

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1895

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

PHARMACY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of Mr. CROSS, this Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Friday, 22nd November.

REFUND OF SPECIAL RETRENCHMENT.

Mr. HARDACRE, in moving—

1. Seeing that the 10 per cent. reduction upon the salaries of Civil servants in receipt of over £150 per annum has been removed, the reductions which were imposed upon Government employees in receipt of wages, mostly under that amount, should likewise cease.

2. The rate of payment which existed with regard to persons in the public service receiving wages previous to the retrenchment of 1893 should therefore be restored.

said: I rise to move this motion with a great deal of pleasure. It is one that no fair-minded man can have any reasonable or impartial ground for opposing. Going back to the origination of this motion, I may state that one of the promises included in the manifesto to the electors by the late Premier, Sir T. McIlwraith, at the last general election, was that there should be no additional taxation. Unfortunately that promise, like many of the promises given at election times, was only a promise to the ear, to be immediately afterwards broken in actual practice. From the very commencement of the following session there was imposed, under the euphonious name of "retrenchment," a class tax of the severest and harshest kind—a tax that fell upon one section of the community only; that called upon that section to contribute to the revenue in a most unjust degree, and that fell upon at least one portion of that section with crushing force. It is true that in the manifesto there was also a promise of retrenchment, but the people did not think it would be that kind of retrenchment that was imposed. The people had learned that there were a large number of officers in the Government service who were receiving enormous salaries, and whose positions were really little more than sinecures. They had heard of one man who drew a salary of about £400 a year for merely addressing envelopes; of others who held two or three and more positions at the same time, and were drawing large salaries for each of them; they had heard of Hume Black having been appointed to an empty and useless position at £1,000 a year; of unnecessary expenses being incurred with Government House and the Governor's retinue which were entirely useless, and which they did not want; they had heard of the Chief Justice drawing a salary of £3,500 a year, and the three Railway Commissioners of that time—

The SPEAKER: Order! I really fail to see how the remarks of the hon. member apply to the motion now before the House.

Mr. HARDACRE: I am trying to show the kind of retrenchment which the people believed in and the kind which has since been imposed. I am comparing those two kinds of retrenchment and endeavouring to show that the people are not against the motion I am now endeavouring to support. They had learned to—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member seems to be pursuing a line of argument perfectly foreign to the question at issue. He has quoted certain retrenchments, but surely he cannot include under that head the salaries voted by previous Parliaments to the Chief Justice and Mr. Hume Black?

Mr. HARDACRE: I am trying to show that the retrenchment which the people did not believe in we have got, and that that which they were in favour of has not been imposed.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot pursue that line of argument when speaking to this motion.

Mr. HARDACRE: I must bow to your ruling. In pursuance of their policy of retrenchment the Government imposed a 10 per cent. reduction upon the salaries of all Civil servants who were in receipt of more than £150 a year, and that provision, so far as it went, this side of the House thoroughly believed in. They tried to shelter, to some extent, the lower paid of that particular class of servants upon whom the retrenchment was imposed. But there was another class of servants who were in receipt of what are called "wages" as distinguished from those who received "salaries," and with regard to that class the Government acted quite differently. They imposed not merely a 10 per cent. reduction, but actually from 15 up to 25 per cent., and that fell upon a class of persons nearly the whole of whom were receiving very much less than £150 a year. The average would be about £100, and they took from about 2,000 of those persons a total, as we have learned in reply to a question, of about £30,000 a year. This of course caused a large amount of dissatisfaction, both deep and loud, but it was somewhat quietened owing to a promise made that the retrenchment was to be only temporary—that the former wages were to be restored when the finances of the colony were once more in a prosperous condition. However, at the end of two years we find that the Civil servants who were most lightly treated in the first instance have been relieved of the retrenchment imposed upon them, and for some reason or other the severest kind of retrenchment has been continued upon that class of persons who were receiving very small wages. This motion asks the House to express an opinion that, seeing that the 10 per cent. reduction in the salaries of Civil servants in receipt of over £150 has been removed, the reduction imposed upon employees in receipt of wages under that amount should likewise cease; and it further asks that the previous rate of wages those men were receiving should be restored. If we are not to trample upon the weak simply because they are weak; to take away from the poor simply because they are poor; to deal differently with one class of employees than with another class, simply because that class works harder and is less able to bear the burdens that have been imposed upon them—if we are not to do these things, I cannot see how any fair-minded man can fail to give this motion his support. It certainly cannot be contended that these men work less hard than the other class of employees; it cannot be said that their work is of less value; and it certainly cannot be said that they are less

in need of relief than the other class, who have obtained that relief. It has been urged that it is not a sound argument that because one class of persons receive certain payment, therefore another class should receive the same amount. I admit that, but surely we are to expect something like impartiality on the part of the Government with the whole of their employees, and there is no reason why they should single out one set of employees to be dealt more harshly with than another class. If it be said, as it doubtless will be, as an excuse that the wages now paid to the Government employees are fair compared with what the same class of persons receive who are outside the Government service, that argument applies with tenfold force to those Civil servants who have had the retrenchment removed from them. The Government, in this case, are on the horns of a dilemma. Either it is right to restore the payments to those employees to whom my motion refers, or else it was wrong to restore the payments to those persons from whom the retrenchment has been removed. This motion is not asking for an increase of wages, as seems to be the idea in the minds of some persons, over what they were previously getting. It simply asks the Government to give back to them the wages they previously received, and which were taken away from them for the purpose of relieving the Treasury at a time of financial difficulties. The motion, of course, includes all wages men, no matter in what department they are employed, upon whom the retrenchment imposed in 1893 still continues. I intend here more especially to refer to the class known as railway men, not that they are the only class to whom the motion refers, but because I know more of their circumstances, and because a large proportion of them are included in that class of employees. For some reason or other the reduction in the wages of these men has not been on one occasion only; it has been persistently continued for a number of years. There has been not only one but a series of reductions. In 1890 their wages were reduced, up to a certain distance on the line, 6d. a day, and they were informed that if they did not like it they could go farther away from the coast, where the line was being extended, where living was dearer and expenses greater in every way, in order to get it. This, of course, was equivalent to a reduction all along the line. Then there was abolished the system of the free carriage of rations, to which they had been accustomed for some time, and which thereby caused them a very considerable increase in the cost of living. Then there was a circular issued, charging them a ground rent for the land on which their cottages were erected. After that the Commissioners cast out a large number of gangs of lengthsmen and compelled the rest to do the whole of the work. It was called a rearrangement of gangs, by which the Commissioners, according to their statement, saved something like £90,000 a year. That statement was found not to be entirely correct, but it must have brought about a considerable saving at those men's expense. Then, under the special retrenchment their wages were reduced, on the Central and Northern lines, by 1s. a day, and the guards in some cases were reduced by 2s. 6d. a day. Taking the lengthsmen alone, the Government took a total of £16 a year from each man's scanty earnings. On the Southern line, in some places, they were reduced 6d., but for some reason on the Central and Northern lines they were reduced 1s. a day. Since that time a circular has been issued under the by-laws by which the increases to which the men were entitled on account of length of service were withheld, and that amounted to a further reduction. I desire now to refer to a petition drawn up in 1891 in consequence of the

hardships under which the lengthsmen were suffering, and have been suffering from ever since. The petition sets forth that following the reduction of wages which took place some months previously, a circular was issued by the department to the effect that a charge of 2s. a month would be levied as ground rent, and that another circular was issued withdrawing the privilege of free carriage. While it may appear desirable to the department to place all employees on the same footing, the petition went on to say, it should not be forgotten that the circumstances of the Central Railway are different from those of the Southern line, seeing that the one runs through an unoccupied waste, while the other runs through an agricultural district. Last session I had the honour to present another petition from them, which is a reply to any statement to the effect that these men are satisfied with the retrenchment imposed on them. I say the men are not satisfied. They have never ceased to protest against their wages being reduced, and have never ceased to ask that the old rate might be restored. The petition presented last year shows that during the last three years the wages have been seriously reduced on two different occasions. In addition to the previous reduction they were charged for the carriage of rations which were formerly carried free, while several gangs were put out and rearrangements made which imposed additional tasks. The petitioners were mostly men with families to support, and they found great difficulty in providing themselves and their families with food, clothing, medicine, and medical attendance, owing to the cost of living. They pointed out that they were the most poorly-paid class of public servants, and that when the first reduction was made it was said to be only a temporary expedient, and they prayed that their case might be taken into favourable consideration. That shows that they are not satisfied with their condition. It shows also that they believe that they had received a promise which certainly was made by the Premier in the first session on the discussion of the Estimates. These persons have more need of relief than the employees called "Civil servants," who have had their burdens remitted. They have to live far away from civilisation; they have very much larger expenses of living; their children are kept away from school in consequence of the impossibility in some cases of sending them to school; they have to be up in all kinds of weather; they have to be out in storms, and work in the blazing sun in summer time; they have to walk their lengths at night, and in flood time whenever it is necessary for the safety of the line. They have also a large responsibility; they have to look after rolling-stock and the permanent way, worth many millions of money; they have to preserve life and property; upon them depends the safety of our railway trains. Let a rail come loose or a bridge be swept away, if they are not there to look after them and do their duty faithfully, a train is dashed to destruction, and lives and property are destroyed. I say, therefore, that there is more need to ask for relief for those persons, and there is more justice in demanding consideration for them than there was for the Government to relieve those persons in the service receiving large salaries who have nothing like the same hard character of work, and are not, generally speaking, under the same necessities. Many of those men have large families; they have been from ten to sixteen years without promotion, and are now receiving even less wages than when they entered the service. It has been said that they were receiving higher wages than the same class of servants in the other colonies, but that is not the case.

I have a comparative statement of the wages paid here and in the other colonies, and I find that in nearly all cases the wages paid in those colonies are higher, though the climate is more favourable for working, and the cost of living less than it is on the Central and Northern lines—far away from the centres of population. The lengthsmen on our lines receive, on the Southern and Western Railway, 6s. ; and on the Northern Railway, 7s. In New South Wales the same class receive from 6s. 6d. to 9s. 6d. Gangers here receive from 7s. 6d. to 8s. 6d., in New South Wales from 8s. 6d. to 12s.; porters here from 6s. 6d. to 6s. 6d., in New South Wales from 6s. to 10s.; guards here from 6s. 6d. to 8s. 6d., in New South Wales from 8s. 6d. to 12s.; firemen here from 6s. 6d. to 8s., in New South Wales from 7s. to 8s. 6d.; drivers here from 9s. to 12s. 6d., in New South Wales from 11s. to 15s.; shunters here from 6s. 6d. to 8s. 6d., in New South Wales from 7s. to 11s.; signalmen here from 6s. 6d. to 8s. 6d., in New South Wales from 7s. 6d. to 11s. Carpenters here receive from 7s. 6d. to 11s. I have not a comparative statement for New South Wales, but in South Australia they receive from 9s. to 11s. Painters here receive from 7s. 6d. to 9s., in New South Wales from 8s. to 12s. So that there is no excuse in the statement made that Government employees are paid here as highly or higher than they are in the other colonies, and this colony should be the last to set an example of low wages, considering the climate the men have to work in and the general hardship of the conditions. The Secretary for Railways will probably say that this class of men have been given the concession of free carriage of rations. That is no doubt a boon for which they will be grateful, but as a substitute for the amounts by which their wages have been reduced it will not be considered as an equivalent. I do not think that the carrying of this motion will add to the general taxation, as has been said, because I believe that low wages are in the end the most expensive thing that could be adopted. We know that wherever reasonably high wages are paid, the work is more faithfully performed than is the case where low wages are paid. Members will remember the experiment made by Lord Brassey with the navvies in England, who found that he got more value for his money in getting better work done from the men he paid high wages than from the men who were paid low wages. I say, therefore, that there will ultimately be no greater expense upon the taxpayers from the carrying of this motion than there is at present under the retrenchment imposed upon these men. Further than that, this specially applies to these men whom it is of the utmost importance we should have settled in certain places; that they may not be changed about and replaced by new hands. All that we ask now is that the Government, to use an expressive phrase, will "let up" on these men. They have suffered quite enough. I do not say a word against the Secretary for Railways, but for some reason or another these men have been specially singled out for harsh and severe reductions. We ask that the Government shall do justice to these men with the same consideration and impartiality as has been meted out to the Government employees, who are called "Civil servants." I have much pleasure in moving the resolution standing in my name.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Of course, I know it is a very popular thing to increase wages, and nobody in the House would be better pleased to give men high wages than I would, if we could afford it. But we must remember that the railways of this colony, and it is to the railway men the hon. member refers—

Mr. HARDACRE: No, to all classes.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Our railways have cost the people a very large sum of money, and they are annually costing a great deal. We have to pay over 4 per cent. on all the money borrowed for railways, and all our railways have been built out of borrowed money. During the last five years, after paying working expenses and 4 per cent., we have had to take very large sums of money out of the consolidated revenue to make up the loss. In 1890-91 we had to take out £450,839, so that really after paying the wages we are now paying, the loss amounts to an annual tax of £1 a head on every man, woman, and child in the colony. In 1891-2, the loss was £318,000, in 1892-3, £360,000, in 1893-4, £430,000, and last year we lost £364,000, so that the average loss on the railways for the last five years has been about £400,000 per annum. I maintain that Government employees are better paid than men working outside the Government service. They have more regular work, and I do not think their work is so hard as that of men working for private employers, and once a man gets into the Government service, if he behaves himself, he is there for life.

Mr. HARDACRE: Does that not apply to Civil servants?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: More or less it does; but if we look round we will find that during the last three or four years plenty of good mechanics have not earned the same wages as railway lengthsmen have been earning, and they have had nothing like the same amount of work. All Government men get paid for fifty-two weeks in the year, whether they work or not, but that is not so with persons who work for private employers; and as they are the people who have to make up the difference of £1 per head loss on our railways they ought to be considered. Our railway men are in a different position from the railway men in the other colonies. Here they can get good homesteads at 2s. 6d. per acre, but in Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia they have no Homestead Act. It has been the policy of the Railway Department to encourage the men to settle on the land.

Mr. WILKINSON: And then to shift them as soon as they have done so.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; that is not the policy of the department. There may be reasons for shifting some men; but if a man does his work faithfully he is not shifted. There are many men owning homesteads on the Northern Railway, and I do not know of a case in which one of those men has been shifted. Such cases may have occurred in the Southern part of the colony; but I do not know of any. The hon. member for Leichhardt told us about the wages paid to railway men in the other colonies, and said they were higher than the wages paid in Queensland. I have a table here showing the rates of wages in the different colonies, and I find that that is not the case. I admit that in New South Wales the wages are higher than in Queensland, but hon. members must bear in mind that the New South Wales railways are paying more than 4 per cent.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Only during the last couple of years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I think they have done so for the last four or five years. But let us go to Victoria, and it is just as well that we should dwell a little on Victoria. It is interesting to read the report of the commission which lately inquired into the working of the Victorian railways and the wages paid there. I find that our wages are higher than the wages paid there some time ago, and they will be less in that colony after the report of that commission. The commission hold up as a warning the fact that the railway

servants of that colony practically run the whole country. They elect Ministries; they turned out the previous Ministry; and they will turn out the present Ministry if they do not get what they want. That is a thing which should not be tolerated in any colony. Gangers in Queensland get from 7s. 6d. to 8s. 6d., and at Normanton 10s. per day.

Mr. TURLEY: Can you vouch for the statement that the railway servants in Victoria have turned out any Ministry.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is what is reported. Gangers in Victoria get from 7s. to 8s. per day, in New South Wales from 8s. 6d. to 9s., and in South Australia from 7s. 6d. to 8s. 6d.; so that, with one exception, gangers are paid as much in Queensland as they are in the other colonies. Lengthsmen here get from 6s. to 7s. 6d., and at Normanton 8s. 6d. per day; in New South Wales from 6s. 6d. to 7s. 6d.; in Victoria from 5s. to 6s., and in South Australia from 6s. to 7s. Carpenters here get from 7s. 6d. to 10s., and I know that within the last three or four years plenty of tradesmen who are as good as any working in the Government service, have been very glad to get work at 6s. a day, and could not get much at that. In Victoria, carpenters get from 7s. to 9s. per day. The rates in South Australia are not given, but it is stated that they are regulated by those prevailing in private establishments. Our rates for the last four or five years have been higher than the rates paid in private establishments. Guards here get from 7s. to 11s. per day; in New South Wales from 8s. 6d. to 11s.; in Victoria from 7s. to 9s., and in South Australia from 7s. 6d. to 10s. With the one exception of New South Wales, our rates of wages are higher than those of any of the other colonies, and I have already pointed out that in New South Wales the railways are paying more than 4 per cent. If our railways were paying 4 per cent., and there was no taxation on the people to meet a deficiency of interest, we could afford to give better pay. But this is a business by itself, and we must remember that all these men are employed by the Railway Commissioner, and that the Minister does not fix the salaries. When the retrenchment took place two years ago I went through the amounts taken off, and I do not think the railway employees altogether were taxed heavier than other employees. We must also remember that there is a good deal of promotion in the railway service. A lengthsmen gets on as a ganger, and sometimes as an inspector.

Mr. KERR: Some are lengthsmen all their lives.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Some are not fit, perhaps, for promotion.

Mr. KERR: They are fit.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In a colony like this, if a man is fit for something more than a lengthsmen he will not stick at that; he will not always be a lengthsmen. I maintain that the railway men have exceptional privileges, which are not enjoyed by any other Government employees, and certainly by no one outside the Government service. They get cheap trips, their wives get cheap passages, their rations were carried cheaply, and now they are carried free.

Mr. RAWLINGS: What was the reduction per cent. made in the Railway Department?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: On the whole it was about 5 per cent. We purpose increasing some of the men's wages. I think hon. members must admit that engine-drivers, firemen, and guards are the hardest worked men in the railway service; they are kept going night and day.

Mr. GLASSEY: I say the lengthsmen are the hardest worked.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a matter of opinion. I have heard it said by plenty of men who have travelled up and down our railways that they have never seen the lengthsmen working at all, but of course that is not correct. When a train is passing the men knock off work, and the same when the next train passes, and so on. However, they can take up selections alongside the line, and we have evidence that they rear herds of cattle, goats, and all kinds of animals, and in time become wealthy men. Why, a man with 300 or 400 head of cattle is a squatter! Some of the largest squatters in the colony started with a fewer number of cattle than that. Of course it may be said that men with such large flocks and herds should be made to give way to others; but if a man is doing his work well the Commissioner cannot well tell him to go about his business. I am told that the best men in the service are the very men who have accumulated these herds. The men who do the best work for the department are the men who look after their herds and their homesteads, and really they set an example which should be an incentive to the others. Just before the close of the last financial year we made large rebates to the customers of the railways. We gave back £50,000 worth of traffic, and the bulk of that was given to the farmers.

Mr. GLASSEY: The bulk of it was given to the squatters.

Mr. HARDACRE: It does not cost the department anything.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: For agricultural produce we received about £60,000, and we took off a quarter of that—that is £15,000, and that was the largest reduction made.

Mr. HARDACRE: You are not receiving as much now.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think we are from agricultural produce, but an entirely new trade has sprung up. I think we are more justified in giving back that sum of £50,000 to the people who are keeping our railways going than in increasing the wages of the men. I maintain that practically we have given back the amount we took from them by conveying their rations free. I admit that the men near the towns and the coast have not got that advantage, but they have corresponding advantages. They would rather live where they are than go out West. They are nearer schools, and living is cheaper. On the whole I do not think we can afford to increase the wages at present. If times get better, as I hope they will, and wages outside rise, of course we shall have to raise the wages of the employees, but careful examination will show that the wages paid to Government employees are better than the wages paid for the same class of labour outside the service. I have had a lot of experience in employing men, and although I have paid men more than the same men would receive in the Government service, I am certain that they have had a great deal more work to do than they would have had had they been in the Government service.

Mr. GLASSEY: You will be regarded as a slave-driver.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am not afraid of that. Men who have left my employment are always glad to get back again. I have men working for me who have worked for me for over twenty years. I believe that sometimes the Government would get better work if they gave higher wages, because they would get better men; but in a large establishment like the railway service, where nearly 4,000 men are employed, there is not the same room for advancement. You cannot pay one man more than

another doing the same class of work, and I believe that on that account many of the best men leave the service. On the whole, I believe that the railway employees are better off than the same class of men outside, and, holding that opinion, and seeing that the public are taxed to the extent of nearly £1 a head to support our railways, I do not think it is fair to raise the wages of the men at the present time.

Mr. FOGARTY: I think I was the first to draw attention to what I consider the injustice of reducing the wages of the railway men. I took the very earliest opportunity of bringing the question before the House. I thought the men were harshly dealt with, and I think so still. The Secretary for Railways has given certain figures, and I also have some figures to submit. I have taken them from the returns for Queensland and New South Wales to the 30th of June, 1895. Engine-drivers here receive from 9s. to 12s. 6d. a day, the average being about 11s.; in New South Wales they receive from 11s. to 15s. a day, the average being 14s., or 3s. a day more than in Queensland. Firemen here receive from 6s. 6d. to 8s. 6d. a day, the average being 7s. 6d.; in New South Wales the rate is from 8s. to 10s., the average being 9s., or 1s. 6d. more than in Queensland. Carpenters here range from 7s. 6d. to 10s. 6d., the average being 9s., whilst in New South Wales the rate is from 7s. to 13s., the average being 10s., 1s. a day more than in Queensland. Guards here receive from 7s. to 10s. 6d., the average being 8s. 6d.; in New South Wales they receive from 8s. 6d. to 12s., the average being 10s., or 1s. 6d. more than we pay. Porters here range from 5s. 6d. to 6s. 6d., the average being 6s. a day; in New South Wales the pay is from 6s. to 10s., average 7s., or 1s. 6d. more than we pay. Gangers here receive 7s. 6d. a day; in New South Wales from 8s. 6d. to 12s., average 9s., or 1s. 6d. more than here. Labourers here receive 6s. a day; in New South Wales from 6s. to 9s. 6d., average 7s., or 1s. a day more than we pay. Blacksmiths here receive from 7s. to 9s., average 8s. a day; in New South Wales the pay is from 8s. to 16s., average 11s., or 3s. more than here. Painters here receive from 7s. to 8s. 6d., average, 8s.; in New South Wales they receive from 8s. to 12s., average, 9s., or 1s. a day more than we pay. Signalmen here receive from 6s. 6d. to 8s., average, 7s.; in New South Wales from 7s. 6d. to 11s. 6d., average 9s. 3d., or 2s. 3d. more than in Queensland. Shunters here get from 6s. 6d. to 8s., average 7s.; in New South Wales they receive from 7s. to 11s., average 8s., or 1s. more than their brothers in Queensland. These figures should be sufficient proof that our railway employees are paid considerably less than those in the same position in New South Wales, although the fact that we have been free from accidents, while they have not, shows that the work here is at least as well done as in the mother colony.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: There is much smaller traffic in Queensland.

Mr. FOGARTY: I admit that; but against that may be put the narrower gauge of our lines. In New South Wales fitters receive 10s. 6d. a day; moulders, 10s. 6d.; strikers, 7s. 6d.; fuel men, 7s. 6d.; pumpers, 8s. 6d.; and oilers, 9s. 6d.; and in the event of these men sleeping away from home they receive an allowance of 3s., whilst in Queensland the allowance is only 2s. a night, or a difference in favour of New South Wales of 1s. That fact alone shows very clearly that the New South Wales people are much fairer in their treatment of the men than the people of this colony. I do not doubt that our men are quite equal to those employed in New South Wales; but New South Wales is now extending her lines, and there is a chance that the best of

our men may be induced to go to that colony by the better pay and the greater inducements. I know men who have been many years in the service, who were receiving low wages prior to the retrenchment, and who were reduced by as much as 1s. 6d. a day. I believe the Commissioners were not in sympathy with the reductions, and I have a clear recollection of Sir T. McIlwraith, who was then Secretary for Railways, saying in this Chamber that he took all the responsibility of the reduction. In reply to something said by myself, the hon. gentleman said he alone was responsible for the reduction. I only hope the Secretary for Railways will act in his public capacity as he does in his private capacity, and give better wages. It is well known that people in the employ of Burns, Philp and Co. generally remain there, and I hope he will treat the railway employees as generously as he does his own. The hon. gentleman the other evening referred to the immense boon it was to the lengthsmen to get their rations carried free on the railways, and some hon. member said that concession was equal to 1s. per day. I have some knowledge of this matter, and I do not think it is worth more than 1d. per day, and in many cases it is not worth that. I say this without any fear of contradiction, and am prepared to prove it to the hilt. The Commissioner referred to the faithful service rendered by the men during the flood, and it is perfectly true that the men were loyal and faithful to their employers, but reducing their salaries is a poor way of encouraging them. I am very pleased that the 10 per cent. reduction is a thing of the past, but I contend that when the Government restored the salaries of those receiving over £150 a year, they should have restored the wages of the railway men also. Even previous to the reduction they only received a miserable pittance, and it was wrong to reduce them at all. However, the Government reduced these men, and now we have reached the time when they should be restored. The receipts on the railways have considerably increased, and I hope they will continue to increase, and that being the case, why should not these unfortunate men receive sufficient to enable them to live? The wages they got in the best of times were only sufficient to enable them to exist while they were at work, and even the most careful man could not lay by anything for a rainy day. It is true that they can acquire land cheaper here than in New South Wales; but I have proved that the men in New South Wales can afford to pay more for their land. Not a very large number of men here have availed themselves of our liberal land laws, so far as homesteads are concerned. Another matter is this: On different sections of the lines the Government have erected two-roomed cottages; but the men occupying them are charged a rental for them which is out of all proportion to the actual cost to the Government. That should be looked into, and I am sure that if the Commissioner's attention is called to it he will make a reduction. The men are paying from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. upon the cost of the buildings, and that is very unfair. Some men have been in the service for twenty-five years, and I am sure that if their names were submitted to the Commissioner, or any member of his staff, he would say that better men could not be obtained, and why should their wages be reduced? I have approached the Commissioner myself, and he expressed a great deal of sympathy with the two cases I then brought under his notice, but he pointed out that it was impossible to give them justice without placing all the other men in the service upon the same level. That was the reason assigned to me, but considering that those men have spent the

greater part of their lives in the service, and have received very small remuneration, I think their case should be considered. I will not mention names, and probably if I did I might not do much good for those whose cause I am advocating. The greater portion of the £30,000 saving effected in the Railway Department resulted from reducing the wages of the employees, and it would be now only an act of justice to restore them to their original rate. I do not think this is a concession; I do not ask for it as a concession. It is a right, and now that there is an increase in the receipts their services should be recognised. It is quite likely that those who advocate the cause of these men will be charged with electioneering, but such a charge cannot be made against me. I hope the motion will be carried unanimously; and I am sure that if it is no one will be better pleased than the Secretary for Railways himself.

Mr. KING: I do not think that this motion was brought forward by the hon. member for Leichhardt in the interests of the railway men alone. Some hon. members seem to think the lengthsmen are the only men to whom it applies, but I take it that it applies to the employees receiving less than £150 a year in all departments. I admit that the railway employees are the largest body of men the motion applies to, and although the Secretary for Railways made out a fairly good case from his point of view in favour of the rate of wages paid in this colony as compared with that paid in other colonies, I think those reductions were not justified. Some men receiving £2 14s. per week were reduced to £2 5s. That is a difference of 9s. per week, which amounts to a reduction of 17 or 18 per cent. I do not intend to take up the time of the House on this question. I have spoken before on the Estimates, and given my opinion as to what I consider a fair and just thing to do in the interests of the colony; and I think now that we have turned the corner and are on the road to prosperity we should increase the wages of lower-paid men. The individuals in the railway service who are getting over £150 might fairly contribute 5 or 10 per cent. to be distributed among those who are getting very small wages. I hope the Government will take the matter into consideration, and try and make amends for the very harsh treatment these men received two and a-half years ago. The wife and family of the man with £120 or £130 a year are just as dear to him as the wife and family of the man with £1,000 a year are to him; and in the interests of humanity the Government ought to give their employees sufficient to enable them to bring up their little ones in comfort, and to feed and clothe them decently. I shall certainly support the motion.

Mr. OGDEN: There is not much to be said about this motion. It is one of those cases which are *prima facie*. It is a motion which can be put before the House with a positive certainty of being responded to by all men who have fair ideas. As the hon. member for Maranoa has pointed out, the motion seems to have centred round the lengthsmen more particularly, but there are others to whom it applies equally well. There are men working twelve hours a day in Northern Queensland as porters in the goods sheds for 5s. 6d. a day, and there are guards taken on during the rush of work who are receiving the same. That is a little lower than the figures quoted by the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba. We have also a worse phase of the question. We have boys doing men's work; strong youths who are taking the bread and butter out of the hands of men, and are doing the work for 4s. 3d. a day; competing practically against their own parents. If there is one thing more than another we should impress upon the

Government and the people it is that "sweating" is a bad thing. The Government of the day is a "sweating" Government emphatically. "Sweating" which asks a boy to do a man's work, and pays him a boy's wages, is "sweating" of the worst description. It is worse than the physical sweating in Northern Queensland, with the thermometer at 105 in the shade. The senior member for Charters Towers has pointed out that this may result in the downfall of the Government. I wish it would. I wish anything would result in the downfall of the present Government.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Something may result in your downfall.

Mr. OGDEN: I do not care for that, because if the people rise I shall participate. Part of the programme of the Labour party is to cut down high salaries and to increase low ones. They were pledged to a policy of retrenchment of extravagant expenditure, and that programme they will, whenever possible, carry out. My colleague, the Secretary for Railways, has said that in the present condition of the colony we cannot afford to pay 7s. 6d. or 8s. a day for lengthsmen, but what are we doing in other departments? We are paying some men £1,000 a year, and the worst of it is that when they retire they receive from the taxpayers pensions of between £600 and £700 a year. That is a phase of the question that needs putting down. There are men who have been receiving £1,000 a year for the past twenty years, and the men at 4s. 6d. and 5s. 6d. a day are called upon to provide them with pensions. We had the other day a Civil servant who had been in receipt for many years of a very big salary, who has now retired on a pension of £700, although he has only paid £420 towards it. The working man who receives his 6s. or his 5s. 6d. a day has to pay this retiring allowance.

The SPEAKER: I think the hon. member is wandering away entirely from the subject under discussion. I fail to see that his remarks have anything to do with the question before the House.

Mr. OGDEN: I may have done wrong. I was attempting to show the one reason of all others why these men should receive more pay. However, I will not pursue that question further. If our railways are not paying as well as they ought, they are profitable enough to pay the men working upon them a living wage; and I contend that 5s. 6d. a day in Northern Queensland is not a living wage by any means. After those men have worked six days a week, and sometimes on Sundays as well—for they have to obey the call of duty, and very properly so, in the responsible position they occupy—they receive at the end of the week the large sum of 36s., and in some cases less, and out of that they are supposed to fulfil all the duties that appertain to citizenship. The thing will not bear examination for a moment. I intend to put some further facts on this question before the House when we get into Committee of Supply. I shall, therefore, say no more now, believing that if private members, on private members' days, make short speeches, they will get their questions through quickly, and do a certain amount of good.

The SPEAKER: I would point out to the hon. member, who has just sat down, that he was not in order in addressing the House from the end of the table. The Standing Orders provide that every member must speak from his place in the House.

Mr. OGDEN: I happened to be writing at the table just before I rose to speak, and I apologise for breaking one of the rules of the House.

Mr. WILKINSON: This question has been so very exhaustively dealt with by the hon.

member for Leichhardt that it is hardly possible to add anything to what has already been said. Unfortunately, I came here this afternoon without certain papers in my possession in which the number of railway men and the wages paid in all the Australasian colonies are set forth. But I happen to have with me the report of the New South Wales Railway Commissioners, presented to the Assembly of that colony on the 20th November, 1894, which states the amount of wages and the number of men employed on the railways in 1888, when the Commissioners took office, and the number of men and the wages paid now; and I find that while Queensland has adopted a similar policy in one direction, that is, in reducing the number of men, and even to a greater degree, it has not followed a similar policy in another direction. While the number of men has been reduced in New South Wales, the average wage has been increased. In Queensland both the number of men and the wages paid to those remaining have been reduced. In every branch of the railway service in New South Wales the average for 1894 is higher than the average for 1888. The reason given for that by the Secretary for Railways is that their railways pay so much better than ours. That goes to prove that it is not because of low wages that their railways are paying. The mistake we have made has been in the endeavour to get a direct profit out of our railways, and for that reason, among others, I have been pleased to see a change in our railway policy of pushing out railways in advance of settlement instead of waiting until settlement has taken place. That is the true railway policy for a new country. It is scarcely fair to compare the wages paid to men in the employ of the Government with those paid outside. No one will, of course, argue that men employed by the Government are not better paid than those employed outside. But look at the wages the men outside are paid! It does not mean that the Government employees are getting too much, but that those outside are getting too little; they are not getting a fair living wage. The fact that a number of men are anxious to get into the department is no argument that those already there are satisfied. It only emphasises the amount of distress that obtains in the labour world outside. The accusation of the hon. member for Townsville that the Government are really encouraging sweating can be borne out; and I fancy it can be proved at some of the new works that are going on in the immediate vicinity of Brisbane. But it is not only with regard to the actual wages paid that the railway men of Queensland are in a worse position than those in the other colonies. There is only one colony in which they are in a worse position with regard to pay—South Australia—but it must be remembered that the greater part of the South Australian railway system is confined to a much higher degree of latitude than in Queensland, and that the conditions of life are considerably harder here owing to the vast extent of our railway system. Another factor not to be lost sight of is that railway men are entrusted with responsibilities that do not obtain in ordinary outside work. The ordinary labourer goes to his work for 6s. or 6s. 6d. a day—which is considered an enormous wage just now—and he has practically no responsibility whatever; whereas on a railway the slightest lapse of duty may mean a charge of manslaughter with all its consequences. If a clerk in an office with £300 or £400 a year makes a mistake in a ledger, he is perhaps reprimanded; the mistake can be set right. But in the railway service a mistake made by a wages man whose duty it is to keep the line in order, cannot, in the majority of cases, be rectified without

cost to the country; and it is only right that his responsibility should be paid for—that his wages should be higher than those given where no responsibility is imposed on the worker. As I have pointed out before, his work is greatest when other people are indoors sheltered from the elements, and they are infinitely greater in floods than in ordinary times. It may hail, rain, shive, or snow, but the lengthsmen are always responsible for the safe condition of his length. One complaint is that when the retrenchment was imposed there was no real system. It seemed to be a rule of thumb. Some men were reduced 4d., others 8d., 1s., 1s. 4d., 1s. 6d., 2s., and 2s. 6d. a day. A number of the men recognised, patriotically, that they should bear some of the burden of retrenchment at the time, but it is natural that they should be dissatisfied when they find that those who could well afford the retrenchment have their former salaries restored, while they are still receiving pay at the reduced rate. If the colony can afford to restore the salaries of those highly-paid officers, who had simply to dispense with some of their luxuries during the time of their retrenchment, it can also afford to put the wages men back to their old rate of pay. Those lengthsmen never had any luxuries, and a reduction in their case trenched on the necessities of life. Even when men received 6s. 6d. a day, that did not amount to more than an average of £100 a year, which cannot be said to be adequate remuneration for the work and the responsibility. A comparison has been drawn by the Secretary for Railways between the drivers and firemen and the lengthsmen. He asserts that the drivers, firemen, and guards are amongst the hardest worked. I deny that, and I speak from experience as a driver. I say that the hard work those men have to do is due to the management of the department, through which they are called upon sometimes to work excessively long hours. If they are only required to work the ordinary day their work is not particularly hard. There is a certain amount of mental strain which perhaps wears them out sooner than the men who have no care. Men have worked the clock round, and after a few hours' rest have had to go to work again. Of course the life is hard under those conditions, but they are extraordinary conditions, and are not fair conditions. A new traffic has sprung up, and if any blame is to be attached to the department it is for want of foresight in not having made provision for that traffic. In comparing the work of the lengthsmen with that of the drivers and firemen it must be remembered that the former are tied to their lengths from year's end to year's end, while the latter always have their homes in centres of population, where they can get some of the comforts of civilisation, and their children can attend school. It must not be forgotten that these lengthsmen are civilised beings, that many of them have been used to enjoying some of the refinements of civilisation at any rate. I am satisfied that it is only sheer necessity which keeps them where they are now, and I fear that as opportunity offers they will make way for new hands who will be far more expensive than men of experience at fair rates of remuneration. Besides the actual amount of pay received, concessions are given in the other colonies which are not enjoyed to the same extent in this colony. In New South Wales there are comfortable quarters provided for the men working away from home, and an attendant in charge; but in Queensland the men are accommodated in a barracks where there is nobody to look after things, and the bunks are pretty well alive. In the neighbouring colony when a man is away from his home he gets 3s. a night, but here a lengthsmen can be absent from home

a whole week, leaving his wife and family in the lonely bush, and he gets 6d. a night. Sometimes attempts have been made to deprive him even of that small amount by making him travel to and from the place where he has been employed every day, but that was recently brought under the notice of Mr. Mathieson, who had occasion to talk to some of his subordinate officers in a manner to which they were little accustomed. I am not blaming the Commissioner for this, because I believe he did not know of it; but I blame some of the inspectors for suppressing complaints which they should have forwarded to the Commissioner. Mr. Mathieson learnt something about the conditions under which the lengthsmen work during his trip out West. The whole of this motion does not refer to lengthsmen. There are young men serving an apprenticeship in certain trades in the shops, and particularly in the railway shops, who had been given a promise that they would be given a certain increase year by year until they served their time, and they would then receive journey-men's wages in accordance with the worth of their labour, and that was to be regulated by the price paid for similar labour outside. That has not been so. Men have spent five years learning their trade, and when they have got out of their time they have simply been placed on labourer's wages, and have been receiving no more than 6s. a day for years. While serving their time they are working on an average, taking the term for five or six years, of 2s. 6d. a day, and having sacrificed their time in that way, they should, when they are afterwards employed at it, receive some better recompense for their services than the ordinary labourer's wages. Men who, entering the shops as young men, are now thirty years of age, and are still receiving only 6s. a day. Here men are allowed, in the shape of holidays, six days in the year up to a certain term of service. After ten years' service they are allowed a day extra for each year of service. In New South Wales—and I believe it is the same in Victoria and South Australia—they are allowed every proclaimed public holiday as a paid holiday. If they work on that day they are allowed a day off in lieu of it, and if they cannot be allowed a day off in lieu of it, they receive pay for it in addition to the pay they earn by working. In addition to that, they receive six days good conduct holidays in every year. In all, drivers, firemen, guards, and signalmen average about three weeks holidays in the year in New South Wales; here, the most they can get is twelve days. Taking all these things into consideration, it must be admitted, even at the old rating, the condition of our railway employees is very much worse than that of the employees in the other colonies. I was very glad to hear that it is the intention to again put the increases regulation in force. That is one of the most serious grievances the men have to complain of. They entered into the service with the understanding, set out in the regulations, that after serving for a given time they would be entitled to an increase of so much per day, and just when the increases were coming due the new regulations were issued depriving them of the increases to which under their agreement they had become entitled. Had that been applied in the case of a salaried man in receipt of £300 or £400 a year, it would have been called repudiation; but because it was applied only to wages men it is considered legitimate, and is not called repudiation at all. I hold that it was repudiation, and that the agreement with these men under the regulations should have been equally binding upon a just Government as an agreement with any Civil servant under an Act of Parliament. There will probably be an opportunity to refer to the

details of some of these things in the discussions on the Estimates, and I will content myself now with the remarks I have made.

Mr. PHILLIPS: I approach this subject with a perfectly open mind. I have no desire to see men badly treated; I like to see all men get what they are entitled to. If it could be shown that these men have been badly treated or that they are entitled to more wages than they have received they would have my support. It must be remembered that we are the custodians of the public purse.

Mr. GLASSEY: That applies to the high salaries as well as to the low ones, mind you.

Mr. PHILLIPS: We are not voting in this House money out of our own pockets, and it is easy to be generous with other people's money. I do not intend to traverse in detail the speech of the hon. member for Ipswich, to whom I listened with pleasure. He thoroughly understands the subject, and his speech was a temperate one, and from every point of view reasonable. At the same time, he has made some mistakes with regard to certain concessions made to the lengthsmen. For instance, I was informed no later than last night, by the Commissioner for Railways, that these men are entitled to all the public holidays, and that in addition to that they receive one week in every year on full pay and an additional week after eight years' service, not ten years, as mentioned by the hon. member.

Mr. WILKINSON: Yes, I believe that is right.

Mr. PHILLIPS: After eight years in the service they are entitled to an additional week. That is to say, after eight years' service an employee on the railways is entitled to a fortnight's special holiday, and to all the general holidays on full pay.

Mr. WILKINSON: That must be in the new regulations; it is not in the old ones.

Mr. PHILLIPS: I understand also that during their holidays the men are entitled to receive free passes to travel on the lines, and that in certain cases the whole of a railway employee's family are permitted to travel at one-eighth of the ordinary rate.

Mr. GLASSEY: There is a limit as to the number of children.

Mr. PHILLIPS: My information is that the whole family is given the concession. That would be a great concession to anybody outside the Railway Department. I should be very glad if I could get my family taken at that rate.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: It is not one-eighth; it is one-fourth.

Mr. PHILLIPS: I am quoting the Commissioner, and if the information is wrong the fault is his. I am also informed that rations are carried free for these men, up to 600 lb. for a man with a family, and up to 150 lb. for a single man, and a further concession is given in the case of families by allowing 1,200 lb., the concession for two months, to be taken up at once. It must be remembered that there are other people living in these outside districts—settlers who are making the country, and providing the employment for the railways, and they have to live under conditions very similar to the railway men so far as the climate, the removal from social conveniences, and the distance from schools are concerned, and they get no concession in the way of having their goods or the corn for their fowls carried on the railways free. It must also be remembered that these men are permanently employed. As long as they are well-behaved and carry out their duties to the satisfaction of their superior officers, their employment is absolutely certain. Wet or dry, year in and year out, they can get their money, and there is absolute security for them. That is a very great advantage indeed. I was rather struck by one contention of the

hon. member who moved this motion. He said that the higher we paid men the more work we should get out of them. That may be true to a certain extent, but there is only a limited amount of work for these men to do, and if they are going to perform more because we give them another 6d. or 1s. a day, some of them will have to go. I know perfectly well that it is a very monotonous life standing in the sun for eight hours a day ballasting sleepers; but it is also monotonous work standing at the tail of a plough, or digging post holes, or any other work of that description. A surveyor's man suffers more hardship than any one of these railway men, as he has to go out not knowing where he will sleep at night. I have many a time started out in the morning not knowing where I was going to get a meal or a bed at night; but that cannot be said of railway lengthsmen, who have their homes to go to when their day's work is finished. On the whole, I do not think our railway employees have much to complain of, and unless I get very much more information than I now have, I do not think I can see my way to support this motion.

Mr. JACKSON: The Secretary for Railways has argued that, on account of the loss on our railways, it was only a reasonable thing that the men employed in the lower grades of the service should suffer a reduction in their wages, but the hon. gentleman was not so ready to point out the loss on the railways when we were discussing the two railways which were before the House last night, and I do not think it is a fair argument to advance. I do not think that anybody could expect that the railways in Queensland, or any young colony, should pay from the jump. It is a maxim in railway finances, as I pointed out once before this session, that there is really a saving of 12 per cent. on the value of the imports and exports carried over our railways; but taking it at one-half that, the indirect saving on our railways is £756,000, which is about three times the annual deficit that has to be made up by the taxpayers. The Secretary for Railways said he did not know of any case of lengthsmen who had been moved on the Northern Railway, but I could tell him of one or two cases.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He did not deny that there might be some.

Mr. JACKSON: I understood him to say that there had been none. I would point out that there is a Bill before the Parliament of Victoria to refund the percentage reductions made in the salaries of all men getting under £100 per annum. Though this debate revolves principally around the railway lengthsmen, it applies to men employed in other departments of the service. It will be admitted that there is no friction in the railway service. The Commissioner practically admits that, for in his report he states that there has not been 1 per cent. of dismissals in the service, so that it is evident that the railway employees do their work satisfactorily, in spite of the fact that there have been great reductions made in their wages. There is no doubt that the life of a lengthsmen is rather a hard one, in North Queensland particularly. Queensland is a tropical country, and up North it is much hotter than it is down South. Anyone who has even ridden along a railway in the North knows that that is a punishment. I do not know what it must be to work along the lines. During the last ten years I have done a considerable amount of work in the sun, but as a rule persons in other occupations can get a certain amount of shade, which lengthsmen cannot obtain. Although their occupation is not a skilled one, still considerable care has to be exercised by lengthsmen in their work. It might be argued that comparisons should not be made

between the higher grades of the Civil Service and wages men, but if it were only to enter my protest against the differential treatment of the higher grades of the service I should support the motion now before the House. I think it is a fair argument to draw a comparison between those two grades. It might be said that we should make a comparison between these men and those following similar occupations outside, but I think if we did we should find the old proverb that "Comparisons are odious" is borne out. There is a great difference between men working with a pick and shovel along a railway and men working with a pen in an office. It may be argued, as it was in a leading article in the *Courier* this morning, that the remuneration of both classes of public servants should be fixed by the remuneration for similar work outside the Government service. I am rather inclined to dispute that proposition, although it may seem to be a reasonable one. I think the Government should pay more—I would not say a great deal more—than private employers. To that it might be rejoined that if they did so the money would have to come out of the people's pockets; but I answer that the Government should try to raise the standard of living of the working people whom they employ. Of course it would be replied that if we try to raise the standard of living of the workmen in the Government service we should raise the standard of living of men outside the Government service, as they have to pay the taxation to make up for those extra wages. Unfortunately the working men outside the Government service are heavily taxed, but I consider that the advantage would be in their favour in the long run, because if the State paid a higher rate of wages than was paid outside, and a certain high standard of living was obtained, there would be a certain amount of emulation among the working men outside to arrive at a similar standard. But if the remuneration outside is to be taken as a test, I would ask why is that not applied to all grades of the service? When the retrenchment took place in 1893 it was not argued that Civil servants should be paid according to the rates ruling outside. The principal reason then given was that the colony could not afford to pay higher wages, and it was argued that men outside the Government service would be glad to come in and do the work at the lower rate. It might also be argued that we must not reduce the higher salaries because it would tend to weaken the efficiency of the control. Efficiency of control, of course, is necessary, but then, if the lower grades are not paid so well, there is a danger of the working men neglecting their duty. You cannot expect to get as much work out of them as if you paid them higher wages. It is just as necessary for the safe working of our railways that the lengthsmen, the engine-drivers, and guards should be paid well as it is that the stationmasters, accountants, and Commissioners should be paid high salaries. Of course high wages and high prices are not an unmixed evil. Very often high prices follow high wages. Still I contend that it is a good thing generally for the country, on account of the example set by the Government, that higher wages should be paid to the men in the lower grades. I do not think that the State recognises this principle of competition in all its dealings with what may be called its customers. For instance, if it is argued that competition should fix the rate of wages, why is not the principle introduced into the dealings of the State with the people to whom it rents the State's lands? A private landlord gets as much rent as he can for his house or land, and the principle of supply and demand fixes the rent which he is able to obtain; but the State does not act on the

same principle with the pastoral tenants. The State does not attempt to fix the rents by competition. A board is appointed, and it takes into consideration, not what the squatter is prepared to pay, or what somebody else would be prepared to pay, but it decides the rent from altogether different considerations. Considering that the revenue is expanding, we can well afford to restore the old rate of pay. I would point out before I sit down that the question of increased pay applies to a great many other men outside the Railway Department. The men on the Government steamers were also retrenched, and they certainly have not been recompensed for their loss as the men in the higher grades of the service have been.

Mr. McMASTER: I would be the last member in this House to insist upon keeping men's wages low. I believe in men being well paid, and I regret that during the last two or three years tradesmen have not been paid according to the value of their work or at the rates at which they were formerly paid; but we must not conclude, because men are not paid as well as they were four or five years ago, that therefore they are not worthy of that pay. The question is, can their employers afford to pay the higher rate?

Mr. BROWN: Why does not that begin with the £3,000 a year people?

Mr. McMASTER: I shall deal with that by-and-by. I understand what I am talking about; and having been a working man myself, I have a great deal of sympathy with working men. I was under the impression that some six years ago this House handed over the management of our railways to Commissioners so as to get rid of political influence. I do not see that any good can follow from this discussion. I believe we shall simply have lost an afternoon. I do not know whether the Secretary for Railways ever interferes in regard to the wages that the Commissioner gives to the railway employees, but, from an interjection he made just now, I should fancy that he does not. If the Commissioner has the sole control of our railways, what is the use of passing this resolution? I take it that the object of the motion is to enable hon. members to deliver electioneering speeches, and, if the motion is passed, to get up on the platform at their election meetings, and say, "We passed a resolution through the House, affirming that the wages paid to the railway employees should be increased." I think that the Commissioner will pay the best wages he can afford to pay, without any resolution being passed by this House. The hon. member for Croydon interjected "£3,000 a year." If this House thinks it desirable to pay a man who has a grasp of our railway management that salary, I do not think we should interfere with him now. We placed the railways under his control so that they might be taken away from political influence, and it was necessary that we should get a first-class man. We have got a first-class man who has given satisfaction, both to this House and the country, so far as I know; I have heard no expressions to the contrary. I contend that as long as he does not oppress anybody, and pays fair wages to all men according to their value, we should not interfere with him in his efforts to meet the engagements demanded by the taxpayers. One man may be worth 7s. a day, while another might only be worth 5s.

Mr. REID: Members of Parliament are all paid alike.

Mr. McMASTER: I think hon. members in that corner are worth very little, except to talk. If we are not satisfied with the Commissioner, Parliament has power to dispense with him, but we would have to pay him.

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Mr. GLASSEY: No.

Mr. McMASTER: If the hon. member were in power to-morrow, he would not dismiss a man without doing him justice. Having placed the management of the railways in the hands of the Commissioner, we have no right to tell him that he is to pay higher wages, when the men were fairly well paid before. If we compel him to do that, it will make the cost of working the railways so much greater, and the surplus will be so much the less, or rather, the deficiency will be so much the greater. I cannot understand what extra qualities the railway men have above other men that they should be trotted out in this House every session. Of course they have votes, but so have all other Civil servants except the police.

Mr. GLASSEY: Why don't you give the police votes?

Mr. McMASTER: The hon. member would not care to give the police votes. If there is any hon. member in this House who detests the colour of a policeman's clothes it is the hon. member for Burke. Instead of having these men trotted out every year the hon. member should have given notice of a motion calling upon the Commissioner to explain why these men are dealt with differently from any other workmen, and why he does not pay them higher wages if they are entitled to them. That would be very much wiser than adopting the present course, and I could understand it; but the hon. member simply moves, that in the opinion of this House the Commissioner is not paying sufficient wages. The hon. member for Leichhardt has compared this colony with Victoria and New South Wales, but I object to that comparison. Railway matters are in a pretty bad state there, particularly in Victoria, and I do not think we ought to take that colony as an example. Our lines have been fairly well managed for the last two or three years, and we ought to let well alone. We ought to allow the Commissioner to manage the railways to the best advantage, but if he does an injustice to anybody, even to the humblest man in his employ, he should be called to account, or the Secretary for Railways should be asked to make inquiries, and give information to this House regarding the matter. There are other men besides the railway men who deserve consideration, and this resolution does not refer to them.

Mr. TURLEY: It says nothing about the railway men.

Mr. McMASTER: It does not, but the whole discussion has turned upon the railway employees. The hon. member for Leichhardt spoke entirely on behalf of the railway men, and compared their wages with those paid in New South Wales and Victoria. He never referred to any other low-paid servants, so that I take it his whole aim and object is to increase the wages of the railway employees.

Mr. KERR: The junior member for Townsville spoke of others.

Mr. McMASTER: I did not happen to be here when that hon. member spoke. If the wages are to be raised then everyone should be treated alike. I should imagine the resolution would include the police. They have very arduous duties to perform, having to be out early and late; they are getting lower wages than any members of the Civil service, and are not by any means overpaid. I maintain that if there are any grievances to be remedied—and I am not at all sure that there are—that this resolution does not go the right way about it. If the Commissioner can see his way clear to raise the wages of his men he will do so, but it is not desirable that this House should interfere with the heads of

departments. The House has placed the Commissioner almost beyond the control of Parliament, to administer the department without fear or favour and free from political influence.

Mr. KERR: You would not say so if you were round the Commissioner's office and saw members there.

Mr. McMASTER: I am not often at the Commissioner's office, and never called to see him about wages; but this seems an attempt to get at the Commissioner, and to get the votes of the railway employees. It does not follow that because members go to the Commissioner's office that they have not got other business besides that of trying to influence him about wages. I have had occasion to go there concerning freights and other matters of importance to my constituents, and I should be neglecting their interests if I did not do so.

Mr. KERR: The member for Leichhardt is looking after the interests of his constituents.

Mr. McMASTER: I am not accusing him of not doing so. I believe he has some railway men in his constituency, but not such a large number after all. I am not sure that I have not more Civil servants in my constituency, and I am quite sure I have the confidence of a large number. But I have never interfered with the heads of the department to do any Civil servant an injury. My own idea is to do justice to everybody. If I could have my way I would raise every man's wages in the service. I never was a believer in low wages. But, with regard to the railway employees, it must be remembered that there is a large number of persons outside who are not getting anything like the labour or the wages that those men are enjoying. The Secretary for Railways put that very plainly this afternoon. I am not saying that Civil servants are too well paid, but I do say that for the last two or three years—and they know it themselves—no portion of the community has been better off. They were in constant employment, and, although they had to forego some portion of their remuneration—which has since been restored to them—they were better off than those who had to find the taxation to keep the service going. There are scores of men, even now, who are only working half-time. Perhaps the best course would be for the House to request the Secretary for Railways to ascertain from the Commissioner whether he can see his way to increase the pay of the men under him. If the motion is carried, the Commissioner will say that he is going to manage the department to the best of his ability and judgment, and to pay every man according to his work. But if we demand that the Commissioner must pay a certain amount of wages, this House, and not the Commissioner, is in charge of the department.

Mr. BOLES: No doubt there are times in the affairs of the colony when it falls upon the Government to retrench in many ways, and at such times retrenchment should take place all round. But when the finances have so far improved that such severe economy is no longer necessary, in common fairness the lower grades of the service ought to be taken into consideration as well as the higher. Equal justice should be dealt out to all. There are not many railway employees in my electorate; but some of them are rather underpaid. I will only refer to the case of a woman who acts as a gatekeeper and takes charge of a little post office on the line. Up to 1893 she was receiving £18 a year. At the time of the retrenchment her pay was cut down by 33 per cent. to £12 a year, and at that rate she has been paid ever since. She wrote to me to find out whether she could not be restored to her former salary; £12 was so small a sum that it was scarcely worth her while to keep the position. I waited on the Commissioners, but I

got very little satisfaction. They were under the impression that the woman was fairly paid. I do not think there is a member present who will say that £12 a year is a fair wage, even though she may have a cottage to live in. Now that the finances of the colony are in a sounder position than they have been in for some time, it would be a gracious act on the part of the Government to restore to the men in the lower grades the pay they were formerly receiving. They ought to have commenced at the lower rounds of the ladder, and raised the wages there first. I do not know whether this motion will have any effect; the hon. member who has just sat down thinks it will not. I hope it will, and that the Government will see, by the vote of the House, the justice of treating the lower grades of the service as generously as they have treated the higher ones.

Mr. MIDSON: The subject of this motion is one that I have taken a great interest in, not recently, but for a great number of years. I believe in everyone being paid a fair wage, and I have not only believed in it but have practised it all through my business career. Every year for some years past the grievances of railway employees have been brought before us. In my opinion they have very little real grievance to complain of, particularly in the matter of wages. In proportion to what is paid outside, railway employees are getting a very fair wage. I do not say they are paid an extravagant wage, but compared with what I know is paid outside, they are not paid badly from the highest to the lowest. The argument that they should be paid according to what people outside are paid is a very sound one. I know many men outside the Railway Department who are paid very much less for work just as arduous and requiring just as much skill. A little while since I received a letter from an old employee of mine who took up some land in the Burnett district four years ago. He told me that up to last year he had been getting on fairly well, but owing to the prolonged drought had lost nearly everything. He is a first-class mechanic—a carpenter and joiner—and he asked me if I could give him any employment, either at his trade or as a labourer, at any wage I could give him until the weather would allow him to return to his farm, when he would be able to get along again there. I am sorry to say that I was not able to employ him. For some years past I have not been able to employ anyone. I should not like to employ anyone unless I could give him a fair wage. That is only one case. Two or three weeks previous to that there were two old employees of mine—bricklayers—came to me. To one I had paid as much as 14s. a day. He told me that I had no work to offer men simply because I had always been trying to keep up the rate of wages; he said I was not able to compete with other men while endeavouring to keep up the rate of wages, and he and the man along with him were quite willing to work at 6s. a day. That man is equal, if not superior, to most men in Brisbane at his particular trade. That shows that those men are very much underpaid in comparison with the railway employees, when we take into account the constant nature of the employment in the Railway Department, which is a consideration with most men. The argument that these men are not sufficiently paid will not hold water. I have come to the conclusion that these men are at least 20 per cent. better off than their fellow workmen out of Government employ. From the number of people seeking this employment I do not think any reasonable man can come to any other conclusion than that this particular employment possesses attractions that no outside work does. That is

the only reason we can give for such a large number of people being always willing, even in the best of times, to enter the service. If the conditions were so hard as some hon. members would have us believe, there would not be such a great number of men anxious to get into the service. In ordinary employment outside, the moment a man imagines he is put upon, either in pay or in treatment, he complains to his employer, and if he cannot get satisfaction he leaves that employment; and if the railway employees are dissatisfied I take it that is what they should do.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They have no union.

Mr. MIDSON: The men that have unions are those that I have been speaking of lately. The bricklayers' union was one of the strongest unions in Brisbane, so that falls to the ground. The men of the best sort belong to unions—old unions, not the latter-day unions. Honest trade unions I am a firm believer in, but I will have nothing to do with the new unionism. I do not intend to take up more time. I do not think the proposer of the motion has made out a good case. Before the commencement of the session there was a general demand for retrenchment in the Government service—retrenchment that was not to be of a temporary character.

Mr. WILKINSON: Why restore the big ones?

Mr. MIDSON: I admit that in many cases that was not the correct thing to do, but that is no reason for increasing the wages of men who are, as I have shown, very much better paid than the men outside. I cannot support the motion.

Mr. DUNSFORD: The hon. member thinks that because men are in a bad way outside; because competition has been very keen and a large number of unemployed are prepared to work for any wage—which means next to no wage—that therefore the department are justified in paying them any wage inside. In other words, because a large number of men are willing to work in our reserves at 1s. 9d. or 2s. a day, therefore men inside the department should be paid no higher than that. That is what the hon. member stated—that the ruling rate outside, whether high or low, sweating or living, should be the wage paid inside. I do not think that ought to guide us at all. Members who vote against this motion will be voting in favour of a sweating system, and the members who vote for the motion will be voting against the system of sweating—a low wage and long hours of labour. Is this House prepared to sanction sweating in any department of the State? Hon. members who say that the outside wage should be the ruling wage prove that they believe in sweating wages, because, unfortunately, that is what the outside wages are in many instances, owing to the sweating, cut-throat competition carried on under our industrial system. This House should raise itself and the State above these mere cut-throat competitive cruel conditions.

Mr. MIDSON: What about the taxpayer?

Mr. DUNSFORD: It is not in the interest of the taxpayer, or the nation, that the ruling rate of wages should be low. The higher the wages, the higher the condition, the more intelligent and inventive the people, and the more discoveries are made. The happiest and most advanced nation is the nation paying the highest rate of wages. Turn where you will, the advantage is with the country in which the highest rate of wages is ruling, where there is not a lowly-paid degraded working class, but a highly-paid intelligent working class. I deny that the wages paid in the Railway Department in some parts of the colony compare favourably with even the wages ruling under the competitive cut-throat system prevailing outside. I can prove that in North

Queensland the wages paid are 50 per cent. lower, in many cases, than the wages paid outside. First of all, I deny that the outside rate of wages should be the guide for the State, but that we should see that every man, woman, and child earns sufficient to lead a decent life. Under present conditions in some departments, and especially in the Railway Department, a number of men are not earning sufficient to enable them to remain good citizens. When they are merely receiving semi-starvation wages, how is it possible for them to remain good citizens and do their duty to themselves, their wives and families, and to the State? I have in my hand the latest edition of the *Eagle*, a paper which is filed in the library here, and read by many hon. members.

Mr. McMASTER: There are some good things in it.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I am glad the hon. member agrees with it in some things. It is full of truths. In this issue of 19th October it is pointed out that lads able to do men's work are employed at the Charters Towers railway station at 4s. 2d. a day. These are lads in their teens, but they are as good men as they will ever be, and they have taken the place of men at 4s. 2d. a day. The hon. member for South Brisbane says that these men have regular work, and that is a great advantage; but I find here that men employed as casuals are receiving 5s. 6d. a day, and the highest wages paid them is 6s. a day. This is in a part of the colony where the municipal council, the divisional board, and the mines are paying their men 10s. a day.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: For labourers?

Mr. DUNSFORD: Yes, 10s. a day for labourers. Are these wages, 5s. 6d. a day for married men, paid by the department 25 per cent. higher than the wages paid outside? There is only one name for this—sweating. It is not possible for men to keep a home, maintain a family, and pay their way as good citizens in North Queensland on 5s. 6d. a day. I challenge any man to stand up in this House and say it is, if he knows the price of commodities, and the purchasing power of money in that district. Some of the guards on the Northern line work from eighty to ninety hours per week, and they are not paid for overtime. Is this sweating or not sweating? Give it a name. When hon. members are voting let them remember that this thing is carried on in the department, and let them vote accordingly if they do not believe in sweating. In the interests of the public, if I had the power I should demand that hon. members should vote for this motion, and against these abnormally long hours. How can guards do their duty if they are worked for these terribly long hours. A train may be wrecked owing to a man being in a half sleepy condition, and even if hon. members look at this through the public spectacles they will say that in the interests of the public, apart from the interests of the men, they should receive a fair wage and work only for reasonable hours. I know that cases have been brought before the department within the last week or two, and statements have been sent here from men suffering from this state of affairs, and the department is now inquiring into them. Such cases do exist to my own knowledge, and if hon. members want to consider the interests of the public on the one hand, and the interests of the men on the other, they will vote for this motion.

Mr. FOXTON: I am going to vote for this motion, but I do not care to do so without giving my reasons. The reason upon which my vote will be based is that a temporary reduction was made all round, and certain grades of the service have been restored to the status they

previously held so far as remuneration is concerned. I do not at all agree with the views which the last speaker expressed with regard to what should obtain in the management of our Railway Department. We have placed our railways in the hands of persons independent of political control, and they are responsible to the Government, to this House, and the country for the economical working of our lines. Does not the Treasurer, when he is forecasting the loans which he proposes to raise for the purpose of building further railways, or extending those which now exist, take pride in being able to state that the lines are paying, and therefore that the investment of more money in that direction is a good, safe, and profitable investment for the public lender? And do we not all share in that pride? Of course we do. Then, in the interest of the public at large, in the interest of those who desire further railway extension, and in the interest of those who are called the wage-earning classes, more especially labourers and navvies, it is desirable that our railways should be conducted upon economical principles. But as an abstract principle I am prepared to support a motion, which would come, I will not say as a direction, but as an expression of opinion from this House that it is desirable that all parties in the Government service should be treated on the same terms. I feel that there is a great deal in what was said by the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Midson—namely, that the permanence of the employment in the Railway Department is a source of attraction to persons who are outside and who are constantly endeavouring to obtain employment in the department. I am constantly called upon to give recommendations to persons whom I know and who are desirous of entering the Railway Department, and I suppose every hon. member, at all events every member who is blessed with a railway through his constituency, has a similar experience.

Mr. KERR: Not on this side.

Mr. FOXTON: I do not know how it is with hon. members opposite, but I am very glad to hear that their constituents are in such a prosperous condition that they do not want a recommendation for employment in the Railway Department.

Mr. REID: Our recommendation would kill them.

Mr. FOXTON: I do not think so. A recommendation as to the trustworthiness and honesty of a person would have as much weight coming from members opposite as one coming from members on this side. I utterly deny that I would endeavour to use any political influence. I am perfectly prepared to give to any man who desires to enter the public service the same recommendation as I would give that man if he applied to me for a recommendation to enable him to get into any other service; I do not see that the fact of my being a member of Parliament should debar me from doing that, but further I would not go. Not long ago I happened to be on a farm which was worked by an elderly man and his four sons, who in order to pay their way worked, not eight hours a day, but from daylight until late at night. Their troubles have been considerable, but I am glad to say that they are now succeeding. When talking with the eldest son, a very intelligent young man, whom I have known for many years and think very highly of, without any invitation from me, he drew my attention to the difference between the position of himself and others of his family who worked such long hours and the position of the men employed on the railway, which was in sight. He said, "I wish to goodness we could make as good wages as the men employed on the railway." His opinion was

that they were overpaid; but I do not endorse that. I merely mention it to show that some struggling farmers think they would be better off if they were able to obtain the wages of labourers on the railways.

Mr. WILKINSON: What do they think of the higher salaries?

Mr. FOXTON: I do not know. Probably they think those salaries too high, but there is no means by which you can compare the remuneration given to labourers and that given to men who have had considerable sums expended upon their education. Necessarily and naturally the man who has had considerable sums expended upon his education stands upon a higher plane, for the simple reason that his services are worth more.

Mr. OGDEN: The limit is a reasonable subsistence.

Mr. FOXTON: I have not heard that any of the railway men are starving.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Many of them cannot pay their way.

Mr. FOXTON: I know some intemperate men who would never pay their way, even if they were paid three times what they now receive. The hon. member, Mr. Dunsford, stigmatised the present system on the railways as "sweating." I think the hon. member hardly realises what "sweating" means. So far as I know, the term had its origin in the East End of London, and what goes on there, but that is a very different thing from what obtains on our railways. The hon. member argued that the country in which the remuneration is the highest is the most successful, the most prosperous, the most intelligent, and in every way the best to live in. But that is only half true. If the hon. member's argument had anything in it, it simply means that you have only to pass a law compelling everybody, in every walk of life, to pay double the wage that is paid at present, and immediately you would have more prosperity. But that is absurd on the face of it. If that were done no wool would be exported, no corn or sugar would be grown, and no agricultural produce of any kind would be exported. The production of anything that is exported must be treated upon very different lines. It is not a mere question of raising wages within this particular community. You would have to compulsorily raise the rate of remuneration given to every worker in every part of the globe where the exported articles of that country came into competition with goods produced by foreign labour.

Mr. HARDACRE: Which is the more productive—low or high-paid labour?

Mr. FOXTON: There is no doubt that highly paid labour is the more productive, but hon. members must not allow themselves to be led away into accepting a fallacy. That proposition must be admitted, but it must be within certain limits, otherwise you are met by the *reductio ad absurdum* which I have just stated—that is, that by continually increasing wages you are correspondingly increasing the prosperity of a country. The proposition is only true within the limits of supply and demand, the laws of which are as unalterable as the law of gravity.

Mr. HARDACRE: Have we reached the limits of reasonable wages?

Mr. FOXTON: I certainly think we have for the time being, because wages outside are regulated by the law of supply and demand. In prosperous times unquestionably higher wages are paid; in less prosperous times men have to be content with a lower remuneration. Not only labourers have to do this, but persons in every walk of life. I know I have had to submit to it with everybody else.

Mr. KERR: I thought you always got 6s. 8d.

Mr. FOXTON: Unfortunately I do not. Often I do not get paid at all. I am going to support the motion, because the principle involved in it is a sound one. At the same time I say that we have committed our railways to non-political control, and the country looks to the managers of those railways to work them economically, and exactly in the same way as they would if they were their own private concern. As a matter of abstract principle, and being desirous that the Commissioner should, if he conscientiously believes it will be to the interests of the Railway Department or the railway employees, and of the country at large, act upon this resolution, I shall support it.

Mr. ANNEAR: From the first time I read this resolution I have considered it a fair proposition, and one which I intend to support. I do not suppose that the pay of the lengthsmen on our lines exceeds £100 a year, and seeing that those Government officers in receipt of £150 and upwards have had their former salaries restored, I do not see why these fettlers, who also suffered a reduction of 10 per cent., should not have their wages restored to the old amount. It is a very monotonous life. I should be very sorry to be a fettler on some of the lengths in the remote parts of the colony. There is another argument in favour of the motion. Every week we see by the papers that the railway receipts are increasing, and I think the colony can well afford to increase the wages of these men. The contention of a good many members—and it is my contention—has been that the direct receipts from our railways is not the basis upon which we should judge of their paying capacity. There are scores of indirect ways in which they pay the country. Without railways we could not conduct coal-mining, and the timber industry would have to cease, because without railways we could not bring log timber to the mills, or take away the sawn timber. All men have to live, and the revenue is raised through the Customs. I hope that the Government will support the motion, because it is a very just one. I do not see why the wages of the man in receipt of 6s. a day should not be restored, when the man with £3 a week is now getting his old salary. I feel sure that the passage of this motion will not only give satisfaction to the workers on the railways, but to the people of the colony, and holding that view, I shall support it.

Mr. HAMILTON: Two years ago, when the colony was suffering from financial embarrassment, the Government found it desirable to reduce the salaries and wages of their servants. Those reductions were not made because the Government employees were receiving too much, but because the Government could not afford to pay them any more at the time. Since then, on account of renewed prosperity, the salaries of Civil servants in receipt of over £150 have been restored to the old amount, and that being the case, I cannot see why those in receipt of less than £150 should not be treated exactly in the same manner. If the wages of those men had been reduced on the ground that they were receiving too much, that argument would not stand; but Sir T. McIlwraith, who was then Secretary for Railways, distinctly stated that the financial embarrassment of the colony was the only reason for the reduction, and he distinctly promised that he would again raise the wages of the men when prosperity again dawned upon Queensland. In 1893 the hon. gentleman said: "Hon. members seemed to assume that the reduction in the wages of the railway men was a permanent reduction. It was not meant as such by him." Further on he said: "There was no regrading, and the wages would be increased when circumstances permitted."

The circumstances of the colony permit an alteration in the salaries of the higher paid Civil servants, and therefore the time has arrived when the lower paid men should be treated in the same way. It has been said that if the men are not satisfied they can leave, but that is not a logical argument. We could say that if a clerk receiving £500 a year did not choose to accept a lower salary we could get men at half the price. No doubt we could, but it is not necessary for me to show how fallacious that argument is; it is self-evident. I have always supported high salaries and good wages. I have supported the salaries of men receiving £500 a year, because it would be false economy to reduce them. You cannot get the best men unless you pay them good salaries, and to be consistent, I must apply the same argument to men who are paid lower rates of wages. The hon. member who moved this resolution made one important omission, and had he not done so it might have stood a greater chance of success. He should also have proposed that the salaries of hon. members should be increased; that they should be treated in the same way as Civil servants—namely, that amount which has been deducted during the last few years should be restored. Under those conditions we should receive about £450 each, which would be very acceptable next April when we will have to meet the electors, and it might assist us to make them believe that we are the best men in the colony. I shall not move that amendment, because I do not want to delay the motion, which I intend to support.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. D. H. Dalrymple): I do not think it matters very much whether this motion goes to a division or not. It appears to be one of those matters which hon. members opposite have to take an interest in, but I must point out that although this Parliament has been in existence for nearly three years, no motion to this effect has been brought forward before. It has been decided by Parliament that the management of our railways shall be in the hands of a Commissioner whose business it is to arrange what the rates of remuneration of the men he employs shall be. If he does not do that, it will be impossible for him to calculate what his expenses will be, and at what rates he will be able to convey produce. As far as I can see, this resolution, if passed, will have no effect; the Commissioner can act upon it or not as he thinks best. It is not at all surprising that the senior member for Toowoomba should disclaim what he felt certain in his own mind would be attributed to him—namely, electioneering. If, at the end of a Parliament, you bring forward a motion, which you have every reason to believe will have no material effect, what kind of action is it? Electioneering of the most palpable kind, while the hon. member would make us believe that he brought it in simply as the best friend of these men—that "Codlin's your friend, not Short." When these men understand that no necessary consequences will arise from this motion, then the enthusiasm which has been experienced respecting it will to a large extent subside. The motion itself simply involves a small increase in the pay of the lengthsmen, and I have not the least objection to their receiving that addition, provided that circumstances will admit it. The hon. member for Cook quoted a passage from a speech by Sir T. McIlwraith, in which that gentleman promised that when prosperity returned that reduction should cease. What I understand from that is that the wages of lengthsmen should bear some proportion to those current amongst the community. It is not long ago since hon. members opposite viewed the position of the

colony as of a most distressing character, the hon. member for Burke especially, who has been called the "calamity howler." In mercy to him, I will not give his exact statement, but he believed in nothing which would tend to show that the colony was prosperous. But now he and his friends tell us it is so prosperous that this express or implied promise should be carried out. I believe the colony is on the turn, and I hope that wages will soon rise. Probably, if we obtain more capital, if men go to work instead of going on strike, and add to the wealth of the colony instead of diminishing it, the additional work will lead to more production, more demand for labour, and a consequent rise in wages. When there is the slightest indication of such a desirable state of things coming about, the lengthmen's wages will be increased. In these matters we should be guided by some principle. The wages of manual labourers in the Government service should compare very favourably with those current outside; but if we, in our generosity, make their wages considerably higher than those which are paid to men outside the service, then we shall be making a privileged class and nothing else. And we have no right to make large distinctions between the persons who are outside the Government service and those in it, because after all we can only obtain the money to pay wages to the Government employees by extracting it out of the pockets of those who are outside the Government service. That being the case, while we should treat our employees, whoever they may be, as liberally as an ordinary employer would do, and give them a fair and full measure of current wages, yet we should not place them in so favourable a position as to make the taxpayers outside this kind of sacred circle dissatisfied with their lot, and point to the fact that the people employed by Government are in a very much better position than those who bear the burden of the day outside. The senior member for Toowoomba pointed out, amongst other things, that the concession made to the employees of the Railway Department in regard to their carriage of goods was practically valueless, that it was only a benefit to the extent of 1d. per diem. I can scarcely credit that, because this particular concession was very much clamoured for, and I cannot believe the railway officials would make a considerable agitation over what really only amounted to 1d. per day. But take another statement of the hon. member. I quote it because it appears to me to entirely contradict his argument, and to bear out what I have reason to believe—that, in comparison with the wages paid outside, the railway employees are fairly remunerated. The hon. member said that men he knew had been in the service for twenty or twenty-five years, and were receiving to-day a "miserable pittance." He wanted to show how badly the railway employees were paid in comparison with those outside the service, but I ask any intelligent member to consider whether men who have been receiving a "miserable pittance" for the last twenty-five years, during which there have been some very good times, when labour was scarce and wages high, would not have done well to seek employment elsewhere? That they have not done so entirely does away with the force of the hon. member's argument. I also wish to refer to the fact that, with the exception of the hon. member for Kennedy, very little reference has been made to the statement of the Hon. the Minister for Railways. Certainly some figures were quoted by the junior member for Ipswich and some by the senior member for Toowoomba—who I may observe on this occasion seems to have followed the example set from time immemorial by his junior colleague,

of walking out of the House as soon as he has delivered himself of his address. The hon. member for Toowoomba quoted exclusively figures taken from the New South Wales pay-sheet showing that certain railway officials there obtained higher salaries than are commonly given in this colony. The statement made by the Minister for Railways, on, I imagine, good authority, and which was not refuted, showed that as compared with South Australia and Victoria the wages which are paid in Queensland compare very favourably. But the Minister for Railways also admitted that in some respects the wages paid in New South Wales were certainly higher than those paid here, and accounted for it by the fact that the New South Wales railways were more profitable, were paying 4 per cent., while in this colony they only return 2 per cent. It seems reasonable that when the colony is prosperous, it feels able to be liberal and pay more wages than in a time of adversity. In one case you can pay practically what you choose; in the other you have to consider your means of paying, and only pay that which you can afford. It has been stated to-night, and I take the liberty of repeating it, that if the House can dictate to the Commissioner what he shall pay to his employees, it is quite evident that that semblance of freedom from political control, if it be a semblance as some hon. members have said it is, would be entirely lost. The motion merely suggests to the Commissioner that when times improve, and he thinks he is able to do so, he might grant this increase. I have no objection to that; but that suggestion is not, I imagine, what the hon. member for Leichhardt intended to convey; and after all the result of this debate is only to suggest something which the Commissioner is not bound to carry out. The junior member for Townsville has referred to sweating, but it has been pointed out that to apply that term to an employment which is eagerly sought after is absurd. It is therefore an entire misuse of the word. It may be sweating to offer a man low wages, but the biggest sweater is the man who offers no wages at all. If you offer a man less wages than the market rates, he need not take them unless he likes, but the man who says, "I will not give you any wages at all," cannot afford to condemn the man who will go a shilling or two below the market rates. When, therefore, hon. members talk about sweating, I ask them to reflect and bear this in mind—that the worst sweater is the man who will offer the workman nothing.

MR. DUNSFORD: Who does that? Do you insinuate that I do it?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I do not know whether the hon. member is an employer of labour or not. If he is not, he offers the workman nothing. If the current rate of wages is £3 a week, it is far better for a man who is out of employment to be offered £2 a week, if he has nothing to fall back upon, or £1 or 10s. a week, than to be offered nothing. So I say a man who will give nobody work when he wants it, who will merely attack and denounce other people who are getting higher wages, is worse than the sweater, so far as it affects the condition of the working class. The sweater is a man who will give a small price, but the worst sweater is the man who will give you nothing. If I take a horse to market for which I want £10, and I cannot get even £5 or £1, and I do not like the idea of taking it back 100 miles, the man who ultimately offers me 2s. 6d. for it is a better friend than the man who offered me nothing. Of course, the man who will give me the highest price will suit me best. If I am dealing with a stranger all I am entitled to ask from him is justice. If I am dealing with my family, or my friends, or my neighbours, I

step into a different region—the region of philanthropy. If a stranger wants to make a deal with me, he does what most hon. members do when they are dealing for corn or mining shares or anything else. They never ask how much it cost the farmer to raise his corn. It may have cost him 4s. a bushel; but if the market rate is 1s. 6d. they would not offer him 4s., although all his labour is buried in that corn. In buying mining shares a man does not ask how many persons have lost money over them; he offers the market price for the time being. In many respects my opinions are not those which are considered orthodox in labour circles, though I believe them to be true, and that they will tend to the welfare of the working class which comprises nine-tenths of the people of Queensland. So far as complaints have been made that the Government employees working on the railways and elsewhere have not been treated fairly, I hold that if it can be shown that their lot is preferable to that of the ordinary wage-earner, it cannot reasonably be said that they are treated unjustly; and so far as their pay is concerned, I hope that as soon as the current rate of wages is raised outside, and as soon as the 92,644 men whom the hon. member for Burke tells us are unemployed have somewhat diminished in number, we may gradually ameliorate or better the lot of the railway employees. I shall not oppose this resolution. There is nothing to oppose. If we carry it it will not do any good except as a sort of nice expression of our sympathy. It will achieve the object of the hon. member for Leichhardt, and when he has convinced the lengthsmen that he is their friend in the House, he will have got all he wants, and they will have got just nothing.

Mr. MURRAY: This is a question in which I take a considerable interest. I should be well pleased indeed if I could see every man in the colony earning a living wage—a wage sufficient to keep him in a reasonable degree of comfort. That should be the end and aim of every member of the House, and more especially of the Government. But the object is one very difficult to attain. I believe that the bulk of our working men do not require to be spoon-fed in this way at all. Certainly wages are not what they were a few years ago, but that is a condition of things which prevails all over the world; but I maintain that, bad as this state of affairs may be among us, in no part of the British dominions are the people enjoying so much general comfort and prosperity as the people of Queensland, and I trust it will be long maintained. In speaking on this question, I am not speaking in the interest of the working man or of the Government, but in the interest of the taxpayers generally. Any increase of this description will have to be paid for by the taxpayers, and I believe that many of the railway employees, especially the lengthsmen, are enjoying a far greater degree of prosperity, comfort, and ease than a great number of our farmers and those engaged in carrying on our industries. For a long time I was a farmer, and have been an employer of labour almost since I was a boy, and I have often found it very hard work to get the wherewithal to pay the labour, and my own share has been what the labour produced. A fall in the market price of products always affects wages, and it would be as reasonable for the House to attempt to fix a standard price for produce as a standard price for labour. It is one of those things we will never be able to accomplish—a standard price for produce—because it will always depend upon supply and demand. Those engaged in the farming industry can only afford to pay for labour out of what the labour produces; the Government, however, have the taxpayers of the colony to

fall back upon, so that it is an easy matter to pay for labour in their case. We have seventeen members in this House who represent labour, but I do not know that the condition of the labourer has been much improved since those gentlemen came here; in fact, I think it has gone back. A few of those hon. members are and have been employers of labour, and I hold that until they become actual employers they will never realise what it is to pay a living wage when the product of labour is not sufficient to enable them to do so. When the amount obtained is not sufficient to pay what we would like, we have to take what we can get. There is no escape from that. My greatest objection to this is that it is pandering to the Civil Service vote. There was a good illustration of that in New South Wales, when Mr. Copeland came forward for election. He had been Minister for Works and Railways in a previous Government, and reminded the electors that he had been the means of getting the men in the Government workshops 10s. a day as a standard wage—which increased the cost of the Railway Department in that colony by £34,000 per annum. Now he comes forward with the same popular cry, and of course he secures the vote. So it is in all cases where there is a large Civil Service vote. The man who comes forward with a liberal programme secures the votes; but the man who comes forward in the interests of the general taxpayer to protect their interests against this extravagance, has no show at all. The hon. member for Logan the other night assured us that many of his constituents were reduced to almost beggary, that many of them had not eaten butcher's meat for twelve months, and he knew for a positive fact that many of them had nothing to eat but fried pumpkins. Why do not some hon. gentlemen rise in this House and ask that this sort of thing shall be remedied? The men to whom the hon. member alluded were paddling their own canoe, working for themselves, employing labour on their own account, but they have no one here to protect their interests or to denounce their poverty. I hold that it would be as reasonable on my part to bring a motion before this House to the effect that, if their business does not produce them a living wage, whatever deficiency there is between the value of the product and the returns should be made up by this House. The one is on a par with the other. Neither cheap money nor cheap land nor anything else will do a certain class any good. I am certain that the man who has any self-respect, or is endowed with any degree of industry or economy, will fight his way without any assistance from this House. Many of our most prosperous colonists to-day have been men who started in a more humble condition than many of the lengthsmen on our lines. One of the wealthiest men in Queensland told me that he started life on £20 a year, and had to cook his own food. The same opportunities exist to-day for the working man. If his employer is not giving the terms he thinks he ought to have, the world is wide—let him go and do for himself. One of the wealthiest and most prominent men in Australia told me last night that he never was in a school in his life; his parents could not afford to keep him at home; that when he was eight years old he was sent out to service at 1s. 6d. a week. He is worth millions to-day. That only shows that good men require none of these things—they will fight their way under any circumstances. Of course, this motion will be carried, because it is popular; but there are other people to consider besides railway employees and other Government servants. As a class, they are the best off, take them from top to bottom, in any

of the colonies. I hope that members will have the courage of their convictions when contesting the elections next year. I hope the day will never come when Queensland is dominated by the Civil Service vote. That is what has caused the trouble in Victoria, which is in such a position in consequence of this vote that she cannot rid herself of it.

Mr. TURLEY: Do you think the Civil servants should be disfranchised?

Mr. MURRAY: I do. I do not want to speak under cover of this question. If ever an opportunity offers in this House, I will show what I think on the subject. If the Electoral Reform Bill of the hon. member for Burke had got into committee, it was my intention to have moved an amendment to disfranchise the Civil servants.

The SPEAKER: I will ask the hon. member not to go into that question now, but to confine his remarks to the motion before the House.

Mr. MURRAY: Perhaps I have drifted away from the question, but it has been in reply to interjections, and I may be excused for a little transgression. I have a great interest in the question before the House, as many of my constituents have not the comfortable easy living that many of these railway employees have, and it is in their interest I am speaking.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. Tozer): I have listened patiently to most of this debate, and towards the end of it I desire to say that the passing of this bare resolution, following upon the discussion which has taken place this week on the Railway Estimates, will have no practical effect whatever. It would have if it was endorsed by a majority of this House, but any resolution which is come to on this academical day, Friday, is no use, when we have only about a fourth of the members of the House present—unless it has the moral support of the House and the country. The Government will take the notice of it that members of the House have taken of it by their absence. The thing is without interest.

Mr. HARDACRE: It is not without interest to the men themselves, I can tell you.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am going to explain that. I am going to deal with the matter plainly, and I shall leave no doubt in the minds of hon. members as to what my opinion is on the subject. The hon. member has framed this motion in a general way, but not one member has spoken on the subject, except in a special way, as affecting the railway employees.

Mr. KERR: Yes; the hon. members for Charters Towers and Maranoa. You could not have been in the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Well the small observation made in regard to the Government steamers has little foundation in fact, and in my department, instead of a decrease, there has been an increase. £472,000 was voted for the Colonial Secretary's Department, and there is not a single farthing of decrease from any person in that department that I am aware of.

Mr. WILKINSON: Yes, and I can give the name.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Tell me one. I challenge the hon. member to do so; unless it is a highly-paid Civil servant.

Mr. WILKINSON: No, a wages man on a dredge.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have nothing to do with the dredges. I say that £472,000 was voted by the House, and most of that is in connection with the Home Secretary's Department and for wages. There was not a farthing reduction, and, on the contrary, this year I felt that, in accordance with the wages ruling in other places, I should recommend an

increase in one department at all events; in the Government Printing Office I did recommend an increase which amounts to a considerable sum in the aggregate. This resolution deals with Government employees in receipt of wages mostly under £150 a year, and as I have heard of no reductions in the other departments, I will deal with it as applying to what are stated to have been reductions in the railway service.

Mr. TURLEY: Were not reductions of 30s. a month from the firemen on the "Lucinda" made in your department?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No.

Mr. TURLEY: I say yes. Turn up the "Votes and Proceedings" for 1892-3, and you will see that they were reduced from £8 10s. to £7.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; they were put off altogether.

Mr. TURLEY: Well, on the "Otter"?

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity of replying to the Colonial Secretary.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, the hon. member has got a point, but he will be mown down very quickly by my reply. There was a reduction of the firemen, but if my memory serves me, an allowance was made of 2s., which they did not get before. They get an increase of salary in another form, and if hon. members will look at the aggregate vote they will find that it is equal to, if not greater than it was before. That affects only two persons in the service, but this deals with a very much larger question.

Mr. TURLEY: You said there was not one case.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: And I say so now, and the men referred to so far from grumbling are abundantly satisfied with the provision made for them. The hon. member for Leichhardt says in his resolution that the 10 per cent. reduction on salaries of over £150 has been removed, but he must remember that the 10 per cent. was a temporary reduction during the time of the retrenchment.

Mr. HARDACRE: The same as the others.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member should know that the reductions on the higher paid officers in the other departments nearly equalled the whole of the reductions in the Railway Department, and that when I was moving my Estimates I said that I was regrading the officers. In the petty sessions department there was a reduction of about £10,000; and apart from the 10 per cent. I reduced them also in their emoluments, and not a farthing of that has got back. The reason for that reduction was that on going through the item we found that it was in excess of what the country could pay. The hon. member starts with wrong premises. He omits in his motion any reference to the large reductions which were made quite outside the 10 per cent., which was merely temporary. If the hon. member means by this resolution to imply that the wages men are the only losers, he makes a great mistake. If he looks through the Estimates he will find that the principal savings were outside the 10 per cent. reduction, that they were affected by the reductions in the compound emoluments that were previously received by various officers. At one time many officers used to be paid by two, three, and even four departments, but that system was discontinued; they got one fixed salary, and all the rest of their emoluments were wiped out, so that they suffered considerable reductions in their salaries. The hon. member hardly states the facts correctly in his resolution. The Government scheme of retrenchment embraced not only what the Treasurer brought in, but many persons whose services were dispensed with, and many classified officers whose salaries were reduced, and on the whole

the classified officers got a bigger knock in the aggregate than the railway men. Hon. members have assumed that these railway men are the poorest paid men in the service, and have compared them with the classified service, as if that service was one of those encouraging things for persons to go into. But let them take the Blue Book, and they will find that out of 1,546 names it contains only 472 who are the names of persons who have emerged out of the 5th class, which is somewhere about the grade of the men in the railway service. There are over 1,000 persons in the classified and unclassified Civil Service who are in receipt of emoluments which, in the aggregate, are not more than those paid to the railway men.

Mr. WILKINSON: How much are they?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Under £200 a year. The hon. member can look for himself, and he will see that only 472 men are getting over that amount.

Mr. WILKINSON: The majority of the railway men get under £100 a year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The great majority of the railway men, taking everything into consideration, get as much as a man who receives £200 a year, and has to remain in his office. In all branches of life, and in all services there are grades. In saying that, I do not say that they are inferior grades in life. But there are different forms of occupation, and I do not think you can compare the occupation of a man on the railway, and the circumstances connected with it, with the occupation of a Civil servant. I do not say it is inferior, because there is no more dignified form of labour than manual labour. I know that many a time after I have gone home at the close of a hard day's work, and after working for a small pittance, I have wished that I had turned my hand to some manual labour and got a comfortable night's rest after hard physical work, instead of a broken night's rest after hard mental work, in which the mind is always racked. The man who chooses manual labour knows that it has its compensations for the low amount of salary it commands. The men who follow the avocation of lengthsmen are always in the open air, and they have a certainty of employment. At the end of the year they are as well off pecuniarily, and certainly have had as much real enjoyment of life, as Civil servants generally. You cannot say that the man in the city who receives under £200 a year, and has to work all day in an office, is in a better position than a railway man who gets £150 a year with all the privileges he enjoys. A clerk in the city, with a salary of under £200 a year, has to live near his office and pay a rent which a railway man has not to pay, yet the argument of hon. members was that a man in the classified divisions of the Civil Service, who has to perform mental work, should be put on the same footing as far as actual salary is concerned as the men in the railway service. If the railway service men were to be paid an amount equal to that received by Civil servants, then the necessary corollary would be that Civil servants, instead of being in a position to give employment to other people and pay them wages, would have to do all their own work.

Mr. WILKINSON: We do not intend to do that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: But that is the position into which hon. members are driven by their argument. It is a general rule applicable to all the Government departments that for the permanency which is assured, and the certainty of getting his cheque regularly, no matter what the circumstances of the colony may be, there should be a small difference between the amount paid to employees and

that paid outside, where there is risk and uncertainty of employment. Hon. members may think that by their advocacy of the railway employees they are securing for themselves a lot of future support; but I believe that if the railway men sit down in their homes and consider their position in comparison with the position of labour outside, they will come to the conclusion, taking into account the advantages they possess in the Railway Department, and the certainty of employment, that they are better off than men working outside.

Mr. WILKINSON: There are forty men working in the Roma street station yard who only get 5s. a day, and they have to pay for board and lodging.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have no knowledge of the wages paid beyond the statement of the Secretary for Railways, but I do not believe in men getting less than the current rate of wages, and if any men are receiving less than the current rate, it should be the duty of the Government to set it right; but I know that in the Wide Bay district a large number of men who have to toil far harder than any lengthsmen—who are working from early morning until nightfall, with interest to meet on overdrafts and mortgages on their little properties, trying to send a few pounds of butter and other farm produce to market—have complained to me that they are subjected to unfair competition by these very lengthsmen.

Mr. REID: No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Before very long the men of the Wide Bay district will have an opportunity of showing whether I am stating what they have written to me about frequently. They complain that the railway employees are preying upon their vitals, although they have to assist to pay those men's wages. They are beaten down by circumstances. They are poor, and it is no discredit to them, for they have worked hard without success, owing to droughts following upon floods, and now they have to meet the unfair competition of the railway men. First they are taxed to find the wages of these men, and then the railway men are given facilities for getting their produce to market which they do not enjoy. I have received numerous complaints from people in other avocations and in other districts concerning the competition of the railway employees. A deputation waited upon me recently from the North composed of men who made their living by securing live birds for the market. It is a trade involving a large amount of time and money, and the profits they once made were fair, but they complained to me that the railway men undersell them owing to the facilities which they possess. When hon. members come here and advocate the claims of railway employees, they should remember that for every £1 these men get, somebody else has to get that much less. I do not contend that any man should get one farthing less than the current rate of wages, but this is the basis of my argument: that in the times when loan money was abundant in the country, and when majorities in this House were so small that any day they might be turned into minorities, contractors got abnormal prices for building railways, and an artificial standard of wages was fixed. It was abnormal.

Mr. REID: How was it fixed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It was fixed by politicians, because those wages were paid, not out of the natural resources of the colony, but out of loan moneys, on which we are now paying interest; and as the contract prices for railways were high, the contractors were able out of their immense profits to pay big wages. I do not say that the Government fixed their rate

of wages higher than the contractors, but still the condition was abnormal. Here is what was said by Sir T. McIlwraith in 1893 in regard to the question—

"The general result was that the daily wages of the men on the lines had been retrenched to the amount of $\frac{7}{8}$ per cent. It was his duty, as Secretary for railways, to see that the price paid for labour on the railways was reduced somewhat in proportion to what was paid for labour elsewhere.

"Mr. FOGARTY: Where?"

"THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In the colony of Queensland, and in similar industries. It was his duty to reduce, when he saw that contract work was being done at something like 15, 20, or 25 per cent. less than before. It was indisputable that all salaries on the railways were paid by the people, and, if their wages had been reduced, they would look to him to reduce the railway wages accordingly. He had done that with a very lenient hand. No class of men in the colony employed as labourers had been reduced so little as the railway men."

Then he went on to state that he had tried to counterbalance the reduction of wages by giving advantages to the men in respect of accommodation, so that they might live as cheaply as possible. The hon. gentleman stated that as a fact, and it did not seem to be controverted then. If we take that as a standard of the state of affairs of the colony, we will know what we have to deal with. I do not think that any hon. member will deny that the wages received now will buy more than the amounts previously received.

Mr. DRAKE: Why should not their condition be improved?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am only contending that their condition should not be improved at the expense of those whose conditions have retrograded. I would like to see their condition improved if the country could afford it; but I think the concessions made when that $\frac{7}{8}$ per cent. was deducted were very great.

Mr. WILKINSON: You know the wages were fixed long before the boom time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know; all I do know is that when I compared our rate of wages with that paid in the other colonies I found it in excess of that paid in New South Wales. The rates of wages paid in other colonies ought not to form any basis to work upon here. I can confirm the statement that when Mr. Copeland wanted to get in for a railway constituency in New South Wales he increased the wages of the railway men. That made a much greater difference in the total than he expected; but I am not at one with the hon. member who stated that that was the cause of his getting in, for he told me that the men he fought for put him out. I quote this to show that increases made in the other colonies are not made upon lines which are sound for us to follow. I hope that increase will never be advocated here upon political considerations. There is a liability to that when the State manages such large institutions as the railways, or the Post Office, or the Education Department. Hon. members will always advocate the interests of the officers in those departments, and I am sorry to say the same thing is starting in connection with the Mines Department, a lot of hon. members opposite representing miners. When the State undertakes the management of such departments, all considerations of a political character must be severed from that management, and, if they are to be of a permanent character, they must be managed on the ordinary lines which apply to all business concerns. I do not wish it to be inferred that I do not think the railways ought not to be in the hands of the State, but if they are to remain so, the management must be in the hands of those who, so far as wages are concerned, are removed from political control, and will work them upon lines

of economy as if they were the owners of them themselves. If hon. members seek to raise these wages, the first thing they must do is to form a proper standard to work from. When I first went to my department I found that some person before me had fixed the salaries of, say, clerks of petty sessions at as much as £600 or even higher still. I did not make that the standpoint, but determined to start afresh, and put these men at what I considered a fair sum, remembering their positions, length of service, and the salaries paid outside. The object of the late Premier in reducing these wages was to assimilate the rate paid in the Government service to that paid outside, and hon. members will now have to show that wages outside have increased, and are above that now paid to these railway employees.

Mr. BROWNE: Will not that argument apply to the higher paid servants?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, if they receive higher wages than they would receive outside. There is not the shadow of a doubt that if the Government pay higher wages than are paid outside they are paying too much. The Civil servants have a permanency, and get their money every month regularly, and their salaries should be if anything less than those paid to men for doing similar work outside. Take the status of a police magistrate, who has to exercise a judicial office. I found that that position required a man who had experience and brains, and it struck me that the general salary then paid of £450 a year was a fair standard for the work required. Some by compound payments were getting £500, and £600, and £700 a year, but down they came to £450, because I considered that if those same men had to do that work in a mercantile office, that sum would probably represent what they would be paid. Some may not have been worth that, but hon. members must know that it is impossible for a Minister to get rid all at once of men who have been in the service for fifteen or twenty years. I would deal with the whole service as I would deal with the railway men. If it could be shown to me that the railway men were getting less than those in similar positions outside, then certainly I would raise their wages; but how is it that the department is inundated with applications? See the number of young men at the police office every Wednesday morning seeking employment, showing conclusively that those men think the Government service a better avenue for employment than any other service. In the whole course of my experience I have only tried to get one man into the railway service; that was some years ago, and he was told he would have to wait his turn; he has not yet been employed. That shows two things—first, that that man's turn has not yet come, and secondly, that a Minister has no power to force an employee on the Commissioner. I have endeavoured now to remove what I consider the cobwebs surrounding this question, and I want the men in this service to think for themselves. I know there are men who have a natural discontent of their position. There may be latent discontent in the railway service, and if that exists, and it is not cleared up and the true state of affairs put before those men, the latent discontent will break out into open discontent. There are only too many people ready to fan the ashes of discontent. There are only too many orators of the kind who hold meetings at street corners and deliver their views in windy speeches. I have attended those meetings at street corners and have heard the kind of arguments used. I know what will happen; the salary of Mr. Mathieson will be taken as a standard, and on one side will be put his salary and on the other what is called the "miserable pittance" of, say, £150 a year paid to some of the men,

and then the bellows will blow as hard as they can, and these men will be deluded into the belief that they are being very badly treated. The professional agitator's business is to make comparisons and to set class against class, and I am reminded of the speech of one of them at Clermont, when he informed his audience that if they had not a cause of discontent they ought to have one. I want these railway men to look at both sides of the question; I want them to think and to know. In all branches of life there are grades. In all phases of society there must be someone whom the hon. member for Toowong is so fond of referring to as "the boss." Even the Labour party has a leader. In the Government service there are men receiving very high emoluments, in some cases higher than perhaps I care for, but they are receiving what has been fixed as the fair wage for their work outside. I hope those emoluments are given with the idea that there are others below them who, by industry and ability, may hope to work up to their positions. That is so in all departments under my charge. No matter who he may be, I have always given the best men the best positions, if they have proved by their industry and good character that they are worthy of them.

MR. WILKINSON: You import some.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: There may be a necessity sometimes for even that. At times distant fields have appeared green, and past Governments have imported men occasionally whom I would not care to import, but so far as this Government is concerned their policy is to keep the appointments within the colony. I believe we have in this colony as suitable men for the positions we wish to fill as can be obtained in any part of the world, and so far as my vote is concerned it has always been given for the employment of those we have with us. Therefore I say when we come to this question of comparison there is a hope, and that hope stimulates those who are at the bottom of the ladder, that they will by industry and good conduct some day attain the higher and more lucrative positions. I hope therefore that when these men are considering their positions they will compare them with those of the people employed outside the Government service. The question which they will be called upon to consider is not whether they are getting less than others in the service receive, but whether by comparison with those in other branches of employment they are as well or better off. They must look round them and see the conditions of the colony; they must consider that the Government have to face a large interest bill; they must bear in mind the reverses which the colony in company with individuals has suffered, and they must endeavour to come to a fair conclusion on the facts placed before them. Hon. members opposite are always telling us that all taxation comes from the working men; the hon. member for Burke tells us of 100,000 unemployed persons in the colony, men who can get no wages at all. Those men have to eat and drink and pay taxes. Those men must be considered, and also the vast numbers of partly employed who the hon. member says are struggling and only just obtaining enough to live upon; and I say, then, if these things are taken into consideration and fairly weighed in the balance, the men at present in the Government service will not be able to come to the conclusion, by comparing their wages with that earned outside, that they are being unfairly dealt with in being paid the wages they are now receiving.

MR. DRAKE: I really was fearing that the Colonial Secretary intended to prevent any member on his side from making a speech. He seemed to be inclined to take up the whole of the time himself. But the hon. gentleman's speeches are always interesting. I shall vote for this

resolution. I believe that the welfare of any country is to be measured by the condition of the vast mass of the people. Labour forms the basis upon which the whole superstructure is raised. This, of course, deals only with a special class of the community in the Civil Service, but the same principle applies to them. If we look after the lowest class of our Civil servants, and see that their condition is a prosperous one, we may be perfectly sure that the more highly paid ones will be sufficiently well looked after. I have not been in favour of cutting down the salaries of any of the Civil servants, because I believe in everybody being well paid, and I disagree with the Colonial Secretary and some other speakers with regard to the position the State should take up as an employer. I believe the State should pay its employees at a rather higher rate than any private person. It should never under any circumstances pay less, and if it should err at all, it should err on the right side and pay a little in excess. The State should command the very best service, and it can only ensure that by paying a rate that is a little higher than is paid by any private employer. With regard to the point the Colonial Secretary appeared to be endeavouring to make, that this motion was contrary to the interests of the poorer classes of the community, I would remind him that those people have never been the ones to seek to cut down the wages of the working men. No objection to the amount of wages paid, and no attempt to cut those wages down, has ever come from that class. You cannot point to any member of the House who, in attempting to cut down the wages of men, can truthfully say he is carrying out the wishes of the majority of his constituents. I was rather struck with one portion of the speech of the Colonial Secretary in which he described in glowing terms the happy life of the working man; and the hon. gentleman regretted that his lot in life had not been cast amongst the labouring men. That puts me in mind of an anecdote I once heard. The scene was in America. One of the parties was a runaway slave who had escaped over the boundary line into one of the free States. He was met there by the judge, who said to the slave, "Why are you running away? Was your master cruel to you?" "No," was the reply. "Did you get enough to eat?" "Yes," said the slave. "Were you well clothed?" "Yes, I was well clothed," came the response. "Then," said the judge, "you are a very foolish man to have left a comfortable home where you had good clothes and plenty to eat." The slave said, "Well, judge, that may be; but the situation I have left is still vacant." The point I want to impress upon the Colonial Secretary is this, that though the working man is not able to take the place of Colonial Secretary, because he has not the natural and acquired abilities, the hon. gentleman has all the qualities, physical and mental, to take the place of a labouring man; and he has no right to entertain any envious feelings towards the man who works for 5s. a day.

MR. REID: In 1893, when Sir T. McIlwraith was Secretary for Railways, I put the question to him in Committee of Supply whether the reduction in the railway men's wages was going to be permanent, and the hon. gentleman distinctly replied that the reduction was not meant by him to be permanent; that it had been made in the interests of the colony, and that as traffic increased wages should be increased too. We have heard lately, on the authority of the Secretary for Railways, that it is almost an impossibility for the railway authorities to compete with the traffic they have got at the end of the main lines to bring down. The men are working almost night and day to bring the increased traffic to its destination.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is only for a few weeks.

Mr. REID: The railway returns show that the increase has been going on for the last nine months. The last quarter was better than the previous quarter, and the traffic this quarter, up to the present is even more than it was in the last, and to all appearance it will continue to increase. According to the Treasurer and others the colony has entered upon a period of prosperity, and the Secretary for Railways stated the other day that the Government, having a surplus of so much, had made a present to the farmers of £50,000. As that is at the expense of the wages man, I think they have been a little too generous. The promise of Sir T. McIlwraith ought to have been carried out, and enough of the surplus should have been devoted to restoring to the men their former wages. But the full benefit of the surplus has been given to the producing class. The Colonial Secretary said that according to the promise of the Secretary for Railways the railway men only suffered a reduction of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., but the fact is that they were reduced from $7\frac{1}{2}$ up to 20 per cent.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Half the wages men were not reduced at all. Look at page 1043 of *Hansard*.

Mr. REID: Anyone who knows the railway service knows very well that very few of them were not touched; but I believe the drivers, because they and the Commissioners were good friends at the time, got certain concessions which the others did not get. At that time the other grades of the service were being driven out of their organisations by the Commissioners, and the drivers were considered faithful servants. I am not saying anything against the drivers; I am only saying why they got concessions.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Sir Thomas McIlwraith says, on page 1043, that 2,000 of them were not touched.

Mr. REID: I do not deny that it is in *Hansard*, but I deny the statement. I do not know how that number is made up, so I will let it alone. The Colonial Secretary said that when he was a young man, the mental strain he experienced was so great that he could not find sleep when he got home, and he longed for the honest sleep that comes from honest work. When I look at the Colonial Secretary in his good ripe old age, and see the good condition he is in; when I look at his healthy face, and notice the amount of energy he has even in his old age, I ask what becomes of the honest wage-earners of his own age in the Railway Department? The majority of them get the sack. The hon. gentleman, in answer to an interjection by the hon. member for Burke, said there were many old fossils in the Civil Service who had been in it fifteen or twenty years, and could not be removed. Can he point to one wages man in the Railway Department—except a cripple in charge of a gate or something of that kind—that has been kept on after arriving at a certain age—I think it is sixty years? I admit that in the Railway Department it is impossible to keep old men on because of the risk to life; but in admitting that, I say that the man who works in the department until he is sixty, and is pretty sure of getting the sack at that age, ought to get some compensation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Do you argue in favour of pensions?

Mr. REID: I am not arguing in favour of pensions, but I think some compensation should be given them in the hope of decent wages. The Colonial Secretary wasted a good deal of time in trying to prove that the 10 per cent. had not been restored to the Civil servants. No member

on this side ever believed that the rearrangement of offices was a reduction, but we know very well that the 10 per cent. reduction which took place in 1893 has been restored to the Civil servants. At that time the majority of the Civil servants and the wages men were willing to suffer the reductions, because they could see the state the colony was in, and now the Government have restored the 10 per cent. to the Civil servants because they thought it was the right thing to do. On the wages referred to in this motion there is no surplus for extras, as they amount to a living wage only.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They are very happy with it, and they get just as much at the end of the year.

Mr. REID: That has nothing to do with it. They may be happy with a living wage, but that is no reason why they should not get more, and whether they have less or more at the end of the year has nothing to do with it, because they are rendering services to the State for which they should be paid; and the motion before the House is only to restore to them what was taken from them. Every argument used for restoring the 10 per cent. can be used for the wages men. The stationmasters are reckoned as Civil servants, and while no one finds fault with them getting their rises, what is good for them is good for the wages men. They both render to the State the same service as they used to do. The hon. gentleman told us that politicians had fixed the wages in the boom times, but they had no more control over the wages than the hon. gentleman has now.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did not say outside, but in the service.

Mr. REID: I deny it still more as applied to the service, because during all the boom times the wages men in the service, and especially the lengthsmen, were getting none of the boom wages, but lower wages than were paid to men of the same class outside, at a time when all the necessities of life were one-third dearer than they are now. The Colonial Secretary asks: What about the purchasing power of wages? But even granting that it is a third more now than it was then, is it not the same for the Civil servants? Is it not better for the Civil servants, most of whom live in towns where rents have come down greatly, than it is for the lengthsmen who live outside, where the purchasing power of wages has not increased nearly so much? The hon. gentleman told us that wages were affected in the service by loan money. I would not deny that, because labour was scarce through men leaving the Government service to work elsewhere. A great deal has been stated about the political control of the railways. There is no member of this House more opposed than I am to politicians having any influence on our railways. I look upon our great railway institution as one of the best investments the people of Queensland have committed themselves to, and though my experience in this House has been short, so far as it goes I would give the Commissioner power to strike any politician who tried to bring influence to bear upon him in his office. On the face of it, it may be said that this motion is an attempt to interfere with the working of the railways, but I hold that the representatives of the people should have the supreme control of the railways. But where the railways have been managed by bitter politicians, as they were by the last Government—the then Minister for Railways was one of the greatest opponents of working men the colony ever had—I say that the men in the Railway Department then were prevented from forming organisations, and there was a system of terror brought about—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is entirely transgressing and wandering away from the subject. What he is now discussing has nothing whatever to do with this question.

Mr. REID: I am prepared to bow to your ruling, but I think this is at the very bottom of it.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is discussing the action of a previous Minister for Railways. What has that to do with the discussion before the House? Nothing whatever.

Mr. REID: I was not discussing the policy of a previous Minister for Railways. I was simply referring to the late Government, and if you would allow me to go on with my argument I would prove that this influence is one of the greatest influences in affecting wages.

Mr. McMASTER: You were talking about unions.

Mr. REID: No; I said he prevented men from forming organisations—

The SPEAKER: Again I must interrupt the hon. member. That has nothing whatever to do with the question before the House, and I will ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the question, which is the increase of wages to all those receiving under £150 a year.

Mr. REID: I am very well aware that that is the motion before the House, but in discussing it the Colonial Secretary and other hon. members wandered very widely from it in giving illustrations. I was going to do the same thing to show that the control of the railways by politicians on either side of the House would injure the railways, which belonged to the people of the colony. I say that if the men were allowed to form organisations they could get their grievances—

The SPEAKER: I cannot allow the hon. member to go on. That is an entirely different subject, and I cannot allow him to proceed further with that line of argument.

Mr. REID: I shall bow to your ruling, but I am sorry that I have to, because I could prove that this political influence has a great deal to do with the question of wages.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: On a lorry.

Mr. REID: Yes; I would do it on a lorry, and I believe I would do ten times more good on a lorry than in this House. When I was on a lorry the Colonial Secretary and his colleagues said that, and I can inform the hon. gentleman that it was the lorry that brought seventeen Labour members into this House. The hon. gentleman talked about the demand there was to get into the public service, and instanced particularly the applications for admission into the police force, with the view of showing that the condition of men in the Government service was not so bad as we tried to make out. But what that has got to do with the wages paid to the employees I cannot understand. It is our necessities as individuals that compel us to go to work whether we like it or not, and there is not that glory in honest labour that the Colonial Secretary referred to. At any rate he leaves all the glory of labour to other people. I have read a good deal in books and heard a good deal from lorries about the dignity that is attached to labour, but I say it is all so much twaddle. But the honest labour, whether it is glorious or not, has nothing to do with the question of men getting proper compensation for services rendered. Men are compelled by their necessities to offer their services to the one who will give them the best engagement, and it is because the Government service is more permanent than that of outside employers, and because their works are more extended and give greater scope to men, that they seek employment in the public service. But that ought not to be any criterion for fixing wages or keeping these men down at a certain

wage. That is the policy of the Colonial Secretary, but the policy of the hon. member for Enoggera is a better one—if you give good wages you will get the best men. The Government have restored the salaries of Civil servants, and no argument has been brought forward to show that the amounts deducted from the wages men in 1893 should not also be restored.

Mr. WATSON: I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. HAMILTON: I decidedly object to any adjournment. On Government days we sit till 11 o'clock, and later if we are requested to do so, and as we have but one day a week for private business, there is a stronger reason why we should take the full benefit of it. If we do not, the result will be that private members will want two or three days a week. Last Friday we were treated in exactly the same way, and I protest against it. It is simply a way of burking private members' business. Everybody has spoken on this subject, and let us now take a division and go on with some other business.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member is in error in his reference to last Friday. I stated then, as I have stated on previous occasions, that I was in the hands of the House, and it was by arrangement with the hon. member for Burke that the debate on the measure he introduced was adjourned, and a division taken on a subsequent evening. A division on the motion before the House will be valueless unless it is taken in a full House. If the reasons the hon. member for Burke gave last Friday for the adjournment of the division on his measure were good then, they are good now. The hon. member stated that, on a matter of that importance, it was desirable to take a division in a full House, and I presume that this is of equal importance.

Mr. GLASSEY: No, no!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think in the interests of all parties there should be a full House when a division is taken. At any rate, the proposal now is to adjourn the debate, not to adjourn the House. We may go on with other business. If hon. members do not like that, it makes no difference to me; but if the mover of the motion wants it to have any effect upon the Government and upon the Commissioner, the proper course for him to adopt is to take a division in a full House.

Mr. REID: What would be the use of that? You said that you would not carry it out.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I say that the Government would not feel bound to respect the opinions of a small minority who carried a division on a Friday night, but the opinion of a division in a full House would be a very different thing. Of course Friday is private members' night, but it is generally understood that on that night we should not sit later than 10 o'clock.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Let us take a division now.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You can take the division now so far as I am concerned. If the hon. gentleman is under the impression that a division taken to-night will have any effect, he is welcome to take it, but if he wishes it to have any effect he will accede to the suggestion made last Friday by the leader of the Labour party, and get an authoritative opinion from a full House.

Mr. GLASSEY: There is a vast difference between this minor question and the great constitutional question which we were discussing last Friday. Here is an attempt made to shirk a division when the Government are likely to go down. I believe that is the opinion on the other side. The Colonial Secretary says the Government are not prepared to give effect to the decision of a majority of this House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did not say of a majority of this House.

Mr. GLASSEY: If the majority rules, it does not matter whether the House is full or not. This notice of motion has been on the paper for some weeks, and if hon. members are not present that is not our fault. The responsibility rests upon the Government. We ought to take a division, and if the Government are beaten, they can adopt whatever course they please. If a division is taken to-night, then this motion will disappear from the paper. The Government can either carry out the wish of the House, or refrain from doing so, as they think best.

Mr. DRAKE: Whether a question is important or not, we are getting into a very bad practice of adjourning a debate and taking a division on some subsequent day. This is bringing Friday—the only day that private members have to transact their business—into contempt. Unfortunately, we have only one private members' day in the week, and members, especially supporters of the Government, stop away. The Premier is invariably absent on that day, and we have a beggarly array of empty benches on the other side with the exception of the Colonial Secretary, who is a host in himself. He comes down and makes a lengthy speech, and then a supporter of the Government moves the adjournment of the debate. I hope it will not be adjourned; but that we shall come to a division, and that in future we shall always insist upon a division being taken immediately a debate is concluded. If the Government and their supporters are not here, the responsibility rests on them. I agree with the hon. member for Burke that some questions must be reckoned more important than others, but every question that engages the attention of this House should be fairly discussed, and we have a right to demand that a division shall be taken as soon as the debate is over. I hope the debate will not be adjourned.

Mr. HARDACRE: As the mover of this motion, I object to letting the division stand over until some day next week. It simply means that the Government will whip up their followers, many of whom have not heard, and will not even read the debate, and they will vote against the motion. The vote would not be taken upon the merits of the question, so that I hope the division will be taken now.

Mr. McMASTER: The hon. member has just given the best argument that could have been given for adjourning the debate. He has told us that he is afraid that if the division is not taken to-night, hon. members will vote who have not heard the debate. Many hon. members who have heard the debate have gone home, believing that the practice followed last Friday would be followed to-night. It only bears out my contention that the whole thing is simply electioneering claptrap. It is all very well for hon. members on the other side to talk of taking the sense of the House, but the Colonial Secretary is quite right in saying that the Government and the Commissioner cannot accept the vote of a score of members as the vote of the House. I am here every night, and always remain until the House adjourns, but I would like to get home early on Friday nights, and there are many hon. members who live in the country, and it is not desirable that they should be unable to get home every night until after 12 o'clock.

Mr. KERR: What are they paid for?

Mr. McMASTER: They are not paid for listening to such rot as comes from that corner sometimes. This is a fair and reasonable request to make, and I think it would be very much better for the cause the hon. member is advocating that the division should be taken in a full

House. I hope the hon. member for Burke, as leader of that party, will advise the hon. member for Leichhardt to consent to an adjournment. I am more anxious to raise the wages of these men than some hon. members opposite who do not care anything about them. They only want to be able to get on a lorry and say they carried a vote, and then blame the Government for not acting upon it, and so hold the Government and the Commissioner up to ridicule.

Mr. DRAKE: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member speaking to the question of the adjournment of the debate?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member appears to be giving reasons why a division should not be taken, and, therefore, he is speaking to the question of adjournment.

Mr. McMASTER: I want to show that it is desirable that the debate should be adjourned in the interests of those whom the hon. member says he wants to benefit.

Mr. REID: You have said that before.

Mr. McMASTER: Yes; and I will say it again. It is as well that these men should know who are their friends.

Mr. REID: Are you going to vote for the motion?

Mr. McMASTER: I have never said how I will vote. The hon. member is trying to draw me, but I am not going to be drawn. This motion has only recently been upon the paper, and if the hon. member for Leichhardt will take the advice of an older man than himself, and of one who is equally desirous of benefiting the working men, he will agree to this adjournment. It is quite possible that many of those who are away to-night would support the motion, but they have gone away thinking that the debate would last all night, and we would not come to a division.

Mr. REID: Are your supporters away?

Mr. McMASTER: Many of those who have gone away know from past experience that hon. members opposite talk till further orders, and why should we miss our 'buses and trams?

Mr. REID: You have not missed your 'bus yet.

The SPEAKER: Order! Hon. members must keep order, and I must ask them to refrain from interjecting. If the hon. member continually repeats himself I will call upon him to discontinue his speech, but so long as these interjections go on I cannot do it, because the repetition is forced from the hon. member by the interjections.

Mr. McMASTER: I understand what the object of those hon. members is. They know I will reply to them.

The SPEAKER: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the motion for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. McMASTER: I contend that the debate should be adjourned, and am giving my reasons. If the division is taken now, what benefit will it be? If a division is taken, I do not suppose more than twenty-two or twenty-three members would be here to vote. Is that a fair representation of the people? Should an expenditure of over £30,000 be incurred upon an authority like that? Is it fair and reasonable in the interests of the men themselves? I thought the leader of the Labour party would have agreed that the debate should be restricted to a certain hour, and that the division should be taken on some subsequent evening. Only a few weeks ago the Government carried out a resolution passed by the House on the education question, and I have no doubt they would do the same in this case if the motion is carried, as I have no doubt it will be. On the other hand, I do not believe the Government would give effect to the motion if it is carried to-night in a thin House. I again ask the hon.

member for Leichhardt, in the interests of the men he is honestly trying to serve, to allow the debate to be adjourned, and accept the offer of the Colonial Secretary to have the matter decided on Wednesday next. That is an honest offer, and I believe the large majority of hon. members will think so.

Mr. TURLEY: I object to the adjournment of the debate for several reasons. One is that there are fourteen private members' notices on the paper, and nine private Bills, while the Government have only seven or eight matters on the paper. If we treat private members' business in the way we are doing, it will never be disposed of. It is said that because we did something at one time, it is absolutely necessary that the practice should be followed right through. Let us apply that to Government business. Once last session, at 4 o'clock in the morning, a vote for £10,000 came up for consideration. The hon. member for Enoggera objected, and said it was no time to deal with such a question in a very thin House, when members were either asleep or rolled up in blankets on the benches. Did the Government on that occasion say that if the vote was carried they would not give effect to it? They said that was the only time they had to get business through, and they intended to put it through. Before the Labour party came into the House what were the divisions as recorded in *Hansard* in 1892? There were many divisions in which only twenty-two or twenty-three members voted; members carrying important questions, such as an increase to their own salaries, by numbers as small as that. Was there any question of shame then, that they should go on with business or give effect to their resolutions? None whatever. Not one dissentient voice came from the Treasury benches then, and why is it that private business is now being treated as if it were of no account? The hon. member for the Valley said that on Fridays many members were away. Is that the fault of those with business on the paper? Supposing on a Government day members on this side were to stay away, would the Government propose to adjourn everything until there was a full House? Once last session, when there was only one member present on this side, the Government started to rush through business thinking that was their opportunity of getting their business off the paper. The Government will take every possible advantage when they can, but when they get into a corner they begin to cry out and beg for adjournments until their supporters put in an appearance. This motion has been on the paper for months, and it is only fair that a division should be taken. If the Government supporters are not here, we are not responsible for that. It seems ridiculous that the business of the country should be allowed to get into this state because the members on the Government side do not see fit to attend to their business.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I sincerely hope the people outside will take notice of what has transpired here, and especially of the attitude assumed by the Labour members. The argument of the hon. member, that on some previous occasion the Government, in endeavouring to get through the business of the country, did so at a late hour of the morning, has no reasonable relation to the position here to-night. The business of the colony must be carried through, and the Government of the day must necessarily represent the majority of the people, and at whatever hour they do the work of the colony the majority of the people are represented. The hon. members opposite profess to be trying to benefit the lengthsmen. What they are really doing is a bit of electioneering. If they get this motion through they will represent to possibly innocent

electors, who have not had the same political training, that they have accomplished something, while all the time we know they have accomplished nothing whatever. The objection that may reasonably be taken to a division to-night is that it would not represent the decision of the majority of the House; and what sort of an instruction would that be to the Railway Commissioner. If hon. members opposite wish to get the true sense of the House on the question, they will postpone the voting upon the motion. But they desire to get a catch vote, and although it will have no effect as far as the men are concerned, it will have the effect of advertising themselves at the expense of the men whose real interests they are disregarding in favour of themselves. They are playing their very last trump card before the elections, and they are trying to hoodwink the electors. If they desire to forward the real interests of the men they profess to represent they will postpone the debate in order to get an honest intimation of the wish of the House.

Mr. BROWNE: The action of the Government reminds me of a cowardly big boy at school, who thrashes the boys smaller than himself, but who, when he meets his equal, whimpers, and tells him to go and fight a boy of his own size. I may state that, just before tea, a deliberate attempt was made to get members on this side to stop away, so that there should not be a quorum when the House met again at 7 o'clock to debate the question. When you, Sir, took the chair at 7 o'clock there was just a bare quorum, and members on this side were rushing in to make a House.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must confine himself to the question before the House.

Mr. BROWNE: I am giving reasons why this House should not adjourn, by pointing out the way business has been obstructed during the evening.

The SPEAKER: Order! There has been no obstruction since I have been in the chair.

Mr. BROWNE: I will put it this way: The argument of hon. members on that side for an adjournment to-night and a division in a full House next week is that it is such a very important matter to the country that the whole of the members should be here, but during the early part of the evening we could hardly get a House, and since then we have had long speeches on the motion. If there had been only one member on this side, a division would have been forced on by the other side. Like the big boy they would have had the little boy at their mercy. But when they think they have not enough members on their side they cry out, "It is not fair." I think they should be more manly. I strongly protest against the adjournment, and I hope the hon. member who introduced the motion will persist in trying to get a division. No doubt if members on the other side can only talk long enough, they will bring back some of those members who have done the disappearing trick, and defeat us in the end.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I object to the debate being adjourned, because there has been a distinct understanding during the evening that this matter was to go to a division to-night. As a proof of that I may point out that fourteen members have paired on the question and have signed the papers. Including those members, the division on this question, if taken to-night, will be bigger than nine-tenths of the divisions that are taken in this House. Then what becomes of the argument that members have gone home? Suburban members have made provision for their votes being recorded by means of "pairs," and country members should protest against this adjournment. I have had a motion on the paper

since early in July, and there is no possibility of bringing it forward yet. I see no reason why we should not go to a division at once.

Mr. RAWLINGS: Just now I looked round the House to see the number of members inside, down in the refreshment room, and in the reading-room; and I find that there are no less than twenty-seven present. When I came back the hon. member for South Brisbane referred to the small number of members that took part in divisions in 1892, and I find that on the 28th July there was a division in which nineteen members took part; the same number took part in another division; on 15th November a division took place in which twenty-one members voted; in another division twenty-one members voted; and in other divisions nineteen members and twenty members voted respectively. So that we are accustomed to taking divisions in very small houses; and I do not see why the Government should object to going to a division to-night.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I never objected in the slightest degree.

Mr. REID: The hon. member for Fortitude Valley stated that members had gone home because they believed that arrangements had been made to take a division during the week.

Mr. McMASTER: I did not say that. I said it was expected that we would take the same course as was taken last week.

Mr. REID: All the members that have been here since half-past 3 o'clock to-day understood that a division would be taken to-night, because the "whips" tried to make arrangements for taking it next week, and the majority decided that the debate should be continued and the division taken to-night.

Mr. CHATAWAY: Hon. members on the other side may not be aware that I have a great deal of sympathy with this motion. I want to see it carried into effect, and on the strength of what the Colonial Secretary has stated—that is one of my reasons for desiring that the debate should be adjourned—I hope the Treasurer or the Commissioner will see his way to restore to these men the pay they were receiving in 1892. I point out that the leader of the Opposition, who leads hon. members opposite, or is led by them, urged that a debate upon a motion should be adjourned on the ground that it could not be finished at half-past 9 o'clock, which he held was the usual time for adjourning on Fridays. It is in order that in a full House there may be some result from this motion that I would like to see the debate adjourned.

Question—That the debate be adjourned—put and negatived.

The SPEAKER: Does the hon. member for Leichhardt desire to reply?

Mr. HARDACRE: Not at this late hour.

The SPEAKER: If no other hon. member desires to speak I will put the motion. If hon. members do not keep order while I am putting the question I shall leave the chair.

Question put and passed.

THE CASE OF HENRY WALKER.

The SPEAKER: General business—Notices of motion, No 2.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He has gone home.

After a pause,

The SPEAKER: There being no response, the motion lapses.

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