

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1896

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER, 1896.

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

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK
GUARANTEE BILL.

ASSENT.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received a message from His Excellency the Governor assenting to this Bill.

RAILWAY—BOWEN TO THE
NORTHERN LINE.

Mr. SMITH, in moving—

That, in the opinion of this House, action should be taken at the earliest possible opportunity to give effect to the urgent and repeated requests made by the people of Charters Towers, Bowen, Kennedy, Flinders, and the Western districts for the construction of the missing link in our Northern system by connecting the Bowen Railway with the Northern line—

said: The subject of this motion is one that is exercising the minds of a very large section of the people of North Queensland very consider-

ably, and it is one that will continue to exercise the public mind as long as it remains in its present state. I can assure the House that the feeling is very strong with regard to this particular work, which has been left in an unfinished state, and the longer it remains in that state the more pronounced will be the opinion of the people who are interested that a grievance exists. When the railway proposals of the Government were brought forward last year, they were much surprised to find that this particular line was not included, and I do not wonder at their surprise. Knowing the feeling that then existed amongst a very large section of the community, I had prepared a little speech protesting against its being excluded from the Government proposals, but unfortunately I did not get an opportunity of firing it off. I am very glad to have an opportunity now of bringing the subject before the House, because I consider it is as important a subject as can occupy the attention of hon. members. Strange to say, another session has passed, and nothing has been done; and under those circumstances, with the concurrence and approval of the members representing districts largely interested in the construction of the line, I have felt it my duty to bring the matter before the House with the object of getting an expression of opinion, which I have not the slightest doubt will be in accord with the opinion expressed over and over again by the people of Northern Queensland that this work should no longer remain in abeyance. The Press and the public of North Queensland have at various times, and almost continuously, advocated the completion of this work. Of course when referring to the Press and the public of North Queensland I speak generally, because no matter how laudable an object may be there are always some croakers opposed to it. But that is only the exception which proves the rule. All the local authorities of North Queensland have pressed this matter upon the Administration of the day. At their fourth conference they brought the matter prominently forward, and I believe in their communications with the Minister they urged that this work should not be allowed to remain as it was. They spoke with no uncertain sound, but advocated plainly and frankly that the completion of the Bowen Railway should become an established fact at the earliest possible date. Deputations have waited upon the Minister year after year, and petitions have been sent into this House. As hon. members know, no less than seven have been presented to this House during the present session. I could quote largely from the Press and from communications which I have received, and from opinions which have been expressed publicly at meetings and otherwise, but the time is not at my disposal. Were I to do so, instead of occupying the short time that is at the disposal of private members for their business, I would occupy the whole afternoon and evening; but anything I say I am prepared to substantiate by reference to oceans of comments in the Press and to correspondence. However, private members' time is so limited that I must confine my remarks to a very short space of time, especially as I want to get a vote upon the question this afternoon. I hope it will not be necessary to take a division, but if it is necessary I shall push it to a division. This is no party question. The Government, the constitutional Opposition, the Labour party, and the farmers' union can all meet on common ground and vote for this motion. We do not come with any *ad misericordiam* appeal to this House. We want this work to stand upon its own merits, and if I do not prove that it will stand upon its own merits—that it will stand comparison with any other railway which is proposed by the Govern-

ment—I shall not deserve the support of the House. I am sure, however, that I shall be able to prove that it will be in the interests of the country that hon. members should give me their assistance, and I hope that I shall receive the almost unanimous support of the House. The Secretary for Railways is likely to be opposed to my motion, but I hope that before I have finished his antagonism will be removed, or at any rate that it will be robbed of its virulence. I have studied this question for some time, and I have never yet heard an argument against the completion of the work which will hold water. On the contrary, all the arguments are in its favour. I am perfectly well aware that the Government, if they choose, can make mountains out of molehills, or they can smooth over all difficulties. I look upon railways as our main highways; the more of them we have the better; and, so long as we can prove that railways will pay either directly or indirectly, they should be undertaken by the Government when their funds will allow. The last time I brought this matter forward was in 1890. At that time it was a question of route. I am not going to delay the House by discussing that question now. I believe it has virtually answered itself; that the route I was so much opposed to in 1890 is now dead and buried, and I hope it will never be resuscitated. That was the 6-mile route. Everything that has happened since 1890 has substantiated and emphasised the arguments I then used. I may mention one fact which speaks volumes, and that is that the population of Charters Towers is at the present time something like 23,000, whilst in 1890 it was not more than 12,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Is not that argument against you?

Mr. SMITH: No. It is doubly in my favour, because the people of Charters Towers, who ought to know their own business, want this railway. At the present time all the petitions that have been sent in, and all the deputations which have waited upon the Minister, have pointed to one particular route. They have not asked for any other. My opinion is that the crossing of the Burdekin should be about 6 miles below Clare. This would give a shorter branch line, and would give the people on the rich lands of the delta a market at Charters Towers. However, that is merely a matter of detail. What I want to make distinct and plain is that the people of Ayr ought to have the full advantage of the construction of this line. I want them to have a market for their produce in Charters Towers, and it is therefore intended that if the main line is constructed from its present terminus to the Northern line it should serve the purpose of the Burdekin delta. As a sample of the demands which have been made for this line, I may quote the opinions of the people of Charters Towers. In a petition which they presented to the House during the present session, they say—

"That if the line were constructed so as to junction with the Northern line at the 37-mile peg, Bowen and the agricultural lands of the Burdekin delta would be within reach of this district; that the district of Charters Towers is a very large consumer of produce of all kinds, which cannot be produced in the district; that all the produce has to be imported from the South at a very large cost, say nothing of its deterioration during transit; that if the proposed line were constructed the Burdekin delta could supply this district with nearly everything required in the produce line; that the present terminus of the railway, 48 miles from Bowen, in no way benefits Bowen, Charters Towers, the Burdekin delta, or the Western districts; that the settlers in the Burdekin delta are much retarded in progress for want of a railway to convey their produce to a proper and profitable market; that the squatters in the Western districts are unable to rail their stock to the Bowen meat works; that Ravenswood, being on the Northern Railway and

a consumer of large quantities of produce, which it cannot grow, would be an excellent market for the agriculturists on the Lower Burdekin; that the delay in the arrival of mails from the South at Charters Towers has been a fruitful source of loss and annoyance to this district for a long time; that Bowen is a natural harbour, with a jetty running to deep water, where the boats can come alongside and discharge cargo as well as take cargo on board without the aid of expensive lighters and the risks attending lightering; that your petitioners hope you will, for the reasons previously mentioned, allow of no further delay in the completion of this very important link in our railway system."

That petition puts the whole subject in a nutshell. I may say that in 1889 a statement was laid before the Secretary for Railways urging the construction of a similar line to that advocated by the people of Charters Towers, and it was signed by the following gentlemen, who were members of the House at that time:—Messrs. Crombie, Hunter, Sayers, Lissner, Rutledge, Palmer, Dalrymple, and Smith. So long as this line is allowed to remain where it is it is a reproach to the colony. We hear a great deal about repudiation when Civil Service pensions are under discussion; the moment they are objected to Ministers immediately rise and say that a certain man has made a contract with the country, and that we cannot break it. I say distinctly that the Government made a contract with the country so long ago as 1882 to construct this line from Bowen to the Northern Railway, and the delay in carrying out the work is distinctly repudiation. It is fourteen years since the promise was made. The plans were tabled in 1883, but unfortunately the Government of that day went out of office at the general election, and the plans were removed from the table. A new Minister reigned in the Works Office, and this new Minister had a feud with another prominent politician, and because of that feud our line was blocked, and it was not until 1886 that we could get it commenced. From 1883 until 1886 the wires were pulled and all sorts of pressure was brought to bear upon the Minister to prevent the line being constructed. Then in 1886 this Minister graciously consented to carry out the work which Parliament had approved of three or four years before. It was the same Ministry who were responsible for carrying out the Cairns-Herberton line and stopping this line. It is no use going into very minute particulars, but to show hon. members how we were jostled out of this line being commenced, I may say that the Minister, in order to draw attention away from the main object we had in view, offered us a line from Bowen to a coalfield, and actually placed a sum of money on the Estimates for that purpose. Well, the Minister got the line approved of, and then went to explore for a coalfield. Everyone knew that a coalfield was there and it is there to this day, but that field has been discredited through the action of the Minister of the day. Mr. Jack, the Government Geologist, recommended that a bore should be put down to test the field. He said he believed it corresponded with the Newcastle measures, and recommended that the bore should be put down from 1,000 to 1,200 feet. And what did the Minister do? He sent up a boring machine which at high pressure could only go down 500 feet; that was the way he carried out the recommendation of Mr. Jack. After all he acknowledged in this House, and it is recorded in *Hansard*, that he was happy to say that even with that toy machine two good seams of coal, 7 or 8 feet thick, were passed through. The coalfields line having been knocked on the head, the money voted for it was transferred to the other line by an Act which provided that the two sums of money which were to the credit of this line should be transferred for a line "from Bowen to Townsville *via* Ayr, and not

otherwise." If ever there was an iniquitous Act in this world it was that. Why were those words "and not otherwise" used? I leave hon. members to come to their own conclusion. There is no use in pursuing that question any further, as it is outside this question altogether. After great trouble the plans of the new line were laid on the table in 1886 by the same Minister who was so hostile to the line. I point out to hon. members that this line was approved in 1882, at a time when with regard to railway making the people were clothed and in their right minds. There was no boom in railway construction then due to the £10,000,000 loan. The grounds for railway construction then were its advantages to the country, and this line was not to be made by a portion of the £10,000,000 in connection with which every member voting for it was promised a railway to his own door. Since 1891 we are stuck. We have got about half-way and we are blocked.

Mr. HOOLAN: Yet you always agree with the Government and have been the Government whip.

Mr. SMITH: I do not always agree with the Government. When they are not doing right I am against them; and I have never agreed with the Government stopping this railway half-way, and I never will. We were just brought to the verge of the rich land of the Burdekin delta, and there we were blocked. You remember that Moses was brought to the top of Mount Pisgah and shown the Promised Land, but he was not allowed to enter it; and in the same way we have been brought to the verge of the Promised Land, and have not been allowed to enter it for some reason or another. I do not say one word against any place or people. I say let everybody get what they are justly entitled to. I am very glad to see the colony progress, and to see the Government spending money in various ways to make it progress; but I am giving the history of this line to show why we were blocked half way. The cry of competition was raised. I hold there is nothing in that cry, and I shall prove it. Rightly or wrongly that cry was raised by people interested in Townsville. I know perfectly well that that feeling does not now exist in Townsville. The hostility to this line has ceased, and the Townsville people have assisted in the endeavour to have some move made in this matter. It was said that the line would compete with another line. There is nothing in that argument, and even if there was the people would benefit by the competition. There might be competition if the lines belonged to rival private companies competing one against the other, but in this case the two lines would both belong to the Government, and there could be no such thing as competition. The line from Townsville to Hughenden is 236 miles, and even if competition existed at all it could only exist over the short distance from the point of junction to Bowen and to Townsville—for 37 miles in 236—as the rest of the line would be common to both. To show that the people of Townsville are not afraid of the competition, and are not at all against our getting our just rights, I quote the following from an article which appeared in the *Townsville Bulletin* in connection with the visit of the "Langton Grange":—

"We should be sorry to see the rivalry between Townsville and Bowen ended. The day is not far distant when Bowen will be one of the chief ports of the north-east coast of Australia, and it is a wider wisdom which Mr. Ackers showed in speaking of Port Denison. If rivalry proceeds along the lines of least resistance its end will be one, and the struggles of competition will augment the prize."

I quite concur with those remarks. I may be asked to show the merits of this line, and how it will pay. With regard to that aspect of the

question I may say that the line will connect Port Denison with the interior, which is one of the richest interiors in Australia. That is a very important consideration. I shall just refer to one fact which will impress upon hon. members the advantages that the harbour of Port Denison possesses for the trade, or a portion of the trade, that may arise from the interior. The "Langton Grange," steamer, a vessel of 9,100 tons burden, drawing 23 feet of water, went to the Bowen jetty on the 19th of October, loaded 14,000 quarters of meat, and got away in five days. That speaks volumes for the harbour accommodation of Port Denison. The tendency now is to increase the size of merchant ships; I read the other day of a ship being launched at Belfast which was of 20,000 tons burden, 580 feet long, 62 feet in beam, and 42 feet in depth. This construction of large ships is likely to continue, as it is more economical, seeing that a crew of fifty men can manage a ship of 10,000 tons, and that it takes the same number to manage one of 3,000 or 4,000 tons. There is no doubt that all our deep-water harbours will be required in the future, and it is wise to be prepared for what is coming. The meat works at Bowen have a capacity of 30,000 cattle annually or their equivalent in sheep, and those works can be duplicated if required. I believe it is the intention to duplicate them at no distant date, if necessary. The Western graziers want to bring their cattle down to those works, and how have they to do it at the present time? The cattle are trucked from Hughenden, a distance of 231 miles to the Reid River, which is 35 miles from Townsville; then they are taken from the trucks and driven a distance of 50 miles to the present terminus of the Bowen Railway, where they are again trucked and conveyed to the meat works. Any one who knows anything of how cattle suffer by being knocked about in that way prior to slaughter knows that every knock they receive makes a black spot on the meat; and that is the only means we have at the present time of conveying cattle to the meat works at Bowen. But the knocking about they get in transit is not the worst feature of the case. Between the Reid River and the terminus of the Bowen Railway it is tick-infested country, and the consequence is that great loss is sustained, and will be sustained as long as this line is incomplete, through cattle having to be driven through that country. The experts whom we sent to America have clearly shown that the only way of getting cattle safely through tick-infested country is by rail, and in America they can in fact only drive their cattle for about three months in the year. At any rate, the only way here to convey cattle from clean country through tick-infested country is by rail. The Western country will always be clean, for ticks do not seem to thrive there, and the meat works will be obliged to get a very large number of their cattle from those districts. This year they are getting 15,000 head of cattle from there, and the railway is necessary to carry them from clean country to the works. The loss that has been sustained by the present company through having to drive their cattle from the Reid River overland to the terminus of the Bowen Railway has been something immense. The manager told me the other day, when he was passing through Brisbane, that they had lost £2,000 in a very short time. We know that the pastoral industry requires all the assistance we can give it at the present time, and that is one very great reason why this line should be completed. Then, again, sheep cannot be taken to the meat works without a railway. Of course a few have been trucked to the Reid River, and then driven overland for a distance of 50 miles, which is a missing link, as I call it,

in the same way as the cattle; but I contend that in the interest of the meat-exporting industry and of the grazier this line ought to be completed. The company at Bowen are cash buyers of sheep and cattle, which is a very great assistance at present to the pastoralists. With regard to the agricultural aspect of the case, we know that the Bowen district is an agricultural district, and capable of very great expansion. The Government have always made it their policy to assist settlement on the land, and by completing this railway they will encourage settlement in the Bowen district and assist in expanding its capabilities. The Ayr district is in the best position of any district in Australia, because it is within 90 miles of the best market in Australia—that is, Charters Towers. There are very few districts in the colony that are richer or more extensive as far as capacity for agriculture is concerned. Here is what Mr. Hume Black said when the Bowen Railway was before the House in 1890—

"I have been all over the Burdekin district, and I know of no portion of the colony that gives a fairer prospect of success for agriculture than the Burdekin delta."

Mr. Black was Secretary for Lands for a number of years, and was likely to know what he was talking about. With regard to the capabilities of the Burdekin delta, and the possibility of its being a feeder to the Charters Towers district, I will quote a portion of the evidence given by Mr. Archibald Campbell McMillan before the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the general condition of the sugar industry in Queensland. In "Votes and Proceedings" for 1889, vol. iv., at question 4971, he was asked by the chairman—

"From your long experience of the Northern districts can you give us your opinion, generally, of the state of agriculture outside of sugar-growing?"

Mr. McMillan said—

"Well, I think it is languishing, partly through the difficulty of getting perishable goods to market. Fruit can be grown well here if it could only be taken quickly to market; but the means of communication by steamer does not suit. Even the butter from this district cannot be taken to market in an eatable condition. That is a great fault up North. Nearly everything is perishable and cannot be got to market in a fit state. That is really what is keeping back this district. If it had communication with Charters Towers, Townsville, and Ravenswood it would go ahead apart from sugar altogether."

Here is some of the evidence given by Mr. William Villiers Brown before the same commission, as will be seen on reference to questions 5234 to 5238—

"Can you say anything with regard to other tropical agriculture besides sugar? Yes, the culture of fruit, particularly in our sugar districts, has made great progress, and I think it might be extended immensely if the conditions were more favourable; that is to say, we know the soil and climate, but other things are wanting."

"What tropical fruits can be produced in the district? I could give a detailed list of plants and fruit, but besides we grow maize and sweet potatoes. In fact, the Chinese succeed in growing English potatoes. We believe that we can grow large quantities of lucerne and oat hay and forage of all sorts. Although these things have not been produced in large quantities, we believe that they can be produced under favourable conditions; that is, if we had better means of transit."

"Where do you think they can be grown? Chiefly in the Herbert River and Burdekin districts."

"Admitting that efforts were made in the direction you have indicated, where would be the market for these articles? There is a very large market at Townsville, Charters Towers, Ravenswood, and Hughenden. There is an immense market at Charters Towers, as the commission will readily understand when they think of the large amount of quartz carried every day and the large number of horses employed."

"Are the present means of transit from the Burdekin and Herbert Rivers at all calculated to facilitate agriculture? No; the very reverse. The cost of transporting produce down these small rivers to meet the little coasting steamers is altogether too great, and the steam communication, with one exception, and that is on the Herbert River, is not reliable. For instance, it is almost impossible to bring perishable produce from the Burdekin to Townsville."

I cannot speak too highly of this Burdekin delta. It contains fertile lands of large extent which will grow almost anything, but the people have no means of getting the produce to market. If they had they would go ahead, as Mr. McMillan said, apart from sugar altogether. I know that maize has been sold on the Burdekin delta at 1s. 8d. a bushel when I do not think it was less than 4s. or 5s. a bushel at Charters Towers. The growers could not get it to market, and had to take what they could get. Yet there is no district in Queensland in a better position to prosper than the Burdekin delta if it had means of communication.

Mr. CROSS: How many agricultural farms are there?

Mr. SMITH: There are 90,000 acres selected and eighty-nine selectors.

Mr. CROSS: What do they produce?

Mr. SMITH: Sugar principally, because they cannot produce anything else to advantage on account of being absolutely outside of communication with a market. It is perfectly isolated; and the farmers, instead of prospering, are languishing; but if this railway were completed, not only would those farmers prosper by growing all the produce necessary for Charters Towers, but there would be a large influx of settlement to those rich lands.

The HOME SECRETARY: They are an anomaly. They live and die by tick.

Mr. SMITH: I am glad the hon. gentleman has reminded me of the ticks. This was also good cattle-raising country, but the cattle part of the business has been wiped out completely by the ticks, and the only thing to save the district from ruin, I might say, is that it be settled by men raising agricultural products.

Mr. GLASSEY: How far are they from railway communication?

Mr. SMITH: Twenty-five miles from the terminus of the Bowen railway. But I do not advocate that they should send their produce to Bowen; what I want is to make the main line, and have a branch to give them a straight run with their produce to Charters Towers. And the longer I live the more I believe I am right in my advocacy of this line. Since the Royal Commission reported upon the sugar industry, Charters Towers has nearly doubled its population.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Notwithstanding the want of this railway.

Mr. SMITH: They are struggling under difficulties, but if this line were constructed they would be a great deal better off, and they know it. They could get their provisions cheaper, and more farmers would be settled on the delta. At present 123,000 bushels of maize are being imported into Charters Towers from New South Wales, and yet at their very doors they have a district capable of supplying all their wants in this direction, but they can make no use of it. If people would only consider this matter fairly, impartially, and sensibly, they would be surprised that this railway has not been completed before now, because its possibilities are greater than those of any other line in the colony that the Government is now constructing. In ordinary seasons there are 10,000 tons of sugar produced on the Burdekin delta, and at one time a deputation from Townsville that waited upon the Minister stated that during the year 1888 there were

imported by sea 31,729 bushels of maize, 2,388 tons of potatoes, 1,728 tons of hay and chaff, 2,518 packages of green fruit, 130,246 lb. of butter, 18,922 lb. of honey, 118,324 lb. of cheese, and about 1,000 tons of sundries; and according to Mr. W. V. Brown's evidence nearly all this could have been grown on the delta. Since that time the imports must have doubled, because the population of Charters Towers has increased from 12,000 to 23,000. I think it is a reasonable thing to say that the railway would convey this 10,000 tons of sugar, and there is no doubt that that output would be increased by the construction of this line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You do not propose to go to the Burdekin delta.

Mr. SMITH: I propose that there should be a branch line down the Burdekin, and I wish the Minister to pay particular attention to that.

Mr. GLASSEY: What would be the length of the branch line?

Mr. SMITH: The route *via* the rocks would be 14 miles, but by the surveyed route it would be 20 miles.

Mr. GLASSEY: A narrow gauge line would be sufficient for that.

Mr. SMITH: I may say that the Ayr people made inquiries as to whether this main line could not be constructed under the guarantee system, but that was out of the question as there is no possibility of doing it under the present Act.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: How did they propose to go?

Mr. SMITH: To Ayr and then to the Northern line. Last year when I was on the delta I was distinctly told that their idea was to go to the 24-mile peg, but as long as they did not go nearer Townsville than that they would not object very much. Last year there was a shortage in the output of sugar at the Burdekin delta, but I think this line would convey 10,000 tons of sugar from there to Charters Towers at 10s. per ton.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are only paying 6s. now by steamer.

Mr. SMITH: Even at 6s. per ton there would be a return of £3,500 from sugar, and another £5,000 from produce. Bowen might be calculated to send 2,000 tons of produce, which would give another £1,000; and the manager of Bowen meat works has told me that they require about 15,000 head of cattle from the Western districts at 8s. per head, which would give a return of £6,000. That would give a total of £15,500, under almost the present conditions, while there is room for an enormous expansion. There is no doubt that a railway into that agricultural district will cause an enormous quantity of produce to be grown by scores of farmers who are not there now. I am now speaking entirely of the north side of the Burdekin, but the good land on the other side is equally as extensive, and no doubt large areas there would be brought under cultivation when reached by this railway. I would point out that in their report for the year 1892, the Railway Commissioners went out of their way to direct the special attention of the Minister to this matter. When referring to the unpayable state of the Bowen line, they said—

"As there is no prospect of any improvement in the receipts from this line, we consider it advisable to give special prominence to these results in the hope that special consideration may be given to the desirableness of extending it to some point from which traffic may be obtained."

I wish hon. members to remember that. They draw special reference to the fact that this railway ought to be taken, not to some place, but to "some point," and if they had completed that paragraph I have no doubt the words would have been "to some point on the Northern line." I take the liberty to supply the missing words. The saving of time in the delivery of mails for

the North is a great consideration to the business people of Charters Towers and elsewhere. This railway, if completed, will save twelve hours in the delivery of mails, and will afford twelve hours longer to answer them. Another reason, and a very powerful one, is that the Government have in their hands, of money voted for that railway, an unexpended balance of £91,575. Under the present mode of cheap construction of railways I hold that that amount would very nearly complete the line.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What about the bridge over the Burdekin?

MR. SMITH: It would, at all events, go a very long way towards completing it. The Burdekin bridge is the bugbear. But a Government can make mountains out of molehills, or they can smooth away all difficulties if they choose. I say the Burdekin bridge is no bugbear. It can be constructed for £22,500. That is the estimate of a gentleman who has been a contractor, and who built the first section of the Bowen line.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That was for a wooden bridge, was it not?

MR. SMITH: If you go in for a high-level iron bridge we shall be all the better satisfied. But I think a low-level bridge will answer every purpose at present. The line I am advocating is more likely to pay than any other which has been mentioned. I wish the Minister not to introduce an element of discord into the discussion, or draw a red herring across the track, by saying that there are other lines still more necessary to be constructed. I know there are none. I am perfectly aware that there are other lines that ought to be constructed as soon as possible. I am for constructing railways wherever the Government have money to construct them and they are likely to pay. The line from Croydon to Georgetown may be considered by the hon. gentleman equally as important or even more important, but I do not wish that to be brought in as a reason why this line should be delayed any longer. Railways are main roads, and we ought to make them as soon as possible and as many of them as possible. This is not a pettifogging provincial question at all. It is a question of great national importance. We are all Queenslanders. Whether we are born here, or have made the colony our home, we all want to see Queensland made as progressive and as prosperous as we can. And although I am thoroughly in accord with the progressive measures of the present Government, and believe in them, I say there are things they have not done which are a reproach to the Administration, and as long as they are left undone they will be a black mark against the Administration. The construction of works of this kind is the best means to carry out the very laudable object of making Queensland progressive and attractive. In the eyes of the outside world we are judged by our trade, and our facilities for trade. But when we come to inquire into this matter, and ask ourselves have we done the best we can to make Queensland progressive, I say emphatically, No. We have not a single deep-water port connected with the interior of the country, and so long as that state of things remains so long shall we have the character of being non-progressive. It is well known that Bowen and Gladstone are the two best ports in the colony. To those ports we owe the appearance on our shores of Holder's line of large steamers. Those steamers would never have come to Queensland but for those deep-water ports; and when they come here shippers have to contend with enormous difficulties, as I have pointed out. That is not creditable to the administration of affairs in the colony, and the sooner we connect our deep-water harbours with

the interior the better it will be for the reputation of the colony and for the interests of those who live in it and wish to see it progress. I could say a good deal more, but I find that time will not permit. I have exceeded now the time I intended to take up, and I will therefore now finish by moving the resolution standing in my name.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have every sympathy with the hon. member for Bowen, and I must compliment him on the able speech he has made on behalf of his railway. At the same time I regret that I cannot support his motion. My first reason is because I do not think the line would pay—more than that, I do not believe it would pay working expenses. Then there are enormous areas in North Queensland which have no means of getting their produce to port, and the building of a second line for one district would be unfair to those districts which have no railway communication. After all, the strongest thing that can be said in favour of this line is that it would give Charters Towers and the district beyond that place two ports. But only one port would be used for the carriage of produce, because the line which the hon. member advocates is 61 miles further from Charters Towers than Townsville is, and people are not likely to pay carriage for 61 additional miles for the sake of shipping their produce from Bowen. The thing is preposterous. As member for Townsville, I do not object to half a dozen lines being built to Bowen, but as Secretary for Railways I object to the waste of public money. There are three or four railways that are more wanted in the North than this.

MR. SMITH: That is the red herring.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is no red herring. Districts like Georgetown, Atherton, and Cloncurry want railway communication, and those lines should be built before the one which the hon. member has been advocating. His line would be a very costly one to build. At present we are building a steel bridge over the Burdekin very much higher up the river than where he advocates a crossing for his line, and that bridge will cost over £70,000.

MR. SMITH: A timber bridge can be built for £21,500.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The time has gone by for building large bridges of timber in this colony. A steel or iron bridge at the proposed crossing would cost about £100,000, and that amount spent in giving communication to districts at present without it would be far better for the colony. I have been over the route the hon. member has suggested, but I never saw any good land along it.

MR. SMITH: Not the Burdekin delta?

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The people in the Burdekin delta are getting their produce carried by steamer to Townsville for 6s. a ton. If they want a railway to Townsville, they want it from the 6-mile peg.

MR. SMITH: We would rather have our railway stop where it does now than continue it to the 6-mile peg.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think the people of Townsville care whether the railway starts from the 6-mile peg or anywhere else. The hon. member advocates building a branch line from Ayr, some 20 miles up, to junction with the line to the 37-mile peg, which would make them go some 40 miles to the 37-mile peg, and then 37 miles back to Townsville, although nearly all the produce of the district is sugar, which is exported out of the colony. As to the farmers in the delta being at a disadvantage, I maintain that they are better off than the farmers about

Brisbane and on the Darling Downs, to say nothing of those in the Central and Northern districts.

Mr. SMITH: They do not say so themselves.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: At present the farmers in the delta are shipping their produce at the same rate as the sugar-planters. During the sugar season there are five or six steamers going to Plantation Creek and Baratta Creek every fourteen days. They are carrying up to 8,000 tons, but they would be very glad to carry 16,000 tons if they could get it. They are charging 6s. a ton, and for that the produce of the district is landed on the Townsville wharves. Surely that is a great advantage compared with the farmers about Brisbane and the Downs, who have to pay 15s. or £1 a ton to send their produce to Townsville, besides the heavy railrage rates. You can carry things for far less from Plantation and Baratta Creeks to Townsville than you can from the Downs.

Mr. SMITH: That does not agree with what Mr. Brown and Mr. McMillan say.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They may say what they like. I do not believe one acre of that land from the crossing of the Burdekin is fit to grow maize. It is poor miserable poplar-gum country, and anyone who knows anything about the growth of poplar-gum knows that it does not grow on good land. I have always understood that the land on the south side of the Burdekin is good land, but there is not a single acre of land under cultivation for 48 miles along the present route. On the other side of the river I admit there are a number of sugar-growers, and a number of small farmers growing maize and potatoes, but the produce of all that land now finds its way to Townsville, and as things improve they will probably send more. When the country has improved and districts like Atherton have been provided with railway communication this line may be considered; but there is more agricultural land in the Atherton district than in any I know of in North Queensland, and that is saying a good deal.

Mr. JACKSON: Why don't you build them a railway?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Government are pledged to build that railway, and also the line to Georgetown, and they will carry out their pledges; but the Government are not pledged to build this railway. Until times are very much improved, there will be no room for two lines to the Western district. The Cloncurry district has far more need of a railway. The money for that line was voted about the same time as the money for this line, and the people of Cloncurry have a strong grievance because their line has not been built. That is a good reason why we should not commit ourselves to a line like this. Any member may go round the House and get votes for his line, and say that the railway is wanted, but it is no reason that railways should be built because people sign petitions. I believe people in Townsville have signed petitions in favour of this line. Most of the people between Townsville and Ayr have very good water communication.

Mr. SMITH: That is a matter of opinion.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I can safely say that the people of Ayr have never advocated this line. If they want a railway at all, they want it from the 6-mile peg.

Mr. SMITH: I can quote from the Ayr people.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You can get people to say almost anything. I know the people of Townsville would not object to seeing a railway built from Bowen to Townsville, but not at the present time. They would rather see the Western interior opened up first. The

people of Charters Towers have now four trains a day to Townsville, and that ought to give them sufficient communication. The fact that the population of Charters Towers has grown from 12,000 to 24,000 during the time that has elapsed since this line was first advocated is proof positive that the people of that place can get on very well without this railway.

Mr. SMITH: Yes, because there are vested interests to contend with.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am very sorry that the hon. member for Bowen has not got a better case. If he had I should be only too glad to vote for the motion. But notwithstanding that a great many Northern members will vote for it, I cannot vote for it. It would be waste of public money to go on with this line. The hon. member has not shown us that any traffic would come to it. He has only shown that traffic which at present goes on another line might come on to this. He says that the Charters Towers people would get their mails twelve hours earlier. Perhaps they might, or perhaps they might not. He also says that produce would find a better market at Charters Towers. I say again that the people of the Burdekin have a better opportunity of finding a market at Charters Towers than the farmers who are now supplying them, because the bulk of the butter and maize which goes to Charters Towers comes from the South, and the freights are frequently three times as heavy as they are from the Burdekin. That shows that there is some other reason operating than the fact that there is no railway. Besides, if this line were carried out, we would want a branch line of from 14 to 20 miles in addition. We might as well build a branch line to Townsville, but I could not advocate building a line to Townsville at the present time. The member quoted the Railway Commissioners, who said that some line ought to be built. I believe the line they recommended was from the Six-mile to Ayr.

Mr. SMITH: They did not recommend that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That part of the country, at all events, is not badly off for railway communication, and Bowen has an excellent harbour into which large steamers can go. Then at Townsville large steamers come in, and can get away with 1,800 tons. That is even more than the steamers can get at Bowen.

Mr. SMITH: What about the "Banffshire"?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When this House sanctions the lines to Atherton, Georgetown, and Cloncurry we may perhaps think of building this one.

Mr. SMITH: Then the voice of the people goes for nothing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I think the voice of the people, if the matter was put properly before them, would be in favour of building the lines I have mentioned first. The few people that the hon. member for Bowen advocates the interests of—

Mr. SMITH: The few people of Charters Towers?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Charters Towers already has four trains a day, and there are plenty mining districts with no railway communication at all. There is a very large tract of agricultural land at Atherton, and behind it a fine mining district. I say that until other districts more deserving of railway communication have their lines we must put this line on one side. We are not in a position to give any district two lines of railway. When it was proposed to build the line from Brisbane to Gympie I protested against it. It is all very well to have a great coastal line of railway, but that line does not pay at the present time, and

we ought to try, while giving people railway communication where it is most needed, to build those lines first which will pay. For those reasons I must vote against this motion.

Mr. CASTLING: If the hon. member for Bowen had laid down where he intended this line to go, or if he had proposed to take it to the Burdekin delta, I should have voted for it, because there is an immense amount of sugar lands there, and a great deal of sugar to be taken away every year. The Minister says it is taken away in boats, but that is a very expensive process. I think the hon. gentleman made a slight mistake when he said the freight was only 6s. a ton. I have had something to do with the shipping of produce in the butchering line, and I know it costs nearly as much to get that produce from the Burdekin to Townsville as it does to get it to Sydney. I think, therefore, that the line might be extended in that direction, but the people of Bowen want it to go right along to the 37-mile peg, and in that case it would be going through country that is practically worthless. There is not an inch of good ground in that country, and no line would open it up. The only ground for constructing that line is that it would help Bowen. Of course the Charters Towers people say they want this railway; the people in the different towns would like to have a dozen railways. It does not matter to them so long as it helps along their towns. I do not attach any importance to the signing of petitions. It costs nothing to sign them, and the people only have their own towns in view at the time. The proper thing to do would be to take this line right into the sugar lands, not to construct it to the 37-mile peg with a branch to the sugar lands. The hon. member for Bowen laid great stress upon the Bowen meat works being started and the difficulty people had to contend against in sending down their cattle. I know that when those meat works were started there was no intention of getting cattle from the West. The people of Bowen said that in the valley of the Bowen, the Don, and other rivers they could get all the cattle they wanted, and the works were started to get rid of their own surplus stock. They find now that they have not got the cattle. In fact they have been cute enough to let their works. They found they were a white elephant, and now they have been leased. Now they have to get their cattle from the West, and of course there is the tick plague, and the cattle in coming down are lost. The same thing applies to their coming to Townsville. Directly they are put into the trucks and come down to the low country, they develop some disease which they are not subject to on the high lands. There is not the least doubt that if there were good seasons the Bowen people would not draw any cattle from the West, and they never expected to do so when they started their works. At Brisbane and Townsville the meat works are shut up, and at Rockhampton they are very close to it.

Mr. SMITH: At Bowen they are in full operation.

Mr. CASTLING: There is no doubt that if the tick trouble continues the meat works on the coast will be shut up, as people will not run their cattle into danger; they will kill them outside. The only traffic then on the line would be produce and perhaps some hides and tallow. If the hon. member is prepared to have the line carried into the sugar lands of the Burdekin delta I shall support him; if he is not, I must vote against this motion.

Mr. DUNSFORD: With regard to the meat works, it strikes me that the whole system now adopted is wrong, and that in future the cattle will have to be killed where they are depastured,

and the meat trucked over the railways instead of the live cattle. That is by the way; but it must be considered at present in connection with the history of meat-preserving works in Queensland. I listened very carefully to the Secretary for Railways, and it struck me all through his speech that he was acting in a dual capacity. He was trying to serve two masters, being on the one hand the hon. member for Townsville, and on the other representing the country as Secretary for Railways. No doubt he did so unconsciously; but I believe he considered the interest of Townsville in this matter rather than those of North Queensland and of Queensland generally. We must remember, too, that though he is Secretary for Railways, and as such his opinion should carry great weight, he was giving only his opinion as an individual in this case, and it is against the opinion expressed by the people in North Queensland through divisional boards and municipal councils. Even the voice of Townsville as represented at the municipal convention held at Bowen was in favour of this line.

Mr. CASTLING: By the Burdekin delta.

Mr. DUNSFORD: No; the proposal agreed to by the municipal convention was to connect the port of Bowen, which has one of the finest harbours in Queensland, direct with the Western country. That is the opinion voiced in the petitions which have been presented to this House on the subject. I will go so far as to say that if the voice of so many people was expressed so loudly in the South for a line even to a seaside resort it would have been granted by this House. We have railways in all directions down here to seaside resorts for the people. At Bowen we have one of the finest harbours and health resorts at the same time to be found in Queensland, if the people of North Queensland had an opportunity of taking advantage of it. I believe the line would pay even as a line to a seaside resort for the Western and mining populations of the North. The Secretary for Railways laughs, but that is all that is keeping some of the railways in the South going, while this line would in addition serve an agricultural, a mining, and a pastoral community. It would serve the pastoral community around and west of Hughenden, and it would also serve Cloncurry and other Western districts by bringing them much closer to Brisbane.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They would rather have 100 miles of railway at Cloncurry.

Mr. DUNSFORD: They will get that, too, in time, I hope, and they deserve it, and I believe it would be a good investment for the State. That is beside this question, but I can show that this line would bring those Western people, perhaps, as much as a week nearer to Brisbane than they now are through the railway to Townsville. If the coastal steamers arrive in Townsville only a few hours late, the mails arrive at Hughenden too late to catch the Western coach, and, consequently, the Western people have often to wait a week for their mails. This could not occur if we had direct communication between Bowen and the West. The Burdekin delta would be served by a small line which, I believe, would willingly be guaranteed by the people along its course. There is splendid agricultural country there, and the people would find a very good market in Charters Towers. The Minister said that the land along the Burdekin would not grow anything.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; I said the land along this line.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I believe that land in North Queensland, as well as in other parts of the colony where it is considered that nothing will grow, will yet be thickly populated and splendidly cultivated. Even on Charters Towers we have a number of cultivation paddocks, and

it is surprising what may be done in this way with means of irrigation. All this land within a reasonable distance of the Burdekin will have a splendid water supply, and will be closely settled and cultivated.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is nothing growing there now.

MR. DUNSFORD: Why, in the North the people have not yet turned their attention to anything of the sort, and even in the South agriculture is only in its infancy. We cannot understand yet what the North will do in this matter if there are means of transit and more certain markets for produce provided.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What better market do you want than Charters Towers?

MR. DUNSFORD: The people of the Burdekin have no convenience for getting there, but, be that as it may, I hope that we shall live to see the time when a lot of that land which the hon. gentleman says cannot be profitably cultivated will be cultivated, especially on the coast side, where there is a regular rainfall. I believe that within a reasonable time this line can be made to pay, and I hold that the people of the West should not be any longer bled by the Townsville people to the extent they have been. We know that a great part of the population of Townsville are living on the Western people and the mining population. They are acting as middlemen, as consignees, agents, and 2½, 5, 10, and 15 per cent. men. If we could get our goods delivered direct from the steamers on the wharf, and immediately trucked to Hughenden and other places in the West, it would cheapen the cost to the consumers, and be a great advantage to the people of the North generally, though it might to some extent injure the middlemen at Townsville. But they might be induced to give their attention to cultivating the land; and if they could, they would do more in that way for the residents of Townsville and the residents of the North generally than they are now doing by acting as middlemen. I do not blame them for doing that, but we should consider the demands of the people of the West, who have been bled by those persons. The present line would never have been started if the House and the country had not thought that it was a just line and one that would pay. I believe that it will pay, and its completion ought not to be allowed to languish any longer.

MR. HAMILTON: According to the motion of the hon. member for Bowen, the "missing link" is in his district, and Port Denison is one of the finest harbours in Queensland, but I have heard of some extraordinary things in connection with it. On one occasion when a deputation from Bowen called upon the Secretary for Railways and advocated a railway in that district, explaining that its harbour was one in which ships could ride out any storm, a wire came down the same day stating that ships had been blown ashore, houses unroofed, and an iron tank hunted a prominent resident for half a mile up the principal street.

MR. DUNSFORD: The same thing might occur anywhere.

MR. HAMILTON: Of course such exceptional circumstances might occur anywhere. The Secretary for Railways stated just now that there were other districts in North Queensland which had a stronger claim for the construction of a railway than Bowen, and I agree with him. It is more urgent that we should have a railway built to Atherton, and to other Northern goldfields than it is to construct this "missing link." As a rule railways to mineral fields are the best-paying lines in the colony. The motion of the hon. member for Bowen simply says that "action should be taken at the earliest possible opportunity to give effect to the urgent and repeated requests

made by the people of Charters Towers," etc. "The earliest possible opportunity" should be when other districts which have stronger claims to a railway have been considered. Among these I may mention the Atherton railway, the railway to Cloncurry, and one in my own district. I shall support the motion, and I hope the time will come very shortly when we shall have this railway constructed, so that the miners of Cloncurry, as the hon. member for Charters Towers said, may be able to use Bowen as a watering-place.

MR. BOLES: The question we have to consider is whether it is desirable in the present state of the country to connect our best harbours with the interior. The real question in this matter the Minister has fenced; he has given no tangible reason why one of our best harbours should not be connected with the interior by a railway at the earliest possible moment. From the memorials which have been laid before the House it is evident that it is the people of the West who are really asking for this railway, and they desire its construction in order that they may be able to place their products with the outside world at the best possible advantage. I may say that Holder Brothers' steamers would never have been induced to come to our shores were it not for the port of Bowen, and I may also say the port of Gladstone. The Secretary for Railways referred to the excessive cost of building a bridge across the Burdekin, but when we think of the amount of money—about £288,000—that has been literally thrown away upon the harbour at Townsville, I do not think that is a very serious matter. Are we going on for all time with the suicidal policy of frittering money away when we have deep-water ports with which our railway system should be connected so as to give the people settled on the land the earliest and best possible advantages in regard to getting rid of their marketable products? I have here a telegram stating that a vessel drawing 22 feet of water is not able to load at Townsville without the assistance of barges. I suppose that means so much loss to the producer; and I say it is a deplorable state of things that so much money should have been spent at such places when we have ports such as Bowen languishing for want of railway communication. I believe there is an unexpended balance of £91,000 on the Loan Estimates, which I presume the Treasurer has already put on one side; and that amount, with a very small addition, would almost build this connection. I believe that the proper scheme is to provide railway communication with our best ports, and I hope the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government will look upon it with more favour than it has received hitherto. If the Minister does not see his way clear to fall in with this proposal, which I hope will be supported by a good majority, I believe the people of Charters Towers will endeavour to have this line built by means of the Guarantee Act, because I am certain that it would pay, as would the line connecting Port Curtis with the Central Railway.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We would be delighted to get a guarantee from anybody.

MR. BOLES: I supported the Guarantee Act principally because it gives people an opportunity of getting railway communication in districts that have been neglected from political or other reasons. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion, and if the line is not built by the Government I hope the hon. member for Bowen will induce his friends who are interested in the railway to approach the Minister with the view of having it built under the Guarantee Act.

MR. GLASSEY: I shall not take up much time in speaking on this motion, but being a Southern resident, and also a Southern member,

I may be allowed to say a few words. I have a perfectly open mind on the question; and after hearing the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Bowen, as well as the reply of the Secretary for Railways—who did not speak very strongly in opposition to the motion—I think the balance of evidence rests with the hon. member who brought forward the motion. There are many reasons that might be adduced for supporting this proposal, but I will only touch on two or three. I think it is deserving of support, first, because I presume that Parliament, when the first section of the line was built, considered it necessary that communication should be opened up to serve the people in that part of the colony; secondly, because there is a considerable sum of money standing to the credit of that particular district, and they are entitled to the construction of the line when the expenditure of this money is undertaken; and, thirdly, because the Railway Commissioners, in their report for 1892, state that there is no possibility of this line paying even working expenses until it is extended so as to benefit a larger number of settlers. It is sometimes stated that there is a prejudice on the part of Southern members against carrying out public works in the North, and I want to disabuse Northern members of that idea so far as I am concerned. I do not think the argument of the Secretary for Railways, that other districts have not got railway communication, is any reason why this line should be blocked; on the contrary, this line should have been built many years ago. I also think that railway communication should be extended to Atherton and to Cloncurry; and I hope that in a short time means will be found to afford railway communication to the people in those districts. Notwithstanding all the objections raised by the Secretary for Railways, the balance of evidence rests with the hon. member for Bowen; and that being the case, if the question goes to a division, I shall feel it my duty to record my vote in favour of the motion.

Mr. SIM: I was very glad to hear the Secretary for Railways lay so much stress on the importance of railway communication between Croydon and Georgetown, and between Normananton and Cloncurry. Being personally interested in those districts, I might naturally be supposed to be inclined towards the view taken by the Minister and vote against the motion; but I intend to take no such course, because I think this House ought, on occasions like this, to be blind to all selfish considerations, and hold the scales of justice evenly. The hon. member for Bowen made out an overwhelming case in favour of the line. He pointed out that the Government, which, in 1882, might be supposed to be in sympathy with the gentlemen occupying the Ministerial benches to-day—the McIlwraith Government—a Government led by the most astute statesman that ever filled the office of Premier in Australia—thought it advisable to build this railway. They built a portion, and stopped in the middle of a wilderness. Like Moses when he took his people out of Egypt into a wilderness and left them there, the Government have abandoned this line; and if only for the purpose of putting the colony right in the eyes of the world it ought to be completed. It has also been pointed out that in 1883 Parliament voted £150,000 for the construction of this line, and there is a balance of £90,000 still available for that purpose. Apart from that, the Minister has admitted that there are two lines in the North that it is desirable should be built, and I think the hon. member for Bowen, with the assistance of a large number of Northern and Southern members, has made out a good case for a third. This line is necessary for the development of the Northern portion of the colony, because a port is wanted

where Northern cattle can be conveniently and safely shipped without the necessity of lighterage and such things which cause loss and damage to the stock. The necessity for this line was admitted before the necessity for either of the lines the Secretary for Railways referred to, and upon the principle of *seniores et priores* I shall vote for its construction, and trust the question will be settled one way or the other this evening.

Mr. LISSNER: If this is a question of the priority of right, I cannot help sympathising with the hon. member for Bowen, who has made out a very good case, and deserves to get his railway for the pains he has taken. For that reason alone I am glad to vote for the motion, but I do not like to see hon. members getting up one by one and trotting out their little railways at the expense of others who are suffering as much as they are. I have been told since I have been in this House that there are two great ports, Gladstone and Bowen, and I remember getting into trouble when I was a very young and innocent member on their account. I was travelling about Gladstone upon some mining business, and was speaking to a gentleman whom I did not know to be a reporter, and who asked me, "What do you think of this port; is it not better than Bowen?" I looked at him and in an unsophisticated way replied, "If you ask my opinion, it is merely a question of which is the best place for a respectable cemetery so far as trade goes." I need not go back there any more. At present I have the honour to represent Cairns, where we have abundance of sugar-cane and we can grow anything. It has a beautiful harbour but nobody ever gives me any credit for it here. The Government dredged it to a depth of 13 feet at low water, and the place is now sufficiently important to justify us asking the Government to dredge it to 17 feet. The question now is whether Bowen is entitled to a railway, and whether it should have it as soon as possible. I say it is entitled to the railway, and should have it as soon as possible. Hon. members, whether they want railways for themselves or not, are always sufficiently liberal to vote in favour of anyone else getting one, and I would like them to vote in favour of one I want in my electorate, but not upon the American principle of "scratching each other's backs." As the hon. member for Carpentaria said, we should be just in this House. If ever there was a railway wanted, and a promise given of it by the Government, it is the extension from Mareeba to Atherton, which would tap thousands of acres of land, which could compete in quality with the celebrated Darling Downs country. That line was actually promised, but the people have as much chance of getting it as the Bowen people have of being connected with Charters Towers in the near future. It is the business of every port to tap as much of the inland country as it can, and Bowen would have been connected with the interior years ago if the people had not slept upon their rights, and let other people get ahead of them.

Mr. SMITH: It was the misfortune of the colony.

Mr. LISSNER: The misfortune of Bowen probably. I will not detain the House much longer. The hon. member for Bowen thought I was looking vicious when I got up, as if I meant to talk the matter out; but I have never done such a thing since I have been in Parliament because I do not think it is a fair thing. Although I shall vote for this line, I think that if every other hon. member who wants a railway brings in a special motion it would occupy us for about two years after Christmas. We have not very many ports in this colony; but every

one is more important than any other, and there is not one that has not been unjustly treated by the Government for the last twenty years. Look at Port Douglas! There is a port to talk about! Look at Normanton! It only wants continued dredging and blasting of rocks. And look at the Pioneer River, with its beautiful entrance! In fine weather you cannot get in, and in rough weather you are drowned getting out. They want a railway there, and as they have no back country owing to the ranges, the only place they can take it to is the moon. The House seems inclined to pass this motion, and I shall vote for it; but I trust that when the Government are going in for loan money they will not forget other places. The hon. member for Port Curtis says that if the line is not built by the Government it should be built under the guarantee system; but it is all very well to be liberal in guaranteeing a railway when you have no money to guarantee it. We are dealing with the people's money when we build railways, and when the Secretary for Railways has made out his plans for what are the most needed lines, if Bowen is among them, I shall be glad to support it. At the same time other railways must be built as well. As I said, the people I have the honour to represent were promised a very urgent line, only 22 miles long, the whole cost of which was not more than £70,000, and they did not get it. Another promised line most urgently wanted is the line from Croydon to the Etheridge; they did not get it. If all just lines which promise to prove remunerative are granted, Bowen shall have my support, and for that reason I shall vote for the motion that the Bowen line be connected with some point on the Northern Railway.

Mr. CHATAWAY: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SMITH: Are you going to stonewall the motion?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CHATAWAY: I cannot allow this very important motion to go to a division without saying something on it, because the local bodies at Mackay have taken a very special interest in the subject, and have asked me to advocate, from my place here, the extension of this railway. Under these circumstances it is extremely hard that the hon. member for Bowen should interject, "You are going to stonewall it, are you? I will remember it to you."

Mr. SMITH: I did not interject that.

Mr. CHATAWAY: I was sorry to hear the Minister put the position thus: That there were several railways that required to be built in the North, and it was a question which ought to be built first. I do not think that is exactly a fair way to put it to the House, because after all many hon. members may feel disposed to support this motion, although they may think at the same time that this railway is not the most necessary railway to be built in the North. Neither was it fair for the junior member for Charters Towers to insinuate that the Minister was acting in a dual capacity—as Secretary for Railways and as member for Townsville. That is the position of all of us. We all are acting in a somewhat dual capacity. We are all members for some district, and safeguarding as far as possible the interests of the country. One of the great reasons that have made it appear desirable to local bodies at Mackay that this railway should be built is the fact that there is an immense amount of agricultural land on this side of Bowen which no doubt will be joined later on to the Mackay Railway, and which will produce—and does at present—all kinds of tropical produce which will find a ready market in the West. At present, owing to the want of railway communication and the difficulty of getting the produce away,

orchards have had to be abandoned, and the work of a lifetime, in one or two cases, is now lying idle and practically unproductive. It was thought that if this railway was continued—as there is no doubt it should be—further railway communication will inevitably be made with Bowen which will enable that land to be profitably utilised. There are only two things, it seems to me, that can be done with the Bowen railway. One is to extend it in some direction, and the other is to pull it up. One or other must be done in the early future. The hon. member has described it as a standing disgrace to the colony, and I think he was not very far wrong. In its present state it is a most undesirable asset. Very few people, I imagine, will recommend that it should be pulled up, and I am glad to see that the House is in favour of some sort of extension of that railway, without committing itself in any way to the proposal of the hon. member for Bowen that it should be joined to the Northern Railway at the 37-mile peg. Very little information has been afforded, and that of a most contradictory description, of that route. It is possible that it will be found, on further examination, that the route across the Burdekin to Ayr and on to the 5-mile peg may be more desirable in the interests of the colony. As the motion does not commit the House, or those who vote for it, to any particular form of extension, I shall support it.

Question put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 38.

Messrs. Glassey, Dickson, Keogh, Stewart, Smyth, Smith, Grimes, Drake, Curtis, King, Cross, Browne, Hardacre, McDonnell, Fitzgerald, Groom, McDonald, Boles, Collins, Kidston, Fogarty, Battersby, Fraser, Dibley, Dawson, Jackson, Corfield, Thomas, Daniels, Dunsford, Crombie, Lissner, Chataway, McMaster, Sim, Hamilton, O'Connell, and Anmear.

NOES, 7.

Sir H. M. Nelson, Messrs. Tozer, Philp, Dalrymple, Callan, Castling, and Bridges.

Resolved in the affirmative.

At 7 o'clock, the House, in accordance with Sessional Order, proceeded with Government business.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The HOME SECRETARY said that he had a new clause to propose, to follow clause 63. He found that by making a sixth class certain officers of the fifth class who were in receipt of less than £120 a year would be included in the sixth class. In order to preserve their rights and keep them in the fifth class, he moved the following new clause:—

Nothing herein contained shall prejudicially affect the position of officers in receipt of a salary less than £120 who are now arranged and classified in the fifth class.

Mr. GLASSEY: The new clause was a very reasonable one; but he wished to know whether it would affect those officers in the postal service who were not at present classified, but whom the amendment which had been inserted in the Bill would make classified officers? Some of those officers were receiving £120, and some even more. He presumed the new clause would not prejudicially affect them.

The HOME SECRETARY: The clause cannot prejudicially affect anyone; it preserves existing rights.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON presumed that all officers now in the service receiving less than £120 per annum, excluding probationers, would be benefited by the clause, and that only those who might enter the service in the future would be placed in the sixth class?

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes.

New clause put and passed.

Mr. GLASSEY : Before proceeding to move the three new clauses which had been circulated, he desired to thank the Home Secretary for not pushing the Bill through the other night, and for giving hon. members an opportunity to further consider the Bill. The first clause he had to move dealt with the political rights of the Civil servants. He had fully expressed his opinions on that subject in the past, and when the Civil Service Bill was under consideration he had only refrained from submitting a clause dealing with it on account of the small amount of encouragement he had received. He moved the clause, as follows :—

No officer employed in the Public Service to whom this Act applies shall be debarred from taking part in politics, and any regulation to the contrary shall be null and void.

He could quite understand persons occupying high judicial positions, like the judges of the Supreme Court, being placed in a serene atmosphere above and beyond all party conflicts and squabbles; the same thing might even be said of the judges of the District Court, and perhaps to a lesser extent of the police magistrates; but with those few exceptions he was never able to see why persons in the employ of the State, part of themselves, the people as a whole, should be restricted by another section of the community in the exercise of their political rights, and should not be permitted to address political meetings, question candidates, or write to the public prints on political matters. He desired to emancipate the servants of the State politically, and he hoped hon. members would view the matter in a broad and cosmopolitan spirit, endeavouring to approach the question free from bias. He did not approach it with a prejudiced mind in any way. He should not object to any Civil servant voting or speaking against him on any occasion, but would still pursue the course he had always adopted. He did not know whether members of the Civil Service were favourable to one side or the other, but if anything he should say that as a body they were opposed to the party to which he belonged. Notwithstanding that, they should have the fullest political liberty. Without wishing to prolong the discussion, he moved the clause of which he had given notice.

The HOME SECRETARY would draw the hon. member's attention to what had been the practice hitherto. It was left entirely to officers appointed by Parliament to frame regulations for the service, and the Civil Service Commissioners had provided in regulation No. 39, "Officers of all ranks are to refrain from taking part in political affairs otherwise than by the exercise of the franchise." The clause if passed would not only be pernicious in principle, but much more so in practice. Once admit the principle, and why should the line be drawn at the judges or under secretaries or anyone else? Supposing he found his Under Secretary addressing a political meeting at Childers in company with the two gentlemen who went there recently, and in the course of his observations endorsing what they said, he would have something to say to him on his return.

Mr. DRAKE : Supposing he appeared on the other side.

The HOME SECRETARY : Then he should think him a fool. If he was a wise man, he would do his duty and leave politics alone. That had always been the rule. No doubt the railway men, judging from the advocacy of hon. members opposite, had been active politicians. There was nothing whatever to prevent Civil servants exercising the franchise, but they had better abstain from such things as would cause an impression in the public mind that in the performance of their duties they carried strong

political feelings into their offices. What would be the result of passing such a clause? They might have some high official as head of the democratic party, and perhaps that was what the hon. gentleman anticipated; but it would be most injurious. Things had worked very well for the past eight years under the present rule, and it would be an act of indecency for Civil servants to become active political agents. Under the circumstances the hon. member would see that the Government could not under any circumstances accept the clause; and, speaking entirely for himself, he would say that if there was to be any legislation of that description it should go entirely in the opposite direction.

Mr. GLASSEY : It was very disappointing to listen to the hon. gentleman, whom he always thought had a high regard for every man's rights and liberties. Supposing the hon. gentleman, with his strong political leanings, was an Under Secretary, was there any man in the State who would feel more hurt at not being allowed to exercise the faculties with which he was endowed by the Creator? What was the use of having a mind and will if one was not permitted to use them? Providence said they should use them, and puny man said it would be most injurious to do so. He wanted to see every man in the country, irrespective of his occupation or emoluments, holding his head erect, taking his part as a citizen, and moulding and shaping the laws under which they lived, and by his actions help to broaden the platform of liberty on which they stood. If he were standing for a constituency a Civil servant having a vote in it could go quietly into the recess of a polling-booth and record a vote for or against him, but though he might be one of the best educated and refined men in the country he should not have the right to come to him and ask him whether he was favourable to this or that. Was not that a sad state of affairs for a country boasting of democratic principles and laws framed on democratic lines? What difference was there between a man who was a clerk in the Home Secretary's office and a clerk in the office of any private firm in the city? A man might have the most valuable opinions and suggestions to offer for the improvement of the conditions of the people, and so long as he was a Civil servant he could not make them publicly known either through the Press over his own name or from a public platform. If the amendment was carried it would give great satisfaction to the service, and it would do no injury but good to the country.

The PREMIER : That was not a question of the abstract rights of men, but a question of expediency. Was it expedient that Civil servants should take an active part in political matters? Suppose he were a candidate for an electorate, and the hon. member for Clermont or the hon. member for Leichhardt or both were candidates for the same electorate. Suppose the Under Secretary to the Treasury was an elector in that electorate and went about canvassing for him, taking the chair at political meetings and advocating his cause as against the other hon. members he referred to, the probability was that he would be defeated; and supposing the hon. member for Leichhardt was returned and came into the office as Treasurer, he would have to deal with an under secretary who had devoted all his time and talents to try and keep him out of office. He would like to know what the relationship between the two would be then? They would require to get some other Treasurer or a fresh under secretary.

Mr. DUNSFORD : Can you not leave it to the good taste of the Under Secretary? Would he do such a thing?

The PREMIER: That was all they were asking him to do. There was nothing in the Act to prevent his doing such a thing, and regulations preventing it could easily be altered if they were found inexpedient. To push such a proposal as far as it might be pushed it would simply come to this: That the Civil servants would have no votes at all. Why should Civil servants be given an opportunity of influencing hon. members who had to vote their salaries? He did not wish to see it pushed to that extent. Civil servants should exercise their rights of franchise, but there was no necessity for them to make themselves particularly prominent at elections. They could exercise the franchise in an intelligent manner without taking up the position of decided partisans when feeling in politics was running very high. It was far better in the interests of the country that the present method of dealing with such matters should be retained than that Civil servants should take a decided stand for one Government or another. He would say this for Civil servants all through, so far as he had known them, and he had had some experience of them: that whenever there was a change of Government they were just as loyal to the new Government as to the one that preceded it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BOLES: The motives of the hon. member for Bundaberg were no doubt humane, but the amendment was superfluous. His experience was that in the outside districts Civil servants had taken a more prominent part in elections than was good for themselves. He had in his mind's eye the case of a telegraph-master who took so prominent a part in politics that the candidate he opposed had to go miles away to send a telegram, as, if he sent it through that man's office, the contents of it would leak out; and the office even was used as a depot for the opposing candidate's committee. While he sympathised with the object the hon. member had in view, which was no doubt cosmopolitan and liberal, it was far better to leave things as they were.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON was afraid that the amendment would not be deemed by the Civil servants a benefit to themselves; it would place them in an invidious position. The danger of their having this liberty or license to indulge more actively in partisanship was that they would be solicited to take a more prominent part in politics, and avail themselves fully of their rights. They would thus become a formidable factor in politics, and would certainly not earn the gratitude of both sides. Probably they would be looked upon with suspicion by one side, and with hostility and hatred by the other. From the reading of the amendment it might be inferred that Civil servants were wholly debarred from taking any part in politics, but, as the Premier had very lucidly explained, and as they all knew, every Civil servant had the full exercise of the franchise, and could take an intelligent part in politics without stepping forward and becoming a prominent figure. He claimed to have some knowledge of departmental administration, and quite endorsed the well-merited tribute the Premier had paid to Civil servants generally. No matter what party might be in power, the under secretaries and the officers of the service, so far as his observation had gone, had been thoroughly loyal to the political heads of their departments, and he was sure that that was still the case. It was a satisfaction to a Minister to feel that he had officers who would intelligently assist him in the duties he was called upon to perform, and that he was not surrounded by spies who would interpret his acts of administration to his disadvantage. Officers in the public service were placed in no worse position than the officers of large, well-conducted private institutions. While the clerks and

officers of some of their largest institutions were not debarred from the fullest exercise of the franchise, if they took too prominent a part in politics they would lay themselves open to a remonstrance from their superior as to the invisibility of their action, because the tendency of large well-conducted businesses was to preserve their position in public opinion amid all political storms. For these reasons he should vote against the proposal if it were pressed to a division.

Mr. DAWSON agreed with the opinions expressed by the hon. member who had just spoken, but did not agree with his facts. With regard to private institutions, members on that side had a lively recollection of the Queensland National Bank issuing a circular in 1892, calling upon those on whom they had influence to see that their names and the names of their friends were on the roll because an election was coming on, and they wanted their votes for the Government against the Labour party. They had not anticipated that that question would be raised, or they would have been able to produce the circular. Probably the hon. member would get out of the matter by saying that he referred to well-conducted institutions. He (Mr. Dawson) was quite free to admit that well-conducted institutions would do nothing of the kind, but that was not a well-conducted institution, and that might be the reason they did it. He did not agree with the amendment, and if it were pressed to a division he should vote against it. A clause of the kind would be dangerous; it would not be good for the Civil servants, and would not be good for the colony. It would introduce into Queensland the worst phases of the American system, because it would encourage the Civil servants to split up into two or more political parties, and the party who succeeded at the elections would make it particularly lively for the parties against them in the Civil Service. There were many cases now where prominent members of the service took an active part in elections, and they all objected to that; but if this clause were put into the Bill that kind of thing would be legalised, and every man in the public service could become a prominent electioneering agent, and the men who did not vote with the heads of their departments could be harassed in many ways and would never get along as their merits deserved. The hon. member for Bundaberg said he had no objection to judges and members of the Civil Service Board being exempted; but it must be borne in mind that the clause did not exempt one man who came under the Bill. We would get better Civil servants when they ceased to be politicians or partisans than could possibly be the case when they were split up into different political parties. The tribute paid to the Civil servants—that they did their duty irrespective of the political party that might happen to be in power—was probably deserved. It certainly ought to be deserved; but once give them a license to become active political agents, and that loyalty to Governments irrespective of party would cease to exist, and the worst phases of the American system would be introduced.

Mr. McMASTER agreed with the hon. member that it would be bad for the Civil servants themselves if the clause were adopted, but did not agree with his statement in regard to institutions sending out instructions to have the names of their servants and friends placed on the roll in order that they might vote against the Labour party and in favour of the Government. Did the hon. member ever see that circular which he said was issued by the Queensland National Bank? If he did, could he tell the Committee that those words were in the document? He (Mr. McMaster) had heard that the bank issued instructions to their servants not to take any

part whatever in politics, and he had as much reason for believing that was so as the hon. member had for believing the statement he had made. He had not the slightest fear of any Civil servant interfering unduly in politics; but he feared there were some young spirits in the service who perhaps did not know their place. He had seen young Civil servants in a public meeting disturb the whole meeting. Legalise their position by a clause like this, and they would be found on the platform taking possession of the meeting.

Mr. FRASER: Quite right.

Mr. McMASTER: It might be quite right for the hon. member, because he might have half a dozen of his friends on the platform, and if he could not speak himself he might get them to speak for him. On one occasion when his late colleague, Mr. John Watson, was addressing the electors, the meeting was disturbed by a young Civil servant; and supposing that young man had the right to go on the platform, he might have knocked Mr. Watson off and taken possession. It was bad policy and bad taste on that young man's part to have interfered at that meeting, because persons in his position had no right to be placed upon the same footing as those who were seeking to become members of Parliament, and who would have a say in voting their salaries. Had that young man's name been known he would have been named at the meeting, and it would not have been a good thing for him, but it was not known until afterwards who he was. No doubt, in his ardent spirit for politics and his advocacy of the Labour party, his zeal over-rode his judgment. He hardly thought the hon. member for Bundaberg was in earnest about this clause, but seemed to have some doubt as to its effect upon the service if it were carried. As for the second clause, it seemed to be shunting the Ministry altogether. He would again ask the hon. member for Charters Towers if he saw the circular he spoke of?

Mr. DAWSON: It was quite consoling to know that that young Civil servant escaped with his life after raising the ire of the hon. member for the Valley. He attended one meeting in the Valley to which the hon. member was invited to attend; but he evidently thought discretion was the better part of valour and did not turn up. He was not complaining about young men interrupting meetings, but about their legalising political action on the part of officers in superior positions to use their influence to coerce those under them to vote on their particular political side. They knew instances in which men in charge of departments had used their influence, and positions as masters, to coerce their subordinates into voting for particular candidates. The hon. member for the Valley might try to pull the wool over their eyes, but they knew what they were talking about, and that was why they objected to this proposal, which might legalise action of that kind. Things had been done in the past against the practice of the service, and it was proposed to make them legal. The circular he referred to was issued in 1892, and he had seen it, although he had not a copy of it. Some of his friends had copies yet, but he could not quote the exact words. All that he would guarantee was that the plain, indisputable meaning was what he stated. He would not even say that the phrase "Labour party" was used, but it spoke of a "prominent political party now arising in the State." He did not give the hon. member for the Valley credit for being a genius, but he did give him credit for having a certain amount of common sense, and being able "to read between the lines," as the hon. member for North Brisbane said the other night. The

instruction was that these officers should get their names on the rolls, as their votes would be needed to defeat this rising political party, and he would like to know if the hon. member for the Valley would have the hardihood and audacity to deny that statement.

The HOME SECRETARY hoped they would get back to the clause. The object was to get through the Bill, and although this abstract question might be very interesting from a debating point of view, it did not tend to business. It was late in the session, and as everybody had made up his mind, they should decide the matter at once.

Mr. KEOGH fully sympathised with the amendment, because he had had something to do with political matters ever since separation. He had constantly seen men in the Civil service take a particularly active part in politics, and he did not blame them for it. It was only right that their action should be legalised, and that they should be allowed as free a hand in political affairs as men outside the service. If their actions were legalised it was not likely they would be such fools as to go on platforms and make party speeches. At the same time they ought not to be debarred from the right to speak at such meetings if they thought proper. As it was to the interests of the Civil servants that they should be put on the same political footing as all other members of the community, he should vote for the proposed new clause.

Mr. STEWART: The new clause had his fullest sympathy, and he could not discover on what grounds the opponents of it took their stand. They ought to be consistent. If they would not allow a Civil servant to discuss public affairs in a public manner, they ought to carry the rule to its logical conclusion, and refuse to allow him to vote. But there was a greater question involved, and that was the right of free speech—a right for which their forefathers had bled. Yet that so-called democratic Assembly were deliberately refusing the right of free speech to thousands of their fellow-citizens simply because they happened to give their labour to the State instead of to private employers. He had no sympathy with any of the reasons advanced why that right should be denied them. The Home Secretary instanced the case of an under secretary. If he (Mr. Stewart) happened to be Home Secretary, and an under secretary spoke against him, he did not think he should dismiss him on that account. He would give the right of free speech and make no conditions whatever. If the Civil servants had the right claimed for them in the amendment, it would make the service a great deal better politically than it was. For the very reason that they were not allowed to appear on public platforms, those men did an immense amount of wire-pulling. If they could not appear in public themselves they got others to appear in public for them. Allow them to appear in public, and there would be a great deal less wire-pulling. A Civil servant was a citizen, and just as much interested in the welfare of the community as any other man. He had to obey the law, to pay taxes, and to take up his position as a responsible citizen, and such a man should not be deprived of any portion of his political rights, more especially of the dearest right that belongs to a Briton, the right of free speech. He hoped the hon. member would press his motion to a division.

Mr. DANIELS did not altogether agree with the hon. member who had just spoken. On the contrary, he considered the clause a very dangerous one. It was practically an invitation to Civil servants to take an active part in politics, and would enable heads of departments to bring pressure to bear on their subordinates to

vote as they thought fit. Supposing the head of, say, the Railway Department brought pressure on his subordinates to vote against the Labour party, and the Labour party came out on top, that officer would have a very rough time of it afterwards. As far as he was concerned, if there were two men in the service whose merits were nearly equal, and one worked hard against him and the other supported him, and it was in his power to give promotion he would give it to the one who had supported him. Everyone would do the same. Even the hon. member for Rockhampton North, if he were an employer of labour, and found one of his men trying to defeat his election—though he might be better disposed than the average of mankind—would discharge him.

Mr. TURLEY did not intend to support the clause, because he believed that if they wanted to do Civil servants harm they should pass it. He was suspicious as to what use the Government would make of the clause if it were passed. He believed they would make it a lever for disfranchising Civil servants altogether. That was his opinion from the expressions he had heard from hon. members on the other side. They did not think that Civil servants should have votes, and if at the next election a number of Civil servants took a prominent part in the elections against the Government, and the Government lost ground in the community, they would attribute it to the action of those officers, with the result that they would propose the disfranchisement of all Civil servants. Another reason he had for not supporting the clause was that a number of Civil servants were connected with the compilation of the electoral rolls; and if they acted as the political partisans of either party, the other party would accuse them of stuffing the rolls on their own behalf. They had quite enough of that sort of thing now, and far from the clause doing away with the political influence which at present operated it would aggravate it. He was afraid that the clause would not bring about the object the hon. member had in view.

Mr. GROOM: One of the strongest reasons he had for opposing the clause was that it would include school teachers; and if there was one class of Civil servants who should be kept free from political interference it was school teachers. He remembered the late member for Rockhampton, Mr. Archer, when he was Secretary for Public Instruction, issuing instructions that school teachers should not attend political meetings or have anything to do with politics; and there was no doubt great good had followed from the issue of that notification. He did not think, however, that the regulation which had been read by the Home Secretary was generally observed. At the last general election at Toowoomba he had seen a school teacher stand at the door of a polling-booth all day long, actively canvassing for votes for the Government candidates.

Mr. FINNEY: Did he get promotion?

Mr. GROOM: He had been promoted the wrong way. At all events, he had not been kept in Toowoomba. He did teachers the justice of saying that that was an exceptional case.

The HOME SECRETARY: Is it?

Mr. GROOM: It was, so far as he was aware. If the hon. gentleman knew of other cases he hoped he would be as frank as he had been.

The HOME SECRETARY: Why, one put up an "Aunt Sally," called it the Home Secretary, and threw at it.

Mr. GROOM: That showed that the regulation the hon. gentleman had read had not been religiously observed. Though he had no doubt the hon. member for Bundaberg had been actuated by the best of motives in moving the clause, he thought it would have no beneficial

effect. At present, according to the regulations of the board, they had some control. He might just mention that an officer of the very highest class had set a very bad example to his subordinates. At Mackay the late Commissioner for Railways had told some electors that if they wanted the Mirani railway they should support the two Ministerial candidates. He had threatened to bring an action against the paper which had published the statement, but he (Mr. Groom) had the written statement of the editor of that paper that he could bring twenty witnesses to swear that they had heard Mr. Mathieson make the statement. If the head of a department made such a statement, was it not a natural inference that some of his subordinates, in order to curry favour and get promotion, would follow his example? If they legalised such a thing, the system would become intolerable to every candidate. The hon. member for Charters Towers had stated the case against the clause with such clearness that nothing could be said to strengthen the position. No doubt some good had been done by the discussion, but he hoped the clause would not be pressed. If it was, he would have to vote against it.

Mr. CROSS was not sure that the hon. member for Charters Towers had been so clear that nothing further could be said on the question. The whole tenor of the speech of the hon. member was a justification for the embodiment of the clause in the Bill. If the hon. member had been emphatic on one point more than another in his emphatic remarks it was when he stated that Civil servants had for years past taken a prominent part in politics. He had mistaken partisanship for an interest in politics, but so long as there were politics in the world, and party government, it was only reasonable that there should be partisanship, which was a healthy stimulant, and should not apply only to those in the higher grades of the service. If this clause were not passed the higher grades would still continue to take a deep and absorbing interest in politics, and there was no fact more painfully patent than that they did so now. He did not blame them. Every citizen had a right to take an absorbing interest in politics; he was no true citizen if he did not. What he complained of was that the Civil Service did not take a sufficiently active part in politics, and this clause simply recognised the rights of the lower grades of the service, who were more in touch with the troubles and struggles and disasters which overtook the ordinary members of the community. The hon. member for Bundaberg was to be complimented upon the patriotic spirit which induced him to propose the clause. What had brought the Labour party into existence? They contended that every free man had political rights by virtue of being taxed, and they adopted the old radical principle that there should be no taxation without representation. Every man of the age of twenty-one should be compelled, under the pain and penalty of losing his citizenship, to exercise his vote, and that, he was happy to say, was the law in one colony. He should be sorry to see any member of his party record his vote against the clause, which embodied the very spirit of democracy. He would enfranchise fully every Civil servant, and even policeman, because they all had responsibilities to their wives and families and to the community as a whole. Politics was not a game of partisanship or a game of aspiring to the position of a Minister with £1,000 a year. It was the science of government what was best for all; and it was to be deprecated that any legislature at this time of day should advocate the gagging of any section of the community simply because they were in the pay of the State. He hoped

members would rise to the occasion, setting aside their old stagnant worn-out Tory principles, and vote for making every man in the community a free man. As a partisan politician he would take his share of the risk; he feared nothing, and any opposition to such a clause was the thin end of the wedge of the old Tory spirit which feared the verdict of the people.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. member for Clermont and himself could agree to differ. He did not say that political action was rampant in the Civil Service, but that it was rampant in certain specific instances, such as that quoted by the hon. member for Toowoomba. No great abuse had crept in, because public sentiment was against Government servants taking an active part in politics, and because the practice of the service had been to discourage such action. When a Railway Commissioner told the people of an electorate that they would not get a railway if they did not vote for the Ministerial candidates, it was an abuse of his position, but under the present system they had an opportunity of bringing such a case before Parliament and giving that person such a roasting that he would not repeat that kind of conduct; and it would be a warning to others not to follow in his footsteps. On the other hand, if they passed the clause they would legalise such action and could not take exception to it. He had in view the American system, under which partisanship was rampant from the highest to the lowest in the Civil Service, and knowing the evils that resulted from that system he was not inclined to encourage the introduction of the system in Australia. However such theories might suit them as intellectual convictions, one ounce of painful fact, as exemplified by America, was worth all the intellectual convictions in the world.

Mr. GLASSEY desired to correct the hon. member. If he would look at clause 3 he would find that the Bill did not apply to the Railway Commissioners at all.

The HOME SECRETARY: Why not? If a clerk may do it, why should not they?

Mr. GLASSEY: He was dealing with facts. He did not say the Bill should not apply to the Railway Commissioners, but as a matter of fact it did not apply to them; with others they were specially exempt. Another point which the hon. member emphasised was that members of the Civil Service in the United States were liable to dismissal for political action taken during presidential elections. That was the case at one time, but it had not been the case for the last twelve years.

Mr. McDONALD: Two millions were dismissed at the last change.

Mr. GLASSEY: Nothing of the sort. When in America he had visited many of the Government departments, notably the Post Office Department at San Francisco, at New York, Washington, Pittsburg, and many other towns, and the officers there had an eight-hours day, certain salaries, and all rights and privileges as citizens. While he was in Washington a deputation of them waited on a Minister to get something they were asking, and not a man of them would be dismissed the service in consequence of any such action.

The HOME SECRETARY: Nor would they here for doing what you say.

Mr. GLASSEY: Possibly they might be. He could go further and say that in the United States many men high up in the public service took part in the public life of the country, delivering speeches and attending conventions in the different States. He communicated regularly with men in different departments in the United States who were in the service before he went there, and were in it still. He hoped hon. members would not emphasise too strongly the state-

ment that public servants were dismissed according to the "Ins" and the "Outs" in the States. He could agree to differ with those who were not inclined to support his amendment, as it was moved entirely from a public standpoint.

Mr. CROSS: The principle laid down by the hon. member for Charters Towers could be carried to a very dangerous point indeed, because government in this colony was divided into two sections, national and local, and if the principle was applied to the Civil servants it could also be applied to persons employed by local authorities. That would be the commencement of a restriction of the franchise by a body of men whose presence in that House was a protest against the enforcement of that principle in the past.

Mr. DAWSON: Bunkum!

Mr. CROSS: That might be, but he emphatically declined to belong to any section of that House that would initiate any steps to restrict the franchise or the exercise of citizenship in the colony.

Mr. DUNSFORD could not see how they could consistently withhold from that section of the citizens the rights and privileges they claimed for other sections. He would not withhold the right from the Commissioner for Railways or any other man with intelligence enough to exercise it. They were compelled to perform certain duties as citizens every day. If he had a child born to him he was compelled to register its birth; in the same way the exercise of the right to vote should be compulsory, and in some places that was recognised, and those who did not use their votes had them taken away from them as a punishment. He looked upon Civil servants as wage-earners in the service of the State, and he could not withhold from them the rights he claimed for other wage-earners. Being wage-earners implied that the Civil servants had masters, and their masters took good care to exercise their full rights as citizens. He knew mining managers who used their position to coerce in a mild way those under them to vote in a certain way, but he would be considered mad if he proposed that mine managers should be deprived of their rights as citizens because a few were foolish enough to abuse them. He knew of a case in which the regulation acted very unjustly—the case of a very intelligent man who wanted to stand as a candidate at the last election, and because he was receiving a wage from the State, instead of from a private individual, he was told that he would have to resign before he could contest an electorate. Was that just? Why should not intelligent men in the Civil Service have a right to stand as candidates if their common sense told them that they were doing right in taking that course? He would give all Civil servants all the rights of citizenship and the opportunity to use those rights.

Mr. KIDSTON recognised the truth of a great deal of what had been said with regard to the danger there was in giving Civil servants the liberty to exercise this right, but the chief argument adduced against the proposal was the very same argument that was used for disfranchising another large section of their fellow-citizens—namely, that it was not expedient. There were some restrictions which good sense and good taste would impose upon Civil servants. For instance, it would be improper for a Civil servant in the exercise of his political liberty to use departmental information that he had got in the discharge of his duties. It would also be improper for Ministers to use such information in carrying on political warfare, but they continually offended in that particular; and if that reason excluded Civil servants, it should also exclude Ministers. Liberty always meant a certain amount of risk, but in spite of the risk of giving liberty, the extension

of liberty had been on the whole a good thing. He would risk a good deal in order that all citizens should have perfect liberty of speech on public affairs, and would not restrict the liberty of Civil servants in that respect until it was shown that they abused that liberty, and that it was necessary in the public interest to take away the right.

Mr. FOGARTY: The so-called fact which the junior member for Charters Towers had communicated to the Committee was purely imaginary.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I did not refer to the Toowoomba case; I referred to the case of Mr. Wood.

Mr. FOGARTY: The hon. member for Rosewood interjected Mr. W. R. Trenwith, of Toowoomba, and the hon. member seemed to agree with the interjection. With regard to that case, he understood that Mr. Trenwith applied for leave of absence to contest one of the seats for Toowoomba, and that it was refused. Mr. Trenwith, however, insisted upon contesting the seat, and resigned his position for that purpose, but was subsequently offered reinstatement, which he declined, so that no harsh treatment occurred in his case. As far as the amendment was concerned, he was sadly afraid that the Civil servants might well say in that case, "Save me from my friends!" Should the amendment be carried it would be of no benefit to them, but quite the reverse. It was well known that Civil servants took an active part now in political matters, and they had a perfect right to do so after working hours. And he did not think that any candidate, or any member of the House, would for one moment think of reporting an officer for taking an active part against his candidature. Certainly he would not, but if they had the right that was proposed to be conferred upon them by the amendment he believed that the older Civil servants would act as they did at present and vote secretly by ballot. If a public officer took an active part in a political campaign, it was only natural to suppose that if the party he opposed were victorious, the relations between him and them would not be as friendly as they would have been had he remained neutral. Theoretically the amendment was very nice, but he was satisfied that in practice it would fail in its object, and he should vote against it.

Mr. BROWNE did not feel inclined to support the clause, because he did not believe it would do any good, but rather that it would do harm. He was sure that the hon. member introduced it with the very best motives, but there was nothing in the Act which said that Civil servants must not take part in politics. It had been stated that Civil servants had been dismissed or removed for taking part in politics, but he would ask whether that had ever been given as a reason by a Minister or by the head of a department for removing a Civil servant? And if this clause became law, and a Civil servant was removed for taking an active part in politics, did any hon. member think that would be given as the reason for the removal? There was a sort of unwritten rule—and a good one—that Civil servants should not take a very active part in politics; and there were no men in Queensland who howled louder when a Civil servant took a prominent part in politics than the men who were sent in to Parliament to represent them. If the question went to a division he would vote against the clause, because he thought it would not effect the object intended, but would open the door to bigger evils than existed at present.

Mr. JACKSON: To be consistent he thought the members of the Labour party should vote for the clause. Most of the members of that party believed in State socialism, towards which our civilisation was trending; the State was

more and more taking control of our industries; probably in a short time Queensland would have an army of Civil Service bank officials; therefore it appeared to him that those members of the Labour party who objected to the clause were putting themselves into an inconsistent position. At the same time he thought that at present the clause was perhaps not quite necessary, and that it would work out rather badly and cause ill-feeling during election times. He would advise the hon. member not to press his amendment to a division.

Mr. McDONALD did not wish it to go forth that those who opposed the clause did not want to extend the franchise, because such was not the case. Civil servants had the right to vote, and his experience was that they discussed politics pretty freely; therefore, he would like to know what the clause meant? Why did not its advocates go further and say that Civil servants should be allowed to stand for Parliament?

Mr. GLASSEY: Hear, hear!

Mr. McDONALD asked whether that was intended?

Mr. GLASSEY: Yes.

Mr. McDONALD: They could not do so under this clause, because the Constitution Act said that no person receiving emoluments from the State could become a member of Parliament; therefore, any Civil servant wishing to stand for Parliament would have to resign his position. If that were what it meant, it should be distinctly stated, so that they might know where they were.

Mr. GLASSEY was sorry he had not been able to make himself perfectly clear to the hon. member, but he would try to explain his meaning. He desired that Civil servants should enjoy to the full every right and privilege that he himself enjoyed; that they should be entitled to use their faculties of thinking, speaking, and acting as long as they kept within the law. A regulation had been framed distinctly debarring Civil servants to whom this Bill would apply from doing anything beyond recording their votes silently, and he wished it to be clear that under this clause such a regulation would be null and void.

The HOME SECRETARY: When the regulation comes on will be time enough to discuss that matter.

Mr. GLASSEY: The regulation was in force now, and would remain so until this Bill passed, when a new set would have to be drawn up. He hoped he had made his intentions clear, but he should not feel offended if hon. members voted against the clause. He would go further and contend that if any Civil servant wished to stand as a candidate he had a right to do so. Of course under the Constitution Act they could not remain in the service after they were nominated, and would cease to draw salaries; but if they happened to be unsuccessful in obtaining election, they should be allowed to resume their duties.

Mr. CROSS: Some hon. members seemed to be in a terrible state of ignorance as to the meaning of the clause. The hon. member for the Valley spoke about a Civil servant taking part in a meeting, but no one could imagine that the hon. member for Bundaberg simply meant the clause to provide that Civil servants should exercise a right which no power could deny them—the right to discuss politics. Those who understood the clause in that way did not want to understand it. What was referred to was taking an active part, such as belonging to election committees, canvassing, or even being a candidate for the suffrages of the people. Any Government which tried to throw barriers round certain sections of the community were altogether against the spirit of the times.

New clause put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 10.

Messrs. Glassey, McDonnell, Keogh, Dibley, Hoolan, Dunsford, Jackson, Cross, Stewart, and Kidston.

NOES, 41.

Sir H. M. Nelson, Messrs. Philp, Foxton, Tozer, Kerr, Dalrymple, Chataway, McDonald, Fitzgerald, Dawson, King, Sim, Finney, Turley, Collins, Stumm, Bridges, Curtis, Lord, Boles, Groom, O'Connell, W. Thorn, Callan, Fogarty, Daniels, Castling, Browne, McMaster, Story, Hamilton, Lissner, Crombie, Bartholomew, Bell, Smyth, Macdonald-Paterson, Newell, Stephens, Corfield, and Thomas.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. GLASSEY moved the insertion of a new clause, providing that any officer who feels aggrieved with his position in the service may communicate his grievance, in writing, direct to the board, and that the board, after investigation, shall forward the result of their investigation to the officer making the complaint, and also to the head of the department in which such officer is employed; no verbal information to be furnished during the inquiry by the head of the department except in the presence of the complainant, and a copy of any written information sent by the head of the department to be furnished to the complainant. The object of the clause was to enable justice to be done to officers who felt aggrieved with the positions they occupied, probably owing to certain action taken by the head of a department. Sometimes officers were not placed in positions which their length of service and ability entitled them to fill, and they were now debarred from communicating their grievances direct to the board. They could only do so through the head of the department, and if the head of the department wished to use his influence he would, and did, pass it on to the Minister, who would communicate with the board. The result was that the officers in question, who were by no means few in number, received extremely little consideration and certainly no redress, while other officers were placed in positions to which they were not entitled, and received emoluments they did not earn. He had known cases of officers being removed from place to place in a department, and after years put back to the position from which they started. The object no doubt was to make them discontented, and induce them to leave the service. It was his desire that that state of things should cease, by enabling aggrieved officers to communicate directly with the board, and whatever statements might be made against them by heads of departments they should hear, and be able to reply to in their defence. He believed in the true English spirit of dealing with matters of that kind—that was, that whatever might be said or written against an officer he should hear or read. Discontent had prevailed in the service for years past because that was not allowed, and injury had been done to many deserving officers. He wanted them to receive fair play and an honest and open trial. He hoped the Home Secretary would accept the amendment, which could not possibly do any harm, and was certain to do much good to a considerable number of persons in the service. The Home Secretary would doubtless reply that such a clause would make them lose control of the service, and that complaints would be made about frivolous matters. He did not believe it would lead to anything of the kind, but that on the other hand it would remove many grievances, and would give officers some protection under the law which they did not now enjoy, except in a second-hand way.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member had not shown that the past administration of the Act necessitated such a provision being inserted in the Bill. There were many wise things which they did not put into Acts of Parliament. The ethics of part of the clause were

perfectly right, but they were looked after by the board now. The hon. member would see that his clause was peculiarly worded. It did not deal with charges made against officers. The Act provided for the utmost fairness in regard to the hearing of charges. They were investigated publicly, and an officer had a right to be heard. The hon. member based all his clauses in distrust of the board and of Ministers. The first duty of Ministers and of the board was to the persons working under them, and it was their first pleasure to see injustices redressed. What the hon. member proposed was that any officer who felt aggrieved with his position in the service might communicate his grievance in writing to the board. As he had previously explained, every officer in the service was aggrieved with his position. They all wanted more salary and to get over everyone else. There was nothing now to prevent officers communicating with the board.

Mr. GLASSEY: Oh, isn't there?

The HOME SECRETARY: Of course it was only right that when an officer had a grievance it ought to be first made known to the person causing the grievance, so that it could be remedied, and the regulations provided that all communications with the board must go through the Minister in charge of the department. Did the hon. member think that departmental discipline could be interfered with by the board? Once they relaxed that discipline, which ought to be parental in its nature, they laid the foundation of rebellion in the service. The New South Wales Act contained a clause which was the crux of the whole thing. It provided that nothing in the Act should be construed as restricting the ordinary and necessary departmental authority of the Minister or permanent head of the department with respect to the promotion and control of the officers. How could they expect a Minister to admit any responsibility in connection with officers if this clause was passed? If any question was asked in Parliament, a Minister could throw the responsibility entirely on the board and declare that he knew nothing about the matter. It would require fifty boards to do all that was required of them by the clause, because it included the Education Department, where there were over 1,000 officers—ladies as well as men—most of whom had their grievances. Ministers never bothered themselves about complaints with reference to classification, position, or salary, but at once handed them over to the board, because, if a man had been wrongfully classified, it was the duty of the board to set the matter right. The Act stated that the Minister had the final decision. When a Minister made a complaint against any officer, the investigation was publicly conducted, all the evidence was taken down, and was sent to the Governor in Council. The hon. gentleman imagined some other position in which a man had a grievance. The only thing he could think of was in regard to salary. If that grievance was a matter the board could redress by putting the officer into a higher class it would be done, and it was their duty to inquire into the case. He had known many instances in which the board had inquired into such cases and remedied the grievances. They trusted the board in a number of important matters, and were now asked to pass a clause showing their distrust. It would be utterly impossible to work a department if the Under Secretary or Minister had not the privilege of making a communication to the board. As a general rule everything was done in the best interests of the officer. He knew of several instances where officers showed by their work that they were losing their reason. The Minister did not put that on record to the detriment of the officer; he

told the board privately, and after a few months' holiday that officer might come back with nothing recorded against him. Then, in the case of an intemperate man, the Minister might tell the board privately that the intemperance had only occurred once or twice before, that the general character of the officer was good; nothing would be officially recorded against that man unless a formal complaint was made to the board. The hon. member would be wise in leaving matters as they stood at present. He had expressly inserted a clause to remedy a defect in the old measure dealing with matters of this kind, providing that an officer could ask for a reconsideration of his case, and then appeal to the Governor in Council. With that provision, and clauses 42 and 52, did the hon. member not think that the service was protected in every possible way? If what was contained in this clause and the following one were inserted in the Bill, it would be utterly destructive of all discipline, and dangerous to the rights of individuals. Besides that, there was no provision in the clause for any result coming from what the hon. member wished to provide for. Supposing the clause was agreed to, and a person aggrieved with his position wrote to the board, the board then asked the Under Secretary if he had anything to say on the matter, and if so to put it in writing. That was then sent to the officer. The board then inquired into the matter, and there the matter ended. The Bill provided a remedy in all cases, and the hon. member in his desire to lay down certain rules for the guidance of the board and Minister simply showed his distrust of both authorities. If the board was not to be trusted to act impartially it should be got rid of; if Ministers were not capable of seeing justice done to the officers of the service they ought not to occupy the positions which they did.

Mr. GLASSEY: The Minister had wandered away from the question at issue. He was dealing with cases which actually occurred. The clause was very plain and practical. He desired that the board's functions should be what Parliament intended that they should be. First of all, the officer who was not receiving the salary to which he was entitled, or was not occupying the position to which he was entitled, had to communicate with the head of his department, and he suffered because he had not the ear of the Minister. The redress the Home Secretary offered was that the officer should communicate with the board, and, if he was not satisfied with their decision, with the Governor in Council. Who was the Governor in Council but the Minister, who would be influenced by the head of the department, as in the past? He was talking to a gentleman yesterday who had done clerical work for twelve years, and had written through the head of his department again and again in his endeavours to obtain redress. His communications never reached the board; but if that officer and others had the right to communicate directly with the board, and the head of the department was not allowed to have written or verbal communication without the knowledge of the officers, the verdicts of the past would often have been entirely different. It would not affect the discipline at all to enable officers to go before a non-political board appointed to hold the balance fairly between Ministers and the people of Queensland. He would say no more on the subject.

Mr. SMYTH did not think they should take any notice whatever of the amendment, as the person who moved it was very much interested. The service should be treated on commercial principles. The new clause was purely a personal one. He did not wish to say too much upon it now, but he might have to by-and-by.

Mr. GLASSEY called attention to the hon. member's remark that the clause was purely a personal one. He denied it. He had letters in his possession on the subject from various parts of the colony, notably one which he received on Saturday from Dalby. He asked a ruling as to whether the hon. member was in order in stating that the amendment was brought forward on personal grounds.

The CHAIRMAN: Under the Standing Orders the hon. member is not in order in imputing motives to any hon. member. I am sure the hon. member for Gympie will accept the statement of the hon. member for Bundaberg that it is not a personal matter to himself.

Mr. SMYTH would do so if it were not for a debate which took place last week, and which it was not in order for him to refer to now. They must deal with the service on purely commercial principles, and if a Civil servant wanted a rise he should get it purely on his merits, without any buttonholing of the departments. He did not wish to be personal in the matter, but it was peculiar that the person who brought that forward should have been very pugnacious in getting two of his sons into the service, and another person, to whom he would not refer now, because he did not like to be nasty. The amendment should receive the consideration it deserved. If Samuel Alexander Glassey had a good record, and was deserving of a rise, give him a rise. If the young Glassey in the Government Printing Office was a good officer, give him a rise. If Mr. Basford was deserving of a rise give him a rise, or anyone else. But what he did not believe in was one or two members of Parliament being pugnacious and forcing themselves on heads of departments, and forcing their claims to get friends and relations into the Government service.

Mr. GLASSEY rose to a point of order. Was the hon. member in order in imputing motives? He wanted a ruling on the point.

The CHAIRMAN: I have already ruled that that is not in order. Standing Order 111 provides that a member shall not use unbecoming or offensive words in reference to another member of the House. I feel sure that the hon. member, Mr. Smyth, will see that he will not be in order if he indulges in unbecoming words in reference to a member.

Mr. SMYTH would be one of the last to break the rules, but he wanted commercial principles applied to the service. Let every officer stand on his merits, whether he was a Glassey, a Tozer, or a Smyth.

Mr. GLASSEY: Why all this beating about the bush? Let us know what you want to get at, and I will answer you.

The CHAIRMAN: I would thank the hon. member to confine his remarks to the question before the Committee.

Mr. SMYTH: If a person in the employ of a private firm was aggrieved with his position, he would probably be told that he was a good man, but they could not afford to give him any more salary than he was getting, or that they had a better man, and if he was not satisfied he could leave. Why should there be any distinction between private service and public service? It was recognised throughout Australia that where a person was pushed on beyond what he was entitled to by examination he was pushed on by political influence, and he held that all promotions should be according to merit.

Mr. KIDSTON: The hon. member for Gympie had made it very clear that he did not know what he was talking about. There was an examination for Civil servants, and the hon. member's conduct showed that the sooner there was some examination of members before they

entered that Chamber the better it would be for the character of the House. He thought the new clause would be improved if it were amended so as to read, "Any officer who feels aggrieved with his position in the service, and who cannot get redress from the head of his department, may communicate his grievance in writing direct to the board." It was not desirable to encourage needless complaints to the board, but where an officer had a difficulty in getting what he considered redress from the head of his department he should be permitted to go direct to the board.

The HOME SECRETARY: What stops him now?

Mr. KIDSTON: He must send his communication to the board through the head of his department.

The HOME SECRETARY: There is nothing in the Act about that.

Mr. KIDSTON: But it was the practice, as the hon. gentleman knew perfectly well. The hon. gentleman argued that one objection to the clause was that it would destroy Ministerial responsibility. If he thought that would be the effect of the clause he would be entirely against it, but the hon. gentleman showed that it would do nothing of the kind, because he immediately proceeded to point out that the clause was not necessary, as what it provided for could be done now. Another argument of the hon. gentleman was that the mover of the clause assumed that the board were not going to do their duty. The same objection might apply to any law, because they assumed in every instance that somebody was not going to do his duty. What were all the clauses in that Bill for?

The HOME SECRETARY: To provide machinery.

Mr. KIDSTON: Exactly. They were to provide certain methods which the board were to adopt in doing their duty, and that new clause was simply another wheel in the machinery. It was simply making what seemed to be a wise provision. He knew a case where a man was dismissed for a reason which was kept secret, while another reason was stated publicly. The Home Secretary clearly indicated that, he knew of some cases, and claimed that secrecy in such cases was to the advantage of the public servants themselves. But if in some cases secrecy might be to the advantage of the Civil servant, was it not likely that in some other cases it was to his disadvantage, and that he might be the victim of private malice? To allow secret reports by which a man was injured without knowing who hit him was a bad system; and, if it could not be prevented altogether, the clause would be a step in that direction.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON: No doubt the hon. member for Bundaberg desired to give officers more immediate access to the board than through the Minister, and, perhaps, in that direction he was right. He wished the clause had been considered when they were dealing with the Home Secretary's clause 54, which to a certain extent embodied the same principle, though the first paragraph of this clause was somewhat fuller. In the Home Secretary's clause it was provided that the decision of the Governor in Council should be final, but no provision was made for finality in the clause now before the Committee. There was something good in the amendment; at the same time the 54th clause might have embodied all that the hon. member required. He would suggest to the Home Secretary the re-committal of the 54th clause in order to embody the principal idea contained in the amendment before the Committee.

The HOME SECRETARY: The new clause was entirely at variance with the two previous clauses of the Bill. The board had all the powers of classification, and the complaints made during the last seven years had been against the action or inaction of the board, from which there

had been no appeal, so it became necessary to provide for an appeal to the responsible Minister. The board had no power to give redress; they were not the Executive; they were only there to see justice done. There was no provision in the Act, or in this Bill, by which Civil servants were prevented from communicating direct with the board. If the board, having power to make a regulation, thought it was desirable in the interests of the service that communication should be made direct, did the hon. member want to prevent the board from saying so? The duty of the board was to classify the work and inquire into complaints against officers, but the amendment of the hon. member would leave the Minister out of it altogether, and make him a nonentity. He had had reason lately to promote certain officers, and supposing the clerk of petty sessions at Charleville felt aggrieved with his position, under this clause he would not be able to write to the Minister and communicate the grievance that had been perpetrated by the board, but the board would investigate the matter and forward the result to him. Directly one person was promoted there were fifty who would rise up with a grievance, but all that ought to be taken into consideration before the board made any recommendation. According to the Bill if any officer felt aggrieved with the action of the board, he might appeal to the Executive, but the hon. member wished to reverse all that, and allow an appeal to the board against the action of the Minister, while as a matter of fact the board had done the whole thing. If an injustice were done by the Minister the House alone could remedy it, but it was the duty of the Minister to see that the board did justice.

Mr. GLASSEY had endeavoured to convince the Minister that he was dealing with the practice now going on in the service, and was not dealing with an isolated case. Officers had been unfairly treated by the heads of the departments, who had influenced the Ministers, and they had absolutely failed to obtain redress, therefore he wished them to have an appeal to an independent body—namely, the board.

The HOME SECRETARY: To whom you have given no power to act.

Mr. GLASSEY: The sooner that power was given the better. The head of the department, having the ear of the Minister, would tell him all kinds of things, and some Ministers were so weak that they had no grip of their departments, while others were prejudiced by the heads of departments who wished to curry favour. Seeing that the Minister was disinclined to accept the amendment he did not care about pursuing the controversy further, but he had no objection to amend the clause in the direction suggested by the hon. member for Rockhampton, because he was dealing with matters which had existed and did still exist.

Question put and negatived.

Mr. GLASSEY would move formally the third new clause of which he had given notice, as it was merely a sequence to the one which had just been negatived. He moved that a new clause be inserted providing that if any head of a department makes a complaint to the board against an officer in his department, such complaint shall be in writing and a copy thereof furnished to the officer against whom the complaint is made, and if any officer complains against any other officer the complaint to be in writing and a copy to be furnished to the officer complained against.

Question put and negatived.

Schedule and preamble put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments.

The HOME SECRETARY : I move that the Bill, as amended, be considered to-morrow. I may inform the hon. member for Bundaberg that I find one of his amendments will be utterly unworkable, and on the report stage I shall move that it be omitted from the Bill for reasons I shall then offer.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The HOME SECRETARY : I move that the House do now adjourn. The business for to-morrow will be Supply.

Mr. GLASSEY : When does the hon. gentleman intend to take up the report stage of the Public Service Bill?

The HOME SECRETARY : Not before Thursday.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-seven minutes past 10 o'clock.