

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 1895**

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.**

TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER, 1895.

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

**PETITION.**

Mr. DRAKE presented a petition from 128 licensed cab proprietors and cabmen, suggesting certain amendments in the Brisbane Traffic Bill.  
Petition read and received.

RAILWAY FROM MAYNE TO ENOGGERA.

Mr. DRAKE rose to give contingent notice that, on the motion being moved for the House to go into committee to consider the proposed guaranteed railway from Mayne to Enoggera, he would move that the question be referred to a select committee.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot give notice of that, because the motion is set down for discussion to-day.

Mr. DRAKE: It might not come on.

The SPEAKER: Notice cannot be given for the same day on which the motion comes on for discussion; but if that motion is not reached, the notice will stand good.

QUESTIONS.

POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICE, GAYNDAH.

Mr. CADELL asked the Secretary for Works—

1. Is it his intention to proceed with the erection of the post and telegraph office at Gayndah?
2. If so—when?

The SECRETARY FOR WORKS (Hon. R. Philp) replied—

1. Yes.
2. As soon as the necessary arrangements are completed.

SANDY CREEK (MACKAY) RAILWAY.

Mr. CHATAWAY asked the Secretary for Railways—

1. Has there been correspondence between the Commissioner for Railways and the general manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, Limited, of Sydney, with reference to the proposed line to Sandy Creek from the Racecourse on the Mackay line?

2. Has the Minister for Railways any objection to lay that correspondence, or so much of it as refers to a promise of their freight to the department, on the table of the House?

3. Is it the intention of the Minister to lay on the table of the House this session the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway to Sandy Creek from the Racecourse on the Mackay line?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. R. Philp) replied—

1. Yes.
2. No; and I now produce the correspondence bearing on the subject.
3. Not this session.

ELECTORAL CLAIMS.

Mr. CROSS asked the Colonial Secretary—

1. If he has issued instructions as to head teachers of provisional State schools attesting and signing electoral claims?

2. If not, will he say whether the head teachers of provisional State schools can attest and sign electoral claims?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. Tozer) replied—

1. No.
2. My own opinion is that a teacher in charge of a provisional school is not a head teacher of a State school, and cannot therefore attest electoral claims. The proposal to extend the powers of attestation to provisional school teachers was not accepted by this Chamber at the time of the passing of the amended Elections Act.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By the ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. T. J. Byrnes)—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirability of introducing the following Bills:—

1. A Bill to amend the Supreme Court Acts, 1867 to 1893, and for other purposes.
2. A Bill to amend the Succession and Probate Duties Act, 1892.
3. A Bill to facilitate the recovery of wages by workmen.

COLTON-PIALBA RAILWAY.

COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed branch railway from Colton to Pialba, in length 16 miles 47 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Wednesday, 13th November, 1895, to be constructed under the provisions of the Railways Guarantee Act of 1895.

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

said this was the commencement of a new era of railway making. By an Act passed this session they now proposed to build railways under a guarantee—the Government finding half the loss, should any arise, and the communities guaranteeing the line paying the other half. He hoped this would be the forerunner of a number of railways, because when the residents of a district were prepared to show their *bona fides* by guaranteeing the half of any loss that might accrue, Parliament was justified in assisting those communities to build the line if they could show any reasonable case. This line was one which he had every reason to believe would pay working expenses and interest on the money expended. He had received a report from the engineer of railways in the Maryborough district, Mr. Evans, who stated that fifty-two farms would come under the influence of the railway. They had a total area of 555 acres, and the crops included bananas, maize, oats, sugar-cane, and other products. If the line was made he believed that a considerably larger area would be put under cultivation, and that would help materially to make the line pay. Apart from that, he understood that Pialba was one of the finest watering-places in the colony, and would be taken advantage of by the residents of Maryborough, Gympie, and Bundaberg if the line was made. The total length of the railway was about 16 miles, and the estimated cost was £43,000, which was equal to £2,600 a mile. The annual interest charge would be £1,740, and there was a fair probability of the line paying. The inhabitants of the district said it would pay, and were prepared to back up that assurance by pledging their land to pay half the amount of the loss of interest. There were several hon. members present who had visited the place and could speak from personal knowledge, and he was sorry that the Chairman could not leave the chair and speak in advocacy of the line, because there was not a man in the Chamber who knew more about it than he did. He hoped the Committee would pass the plans. Passing the plans did not mean building the railway, because, after the plans had been passed by both Houses, a guarantee would have to be obtained from the local authorities interested to bear half the loss. As soon as that was obtained the Government were prepared to go on with the building of the line, because he understood that the line ought to be built not later than this time next year to get the cane carried to the mill in Maryborough. He heard that there was a considerable quantity of cane standing over to be carted or punted to the mill, and it would not be his fault if the line was not pushed on as fast as possible, if the plans were passed and the funds were furnished.

Mr. POWERS thought that as this was the first railway proposed under the Guarantee Act a little more information would have been given. When that Act was under consideration the question arose as to what should be the benefited area, and what the Government might be liable for in connection with the guarantee, and it was said that this Chamber would protect the people from any injustice in connection with the benefited area. Under this there was a limit to the

amount of the guarantee. The local authority must show that the amount of its rates would be sufficient to cover the amount of the guarantee. That information, he supposed, would be afforded by the time they were asked to vote the money. The hon. member for Burrum, who represented the district, was in his place, and would no doubt be prepared to give information on matters of detail.

Mr. MORGAN: What is there to stop the local authority from lowering the rates?

Mr. POWERS: It did not matter whether they did or not, because if they did the Commissioner could strike and collect a rate. But that need not trouble them in this case, because the Commissioner had made a more favourable report on it than on any railway to be constructed without a guarantee. He said that so far as he had been able to ascertain the traffic would be sufficient from the beginning to almost, if not quite cover the working and interest charge, amounting together to about £3,750. The Commissioner considered that without any guarantee at all he should recommend this line, as it would pay interest and working expenses from the start. Pialba was the only seaside resort for a district which contained over 40,000 people, and there was more farming there than in many districts which had obtained railway communication. He thoroughly believed in what the Commissioner said as to its being a paying line, and they would be safe in building it. The protection afforded by the Act was sufficient, and the guarantee would have to be given before any tender was accepted. The only injustice that could be done was if the benefited area were made too large or too small; but those matters were in the hands of the people themselves. This line would have been built in 1884 if a private company had not agreed to do it, and it was also one of those which was proposed to be built in 1890 without any guarantee. Now it was the first line proposed under the Guarantee Act, and he did not think a better proposal could have been made in the interests of the district or the colony. He had believed in the line from the first, and did not think there would be any difficulty in getting Parliament to vote the money.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON did not think there would be any objection to the construction of this line, seeing that the people were willing to bear the burden of a guarantee for fourteen years should any deficiency accrue in regard to the working expenses or the interest upon the cost of construction. He hoped all the expectations that had been formed concerning the line would be fulfilled. With regard to the route, they would have to be satisfied with the assurances of those who were conversant with it, that it would afford the greatest facilities to the greatest number of people. He was very sorry that the Premier was absent owing to ill-health, as he thought that before proceeding with these lines they ought to be satisfied as to the financial ability of the Government to carry them out. The mere fact of receiving a guarantee of 2 per cent. of interest would not find the means of construction. The capital necessary would have to be found by the Government just as if the lines were to be built upon the ordinary State principles. They had had nine lines before them, and now there were five more, which was a very comprehensive railway scheme. He was not disposed to cavil at it; but as a prudent business man he thought they should have had some assurance that the ways and means would be forthcoming, and that the Government would proceed with the lines as soon as possible. He had no grounds for opposing this line, and believed it would fulfil expectations. He knew the Secretary for Railways

was sincere and in earnest in regard to these proposals, and hoped he would carry them out as soon as possible, also that the Treasurer would be able to show them that he had the necessary funds at his disposal.

Mr. TOOTH: As the member representing the district through which this line would pass, he could assure hon. members that there was a fair and reasonable prospect of this line paying from the start, and that even if there were not the Government would be justified in accepting the guarantee of the divisional boards for any shortage in the income. As to the position of Pialba as a seaside resort, not long ago it was described by a well-known Press writer as "pretty Pialba," and probably he could not have described it in more forcible language. At present there were eighty-five seaside residences, three large hotels, three boarding-houses, two stores, one bakery, one butcher's shop, three post offices, three schools, and last, but not least, three churches, so that there was every provision made for making visitors comfortable. Every week a large number of people went there from Saturday till Monday, and also upon public holidays. At Easter and Christmas he had counted from 1,600 to 2,000 people there. As a health resort he did not think it could be surpassed by any watering-place in the colony. Though it had the benefit of the ozone and sea breeze, it was protected from the bleak oceanic gales by the Great Sandy Island. At present it was visited by people from Maryborough, Gympie, Gayndah, Bundaberg, and even from the Darling Downs. To give some idea of the traffic, a couple of years ago one of the bridges on the main road was washed away, and the board had to erect a temporary bridge there. They put a toll upon it, and they immediately got from the lessee £250 per annum, though the lessee had to find everything in connection with the collection of the toll. As a farming district, he might state that there was a scrub running parallel to the sea, and at an average distance of from one to four miles from the sea. That scrub contained from 11,000 to 13,000 acres, the larger portion of which was really good agricultural land, and that portion of it which could not be classed as first-class agricultural land was eminently suitable for fruit-growing, and to that purpose a large portion of it would be put. There were ninety-two farmers settled there. They had taken up the land many years ago, and had been growing the ordinary heavy crops until they found themselves so hampered by the long land carriage to market that they have almost to abandon those crops and go in for lighter crops and for fruit and dairying. A couple of years ago, understanding that a mill was to be erected there, many of them had gone in for cane-growing, and though some of them had to cart the cane 22 miles to Maryborough they found the cane far more profitable than other crops, and there was not the slightest doubt that cane would be the main crop grown there in the future. He was prepared to assert, from a certificate he held in his hand, that if the line was ready for the 1896 season 6,000 tons at the very least had been guaranteed by a few farmers there to be sent to the Maryborough sugar factory. Putting the freight on it at 2s. per ton, hon. members would see that that would give a very fair return. The greater portion of the scrub was eminently fitted for sugar-growing, as it was absolutely free from floods, and almost entirely free from frost. He expected that within three years there would be at least 2,000 acres there under crop, which, at the low average for that district of 25 tons to the acre, would give 50,000 tons of cane which must be brought over that line to the Maryborough sugar factory or

one of the other mills there, and at 2s. a ton that would give an income of £3,000 per annum.

Mr. FISHER: What about a central mill at Pialba?

Mr. TOOTH: The cane must go to Maryborough, for the reason that nobody would be idiotic enough to put up a central mill to manufacture sugar down there. The idea of small mills had now been pretty well exploded; and it was admitted that in connection with sugar the profit must be looked for from the manufacture, and anyone prepared to manufacture sugar must be prepared to put up a mill costing anything from £50,000 to £150,000. The district was not suitable for a central mill, owing to the distance of permanent water from the cultivated land; and the Committee need not have the slightest notion that there would be a mill there. In the benefited area there were 29,000 acres under farming and grazing, with a capital value for rating purposes of £103,000. So far he had simply alluded to the line from Maryborough to the seaside, but there was a far more concrete factor for making the line pay, looming in the future, in the extension of the line for 2 or 3 miles to what was known as Urangan Point, where by the erection of a not very long jetty over a sand-bank they could have a wharf in a channel from the main channel north and south, where there was a minimum depth of 3½ fathoms at low-water springs with a rise of over 10 feet. With a very small outlay a wharf or jetty could be erected there, and he had not the slightest doubt it must come sooner or later, for the purpose of shipping the Burrum coal if for no other purpose. At present the coal had to go up to Maryborough and then down the river for export, and if that proposal was carried out it would save a distance of about 80 miles in the carriage of the coal for export. The large mail steamers that now came in to the White Cliffs, in Hervey Bay, could come up to that wharf to discharge cargo and load coal, and putting the traffic on last year's export of 40,000 tons, and taking the railway carriage from Howard to that port that would give an income of £4,000 per annum. He did not think there was a district in the colony that contained so many elements that would go to ensure the success of a line. To sum up, there was a very fair resident passenger traffic, a large non-resident passenger traffic, a very large excursion traffic, a fair general freight traffic, a fair dairy and agricultural produce traffic, a large sugar-cane traffic to the Maryborough mills; there was also a probable timber traffic, and a large prospective shipping coal traffic. The Burrum Board had not been blind in asking the Government to build the line under the guarantee system. They were perfectly certain that if the line were built next year, the first year's income from it would be over £4,000, and that estimate was based on statistics which they had taken a great deal of trouble to gather. The line was one of great moment to a large body of hard-working farmers, who had shown what they were made of by struggling on for years in the hope that the railway would be built. It might be asked why the line should be brought under the guarantee principle; why it should not be constructed by the Government? The reason was that two and a-half years ago the Burrum Board approached the Government of which Sir Thomas McIlwraith was the head, and asked to have the line built under the Local Works Loans Act, intimating that they were prepared to pay for the line in forty years. They were ready to build the railway and take payment in Treasury notes, but at that time Sir Thomas McIlwraith did not think the proposal was practicable, and the board then came forward and offered to guarantee any ordinary, reasonable

interest if the Government would build the line. He believed this proposal was the outcome of that offer. The board were quite prepared to-morrow to execute the necessary bonds in connection with the guarantee, and he hoped the plans would be approved by the Committee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said this was one of the railways contemplated when the Railways Guarantee Act was passed. By the Act it was provided that the plan, estimate, and book of reference of a proposed railway should be transmitted to the guarantors for their consideration and suggestions before they were submitted to Parliament, and he hoped that whoever might be in power next session would see that all that information was given to the local authorities. There were, however, three or four railways now before Parliament in which that could not be done unless the consideration of the plans was held over till next session. To meet such cases section 7 of the Act provided that—

"For the purpose of avoiding delay in taking advantage of the provision of the Act, the plan, estimate and book of reference of a proposed railway may, on the application of a local authority proposing to give the guarantee under this Act, be submitted to Parliament for approval before the guarantee is executed."

Section 14 further provided that—

"Such resolution may, however, for the purpose of avoiding delay, be passed by both Houses of Parliament before the execution of such guarantee, but no action shall be taken thereon if a poll is taken and the majority of votes are not in favour of the giving of the guarantee."

That was the excuse for the Government bringing forward this line, and under the circumstances they were justified in taking advantage of the urgency provisions of the Act. They proposed the line because if a railway was to be built from Colton to Pialba the route suggested was the best, and because the line was one which should be constructed under the Guarantee Act. In regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Bulimba, he extremely regretted that the Treasurer was unable to be present that afternoon owing to illness, but he could say for him that he was prepared, as soon as those railways were disposed of, to submit his budget on those proposals, and the Cabinet were satisfied that the money would be forthcoming. The amount that would be asked for on the Loan Estimates for the year would probably not exceed £500,000, and the Estimates would, he believed, be submitted to the Committee in a few days. The Treasurer had always taken the view that the passing of the plans of a railway was the initial stage; that after they were approved of hon. members would have to consider in Committee of Ways and Means what works the Government proposed to go on with at once this session; and he thought that that view was also held by the hon. member for Maryborough. With regard to the railway itself, he had never been favourably disposed towards the extension of lines from centres of population to watering places. He believed that the best thing for the colony at present was to extend our railways westward. By-and-by, when they could afford it they could extend them to the seaside for the convenience and comfort of the inhabitants of the larger towns. His opinions on that point were confirmed by their experience in connection with such lines as those from Brisbane to Cleveland, from Brisbane to Southport, and from Rockhampton to Emu Park. But in the present instance they had as guarantors one of the best-managed local authorities that he, as Colonial Secretary, had had the pleasure of dealing with, and one whose position was such as other boards in the colony might envy.

At twenty minutes past 4 o'clock, a storm rendering hearing almost impossible, the Chairman left the chair for ten minutes.

On resuming,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY continued: He knew every inch of the country. For the first 11 miles the land was ordinary coast country, but he believed it was coal country. From there to Pialba the land was occupied by farmers; it was good land and capable of settling a large population. Of course there was nothing in that to warrant building a railway, even if guaranteed by the local authority; but of all the watering-places in Queensland there was the most traffic to Pialba in proportion to the population of the surrounding districts. He had information that the lessee of the tollbar on the bridge over Saltwater Creek had taken as much as £8 per week during last year, and that represented 50,000 people passing along that road. That gave some idea of the traffic. Pialba was somewhat in the same position as Sandgate and Cleveland were to Brisbane some years ago, with this difference—that it was Maryborough's only watering-place, while there were several in the vicinity of Brisbane. The Maryborough district was a very thriving and important one, and no doubt the people looked for facilities for getting to the sea. For a considerable time many people from Bundaberg would make use of Pialba, and even now it was used by many people in Gympie as a watering-place, and would be more so but for the difficulty of making arrangements from Gympie for the necessary conveyances to take families to the seaside. The traffic from Gympie would no doubt be diverted in course of time, because Gympie's natural port was Tewantin, so that that traffic could not be relied upon as permanent. He might mention that the Burrum Board, which had a ratable value of property of £200,000, was very well managed, and the long-headed men on that board, as well as on the Maryborough Municipal Council, would not guarantee such a proposal unless they were sure it would be a success. He was not going to enter into rhapsodies over the line; he did not believe in high-falutin statements about railways; but as a general principle, where there were long roads to maintain, it paid in certain cases to make railways such as this, because the roads themselves cost much to maintain. He would vote for the line independent of the fact that he was the member for Wide Bay, and although a great many of his constituents were interested in a line which might be considered an opposition line, because he believed there would be sufficient ordinary seaside traffic to ensure the line paying interest, and that if constructed the number of farmers would multiply. There was also the fact that much of the land was coal land, and if the line was extended a further distance of 5 miles to deep water at Urangan Point, and a jetty or wharf was built, the largest ships could come there and load. That, however, was in the future. Independent altogether of the fact that he was a member of the Government he should give the line his support on its merits.

Mr. FISHER: The Maryborough people were to be congratulated on the energy they had shown in trying to get the guarantee principle incorporated in the Acts of this colony, and they had made out a very good case for the construction of this line. Various arguments had been used in favour of the line, and some that were slightly against Maryborough. The hon. member for Burrum and the Colonial Secretary had spoken of the probability of a port being established near Pialba which would do more harm to Maryborough than any want of railway communication. It was not likely, if that argument was sound, that Maryborough was going to assist in its own suicide by advocating a new port. As to the amount of coal likely to be raised in the district, he did not think it would be much for

years to come. Then, it was not a sound argument to say that the whole of the cane would be carried over the line to the Maryborough mill, because, if the farmers there were successful in growing cane, they would be entitled to a central mill. How could anyone say that they should not have the same facilities afforded to them by the Government for the manufacture of their sugar as other districts?

Mr. LEAHY: They won't get a central mill if they get this line.

Mr. FISHER saw nothing to justify that statement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have never asked for a mill.

Mr. FISHER: There had been an agitation for a mill of that kind, and various proposals had been made, though no application had been made to the Government. The sugar industry was the one that was likely to make the greatest progress in that direction, and a central mill would follow as a consequence of success in cane-growing. In connection with the passenger traffic Gympie had been spoken of as a factor in making this line a success; but Gympie had a much nearer watering place at Noosa, which could be made available by a short line, so that the Gympie passenger traffic to Pialba could not be counted on for any length of time. He thought that a good case had been made out for the construction of the line, though some of the arguments used in supporting the case were rather damaging than otherwise.

Mr. CROSS said that, according to some hon. members who advocated the line, one of the great advantages would be that in the near future there might be a jetty constructed over a sandbank to an excellent channel showing 3½ fathoms at low water, where the largest ships could lie. Just imagine the *Maryborough Chronicle* and the *Wide Bay News* getting hold of that as a reason why the line should be built.

Mr. POWERS: It has been known to them for the last twenty-five years.

Mr. CROSS said the hon. member for Maryborough could not consistently vote for the motion if there was any solidity in the reason, and he could not understand the attitude of the hon. member. If the Secretary for Railways were to put the plans of an extension from Clermont to Blair Athol on the table, he would take the same attitude in regard to that as in regard to other railways. He held the Committee had no right to pass these railway motions unless the proposals were thoroughly sifted. From his knowledge of the district, a pretty fair case had been made out for this line; but it was not everybody who had been over the district, and the matter should have gone before a select committee. He fully expected that the leader of the Opposition would have forgotten for the time being that he was junior member for Maryborough and shown some consistency in his policy by seeing that there was a select committee appointed. According to the Commissioner's report, the first 11 miles of the route ran through unoccupied and barren country, mostly wallum flats and grass-tree ridges; the soil thence improved, scrub lands being traversed from 12½ miles to within half a mile of the terminus. The whole length of the line was only 16 miles 47 chains from the junction; yet it was only after reaching the 12½-mile peg that there was any decent land. As to the prospect of sugar-growing, he pointed out that as soon as the supply of Australian sugar met the demand there would be stagnation and the growers would then be in no better position than the growers of maize. The industry had already arrived at such a stage as to cause many persons to halt and seriously consider their position. The hon. member for Burrum had calculated that there would be so many thousand tons of

sugar-cane taken over this line at 2s. per ton, giving a revenue of £4,000 a year. But 2s. per ton was a very serious item, and there was an indication that the price of cane would go so low that they could not afford to pay that amount for carriage.

Mr. TOOTH: They cart it 22 miles and make it pay.

Mr. CROSS: It was not the distance, but the cost. So far as the Maryborough people were concerned, no doubt there would be some who would avail themselves of this line to go to the seaside, and so save horseflesh and buggies, but generally speaking they were not in a state of wild enthusiasm about it; and he did not altogether agree with the statements of the Colonial Secretary in regard to Pialba as a seaport. There were many reasons why this line should have been referred to a select committee. An amendment to that effect could not be moved now, but he had anticipated that the leader of the Opposition would have consistently carried out his policy in this direction, and given notice of his intention to move for a select committee. If a good case could be made out for the construction of this line, or any other, he would not oppose it, but there were other considerations, one of which was, where was the money to come from? They should have information upon that point before any line was proposed, but the Government had commenced at the other end, and had gone in for a lot of railway construction without taking the Committee into their confidence as to how the money was to be found. The Colonial Secretary had informed them that the Government were satisfied; but what was the Government or the Cabinet? It ought to be the Executive of Parliament, to carry out its resolutions, but the actual position was the reverse, and the Government were simply the bosses of the House. If the Government were satisfied, somebody must have satisfied them. The Colonial Treasurer had satisfied his colleagues that he was able to get this money without any further loans, but he should satisfy the Committee also. It seemed as if hon. members outside the Cabinet could be done without, and the Government were depriving them of one of their highest functions—namely, that of saying where money should come from and how it should be spent. The Government were not treating hon. members fairly, and he should oppose this motion, and call for a division even if he sat by himself.

Mr. LEAHY said he was one of a party who went to Pialba a couple of months ago to inspect this line, and thought the Colonial Secretary had described the country very fairly. A great deal of the country about Pialba was actually under sugar-cane, and there was some excellent scrub there, some of which had been cleared and some not, which was admirably adapted to the growth of cane by small settlers. If there was any form of sugar-growing which should commend itself to the Committee, it was that which would be adopted there. The hon. members for Clermont and Gympie had said some of the remarks of the Colonial Secretary would raise opposition to this line amongst the Maryborough people, but that was a matter for the Maryborough people themselves. They were not committed to the line. This was only one of the preliminaries, and they had to approve of it afterwards by poll. Having inspected the route and gone into calculations as to the amount of passenger and cane traffic, he believed the line would pay if cheaply constructed, as all their lines ought to be. He had been astonished to hear the hon. member for Clermont raise an objection as to where the money was coming from. The hon. member was a financier, and had a scheme for making money out of paper; and as the Government might be

going to construct the line under his scheme, the hon. member paid himself but a poor compliment in raising such an objection. The hon. member for Gympie had said that there was no justification for an interjection he had made while the hon. member was speaking about the erection of a central mill at Pialba; but if, after the House passed the line on the understanding that the people there growing cane would carry it to Maryborough on the railway—and he and others had been told that they would by the people themselves—they took their cane to a central mill, they would be guilty of a breach of faith. They should be prepared to abide by the bargain they made, and if they were not he should feel it to be his duty, if he were in the House at the time, to oppose the line for such a departure from the terms made with the House. However, they were not committed to the line yet, and it was for the people themselves to determine, and with the coal lands they had there—

Mr. FISHER: There is no proof of the existence of coal there.

Mr. LEAHY had already said that apart from the speculative future he believed the line would pay, but there was certainly a probability that coal would be got there, and those things should count for something in considering the merits of the line. He intended to support it.

Mr. POWERS did not know that there was any condition in connection with the line, except the guarantee, and he knew nothing of a condition that there should be no central mill.

Mr. LEAHY: It might not be in the written contract.

Mr. POWERS did not understand that there was any condition of the sort, and he thought that the more mills they had established there the better the railway would pay. That was the experience in the Isis Scrub. As to there being no coal in the district, he had been connected with a company that bored for coal just where this line turned off, and they found as good coal there as any that had been found in the district.

Mr. FISHER: It is doubtful.

Mr. POWERS: It was not doubtful unless bores were doubtful; if there was no coal there the bore had lied. He put aside altogether the shipping of coal from Urangan, as people would send their coal the 8 miles to the Maryborough wharf rather than 22 miles to Urangan. The hon. member for Burrum had no doubt been looking to the future in that matter, and when it was proposed the Maryborough people would have something to say about it. The hon. member for Clermont had asked why he did not move that that line should be referred to a select committee, but he had asked for select committees only upon those lines in connection with which there was a question as to whether they were going in the right direction. In this case there was no question as to the route, as the Government had selected the best route, and were taking the line through the centre of the district.

Mr. FISHER: No doubt the district was a coal district; but so far it had not been proved that there was a payable seam in that district. The hon. member had referred to a company that had experimented there six or seven years ago; but he did not think that the result of their boring operations made it likely that they could successfully compete with the existing companies. No doubt there were coal seams at a greater depth than had yet been proved, and some years hence, with improved machinery and better facilities for shipping the coal, there might be a large coal product from the district. He did not think that coal

would be shipped from any other port than Maryborough, and the coal-shipping facilities of Maryborough would stand that port in good stead for many years to come. He had been astonished at the argument of the hon. member for Bulloo that the people on that line should send their cane for all time, or until the railway paid, to Maryborough. From the hon. member's method of dealing with the border tax and other matters, he assumed that the hon. member did not believe that there should be any restrictions upon trade, and if the existence of the sugar farmers of that district depended upon their having a central mill, it would be the duty of the hon. member to give them that mill rather than hold them to an agreement that would ruin them and benefit nobody.

Mr. CROSS said the reasons given by the junior member for Maryborough, summed up, simply amounted to this: That he asked for the appointment of select committees merely to decide the question of route. He thought the hon. member had a deeper and more significant reason than the merely local one as to which direction a railway should be taken. He was sorry that the hon. member for Bulloo referred to him, as two or three other members persisted in doing, as having any specific idea of turning out money by machinery, the same as was done at the Government Printing Office. Those who knew him gave him credit for more sense, and knowing that no money could be issued unless there was an exchangeable value behind it.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. member that this is not a Committee of Ways and Means. The question before the Committee is the approval of a certain plan and book of reference, and I must ask hon. members to confine themselves to that question.

Mr. CROSS did intend to confine himself to the question, and was simply replying to some remarks which had been made in reference to himself. He was very sorry to have to vote against that railway, but there was no other way in which he could enter his protest, and he must, therefore, take that course.

Mr. CALLAN: In considering whether it was advisable to construct that railway, they should be guided to a great extent by their experience of railways to watering places in other parts of the colony. The Colonial Secretary had laid great stress on the traffic there would be on that line from Maryborough, Gympie, Bundaberg, and other places. Some years ago they constructed a line from Rockhampton to Emu Park, and he was then a very strong supporter of the railway. It went to the sole watering place for the 14,000 or 15,000 people living in Rockhampton, the 4,000 or 5,000 at Mount Morgan, and for those living along the Central line, which extended 470 miles out west. In the remarks he was now making he was speaking to a certain extent against the interests of his constituents. They had got their railway, and he was sorry they had, because it was a great loss to the country. The report of the Commissioner showed that the revenue from that railway for 1895 was £4,810, the expenditure £6,285, loss £1,475. The cost of the line was £164,061. Four per cent. on that was £6,500; so that the loss for the year was about £8,000. It was said that there was a great deal of sugar land in the district which would be served by the line to Pialba, but it would cost a great deal to get the cane to the mills, and that would always be a drawback to that land as compared with the sugar lands in the North, which were close to mills. As for the guarantee, people would guarantee anything to get a railway to their back door, but hon. members had to look at the matter from a much broader standpoint than that of the interest of the people immediately concerned.

He looked upon the guarantee as simply rot. If a guarantee was backed by men whose signature to a bond was worth a lot of money, it would be worthy of serious consideration, but after all the guarantee was only for fourteen years. He was not now speaking of the Pialba line—he knew nothing at all about it—but he was speaking of the general policy of the Government, or the general policy of the Secretary for Railways.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. gentleman that the general policy of the Government is not now before the Committee, and I ask him to confine his remarks to the question.

Mr. CALLAN: Certainly. He always obeyed the ruling of the Chairman. This railway was one that should be very carefully considered before it was passed. Members should not be led away by the guarantee, as after all it was simply a question of spending the money of the people to build the railway. Personally he did not believe the line would pay.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Its cost will only be one-fourth that of the Emu Park railway.

Mr. CALLAN: They had had railways before which they were told would cost a certain amount, but when they were finished they cost three or four times the original estimate, and they did not know that this railway could be built for the amount of the estimate. What about the Cairns Railway? Had they not seen those things over and over again? However, he left the matter in the hands of the House; he would not vote for the line.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD thought the hon. gentleman had made out a very admirable case against the Emu Park railway. He had shown clearly that in the interest of the taxpayers it would be better to close that line until more people were inclined to make use of it. The hon. gentleman had not yet made any such proposition as that. Having got a line for the Central district which did not pay, the hon. gentleman abused one which would pay, because the Emu Park line did not. They had the best authority—the Railway Commissioner—that the line would pay. That gentleman had made a reputation, and had it to maintain, and he distinctly said that the line would pay interest and working expenses. If they were to trust the railway expert, the condition of affairs was absolutely different to the Emu Park line. In the one case there was an admitted loss of a great many hundreds a year, and in the other the Government had submitted the line on the Commissioner's representation that the estimates would be borne out by facts. He could not see the analogy between that line and the one which the hon. gentleman deprecated so much, and which no doubt would have received his strongest support had he been in the House at the time it was proposed to be built.

Mr. ARMSTRONG differed from the hon. gentleman who had just sat down. The contention of the hon. member for Fitzroy was that when the line to Emu Park was proposed it was strongly favoured because it would open up a seaside resort, and in the case before them too much stress was laid on the fact that the line would serve a similar purpose. He congratulated the hon. member for Fitzroy upon the candour with which he had spoken and upon bringing the experience the colony had had to bear upon this line. He could not help wondering why the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Powers, should not have followed his usual tactics, and asked for a select committee on the line. His only reason could be that he had the deep blue sea on one side of him and Maryborough on the other. Had a select committee reported upon the line hon. members would have had much more information before them to enable them to come to a decision. He could quite understand the hon

gentleman having no doubts about that line, because his constituents would be so largely affected by it. From the information before them, and from his knowledge of the country, he could not understand how that hon. member could swallow that proposal and so strenuously oppose the construction of the Northern line they had before them lately. From the Commissioner's report the line went through 3 miles 67 chains of good country only, and for that they were going to expend £40,000, which would probably amount to £50,000 before they had finished. The hon. member who represented the district told them there was not the slightest probability of a private company establishing a mill in the district, and that the sugar-cane to be grown there would be taken along the railway. That was one of the strongest arguments that could be adduced against the line. If it would not pay a private company to start a mill where there was a prospect of 13,000 acres of cane, which would yield 39,000 tons of sugar, it would never pay the Government to take their share of a guaranteed railway. It was very questionable whether the guarantee would be worth the paper it was written on. He did not doubt the *bona fides* of those who offered the guarantee; no doubt they honestly believed the line would pay, but was it not far more likely that the amount of money proposed to be spent could be much better expended in other directions and open up a larger area than would be opened up by the proposed line? There were 13,000 acres of land available and ninety-two farmers, and the whole contention had been that the line would open up a seaside resort for the richer people of Maryborough. It would to a certain extent enhance the value of private property in and around Pialba, and add a certain value to Maryborough property, but beyond that he could not see any good in it. If it would open up a large area of Crown land and make it available for settlement, he would be among the first to support the line, but as matters stood he could not support it.

Mr. MORGAN must confess that the last few speakers, who had broken the pleasant harmony of the earlier part of the afternoon, had a great deal of reason in the arguments they had advanced. That, of course, was one of the railways which was going to pay from the jump. In that respect it was not at all unique. They had heard of many railways, and passed many, that were going to pay from the jump, but which had never yet paid.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The Killarney line.

Mr. MORGAN: The Killarney line was one. But this line was unique in being the first guarantee railway proposed in the colony, and as such he thought it demanded a more extended consideration than it would demand merely as a railway to connect Maryborough with Pialba. It seemed to be taken for granted that the Committee should offer very little opposition to railways that were to be backed by the guarantee of the local authorities concerned to the extent of half the possible loss; but the State was a party to the bargain in that it had to undertake to find the other half of the possible loss; and it was within the range of probability that the State might have to find the lot. Would anybody say that the Guarantee Act was a perfect measure? Would anybody assure him that the senior member for Fortitude Valley and the hon. member for Woolloongabba could not drive a coach-and-four through its provisions? But there was a greater danger than that, and that was the force of political influence when a general election was approaching. He firmly believed that if the local authorities interested in the five lines on the paper gave the guarantee, those who

found it a bad thing would, before three years had passed, be agitating for the repeal of the Guarantee Act. They had seen in the life of this Parliament the destruction of the bridge across the Brisbane River and the construction of another to be paid for by the people who used it by means of a toll. Half of the toll had disappeared already, and the chances were that before the end of another twelve months the whole would have disappeared, and the charge Parliament intended to place on the people using the bridge would be shifted from their shoulders to the shoulders of the general taxpayer. It therefore behoved Parliament to give the fullest consideration to the first proposal to build a railway under the Guarantee Act. This was part of the railway policy of the Government, and they could not forget the fact that they had already sanctioned the construction of railways which would commit the colony to an expenditure of nearly £1,000,000. And by the five proposals under the Guarantee Act they were asked to make the country responsible for a further £200,000. That committed the country to an additional interest expenditure equal to £40,000 a year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They do not amount to £1,000,000 altogether.

Mr. MORGAN: No doubt the hon. member believed so, but he preferred to take his own view from past experience.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We have detailed plans, which you did not have before.

Mr. GROOM: We had detailed plans before.

Mr. MORGAN said he would leave the general policy, and devote his attention to the railway proposals in the batch now practically before Parliament.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will not be in order in discussing the batch; it will be necessary for him to confine his remarks to the proposal now before the Committee.

Mr. MORGAN admitted that the Chairman was technically correct, but he would again remind hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches that this was the first guarantee railway submitted. Of course, if the Chairman insisted on his ruling, other measures would have to be taken to raise a general discussion.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. T. J. Byrnes): Why did you not raise the question on the Guarantee Bill?

Mr. MORGAN was not going to wander over the details of each of the several lines in anticipation of any discussion that might take place on them; but he thought that on the first he had a right to allude to the general question of the guarantee.

The CHAIRMAN: I rule that the hon. member will not be in order in speaking on the general question. The railway now under consideration is the line from Colton to Pialba, and the discussion must be on that line only.

Mr. MORGAN: If he was to be restricted merely to the consideration of the advisability of building a line from Colton to Pialba, and not allowed to go outside that question, he must protect himself by a motion which would give him power to say what he wished to say. He did not propose to trench on the spirit of the Standing Order, but he wished to pay some attention to what the country would be committed to by the proposal.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That you should do in the House, not in Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure the hon. member will see that what he wishes to say was fully discussed on the second reading of the Bill for the construction of railways under the Railways Guarantee Act of 1895. I am sure the hon. member will see that he cannot discuss five proposals under this resolution.

Mr. MORGAN said he did not propose to do so. But in discussing the line from Colton to Pialba they could not forget the fact that there were other proposals of a like nature to follow. He was not going to discuss them now, but he asked the Committee to remember that those proposals represented an expenditure of £200,000, and that their construction would commit the country to the possible loss of a very large sum of money per annum. That being so, they had a right to be well assured that any line offered to them for construction, even under the guarantee system, would be one that would offer a very good prospect of becoming payable, or at least not involve the Government or the guarantors in the payment of a considerable sum annually. The greater the sum the guarantors were called upon to pay the greater would be the incentive to action with the view of compelling Parliament to remove the burden. From the speeches of hon. members who knew this district, and the report of the Commissioner, there seemed to be very little doubt that this line would pay immediately after its construction. But if this line was a line that would pay, it was essentially one that should be constructed by the Government without any guarantee, and the local authorities should not be asked to guarantee any possible loss, seeing that Parliament had cheerfully agreed to lines being built without any guarantee which the Commissioner said would not pay. That convinced him that this Parliament was not in a position to deal fairly with railway proposals involving the expenditure of large sums of money. This line would pay, and yet they were going to ask the local authorities to guarantee half of any possible loss. Where was the necessity for such a demand in this particular case? He could not reconcile the action of the Government in this case with their action in previous cases. He was not making any allusion to the Mirani line. The Colonial Secretary, who was a very warm advocate of this line, spoke eloquently of the large amount of passenger traffic, and quoted the statistics of some tollbar-keeper on the Pialba road which went to show that the passenger traffic equalled some 50,000 per annum. The inference he wished the Committee to draw was that the whole of this traffic would be retained. Was that justified?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: A great deal more than that.

Mr. MORGAN: He was sure that, even if the line were constructed, a great many of those people would still go by vehicles as they did now. They would go that way because there was a good road, and if they had their own vehicles they would not submit to the discomfort of railway travelling.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They would rather go by train than drive 22 miles on a hot day.

Mr. MORGAN admitted Pialba was equalled by no watering place, and that it was approached by a few, but they could only judge what would happen in its case by asking what had happened in regard to other watering places. He believed the only line to a watering place in Queensland that paid was the Sandgate line, and there were three reasons why that line paid. The first was that there was an aggregation of population in the city convenient to Sandgate; the next was that it was only a short line; and the third was that the fares were abnormally low. There was a large population not only in the city but all along the route and at the seaside resort itself, and those conditions existed in no other case in the colony. They also had the painful fact that all the other lines to watering places had utterly failed to pay interest and working expenses, but, notwithstanding that, they were asked to add

another to their long list of non-paying lines. However much credence he was disposed to give to the testimony of the Colonial Secretary, and the leader of the Opposition, and the hon. member for Burrum, he felt inclined to agree with the hon. member for Fitzroy that the line would not pay, in spite of the fact that this watering place was better than its rivals, and that there was an agricultural population settled in the immediate vicinity. They must have some regard to the extent of the agricultural settlement there. For more than three-quarters of the distance the line travelled through inferior country, and there was only a belt of 3 miles fit for agricultural settlement, which they were told was going to supply sufficient traffic in sugar-cane to make the line pay without the assistance of passenger traffic at all.

Mr. TOOTH: It is 13 miles wide.

Mr. MORGAN: He had been credibly informed that the width of the scrub at Pialba was nothing like 3 miles, but that was the distance from the point at which that wretchedly inferior country ceased, and the rather better country began, to the terminal point.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is very good land.

Mr. MORGAN: He believed the scrub was excellent country, and would grow sugar for a time at least—how long remained to be proved. It must not be assumed that, because they had a belt of country capable of producing sugar-cane immediately when denuded of its scrub, that that production would go on unchecked for an indefinite number of years. There was no more striking example of the impoverished condition of country from sugar-growing to be found in Queensland than in the Maryborough district. Anybody travelling by rail in that district could see from the train remarkable evidences of worked-out soil once devoted to sugar-growing.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Where?

Mr. MORGAN: On the Mary River, at Antigua.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Frost.

Mr. MORGAN: The difference in latitude or in altitude between Antigua and Pialba was so very little that he feared that if the frost had proved ruinous at Antigua it would also prove ruinous at Pialba. He had no interest in opposing the line, but he pointed that out as a possible danger. If the line would pay—if it was so full of promise as had been said—it ought to be constructed at the expense of the State. He had no objection whatever to the guarantee, but it was the duty of the Committee to review the facts before they committed the country to the expenditure of the money.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The guarantee is there.

Mr. MORGAN: It was for only half the possible loss, and though it might be good for fourteen years, it might not be good for more than three, and when it failed, whether after one year, three years, or fourteen years, the whole burden would fall upon the State.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: We have only just passed the Act.

Mr. MORGAN: They had only just passed the Act, and he made bold to say that the people for whom those railways were being asked did not thoroughly understand what they were committing themselves to. Though there was good agricultural country at Pialba, there was always the danger of the soil working out to such a degree as to deprive the line of much of the traffic from cane, which was held out as the chief justification for its construction. Then they must have regard for the fact that if sugar-growing was made to pay there, the next thing that would be asked for by the cane-growers of the district would be a central mill, and there was no

lawful reason why they should not extend to those people the provisions of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act if they were prepared to pledge their lands as security in the usual way. The hon. member for Bulloo suggested that the establishment of a central mill there to turn the cane into sugar on the spot would so reduce the tonnage of goods carried on the railway as to injure the Government security, and that would be a sufficient justification for refusing to extend to the people of the district the provisions of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act. If that was the position the Government intended to take up, it was right that the people of the district should at once be made thoroughly acquainted with the fact, and the Government should say now whether their choice was to be between a railway and a central mill, and whether they could or could not have both. Those were pertinent matters to consider in deciding whether that line should or should not be constructed, but above and beyond all that they should have known before they were asked to give their attention to any of those railways, where the money was coming from. That was the first thing that should have been insisted upon by members on the front Opposition bench, and there was no excuse for their plain neglect of duty in that respect. They had had no information so far from the Secretary for Railways on the subject. The Colonial Secretary in his speech had made two interesting statements which deserved to be taken note of, and he was surprised that they had not been taken notice of earlier in the debate. One was that, with those that had gone before, the railways now proposed embraced the whole of the Government railway proposals for the session. It was satisfactory at last to know that much. It was satisfactory to know that they had at last got to the bottom of the railway lucky-bag of the Ministry. The other statement was that the loan proposals to give effect to the railways that had been and were to be approved would not exceed £500,000. That was for the remainder of the current financial year. They had already had submitted to them proposals for State railways involving an expenditure of over £1,000,000, and the guaranteed railways submitted would involve £200,000 more, so that they would have a total authorisation of nearly £1,250,000. From the fact that they were only to be asked to vote £500,000, he argued that a great many of the lines they had been asked to consider would only be used as bunches of carrots, to be held before the constituencies at the coming general election. That might be a vulgar way of putting it, but it was a short way, and he desired to economise time as much as possible. If those railways were not to be proceeded with during the currency of the present financial year, why had they not been left to the new Parliament to deal with? The information given on that railway, except by the member for the district, was most meagre, and he did not take the same favourable view of the prospects of the line as the hon. member for Maryborough and the Colonial Secretary. He was sorry that they had not the means now of obtaining further information on the subject; but that was due to the late stage of the session at which the proposal had been brought down, and to the fact that many more proposals had been submitted than they anticipated would be submitted this session when they passed the Railways Guarantee Act. He certainly never anticipated that a batch of five railways would be submitted so soon, and he did not believe there had been any call on the part of the people for the majority of the proposals now submitted. There had been a call for this line and for the line from Allora to Hendon, but as for the others he doubted whether the people were in favour of

their construction under the guarantee system. They had been asking for railways, but not for railways built at the expense of their own pockets, and he did not think it was wise that the plans of railways for which there had been no demand in the district should be submitted for approval under the guarantee system, as it did not follow that the passage of those plans would be followed by the necessary guarantee.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The line will not be built then.

Mr. MORGAN: Quite so; but it was possible that some of those railways for which they were now asking a guarantee, and for which a guarantee would not be given, would on that account not be constructed for many years, while in the absence of those plans under the Guarantee Act the State might have stepped in and built the lines without any guarantee. The guarantee might not be given, but the passing of those plans would be held as a valid reason in future for not constructing those railways by the State, and he felt sure that in some of those districts the electors would see reason to regret the unnecessary haste that had been displayed, he presumed at the instance of the members representing the districts, in submitting plans for guaranteed railways which the people did not want. If a division was called for he would vote against that line, chiefly because they were not in possession of all the facts which ought to have been submitted to the Committee, and also because he did not think they had sufficient information from the Treasurer as to where the money was to come from.

Mr. DRAKE thought the hon. member for Warwick had been unfair to the leader of the Opposition and to the other members who were in the habit of sitting on the front Opposition bench. The hon. member charged them with not having from the first insisted upon knowing what money was available for the construction of railways, and where that money was to come from. If the hon. member would refer to *Hansard* he would find that upon the motion for the construction of the first railway proposed by the Government the leader of the Opposition, very early in his speech, asked that very question.

Mr. MORGAN: And did not get the information.

Mr. DRAKE: He did not get the information because he was not supported as he should have been. If he had been supported by members on the cross benches who opposed the Government, possibly he might have extorted that information. He (Mr. Drake), who sat on the front Opposition bench by the courtesy of hon. members on that side, had tried to get that information, going so far as to say that if they could not get it he would vote against every railway brought forward by the Government. He voted against several other railways whenever an opportunity occurred, and if he had not made the same demand upon every occasion it was because he became tired of the constant reiteration. The only other information they had been able to get was in consequence of pressure put upon the Government from outside. Tonight they had been further told by the Colonial Secretary that £500,000 was to be asked for, and it was just as much the duty of the hon. member for Warwick, sitting on the cross benches, to extort the information from the Government as it was the duty of the leader of the Opposition. If the position taken up by the leader of the Opposition at the outset had been supported by members of the Opposition generally and by members on the Government cross benches, he felt sure they would have been able to get the information they required. The Government by their snaky method of carrying through their

railway policy had got it through up to the eleventh railway, and they had got it through in this way—

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member should address his remarks to the question before the Committee. We are now considering the plans of a certain railway, and not the general policy of the Government. I am sure the hon. gentleman will see that he will only be in order in addressing himself to the railway before the Committee.

Mr. DRAKE: As the hon. member for Warwick had said, the Chairman was "technically" correct, but he (Mr. Drake) might possibly put himself in order by moving an amendment. The proposal before them was part of the railway policy of the Government, and the question was whether they should approve of that policy or not.

The CHAIRMAN: A general discussion on the railway policy of the Government should take place when the Speaker is in the chair. The Committee is appointed for a certain purpose, and that purpose now is the consideration of the plans of the Colton to Pialba railway.

Mr. DRAKE said he intended to vote against the proposal, because it was part of the Government policy, and the head of the Government had said that they had no railway policy; that railway policies had been the curse and ruin of the colony, and that a railway policy before an election simply meant bribery. That railway was the first proposed under the guarantee system, and when entering upon a new stage of the railway policy they should consider whether it was worthy of approval or not. He saw no reason why that line more than any other should be constructed under the guarantee system. He hoped they would never again see the House engaged on a hair-splitting discussion as to what was a main line and what a branch line. The object of introducing the Railways Guarantee Act was stated to be that it was only desirable to expend loan money on railways that would pay interest on the cost of construction, and in cases where the lines will not return interest on capital they should be constructed on the guarantee principle. But they found now that proposals which the Commissioner told them would pay interest were set down to be constructed as guaranteed railways, whereas proposals which the Commissioner said would probably result in a loss were to be State works. That was directly going back upon all the arguments used at the time the Railways Guarantee Act was passed. That Act was simply passed in order that the State should be protected against non-paying railways. The Government now come to the House and wanted to establish a different rule altogether. The estimated cost of this line was £43,000, but before the House agreed to that work they should consider it in the same way as he said they should consider every railway—namely, was that £43,000 available for that purpose; and if so, was that the best way, in the interests of the country, in which that money could be spent? Upon that they had no information whatever. They were asked to approve of the plans simply on the ground that it was desirable to build the railway. If they adopted that principle they might easily be asked to vote for railways involving an expenditure of untold millions. That all these lines would be carried out simultaneously he thought no one believed, and a little information given by the Colonial Secretary confirmed him in that opinion. The estimated expenditure on the railways already passed amounted to £780,000; on this batch, £177,000; in connection with sugar-mills, £500,000; the total being nearly £1,500,000. The hon. gentleman said they were to be asked on account

of loan for £500,000. The members of the Government were business men, and they were not going to commence the construction of those lines simultaneously. They knew that to commence the construction of a railway it was necessary to get a considerable amount of expensive plant on the ground, and it would not pay to construct a very small section; therefore, seeing that the money to be asked would not be sufficient for the whole, the intention of the Government must be to go on with some and drop others; and when they had induced Parliament to sanction the plans of those fifteen railways, it would be in their power to say which they would go on with and which they would drop. He wished to know from the Secretary for Railways what knowledge he had with regard to the probability of the guarantee being forthcoming in connection with this railway; also, whether those who were expected to be the guarantors had been consulted with regard to this particular railway, and whether the plans had been submitted to them? If not, the thing was a farce. If they could depend on the Commissioner's report that this line would pay from the start, he saw no reason why any local authority should be called upon to give a guarantee, and he felt disposed to move the omission of the words "to be constructed under the provisions of the Railways Guarantee Act of 1895."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said the plans had been brought forward at the urgent request of the Burrum Divisional Board, who were prepared to guarantee the interest required. At one time they were prepared to guarantee 4 per cent. on the cost of construction. The 7th clause of the Railways Guarantee Act provided for the submission of the plans to the guarantors, but the Act had been in force only for about three weeks. All these things would be submitted to the ratepayers, and if the majority decided against giving the guarantee nothing more would be done. Even after the tender was let, it must receive the approval of the guarantors. He thought the ratepayers might be considered a much better select committee than any committee that could be appointed by that Chamber. They would be more careful, because to a certain extent they would be voting money out of their own pockets, and they would not guarantee a line that would not pay interest unless it would benefit their property. This line was quite different from the lines submitted previously, inasmuch as it was a branch line. The leader of the Opposition contended that the Mirani to Cattle Creek line was a branch line, but that had been abandoned by the Government. If the ratepayers were certain that the line would pay without any guarantee, surely it was not asking too much to want them to give a guarantee. The Government were not satisfied in asking Parliament to pass it without a guarantee.

Mr. DRAKE: Why not, if the Commissioner says it will pay?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In his opinion there was very little doubt about the line paying. At any rate, the members for the district, who knew more about it than he did, said it would pay, and they would guarantee it if it did not; so that the Government were not justified in refusing to submit the plans after they had been urgently requested to do so. They had only a limited amount of money at their disposal, and could not build every line that hon. members wished. For the information of the hon. member for Enoggera, he might say that all these lines could not be finished in seven or eight months, but it was the intention of the Government to get on with them all as soon as possible. No Government had ever rushed the plans of a lot of lines before the colony, and they

knew that money borrowed twelve years ago had not yet been spent. No district had suffered more than his own in that respect. The line from Townsville to Hughenden had paid £250,000 profit, which had been spent on the harbour there. These plans had been brought forward at the urgent request of the Burrum Divisional Board, and he hoped they would be passed without delay.

Mr. DRAKE: The Secretary for Railways had said that those who consented would be the persons who paid, and, therefore, they might safely pass this line. He could not agree that those who consented would be those who paid, as it unfortunately happened that local authorities were sometimes represented by gentlemen who really were not the persons who paid.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There must be a poll taken of the ratepayers.

Mr. DRAKE: The local authority might be operated upon by a few wealthy landowners, and induced to consent to a proposal of this kind. Those who would have to pay would very often be small proprietors who would know nothing about the thing until they were called upon to pay to make up a deficiency. The provisions of this Guarantee Act were not thoroughly known yet, and a good many people did not understand that they were rendering their lands liable to be rated at 3d. in the £1. When the land tax of 1d. in the £1 was proposed, people went almost off their heads with fright, but here was a proposal to render it liable to a tax of 3d. He could not agree with the Secretary for Railways that the members of a divisional board were the best committee to inquire into the *bona fides* of one of these lines.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said ratepayers.

Mr. DRAKE did not think the ratepayers would be equivalent to a select committee, as they had not the means of taking evidence and getting at the facts. He was sorry this proposal had not been submitted to a select committee; in fact it would have been better if all these lines had been submitted to select committees. In the few instances in which railways had been so submitted, the result had been beneficial, and in no case had any line been thrown out in consequence of the report of a select committee.

Mr. CHATAWAY: The hon. member for Enoggera said there would be a great danger in the ignorance of landowners, especially small landowners, in regard to their responsibilities in these matters. That was not in accordance with the usual gag of the hon. member about trusting the people. He had yet to learn that small landowners were more ignorant than those whom the hon. member designated "the people," meaning those who did not own land, probably. But that was not the question before them, neither was the sincerity of the Government, upon which the hon. member dwelt at some length. The question was whether they should approve of the plans of this line. It was not where the money was to come from; if it were, the leader of the Opposition would be found voting against the line, because he said he wanted to know where the money was to come from before he voted for any line. He concluded that the hon. member for Enoggera did not understand the position of the leader of the Opposition. The line seemed to be very similar to one they had dealt with at some length. It went through a large amount of poor country, and it ran into "a pocket," further than which it could not go, because railways could not go into the sea. Just as in the case of a railway recently submitted to the House, it was urged that the line should not be built because private owners of property would benefit by it, and there was not a large quantity of Government land for sale.

Mr. POWERS: You have not looked at the plans.

Mr. CHATAWAY was using the arguments used against the line. He was not saying what he believed at all, but was pointing out the unfortunate position in which the leader of the Opposition was placed, in being compelled to vote for a line, much against his will no doubt, that went through a large amount of very bad country and into a pocket that was privately owned. With himself it was not an argument against the line that the land was held by private persons, but it was an argument for a guaranteed line, as the unearned increment, as it was called by members opposite, would go into the hands of the owners of the land. The pocket into which this line would run was as good agricultural land as any in the colony, and though one hon. member had said it was liable to frost, he could say that this year when all the cane on the Mary River had been absolutely destroyed by frost, in the Pialba scrub, where the warm air from the sea crossed them, cane was almost untouched by frost. He had not the slightest doubt that cane could be grown there profitably. In spite of the difficulties of transit, and they had been very great, the farmers there had been encouraged to grow it to a certain extent. They had had 300 or 400 tons carted by road; about 1,000 tons had been taken to Maryborough by sea, and there was about 1,000 tons standing in the fields. There might be from 100 to 120 acres under cane, and there was an immense amount of land cleared and ready to be put under cane as soon as means of transport had been afforded. The leader of the Opposition, in saying that people there carried cane 22 miles to Maryborough, left it to be inferred that they did so profitably; but they did nothing of the sort, as it was absolutely impossible to carry cane that distance at a profit, and that was one of the reasons why, if those people chose to guarantee a railway, the country should build it for them. So far as he could see, there were some 10,000 acres of good scrub land there fit to grow cane, besides some 15,000 acres of very fair land that had already produced oats and other cereal crops. In Melbourne, if a fruiterer wanted to recommend his bananas, he said, unfortunately, that they came, not from Queensland, but from Fiji; but if he wanted to recommend his oranges he said they were Queensland oranges, and that good name had been gained for the Queensland fruit by oranges grown on soil in the neighbourhood of Maryborough similar to much of the soil in the Pialba district. They were producing oranges better than the Parramatta oranges and far better than those produced at Mildura, and he had no doubt that with facilities for transport a very large trade would rapidly spring up. The Committee should not take into consideration the comparison made with Emu Park as a watering place because that line did not pay and was not likely to pay for some time to come. The hon. member for Fitzroy and some other members were against the line because it would help farmers. The hon. member for Clermont told them that it would only help a few small settlers.

Mr. CROSS: I did not say anything of the kind.

Mr. CALLAN: Neither did I.

Mr. CHATAWAY noticed that hon. members were much against any line that had anything to do with farmers. He sympathised with the leader of the Opposition, who, since his conversion, had tried to show the Committee that a line which would benefit farmers, and especially sugar farmers, was a line that should not be built. If it was a line to benefit miners he had no doubt the hon. member for Fitzroy would support it. He supported the line himself because the farmers there by their industry and

enterprise were deserving of a line, and he could not imagine that those men in offering the guarantee had not sufficient brains to know what they were doing.

Mr. POWERS said there was no occasion for what the hon. member had said about him at all, because he was prepared to deal with this line in just the same way as he had been prepared to deal with the other line to which the hon. member had referred. Some hon. members seemed to be under a misapprehension with regard to the line. It was not the members for the district but the Burrum Divisional Board that had forced the line and asked the Government to bring it on at once, so that they might have a chance of getting the line built. After the plan was passed, the question of constructing the railway under the guarantee system would be submitted to the ratepayers, and if they approved, the matter would then go before the Minister. He thought the Minister might have answered the question as to whether the Burrum Board and the Maryborough Council proposed to join in the guarantee.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have no official information on the subject.

Mr. POWERS thought those two local authorities must join in the guarantee, so that there would be two sets of ratepayers who would have to express an opinion favourable to the railway before it could be constructed. The member for Fitzroy had referred to the fact that the Emu Park line did not pay, but it cost over £160,000, while the Pialba railway would only cost £43,000. There was, therefore, a very great difference in the cost. Moreover, the working expenses of the Emu Park line were £6,000 per annum, while the Commissioner estimated that the working expenses of the Pialba line would only amount to £2,000, so that even with the returns the hon. member quoted the proposed railway would pay handsomely. As to the argument of the hon. member for Warwick that people would go down to Pialba with their horses and buggies just the same if the railway was built, he would point out that the distance was 21 miles, so that the whole journey would be 42 miles, and feed for their horses would cost something even at Pialba. If the railway were constructed they would probably be able to get a return ticket for about 3s. 6d., and in that case it was not likely that they would travel such a distance by road. He would vote for the line, because he believed that it was one which would have to be made some day. There was a Government township not far from the terminus, and though a good deal of the best land had been sold, still half of it was unalienated. He would rather the line had gone from Maryborough, but then it would have had to cross Saltwater Creek, and it would have been a most expensive railway. He wanted to know where the money was to come from for this line, as well as for other railways which had been proposed, and he had done his best, without challenging the whole position of the Government, to get that information, but the passing of plans was an entirely different thing from voting the money. As to the argument that the line should have been referred to a select committee, it would have been folly for him to have proposed that, seeing that the Commissioner had stated that the railway would pay from the jump, and he had the fullest information on the subject; but if any other member had made such a proposal he would have supported it, as he would in the case of any other railway. He was sure that if a committee had been appointed the evidence they would have obtained would have been such that the line would have been passed almost without discussion.

Mr. TOOTH: It had been argued that, because that line would pass through a lot of barren country before it got to the good country, therefore it could not pay, but the first few miles of the Isis Junction railway passed through the most God-forsaken country a man ever set eyes on, yet it was the best paying line in the colony. He would also point out to the hon. member for Clermont that in the whole of the district which the proposed line would traverse there was not one kanaka or Chinaman employed, so that if the hon. member was sincere in his desire that sugar should be grown by white men he had now an opportunity of showing his sincerity by voting for that line.

Mr. GRIMES was rather surprised at the opposition shown by hon. members opposite to the construction of this line, especially as it was to be built under the Railways Guarantee Act. If the Maryborough Council and the Burrum Divisional Board were not prepared to give the necessary guarantee the line would not be constructed; but knowing well the route the line would take, and the character of the land, he had no fear but that they would give the guarantee. Those who were promoting the line might court investigation, and the stricter the inquiry the more clearly would it be proved that the railway was one which ought to be built. In 1884 a line was projected in the same direction. It was then reckoned more a mineral line than one to encourage agriculture. A Bill was passed to enable a syndicate to construct the railway, and had it not been for the partial failure of that syndicate the line would have been built at that time. If the syndicate had not taken the matter up, it would no doubt have been built by the Government without any guarantee. He would support the railway because it would open up a good deal of first-class agricultural land, and the settlers had shown, by their enterprise, perseverance, and patience in pushing on cultivation under great difficulties, that they were entitled to a railway. They were now carting their cane something like 18 or 20 miles, and if they attempted to carry on cane-growing under those circumstances it was desirable to encourage them. The line also led to one of the best watering-places in the colony, so that there would be considerable passenger traffic, and eventually it would be extended to deep water at Urangan, and be available for the exportation of coal. He intended to support the line heartily.

Mr. PHILLIPS intended to support the passing of the plans, because the people in the district interested desired the construction of the line, and were prepared to show the faith that was in them by guaranteeing it. At the same time he was not satisfied that it would pay from the jump. The amount allowed for working expenses only gave one train per day each way, and he was quite sure that would not satisfy the requirements of the people visiting the watering-place, although it might suit the agriculturists. He regarded the proposal as a most interesting experiment, and one which might very well be carried out. The amount of money involved was not very large, and, apart from the convenience which it would afford the agriculturists of the district, he realised the advantages of giving people living in a semi-tropical climate an opportunity of visiting the seaside. He was sure the people of Maryborough and Gympie would largely avail themselves of the line.

Mr. CROSS did not think the member for Carpentaria had any proof that the people desired the line, or were anxious to guarantee it. The Secretary for Railways had given by no means a satisfactory answer in reference to the guarantee of the line. The people of Maryborough had not taken a very lively interest in it, and he very much doubted whether they

would, on a vote, accept any share of the guarantee. He did not believe they would give a guarantee for the sake of having a 3s. 6d. journey to Pialba. The hon. member said if he (Mr. Cross) was anxious to see cane grown by white labour he would vote for the line, but it was questionable whether the farmers would be assisted by having to bear the additional burden of £40,000 a year in interest involved in the Government railway proposals. In the report of the evidence taken by the Sugar Commission in 1839, a farmer near Pialba, named Anthony Anderson, stated that a central mill was the only thing they wanted to assist them. Now one of the arguments of the hon. member for Burrum was that a large amount of cane would be sent over the line to Maryborough, but there was that statement that they wanted a central mill. Another witness said they got a total of 12s. a ton for their cane. That was seven years ago, but he doubted whether they were getting more than 9s. now. If the railway was constructed, the farmers would have to pay 2s. a ton railage on their cane, thus reducing the price to 7s., and it appeared to him that what the farmers wanted was not a railway but a central mill. It was not likely if that railway was constructed that the Government would pay from £21,000 to £40,000 for a central mill, and thus deprive the railway of £4,000 worth of freight. And the member for Burrum was perfectly right when he said that if the railway was constructed the farmers would never get a central mill. Then, again, the member for Burrum, who had been thrice mayor of Maryborough, had given them no information as to whether the municipal council was willing to accept any share of the guarantee, and before they had information of that nature they were not in a position to come to a fair conclusion in reference to the proposal.

Mr. BELL thought there were three features of the discussion that might be considered as matters for regret; first, that the exigencies of the Chairman's position compelled him to remain silent while a railway he earnestly desired to see constructed was before the Committee; second, that the discussion was almost entirely out of order, inasmuch as it was one that should have taken place with Mr. Speaker in the chair; and third, the Railways Guarantee Act had been discussed as if it were now under consideration, although it had lately become law. On a proposal to build a line under the Guarantee Act they were entitled to proceed on the assumption that the principles of that Act were the law of the land, and it was not becoming to treat it otherwise. Having travelled over the greater part of the proposed line, he had come to the conclusion that it would be an extraordinary thing to decline to permit it to be constructed, seeing that there was a watering place at one end, with a number of farmers in the locality, and a populous town at the other end, and the people at both places were prepared to give the necessary guarantee. The hon. member for Fitzroy showed unwonted energy in opposing the lines, and pointed to the Emu Park line in his own district as an awful example. But there was no analogy between the two. The Emu Park line was built when the cost of railway construction was excessive, and it was purely a passenger line, while the line now proposed would open up great possibilities in commercial development. Any hon. member who was disposed to oppose the line because of the comparison made by the hon. member for Fitzroy would be doing a thorough injustice to the settlers at Pialba. He was sorry that upon such an interesting occasion as a discussion on the first railway proposal under the guarantee system there should have been such a departure from the merits of the line itself. Very little had been said as to whether the line would pay

or not, but what little had been said pointed to the conclusion that it would pay

Mr. MORGAN: Then why not build it as a State line?

Mr. BELL: If the people were prepared to guarantee that the line would pay, why not accept that guarantee? If they could get all the lines in the colony built on the guarantee plan, surely they would do so! He hoped every line to be built on the guarantee principle would be as good, as sound, and as profitable as he earnestly believed the line to Pialba would be.

Mr. McMASTER expressed his surprise at the opposition shown by the other side, particularly by the hon. member for Enoggera and the hon. member for Clermont. The latter stated just now that the Government had received no guarantee, and asked how the Government knew that the settlers were prepared to give the guarantee? By opposing the resolution he was preventing the Government from ascertaining what he wanted to know. Immediately the plans were adopted the local authorities interested would take a poll. Why should they go to the trouble and expense of taking a poll not knowing whether the Government would bring the plans forward or not? If the hon. member for Enoggera and the hon. member for Clermont were in earnest they ought not to oppose this line. They were informed that there was a very great quantity of sugar grown in the district, and that a great deal of land was waiting to be planted. They were also told that the cane was all grown by white labour; that there was not a single black man employed in the district. If those hon. members were in earnest in wishing to do away with black labour they should support this line, and give the white farmers an opportunity of growing cane profitably. The fact was that they were not anxious to do away with black labour, or else they were only quibbling over this line. As to the passenger traffic on this line, if an hon. member would take a trip to Sandgate on a Saturday afternoon or a holiday he would see the working classes there by the thousand, and there was no doubt that they would use this proposed line in the same manner. The hon. member for Clermont had been in a difficulty the whole evening in trying to find fault with this line, and his only reason was that the line had been brought in by the Government. Like the hon. member for Dalby he was very sorry that the duties of the Chairman did not permit him to speak, as that gentleman would be well able to show that there was a necessity for this line.

Mr. HARDACRE said hon. members on his side were at a disadvantage in knowing so little about the prospects of this line paying, and of the locality through which it was proposed to be built. There was very little information in the report of the Commissioner, and he had no evidence to induce him to vote for the line. Apart from that there were several serious reasons for voting against this and other lines, the chief one being that they would be giving the Government power, which they had no right to have at the end of the last session of the Parliament, to go to the country and obtain votes by the promises of railways. Parliament had given them a very large power to bribe the constituencies to return them to power again. It had become almost notorious that this was a railway bribe for the next election.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order. The question before the Committee is the approval of these plans and sections of the branch line from Colton to Pialba, and the hon. member must confine his remarks to that question.

Mr. HARDACRE : He was dealing with that line as well as others, and thought he was perfectly right in giving his reasons to the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN : The hon. member will be quite in order in referring to the question before the Committee, but I must tell him again that he will not be in order in referring to other railways which have to come on for discussion.

Mr. HARDACRE said he was referring to this—

The CHAIRMAN : Perhaps the hon. member has not heard the question. I will state it again.

Question stated.

Mr. HARDACRE said his argument applied to the Pialba railway. It was one of those railways which would give the Government the power to go to the constituencies and bribe them to vote for them.

The CHAIRMAN : The hon. member is not in order in making use of the language he is now using. I tell him for the last time he must confine his remarks to the question before the Committee.

Mr. HARDACRE submitted that he was dealing with the question. The Government knew some of these lines would not be gone on with. Former Governments had done the same thing, particularly the Government which passed the £10,000,000 loan, and he was not going to assist in following that course. In addition to the guarantee, he held that there should have been some recognition of the betterment principle, under which all railways should be constructed. They had the statement from the Commissioner that the railway would undoubtedly increase the value of the freehold property in the district. The Railways Guarantee Act was simply a bastard copy of the New Zealand Betterment Act. It carefully left out the principle which provided that the increased value to lands, which the construction of a line brought about, should be repaid to the Commissioner, and which would help to make it a remunerative railway to build.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : What has this got to do with the route ?

The CHAIRMAN : I am sure the hon. member will see that his remarks are not relevant to the question before the Committee. He is now making a speech which should have been made when the Bill to which he refers was before the House.

Mr. HARDACRE was not going to dwell upon that. He would not give his sanction to any lines but those which were urgently required. That was the position which he had taken up from the first, and, though he had no special objection to this line, he objected to give those people the power they were asking on the information before the Committee, and because the proposal did not embody the betterment principle, which should be embodied in all railway proposals.

Mr. DANIELS said the hon. member was very much concerned about building railways where they were not wanted ; but, if this line was not wanted, how was it that the people were willing to guarantee it ? When they guaranteed half the interest it was a sure sign that they thought the railway would pay. He would support other railways that had been submitted if they had been guaranteed, and he was going to support this line. The hon. member for Carpentaria asserted that the Commissioner's estimate was wrong, and that the line would require more than one train per day. If that was so, the line should pay even better than the Commissioner's report said it would. There was not the slightest doubt that the central mill would be wanted in the district

as well as the railway, and it was very likely it would come, too. Some hon. members had been much concerned because they did not know whether the divisional board and the Maryborough Council were willing to give the guarantee. They need not be a bit concerned about that, because if they were not willing to give the guarantee the line would not be built. He liked the guarantee principle right through ; and it would save the House being pestered with railway demands from all over the colony. If no guarantee was required, everybody would come there with a petition for a railway, and in the case of every one they would be able to show on paper that the line, if built, would pay from 10 to 15 per cent. ; and if they were asked to guarantee 2 per cent. they would quickly draw in their horns and their lines. They had passed the Guarantee Act, and wherever the people of a district were willing to guarantee the payment of 2 per cent. on a line they should have it, and he did not think any railway ought to be built unless it was guaranteed.

Mr. GROOM sympathised with the Chairman, as a member for the district, in being unable from his position to get up and speak upon this proposal. He (Mr. Groom) had been over the district to be traversed by this line, and he had had personal intercourse with the farmers at the Pialba end of the line, and with some who were intermediate, and a finer lot of colonists did not exist in any part of Queensland. From what he had heard of their early struggles from themselves he had promised that he would help them in any way he could if any matter connected with their welfare came before the Chamber. When he was in the district the great body of the people said that their future prosperity as farmers and sugar-cane growers depended entirely upon a sugar-mill being erected in their midst, and in order to get the sugar-mill they undertook to sign a contract that they would grow cane entirely by white labour. They made out as strong a case for a central sugar-mill as any of the sugar-cane growers who came before the Sugar Commission in 1889, but he understood that it was part of the contract that if this railway was built those farmers were not to get a sugar-mill.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : Who made the contract ?

Mr. GROOM : It was stated in the newspapers that such a contract had been made, and he believed he was correct in saying that the hon. member for Burrum had written a letter to Mr. Corser informing him that a contract had been entered into by which the sugar-planters at Pialba were to send their cane for a given number of years to a factory in Maryborough. If that was so, those farmers were placed at a certain disadvantage, because they would be heavily handicapped by the long carriage to Maryborough. He was not so sanguine as the Commissioner as to that being a paying line from the jump. Still it would be a great stimulus to the farming industry in the Pialba district, and eventually prove a paying line, and as the people were prepared to guarantee 2 per cent. on the cost of construction he was prepared to vote for the railway. But he should not like it to be understood that the farmers were to be bound by a contract, written or otherwise, to forego the privileges of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act if the railway were constructed. He hoped the Minister would assure the Committee that such would not be the case, as there were several members on that side who were not hostile to the railway but did not like that aspect of the question.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS had no knowledge of any agreement made between the people of Maryborough and the cane-growers at Pialba, that in the event of that line being

constructed a sugar-mill should not be erected at Pialba. No application had come before him, as the Minister administering the Sugar Works Guarantee Act for a mill, but the application had been made for this railway. When application was made for a sugar-mill it would be dealt with on its merits. If there were 13,000 acres of good sugar land in the district there was ample room for three or four large mills, and if a mill was erected they would be in a much better position to benefit by the railway. There were now three mills in the Isis Scrub. Before the mills were erected there was no traffic. The mills had caused traffic, and the same thing would probably take place at Pialba. No doubt they would get a mill there by-and-by, but in the meantime the Committee might fairly discuss this railway on its merits. A good case had been made out for its construction, especially under the Railways Guarantee Act. The people were most anxious to get the railway finished before the next crushing season, and if the plans were not passed now the matter would have to be postponed for twelve months. He believed there was sufficient land at Pialba for a guarantee for the railway, but failing that he believed from what he had heard from Maryborough, though he had no official information on the subject, that the Maryborough Council would make up the difference. They had now discussed the railway for several hours, it had been before the country for the last ten years, and they had as much information about it as they had had about railways that had been before the Committee. He hoped that they would come to a decision on the subject, and deal with it on its merits.

Mr. SMYTH intended to vote against the line. He had never favoured the guarantee principle, as his experience was that the guarantor generally had to pay, and he looked upon the Railways Guarantee Act as a measure that would be made use of by persons who had a certain amount of land to dispose of. They would work up a railway proposal to concert pitch, perhaps pay the rate for the first twelve months, and then work up a land sale with the assistance of a little champagne or whisky, get rid of their property, and leave the persons who came after them to pay the guarantee. There were four other guaranteed lines coming on, and he would vote against every one of them. Instead of building a railway to Pialba, it would be far better to put up a good mill, which would serve the interests of the people better, because, instead of sending fifteen tons of sugar-cane to Maryborough, they would then only require to send one ton of sugar. It had been said the Gympie people would use this line, but that town had a watering place of its own, and was not dependent upon Pialba. The Gympie people could get to their watering place at Noosa, 22 miles by rail and 10 miles by road; they had invested their money there, and had no intention of travelling 80 miles to Pialba. This line was proposed simply in the interests of a few landowners who wanted to sell their land or wines and spirits at Pialba. He did not believe guaranteed railways would pay; and supposing the lines were built to Pialba, Redcliffe, and Allora on the guarantee principle, what were the Government going to do if they did not pay? Were they coming down like pawnbrokers or money-lenders to put the bailiffs on to the farms of those who had guaranteed? He looked upon the whole system as a rotten one, and if this line were carried he would vote against every other guaranteed line. There was one of the finest roads in Australia leading to Pialba, a road which a bicycle could travel in an hour and a-half, and the people would ride and drive their buggies to Pialba in spite of the railway. What had happened in the case of Ballarat

and Bendigo? In consequence of the cheap price of produce and the general depression, people were competing with the railways with their carts and buggies. The same thing was going on on the Darling Downs, the farmers competing against the railways along roads subsidised by the Government, and yet in the face of that experience they had such a proposal as this. The argument had been used that £250 had been taken at a toll-bar along the Pialba road. That was rather against the whole scheme, because it showed that the people would use the road railway or no railway. A good deal had been said about the amount of cane that would be carried along the line, but he believed it was a myth. The railway would have to go into every farmer's back yard to get the cane. The member for the district told them the line would be extended to deep water, and coal shipped at Urangan. No doubt the coal of the district was good; it was fine gas and steaming coal, but for shipping it was of no use. That coal could not be sent to China or San Francisco. Load a ship with that coal, and send her on a thirty days' voyage, and you would never hear of her again, because, the coal being so rich, spontaneous combustion would take place. It had been said that if a line was constructed to Port Alma Rockhampton would be ruined. What would the people of Maryborough say if a township was established at Urangan, and all the trade went there instead of coming up the river? What would the hotel-keepers and wine and spirit merchants do? They wanted "Jack" to come up to Maryborough and drink his grog there. They wanted the wharfage dues and the harbour dues, and all the other advantages of shipping coming up the river. Taking it on the whole, the railway was for a few persons who owned land and wanted to get rid of it.

Mr. TOOTH: Name.

Mr. SMYTH: He never took advantage of his privileges as a member to give names. There was one speech delivered against the line which he admired, although coming from a man he did not admire politically, because he sat upon a rail. The hon. member for Warwick had spoken the truth and the whole truth about the line, and he felt inclined to pat the hon. member on the back. His (Mr. Smyth's) speech would appear in the Maryborough papers, and he would be subject to a good deal of odium for his opposition to the line, but he was prepared to face that so long as the truth was told. If his constituents asked him to stand again he would be willing to do so, and would be quite willing to account for his action in regard to that line, because they, at all events, had not clamoured for it. He had no faith in these branch lines; there were too many of them—from Toowoomba especially—and none of them paid. People would bring forward enough statistics to kill Bishop Colenso to show that a line would pay; but he was satisfied that in this case, as in others, it would be found that the line would not pay expenses.

Mr. REID complimented the hon. member on the speech he had just made. He was thoroughly in earnest, and there was no sitting on the rail. But as the hon. member had stated that the line was wanted in the interests of a few property-owners at Pialba, he suggested that the Chairman should call upon the Acting Chairman to take the chair in order that he might reply to the speech made by the hon. member, Mr. Smyth.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said this was not the first time he had heard the hon. member for Gympie give utterance to such statements in connection with the proposed lines.

Mr. GLASSEY: Are the statements true?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No. Was it likely that the ratepayers would give a guarantee in connection with a line to be constructed for the benefit of a few landowners at Pialba? He was sorry the hon. member had not forgotten the old animosity between Maryborough and Gympie. Before long he would probably be a prominent member asking for a line on the guarantee principle from Gympie to a place called Tewantin, yet he said he would never give his consent to any guarantee railway. He hoped the hon. gentleman would remember that his own constituents were as directly interested in getting to a watering place as the people of Maryborough, and if he would be a little more unselfish and give Maryborough that which he would like to give to Gympie, he would be more appreciated by the people in both places.

Mr. SMYTH said he had been approached several times about the construction of a railway to Noosa by a land syndicate who had obtained a very elaborate report of the line from the hon. member for Carpentaria. He had told his constituents that he was totally opposed to making a line to Noosa unless there was some probability of it paying.

Mr. KINGSBURY said the arguments from the other side seemed to be directed mainly against any resumption whatever of public works. It was summarised best by the hon. member for Clermont, who said that this was to be a guarantee line, and the men whose guarantee was required were not likely to give it; in fact, he knew they would not give it. Consequently it would add very heavily to the burdens of the poor farmers who had to pay the interest. As the line was not to be built, it was clear that it would add greatly to their burdens. The hon. member also said that the lines already approved of would entail an expenditure in interest of £40,000 per annum, which would have to be paid by the poor farmer. But as the line was not to be built except upon the guarantee principle, and nobody was going to give a guarantee, what was the use of talking?

Mr. DRAKE was very sorry there had been a difference of opinion between the Colonial Secretary and the hon. member for Gympie as to whether the statement of the latter was correct. Certainly the statement of the hon. member was a very interesting one, and a great deal more to the point than some speeches that had been delivered by hon. members opposite. The hon. member for Mackay gave them a dissertation upon oranges, which the Chairman allowed to pass, but he was not prepared to admit that the oranges from Maryborough were better than those grown at Enoggera, where they had grown the finest oranges in the colony.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. member that I think the hon. member for Mackay was quite in order in showing the produce that would be carried by this railway.

Mr. DRAKE: The principal other product was sugar-cane, and the hon. member for the Valley went out of his way to drag in the black labour question, charging him and the hon. member for Clermont with inconsistency. But they were quite consistent. There was no black labour at Pialba, but it was employed at the mills in Maryborough, to which this line was intended to carry cane. He would like to see a mill erected at Pialba, but, as the principal produce to be carried on this line would be cane, the residents who gave the guarantee would prevent any mill being erected there, because it would do away with the necessity for carrying the cane to Maryborough.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It would have the sugar from two or three mills to carry.

Mr. DRAKE: If they had two or three mills, there would be less reason to carry the

cane away. If the report of the Commissioner was correct, the line should be constructed so that this liability would not be thrown upon the people at Pialba, and there would be no possible inducement to refrain from building a mill there. He therefore moved the omission of the words "to be constructed under the provisions of the Railways Guarantee Act of 1895."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he could not compliment the hon. member upon being very consistent. He said he would oppose every line until he was satisfied as to where the money was to come from, and yet in this case, where there was a guarantee, he wanted to remove the guarantee. What he really wanted was to shelve the line altogether, so that Pialba would have no railway at all. If the line would pay the guarantee would not be called up; but when people were willing to guarantee a line, no Government would be justified in placing the plans before Parliament without that guarantee. He hoped the hon. member would withdraw his amendment. The Treasurer had said that he was prepared to show where the money was to come from; that he had sufficient money to build those railways.

Mr. DRAKE: Without a loan?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. gentleman said distinctly that he was prepared to carry on railway construction for the next twelve months without a loan; and the Government would build every line they had brought before the House if Parliament would grant the money. What more consistency could they show than that. There was not one line that would be dangled before any electors. They had stated that every line they proposed could be proceeded with within a given time, and that House would be asked to vote the money to build those lines.

Mr. POWERS: The hon. gentleman had already said that the only way the Government would build this line was under the guarantee system. He thought it ought to be built without a guarantee, and that the guarantee principle should not have been applied to South Queensland only. The larger proportion of the proposed expenditure was to be in the North, and no part of it was to be guaranteed, though when they came to deal with the South there were five railways to be guaranteed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are all branch lines.

Mr. POWERS: That was unfair. The people of the district said they were prepared to guarantee this line, because they were told that that was the only way in which they could get it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They offered to guarantee 4 per cent.

Mr. POWERS: Yes, because they were so satisfied that the line would pay. The only persons who said that were the members of the divisional board. The council had not said so. He believed the members of the board thought they were expressing the opinions of the people they represented, and it was to be left to the people to say whether they would guarantee it or not. He would not vote for the amendment because he believed that the people were prepared to offer the guarantee.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said the issue between the two sides of the House was that the Government said that they were prepared to go on with public works, and the Opposition—the friends of the working man—said, "You shall not go on with public works."

Mr. POWERS: They do not say anything of the sort.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: The Government said they had a definite policy to put before the House, and, without any extra cost to the

taxpayers, they were prepared to find employment for labour. According to the statement of one hon. member on the other side there were 96,000 unemployed in the colony. He thought the statement an exaggeration, but taking off 50 per cent. they had 48,000 unemployed; and when the Government proposed to find employment for them by a scheme of public works that would not involve extra taxation the "friends of the people" said they would have none of it—that they would have no public works.

Mr. GLASSEY: Who said that?

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: That was said on the other side. There had not been a single works proposal brought forward by the Government that had not been opposed by the other side, and there had not been a single scheme proposed for giving work to the unemployed that had not been opposed by the quasi friends of labour, because it had been brought forward by the Government.

Mr. OGDEN had never heard the hon. gentleman make a more uncharitable statement. The hon. member for Mackay had said about the same thing when he accused hon. members on the Opposition side of opposing the line because it was wanted by farmers. They had voted the £500,000 asked for, mainly for the sugar planters, and now because they were taking each line proposed on its merits—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You have done a lot of logrolling.

Mr. OGDEN: The Mirani line was the only one that had been rejected, and he did not see where the logrolling came in. Was it fair to expect members who had no opportunity of going over the country to vote an expenditure of £50,000 with only the sheet of paper containing the Commissioner's report before them?

Mr. REID: What did you have for the Hughenden-Winton line?

Mr. OGDEN: They had more information, even without the report of the select committee, on that line than on any other line in the colony. The statement that they were opposing the line because they were opposed to public works was simply monstrous as an argument. He thought a good case had been made out for building this railway under the guarantee principle, but if he came into the House again he would insist upon a select committee on each railway submitted to the House.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON said it was about time they came to a decision upon the question, and he was sorry the hon. member for Enoggera seemed to wish to delay it. He thought the hon. member's action was inconsistent with that he took in connection with the Mirani railway. He himself had been prepared to support that line if it had been proposed to construct it on the guarantee principle, and under the circumstances he could not consistently refuse to admit the application of the principle to this line, though he might be opposed to the line if proposed without the guarantee. The hon. member for Mackay, in suggesting inconsistency on the part of hon. members who were opposed to the Mirani line and yet supported this line, had referred to many points of similarity between the two lines; but he had failed to lay sufficient stress upon the fact that the guarantee principle had not been applied to the Mirani line. If it had been, it would certainly have removed his objection to it. He could not support the amendment.

Mr. DRAKE thought the inconsistency rested with the Government, and not with him. The Mirani-Cattle Creek railway was proposed on a very unfavourable report from the Commissioner with regard to its paying qualities. He showed that for two years that line could not pay. That was a reason why it should be constructed on the

guarantee principle, so that the persons locally interested should make up the deficiency. But in this case the Commissioner expressed the opinion that the line would almost, if not quite, pay interest and expenses. That was a reason for not insisting on a guarantee for this line, and he did not think that he was at all inconsistent in the matter.

Mr. GLASSEY wished to reply to the statement of the hon. member for Balonne that hon. members on that side, who were supposed to represent the wage-earners and workers of the colony, were opposed to all the railways brought forward by the Government, though they would afford employment for the vast number of persons who were idle. That statement was absolutely untrue. Some of his colleagues had not been able to see eye to eye on all the railways proposed, but with the exception of the Mirani-Cattle Creek railway, the majority of the Labour members had supported the railway policy of the Government. They had supported them on the Winton railway, which was the most contentious line submitted, on the extension from Mareeba to Atherton, on the Rockhampton railway, on the Cunnamulla railway, on the extension to deep water at the Eagle Farm meat works, and on other lines. He hoped that hon. members who were inclined to be prejudiced against that party would be a little more accurate in their references. With regard to this line, his sympathy all the evening had been with the proposal of the Government. He did not exactly agree with the action taken by the hon. member for Enoggera, but was inclined to go with the hon. member for Bulimba when he said that if it was right to build the Mirani-Cattle Creek railway on the guarantee principle, it was not wrong to build this line on the same principle. Still, in view of the statement of the Commissioner with regard to the paying capacity of the line, there was something to be said in favour of the contention of the hon. member for Enoggera, that as it would be a paying line it might very well be built by the State without a guarantee. It had been said that the line would chiefly benefit the farmers in the Pialba district, but he could not entirely endorse that statement. The line would perhaps be, to a considerable extent, in the interest of persons who had considerable portions of land to dispose of, land that might be heavily encumbered, and that would be enhanced in value by the construction of the railway. When the Colonial Secretary was combating the very strong statements of the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, he asked the hon. gentleman if those statements were true, and he did so with the view of getting information, which the Committee were entitled to, and which would guide him in coming to a decision. He was waiting and anxious for authentic and accurate information before coming to a decision. At one time he was favourable to the proposal to construct the Winton railway, but after listening to the discussion he thought the balance of argument was in favour of the contention of the hon. member for Rockhampton. He was in the same position in this case; but so far as he had been able to obtain information, he was favourable to the proposal. It was unfair of hon. members to send forth to the country statements that members sitting on his side had opposed the proposals of the Government because they came from the Government. He had said again and again that any measure or motion which would tend to improve the conditions of life in Queensland, no matter from whence it emanated, would receive his support, but that if he did not approve of it it would receive his utmost opposition. He asked hon. members—especially the hon. member for Balonne, who was extremely reckless in his

statements—to justify what they had said. The hon. member's statements were absolutely untrue, and could not be borne out by facts.

Mr. KINGSBURY said that during his enforced absence from the House, through failing health, many of the railway proposals of the Government had been passed. He was under the impression they had been opposed one by one by the Labour party, and he rose to express his regret for making that statement. He accepted the assurance of the hon. member that the Labour party had really been in sympathy with the Government, and he trusted that as general elections were the order of the day now, coalition would be the order of the day in future. He quite expected to see the Labour party and the Government sitting side by side, and the other side empty.

Mr. GLASSEY said he could not gather from the hon. member's previous remarks what he was going to do; but in the early part of the session he showed a very hostile attitude to borrowing. The hon. gentleman said that a loan policy meant "borrow, boom, and burst." He (Mr. Glassey) did not want to leave any false impressions in the minds of hon. members. He would vote for the plans of this railway as he voted for others; but, notwithstanding his approval of those lines, if money was to be borrowed for their construction unquestionably he should oppose the borrowing of that money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. D. H. Dalrymple) said he did not quite understand the position the hon. member for Burke assumed. He rose to clear the Labour party from the charge of having opposed the so-called Government policy, and he expressed his earnest desire that the whole of the people should understand that he and his friends were in favour of the railways; and he now got up and said if it was necessary to borrow any money he would oppose it. In the interest of those he professed to represent he earnestly desired the construction of the railways, but, notwithstanding that, he was opposed to providing means for their construction. It was not so long ago since the official organ of the party opposite stated that the whole so-called Government policy was corrupt. The hon. member for Enggera said it was bribing and debauching the constituencies, and the official organ of the Labour party made the same statement.

Mr. DRAKE, in explanation, said at the time he used the expression "bribing the constituencies" he was quoting an expression of the Premier's.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The hon. member told them that the introduction of a policy of that description before the elections was intended to bribe the constituencies, and he wondered that the hon. gentleman did not stand to his guns. With regard to the official statement, the organ of the party entirely coincided with the opinion which the hon. member expressed—that the policy of the Government was a corrupt one. It was also stated that members of the Labour party knew it was a corrupt policy, and therefore they would oppose it; but hon. members had abandoned their time-honoured leaders, and their present leader was the Secretary for Railways. He hoped they would continue to follow that leader.

Mr. GLASSEY said the hon. gentleman had misconstrued his remarks. What he said was that he voted for the passing of certain plans and books of reference believing that they were correct, and that the statements made by the Minister were accurate, but beyond the passing of those plans and books of reference he was not prepared to go; that was to say, he was not prepared to borrow money to add to the in-

debtedness of the colony. He did not want the statement of the Secretary for Public Instruction, that there had been a change in the attitude of himself and his friends, to go forth without contradiction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that all he asked the Committee to do was to pass the plans, and he thought there had been a lot of unnecessary talk. Full information had been given by the members representing the district, and they might very well come to a vote now.

Mr. POWERS thought it was just as well that the Secretary for Public Instruction had been drawn. They had been told all along that there was to be no loan.

Mr. KINGSBURY: No one said that on this side.

Mr. POWERS: The Premier had said, in reply to questions, "No loan." In reply to questions asked by him, the hon. gentleman said he had the money available. If that money was available there was no need for a loan. If it was not available, the Committee had been misled till this evening.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said they had not been misled. The Premier said he had sufficient money to carry on railways this year, and that Parliament would not be asked to pass a Loan Bill this session. He said he had sufficient to go on with for the next twelve months without borrowing any money at all.

Mr. McDONALD: If what the hon. member said was correct, then what the Secretary for Public Instruction said was not correct. The Premier had stated that there was no works policy; now the Secretary for Public Instruction distinctly stated that members of the Labour party consistently opposed the Government works policy. He thought the whole debate had been a disgrace to the Chamber, because there was hardly a member on the other side who had not been distinctly out of order.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You are out of order now.

Mr. McDONALD was aware of that—that his remarks were not relevant to the question, but members on the other side had been making irrelevant speeches all the evening. If questions were to be debated in this way, the business would not be got through in the time indicated by the Premier. If this line would pay without a guarantee, why should the people be asked to give a guarantee? The people in the different divisional boards would be put to a great deal of expense in connection with the taking of the poll and the making out of the guarantee. If the line was going to pay, why should they be put to that expense, and why should not the State construct the line without a guarantee? He understood that the Railways Guarantee Act was only to be applied in cases where a line would not pay working expenses and interest at the rate of 4 per cent. If the Government insisted upon a guarantee in this case, they must have some doubts as to the line paying. He had been quite prepared to build the Mirani-Cattle Creek line on the guarantee principle, because there was a doubt of that line paying, and he desired to protect the Treasury. They were practically asked to pass the resolution in anticipation, because no poll had been taken on the question outside the one divisional board, and they did not know whether the Maryborough Council would agree to join in the guarantee. The Government had incurred expense in surveying the line, and in preparing the plans and papers connected with the railway, but it would have been quite time to do that, and to discuss the proposal, when the Maryborough Council had intimated their willingness to join the

Burrum Board in giving a guarantee. He hoped that they would confine themselves more to the question in future.

Amendment put and negatived.

Original question put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 45.

Messrs. Tozer, Philp, Barlow, Byrnes, Dalrymple, Dickson, Crombie, Reid, Grimes, Kerr, Tooth, Cameron, Morehead, Smith, Allan, Leahy, Thomas, Bell, Fogarty, Cadell, Groom, Ogden, Rawlings, W. Thorn, Daniels, Jackson, Duffy, Powers, Browne, Phillips, Battersby, Lord, Kingsbury, Fisher, Wilkinson, Corfield, McMaster, Foxton, Stephens, Chataway, Petrie, Midson, Agnew, Glassey, and Hamilton.

NOES, 5.

Messrs. Drake, Cross, Hardacre, McDonald, and Smyth.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The House resumed; and the CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions, and the resolutions were adopted.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL No. 3.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Council, returning this Bill without amendment.

#### NORTH PINE TO REDCLIFFE RAILWAY.

COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed branch railway from North Pine to Redcliffe, in length 9 miles 69 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Wednesday, 13th November, 1895, to be constructed under the provisions of the Railways Guarantee Act of 1895.

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

said this was a line very much like the one they had been discussing the whole evening. It was a line to a watering place near Brisbane, some 9 miles in length, and the estimated cost was £36,000. The Commissioner set down the interest and working expenses at £2,500 per annum. The residents at Redcliffe thought the Government should build this line without any guarantee at all, but the Government refused, and, at the request of the Redcliffe Divisional Board, he had laid the plans and specifications before the House. The board now said that if the plans and specifications were approved of they would endeavour to get the ratepayers to guarantee the line, and unless that were done it would not be built. So far as his knowledge went, there was not much probability of the line paying at the start, but still there might be a considerable traffic. A number of people resided at Redcliffe, but the means of communication were not sufficient to insure a very large population, although a good many people went there on holidays. If the line were built it would afford another seaside resort to the people of Brisbane. Of course it might be said that there were three seaside resorts already for Brisbane and the south-western part of the colony, and that the only line that paid was the Sandgate line, which was a cheap one, only 12 miles in length. This line would, he hoped, in time pay as well as the Sandgate line. If the residents of the district were willing to guarantee the line he thought the Government would be justified in building it. It would not take many passengers to pay the interest and working expenses. He hoped the Committee would pass the plans and specifications, and then if the inhabitants of the district were willing to give the necessary guarantee the Government would be quite justified in going on with the line.

Mr. POWERS said they had been dealing with a line where there was only one watering place in the district and where there was an

agricultural settlement near it, and as in that case so much had been said as to the possibility of the line paying and the necessity for a guarantee, the present line was one that should be seriously considered, and the Secretary for Railways should give them some information as to whether the Redcliffe Board were in a position to give the necessary guarantee under the Act. He did not know the position of the board or the value of property in the division. They should know something about the guarantors when they were asked to accept their guarantee for £2,500.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; £1,250 is the extent of their liability. They pay 2 per cent. interest and half the loss on working.

Mr. POWERS: The hon. gentleman should be able to tell the Committee whether a rate of 3d. in the £1 over the benefited area of the line would cover the guarantee for the railway. Unless that was so the line could not be built under the Act.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS understood that the Redcliffe Board was in a very good position, but he could assure the House that unless they could get a sufficient ratable area the Government would not go on with the line. There must be property which at 3d. in the £1 would yield £1,250 per annum. He had explained that all those plans had been put forward at the request of the different boards, because they did not want to lose twelve months. Under clause 7 of the Act they had power to lay the plans before Parliament, and if afterwards there was sufficient property in the benefited area to meet the guarantee for a line they would be prepared to go on with it, but not otherwise.

Mr. BATTERSBY was surprised to hear the hon. member for Maryborough ask about the benefited area when he knew that the House had nothing to do with the benefited area; that was a matter for the local authority to settle. Those were local authority and local option lines, and further than that they were proposals that lines should now be constructed at the will of the people. No benefited area had been talked about in connection with the Pialba line. He was satisfied, after fifteen years' experience of local authorities and the people who elected them, that they were as well able to look after their own affairs as members of that Committee. He had listened to some very amusing speeches that afternoon from members who distrusted everybody but themselves, but if they thought that all the good sense of the colony was in that House they were much mistaken. He was prepared to speak on the last line, but he thought it better to hold his tongue until that one in which he was personally interested came on. Syndicates had been referred to in connection with the other line, but the syndicates at Humpybong had a very small part of it. He had seen the growth of the place; and when it was connected with Caboolture the people down there took the responsibility of borrowing something over £4,000, something like nine or ten years ago, for the purpose of erecting jetties to enable steamers to come in there, and the Colonial Secretary would bear him out that they had never shirked that responsibility. They did not do so while they were connected with Caboolture, and he was satisfied that they had not done so since from his knowledge of the Redcliffe Board. This line had been dangled before the electors during the last fourteen or fifteen years, and when he got a seat in that House in 1883 it was dangled before them, and a certain individual told the people that if they returned him they would get the railway, but they did not do it. In 1890 the Government then in power, and of which the hon. member for Maryborough was a member, agreed that the railway

should be fairly taken up, and at that time plans had been prepared for laying upon the table of the House, and if the coalition had been delayed for two or three weeks he believed the House would have passed them then. Ever since the coalition took place those who represented the ratepayers had been agitating for the construction of this line; they had been prepared to give a guarantee of 4 per cent. under the old Bill which the Council had thrown out. Hon. members had before them now purely a local option bunch of railways, and not the Government bunch of railways at all; and if the House passed the plans, the local authorities would then have to advertise their intention to give the Government a guarantee for the construction of the railways. Within twenty-eight days after the publication of the notice in the *Gazette* and some newspaper generally circulating in the district, any twenty ratepayers in the benefited area could demand a poll to decide whether the guarantee should be given by the local authority. As to a syndicate influencing the decision, if they had £100,000 worth of property in Queen street they would only have nine votes, and they would have no more in voting on a guarantee. The people in the Redcliffe division were quite able to look after themselves, and they had, through their representatives, asked for the line under the Railways Guarantee Act. Let the Committee pass the plan, and allow the ratepayers to take the next step. There need be no discussion on the plans, sections, and books of reference of those five railways.

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the railway before the Committee. The other railways will come on afterwards.

Mr. BATTERSBY apologised if he had gone outside the question. He did not see why the Committee, after passing the Bill for the construction of railways on the guarantee principle, should make any difficulty about passing the plan when it was submitted by the Government, seeing that the Government would not build the line without a guarantee. He was informed by the Secretary for Railways that the value of ratable land in the Redcliffe division was £220,000. He was satisfied that the people would give a satisfactory guarantee, and that the construction of the line would induce many people to go there from Brisbane and suburbs, Toowoomba, Warwick, and other places—people who would not go at present, as they did not care to face the journey by steamer to Humpybong or Redcliffe. He hoped the Committee would approve of the plan by a substantial majority.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON: As the hon. member for Moreton had said, the question of the construction of a railway to Redcliffe had been a long time under consideration, and he had always thought that if a cheap line could be constructed from a convenient point on the North Coast line it would open up for closer settlement a very attractive portion of country, especially for those who desired to live at the seaside. The estimated cost of the proposed line was somewhat higher than he had hoped it would have been, but he believed that in time the line would become remunerative. He quite agreed with the Secretary for Railways that it was not likely to pay from the jump; he thought its success would chiefly depend upon the settlement which took place on the peninsula. It would open up seven or eight miles of esplanade fronting the Bay, all of which was very attractive for settlement, and a great deal of which was already settled. Along that eight miles there were no less than three distinct communities settled—namely, at Woody Point, Redcliffe, and Scarborough. This line was intended to be taken

to the middle of the peninsula, so that it would afford facilities to settlement on either side for convenient access to town. The Redcliffe Divisional Board was composed of good business men who could be relied on, and he believed that the interest on the cost of the line would be duly provided for. Unless the ratepayers endorsed the action of the divisional board, of course the whole thing would lapse, but from what he had heard he believed a great number of the ratepayers were inclined to incur the liability. Reference had been made to several seaside branch lines constructed about Brisbane not paying, with the exception of the Sandgate line. The Sandgate line would no doubt pay better were it not saddled with another branch which detracted from its paying capabilities. He desired to make a remark about the Cleveland line, which had been referred to during the debate. There were sufficient reasons for it not paying, inasmuch as it stopped short of Cleveland by about 2 miles, and anyone going there on an excursion had to take into consideration the difficulty of carrying supplies from the station to the jetty. Of course, on the road there were the townships of Wynnum, Manly, and Wellington Point, and there was no doubt that Wynnum was now attracting a population second only to Sandgate, the numbers of people going there during holiday times being very large. He believed the section as far as Manly would, if it were treated separately, show a profit; and if the whole line were extended to Cleveland proper there was a fair chance of it returning reasonable interest on the capital expended. He had risen chiefly to express his belief that the Government were justified in putting before the House the plans of this railway to Redcliffe, and if the line were satisfactorily guaranteed, he believed the expenditure would be a wise one. He would, however, call attention to the cost of the line, believing that, although there were three creeks to cross, £3,600 per mile was excessive. As it traversed level country, with the exception of a small portion near the North Pine, he should have thought it could have been constructed for under £3,000 per mile. He had always expressed a desire that railways constructed under the guarantee system should be built as economically as possible. When the State built railways it could afford to indulge in luxuries; but when a branch line was to be built through a sparsely peopled district, economy should be the first consideration. For the reasons he had given he would give the line his support.

Mr. CALLAN said this was another railway for the benefit of the people of Brisbane. There were already railways to the seaside resorts of Cleveland, Sandgate and Southport, only one of which anything like paid its way. In the Commissioner's report the revenue of the Cleveland line was shown last year to be £7,890, and the expenditure £8,691, the loss being £732. The actual expenditure on the whole line was £254,000. In the Southport line the Commissioner said the net receipts showed a slight decrease, and after paying working expenses the line returned last year only 5d. per cent. as against 1s. 10d. for the previous year. He trusted the House would construct no more lines to the seaside with such lamentable results. He did not propose to say anything further on the question, because he was sure that a majority of the Committee would pass anything the Government proposed.

Mr. OGDEN said he was willing to support the hon. member in objecting to this railway. There were Wynnum, Manly, Wellington Point, Cleveland, and other watering places within an easy distance of Brisbane, and he saw no reason why they should agree to a proposal to expend £35,000 or £36,000 on a line to another Brisbane

watering place, especially when it was doubtful whether it would pay or not. He would divide the Committee on the question.

Mr. POWERS said that, according to a return moved for by the hon. member for Warwick, the population of Redcliffe was 700; the whole of the rates at  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £1 amounted to £695 14s. 2d. Nobody could conceive that the whole of the property would be in the benefited area; and though the hon. member for Moreton said the Committee had nothing to do with the benefited area, he thought they should insist on knowing what the benefited area was. The local authorities would have to declare the benefited area, and the whole argument when the question of the benefited area was under discussion was that Parliament would protect the people from injustice. The Colonial Secretary would bear him out in saying that they must know what the benefited area was.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Before we vote the money for the railway we must know the benefited area.

Mr. POWERS: As far as this line was concerned it would connect Brisbane with a watering place that was far more attractive than any of the others. As to the guarantee, that would be decided by the Brisbane ratepayers. He was at Humpybong within the last three days, and a defeated candidate told him that when he put up for election he got all the votes of the residents except two, but the Brisbane voters put him out. He did not know whether the local authority in this case had contracted loans or not; but the Committee ought to know what was the position of the guarantors, so that it might be seen what they were worth.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he found that the capital value of the property in the Burrum Board was £180,000.

Mr. POWERS: Yes, but the rates are £1,071, and there is a population of 2,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The valuation in the Redcliffe Board was £222,000. Of course the rate there was only  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £1. He assured the Committee that he had no wish to force any of those guaranteed railways upon the people in the different districts, or through the Committee. He had brought them on out of deference to the wishes of the Pialba people, so that they might be able to get their cane taken into Maryborough next year. If there was any such delay as the leader of the Opposition had suggested, he was afraid that they would not get their railway this year. He could not treat them differently to the Redcliffe people, nor the Redcliffe people differently to the Pialba people. As the Committee desired further information, he moved that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and obtain leave to sit again.

Question put and passed; and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

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