

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 1896

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER, 1896.

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

GOLD MINES DRAINAGE BILL.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES, it was resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to further amend the Gold Fields Act 1874.

DEFENCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE—INTRODUCTION.

The PREMIER, in moving—

That it is desirable to introduce a Bill to further amend the Defence Act of 1884—

said the Bill was a very short one, consisting of about five clauses. It had been necessitated by the fact that having carefully revised the regulations dealing with the Defence Force, and submitted them to the Crown Law Office, he was advised that it was doubtful whether some of the regulations under which the force was now existing were not *ultra vires*. That was the main reason for the Bill, and one or two amendments were provided for.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; and the resolution was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an order for to-morrow.

GOVERNMENT LOAN BILL.

SECOND READING.

The TREASURER: I move that this Bill be now read a second time. I do not think there is any matter in it requiring special reference, as the whole of the details of the Bill have already been before the House on one or two occasions. The Bill embodies the resolution that was passed in Committee of Ways and Means last week and adopted by the House yesterday. The only thing that may be worthy of remark is that we fix certain limits under which the Government or the Treasurer may float a loan under the authority of this Bill. First of all the interest is not to exceed $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

Mr. GLASSEY: It is very likely you may get it for three.

The TREASURER: That is so, but this Bill allows me to deal at any particular rate that may be agreed upon, not exceeding $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. As I have explained before, I shall be guided to a large extent by what I may be told by our financial advisers in London, and if it seems advisable to float a loan at 3 instead of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of course the Bill gives ample authority for that purpose. That is one thing that deserves attention. Another will be found in clause 5, where, instead of fixing an absolute day on which the principal of the loan shall be repaid, I have inserted the words "not later than the first day of January, one thousand nine hundred and forty-seven." I have done that purposely to give me a little more discretionary power. I find that a good many loans have been floated lately, and floated successfully, where power is reserved to the Treasurer, as borrower, to give notice after a certain term of years—say twenty—that he is prepared to pay off the principal. That gives this advantage: That if money should be cheaper at that date than it is now, we could then float a fresh loan at a lower rate and pay off the creditor. Whether we should gain anything by doing that or not I cannot say, but, if the loan can be floated without any disadvantage, I think that would be a very good thing in future. At any rate, the option remains with the borrower and not with the capitalist, and I have altered the usual form of a Loan Bill to that extent.

Mr. GLASSEY: I think the statement made by the Treasurer that the rate of interest is not to exceed $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. will be taken by some of the smart financial agents to mean that that rate is to be paid. It will be wired to the other side of the world that the Queensland Government is about to float a loan amounting to so much, and I fancy there are smart financial agents in the old country who will take advantage of this provision as to the maximum rate of interest, and hold out for the higher rate. It, therefore, struck me that it might be unwise to mention $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and that if any rate were mentioned it would have been perfectly safe to have fixed it at 3 per cent. Some of the other colonies have borrowed at that rate, and, without attempting to exaggerate our position beyond what is substantially correct, I think I may say that Queensland is in equally as good a position to borrow at that lower rate as some other colonies. Speaking from memory, I believe that New Zealand and South Australia have borrowed at 3 per cent., and I would suggest that if any rate is mentioned in the Bill it should be 3 per cent.

Mr. JACKSON: There was a good deal of discussion on the loan proposals in Committee of Ways and Means last week, but I did not get an opportunity to make any remarks on that occasion. The Central members occupied a considerable portion of the evening in discussing their own little grievances, and that prevented me from getting an opportunity of speaking. I should therefore like to make a few observations now. I should very much like to see this loan a success, but it is scarcely likely that it will be as successful as the loan of 1894, because that was merely a conversion loan, while this loan will increase the indebtedness of the colony to the extent of some £2,300,000. It is to be hoped, however, that it will be more successful than the loan of 1894, which was an undoubted failure, realising only £88 16s. 4d. per cent. It was a loan of £1,182,400, but the amount received was only £1,050,000. The public debt of the colony is nearly £32,000,000, but we have only received £29,916,000 according to the Auditor-General's report, so that there is a difference of £2,000,000 between the amounts realised and the amounts the loans stand at. I do not mean to say that that is a direct loss to the

colony, because if we had raised the rate of interest no doubt those loans would have floated at a higher figure, but at the same time it is not very pleasant to see that our $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. loans have been floated at such a very low figure. What the Treasurer has not explained, and what I am curious to know, is how it is that during the last three years we have spent £1,500,000 out of loan money, but have not floated any loan except for conversion purposes, and yet we find that we have £1,000,000 more in the Queensland National Bank than in 1893. That seems very smart financing, and I would like to know how it has been done. It has been done somehow, but how I cannot make out. The Treasurer pointed out last year in his Loan Financial Statement that he expected to have £500,000 on 30th June. In addition to that he said he had £458,000 available from the Treasury notes fund, but he has more than that now. Then, in the two other local banks, the Royal and the Bank of North Queensland, he said he had £150,000, and besides that he had £606,000 in Treasury bills that would be available for sale if required. He also had the sugar works debentures which he could realise upon if necessary. He has not taken any money out of the Treasury notes account, but he has now between £700,000 and £800,000 in cash to the credit of that account under his own control.

The TREASURER: That includes £166,000 loan account.

Mr. JACKSON: Yes. The hon. gentleman got that out of the Queensland National Bank, but still he has some £700,000 or £800,000 of gold under his own control.

The TREASURER: No.

Mr. JACKSON: The bank has no control over that whatever. Looking at these figures I cannot make out where he has got all this money from—this £1,000,000 extra that is now in the Queensland National Bank, unless he has sold some Treasury bills, which is one thing I would like to know about. Did he sell any of those Treasury bills?

The TREASURER: I have already said, in reply to the hon. member for Charters Towers, that the whole of that is intact.

Mr. JACKSON: That makes the difficulty all the greater, so far as my not being able to comprehend the position goes, and I would be very glad to have the matter explained before the second reading of this Bill is passed. It is quite a puzzle to me, and I am sure it will be interesting to hon. members to know how it has been done. In stating that there is £1,000,000 more in the Queensland National Bank than there was in 1893, I am stating what is borne out by the Auditor-General's report. The public balances in 1893 amounted to £3,270,000, and of this £2,394,153 was in the Queensland National Bank. In 1894 the amount had increased to £3,222,000 in the Queensland National Bank. Of course, I can understand where a couple of hundred thousands might come from; I suppose the Treasurer got that amount from the other banks, the New South Wales, the Australasia, and the Union.

The TREASURER: Not at that date, previously, before I had anything to do with the Treasury at all.

Mr. JACKSON: That shows an increase of £1,000,000, but in 1895 the amount in the Queensland National Bank was £3,540,000. On the 30th June, 1896, the public balances amounted to £4,340,000, which amount includes £856,634 in Treasury notes, £3,404,000 being in the Queensland National Bank. I can quite understand how the public balances have increased by nearly £1,000,000, owing to this £856,000 being credited to it. These figures, which are taken from the Auditor-General's report, clearly show, as I have

already stated, that the amount in the Queensland National Bank has increased by £1,000,000 since 1893, and yet the Treasurer has spent £1,500,000 out of loan money during that time.

The TREASURER: Where do you find that?

Mr. JACKSON: In the Auditor-General's report.

The TREASURER: Will you quote that? That is the only part I do not understand.

Mr. JACKSON: In 1893-4 we spent £209,000 out of loan money, besides £168,746 for the public depositors' relief. That makes about £370,000. In 1894-5 we spent £531,937 out of loan, and in 1895-6 £592,158. If the Treasurer adds these amounts he will find they total over £1,500,000. The Treasurer denies that he has spent £1,500,000 during the last three years. I do not know whether he has spent it out of loan money, but it has been spent for loan purposes; is there any difference between the two? I cannot see where the difference comes in, but at any rate the money has been spent, and I want to know where it was obtained? I do not know whether the Treasurer understands making money. I am not one of those who altogether believe in the possibility of making money to an unlimited extent by stamping pieces of paper. I remember reading, not very long ago, a very ingenious, if not very able, pamphlet written by a Brisbane gentleman, in which the writer advocated making more public works by the issue of Treasury notes. He argued that that would enable us to dispense altogether with floating loans, but I think there is a fallacy in the argument. At any rate, if our public works were all reproductive—that is to say, if they all paid 4 per cent. interest—there might be something in it; but, as we know, a great portion of our public works do not pay any interest at all from the very nature of the works. Of course our railways, which form the largest portion of our public works, pay something like 2 per cent., but, even supposing they paid 4 per cent., such works as public buildings pay no interest at all. However, I certainly think that the State's credit could be used to a larger extent than it now is in connection with a State bank of issue, and I believe that our Treasury notes could be much more largely used than they are at present. In fact, our Treasury-note system is practically useless, because the Treasurer is keeping a sovereign in his safe for every Treasury note he issues. There seems to be no sense in adopting a Treasury-note system if we are not going to make use of it. The Treasurer some time ago, in reply to an interjection made by me, stated that there were critical times ahead, and that was his reason for keeping such a large reserve of gold. Probably there were critical times ahead, and probably they are not quite over yet. At the same time I fail to see that there is any justification for keeping such a large reserve of gold, and our Treasury-note system might be made use of to a certain extent in dispensing with a portion of the loans we are continually floating. When the loan proposals were before us the other evening, hon. members will remember the speech of the hon. member for Burke. It is just as well that we should occasionally see the other side of the shield, and the hon. member warned us against extravagant expenditure in regard to public works—particularly in regard to railways. I do not agree with the hon. gentleman in taking such a pessimistic view of railway construction. I never was averse to borrowing for public works. I have stated that over and over again in this House since 1893. So far as railway construction goes, it is perfectly justifiable to borrow money if we can get it in no other way, and we know that we cannot get the money from revenue. I remember quoting some figures of Mr. Mulhall's, showing that a country

gains very largely from railway construction. He pointed out that a country gained to the extent of 10 per cent. on its imports and exports by having railway instead of ordinary land carriage. Now if we take those figures we shall find that we are saving £1,200,000 a year through our railways; but I shall not take 10 per cent.—I shall not even take 5 per cent, which would mean a saving of £600,000 a year; but taking it at 2½ per cent. it means an annual saving of £300,000. That is almost equal to the loss on our railways, which amounts to about £348,000. That is the optimistic view that we might take of borrowing for railway construction. I should like to see this loan a success. I am sure that the hon. members sitting beside me have no desire to see the loan a failure for the sake of discrediting the Government. We know that the better terms on which our loans are floated the less interest we have to pay, and the less the burden imposed upon the taxpayers. There is certainly a cloud in the sky. Times are not as opportune for raising money as they were some time ago. I believe the Treasurer does not intend to float this loan for some months, and possibly by that time things may have improved. We know that the Bank of England has recently raised the rate of discount, and securities generally have fallen. Then there is the Queensland National Bank difficulty staring us in the face; that will not tend to raise the credit of the colony. However, I hope that before the time comes for floating the loan that the financial position will have improved, and that it will go off successfully.

The TREASURER, in reply: If no other hon. member intends to speak, I would like first of all to say, in reply to the hon. member for Bundaberg, that although we might float the loan at 3 per cent. it does not follow that it would be advantageous to the colony. If we have to take a much lower price for the loan by floating it at 3 per cent., it may be more profitable to the colony to give 3½ per cent. It depends altogether on the price we get whether it is profitable to float it at the lower rate of interest.

Mr. McDONALD: We do not make a profit at all.

The TREASURER: I shall make no promise at all. I limit myself to 3½ per cent. If I am advised that we can successfully and profitably float our loan at 3 per cent., of course I would much prefer to do it at that rate, because it meets the requirements of a large number of trustees, who never like to buy stock at a premium. It suits them much better to always buy at a discount. At the same time we must recollect, as the hon. member for Bulimba pointed out the other night, that we have a large amount of this discount to work off. Nearly £400,000 is standing against us as expenses incurred in floating past loans. As to reserving the option to give notice after a certain number of years to pay off the loan, that is also a matter for consideration. I do not say that it is going to be done, but if it can be done without prejudice to the loan, I should like to see it done. I am sure the House will be delighted to find that the hon. member for Kennedy, who has had a speech weighing on his mind for some considerable time, has now safely delivered it. His charge against the Treasury is that we have more money than we ought to have, and he cannot make out how the money has come there. All I can say is that the Auditor-General year after year keeps expanding his reports. He expanded it last year to such an extent that there is hardly anything left for me to say; he has given publicity to the utmost detail. When we first went into Committee of Supply the cry was, "Do not let us appropriate any

money until we get the Auditor-General's report." We have had that report for two months, and if the hon. member cannot find out from it what he wants I do not think anything I can say can explain it better. There are the details there on every subject connected with our finances. I will, however, explain to the hon. member how I got the money. I think I have already explained it in such a manner that every hon. member except the hon. member for Kennedy understands it. I predicted last year that I would have on the 30th June last £500,000 on working account; but I cautioned the House while making that prediction that I was taking things at their worst. I was providing for every liability that I could conceive of, and assuming that everything was going to be paid at the due time. We had a certain number of Treasury bills then falling due, for which provision had to be made. I showed how the money had been provided; I shadowed forth that if they were all brought in at the due date that they would be paid, and after allowing for a large expenditure on account of the loan fund, which expenditure was a great deal less than anticipated, as it nearly always is, I would have at least £500,000 to work upon up to the 30th June last. Well, instead of having £500,000 I had £900,000 and I explained how £300,000 of that arose. One of our fellow colonists, a good friend to the colony, who owned £200,000 of the Treasury bills that fell due during that period, refused to take the money, and elected to leave it in the Treasury, but under a different arrangement. Instead of having Treasury bills, which I would not further issue, he took it in savings bank stock. That accounts for £200,000. Then I explained further that one of our eminent insurance companies, the Australian Mutual Provident Society, had also done pretty much the same thing. They had invested in savings bank stock a sum exceeding £100,000.

Mr. Dawson: It is a very good advertisement for the Australian Mutual Provident.

The TREASURER: Perhaps it is. I have a personal interest in the society, and I believe it is one of the best societies in the colonies, and I have no hesitation in advertising it in that way if the hon. member thinks I am doing so. I think it is a very good thing for societies of that sort to do, and I wish others would do the same; that instead of having their money, which is paid in premiums and insurances, taken away out of the colony, they would invest it in the colony. It also has this advantage: that the interest is payable in Brisbane instead of abroad, and the interest will circulate in the colony instead of being taken away. If we could afford to own the whole of our debt in Queensland the colony would be very much benefited, but we know very well that capital is not too abundant in the colony, and when there is good capital of that sort staying here I think the colony is to be congratulated. Well, that accounts for £300,000. That would leave me with somewhere about £600,000, but there is another £100,000 out, a very small margin after all, for which I apologise, but I am glad it is on the right side. It may be accounted for by the fact that the revenue is better than the estimate. We had a surplus of £73,000 on the revenue account, and that forms a large part of £100,000. If the hon. member will only read the Auditor-General's report, and look at the whole matter, he will find that after all I have not committed any very great sin.

Mr. JACKSON: Did you get anything out of the conversion loan?

The TREASURER: I do not quite understand the question. Of course we got nearly £2,000,000 out of it.

Mr. JACKSON: Anything else over and above what you had to make good?

The TREASURER: Yes, you will find it all in the Auditor-General's report. We got a little more, something to reduce the deficits on previous loans. That is all stated in the Auditor-General's report. I forget how much, but I think it is somewhere about £60,000.

Mr. JACKSON: That does not explain how you had £1,000,000 more.

The TREASURER: I think we shall require to be furnished with a blackboard in future, so that I can set down the figures in a way the hon. member can understand with his optics if he cannot with his ears. I think I have given a very fair explanation, and I think the hon. member must be satisfied with it. Whether he blames the Treasurer or not I do not know.

Mr. JACKSON: I am giving you credit for it. I am astonished at your ability.

The TREASURER: Well, instead of being sorry for it, I can only say that I am going to do it again if I can.

Mr. McDONALD: Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that he is following a very unusual course in speaking after the mover of the motion has replied. He had abundance of opportunity of doing so before.

Mr. McDONALD: I may state this very emphatically, that while I am quite prepared to obey your rulings I am not prepared to take advice on my action.

The SPEAKER: I am not giving the hon. member any advice, but would be quite justified in doing so. I simply drew attention to the fact that it was unusual for an hon. member to speak after the hon. member in charge of a Bill had replied.

Mr. McDONALD: I may say that if I am out of order when I rise it is your place to correct me. If I am not out of order I decline to take any advice from the Chair as to the way I will conduct my own business in the House. The thing has been done too often of late, and it is just about time someone put his foot down. There is a little matter which I want to bring up here. We have been told by the Treasurer that he is going to leave this money in the Bank of England. We have also been told that if that course is followed it is likely to injure a certain institution. But I will not go into that. The hon. gentleman said he wanted to leave that money in the Bank of England.

The TREASURER: You know I cannot reply to you.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is now, I think—I am not certain—referring to a previous debate. I have no remembrance of the Treasurer saying this afternoon that he would leave any money in the Bank of England, and the hon. member cannot refer to that matter.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman may have referred to it in a previous debate; what I said was that I understood that he had said so.

The TREASURER: You know that I cannot reply.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman can reply. I will give him plenty of opportunity to reply. He knows he can get the permission of the House to reply if he desires to do so.

MEMBERS on the Government side: No, no!

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You would object yourself.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, and I have a lively recollection that hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches objected when I wanted to reply after I had been attacked. If that money is to be left in the Bank of England I want to know what is the difference between leaving it there and bringing it out and placing it in the Queensland National

Bank? We will be in exactly the same position, as we have about an equal sum to take out of the Queensland National Bank. In the position in which that institution is now, I do not think the Treasurer would be warranted in leaving that amount there. In the interests of the colony it should be placed in safe keeping in some place other than that institution. The Treasurer told us in glowing terms about the friend of the colony who took up so much savings bank stock. I do not see that there is so much friendship in it at all. If that gentleman, whoever he was, put his money into that stock, he did so because he thought it a good speculation, and a better investment than any he could have made outside of the colony. Capitalists nowadays invest their money where they can get the greatest possible advantage from it, and they will not invest in Queensland if they can get a higher rate of interest elsewhere. There is therefore no necessity to be continually lauding these people up to the skies.

Mr. DUNSFORD: It is a pity, I think, that the Treasurer rose to reply so soon after the hon. member for Kennedy.

The TREASURER: I waited till the Speaker was going to put the question.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Well, I certainly had intended to speak, as I wanted an explanation from the Treasurer which I suppose we will not get now until the Bill is in committee. The amount to be floated is £2,300,000 odd, and I understand that £1,500,000 of that is to be obtained from the British money-lender, and £800,000 is to be obtained in the colony, partly through the savings bank. What I want to know is why we should propose to pay the British money-lender 3½ per cent. when it is proposed to pay our own thrifty savings bank depositors only 3 per cent.?

Mr. LEAHY: Three and a-half per cent. is the limit.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Yes, and 3 per cent. is the limit for our own thrifty people.

The TREASURER: You are wrong there.

Mr. DUNSFORD: What I would like to ask is, whether the hon. gentleman will not raise the limit here to 3½ per cent., that he may obtain as great an amount of the loan as possible within the colony? It would be advisable to raise the savings bank percentage to 3½, that we may obtain more from our own people and less from persons outside.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The point raised by the hon. member for Flinders was plainly stated by the Treasurer in explaining the necessity for the loan.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes; but you have no right to read from the report of a previous debate.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I am aware of that. What the hon. gentleman stated was that a certain amount borrowed in the old country would be left in the Bank of England, where it could be held to meet interest, while the revenue coming in at the rate of £100,000 a month could be made available for public works expenditure. The hon. gentleman aptly explained the matter by his illustration that it would be useless to have a ship coming out here with £650,000 in gold and meeting in the Suez Canal a ship going home from the colony with £650,000 in gold.

Mr. DANIELS: I am of the same opinion as other hon. members who have spoken. I think that if we gave savings bank interest at 3½ per cent., or even 3 per cent., hundreds of people in the colony would put their money into the savings bank.

The TREASURER: They can do that now. It is published every day.

Mr. DANIELS: They get no interest over £200.

The TREASURER: They can if they take stock.

Mr. DANIELS: At all events by this means we would keep the money in the colony.

The TREASURER: I said before that I will try to do.

Mr. DANIELS: Why not give the people who put their money into the savings bank the 3½ per cent., the same as we gave to the English money-lender?

The TREASURER: I have said that I am willing to do that.

Mr. DANIELS: The hon. gentleman says he is likely to do, and I think he should try and force the money into those lines and not go home for the money at all. If we borrow from the people here we will get the capital and the interest also left in the colony.

Question put and passed; and the committal of the Bill made an order for to-morrow.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

RAILWAYS—GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Question stated—That £24,521 be granted for railways, general establishment.

Mr. GRIMES wished to refer to the subject matter of a petition he presented to the House a few weeks ago with reference to the running of excursion trains from Charters Towers to the Burdekin River on a Sunday. When the matter was made public in Charters Towers the whole of the Christian public rose up to condemn the action of the Government in granting those trains. First of all, a letter was directed by the ministers' union to the Premier, and then, not receiving a satisfactory reply to their representations, resolutions on the subject were passed in all the different congregations in Charters Towers, except the Roman Catholic. But the minister of that church sent in a special communication to the Premier, stating that he was perfectly in accord with the resolutions passed by the other churches, and that had he known in time he was sure that a similar resolution would have been passed by his own church.

Mr. McDONALD asked whether the hon. member was in order in discussing that question in anticipation of a motion he had on the paper, asking that there be laid on the table of the House all correspondence with the Government and the Railway Department, relating to the running of excursion trains from Charters Towers to the Burdekin River on Sundays, the 4th and 18th October, etc.?

Mr. GRIMES pointed out that the motion on the business-paper only referred to certain papers. He was now referring to facts in connection with the petition he had presented to the House, and not to those papers.

The CHAIRMAN: Following the practice laid down in "May," I think the hon. member is not in order in anticipating the discussion on a motion which he has on the paper, and which is to come before the House. At page 299 "May" says—

"It follows, therefore, that debate must not stray from the question before the House to matters which have been decided during the current session, nor anticipate a matter appointed for the consideration of the House." No doubt the matter is on the business-paper for the consideration of the House, and I must rule that the hon. member is not in order in referring to the question, as it will be anticipating a discussion in the House.

Mr. GRIMES was rather surprised at the ruling the Chairman had given, and would still point out that the motion on the paper was merely a motion asking for certain papers, and was intended as a formal motion.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was going fully into the question as set forth in the notice on the business-paper, and I feel sure that

on reflection he will see that I was perfectly right in following so eminent an authority as "May."

Mr. GRIMES: If the Chairman would reflect a minute he would find that he never referred in any way to the papers, but was discussing the petition he had presented to the House. He was not surprised at the opposition he was receiving from the other side.

Mr. McDONALD asked if the hon. member was in order in questioning the ruling of the Chair?

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member, on reflection, will not question my ruling. If the hon. member will look at his own motion he will see that it refers to the running of excursion trains from Charters Towers, which is the question he was proceeding to discuss.

Mr. KIDSTON asked if the Minister would cause a slight alteration to be made in table 11, at page 42 of the Commissioner's report? A number of particulars regarding the railways in the Southern division were given separately. The same details were given in regard to these railways collectively, and the same information was given in regard to the railways in the Central division; but, in regard to the Northern railways, details were only given for the lines separately, and not for them collectively. He would ask the Secretary for Railways to see that these details were given for the whole of the Northern railways, the same as they were given for the Central and Southern lines.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He could only call the attention of the Commissioner to the request of the hon. member; he could not ask him to make a report in any particular form, as the Commissioner, being an officer of Parliament, was not under his control.

The Hon. G. THORN wished for some explanation regarding several accidents that had happened to their locomotives in connection with driving rods. Up to the present no serious loss had been sustained, but they did not know the day when a serious accident might occur. He knew all about it himself, but it was not his place to point it out. Who was to blame, and were the accidents caused through defective specifications? These accidents had no reason to occur if they had competent people to look after the locomotives.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: A number of accidents had occurred which had caused the Commissioner and himself a good deal of anxiety. They had been making inquiries in this as well as in the other colonies, and so far as they could learn the accidents were owing to the locomotives being fitted with Westinghouse brakes. Since that reason had been assigned the connections had been taken off and no accidents had occurred.

Mr. BROWNE: They had a Railway Commissioner, and were to have a deputy commissioner. The salary of the former was fixed by Parliament, but there was no salary upon the Estimates for the deputy. He noticed, however, that the salary of the traffic manager had been increased from £700 to £1,000, and he would like to know whether Mr. Thallon would hold both these offices or whether they were to be separate offices?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Mr. Thallon would be general traffic manager and also deputy commissioner.

Mr. DANIELS asked whether it was the intention to do away with the differential rates for the future?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: These rates were imposed to secure the traffic that used to go to the other colonies, and so long

as they succeeded in retaining that traffic those rates would be continued. We ought to secure our own traffic for our own lines.

Mr. DANIELS: They had not gained one iota since those rates had been imposed. Freight was now carried forty-one miles along the line between Cambooya and Warwick for nothing, and there was a rebate of 10 per cent. upon all merchandise in addition to that. He might say without exaggeration that they were losing £1,000 a year by those special rates. The carriers preferred to go to Cambooya; but when they had got there and unloaded they had to go to the stationmaster at Warwick before they could get paid, and it was impossible for them to get return loading, because goods were consigned from Brisbane to Warwick. When the Government sold township allotments at a place like Cambooya, which was said to be on the direct route to Goondiwindi, it was nothing less than repudiation to divert the traffic to another course, especially when the colony was losing about £1,000 a year by it. In order to know what he was talking about, he had sent to the Railway Department for the information he wanted regarding the St. George district, and the quantity of goods sent *via* Warwick at special rates, and the reply he received from the secretary was—

"I am desired to inform you that the Secretary for Railways does not consider it would be advisable to make public the information which you desire."

Why should it not be made public, unless it was meant as a bribe to Warwick for keeping true to the Government? The legitimate route for the Goondiwindi traffic was from Cambooya, *via* Leyburn, but heavy floods on one occasion had been made the excuse for taking the traffic to Warwick. There was no doubt that people had paid a higher price for land at Cambooya because the Goondiwindi traffic went there, but after having sold the land the Government wished to give a sop to some other district.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There had been no alteration in the through rates since he had been Secretary for Railways. They were brought into force when the member for Warwick had a seat on the other side.

Mr. DANIELS: When the hon. member for Warwick was Chairman of Committees.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Mr. Morgan had sat on the other side for the last four or five years. He understood the reason the carriers preferred the Warwick route to the Cambooya was because on the latter there were forty or fifty miles of blacksoil plains which were impassable in wet weather. If the hon. member had been as much alive to the interests of his constituents as the late member for Warwick, he could have made the same arrangement as had been made with regard to Warwick. He had understood that the information the hon. gentleman had sought was with reference to the railway surveys. The department was at present engaged in making five surveys, and the information regarding those surveys should be given in the first place to Parliament. The hon. member had no right to expect to be supplied with such information before it was given to Parliament. At the present time no information was available.

Mr. DANIELS: The hon. gentleman had not been very well informed when he stated that there were forty or fifty miles of blacksoil plains on the Cambooya route, when the total distance was only twenty-eight miles, ten miles of which was sandy country.

Mr. BELL did not blame the present Secretary for Railways for the introduction of the system of preferential rates, but certainly whatever commissioner was responsible for the system should undergo some criticism at the hands of the Committee. In the railway system with which

he was particularly connected they had the most extraordinary preferential system which had been adopted in Australia. It was also the most unsuccessful system which had been tried. Its rigidity, which had been insisted on for months, which ran into years, was now being gradually relaxed—which was the best part of that could be offered of its want of success—and before long he hoped that it would be finally abandoned. The system had been initiated to make Yeulba the depôt for the whole of the trade of the Balonne district—a trade which had previously belonged naturally to Dalby. It had had the result of inflicting upon many families, whose livelihood depended upon the carrying trade, an amount of absolute suffering which had not yet passed away, and whose effects were likely to be felt for a very long time to come. Some notice should certainly be taken by the Committee of the matter. During the last Parliament he had spoken as strongly as he could of the injustice inflicted upon the chief town in his district by attempting to concentrate trade which belonged to it in Yeulba.

THE HON. G. THORN: There was no doubt the hon. member for Dalby had just ground for complaint in regard to what the Commissioners had done in his electorate; but with reference to the complaint of the hon. member for Cambooya the position was altogether different. From time immemorial carriers had preferred the Warwick route to the Cambooya. In wet weather the carriers could not travel along the Cambooya road. Besides, he was sure that when the Commissioners had drawn up the through rates, they had singled out Warwick as the terminus of the border trade, and had been paving the way for the construction of the *via recta*. If the *via recta* were built on the system which was to be adopted in connection with the Mount Morgan line, it would only cost £300,000, whilst it would save sixty or seventy miles of carriage from Warwick. No doubt that was a reason the Commissioners had in their minds when they went in for preferential rates from Warwick to Brisbane. The Commissioner was to be greatly commended for his action in regard to the Cambooya line. He was sorry the hon. member for Toowoomba was not in the House, because he had always championed the cause of Cambooya, and he would say no more.

MR. DANIELS: There was a 640-acre camping reserve along the Cambooya route, and twelve miles further on another 640 acres. On the other route there were no camping reserves, and travellers had to pay for accommodation for their stock. Carriers would rather go to Cambooya than to Warwick only they could not get return loading, and had to go to Warwick to get paid.

MR. W. THORN took a broader view than the hon. member for Fassifern. The differential rates were doing the colony a great deal of harm, and settling people in places where they did not want to go. The farmers on the Killarney branch had fifteen or sixteen miles more carriage to pay than those on the Crow's Nest line.

MR. MCGAHAN: Not at all.

MR. W. THORN: What he was saying was a fact which could be found in the Commissioner's report. As to the *via recta*, neither he nor the hon. member for Fassifern would ever see it in his day. Those who represented the Southern part of the colony round about the Logan would require a line in their direction, which was the nearest and best. He wished to ask the Minister whether anything would be done in the direction of making trial surveys to farming centres. He was sorry nothing had been done, and hoped that during the next six months four or five surveys would be made. One line in particular should be surveyed—from Crow's Nest to Nanango. He knew the Nanango and Kilkivan people were

trying to get the line their way, but to his mind the Crow's Nest route would be the shortest and the most profitable to the colony. The Secretary for Lands was having 21,000 acres of good agricultural land thrown open in the district, which he ventured to say would be all taken up in the first week. He also wished to call attention to the way in which tenderers were treated by the Railway Department. Only a few weeks ago a tenderer came all the way from Toowoomba to find out whether he was the highest tenderer for a refreshment-room, and he was actually refused the information. He thought as the tenders were public property they should be treated publicly. The freights on the branch lines was another grievance he had to bring forward. On the Pengarry Junction to Crow's Nest line there were a large number of farmers who were doing their best to open up the colony, and he did not at all agree with the hon. member for Burke that the branch lines should be closed up. If they did not bring in anything to the coffers of the State directly they did indirectly. From Pengarry Junction to Meringandan was a distance of five and a-quarter miles; the freight earned was £1,558 7s. 6d., and 3,711 tons were carried. Then from Laidley 8,526 tons were carried, and the freight was £2,473 10s. Most of that was carried a distance of sixty miles, and he contended that the line to Meringandan should get credit for the traffic it brought to the main line. The branch lines should get credit for more than the amounts credited to them. If they did not get credit for one-half they should for at least one-third, and he was glad the Commissioner was going to give the question consideration. He would also like to draw attention to the disgraceful way in which the closets were kept at the different centres, at Ipswich especially. Instead of having them attended to by the railway employees it would be far better to go back to the old contract system.

MR. TOOTH asked if the department intended to run a night train from Bundaberg to meet the Southern mail train? Mails for the whole of the Wide Bay and Burnett districts were now delayed in Brisbane from twelve to fourteen hours. They not only had to suffer that inconvenience, but by running a night train from Bundaberg the department would gain considerably. A person from the Wide Bay district now had to lose three days to put in a day in Brisbane; but with a night train from Bundaberg he could save a day. He trusted the department would give that matter serious consideration. It had been brought under the notice of the late Commissioner, Mr. Mathieson, and a kind of provisional promise had been given that when an alteration was made in the Southern mail service their convenience would be consulted.

MR. KEOGH asked whether the Minister had had under his notice the matter of the contract entered into by the Phoenix Engineering Company for a footbridge over the roadway at Union street, Ipswich? The contract time was two months, and the contractors had been over seven months at the work. In the meantime a contract had been let to a man named James Madden for a goods-shed at Ipswich, and that man, after having performed the greater part of his work, had had the completion of his contract delayed for over seven months through the failure of the Phoenix Company to complete their contract. He would like to know if a letter had been written to that company, calling upon them to pay a fine of £150 in connection with their contract? The man Madden could receive no compensation whatever, and he had been informed that the department intended to complete his contract themselves. If the department had not insisted upon the fine from the

Phoenix Company, he had no hesitation in saying it was because that company was looked upon as a great political body in Ipswich. He had no hesitation in saying either that it was due to the engineer of the department in Ipswich, who was responsible for a turntable which was nine inches short in diameter, and for a cabin in which they had had to put up reflectors to show trains coming under the railway bridge. He was the man who was bolstering up the whole of the railway system in Ipswich, and who was doing away with Madden's contract. The hon. member for Bundaberg had called for the papers in Madden's case, and they had been laid on the table, and that hon. member could deal with the matter better than he could. He wanted to know whether the Phoenix Company had been called upon to pay the fine of £150, as they should have been?

Mr. STORY was very gratified to hear the Minister say that the routes for the St. George Railway were being surveyed, and that the information when complete would be laid on the table for the benefit of hon. members. He could quite understand the hon. member for Cambooya desiring a little information in advance of anybody else, as little speculations could be gone into on advanced information where it was of any value. But the whole of the constituencies interested would depend upon the reports, and until they had the information which the reports would furnish respecting all the routes all log-rolling was futile and unnecessary. With respect to the differential rates referred to by the hon. member for Dalby, he pointed out as a necessity for them that the whole of the Lower Warrego did business for many years with New South Wales. The people had got into the habit of dealing with New South Wales, and if the Queensland Government desired to get the trade of their own people they had to make some big concessions to induce those people to change their accounts and send their produce to Brisbane and get their supplies therefrom. Without the concessions a hawker could go 140 miles from Charleville to Cunnamulla, buy his goods there, and then go back to Charleville and sell them at a profit. Coongoola would naturally send wool to Charleville, but Weelamurra and Widgegoara would naturally send it to Bourke. To get that wool at all it was necessary to make some concession, and the effect of having done so was that the whole of the wool from that district, and even from Tinnenburra, now came to Brisbane. When the railway got to Cunnamulla that concession would be no longer necessary; and if the Government would trust the people further down on the border to deal as soon as they could with their own country, and do away with that most iniquitous border tax which was levied for the purpose of preventing the people sending their wool over to New South Wales, there would be no further cause of complaint in that locality. The whole of the stations from the South Australian border to the Paroo were exempt from the tax, and it was only an imaginary statement to say that the wool from the stations in that part went to Adelaide, for that was not a fact. The wool from Currawinya went to Bourke, and had always gone to Bourke. From Caiwarroo eastward every man paid the tax, and much of the wool there went to Moree, as the men were no nearer the Warwick railway than the Western men were to Charleville. There was not so much difference that the people along one half the line should be exempt from the tax, while the people on the other half had to pay it. It was true that the money so collected was given to the divisional boards to make the roads to the railways, but there were many squatters who were

so peculiarly situated that that was no advantage to them, because if they had a macadamised road to the railway they would not send their wool to the railways. The track that carriers travelled was to a very great extent decided by the season. There were some seasons when it was simply impossible to take wool to Bourke, and then it went to Charleville; and at other seasons it was impossible to take it to Charleville, and it went to Bourke. The differential rates were necessary at the time they were made, and had done a considerable amount of good, as the returns of wool sent to Brisbane by rail would show; but he hoped the Government would consider the iniquity of the border tax, as its abolition would be an advantage to all concerned.

Mr. KERR: It had been stated by hon. members that the reductions made by the late Commissioner in the matter of maintenance and ballasting would have to be paid for in after years, and was therefore not really a saving. Anyone who travelled on the Central Railway from Rockhampton to Longreach must come to the conclusion that there was something radically wrong with the railway, as the carriages bumped and jumped, and riding in them was nearly as rough as riding in some of Cobb and Co.'s coaches. Men working on the line, and officials who had held responsible positions in the department before the appointment of Commissioners, and who were still in responsible positions, had stated that the saving on the railway had been effected at the expense of the maintenance of the roads, and that they would in consequence be forced in future to have extra expenditure on the roads. The cost of repairing rolling-stock must also be greater in such a case than it would be where the road was kept in good repair. He quite agreed with the action of the present Commissioner in arranging cheap excursions from Toowoomba and other places down to the coast, and from the towns to the Western portions of the colony, so as to give children a chance of seeing life in those various places, but he did not approve of the differential charges which were made. He found that the return fare from Toowoomba to Sandgate, a distance of 230 miles, was 5s. for adults and 2s. 6d. for children, while at Barcaldine adults were charged 3s. and children 1s. 6d. for a distance of twenty-four miles. He hoped the Minister would make a note of that anomaly, and see that the same concessions were granted to the people in the Central division as were granted to those in the Southern division. Another matter he wished to refer to was, that on the Central line if a person started from a station and wanted to stop at a camp fifteen miles distant where there was no station, and the next station was thirty miles from the place he started from, he had to pay the fare for the whole thirty miles. He did not know who was responsible for this, but if the Secretary for Railways would put a stop to it he would have the best thanks of the people in the Central district. Another matter which required attention was the accommodation for the second-class passengers. The first-class carriages were well got up, and there was a splendid sleeping-carriage, but the second-class carriages were a disgrace to the colony. He had seen them so crowded that women and children had to lie down along the aisles to sleep when travelling from Rockhampton to Longreach. He and his family had had to do this, although they paid their fares the same as first-class passengers did. The second-class carriages there were not nearly so comfortable as those about Brisbane, and the seats were so hard that after travelling all day he did not know what was the matter with him, and he

came to the conclusion that if the Commissioner or the Secretary for Railways had to travel from 10 o'clock one evening till 5 o'clock the next, there would be a change. There was no lavatory accommodation, and you could not even get a drink of water, although he was sure that if a return were made out it would show that the amount received from second-class passengers was greater than that received from first-class passengers. Now that they were building new carriages, the department might see that those supplied to the Central line were more suitable for the climate and more comfortable for travelling long distances in. Hard seats did not matter for suburban travelling, but for long distances they were too monotonous, and made one disinclined to sit down for a week. He might suggest that some of the first-class carriages that had been in use for some time should be converted into second-class lavatory carriages for women and children, which would do away with some of the inconveniences that were suffered by travellers on this railway. Another point he might refer to was the necessity for some regulation such as they had in the old country, which would prevent more than a certain number of passengers being crowded into one carriage. There were rules restricting the number of people who might get into a 'bus or travel in a steamer, but there was no law restricting the number who might travel in a railway carriage. Another thing they had to complain about was that women and children travelling second class had to go into the same carriages with kanakas and Chinamen. The time had arrived when these coloured gentlemen should have a carriage for themselves, because they smoked opium and used language not fit for women and children to hear. He knew the Secretary for Railways did not desire that state of things to continue, and he would remedy it if his attention were called to it. He did not mention these matters in a carping spirit or to gain *kudos*, but simply to let the hon. gentleman know the disadvantages under which second-class passengers on this line had to travel.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: He had not been present when the question of wages paid to railway employees was discussed. When retrenchment had taken place, it had taken place at the bottom of the service and had never reached the top.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS rose to a point of order. There was at the present time a motion on the paper dealing with the question the hon. member was referring to.

Mr. HARDACRE: "May" laid it down that there was no objection to discussing a question of this kind on the Estimates. The only point at which irregularity might come in was in referring to another debate during the same session. They were now discussing a question of public expenditure, and there was nothing in their rules to prevent them discussing any question connected with that expenditure. If that was the rule, any hon. member might put a motion on the paper, never intending to discuss it, and block all discussion when the Estimates came on. That would render their Standing Orders ridiculous.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You have discussed this matter very fully.

Mr. HARDACRE: They had nothing to do with discussing the motion on the paper. That was an entirely different thing. He admitted they could not refer to that motion, but they could discuss anything within the limits of the vote before the Committee.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: So long as it does not clash with a discussion already initiated.

Mr. HARDACRE: It did not matter whether it clashed or not. It had been ruled time after time that they could discuss any question of expenditure.

Mr. HOOLAN: A ruling has just been given, which met with the approval of this side, and we should not go back on that.

Mr. HARDACRE: He was not going to allow a member either on his own side or on the other side to deprive him of his right to speak in regard to the expenditure of the public money. The ruling which had been given was a mistaken ruling.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You should have challenged it.

Mr. HARDACRE: He had not had time to look the matter up at the time. If such a ruling was to hold good it would make their Standing Orders a farce.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL thought it would be a very unseemly state of affairs if, after a ruling had been given on the same point during the same sitting of the Committee—particularly as the ruling had been asked for by a member on the side on which the hon. member sat, and had gone unchallenged—the Chairman should be asked to reverse his ruling. The hon. member for Oxley had wished to discuss a matter connected with the railways, but the hon. member for Flinders had raised the point of order that the hon. member had a motion on the paper dealing with that particular question, and the Chairman had ruled that the hon. member for Oxley was not in order in attempting to discuss it on the Estimates. As a matter of fact, the motion the hon. member for Oxley had on the paper had never been discussed, while the motion of the hon. member for Leichhardt was in process of being discussed. If the ruling was correct with regard to the hon. member for Oxley, it applied with triple force in the case of the hon. member for Leichhardt. Seeing the first ruling had been acquiesced in by the Committee it should be adhered to.

Mr. GRIMES: The point of order just raised was on all-fours with the point of order raised when he had attempted to speak. He was surprised at hon. members objecting to the ruling of the Chairman so soon. He would not say that the ruling was the one he would have given had he been in the chair; but the precedent having been laid down at the beginning of the sitting, they should at least adhere to it for the remainder of that sitting. He had known very well that the ruling would be objected to later on, and he was not disappointed of the satisfaction of finding that those who had objected in his case felt the shoe pinch themselves.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: As a new member he understood that as there was a sum of £12,000 on the Estimates for the wages of the railway employees he was in order in referring to it. He understood that the proper time to discuss such questions was when they were dealing with the Estimates. Why should any member be able, by putting a motion on the paper, to block discussion on the Estimates? He supposed the only way in which he could refer to the matter was by moving a reduction.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind hon. members that the motion of the hon. member for Leichhardt is still on the business paper, and will again be discussed. I still think that the point of order raised is precisely the same as that raised in reference to the motion of the hon. member for Oxley. I feel confident that my ruling was correct, because the motion of the hon. member was called "not formal," and the motion is coming on for discussion. The motion of the hon. member for Leichhardt has been discussed two or three times, and will come on again. The junior member for Maryborough

will be in order in discussing the matter when we come to the wages of the workmen, but we have not come to that yet. It has been the rule since I have been in the chair to discuss the general administration of the department on the first vote, without referring to any particular item, and I think we must follow that rule. I must rule in this case, as in the former one, that hon. members will not be in order in discussing the motion of the hon. member for Leichhardt.

Mr. HARDACRE: Did he understand that they could discuss the question of wages when they came to the item, because if that was so then the item was included in this vote? He was going to move that the Chairman's ruling be disagreed with, because he felt that it was of great importance to the whole Committee. He was sorry the ruling came after that which had been given on the hon. member for Oxley's motion. Because a ruling was given against one member of the Committee it did not bind the whole Committee. If they found that a ruling which concerned the rights and privileges of hon. members was wrong, they had a right to reverse it within two minutes.

The CHAIRMAN: Do I understand that the hon. member is going to move that my ruling be disagreed with?

Mr. HARDACRE: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Then the hon. member cannot continue to discuss the question dealt with by his motion.

Mr. HARDACRE pointed out that there was an item of £12,000 on the Estimates, and he maintained he could refer to any matter which in any way concerned the spending of that amount. He was not referring to his motion at all. He wished to confine himself strictly to the spending of the £12,000.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot debate the same question to which his motion refers on this Estimate. I would ask the hon. gentleman to point out on the vote where the sum of £12,000 is referred to.

Mr. HARDACRE wanted to discuss a vote which included an increase of £12,000 for wages. Because a person put a motion on the paper surely that did not take away the rights of hon. members to discuss the Estimates freely. If that were so he could, by putting a motion on the paper in reference to the railways which the Minister had introduced, prevent him from discussing those railways.

The Hon. G. THORN rose to a point of order. The hon. member was transgressing the rules altogether.

Mr. HARDACRE: Surely he could give his reasons for disagreeing to the ruling. A question had arisen at one time whether the then member for Burke and the then member for Maryborough, Mr. Powers, could both place on the paper Bills dealing with electoral reform, and the Speaker had ruled that the placing a motion on the paper by one member did not take away the equal rights of other members to discuss the same question. They ought to uphold a ruling like that, so that no member might deprive another of discussing such an important matter as the expenditure of public funds. He admitted that he had no right to refer to the former debate, and he was quite sure the Chairman would see that he had given his ruling thoughtlessly.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Why did you not challenge it?

Mr. HARDACRE: Because the whole thing was done so quickly.

Mr. McDONNELL: The hon. member for Barcoo had referred to the excursions carried out for the benefit of State school children, and there was no doubt that the General Traffic Manager and the Commissioner deserved every

credit for the way in which those excursions had been carried out. He believed they had been a success financially for the department, and they were a great source of enjoyment and recreation to the children and their parents. He had noticed, however, that the children were packed into the carriages in such numbers as to greatly inconvenience them, and more ample accommodation might be provided for them. He wanted to see the principle under which those excursions had been arranged carried further, and people induced to visit Sandgate, Wynnum, Cleveland, and Southport during the summer months on the Saturdays and Sundays. He was referring principally to people who had not much means, and for whom Sunday was the only day they had at their disposal. At present the fares to those seaside resorts were prohibitory, and the department would do well to run Sunday trains to the places he had mentioned at reduced rates. He did not see why the people of Brisbane should be denied a privilege granted to the people of Charters Towers. At present the second-class fare to Sandgate was 1s. 6d., and if a working man wanted to take his wife and family there the cost amounted to a big tax upon him. He thought a return to the old policy of issuing single fares for the double journey to and from those places would give satisfaction. The people of Sandgate were doing something to induce people to patronise the place during the summer months, and they now had a good band there performing on the Sunday afternoon. If the fare from the Central Station to Sandgate was fixed at 1s. the trains would be packed, instead of going down as they did now, a quarter full. The people and the department would be benefited by the adoption of the suggestion, and he hoped the Minister would take it into consideration.

The Hon. G. THORN was astonished at any member of the Committee advocating the running of trains on the Sunday. The hon. member should remember that there were a number of sky-pilots in the Committee, himself amongst the number, and they were anxious to preserve the sanctity of that day. The railway servants wanted a holiday on that day as well as other people, and they should be given the same opportunity to keep the fourth commandment.

Mr. KEOGH: We run trains already between Ipswich and Brisbane on the Sunday.

The Hon. G. THORN: He had been instrumental in getting those trains to enable people to go to church. He did not believe in running trains for any other purpose than that, and hoped they would not desecrate the Sabbath by running excursion trains to Sandgate. With regard to the large number of grievances mentioned by the hon. member for Barcoo, he was sure that if the hon. member went to the Commissioner with his grievances he would have them cured. Mr. Gray would see that no one part of the colony was favoured at the expense of another, but would mete out fair play to all, and see that children travelling on the Central Railway were not charged more than children carried on the Southern railways. With reference to the *via recta*, he would remind hon. members that some time ago, before some of them were members of the House, Parliament sanctioned a railway from Warwick along the valley of the McIntyre to St. George. Parliament had also sanctioned unanimously a *via recta* from Ipswich to Warwick. The money had been voted for both those lines, and had not yet been diverted to any other purpose; and he would be no party to its diversion, as he hoped before very long to see the lines constructed. The money for the line from Ipswich to Warwick would have been expended long ago had the members for Warwick and its vicinity and

the members for Ipswich and its vicinity done their duty, but they had not. Another matter he wished to refer to was in connection with Mr. Stanley's visit to America. As hon. members knew, Mr. Stanley had gone to the United States to discover a way of making cheap lines to agricultural centres in the colony, and it must be admitted that if agricultural settlement was to continue and prosper they must construct railways to the places where farmers were established. Mr. Stanley had now been away some time, having gone before Mr. Collins and Mr. Hunt left to make inquiries with reference to the tick pest, and he would like to know whether the Minister had received an advanced or preliminary report from him on the matter of those cheap railways?

Mr. STEPHENSON wished to impress upon the Minister for Railways the necessity of formulating some little more common-sense rules than existed at present in connection with the examination of candidates for employment in the Railway Department as apprentices, cleaners, porters, etc. An advertisement was occasionally inserted in the papers announcing that candidates for employment in various capacities in the railway service were invited to go up for examination, and in times like the present the number of candidates in one locality would probably be fifty, seventy-five, or 100, and a very considerable percentage of them passed. So far as he could understand, if fifty boys passed at one examination, and there were only, say, ten vacancies, at the end of twelve months the fact that the other forty had passed the requisite examination would be ignored, and they would have to go up for examination again before they would be eligible for employment. If this system was to be continued, efforts should be made to ascertain the probable requirements of the department for the year, as it was no use examining a great number of boys when there were only a few vacancies, because attending these examinations entailed a good deal of loss of time and money either to the applicants or their parents. No fresh examinations ought to be held until all those who had succeeded in the previous examination had been employed. He had been informed that the porters on the lines around Brisbane were only employed for eight hours a day, while those in other places, where the traffic was perhaps equally heavy, had to work for nine and a-half and ten hours a day. He did not want to go into the eight-hours' question, but he did not think this was fair, as the same rule ought to be applied all over the country. The hon. member for Rosewood had referred to the Phoenix Company and its contract for the foot-bridge in Union street, and had said that this company was a huge political institution. That was all nonsense, and could serve no good purpose. He surely had better opportunities of judging than the hon. member, and knew that the company exercised no political influence whatever. There were a number of men employed in the construction of locomotives and rolling-stock, but their political opinions were pretty equally divided, and neither the company nor the directors wielded any political power. He agreed with the hon. member for Barcoo that it was quite time more decent accommodation was provided in the shape of lavatory carriages for those who had to travel long distances, and hoped that the remarks of the hon. member would have some effect, as there was no doubt that the travelling public had had to put up with great inconveniences. Efforts were, he knew, being made to remedy the present state of affairs, and he hoped those efforts would be continued. References had been made to the construction of the Tivoli branch line, and he could not

understand the delay that had taken place. Everybody seemed to admit that the line was desirable, and that it would be profitable, although it was very short, and he was under the impression that it would have been completed before this. He trusted that the line would be commenced soon. Another matter that should be referred to was the desirability of running workmen's trains, as they were called in other parts of the world, which would be found very serviceable indeed. Excursion trains had been run lately, at moderate charges, for the purpose of conveying school children to the seaside, and it was proposed to run them from the metropolis to Toowoomba. Those trains should be run frequently at such moderate prices and convenient times that working men and their families would be able to take advantage of them, and go inland to breathe the bracing air of the Downs, or to the seaside to inhale the ozone there. He did not cavil at the reduction, but he noticed that, although the number of traffic and station auditors was the same as last year, the vote had been reduced from £1,200 to £1,095. It might be that one or two new officers had been appointed at lower salaries, but the Committee was entitled to know the reason for the reduction. Another matter to which he wished to refer was that a Mr. Halley, a business man in Ipswich, complained that he had been unjustly treated by the Railway Department. He alleged that when he bought his business premises and residence he had been informed by the then Commissioner for Railways that the land on which his buildings were erected would not be interfered with by the department blocking the road between Nicholas and Ellenborough streets, and on the strength of that he had paid the authorities a very much higher price for the land than he would have given under other circumstances. Since then the gates between those streets had been removed and a footbridge had been erected, and Mr. Halley complained that the alteration had led to his sustaining very considerable business losses, and that gentleman thought he had a fair claim to compensation. There was no doubt that the traffic between the two streets was nothing like what it had been prior to the erection of the footbridge. He had not asked Mr. Halley what was the amount of the loss he had suffered, but he stated that he had been promised by various Ministers that the road would not be blocked. He hoped the Secretary for Railways would inquire into the merits of the case.

Mr. GLASSEY: They had just heard an excellent electioneering speech from the hon. member, and there was not a single point of the compass that he had not boxed in order to get votes; but no matter what the hon. member did it would not return him at the next election. The hon. member was not so innocent as he would have them believe as to the delay in regard to the Tivoli Railway. The hon. member knew that vested interests were at stake. The same causes were operating which had operated in many directions for years past in Ipswich. The same interests had led to the railway station in Ipswich being placed in its present wretched position. People were simply roasted there during the summer months because certain vested interests had ruled the roost in years gone by. The hon. member might inquire among his proprietary friends, who had had such a large say in returning him, if he wished to know the secret of the delay. He was glad the Secretary for Railways was going to make a special visit to the district to see what elements were at work preventing the line from being proceeded with. The line ought to have been built years ago, and when it was built it would pay splendidly. With regard to the footbridge the hon. member

had spoken of, he seemed to call in question the statement of the hon. member for Rosewood that the Phoenix Engineering Works were a huge political engine. There were some genuine, honest men connected with those works, but, taking that company as a whole in connection with other companies there, he might say that Ipswich was divided into a number of little cliques, in all of which the hon. member had some shares. Yet the hon. member posed as an innocent sort of sucking dove. He would remind the hon. gentleman that a person who had taken a contract for the construction of a goods-shed at Ipswich had suffered very material loss in consequence of the delays at the Phoenix works in carrying out their part of the contract. Mr. Madden had been told that the reason why he had not succeeded with his claim was that he was too intimately connected with the Labour party, and yet the hon. member for Ipswich told them there was no such thing as political pressure used in that part of the Government service. He (Mr. Glassey) knew exactly the dodging and cliqueism which had been going on for years in connection with the hon. member's district. He drew special attention to the case of Mr. Madden, and took that opportunity of thanking the Minister for having the papers connected with the case printed and circulated. Mr. Madden and his two sons had been kept idle for ten weeks, and had suffered a loss of £80 or £90, through no fault of their own. He would bring the matter before the Minister, and was sure he would rise above any petty party considerations, and do justice to a struggling man and his family. He wished also to refer to the question of Sunday trains, and the mileage limit at present in force. Persons living beyond twenty-five miles from certain stations had an opportunity of travelling at reduced fares, but he had never been able to see why a limit should be imposed. He believed in every facility being afforded to working people to enjoy a little recreation and rest at the seaside with their families on the only day of the week on which they were free. The hon. member for Oxley might, with other members, fairly take exception to Sunday trains, but he differed with those hon. members, and maintained that that was the only day on which the working classes could enjoy a little change of air. It did not follow that because they travelled on Sunday they were committing any great offence. It was far better for them to do that than to lounge in at the back doors of public-houses on Sunday, and from what he knew there were very few obstacles thrown in the way of doing that. He particularly wished to impress on the Minister the consideration of the questions to which he had referred—namely, the case of Mr. Madden, the Tivoli Railway, the abolition of the twenty-five mile limit, and the need of further facilities being afforded to working people to travel on Sunday. He was quite sure the hon. gentleman would give those matters his careful consideration, rise above all petty feelings, and do that which would result in the greatest good to the greatest number.

The PREMIER did not take exception to the speech of the hon. member who had just sat down, because he was replying to what had been said by a former speaker; but he wished to draw the attention of the Chairman to the fact that they were discussing revenue and not Loan Estimates. The construction of railways was a matter entirely outside this vote. If they were going to discuss all the affairs relating to loan expenditure, he did not know where the matter would end. They were dealing now with the money required for the management of the railways.

Mr. HOOLAN: We are dealing with our constituents.

The PREMIER: If hon. members in addressing their constituents referred to the construction of railways on this vote, then he blamed the Chairman for allowing them to do so. He would suggest that they stick to the business before the Committee, which was consideration of the amount required for the management of the railways.

Mr. DAWSON: We always take a general discussion on the first vote of the Railway Department.

The PREMIER: Not on the construction of railways. There have been plenty of opportunities for that.

Mr. ARMSTRONG could not congratulate the leader of the Labour party on his introductory remarks. He had always held that it was the duty of a member of Parliament to ventilate the grievances of his constituents; yet because the hon. member for Ipswich had done that, he had been told that he was making an election speech. The remark was derogatory to the hon. member who made it, and one that he could not be proud of. With regard to Sunday trains, if once initiated, where was the system to stop? He was in favour of giving persons living in congested centres an opportunity of getting into the country or to the seaside, but it would be quite impossible to apply the principle all over the colony. It would involve payment of high rates for overtime, and that would mean a largely increased expenditure which he did not think the Treasurer was prepared to cast on the Railway Commissioner at the present time. The question of differential rates had been raised. He held that that was the only way in a colony like Queensland to work the railways profitably. Where railways stretched out into the far Western districts something must be done to induce traffic, which would otherwise go in other directions, to come over the railways. A certain amount of traffic made the railways pay. Anything they could get over and above that, even if they obtained it by means of a differential rate, they ought to try to obtain. He wished to congratulate the Government on the exertions they had made during the past twelve months to overcome the difficulties under which the dairying industry had previously suffered. That industry was now assuming large proportions, and when farmers living at considerable distances from a railway brought their dairy produce to the stations they found no provision for storing it until the arrival of the train. It had either to remain on a hot platform or in a hot goods-shed, or else the producer had to time his arrival with that of the train, which meant often his getting home very late, and other inconvenience. That difficulty could be overcome by putting up at each station a small louver shed. They would not cost much, and the produce would be protected from the effects of the weather until the arrival of the train. He hoped the Minister would consider that suggestion. Reference had been made to the examinations required to be undergone by those who wished for employment in the railway service. In a conversation the other day the Commissioner informed him that it was contemplated in future to only examine as many applicants as it was estimated would be required to fill up the vacancies in each year. That would be a change in the right direction, and would remove a grievance that had been so often complained of.

Mr. GRIMES, while approving of the action of the Railway Department in giving facilities to school children and young people generally to travel by excursion trains to the seaside or the country on Saturdays, could not go with those hon. members who wished to extend that system to the Sabbath. The hon. member, Mr. McDonnell, had been a persistent advocate

for short hours and half-holidays, and unsparing of his condemnation of the long hours worked by signalmen and others on railways; yet now he came forward with a proposal which would compel them to work those long hours not only on six days of the week but on the seventh, which many of them had believed had been set apart as a day of rest. He did not think that in advocating that system the hon. member was voicing the opinions of the electors of Fortitude Valley. He was certainly not voicing the opinions of the general public in the matter. He need not mention the district, but hon. members would understand what he meant when he said an innovation had been introduced which had given the greatest dissatisfaction in nearly all quarters. If the Government had been possessed of all the facts they would not have sent the reply they did, declining to interfere. They had been under the impression that the Sunday excursion trains in question were the ordinary Sunday trains, such as those in Brisbane run throughout the year on a recognised published time-table, giving the fares charged. They had, in fact, been farmed out to persons for their own profit. Such persons would, of course, endeavour to make the most of the advantage they got, and in the case to which he referred they had done so by publishing a flaming advertisement of sports to be held to induce people to patronise the excursion. He held in his hand a copy of the advertisement, which fixed the fares at 2s. 6d. and children half-price, and promised "numerous attractions," "a splendid brass band," "the cricket match of the season—Kangaroos v. Burdekin Meat Works," and a fishing competition, and a sports programme including a "tug-of-war" for miners only, "claim v. claim." The advertisement was inserted by the Anglers' Association, and invited people to "remember Sunday, the 18th—red letter day." He was informed that the rate charged by the department to the association was 1s. per head for adults and 6d. for children, so that they made a big profit on their bargain, and he did not wonder under the circumstances that they were able to put forward a good programme of sports upon the Lord's Day. He had a report of the excursion before him, which showed that about 1,400 people were attracted by that flaming advertisement, and the sports appeared to have been really engaged in, the Kangaroos beat the Burdekins, and the children were not forgotten, races being got up for boys and girls. If the Government adopted the suggestion of the hon. members for Fortitude Valley and Bundaberg, that was the kind of thing they would get, and it could be seen at once that it was an attempt to introduce into our social system the Continental Sunday. He would not enter upon a dissertation with regard to the sanctity of the Sabbath, though he might occupy half an hour profitably for the benefit of hon. members opposite if he did so. But he did say sincerely that the observance of the Lord's Day was part of that "righteousness which exalteth a nation," and its non-observance or desecration degraded and debased a nation. The desecration of the Sabbath was a danger to our social life and civilisation, and especially to Christianity. President Harrison, of the United States of America, once said that whether they looked upon man as an animal or as a human being they ought to unite to preserve to him the day of rest, which was so necessary for his moral, his physical, and his intellectual welfare, and that those who could not find the Divine command in the Bible might see it in man himself. If they removed the old landmarks and allowed those innovations to destroy Sunday observance they should lose Sunday as a day of rest, and the working men would be the principal losers in the

matter. If they allowed it to be used for amusements, by-and-by the competition of trade would force the unfortunate labourer to work seven days a week, as the hon. member for Fortitude Valley wished the railway men to do; and on behalf of a large portion of the community he seriously protested against the Government using the railways of the colony for excursion purposes on a Sunday.

Mr. McDONNELL might tell the hon. member for Oxley that he came from a country where there were excursions on Sundays, and that the people of that country would compete in religion or morality with those of any other country in the world. He did not think the hon. member could claim that in expressing the opinions he had he was representing any portion of the public, and he might tell him that the very people who had asked him to introduce that matter in the Committee were constituents of the hon. member. They were very anxious that the concession asked for should be granted, and so were many persons in Fortitude Valley. The hon. member had mentioned the ministers' union, and had also twitted him over his advocacy of shorter hours for work people. He might say that if the ministers' union would take up that question in a practical way, there would be very little need for advocating those Sunday excursions. Members on that side had on every occasion advocated fair hours of labour for railway employees, and the adoption of his suggestion would not entail additional labour upon them, as the men now employed on Sundays would be able to do all that was required. The Committee recognised that the hon. member for Oxley was an authority on pumpkins, arrowroot, and such like, but he refused to accept his lecture on Christianity or morals. There were men in the House who traded upon their profession of religion, but if their lives and their actions towards their fellow-men were looked into, it would be found that they did not live up to the teachings of the Master they professed to follow. He did not pose, and never did, as a very good Christian, but he had a certain religion that he believed in, and he was as anxious to honour the Sunday according to the commandments as any member of the Committee. At the same time he did not think that rational and innocent amusement and recreation was in any sense a desecration of the Sabbath day.

Mr. STEPHENSON regretted that in his innocence he should have poached upon what the hon. member for Bundaberg appeared to consider his own particular preserve. That hon. member seemed to think that he was the only true patriot in the House, and that everybody else who brought forward a grievance must be delivering an electioneering speech. The hon. member threatened that as this was his first appearance it would also be his last, and that when another general election came on the present junior member for Ipswich would not be in the House. A statement like that would surely have come with better grace from some other hon. member than the hon. member for Bundaberg, who had had to go from Bundamba to Burke and from Burke to Bundaberg. However, the people of Ipswich had shown such a poor appreciation of the services of the hon. member that they had at the last general election returned a Ministerialist instead of a follower of his, which appeared to be a high crime and misdemeanour in the eyes of the hon. member. He trusted, however, that the electors of Ipswich would be able to survive the hon. member's displeasure.

The CHAIRMAN: I also trust that the hon. member will see that he is not in order in replying to the hon. member for Bundaberg. I ask him to come back to the question before the Committee.

Mr. STEPHENSON: He would bow to the ruling of the Chairman, but the hon. member for Bundaberg appeared to have gone out of his way to attack him. He desired to do the best he could in the interests of his constituents, and should fight the battles of Ipswich in his own way, whatever hon. members opposite might think of him or his methods.

Mr. KEOGH did not rise to make an electioneering speech, but he had no hesitation in saying that it was no use anyone opposing Keogh for Rosewood.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I trust hon. members on both sides of the Committee will now seriously devote their attention to the question before the Committee. Hon. members must be aware that we are not electioneering at present.

Mr. KEOGH: The junior member for Ipswich had referred to Mr. Halley, who had been injured by the erection of this overbridge. The late Commissioner had promised that he should be compensated for the loss he had suffered, because he had bought the greater part of the property from the Railway Department on condition that a particular gate should be left open, and he had paid at the rate of £1,600 per acre for it. He was present when that promise was given, but nothing had yet been done.

Mr. DAWSON thought it would be more satisfactory if they thrashed out one subject at the time, and he intended to refer to the subject of Sunday trains. The matter was of particular interest to him, because he represented the unfortunate district that had earned the censure of the hon. and pious member for Oxley.

The CHAIRMAN: I trust the hon. member will not use words like that. The hon. member, I am sure, will see that they are out of place.

Mr. DAWSON: He would withdraw the word "pious." In opposition to the opinions expressed by the hon. member for Oxley, he commended the Commissioner for his considerateness in granting these excursion trains to the people at Charters Towers, and he emphatically endorsed the remarks made by the hon. member for the Valley that similar privileges should be granted wherever possible. The hon. member for Oxley represented a certain number of persons, who were not very numerous in any particular district, although there might be a good many scattered throughout the colony. Those persons were generally termed "busy-bodies," and they were kicking up a great disturbance about these Sunday trains, and had the hon. member as their mouthpiece in this House. He challenged the hon. member to adduce one single fact to prove that the Sunday excursions had injured anyone either morally, physically, or intellectually. If he had no proof, then he characterised the hon. member's action as a piece of gross impertinence. For no apparent reason the hon. member objected to a number of people, who were cooped up in a particular town all the week, having facilities afforded them for having an enjoyable day once in a while. The hon. member had referred to the days of labour, and objected to the railway employees having to work on Sundays. He hoped the hon. member would support the motion which was likely to be introduced to grant relief to the men who were forced to work on Sundays. He hoped that the hon. member and those whom he represented outside the Committee acted up to their own doctrine; that the hon. member for Fortitude Valley did not run 'buses, and the hon. member for Oxley did not drive in a dogcart or buggy; that they did not ask anyone to work for them on Sunday. It was surely far better for people in Queensland to have a day's recreation than to be spending half the time in public-houses. The position taken up by the hon. member for Oxley was an inheritance from the

old Puritans. People who went to the seaside or down the bay to enjoy themselves on a Sunday did not inquire how the hon. member for Oxley and his friends spent the day. If the hon. member chose to wear a long face and howl and groan and wail all day long, let him do it, but he should not endeavour to prevent others enjoying themselves in their own way.

Mr. SIM was very glad the question of differential rates had been raised. Such rates were pressing with great severity on the district he represented. The Secretary for Railways had promised to look into the matter, and he trusted the hon. gentleman and the Commissioner would immediately remedy it. With regard to the complaint of the hon. member for Barcoo that respectable women and children had to lie in the alley-ways in second-class carriages in which kanakas and Chinamen were also allowed to travel, it was a great grievance that such a thing should be permitted. He was not one of those who objected to travelling with a man on account of his colour. He remembered being very much annoyed at the port of Tecoma, in the district of Washington, at seeing a very respectable Chinese merchant from Vancouver, who had purchased a first-class ticket, compelled to move into another carriage because Chinamen were not allowed to travel in the same carriages as white men. It was carrying the question of race too far when a well-educated Chinaman, who was in every sense of the word a gentleman, was ejected from a railway carriage; but that was different to respectable women and children having to travel under the circumstances referred to by the hon. member for Barcoo with half-savage kanakas and pig-tail Chinamen of the filthiest and lowest type. He trusted that the Minister would make provision for separate carriages in districts where there was a tendency to an influx of those races. The Secretary for Railways had said that the further they went North the worse matters became on their railways. He was sorry that that was true, and he would support the contention of the hon. member for Barcoo in favour of improved carriages on the Central line but for the fear that the carriages at present in use on that line might be brought up to the line traversing his district. When the Croydon line had been opened they had had to take engines which had been out of use for some time. They had been up to the present compelled to wear second-hand clothes on that line, like the younger members of a family in necessitous circumstances, and, in addition to that, they had had to pay double rate at first.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not double rates—rates and a-half.

Mr. SIM: That had been remedied; but he wished to point out how the population in the North had the difficulty of earning their bread increased by the action of the Government and of public departments. With regard to excursion trains, the hon. member for Lockyer had stated that they ought to be run in the neighbourhood of Brisbane and other large centres, but he presumed districts such as the hon. member for Barcoo and he represented were not to have the same privilege. The trains that were most profitable in all countries where there was any considerable number of people were those run at the lowest rates. That was so in England, where he had frequently travelled seventy miles to the seaside and back for 2s. If our railways were to be made to pay, the public should be tempted to travel, and that could be done by running excursion trains at low rates. In the district represented by the hon. member for Croydon there was, within comparatively narrow limits, a large population of men mining in the tropics. The

Railway Department had seen fit to arrange for special excursion trains between Toowoomba and the seaside at the rate of 5s. for an adult and 2s. 6d. for a child, and he did not see why arrangements should not be made for excursion trains to enable the people of Croydon to enjoy a change of air at Normanton. Reference had been made, especially by the hon. member for Oxley, to the question of Sunday excursions. He might say without any disrespect that he was brought up in as strict a sect as the hon. member, having been brought up as a Presbyterian in Scotland. Since then, however, he had seen a little of the world, and he was surprised to hear the hon. member refer in a tone of high Christian superiority to the Continental Sunday as something exceedingly bad. He reminded the hon. gentleman of the man who went up to the temple to pray, and said, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men." Any reference to the Continental Sunday pointed to what was done in France, Belgium, Germany, and Spain on that day; and amongst the population of those countries there were probably men as devout as the hon. gentleman himself. Many years ago he was living in the house of a Presbyterian Dutchwoman, who was also vice-president of an evangelical union. That lady did not scruple to send out on a Sunday morning to buy whatever she wanted, or to take her friends to pleasure gardens where they had all sorts of amusements in the afternoon; and after they returned they enjoyed themselves by singing profane songs. From the hon. gentleman's point of view she was wrong; but she represented tens of thousands who held the same views regarding Sunday. He trusted that the opinion expressed by the hon. member for the Valley, Mr. McDonnell, would not be viewed in the light of religious bigotry, but that it would receive favourable consideration. Sunday excursions to places where people could breathe the fresh air would conduce not only to their physical well-being but to their moral well-being also.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON was strongly in favour of the railway authorities furnishing all reasonable facilities for the travelling public on Sundays as well as other days. He did not think that Sunday trains tended to the moral or spiritual degradation of the people, but he agreed with those who thought that excursion trains should be run to Sandgate, Cleveland, Pinalba, and other places, where people might enjoy the sea air. That might be done without interfering with the due observance of Sunday. He thought it only due to the Commissioner and Mr. Thallon to say that they recognised the desirability of providing excursion trains as frequently as possible. He trusted they would extend the principle so that the public might have the benefit of enjoying excursions on Sunday. He had been requested by a number of constituents to point out that the monthly tickets issued to workmen who lived in the suburbs might be conveniently altered to weekly tickets, especially in these times when work was sometimes casual and intermittent. Those who used the trains also complained of what they considered excessive fares. This was a delicate matter to deal with, but it had been represented to him in such a light that it appeared a very great hardship. One case was quoted where a girl paid 14s. 3d. for a monthly ticket to Rocklea, while she earned only 3s. 9d. a week, thus having to pay 14s. 3d. out of a monthly wage of 15s. The representations were supported by a lengthy letter, signed by a number of people well known to himself, and he had been requested to bring the matter forward when the Estimates were under consideration. He knew that Mr. Commissioner

Gray was anxious to encourage the use of the railways as much as possible, and to lighten the burdens upon the travelling public; and he would impress upon him the fact that a large residential class had settled in the suburbs, and, as work was not too plentiful, some consideration might be given to them in the way of issuing weekly tickets. It had also been represented to him that boys and girls of fifteen years of age had to pay adult fares, and as those children received small wages he hoped that some arrangement might be come to whereby they would be granted a slight concession. He was sure that if the matters he had mentioned were attended to a great boon would be conferred upon working men and others with limited means, and the population of the suburbs would be greatly augmented by liberal railway concession.

Mr. McDONNELL was pleased the hon. member for Bulimba had brought up the question of workmen's trains. It was a matter affecting a large number of people in the suburbs, and it would be a great boon if the same system were adopted here as was followed in New South Wales, where morning and evening trains were run for the benefit of workmen, and tickets issued for the six working days of each week. Then complaints were made of the excessive rates charged for season tickets. He lived in one of the suburbs, and could remember that some years ago the rates were one-third less than they were at present. When the increased rates came into force numbers of people left the suburbs and came back to town because they could not afford the extra tax. If the Minister and Commissioner would take those matters into consideration, he was sure it would result in a number of people returning to the healthy parts of the suburbs to live. The fares for both first-class and second-class had given a great amount of dissatisfaction, and already in more than one electorate convenient to Brisbane an agitation had been set on foot for their reduction. It was ridiculous that a person should have to pay 9s. a month for travelling to Taringa, a distance of a little over three miles. A few years ago the cost was 5s. 6d., although at that time the Central Station had not been opened, and the ticket was not available for Sunday. But at least half the people in the suburbs who took out season tickets did not travel on Sundays, so that the Sunday ticket was of very little use to them. He hoped the Commissioner and the Minister would consider the matter. There was room for improvement, and as the administration of the department seemed to be getting on more liberal lines more liberality might be shown to persons outside the city, whose fares had been largely increased during the last few years.

Mr. CRIBB fully agreed with what had been said by the hon. member for Dalby on the question of differential rates. He did not think the system had been the benefit to the Railway Department that some hon. members claimed for it. He was glad to hear that its operation was diminishing, and trusted it would soon vanish altogether. It would be far better to adopt what was known as the zone system. The question of Sunday trains—he wished that he had the power of speech to express himself as he could wish. He thoroughly appreciated all that had been said with regard to giving all classes an opportunity of enjoying fresh air, and was aware that the only day a large proportion of the working classes could enjoy that opportunity was Sunday. But he held the old-fashioned idea that they were all children of one common Father, and that on the one day in the week set apart for the purpose everybody should have an opportunity to get as near that common Father as possible,

which could not be if they made Sunday entirely a day of pleasure. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that the Continental Sunday had not tended to ennoble the natures or to improve their character. His objections were not so much to Sunday trains as to trains being let to individuals for Sunday pleasure excursions for the purpose of making a profit. They had heard of instances of that in the Northern part of the colony; the system had not as yet, fortunately, penetrated as far as the South. As a side issue of that question, he did not see why fares on Sundays should be made any cheaper than on ordinary days. If the department could afford to run all trains on Sundays at a certain rate, they could afford to do the same on all other days; and that might be used as an argument that the daily rates were higher than they ought to be. While not now objecting to the running of Sunday trains within certain limits, he contended that they should not be allowed to run for the purpose of enabling private persons to make a profit. The hon. member for Rosewood had touched upon Mr. Madden's case. He had gone into the case thoroughly, and he believed that Madden had been a sufferer to some extent, but he did not think any intentional injustice had been done him. It was one of those oversights that sometimes occurred, but it had been brought under the notice of the Commissioner and the Minister, and anyone who went into the whole of the circumstances connected with the case would admit that Madden had received full compensation for any loss he suffered. He had spoken to Madden himself on the matter, and had told him that if it was referred to in the House he would say that he believed that he had been handsomely treated. He had been surprised to hear the hon. member for Rosewood go out of his way to attempt to damage an industry in the town in which he resided, and an industry which gave employment to a large number of people. He did not understand the hon. member's reference to that company as a huge political institution, unless it arose from the fact that the majority of the persons employed in that establishment were on the Labour side. With reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Bundaberg as to the political cliques in Ipswich, he might say that the hon. member had the reputation of having coquetted for years with the West Moreton constituencies, and he would have been only too well pleased if he could have induced those cliques to accept him as a candidate. If the hon. member could have done so, they would not have heard of him in Bundaberg. A good deal had been said about the inconvenience of having to travel with kanakas, and while he did not like it himself he had to admit that they were not the only people with whom it was objectionable to travel, as the conduct of some Europeans was more disgraceful than anything a Chinaman or a kanaka would be guilty of. He did not object to people smoking, but their indulgence in the habit should not be rendered objectionable to the rest of the community. At present, although they had a regulation prohibiting smoking on railway platforms, the platforms were covered with the filthy spittle of those who indulged in the habit, and he hoped the regulation would be more strictly enforced in the future.

Mr. McMASTER: In justice to himself he should say something in order that he might not be confounded with his colleague, who had several times during the discussion been referred to as the member for the Valley. He should be sorry to hold some of the opinions which his colleague held. On the question of Sunday excursion trains he might say at once that he was one of those who believed in keeping the Sabbath Day. When the proposal was first

made to run Sunday trains the argument in favour of it had been that they would enable people in the country districts to get to church. The thin end of the wedge had thus been introduced, and now they had Sunday trains running to the various watering places. He understood there were eight trains running to Sandgate on the Sunday. He did not believe in holding out special inducements to people to go upon excursions on the Day of Rest, but for those who did require to go there was ample train accommodation, as the hon. member had told them that the trains now running were not half full. The hon. member said that some persons in the Valley electorate were anxious for those excursions on Sundays. He (Mr. McMaster) had been in that electorate for twenty-eight years, and he could say that not one of the electors had ever approached him with regard to the running of excursions trains on a Sunday. Had they done so he should have certainly told them his opinion on the subject, though he would not attempt to compel any person to do as he did. The hon. member, Mr. Dawson, had referred to his employing 'bus-drivers on Sundays. Unfortunately he had 'buses, and some of them he regretted to say travelled on Sundays. They did not all run on Sundays, but only one or two on each route, and they were run for the purpose of taking people to and from church, though he would very much like to stop that and give the men the Sabbath day to rest. Members on the other side had often run down middlemen, and called them the curse of society, and yet those very men had themselves been endeavouring to become middlemen, and make a profit out of the running of Sunday trains. From the advertisement read by the hon. member for Oxley it appeared that the fares for the excursion from Charters Towers to the Burdekin River were 2s. 6d. for adults and half-price for children, while the real fares fixed by the Railway Department were 1s. and 6d., so that a profit was being made out of the business by those middlemen, who were the Workers' Union.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The Anglers' Union.

Mr. McMASTER: They were a workers' union as well, and those gentlemen who preached against the middlemen should be careful to practise what they preached.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope the hon. member will not go deeply into that question, because in doing so he is anticipating a discussion which must take place on a motion of the hon. member for Oxley.

Mr. McMASTER was simply taking up the burden of a speech made by another hon. member.

The CHAIRMAN: I am very sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I would really ask him as a member of such long standing in the House to consider the question before the Committee. Surely he will see that we are not dealing with the second reading of a Bill, but that we are in Committee of Supply for the purpose of dealing with this vote for the Railway Department.

Mr. McMASTER would always willingly bow to the ruling of the Chairman, but wished he had given that ruling earlier, because he could not see what his 'buses and 'bus-drivers, to whom the hon. member for Charters Towers referred, had to do with that vote for the Railway Department. He regretted very much to hear the speech of the hon. member for Carpentaria, who had been brought up better. He was afraid that the hon. member and the hearty, cheerful, Presbyterian lady who went shopping sang comic songs, and danced on a Sunday had fallen away from grace; that they were

beyond redemption, but he hoped they were not. He did not object to people getting as much fresh air as they could, but the State had no right to go out of its way to encourage them to break the Sabbath, and help people to make money out of it. At all events, hon. members opposite had their opinions, and he would not cast his pearls before them, but he was surprised that the remarks of the hon. member for Oxley should have been received with sneers from the other side. Hon. members opposite preached a lot to *Hansard*, but they did not practice what they preached.

Mr. GRIMES: With reference to the remarks of the hon. junior member for the Valley in regard to his being an authority upon pumpkins and arrowroot, he remembered reading in the Scriptures that a wise man said that certain individuals should not be answered according to their folly, and acting upon that, he should not reply to those remarks. In reference to the bad effects of the Continental Sunday, fortunately for Queensland these trains had not been running long enough to have any bad effects, but they wanted to nip the thing in the bud. Statesmen in France had long seen what would be the result of the Continental Sunday there, and during the last Paris Exhibition an international convention was called to discuss the question, under the presidency of Leon Say. This convention affirmed the necessity for a day of rest, not only for the physical, but for the moral well-being of the people, and although time prevented them from going into the religious aspect of the question, a supplementary convention afterwards affirmed that nothing but a radical change in the observance of Sunday in France would prevent the decay of religion. Godet, the Protestant French divine, said there was no true vigorous spiritual life except among Sabbath-keeping nations, and that the anti-Sabbationations were those in which national paganism was making the most startling progress. Montalembert said there could be no society without religion, and there could be no religion without public worship, and there could be no public worship without the Sabbath. Those were the opinions of men who had opportunities of judging the effects of the Continental Sunday, and he wanted to prevent those effects being felt here. As legislators they were commissioned to protect the physical and moral wellbeing of the people. They prevented men from working on Sundays to the annoyance of their neighbours, and prevented traders from trading on Sunday, and the Home Secretary would not grant permission to a theatre or music hall to be open for gain; so that they were acting inconsistently by allowing excursion trains to be run on Sundays.

Mr. STEWART thought they had more important business to discuss than the running of Sunday trains. The colony was to be congratulated upon the change that had recently taken place in the governing power in this department, but he was sorry he could not congratulate the Ministry for the improvement. Unfortunately, even in that small matter he could not give them any praise. The whole policy of the present Government—which was the lineal descendant of the McIlwraith Government—was one of incapacity. The policy of the last Government had also been one of incapacity. He would refer to one conspicuous act of that Government to show its incapacity. It had made the wonderful discovery that one man was not sufficient to manage their railways, but that three men were absolutely necessary, and that one of those men should be an expert from Great Britain. That had been the greatest blunder ever committed in connection with their railway management. The contention of his party all along had been abundantly

proved by the results. The colony was as well served now by a Commissioner at £1,500 a year as it had been by the Commissioner drawing £3,000. He sympathised very heartily with the Commissioner with regard to the irksome nature of his duties. He believed no man in the colony held a more responsible position; there was no man who was more interfered with in the conduct of his business, and he was entitled to the sympathy and assistance of every hon. member. The Commissioner had been appointed on the distinct understanding that he was to manage the railways on commercial principles, and, if possible, he was to make them pay both working expenses and interest on the cost of construction. That most desirable result had not up to the present been accomplished, and he was very doubtful whether it ever would be accomplished. Year after year they were compelled to subsidise the Railway Department to a very large extent from the general revenue. Continually the people in every district in the colony where there was a railway were appealing to the Commissioner for further concessions, and every day it became more difficult for the Commissioner to run the railways on commercial principles. They could not blame the Commissioner for the annual deficiency. He had fallen heir to a legacy of incapacity, log-rolling, and political corruption. His report gave a very fair idea of how the railways were managed and how they stood, but it would add very much to the value of the report if it included a table showing the position of each railway and how much money had to be taken from the public purse to keep it going. Having gone into that matter himself, he found that there were only four railways which paid working expenses and interest on the cost of construction. Those railways were: The Central Railway, from Rockhampton to Longreach; the Northern Railway, from Townsville to Hughenden; and the railways from Croydon Junction to Bundaberg and from Isis Junction to Cordalba. Each of the other railways showed an annual loss, and for the benefit of hon. members and the country generally he would give in round numbers the amount which the taxpayers of the colony had to contribute to support each railway. The railway from Brisbane to Charleville, £35,000 per annum; Gowrie Junction to Wallangarra, £37,000; Ipswich to Dugandan, £7,000; Brisbane Valley to Esk, £10,000; Pengarry Junction to Crow's Nest, £6,000; Wyreema to Pittsworth, £3,000; Warwick to Killarney, £7,000; South Brisbane to Southport, £31,000; Bethania Junction to Beaudesert, £5,000; Ernest Junction to Nerang, £1,800; South Brisbane to Cleveland, £10,000; Brisbane to Gympie, £25,000; Gympie to Maryborough, £7,000; Kilkivan Junction to Kilkivan, £8,000; Mungarr Junction to Woowoonga, £7,000; Bundaberg to Mount Perry, £16,000; Bundaberg to Rosedale, £5,000; total, £220,000. On the line from Emerald to Springsure there was an annual loss of £6,000; Emerald to Clermont, £8,000; North Rockhampton to Emu Park, £6,000; making a total of £20,000. But as against the railway from Rockhampton to Longreach showed a surplus of £34,000, so that the Central division came out on the right side by £34,000. On the Mackay Railway there was an annual loss of £4,000; Bowen, £8,500; Ravenswood Junction to Ravenswood, £3,000; Cairns, £53,000; Cooktown, £18,000; Normanton, £8,000; making a total of £94,500. Against that there was the surplus of £55,000 on the line from Townsville to Hughenden, reducing the total loss to £39,500 on the Northern railways. He was pretty well acquainted with the railway from North Rockhampton to Emu Park, and if that line had been made in a different direction to a different point it would have been a paying railway. But

by political influence it was taken through practically valueless country to a town where nobody was living, while the Government had the option of taking it through some of the best agricultural country in the Central division to a point where there was a population. He believed it would be remunerative in time after the opening of the line joining South and North Rockhampton and the line to Mount Morgan.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to remind the hon. member that this is not a vote for the construction of railways, but for the working of railways already constructed. There will be no finality if this course is continued.

Mr. STEWART did not think it was out of place, when discussing the management of the railways, to refer to past mistakes in construction. A great number of political railways had been constructed.

The PREMIER: You can talk about past management.

Mr. STEWART: They might take the past as a guide to the future, and he hoped hon. members would assist the Commissioner in the endeavour to see that any proposal for a new railway would be one for the construction of a line that would pay.

The PREMIER: That has nothing to do with this vote.

Mr. STEWART: It had everything to do with the vote, because if the railways had not been handicapped by being constructed in the wrong places the taxpayers would not be called upon to pay to such an enormous extent annually. Another thing, he thought the Commissioner should make a distinction in the tables to show the relative value of the first and second class passenger traffic. This was a very important question, because complaints were made that while the accommodation for first-class passengers was of the best quality, that for the second-class passengers was very inferior. On this point he could bear out every word said with regard to the accommodation on the Central Railway by the hon. member for Barcoo; and he would only add that the Minister and the Commissioner ought to see that the grievance was remedied. Then, in the matter of house accommodation, if it was desirable to provide houses for stationmasters, it was equally desirable in the case of lengthsmen. The railways could not be conducted without lengthsmen any more than without stationmasters, and the houses at present occupied by the men were unsuitable in every respect. They were unhealthy in construction, and the accommodation was insufficient. The department should take that matter into its own hands and provide houses for the men. Another matter in which lengthsmen were treated differently from ordinary Civil servants was in regard to payment while sick. An ordinary Civil servant might be away from duty for months and weeks and his pay went on all the same, but the lengthsmen's pay stopped the moment he ceased work. If any public servant had a claim to be paid when sick, it was the lengthsmen, who was compelled to be continually at his post. The worse the weather, the more need for his attendance to duty. They had to wade in water up to their necks in flood time, and the wetter the season the harder they had to work. He had known men to be permanently crippled through being compelled to work in the wet. In addition to that, they were very subject to eye troubles. Hardly a week passed that he did not see a lengthsmen in Rockhampton who had come to consult a specialist about his eyesight. All he claimed for those men was that they should be placed on the same footing as other employees of the Government. In his opinion, those men were entitled to even better treatment than the ordinary Civil servant, on account of their being

exposed to greater hardships and their lives generally being harder. Then, again, in the matter of holidays, the lengthsmen were unfairly treated. While an ordinary Civil servant was allowed a fortnight or three weeks holiday, the lengthsmen only got six days; and those they were entitled to, as they were obliged to work on public holidays when the traffic was heavy. Why not give the men on the railways a fortnight's holiday? Surely they were as deserving of holidays as any other class of Civil servant. Do not make fish of one and flesh of another. It was the old story of the man with a coat and white shirt receiving greater concessions than the pick and shovel man. He wished to see that kind of thing done away with. Another class of men who were hardly dealt with were those employed in the goods-sheds, who were paid less than any other class in the department. Their ordinary day's labour was nine hours, but when work had to be done they had to finish it, and received no overtime, which was a gross injustice. In many cases the men were temporary hands, and when they worked overtime it sometimes happened that next morning there was no work for them in consequence of their having worked the overtime for which they had not been paid. Those were some of the points to which he wished to direct the attention of the Minister and the Commissioner. Other grievances he might mention on a subsequent vote.

Mr. DAWSON wished to nail down an untruth stated by the hon. member, Mr. McMaster, with regard to the Sunday trains he spoke of. The hon. member said that the Workers' Union got a special train from the Railway Department and obtained and sold tickets for the excursion. Such was not the case. The whole affair was got up by the Anglers' Association, who had no connection whatever with the Workers' Union either at Charters Towers or anywhere else. That body was composed of a number of fishing enthusiasts who called themselves an association. He had challenged the hon. member for Oxley to produce a title of evidence to show that the running of Sunday trains had produced any of the evils he predicted to the colony, and all the hon. member could say in reply was that the trains had not been run long enough to render the evil effects visible.

Mr. GRIMES: I referred to excursion trains.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. member had himself supplied the best argument why the department should continue to run Sunday excursion trains when he said that no less than 1,400 people from one town took advantage of the opportunity to go down to the river-side and enjoy themselves. That showed that the public thoroughly appreciated the consideration extended to them by the department. It was a good thing for the department, and a good thing for the 1,400 people who got an opportunity to spend a pleasant Sunday in the open air. The people in that particular district were physically as robust as any in Australia; they were as moral as any member of the House, and intellectually they would compare with the average man to be found anywhere. The hon. member for Oxley had told them about the evil effects of the Continental Sunday. Perhaps the hon. member was not aware that the Continental Sunday was a most strictly religious day up to a certain hour, after which the people enjoyed themselves. He would advise the hon. member to try to discover whether the evil effects which had resulted from the Continental Sunday were due to the strictly religious portion of the day or to the portion of the day devoted to enjoyment. He should be sorry if the Railway Department were induced, by the representations of the hon. members for

Oxley and Fortitude Valley, to cut off any one of those Sunday excursion trains which were now so thoroughly enjoyed by the people of Queensland. Instead of curtailing them, the best thing the department could do would be to increase them wherever it was possible.

Mr. DANIELS: Pleas had been put in for cheap trains for workers, for school children, and for excursionists. He wished to put in a plea for a cheap train now and then for farmers. Twenty-four years ago they had a system of running excursion trains at single fares for the double journey, and a person could get a return ticket from Clifton to Brisbane for 13s. 6d., whereas it was now about 18s. Under that system people, instead of spending their money in bush pubs., came down to Brisbane, where they could see something for their money. Farmers could come down in those days on the Friday, and after making their arrangements with produce-dealers and merchants in town return on the Monday night. The result was that a lot of people used to travel by those trains, and they were the best-paying trains ever run in Queensland. The farmers were beginning to make the railway lines pay, and they would make them pay handsomely in the future. Some of them paid over £100 a year to the Government in railway freights, and they got no concessions at all. The department should revert to the old system to which he had referred. Before he sat down he wanted to set the hon. member for Lockyer right on the matter of differential rates. The hon. member had contended that they were absolutely necessary to get the traffic from certain districts, but the departmental report would show that they were getting no more traffic from those districts now than before, except what might be expected from the natural growth of any district. With regard to the border tax, that was all nonsense, as the persons who paid it had it refunded to them by the New South Wales Railway Department.

Mr. BROWNE had listened to the discussion on that infamous Sunday travelling, and, as one guilty of being instrumental in getting one or two Sunday excursions for his constituents, he ought to say something, and he desired to thank the Commissioner for allowing the people to have them. Those who had said so much about the Continental Sabbath knew very little about it. There was scarcely a country in Europe that he had not been in, and as an Englishman knocking about there he had not been impressed with the idea that the Britisher was so much the superior, morally or intellectually, of the people on the Continent. The hon. member for Oxley came from England, as he did himself, and he could tell the hon. member that Sunday excursion trains were the recognised thing in England on all the great railway companies' lines, and he had travelled forty years ago in one of the first Sunday excursion trains run from London to Brighton. If Sunday excursion trains were to have such a terrible effect out here, as was contended, Englishmen must feel very degraded to think that the practice had existed in England for over forty years.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The hon. member for Rockhampton North had said that the Government policy with regard to railway management had been a policy of incapacity. He held a different opinion, and was proud to say that with respect to the producing industries it had been a policy of progress. It was within the knowledge of every hon. member that within the last twelve or eighteen months the rates charged upon produce had been considerably reduced, and the Government should get credit for that. The hon. member also touched upon the wages paid to the workmen employed by the depart-

ment. He (Mr. Armstrong) had had considerable dealings with men in different spheres of life, and had always found that if they were discontented with their position they immediately left their employment, and he would like to know how it was, if the railway men were as dissatisfied as was alleged, they continued in the service.

Mr. HARDACRE rose to a point of order. He did not object to the hon. member discussing the question of the wages paid to railway employees, but he wanted to know whether he would also be allowed to discuss the matter, as that had been ruled out of order earlier in the evening.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: It might obviate all trouble in the matter by saying that he was merely replying to a remark of the hon. member for Rockhampton North, and that, rather than place the Chairman in the difficult position of having to give a ruling in the question, he would not further refer to the matter. Before sitting down he would ask the Minister, if he could see his way clear to do so, to allow farmers or large consignors of agricultural produce to travel free to the place where it was sold, the same as was done in the case of nearly every large producer except the farmer.

Mr. DUNSFORD hoped that, if it was the intention of the department to continue Sunday trains at Charters Towers, more satisfactory accommodation would be provided than was provided at the recent anglers' picnic, when, he understood, many people were cooped up in cattle trucks. He would also call attention to the fact that the supply of the rolling-stock on the Northern railway was inadequate. That was a complaint of long standing, and it seemed to be understood that if there was not sufficient rolling-stock in the Southern or Central division the North had to suffer. He hoped that the matter would be remedied, seeing that the line from Townsville to Winton was the best-paying line in the colony. With regard to the question of running excursion trains on a Sunday, the hon. member for Oxley and the senior member for Fortitude Valley appeared to look upon the object of the anglers' excursion as a heinous crime, but they had no objection to church trains. Izaak Walton said that "God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling," and that was certainly very true with regard to angling on the Burdekin. As to the objection that Sunday should be kept as a day of rest, there was no absolute rest in this world, and he held that true rest was recreation and relaxation from ordinary work or duty. That was what they desired for the Sabbath, and the Railway Department could very easily see that the men engaged in working the trains were not employed more than six days, or forty-eight hours, a week. He hoped the excursion trains would be kept on, and that special arrangements would be made so that people would not have to fall back upon cattle trucks. In the North, where the climate was not too good, and the miners had to spend six days of the week in a vitiated atmosphere, the best rest they could get was to get away for a few hours. It did them good, and made them better men, and if it did them good physically it would do them good morally also. An extension of the system would be a good thing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS hoped he would not be expected to reply to all that had been said, but promised to go carefully through *Hansard* with the Commissioner and rectify, so far as possible, all the things that had been complained of. The most difficult part of the Commissioner's duty was to please from 4,000 to 6,000 men and seventy members of Parliament, who

wanted railways built all over the colony, and trains run every day, Sunday included. There was a good deal of misconception in regard to the Sunday trains. The system started in Brisbane, although they were not called excursion trains. The trains had been running for years to Sandgate on Sundays, and they had only followed the same principle in running trains from Charters Towers to the Burdekin. No special favour had been granted in that case. There was also a misconception about those trains being farmed out. He admitted that they had run a train on behalf of the school at Charters Towers, which was short of funds, but the tickets were bought at the ordinary prices from the department, and were sold at a profit. Anyone else could have gone to the station and bought a ticket. Of course, if the people of the colony thought it desirable that Sunday trains should be stopped, they would be stopped; but if they wished for railway accommodation on Sundays, and it could be provided without offending anyone's susceptibilities, they were entitled to it. He did not see why churchgoers should be offended because a train was run from Charters Towers to the Burdekin. There was plenty room in the community for both. As to the want of accommodation on the Northern lines, he could assure hon. members that during the last twelve or eighteen months they had been doing all they could to overtake the pressure in reference to both passenger and goods accommodation. There were at present sixteen composite carriages being built for all the railways, and they would have lavatory accommodation for both first and second-class passengers, but they could not do all in a day. They were doing as much as their means would allow. Hon. members must remember that last year the loss on their railways amounted to £348,000, and it was the duty of the Commissioner to try to reduce that loss. Of course, it could not be reduced if they were going to reduce rates and increase wages and build unprofitable lines. Yet, a few nights ago, forty hon. members voted for a line which the Commissioner said would not pay. He himself had also pointed out that it would not pay, but still hon. members voted for it. The Commissioner had already gone through the freight charges, which had been reduced, and he was now going through the passenger fares, which would be reduced, if possible. There were many people who had no railways, but they had to pay their share of the loss, and they should be considered as well as the railway employees.

Question put and passed.

SOUTHERN DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £405,766 be granted for railways in the Southern division. This was an increase of nearly £20,000 over last year's vote. The amount voted last year for all railways was £620,355, but they had spent £641,935, and this year they were asking for £680,475, which was necessitated by the increased traffic and the higher rates of wages.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: No doubt there had been a lot of electioneering gas that evening from which he had been debarred, which placed him in an unfortunate position. If they saw any defects in the railway management it was their duty to point them out, and in order to get an expression of opinion from the Committee with regard to the wages of the railway men he moved that the item "Enginemen, firemen, men in workshops, etc., £79,500," be reduced by £5. He considered the men were not paid in a proper way; they were not properly classified; and the regulations were not based on any uniform

system. There were great complaints, and the only way to test the feeling of the Committee on the matter was by a vote.

Mr. HARDACRE was not quite sure that he approved of the motion, because it was rather a strange way of getting an expression of opinion. They had a motion before the House, on which there had been a good deal of discussion, and the last time the discussion had been on an agreement had been made between the mover of that motion and the Secretary for Railways that a certain amendment would be accepted.

The CHAIRMAN: I must remind the hon. member that there is an amendment now before the Committee, and I must ask him to strictly confine his remarks to that amendment.

Mr. HARDACRE: He was going to have his say.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not say he is going to have his say if he is not in order. If he is going to have his say, it must be on the amendment before the Committee.

Mr. HARDACRE: He had his rights as well as the Chairman, and he was going to have his say. He had previously waived what he considered his duty out of respect to the Chair, and he had waited all evening to have his say. He was not going to be blocked now, while he was within his rights under the Standing Orders.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not misunderstand me. He will be perfectly in order in speaking to the amendment before the Committee, but he must not speak on the motion before the House.

Mr. HARDACRE: The Chairman had never said that he was out of order. He was speaking strictly to the amendment, and he would go on speaking to the amendment until he was ruled out of order, and he hoped he would not be checked or interjected at by the Chairman until he was out of order.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Speak to the amendment.

Mr. HARDACRE: It was about time a little temper or passion was shown about the way in which the discussion of that question had been burked all the afternoon.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Oh, get on!

Mr. HARDACRE: He would not get on for the Attorney-General or anyone else.

The CHAIRMAN: I trust hon. members will not interject. The hon. member has said that he is going to speak to the amendment—which he must do—and I trust hon. members will listen quietly.

Mr. HARDACRE: He was trying to point out that the amendment was somewhat objectionable and unnecessary, because of something else which had taken place. A vote on a motion to decrease certain wages because certain other wages were not high enough would not be voted upon by many hon. members as a means of giving expression to their opinion, and it might do a great deal of harm to the wages men. An agreement had been entered into between the mover of the motion he had referred to and the Secretary for Railways that that hon. gentleman would confer with the Commissioner with a view to bringing the wages back to what they had been prior to the retrenchment of 1893. If the Minister would accept that position, he was perfectly satisfied without going to a vote in this way, and he was sure the mover of the amendment would be too. If the Secretary for Railways would inform the Committee what he intended to do in connection with the agreement come to on the matter, it might expedite business.

Mr. McMASTER: What agreement?

Mr. HARDACRE: The agreement come to when an amendment was moved on my motion.

Mr. GRIMES rose to a point of order. The hon. member was referring to a debate on a motion not yet disposed of, which now stood No. 8 on the business-paper.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in referring in any way to that motion on the question now before the Committee. He must confine his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. HARDACRE: He could state that the Secretary for Railways had agreed that he would confer with the Commissioner to see if the regulations could be altered, and the old rate of wages restored.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member seems determined to place the ruling of the Chair at defiance.

Mr. HARDACRE: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Then why does not the hon. member comply with my request? I shall not again request the hon. member to confine his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. HARDACRE: He did not wish to defy the Chair in any way; he only wished to say that a good deal of discussion could be avoided if the Secretary for Railways would make a statement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It was very unfair of the hon. member to bring into the discussion of this Estimate another matter which stood on the paper. If the hon. member thought he was going to extract from him a promise now he was mistaken. He had already given his promise, and if the hon. member would not take that he would get nothing at all.

Mr. HARDACRE had no desire to be unfair. It was not a question of him taking the hon. gentleman's word—which he was quite prepared to do—but it was a question affecting the interests of a large number of employees.

Mr. W. THORN: The amendment seemed to be a vote of want of confidence in the Government; and coming from one of their own supporters, it seemed to place the Government in rather a peculiar predicament. They were now discussing the vote for maintenance.

The CHAIRMAN: An amendment has been moved on the item, "Enginemen, firemen, men in workshops, &c., £79,500," to reduce the amount to £79,495. The question before the Committee is that the item be reduced to that amount.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: As hon. members seemed to be against his amendment, and as he did not wish to harm the hon. member for Leichhardt, he would, by leave, withdraw it.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. HARDACRE thought something ought to be said as to the overtime worked by the guards, drivers, signalmen, shunters, porters, and others. Many of the drivers worked for sixteen hours a day. They were worked like that for a number of days and then booked off. The same plan was pursued with the guards.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. member that he cannot go back on the item of £79,500. The rule laid down in "May" is as follows:—"After a question has been proposed from the Chair for omitting or reducing any item no motion shall be made or debate allowed on any preceding item. The rule which prohibits any return in debate to an item prior to the item on which debate has arisen, or a question has been proposed, remains in force after the withdrawal of the motion on which that question was founded; nor can a proposal be made for a reduction of the whole grant for the purpose of renewing discussion upon an item on which a question had been proposed, or debate arisen, or upon any item previous thereto."

Mr. HARDACRE could not understand the Chairman's ruling. He presumed he could discuss on the total vote questions of administration,

even if he could not discuss particular items. He was not discussing any item, but the whole vote. However, he would allow the question to go, and refer to it on the vote for the Central Railway.

Mr. BELL wished to call attention to a change that had been made in regard to the arrangements for testing the eyesight of candidates for admission to the department. It had been the custom until a recent date for the department to employ a medical man to certify to the eyesight of candidates, but recently the department had done away with that system and appointed one or two unqualified men in the department to put the candidates through some perfunctory test as to the condition of their eyesight. It must be obvious to hon. members that a medical man was the only person who could properly certify to the soundness of a person's eyesight, and in all railway services that he knew of there was no function that was regarded as of more importance. He would suggest that the Minister should make close inquiry into the wisdom of the change that had been made. If the present system were continued there might be a smash on the railways caused by some official who was suffering from colour blindness, which certainly no man, unless he was a qualified judge, could properly detect.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS could only promise to make inquiries. He did not think it necessary that a medical man should test the eyesight of candidates. A good optician would be better. He would make inquiries, and see what could be done in the matter.

Mr. BATTERSBY was afraid the statement of the hon. member for Dalby was not quite correct. Not six months ago the eyesight of three candidates for employment in the department was tested by Dr. Thomson. If any change had taken place, it must have been since that period.

Mr. McDONNELL asked whether anything had been done with regard to reducing the number of hours worked by signalmen?

Mr. GRIMES rose to a point of order. The hon. member was violating the ruling which had just been given.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for Fortitude Valley can raise the question on the next vote.

Mr. McDONNELL: There was no vote for signalmen on the Central or Northern Railways, and if he were not allowed to put the question now, it would place him in an awkward position.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Arrangements had recently been made to relieve the men of their long hours.

Mr. DANIELS: The effect of the Chairman's ruling would be that any member on the Government side might move an amendment on a vote at the bottom of the list, and then withdraw it, after which nothing could be debated.

Mr. HARDACRE asked whether any question of administration could not be discussed on the total vote of £405,766?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will be quite in order in moving a reduction in any item after the item of £79,500.

Mr. HARDACRE did not want to move a reduction in any item. He wished to discuss a question of administration which was involved in the total vote.

Mr. BATTERSBY wished to call attention to the wages of cleaners when they entered the service.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no question here with regard to cleaners. That is dealt with in the regulations.

Mr. McDONNELL had not clearly understood the answer of the Secretary for Railways with regard to the long hours worked by signalmen.

Mr. GRIMES again rose to a point of order. There was nothing about signalmen in any of the items below the item of £79,500.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS understood that some of the signal-boxes had been closed, and eight or ten men had thus been dispensed with. Some relief would probably be given to the overworked signalmen.

Mr. McDONNELL asked if the Minister would recommend that the regulation hours should be enforced, and overtime paid for all hours worked beyond the regulation hours?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are no regulation hours.

Mr. HOOLAN: The hon. member for Oxley should reserve his anger and indignation, because after being ruled out of order at the beginning he had been allowed by the Chairman, with the consent of the Committee, to have his full say. It was a piece of downright tyranny now on the hon. member's part to try to gag other hon. members and put the Chairman into an awkward position. He trusted that the generosity which had characterised the Chairman's conduct in the chair would be extended now to hon. members, notwithstanding the hon. member for Oxley.

Mr. STEWART believed they were entitled to refer to the administration of the department on that vote. They were making the whole thing ridiculous, as, if they could not do that, what was the use in their coming there?

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member, who is a new member, that it has been a practice, agreed to on both sides for the last three or four years, to have the administration of a department discussed on the first vote. The administration of this department has been discussed from 4 o'clock this afternoon until 11 o'clock to-night.

Mr. STEWART: With regard to the question having been discussed for seven hours, they were there to do the business of the country, if it took 177 hours to do it. The senior member for Maryborough moved an amendment upon an item far down in the vote, and in consequence of that discussion was to be stifled all along the vote.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member surely is aware that I do not make the rules.

Mr. STEWART: Then they are very bad rules.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS pointed out that no department of the service had been so much discussed as the Railway Department. The hon. member for Leichhardt had had his full fling on it, and it was discussed on every new railway proposed. He had no desire to stifle discussion, and if hon. members who desired to discuss the question further had taken the proper course they would have asked the hon. member for Maryborough to postpone his motion.

Mr. HARDACRE: The hon. gentleman was most ungenerous, as he knew that the chance of discussing the railway men was confined to two hours in the week for two weeks, and the specific motion on the subject had been talked out by members on the other side.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in referring to the motion standing in his name, and I now ask him, for the last time, to confine his remarks to the vote.

Mr. HARDACRE would exercise his right as a member of the House, or be turned out. He was not dealing with his motion, but replying to the Secretary for Railways, and he still contended that he had a right to discuss the administration on the total vote.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will be seated. I call the attention of the Committee to the irrelevance and tedious repetition of the hon. member, though I have several times

warned him. I now order the hon. member to discontinue his speech on the question now before the Committee.

Question put and passed.

CENTRAL DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £134,610 be granted for the Central division. He now invited the hon. member for Leichhardt, as he had done half an hour ago, to discuss the engine-drivers.

Mr. HARDACRE simply wished to call attention to the overrunning of engine-drivers, and the overworking of guards. The drivers were run trip after trip, and often worked fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen hours at a stretch, which was a great physical strain, and when they had made a month's time they were put off for a time, and at the end of the month they only received a month's wages. In the interest of the traffic that ought not to be allowed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS believed that a good deal of overtime was worked last year, but it could not be helped, as they could not make drivers and guards in a day. It was, however, not so much the case now, and the department had no wish to have the men working overtime, as they had to pay more for it. Last year they had earned £58,000 more than in the previous year, but it cost £65,000 to earn that money, because the work was special train work—cattle trains—which were nearly all run at night, and for which they had to pay time and a-half. He believed that the guards were made some allowance; at any rate, he knew that the late Commissioner promised that that should be done. He thought the drivers were harder worked than the guards, and knew one driver who was earning as much as £25 a month last year.

Mr. KERR: Engine-drivers who were sent out on a Sunday were paid time and a-half, but they complained that they were often ordered out with special trains for sheep and cattle at 10 o'clock on a Saturday night, and were not paid Sunday rates, although they did the greater part of the running on the Sunday. Some drivers complained that they were forced to earn too much last year, and that they were on their engines at times as long as eighteen hours. Persons living on the railway had told him that they had seen drivers on duty when they were totally unfit to be in charge of an engine, owing to the long hours they worked. During the floods in the Central district in March last, porters and others, who had worked sixteen and eighteen hours a day were discharged for the time being and were paid no overtime, as in the locomotive branch. If it was fair to give overtime in the locomotive department, it was fair to give it in the traffic department also. Certainly the men were allowed time off, but they could not go away, because they were liable to be called upon at any time in cases of emergency. The more reasonable way would be for the department to pay them for the full number of hours that they worked.

Mr. SIM contended that when railway wages men fell sick their pay should not be stopped. On the Normanton and Croydon line they might now expect the wet season; for the next three or four months the whole of that country would be flooded, and that meant that if the service were to be conducted efficiently it would have to be conducted by men who ought to be hippopotami and not men, because for sixteen miles they would be up to their necks in water. If through those exorbitant demands upon their physical strength they fell sick, they would receive no pay from the State or any compensation whatever. That was unfair when compared with the treatment extended to clerks in the Government

service or in offices administered by generous employers. There might be some generous recognition by the State of the fact that in distant parts of the colony where men were pioneering they had to suffer hardships which had not to be borne by men in the more settled portions of the colony. He hoped that, if necessary, the department would place a sum of money on the Supplementary Estimates for those men.

At six minutes past 12 o'clock,

The CHAIRMAN called upon Mr. Stephens, the hon. member for Brisbane South, to relieve him in the chair, and Mr. STEPHENS accordingly took the chair.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: A special allowance for overtime had been granted to the guards on the Central and Northern lines after the last wool season. With regard to the question raised by the hon. member for Carpentaria, while he sympathised much with the railway men all over the colony who had to work in the wet, he must point out that the railway men were not the pioneers of the colony at all. He had known men with bullock-teams who had had to camp for three or four months in the wet season, and they had not been paid anything. Judging by the number of applications made for employment in the department from all parts of the colony, and the length of time men stayed in the service, the conditions must be fairly satisfactory. If he could improve their lot he would do so, but they were getting £12,000 this year added to their wages, and every lengthsman and ganger who had been reduced in 1893 would get something back, whether he had been five years in the service or not. Sir T. McIlwraith had promised that if times improved the men would get their money back, but last year they had not been better, as they had gone back £7,000 or £8,000. He could only say that, if times improved, when the Estimates were prepared next year the Commissioner would equitably allot any increase that might be made.

Mr. STEWART would not complain of the pay of railway employees being stopped when they were not able to work if other State employees were dealt with in the same way, but he objected to making fish of one class and flesh of another. There was a general opinion in the Central division that the maintenance branch there was undermanned; and the rough condition of the road seemed to confirm that opinion. He would suggest that the Minister might make inquiries, and, if he found that things were as stated by the Central members, take steps to improve the condition of the line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS pointed out that the Commissioner said in his report that the railways throughout the colony were in good order. The portion of the Central line between Rockhampton and Westwood wanted relaying, and provision was made for that. Last year over £40,000 was spent on the maintenance of the Central Railway, and provision was made for the expenditure of £45,000 this year.

Mr. SIM again brought under the notice of the Minister the conditions under which the lengthsman worked in the Central and Northern districts. Those men were crying out for bare justice, and when their condition was compared with that of a junior clerk in the Treasury buildings, surrounded by all the luxuries which residence in the metropolis afforded, there could be very little hesitation in coming to the conclusion that they deserved the kindly sympathy of the House and the attention of the Minister.

Mr. FITZGERALD: His experience of the Central line, between Rockhampton and Longreach, was that generally the cars were comfort-

able, but during a press of business it sometimes occurred that the carriages were overcrowded. The second-class accommodation was quite equal to that provided in the South. The carriages were certainly not divided up in the same way, but they were suitable to the climate. All that was wanted was more carriage accommodation. He could fully bear out all that had been said with regard to the stopping of lengthsman's pay during sickness. Any private employer was legally compelled to pay his employees during any temporary absence from illness, but the moment a lengthsman fell ill his pay was stopped. Only the other day a case came under his notice at Longreach where a lengthsman had fallen over a telegraph wire and broke his ankle. That man was away for eight weeks, and during the whole of that time he did not receive a single penny of pay from the department; he was a married man with a family, and he was only enabled to pull through because he happened to belong to a friendly society.

Mr. HOOLAN: The hon. member for Mitchell evidently represented the first-class people, who were already represented well enough on the other side. He preferred the evidence of the hon. member for Barcoo, who represented the second-class people. And from his own knowledge he could say that as far as accommodation for women and children was concerned, the second-class carriages on the Central Railway were the worst in Australia, and a disgrace to the colony.

Mr. FITZGERALD contended that the remarks of the hon. member only corroborated his previous statement that there was a want of space due to the fact that a sufficient number of carriages were not attached to each train.

Mr. KERR denied that the second-class carriages on the Central line were as good as those on the lines about Brisbane. They wanted better accommodation and lavatory accommodation for females on the Central line.

Mr. DUNSFORD threw out a hint that all carriages should be built to accommodate only a certain fixed number of persons, and that number should be marked up on the carriages. That was done in South Africa, and passengers themselves had the right to prevent overcrowding at any time. They had three classes there, and the carriages were so built that the backs of the seats could be raised up so as to form a bed for use at night-time.

Mr. SIM endorsed the suggestion of the hon. member for Charters Towers, and thought that in view of the possible union of the colonies for defence purposes the carrying capacity of all carriages should be marked on the carriages not only with regard to ordinary passengers but also with regard to soldiers, as was done on the Continent of Europe.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Provision was being made in the sixteen composite carriages now under construction for a special compartment for ladies, second-class; and in the course of time they would get rid of the uncomfortable carriages complained of. With regard to the absence of workmen through sickness the last regulation provided that where any man in any branch of the service was disabled by accident he should be allowed full pay, if necessary, for six weeks, unless the accident had resulted from his own carelessness or negligence. In the traffic branch men who were absent from work through illness were allowed half-pay.

Mr. SIM asked how it would be if a man working in the water developed pneumonia or other lung disease?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If a man got pneumonia in the course of his duty he would get his pay. A case occurred the other

day in Maryborough in which a man died from the effects of working in the water, and his widow was compensated.

Mr. HARDACRE: The Central Railway was worked in the most parsimonious manner. The department was undermanned and the line itself was in the most miserable condition, although good work had been done in easing the grades; but for miles the dogspikes were so loose that they could be drawn out with the teeth. There was no necessity for this meanness, because the line paid 5 per cent. last year, and the whole of the railways paid better last year than for many years before.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner had no wish to make the men work overtime, but the work of the department had to be done. However, forty-eight additional drivers and firemen were being provided for the Central Railway this year.

Mr. McDONNELL pointed out that the shunters should receive the consideration of the Commissioner; and he trusted that they would be allowed the same rights as the signalmen.

Mr. NEWELL: It would appear from the discussion that the colony was almost made up of railway employees and Civil servants; but there were hundreds of other men who had quite as much right to be considered.

Question put and passed.

NORTHERN DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £115,578 be granted for Railways, Northern division.

Mr. JACKSON endorsed what had already been said in regard to the lengthsmen and the condition of the second-class carriages in the Northern division. He wished to know, with regard to the crossing of the Burdekin, whether the Government intended to make provision for the conveyance of passengers and mails during the forthcoming wet season?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It was not the intention of the Government to provide special accommodation at the Burdekin, as the bridge would be finished before the next wet season. Boats had been provided, when necessary, in previous wet seasons.

Mr. DAWSON: It was only within the last three years that boats had been provided, and during the storm in the early part of the year there was a gap between the Reid and the Haughton over which traffic had to be carried on by means of a trolley which had to be pushed by the passengers and railway officials. Although the department was wired to for assistance by his colleague and himself nothing was done, and he had seen women and children fainting on the road. He hoped better arrangements would be made for the next wet season.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member must be exaggerating. He was certain if a horse had been asked for it would have been supplied. He had read the papers, but did not remember seeing any complaints of the kind the hon. member referred to.

Mr. DAWSON repeated the statement that in spite of the department being applied to no assistance was rendered.

Mr. DUNSFORD endorsed what had been said by his colleague. The journey over the 14-mile gap took 6½ hours, and no protection was afforded to the women and children who had to travel over that distance.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported progress, and leave was given to sit again at a later hour of the day.

The House adjourned at a quarter to 2 o'clock.