

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 1900

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WEDNESDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER, 1900.

The SPEAKER (Hon. Arthur Morgan, *Warwick*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

PETITION.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION.

Mr. GIVENS (*Cairns*) presented a petition, signed by 358 residents of Cairns, praying for the immediate introduction of a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill similar to the Act now in force in New Zealand.

Petition read and received.

PRINTING COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (*Lockyer*), on behalf of the Speaker, as Chairman, brought up the first report of the Printing Committee.

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS.

COST OF CONTINGENTS TO SOUTH AFRICA.

Mr. DAWSON (*Charters Towers*) asked the Premier—

1. The amount of money already expended in connection with the various Queensland contingents to South Africa?
2. The amount, if any, still owing?
3. Can he give an estimate of what the total cost is likely to be to the taxpayers of the colony when the liabilities cease?

The PREMIER (Hon. R. Philp, *Townsville*) replied—

1. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Contingents	£106,650
4th Contingent	50,690
Total	£157,340

2. For local disbursements about £500.
3. As it is not known how long the troops will remain in South Africa, and as the amount of pay contributed by the Imperial Government varies according to the locality in which the troops are employed, it is impossible to give an accurate estimate.

REPORTS BY MR. J. M. CROSS.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*) asked the Premier—Will he kindly explain why he declines to permit members of both branches of the legislature to see copies of the periodical political and industrial reports prepared by Mr. J. M. Cross for the information of the Agent-General?

The PREMIER replied—

The Government do not consider that the advantage which hon. members would derive from a perusal of copies of Mr. Cross's reports would be sufficient to justify the expenditure involved in making them.

Mr. DAWSON: What about the Agent-General?

Mr. LEAHY: He has them already.

PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

- (1) Return to an Order, relative to pastoral holdings in the unsettled districts of the colony, made by the House, on the motion of Mr. W. Hamilton, on the 24th July last.
- (2) Return to an Order, relative to Wolfgang Resumption, made by the House, on the motion of Mr. Lesina, on the 24th July last.
- (3) Return to an Order, relative to resumptions open, and available to be thrown open, for selection, made by the House, on the motion of Mr. Bell, on the 19th July last.

EXPENDITURE ON DEEP-SINKING.

On the motion of Mr. DAWSON (*Charters Towers*), it was resolved—

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

1. The amount of money expended by the Mines Department from the "deep sinking fund" on the gold and mineral fields of the colony during the past two years ended 30th June last.
2. If any, where, when, and to whom; also amount in each case.
3. The number of applications received, and number refused.

DIVIDEND DUTY.

On the motion of Mr. DAWSON, it was resolved—

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

1. The amount of dividend duty collected from the gold and mineral fields of the colony for the past two years ended the 30th of June last.
2. The amount of dividend duty paid by all other companies during the same period.

EXPENDITURE ON PROSPECTING.

On the motion of Mr. COWLEY (*Herbert*), in the absence of Mr. J. Hamilton, it was resolved—

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

1. The amount of money expended by the Mines Department for prospecting purposes in Queensland during the last two years ended 30th June last.
2. Where, when, and to whom; also amount in each case.

ALBERT RIVER, BURKETOWN, AND LILYDALE TRAMWAY BILL.

SECOND READING—POINT OF ORDER.

On the Order of the Day being read for the resumption of adjourned debate on Mr. Murray's motion, That the Bill be now read a second time; on which Mr. Browne had moved, That the question be amended by the omission of all words after "be" with a view to the insertion in their place of the words "referred for the consideration and report of a select committee. That such committee have power to call for persons and papers, and leave to sit during any adjournment of the House, and that it consist of the following members:—Mr. Macdonald-Paterson, Mr. Bartholomew, Mr. Kates, Mr. Groom, and the mover."

The SPEAKER said: When this order was last before the House the hon. member for Flinders raised the point of order, "That the Bill had not been properly introduced, being either in the nature of a private Bill, and subject to the Standing Orders governing such Bills; or a Bill such as is contemplated by Part II. of the Railway Amendment Act of 1872," and, the matter having been argued at length, I promised to give a ruling upon the points when the Order of the Day for the further consideration of the measure was again called. Dealing first with the second point raised by the hon. member for Flinders, I am of opinion that the procedure contemplated by Part II. of 36 Vic. No. 21 is not compulsory. As to whether the Bill is a private Bill, and subject to the Standing Orders governing such measures, I am of opinion that the point is one which the House should decide. But, as the House has referred the matter to me, I have no hesitation in expressing the opinion that the measure was rightly introduced as a public Bill. A private Bill, in the fullest sense, gives certain powers for certain purposes, and imposes certain restrictions; but the limitation of its powers, and the security of the public, are governed by recourse to law, and not by appeal to the Crown. The point of order raised upon this Bill must be associated with four other Bills standing for consideration, which each and all contain like provisions for securing

to the Crown an interest in the construction and working of certain railway and tram lines, and a controlling power during the entire period at the end of which the Crown may purchase such lines. There is here a creation of "public policy"—an interest by the Crown, as representing the people—which constitutes the measures public Bills. Moreover, the disposal of Crown lands in the manner contemplated by the Bill before the House indicates that it is a public Bill, and further evidence in support of this view of the case is to be found in the preamble, in clause 9, in clause 25, and in clause 30, the latter creating a prospective claim upon the consolidated revenue fund which no private Bill would be permitted to set up. Numerous instances could be quoted to show that Parliament has in the past dealt with such measures as public Bills, and in my judgment Parliament would be unwise to permit them to be dealt with as private Bills. This Bill is, in my opinion, a public Bill, and was properly introduced as such.

Mr. McDONALD (*Flinders*): I am reluctantly compelled under the circumstances, more especially on account of the remarks in the first portion of your address, to ask the House to decide this matter. In moving that your ruling be disagreed to, I do it with all due respect to yourself, and I do not wish it to be understood by any member of the House, or by yourself, that it is casting any reflection on you, Sir. I do it purely in the interest of the House generally, because I feel that we are now about to make a precedent which is to last the colony for some considerable time, and because I recognise the gravity of the occasion. I would also say that in upholding the ruling you have just now given, I feel thoroughly confident that for the future private Bills will be at an end. First of all, I may say that as far as the procedure is concerned with regard to private and public Bills, both in this Chamber and also in the House of Commons, I think the House is thoroughly agreed, so that there is no need for me to go over the ground gone over before as to what should be done with a public or a private Bill. The question for this House to decide is this: whether this particular Bill is a public Bill or a private Bill, and how are we going to distinguish in future between a public Bill and a private Bill. As far as I was able to follow the ruling given by you, Sir, it was principally on the lines of the argument the Attorney-General took the other night when this matter was before the Assembly; that is to say, that the Bill contains certain provisions which, in the opinion of the Attorney-General and of yourself, seem to stamp it as a public Bill. The first contention was that certain powers were given to the Commissioner under this Bill, which are also included in the other Bills mentioned, and therefore it is of a public nature. The second was that because certain clauses safeguarding the public interests are in the Bill that was additional proof that the Bill was a public Bill; and the third was that because the Government had power to repurchase the line after a certain period that was another reason why the Bill was a public Bill. I think I am fairly stating the grounds on which the hon. gentleman based his argument that the Bill was a public Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You omitted one important point.

Mr. McDONALD: What was that?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: With regard to Crown grants and resumptions through the agency of the Commissioner.

Mr. McDONALD: Do you mean the granting of Crown lands, or, in the event of them having to be purchased, the Commissioner has power to resume them?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Both.

Mr. McDONALD: Then I will also include that argument. In the first place, we are told that this Bill is going to open up certain lands. At the present time what is stated in the preamble is merely allegation. We do not know whether it will do that at all. We only presume that it will do certain things, and that is why our Standing Orders provide that in cases where private Bills are introduced they should go before a select committee to either prove the allegations set forth in the preamble or otherwise. I, first of all, would like to try and see what other authorities state as to the definition of what is a private Bill. I don't intend to travel over the ground that has been traversed before, but I would like to point out that we have one authority—Cushing—who gives a definition of a private Bill—

A public Bill is one which operates upon some subject or measure of public policy in which the whole community is interested. A private Bill is one which is for the particular interest or benefit of some person or persons, whether an individual or a number of individuals, a public company or corporation, a parish, city, county, or other locality, having not a legal but a popular name only.

That is question 754, page 297. Then we have another definition of what a private Bill is; and I think these authorities should be borne in mind by the House in discussing this question. We find on page 664 of "Bourinot" this definition of a private Bill—

Private Bills are distinguished from public Bills inasmuch as they directly relate to the affairs of private individuals or of corporate bodies, and not to matters of public policy or to the community in general.

There we have the only two authorities as to the definition of a private Bill; and we find that a private Bill certainly relates to certain concessions given to certain companies and corporate bodies. Further, I would like to point this out: In the Bill now under consideration we find that they ask for certain concessions, and in asking for these concessions from the Government they are going to do certain things—that is to say, they are going to construct certain lines. If any profit accrues from those lines they are going to put it into their own pockets, and if any loss takes place they are going to bear that loss; so that as far as the Government is concerned they have nothing to do with the profits or losses that may accrue from this particular Bill. I would like also to draw the attention of the House to this: that we have had a number of Bills similar to this introduced into this Chamber as private Bills. It is sufficient for my purpose to refer to the latest Railway Act passed, with the exception of the Chillagoe Act—namely, the Swanbank Railway Act of 1894. That Act was introduced as a private Bill by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, and I maintain that it is on all fours with the Bill at present before us. If we look at that Act—without reading it clause by clause—we find in clause 2 that the company has certain powers to construct a certain line; but they can only construct that line under certain specifications and under certain conditions laid down by the Commissioner, and that it is to be of a certain gauge, such gauge being the same as the gauge of our public railways. Again we find in clause 3 that the Commissioner has full power to deal with the line in such manner as he thinks proper. It is a very lengthy clause.

Mr. LEAHY: It went through Crown lands.

Mr. McDONALD: We find that it never went through Crown lands, but I [4 p.m.] will tell you what it did do: it gave the Commissioner power to resume lands. This Bill gave the Commissioner power to resume lands, so that this line could

be handed over to the Government and dealt with as if by the company for the construction of that particular line. That puts it just exactly in the same position as it would have been in if the land were already Crown lands.

Mr. HARDACRE: It dealt with Crown lands.

Mr. McDONALD: Again, we find that there were running powers over this particular line put into the hands of the Commissioner. Also, we find that he had authority to make certain settlements in connection with the running of that particular line; and in clause 8 there were certain safeguards for the public welfare, and so on right through the Act. Further, I will point out that the Act also gave power to the Government to repurchase the line—not at the end of fifty years as in the present Bill, but almost as soon as it was completed—if they thought fit so to do. There were even more drastic conditions laid down in the Swanbank Act, which was introduced into this Chamber as a private Bill, than in the present Bill as it is now before us.

Mr. LEAHY: No.

Mr. McDONALD: It is for the hon. gentleman to show me otherwise. If the hon. gentleman is in doubt, it may be just as well for me to read the whole of these clauses so that the House may understand the exact position. I say that this Act was more drastic than the present Bill, which only provides that the Government may repurchase the line after it has been running for fifty years. To my mind, it is a question whether the Government have power to do that under this Bill; whether, if they wanted to repurchase the line in fifty years, they would have to come down to the House and ask the permission of this House to do so. I do not think that this Bill really gives the Government power to repurchase the line at the end of fifty years. It only states that if the Government, at a date fifty years hence, should be prepared to buy that line after certain enactments they may be empowered so to do. I do not think they can do that under the present Bill. I do not need to read further in connection with that particular Act, but I only wish to draw attention to the fact that it was introduced as a private Bill, and that is one of the latest, with the exception of the Chillagoe, which has been introduced to this Chamber. Now, I may also state that for some time past, from 1881 to 1887 and from 1891 to 1894, there were also Bills similar to this introduced as private Bills, to say nothing of the various Bills that have been introduced in connection with gas companies. There is one late one that I might refer to: that is the Mount Morgan Gas Company's Bill, which was one of the most recent. It was introduced by the hon. member for Fitzroy, Mr. Callan, and there a clause was inserted, that the local authority could repurchase in seven and a-half years, and other clauses were put in the Bill for safeguarding the public in case of the contamination of water, or that sort of thing. And all through every private Bill that has been introduced into this Assembly, as long as this has been an Assembly, there have been clauses introduced of a similar nature to what were introduced into this Bill for guarding the public interest—I do not say in exactly the same words, but to the same effect. And so I say, in the event of this ruling being upheld, for ever, private Bills will no longer be recognised in this Chamber as long as the Government of the day is prepared to bring them forward, for the simple reason that the various safeguarding clauses in this Bill we find run through every private Act that has been introduced into this Chamber. And the mere fact of going behind the safeguarding clauses that are introduced into this particular Bill, in my opinion, is sufficient to stamp it as a private Bill. We find that in this case, as the hon. gentleman proved,

or attempted to prove, the other evening when he was speaking on this Bill which is now before Parliament, that this was a hybrid Bill. That is what the hon. gentleman proved. I do not say that he intended to do so; but he went on to say that while a private company was interested in this Bill, so was the Government interested. Now, that is an exact definition of a hybrid Bill, and therefore the hon. gentleman has only succeeded in showing that this Bill which is now before us is a hybrid Bill; and our Standing Orders, dealing with hybrid Bills, being silent, then we should have recourse to the English practice, and the English practice is that the Bill should be immediately referred to a select committee.

Mr. LEAHY: This company are not public carriers—they do not carry for the public.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman says that this Bill does not make the owners of this particular line public carriers.

Mr. LEAHY: No, no. I said—

Mr. McDONALD: That is sufficiently proved by the fact that it is provided in the Bill—

Mr. LEAHY: No, I said the Swanbank Bill did not make the owners of the line public carriers.

Mr. McDONALD: They certainly were public carriers. If the hon. gentleman looks up the Act he will find a clause, which was specially inserted, providing that the company could not make any differential charges, but they must carry for one and all persons alike. And the Commissioner also has power to deal with that, and make regulations controlling traffic in that particular way.

Mr. LEAHY: What clause are you referring to.

Mr. McDONALD: You will find it in there.

Mr. LEAHY: I cannot find it all.

Mr. McDONALD: I will find it and read it to the House for the satisfaction of the hon. member. Now, it has also been practically admitted—and it is not necessary for me to deal with it on that ground—that this Bill has not been introduced in accordance with the Companies Act. It has also practically been admitted that this Bill was not introduced in accordance with the Railways Act of 1872, or the Tramways Act of 1882, and I need not deal with the Bill on those grounds. Apart from the fact that all the private Bills introduced into this Assembly have a similar safeguarding clause to that which is put into this Bill, and the fact that we have the admission from the Secretary for Railways that the particular company whom this Bill is intended to benefit have paid for the drafting of the Bill—and on that point I would like to ask this question: I want to know by what right any private company was asked to pay for the drafting of a Bill of a public nature? If the Bill is a public Bill it should have been drafted and printed at the public expense, and introduced on their behalf, but here we find a Bill paid for by a private company, and introduced on their behalf, and that is clear evidence to my mind that it is a private Bill. In connection with the Swanbank Railway Bill and all other private Bills introduced into this Chamber, we find that they are printed together in the third volume of the Statutes, and marked "Private Acts," and we do not look in the volumes devoted to the public Acts for these Acts. When the Statutes of Queensland were revised, the gentlemen who revised them must have had the idea that these were of a private nature, or they would never have put them into a volume specially marked "Private Acts." Taking it all round, I think there is abundant evidence in what I have quoted, and even in the speech of the Attorney-General, to show that this Bill is on all fours

with the private Bills previously introduced into this Chamber. I think the House should consider the matter, because although the present Government may still be of the opinion that this Bill is of a public character, and they were right in introducing it as such, they are not always going to sit there, and there may be gentlemen going on to those benches who do not think that Bills of this kind are public Bills.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Therefore you take that view of it?

Mr. McDONALD: No, but another Government may come there and want to introduce Bills of a similar nature, and this will be quoted as a precedent for introducing them in a particular manner. I maintain that on the line of argument advanced by the Attorney-General and in the ruling given to-day, the private Bills upon our statute-book, to which I have referred, would be considered public Bills.

Mr. LEAHY: Then why did not the Labour party oppose the Swanbank line?

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman knows sufficient of this Chamber to know that many things introduced here are very shady transactions—I do not mean in themselves, but in the way they are done—that they practically ride roughshod over the rules of the House and everything else. The hon. gentleman knows that as well as anyone else.

Mr. LEAHY: No, I do not. You never told me anything of the kind.

Mr. TURLEY: No one objected to the method of introducing that Bill, but to the Bill itself.

Mr. McDONALD: It proves nothing to say no one objected at that time. I have no more to say on the matter. I have mentioned merely what I thought was new ground in the matter, and have attempted to prove that this Bill is on all fours with all other private Bills that were introduced in connection with railways, and this should therefore be considered a private Bill. I think it wise that we should get an expression of opinion on the subject from the House, that we may at all times know exactly where we are. I hope it will not happen, but I suppose it will, that the whole matter will be dealt with, and the vote taken on purely party lines. That I am very sorry for. I hoped the thing would really be discussed on its merits, which, evidently, it has not been in the past. I have laid the matter as clearly as I possibly could before hon. members, and I now leave it in the hands of the House to decide whether the ruling given by the Speaker should be upheld or not.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

After a pause,

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Question!

Mr. BROWNE (*Croydon*): Just a few words, as there is no reply from hon. members opposite. I was in hope that the Attorney-General or someone on the Government benches would have made some answer to the able speech of the hon. member for Flinders. I reiterate what the hon. member for Flinders said as to this motion to disagree with the Speaker's ruling not having been introduced out of any feeling of disrespect to the Speaker whatever. No man on this side of the House, or I believe on either side of the House—whatever view he may have—will do anything to throw disrespect upon the Speaker. Members on this side hold very strong views on this matter. We believe that the hon. member for Flinders, the other night, made out a very strong case in favour of his contention that this Bill should have been introduced as a private measure. The Speaker has given his ruling against that, and the hon. member for

Flinders has exercised his right, and the right of any member of the House, to ask the House to disagree with that ruling. Hon. members on the other side do not seem inclined to discuss this question at all. I may say at once, as an answer to a good many taunts slung at members of the party to which I have the honour to belong—that we are always ready to waste the time of the House—that that is not going to be so on this occasion. The hon. member for Flinders has made a strong protest on behalf on the party, and I do not think any other member of the party has anything further to say on the question—only what I did expect was that some hon. gentleman on the other side would have replied to the hon. member for Flinders.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Question—That the Speaker's ruling be disagreed to—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 21.

Messrs. Kidston, Browne, Fisher, Hardacre, Kerr, Dawson, Maxwell, Givens, Reid, Stewart, Ryland, McDonnell, Dibley, Jackson, Turley, Bowman, Higgs, McDonald, Dunsford, Fitzgerald, and Lesina.

NOES, 37.

Messrs. Philp, Foxton, Dickson, Rutledge, Dalrymple, O'Connell, Murray, G. Thorn, Leahy, Cowley, Newell, Bell, Armstrong, Stephens, Boles, Curtis, Petrie, Bridges, Jenkinson, Forrest, Groom, Mackintosh, Stephenson, Story, Forsyth, Kates, Fogarty, Bartholomew, Plunkett, Annear, J. C. Cribb, Tooth, Hanran, Moore, Lord, Callan, and Smith.

Resolved in the negative.

Question stated.

Mr. KIDSTON (*Rockhampton*): When a previous Bill of this nature was introduced, the leader of this side of the House moved as an amendment that a referendum of the people of Queensland should be taken on the matter, before so large and important a departure should be made from the settled railway policy of the country, the Government refused to accept that proposal, and the House defeated it; so that we come back to this position: that we have to recognise that the House must deal with this matter; that when these Bills are brought before the House, this House will have to deal with them. With regard to a proposal of this sort, I claim that the ordinary members of this House have not sufficient information available and at their disposal to justify them in coming to a decision one way or the other. We are simply being asked to legislate in the dark. Why, even the Minister for Railways, when he introduced this Bill, admitted that he did not know anything about it except that the Government had been asked to make this concession, and now he comes in with a Bill for the purpose of granting this concession. I submit that anyone who goes over the correspondence—or the alleged correspondence—that is said to have been the cause of this Bill being introduced into this Chamber, will find in that correspondence no adequate reason for the Government placing such a proposal before the House, or for the House accepting it. For my own part, I see nothing in the correspondence except two main facts: the desire of the company—or the alleged company—to get certain concessions out of the Government, and the desire—the very natural desire—of the people of Burketown and its neighbourhood to get a railway running into their back country. The Burketown people naturally want such a railway, and, as far as they are concerned, I am in sympathy with their desire.

Mr. FORSYTH: Then you should vote for the Bill.

Mr. KIDSTON: But the fact that the Burketown people want a railway into their back country does not constitute any justification for

this House making so large and important an alteration in the settled railway policy of the country. Not the slightest effort [4.30 p.m.] has been made to show us that this is the best way in which railway facilities can be given to this district. We are told that this is the only way, but that is a mere allegation. Not the slightest attempt has been made to show that this is either the only way or the best way.

Mr. FORSYTH: Will you vote for this as a State railway?

Mr. KIDSTON: The claim that the leader on this side of the House has made—that the whole matter should be remitted to a select committee—is, I assert, under the circumstances, a rational and common-sense one, and no hon. member on either side of the House can deny the common sense of such a proposal, no matter what he may think about the railway.

Mr. FORSYTH: I deny it.

Mr. REID: But he said a man of common sense.

Mr. KIDSTON: It is well known that many hon. members on this side—I regret to say that it is not all of us on this side—but many of us on this side object in principle to private companies being given the power to monopolise a district by getting railway facilities such as are here proposed. But we have a desire quite equal to that of any hon. member on the other side to do everything possible—everything that is at all in consonance with a prudent regard for the future—to give the residents in the outlying parts of the colony whatever help we can in the development of their districts. And if the advocates of this line—if the Government who think, or who seem to think, that it is a desirable line to build—as the hon. member for Carpentaria, for instance, believes that this is not only the best proposal that can be made, but the only proposal that could be made—then I say to those hon. gentlemen that if the matter is remitted to a select committee it will strengthen their case rather than weaken it. I should like to ask the Government, or any member of the Government, what it is they are afraid of? They will not remit such proposals as this to the judgment of the people of the colony, and they will not submit them to the judgment of a select committee of this House. What is it that they are afraid of? Are they afraid that the House will get too much information on the subject before they come to a vote on the question? They have gone directly in the teeth of a vote of this House, and have appointed a Royal Commission for the purpose of investigating the claims of certain Government railways which it is proposed to build; but in regard to these private railways the Government refuse even to submit them to the consideration of a select committee. Why? I think I am justified in asking, is it because the Government are afraid that the House will get too much information? And do they think that, if the House gets full information, it will refuse to pass these Bills?

Mr. HIGGS: They will find out what politicians are interested.

Mr. COWLEY: You point them out.

Mr. KIDSTON: The one point in the correspondence which has been laid before the House in connection with this line that is of any value in helping hon. members to come to a decision on the matter is the fact that the Commissioner for Railways is in favour of the proposal. He says—

I have no hesitation in commending this Bill to the favourable consideration of the Government and of Parliament.

But it is quite evident that the Commissioner for Railways is not an infallible authority on this matter, because a few weeks before this he was

of opinion that the railway could be built under the Tramways Act. He said in a letter written to the Secretary for Railways—

In returning you the enclosed letter from Messrs. R. Newton and Co., applying for an Order in Council authorising the survey of a tramline from the Lawn Hill Mines to a point on the Albert River, near Burketown, I have the honour to inform you that Messrs. Newton and Co. are somewhat premature in applying for this Order. What this firm should do in the first instance is to prepare plans, sections, specifications, and book of reference of the proposed tramway, and an estimate of the cost thereof. Certified copies of these should then be submitted to the Minister, and sent to the office of every local authority through whose district the tramline has been surveyed.

And then they could get power to build the line under the Tramways Act; so that the Commissioner cannot be regarded as by any means an infallible authority. We all know that the Government themselves set aside, without the slightest compunction, the recommendations of the Commissioner for Railways whenever it suits them to do so; and they can hardly expect us to be bound hard and fast by his recommendations. Indeed, in regard to this matter, the Commissioner for Railways says one thing and the Secretary for Railways says another. The very reason which the Commissioner gives for permitting a private company to build this railway is entirely contradicted by the Secretary for Railways in the speech he made when introducing the Bill. The Commissioner says, on page 6 of the correspondence—and he is evidently saying this for the purpose of showing Parliament that it should give power to a private company to build the railway, because it would not be likely to pay the Government to construct the line—

The local traffic (if any) will be purely from horned cattle.

Now, the Secretary for Railways, when dealing in his speech with the same subject, said—

I believe that to the south and south-west of Lilydale there is a very large tract of excellent sheep country, which, at the present time, it is impossible to devote to sheepraising, owing to the absence of the facilities for carrying the produce; but once this line is constructed that country will be utilised for the raising of sheep and growing of wool.

I do not know the country myself, but here is the Commissioner for Railways telling us one thing for the purpose of showing that the line should be built by a private company, and here is the Secretary for Railways telling us another thing for the purpose of showing us what a rich district this is that is lying undeveloped for want of a railway. Now, under those circumstances, it is quite natural that we should ask that there should be some investigation made—investigation such as is likely to be made by a select committee—so that hon. members will be in a position to know accurately where they are before they decide an important matter of this kind. So far as I can understand the Commissioner, his reason for advocating this Bill is simply that the Government will not build the line. Now, there are a great many districts in Queensland that want railways besides this district. There are many districts in Queensland that have railways now that have had a great deal of difficulty in getting the Government to construct them, and although it seems unlikely that the Government will build this railway to-day, it is quite possible they may propose to build it next year. It all depends upon whether in their opinion it is advisable to build the line. Everything that may be said which goes to show that it will pay the company to build the line is so much argument why the Government should build it, and whenever it is said that it will not pay the Government to build it then I say it is unwise to give such a concession to a private company, because it will not pay them either.

I entirely dissent from the principle that we should get railways built over the whole of Queensland if only by the Devil. The very point of order that was raised by the hon. member for Flinders suggests a view of this case which I think might very well engage the attention of the House. It is, of course, said that members on this side of the House object to private railways altogether, that they do not reason on the matter, and are not prepared to discuss them. Now, in England they do not object to private railways on principle. The majority in the House of Commons for the last forty or sixty years have had no objection to the principle of private railways. They have passed private railway Bills over and over and over again, but they recognised the motive that was at work when asked to give concessions for the construction of private railways. They recognised that that motive was a desire to make money, and while they admitted that that might be quite a legitimate reason for the company coming forward with their proposal, yet they also considered there was sufficient reason for Parliament taking the most scrupulous care that the public safety, and the public interest, were safeguarded at every turn. To accomplish that end they made the invariable rule that such Bills should be remitted to a select committee. Now, if in the House of Commons, where they have no objection to private railways, and believe in private enterprise, that custom is considered reasonable, why should this House not do the same? Is it not a reasonable thing, at least, that the men who object on principle to such proposals, should suggest to the House that before compromising itself it should remit the matter for examination by a select committee? For instance, in the preamble of this Bill we are told that it is the desire of the company to construct and maintain a line of tramway, but so far we have not been told one thing, or been given the faintest information about the ability of the company to carry out its desire. The hon. member for Mackay, Mr. Dalrymple, sniffs as if it were an utterly absurd thing to suppose that a company would ask for such a concession unless it had the ability to carry out the work, but that is exactly the element of doubt in this matter. A small group of speculators, who can get the ear of the Government, will come, through the Government, to this House, and ask for a concession when they have no more idea of implementing the bargain or of building a railway to Lilydale than I have.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Do you know their intentions?

Mr. KIDSTON: They ask for the concession simply for the purpose of floating a company, and somebody else is left to "hold the baby" afterwards. I say it is the duty of the House, before it grants such concessions, to see that the men to whom it grants them have ability to carry out their part of the bargain; and I think that when we content ourselves by asking that the same practice in regard to protecting the public interest should be followed here as in England our request is a very reasonable one indeed. Why, if this was a Government railway, if the Secretary for Railways was proposing to build this line with Government money, he would have given us infinitely more information on the subject than he has done. The whole position seems to be that by this method of getting railway Bills through Parliament the House will consent to give power to build a railway which the Government may take over, and the House does not know anything about it. Private members on the other side may get up and tell us that they know this, that, and the other thing, but I am speaking of the official information which has been laid before the House to enable us to form a sound judgment,

and I say we have nothing like the information that we would have had if it was proposed to build the railway with Government money. Surely in a case of this sort we should at least have the same information—I think, personally, we should have more—but it is surely only a reasonable thing to expect that we should have the same information, and until the matter has been remitted to a select committee of the House, and the House has been given the fullest information that can be got, not only about the facts of the case, but about the route, and the ability of the company to build the line, I do not think members would be justified in voting for such a Bill. I do not wish particularly to detain the House on this matter. There are a great many points in connection with the Bill which it will perhaps be better to discuss on the second reading, but I would point this out to the Premier: He has repeatedly expressed his desire to get on with public business. He has repeatedly expressed his desire to facilitate the business of the country. Surely the remission of a Bill of this kind to a select committee would not only safeguard the public interest by securing a calm and dispassionate review of its provisions, but it would economise the time of the House to a vast degree; because if it came back, after investigation by the committee, with a recommendation of the committee for acceptance by this House, I should imagine that it would economise the need for discussion in detail to a remarkable extent. And I submit to the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government that, if no other consideration will induce him to agree to the amendment of the leader of the Opposition, that should have some influence with him. As a matter of fact, this is not a railway only that we are giving a concession to. It seems to me that there is a mammoth corporation that is going to exploit and control the whole of that part of the Gulf district. This is the modest way in which their powers are set out in the preamble of the Bill—

And whereas the company is also desirous of constructing, erecting, carrying on, utilising, and turning to account in connection with the said line of tramway and branch lines certain mines, stores, warehouses, labourers' dwellings, freezing, smelting, crushing, and other works, and wharves and wharfage accommodation.

If that is not a mammoth corporation—if this company exercises the powers handed over to it here—I think it is self-evident that it will simply put in its pocket the whole of the Burketown and middle Gulf district. Just after that passage in the preamble of the Bill which I have read there follows another sentence which, it seems to me, constitutes a powerful argument why this line should, if constructed at all, be constructed by the Government. It says—

And whereas such line of tramway and branch lines would open up and develop large areas of Crown lands for pastoral, mining, and other purposes.

And it is deduced from that that this company should be given power to build the line. I submit that the deduction is all the other way about—that if this line will open up vast pastoral and mining areas it is the duty of the Government to build the line. I do not know any other reason that has induced the Government to build any other line in Queensland; and if that is admitted as a reason for giving a private company power to build this line, it would be an equal reason for selling the whole of the railways of Queensland to a private syndicate to-morrow. As I said, I do not want to unfairly detain the House on this matter. It seems to me—and I say this in all honesty, apart altogether from party feeling or any personal opinion as to the wisdom or unwisdom of private railways—it seems to me that the members of this House who

honestly believe that this line will be an advantage to the Burketown district, and an advantage to Queensland as a whole, have no reason at all to object to the Bill being remitted to the consideration of a select committee. If they are right—if they have confidence that what they believe is the wise thing and the best thing for the colony—then surely they also believe that the more it is investigated the more will that become apparent; and if they do not believe that the more it is investigated the more it will become apparent, and for that reason object to a select committee, then I think it is the duty of every honest member of the House to vote against this Bill until we do get a select committee.

Mr. FORSYTH (*Carpentaria*): The burden of the speech of the hon. member for Rockhampton has been that this Bill should be referred to a select committee. I am certainly surprised that the hon. member completely ignored the report of Mr. Cameron, which has been placed in the hands of every hon. member. He only made reference to the correspondence that took place between the Commissioner and those who are interested in this particular line. He made not the slightest reference to the report we have from Mr. Cameron, which I think meets the whole case.

Mr. HIGGS: Is that the Queensland National Bank Cameron?

Mr. FORSYTH: No; it is the Government Geologist who was sent out to this place for the express purpose of seeing what those mines were. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that we actually did agree to have a select committee in connection with this particular Bill, and suppose, also, that they brought up a recommendation that the line should be built by private enterprise—is there a single member of the Labour party who would vote for it? I say, No. And further, I say that during the debate on the Address in Reply there was not a single member on that side who had the pluck to say he would vote for it as a State line. I know all about that country; I have been all over it; and I emphatically assert—and I challenge anyone to refute it—that if those mines do not pay a line built by the State would not pay for grease for the wheels. And yet we have the hon. member for Rockhampton asking us to refer this Bill to a select committee for the purpose of getting more information! What more information can we get? Mr. Cameron, the Government Geologist, has been over all those mines, and has given us all the information possible for any select committee to get. As a matter of fact, he gives us information that no select committee of the House could possibly get, because he is an expert. Yet hon. members on the other side talk about a select committee.

Mr. KIDSTON: The select committee would get information by examining expert witnesses.

Mr. FORSYTH: Supposing they had done so, what more information could they elicit than we have at the present time? We have Mr. Cameron's report on the present appearance of those mines, and he has said that no man can tell the value of this mineral land until it is further developed. That is exactly where the risk of speculation comes in. The hon. member for Flinders stated the other night that of all the private lines submitted this was the most speculative of the lot. And yet we are told by hon. members on the other side that the Government should build the line.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No.

Mr. FORSYTH: Exactly. They will not have the line built by the State or by private enterprise. Although they wish, as they state, to give the Burketown people all benefits

possible, they do not care a single straw if the people of Burketown remain for ever without railway communication.

Mr. KIDSTON: For ever; that's a very long time.

Mr. FORSYTH: Yes; for ever. That is the position they take up, and I say that all this talk about a select committee is a mere subterfuge, and for the purpose of trying to block the Bill.

Mr. FISHER: How can we vote for it as a State line when it is brought in as a private line?

Mr. FORSYTH: Will the hon. member vote for it as a State line? Would any hon. member vote for it as a State line with the knowledge that it could only pay on the one condition that the mines pay? And how do we know they are going to pay? I say that any private company who are prepared to spend and risk their money here are entitled to build the line, and the Government ought to give them every facility for doing so. The hon. member for Rockhampton knows well that if a private company does not build that line there is not the slightest possibility of the Government ever building it.

Mr. KIDSTON: Never?

Mr. FORSYTH: Yes, ever. I venture to predict that if the Government [5 p.m.] brought in a Bill to-morrow to build this line by the State, the hon. member for Rockhampton would vote dead against it.

Mr. KIDSTON: Don't you start on the prophetic line.

Mr. FORSYTH: We know this much, in any case, that hon. members on the other side of the House take up very logical ground when they say they are entirely opposed to all private lines. Their policy is to vote for State lines only. That is a most logical position to take up, but they are not logical when they seek by every means in their power to get the Government to make statements in connection with this line which they know the Government cannot make, because all the information they can get is contained in Mr. Cameron's report. I noticed that the hon. member for Rockhampton carefully ignored making the slightest reference to that report. Why? Because he knows for an absolute fact, as well as any hon. member on this side of the House, that there is no information the Government can possibly get, except the information we have now in our possession. I remember being in that district two years ago, and there has been very little work done there during the last two years. If anyone will read the report to which I have referred he will see that this mineral field extends for thirty miles in length, and from five to ten miles in breadth, and that all the money that has been spent there only amounts to from £12,000 to £15,000. Anyone who knows anything about mining knows that the expenditure of a small sum like that gives no proof at all of what the mines are, or are likely to be. The development of the mines has been too small to warrant us in coming to any definite conclusion on the matter, and, therefore, I say the Government would not be justified in building the line themselves, when they do not know whether the mines are likely to pay or not. The hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Fisher, stated that a select committee would submit a report as to the value of the concession, and as to the value of the field generally. How is it possible for anyone to do that? How can any expert—ever Mr. Cameron or Mr. Rands, or any other expert in the world—possibly tell what is below

the surface at a depth of 500 or 1,000 feet? They can give you a faint idea of what might be expected under certain conditions, but they cannot give you any definite or certain information. I know that sometimes on Gympie when we have thought that we were in for a really good thing, a break has come in perhaps ten or fifteen feet away, and our expectations were disappointed. Besides, how can we tell that five years hence the value of copper will be what it is to-day? Then, there may be some other metal found which will be far more widely distributed, and completely knock out copper. We cannot tell; no one can tell. And even if we could tell, the price of that metal may go down to a certain extent. How is it possible for any select committee to give us any idea as to the value of the concession? The thing is utterly absurd. In the large majority of cases where land has been utilised there, only a few perches have been worked. I have been over miles of that country, and can inform the House that here and there you will see ten or fifteen feet dug on the surface, and a few tons of stuff heaped up, and that is about all. Yet hon. members opposite think the Government can get more information on this matter. I want to know what more information they can get. I say it is an utter impossibility for them to get more information. There is not a single member on the other side of the House who has made the slightest reference to Mr. Cameron's report, and it will simply be wasting time and wasting money to appoint a select committee to report upon this railway. There is no getting away from that fact. What more information can we get than we have in that report? None whatever. The only conclusion I can arrive at is that this proposal to refer the Bill to a select committee is a mere subterfuge for blocking the passage of the Bill. The hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Reid, stated that this Bill completely upsets the settled policy of the country. That is a magnificent statement to come from such a guileless man. There have been settled policies of a country that have lasted for a thousand years, and they have been upset in twenty-four hours. And if we take that argument of the hon. member for Enoggera as being a valid one, then I say the occupation of every single member of the Labour party is absolutely gone, for the simple reason that their platform from beginning to end is to try to upset the settled policy of the country. There can be no getaway from that fact. The settled policy of the country, as far as railways are concerned, has been altered, for we have had a land-grant railway and the Chillagoe Railway. This statement about the settled policy of the country being departed from is nothing more nor less than so much political cant. The hon. member for Enoggera also said, what a splendid thing it would be for the House if we had a report from a select committee, because it might be so strong that it might even convince the Labour party. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" When they do, then we can believe that the Labour party will change their tactics. I give hon. members opposite credit for persistence in their policy of entirely opposing private lines. But when they say they want more information on this subject, I cannot believe that they are sincere, because we have got all the information we can get. I say the amendment is simply brought forward to try to block the Bill in every way they possibly can. The hon. member also talked about two-thirds of the country along this line being under swamp. I have been over the line, and travelled out as far as Camooweal, and I do not think that two-thirds of it are swampy. The line from Normanton to Croydon is entirely swampy in

the wet season, and seventeen miles of the trunk line between Ipswich and Brisbane was under water in the flood of 1893.

Mr. REID: Where is the sheep country up there?

Mr. FORSYTH: There is no sheep country between Burketown and the mines, but when you get beyond Mosman Downs, going along towards South Australia, you come to very much better country, and at Rocklands Station you get into sheep country, but that is in South Australia. I do not intend to take up the time of the House by making any further remarks in connection with this matter. It appears to me that the amendment is only moved with the one object of trying to block the business. There can be no other reason, and I have no desire to prolong the discussion.

Mr. DAWSON: Do you reply to no reason?

Mr. FORSYTH: I say there has been no reason given for the amendment.

Mr. DAWSON: Why do you reply to no reason?

Mr. FORSYTH: I only want to show the absurdity of the position taken up by hon. members opposite.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Unsupported assertions.

Mr. FORSYTH: Yes. They talk about wanting more information, and the more information they get the denser they get—in some things, at any rate. They talk about taxation and about the people being taxed quite enough; at the same time, we know that if the Government built this line, in the event of it not being a success, the taxpayers of this country would have to pay a great deal of money in the shape of interest on the cost of the line. I emphatically assert, in spite of the remarks made by hon. members opposite, that the people of the district have not the slightest desire to prevent the line being built by a company. I know that, all through my travels during election time, I did not come across one single individual who was not in favour of these private lines; and some of the very strongest supporters of the party opposite, men who voted against me at the election—even the very heads of the Labour party at Burketown and Normanton—are absolutely in favour of this line being built by private enterprise. These are facts which nobody can deny. There was not one single man in the district that I came across who was not entirely in favour of private lines, and no one knows that better than the hon. member for Croydon, Mr. Browne. I have no hesitation in saying that if a referendum of the people of the district were taken to-morrow, 90 per cent. of them would go hands down for this line; and if private people are prepared to come here and spend their money on a speculative line, I say we should let them do so. If they drop their money, the Government does not lose a penny-piece. I hope this amendment will be disposed of as soon as possible, because when we come to the general question I may have something else to say, and give some other information with regard to this part of the country which I do not think it necessary to give at present. The only reason why I got up was to show that the position taken up by members opposite, in my estimation, is not only absurd, but altogether uncalled for.

Mr. TURLEY (*Brisbane South*): The hon. gentleman, just before he sat down, gave the strongest reasons why this Bill should be referred to a select committee. He said, "Let us get rid of this amendment, and then I am prepared to give information to this House which they have not got at present."

Mr. FORSYTH: I did not say anything of the sort. I said I would have something to say on the main question.

Mr. TURLEY : That was the hon. gentleman's statement just before he sat down : " Let us get rid of this amendment, because I have something to say on the main question, and I shall be prepared to give information to this House which they are not now in possession of."

Mr. FORSYTH : I said nothing of the sort.

Mr. TURLEY : What stronger reason could he give for referring this Bill to a select committee—that he will stand up on the main question and give us other information. But we would want that information sifted, and the hon. gentleman could give all the information that is in his possession to the select committee, and could be questioned on the information he is prepared to give.

Mr. FORSYTH : I said, " On the general question."

Mr. TURLEY : And I am satisfied that after the statement made just now by the hon. gentleman he would be about the first witness that would be asked by the select committee to give that further information, on which he could be questioned by the select committee.

Mr. FORSYTH : " On the general question," I said.

Mr. TURLEY : That is the reason for moving the amendment—because we want information on the whole question that is at present before the House. The hon. gentleman further says that every person in this district is in favour of the line.

Mr. FORSYTH : So far as I know.

Mr. TURLEY : I am not able to say whether that is correct—I take the hon. gentleman's statement; but he supplemented the statement by saying that the hon. member for Croydon knows this as well as he does himself. I understand the meaning of the hon. member to be that the whole of the Gulf country is in favour of this line being built. I remember seeing only a few days ago a notice of a large public meeting held at Croydon, at which resolutions were passed denouncing not only this railway, but all private railways.

Mr. FORSYTH : That is at Croydon.

Mr. TURLEY : The hon. member for Croydon has stated here himself that he is opposed to this line; and he knows a great deal about it. He says that though it may be the best of a bad lot, still he wants further information, and with that object he moved this amendment; and since that has been done we find that he is fortified by the fact that his constituents have held a meeting denouncing the proposal.

Mr. FORSYTH : That is at Croydon.

Mr. TURLEY : Yes. But that hon. gentleman would lead us to believe that all the people of the Gulf district are in favour of this line; and he says that the hon. member for Croydon knows that as well as he does. The people of Croydon are just as well acquainted with the particulars regarding this part of the country as members of this House—far better than most members of this House. A large number of the people of Croydon have travelled all over the country prospecting as miners, and probably a large number of those present at the meeting at which adverse resolutions were adopted were persons who know the whole of the district.

Mr. FORSYTH : It was only a fiasco.

Mr. TURLEY : Reports in the Press do not state that; and we know that if there was the slightest chance of the capitalistic Press reporting the meeting as a fiasco they would have gone out of their way to do so without any qualms at all.

Mr. FORSYTH : It was beneath their notice.

Mr. TURLEY : I don't know that there are any meetings beneath the notice of the Press, provided they are able to hold the meeting up to ridicule, or provided they are able to get a meeting of ten persons in a back parlour to carry a resolution in favour of what they advocate. I contend that if it had been possible to show that this meeting was not well attended, or that the people present did not know the circumstances that prevailed in the district, they would have immediately shown that in their columns. They did nothing of the sort. They simply pointed out that there had been a meeting held, and that it supported the hon. member for Croydon in his opposition to syndicate railways.

Mr. FORSYTH : They are all wrong.

The SPEAKER : Order !

Mr. TURLEY : We can very easily understand that there is a very large number that would be in favour of any company or syndicate being given opportunities to exploit this country. We have had evidence of this already. We have had the most influential papers in Queensland—what are considered to be the most influential—fighting all they knew for months and months with the object of giving away three-quarters of the land of Queensland to private syndicates before now. Practically three-fourths of the country they would have given away under an Act passed in 1882, and the hon. gentleman knows that. Then we had just the same expression of opinion from the Press that was interested in endeavouring to secure what they term the investment of private capital in Queensland. The hon. gentleman further asks a question. He asks, " Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Well, he goes mighty near it sometimes. I will take the hon. gentleman who is in charge of this Bill, the Minister for Railways, and I will ask how often has the hon. gentleman changed his opinions? I select that hon. gentleman because he is on the same side as the hon. gentleman who asked the question. The Minister for Railways used to be opposed to everything in the way of State enterprise. He goes to Sydney, and he comes back to Brisbane and says, " I never saw anything like it in my life. We shall have to try to do all the work we can for the State railways in our workshops, because they are able to make a great success of it." And the hon. gentleman goes further than that. We are informed by him that he believes that it is necessary in the interests of the State that the coal-mines required for supplying coal for State purposes should also be State property, worked by State employees.

The SPEAKER : The hon. gentleman is going somewhat beyond the question before the House, which is the amendment of the hon. member for Croydon.

Mr. TURLEY : I was replying to the statement made by the hon. gentleman who preceded me. If I am out of order in replying to statements that are made by hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House, I take it that no person on the other side of the House will be permitted to reply to any statements that I may make as reasons why this Bill should be referred to a select committee.

The SPEAKER : Order ! The hon. member was replying to the hon. member for Carpentaria. I understood him to be referring to the statements of the Hon. the Minister for Railways. Even if the hon. member for Carpentaria was out of order in the remark that he made—and I do not think that he was—that would be no justification for the hon. member for South Brisbane. I desire to call the hon. gentleman's attention to the fact that the question before the House is the amendment of the hon. member for Croydon.

Mr. TURLEY: The hon. gentleman further went on to state that a member of this side of the House had stated that it was necessary to refer this to a select committee, because it was a departure from the settled policy of the country, and he wanted to know if we were not always opposed to settled policies. I say, No. I say that is misrepresentation. I contend that we have not in any case sought to upset settled policies. All we have done has been to endeavour on all possible occasions to obtain reforms of the policy as it already exists, and I think that that is a laudable object. That is the reason why members are sent here—to endeavour, if possible, to secure reforms on any matters that are already in existence. Now, that we have not touched this report, is the complaint of the hon. gentleman. He says why did not the hon. member for Rockhampton deal with the report of Mr. Cameron? Well, he did not deal with that for the same reason that I do not deal with it. I am going to leave that to men who are practical miners themselves, who are able to take that report and tell the House exactly what is in it, and where it tends to show what they believe it should show before they are able to give permission to a company to build this line. That seems to me a reasonable position to take up. I do not profess to know a great deal about mining, and, therefore, I think it would be out of place for me to take the report of the Government Geologist and endeavour to dissect it, and point out where it fails to give information, and where the information that he has given is wrong. There are other reports that have been sent down, or rather recommendations that have been submitted to this House, and I take it that we are at least able to deal with some of these, and to give reasons why in our opinion the amendment moved by the hon. member for Croydon should be carried by this House. It has been pointed out that there is a great value, in their opinion, in the information of R. Newton and others, under date of 25th April. They say—

Subsequent tests justify the assurance of the original prospectors that the mines are very rich in silver and lead, and that with a suitable means of conveyance the company's property will be made a most valuable one.

Now, this is a concession—a concession that is to be given by the State, with the object of what? Of making the property of the company a most valuable asset. Now, we want to know whether the preamble of this Bill, as it is laid before this House, is true or not; and the reason for submitting this Bill to a select committee is to find out whether the statements that are conveyed in the Bill are true. The hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill tells us that he knows nothing about it. He says, "I have never been there. I have no information except what is before the House. I know nothing about the country but from what I have heard from other people." Well, now, is that sufficient information to enable us to make up our minds on this question? He tells us that people have told him that a large amount of country will be benefited, and it says so in the preamble of the Bill. The Bill makes that statement itself, and it is with the object of verifying this statement, and getting all the information that it is possible to obtain, that the amendment was moved that this Bill be referred to a select committee. We are told, too, that the Railway Commissioner has recommended it. Well, that is to say, that the Commissioner has recommended it from the information that has been placed at his disposal by the officers of his department. But, I ask, how long is it since members on that side have been prepared to take the recommendations of the Railway Commissioner? Not so very long. The late Minister

for Railways was not always prepared to do that. I remember a case being brought up by the hon. member for Balonne not very long ago in connection with the Cunnamulla railway deviation.

Mr. LEAHY: No.

Mr. TURLEY: I submit that that case was brought by the hon. member for Balonne.

Mr. LEAHY: No. It was on the motion that the Speaker leave the chair. It never came up in the House.

Mr. TURLEY: *Hansard* of 1897, page 1767, says this—

That so much of the resolutions passed by Parliament in the session of 1895 as approved of that part of the plan, section, and book of reference of the railway from Charleville to Cunnamulla which relates to that portion of the line between 120 miles 13 chains 65½ links and 121 miles 4 chains be rescinded.

That was moved by the Secretary for Railways regarding the consideration of a motion to alter what had been previously done.

Mr. LEAHY: The question was that the Speaker leave the chair and we go into committee. That was the question.

Mr. TURLEY: Most decidedly—to consider certain things.

Mr. LEAHY: That was the question.

Mr. TURLEY: And then the hon. member for Balonne brought up the question of the deviation.

Mr. LEAHY: Quite so; but the question never came before the House.

Mr. TURLEY: But the alteration was made on the vote of the members of this House. The opinion of the House was expressed by a vote, and the Minister stated that he was prepared to accept the expression of opinion of Parliament on the matter.

Mr. LEAHY: The question never came before the House.

Mr. TURLEY: The question never came before the House, but here is the resolution of the House. I quite admit that the question did not come before the House, but it came up in this way—

Mr. LEAHY: That is all right.

Mr. TURLEY: When the motion that the Speaker do leave the chair and the House go into committee to consider certain questions was moved, the whole matter was raised and decided on that motion, because the Ministry themselves said that they would accept the decision of the House on the question, and that the wishes of the member of the district would be carried out.

Mr. LEAHY: They came to a decision on the question by the decision of another question.

Mr. TURLEY: No; it is not another question at all. The next question that was to be considered was the question of the deviation of that line at Cunnamulla, and here was the resolution that was to be moved when the House was gone into committee.

Mr. LEAHY: They did not go.

Mr. TURLEY: The motion was—

That so much of the resolutions passed by Parliament in the session of 1895 as approved of that part of the plan, section, and book of reference of the railway from Charleville to Cunnamulla which relates to that portion of the line between 120 miles 13 chains 65½ links and 121 miles 4 chains be rescinded.

Mr. LEAHY: It never came before the House.

Mr. TURLEY: And—

That the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed deviation commencing at 120 miles 13 chains 65½ links and ending at 121 miles 32 chains 60 links be approved.

That these resolutions be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their concurrence, by message in the usual form—

Mr. LEAHY: The House took no vote upon that.

Mr. TURLEY: Of course the House took no vote upon that. The House could [5.30 p.m.] not take a vote upon that. But what I am saying is, that the House at that time expressed an opinion upon the matter that was submitted under cover of that motion by the hon. member for Balonne, and the members of the Ministry themselves stated that they would give effect to the opinion expressed by the House, though they did not get to the resolution it was intended to move in committee. The question I was asking was—How long is it since the Government and the Government supporters have acquired all this faith in the Commissioner for Railways? That line had been submitted to this House under the instructions of the Commissioner for Railways, and the then Secretary for Railways, the Hon. J. R. Dickson, then said—

I wish the hon. member to understand that Mr. Mathieson never visited Cunnamulla when the route was originally decided upon, but merely selected the site adopted in the parliamentary plans, because it happened to be a convenient site on the map. Therefore, I attach no value whatever to the fact that Mr. Mathieson approved of that site.

Here is the Railway Commissioner, a man who we were told was the best man who could possibly have been secured for the position, and the Secretary for Railways gets up and tells this House that the opinion of that Commissioner for Railways was not worth accepting on a question as to the deviation of about half-a-mile of a line. Now he tells us that the Commissioner for Railways, with no more information than the Commissioner had in that case, is infallible. The Minister now tells us that he knows nothing about it himself, and has simply accepted the opinion of someone who has spoken to him about it. There are numbers of reasons why we want more information. It has been pointed out two or three times that there are various subjects upon which this House requires further information, and it is no new thing for matters like this to be referred to select committees. I will give a few illustrations of that from cases where this House and the country has been saved some considerable expense at one time and another, in connection with these matters. I refer hon. gentlemen to the Mirani-Cattle Creek line, submitted by the Government in 1895. That was a line sanctioned by the Commissioner, and the plans, sections, and books of reference, and everything else were laid on the table of the House; the members for the district were thoroughly in favour of it; and the Government were altogether solidly in favour of it. But when it was pointed out, even from the plans and books of reference, that there was something that might not be altogether right in connection with the construction of this line, the leader of the Opposition at the time moved that the question be referred to a select committee. What was the result? It was referred to a select committee, and that line has never again been proposed in this House, simply because the report of the select committee killed it. When they came to inquire into the reasons why this line should be built, they found that, in their opinion, there was actually no reason why money should be spent on it, and this House was supplied with a great deal of information which previously had not been given by the Government.

Mr. LEAHY: It was public money, anyhow.

Mr. TURLEY: It was public money, but have we not been told by the hon. gentleman himself that this Bill is full of benefit or detriment to the public weal, and are we not as justified in trying to protect the interests of the public under this Bill, by getting all the information we can about it, as we were when it was a matter of the expenditure of public money?

This is a public Bill—the hon. gentleman has decided that by his vote this afternoon, and that being so, it must to a greater or less extent affect the interests of the public; and we are as justified in getting full information on a matter affecting the interests of the public, through the opening up of the country at the expense of a private company, as we would be in connection with a proposal to build a line at the expense of the State. During the same session we had proposed the Mayne to Enoggera line, and though that was a case where any member, by paying 3d., could take the omnibus and go out over the route of that line and form his own opinion—he a select committee for himself—it was moved that that line also should be referred to a select committee, and that was done. People were called to give evidence as witnesses before that select committee with the result that the line was very near being thrown out altogether on the evidence that was given. It was only, I think, because the member for the district concurred with the opinions expressed by some of those who came before that committee, that that line was carried. I am satisfied now that if the good sense of the House had prevailed upon that occasion, that line would not have been built, and that would have been a blessing to the inhabitants of that district. It is in the same way that we are asking now that more light should be thrown upon this question. What do we know regarding the people who are to build this line? In every other case in which we have been asked to give concessions to private people, we have had to have the measure submitted to a select committee that we might get further information. Let me take another railway—the New Swanbank Railway—the Bill for which was introduced in 1892, I think, before I came into the House. Here was a railway built with the object of enabling a company to obtain greater facilities for the transport of material they were getting from their mines to deep water, where they could more easily distribute it. That Bill was brought in practically on exactly the same lines as this Bill. Those people asked to be allowed to construct a railway. They said that certain obstacles were placed in their way by other people, and they asked the Government to relieve them of those obstacles, that the Government might exert the power of the State behind them to enable the company to accomplish their object. The Government did that, and not a solitary soul in Parliament at the time objected to that Bill being referred to a select committee, because the House required additional information on the subject. Will the hon. member for Bulloo support the proposal to submit this Bill to a select committee for the purpose of getting additional information? Probably the hon. gentleman, like the hon. member for Carpentaria, has got all the information he wants, and is prepared to support the Bill in the same way as the hon. member for Carpentaria, without further information. He knows as much as satisfies himself in the matter. But if the hon. gentleman has information which is not in the possession of other hon. members, why has he not given us that information? Or why is he not in favour of the Bill being submitted to a select committee in order to get it?

Mr. LEAHY: I thought you were opposing the Bill upon principle, and not on the question of referring it to a select committee at all.

Mr. TURLEY: I have stated that I believe this Bill should be referred to a select committee with the object of getting further information. When I am opposing the Bill I will tell the hon. gentleman. He need not be afraid of that.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I hope it will be soon.

Mr. TURLEY: Yes, certainly I will tell the hon. gentleman when I am opposing the measure, and why I oppose it. I have here a long list of Bills which have been referred to select committees during the time I have had the honour of being in this House. In 1893 there were three Bills referred to select committees, in 1894, four; and in 1895 there were five different Bills brought into this House, each one of which was referred to a select committee. Take one of these for a most important line. There was a Bill submitted by the Government in 1895 for a line from Hughenden towards Winton. There were a large number of members who were intimately acquainted with the possibilities of that district; the amount of traffic that would be likely to pass over that line; the probabilities of extension of settlement there, of the opening up of further lands; the facilities for the people there to get provisions from the coast, and the facilities for getting their produce down to the seacoast. There were a large number of members on this side of the House in favour of this line being built, but what did they do? When it was moved that that Bill be referred to a select committee these members all supported that motion. Why? Simply because they had a good case. They knew that if the whole matter was referred to a select committee they would be able to get additional information from people who knew the district perhaps more thoroughly than they did; and they all to a man supported the resolution to send the Bill to a select committee in order to obtain further information. We have not sufficient information with regard to the line proposed in this Bill. Some hon. members seem to be prepared to act blindly in the matter. It seems to me that while we have a majority of hon. members who are prepared to act in that way, on a matter of such public importance, that there will be no possibility of our obtaining the desired information, unless those hon. members are satisfied that they have a good case. But I think they have a very weak case indeed. Supposing those hon. members were satisfied that this matter should be submitted to a select committee, there would be a number of men—not only those living in the district, but others—who would be able to give valuable evidence. A large amount of the Queensland population is of a migratory character; they travel about from one end of the country to another. You might see a man at Lawn, and in six months' time you might see him at Thargomindah, on the Barcoo, at Townsville, Brisbane, or any other place. If this Bill were referred to a select committee before which witnesses might give evidence with regard to the character of this country and advertisements were put in the papers as the recent Royal Commissions have done, calling on persons who are prepared to give evidence to come forward, I take it that it would be the duty of such a committee to call on all persons who are willing to give unbiassed evidence, because the information is required by Parliament, before the building of such a line can be sanctioned. In my opinion, hon. members know that there would be such a good case made out against this line—that such reasons would be adduced why this concession should not be granted to this particular company, that they are not prepared to follow the procedure followed in many other cases where railways were proposed, and where it was not the money of private companies that was being expended, but State money borrowed from the English public. Before the House decided to spend State money in building lines which every member knew would be reproductive, hon. members were prepared to allow the matter to go before a select committee. In the case of the Hughenden to Winton line, what happened?

After the report of the select committee hon. members were perfectly satisfied with the plans and specifications, and the matter was allowed to go to the other House, and the line was adopted. I wish further to point out, with regard to this Bill, that there is nothing in it, as there is in large numbers of similar Bills, saying that the plans and specifications and books of reference are to be laid on the table of the House for the approval or otherwise of hon. members. The whole thing comes to this: That once Parliament decides to give this concession to this company to build this line, there will be no question of laying before the House any plans, specifications, or books of reference. Can hon. members point to one instance where the plans, specifications, and books of reference of any proposed line were not submitted to this House? Here is one instance: Section 2 of the Swantank Collieries, Limited, Railway Act of 1892, says—

Subject to the provisions of this Act, the company shall and may, within eighteen months from the passing of this Act, construct in a substantial manner and in accordance with the deposited plan and book of reference, or with other or further plans and books of reference to be approved by Parliament, and thereafter maintain a branch line of railway connected with the branch line of railway constructed by Lewis Thomas under the provisions of the Thomas Railway Act of 1881.

That measure came down to this House in 1892, and we had the whole of the information with regard to the line in the engineer's reports, and the plans and specifications and books of reference were laid on the table of the House, so that members were guided thereby in forming their opinions. Where there has been any Bill giving a privilege or a concession to a private company, the plans, specifications, and books of reference have always been laid on the table of the House, and members have been able to examine them, and form their own opinions, if they were competent; if not, they could get competent persons to express their opinions on them. We have seen that the Mirani to Cattle Creek Railway was submitted to a select committee; and in that case plans, specifications, and books of reference were laid on the table of the House. I remember the then leader of the Opposition getting up and going over those plans and the engineer's reports, and comparing them with the different specifications, and he came to the conclusion that he required additional information; that the information supplied by the Government was not sufficient to enable him to vote for this particular railway. The result was that, in spite of the opposition of the Government and of the members for the district, and in spite of the opposition of a large number of members on the other side, who were prepared to "go it blind," as the saying is, there were members on the other side who also said, "Yes, we want additional information," with the result that they got the additional information, and the hon. member for Mackay has been bewailing ever since that the select committee was appointed, because the Mackay district did not get the railway. Is it on account of a sympathetic feeling on the part of the hon. member for Mackay, in connection with that matter, that he is opposed to the appointment of a select committee in the present case? That hon. gentleman must admit that he does not know a great deal about this district. I know nothing about it, but I want to know something about it before I give a vote on it. I am here, as other members are—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: To stop business.

Mr. TURLEY: I object to interjections like that, because the hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that I am not here to stop business. He

knows perfectly well that I am here to discuss these questions that are laid before the House, and to obtain information regarding them, and it is because I am ignorant, and because I admit my ignorance regarding this part of the country, and ask for additional information before making up my mind, that I am speaking now. The hon. gentleman may know more about it than I do; but, if he does, that is an additional reason why he should support the appointment of the select committee, so that that additional information may be given to the House. There is another reference I wish to make. In looking over *Hansard* for 1880 to-day, I came across a debate on the Burrum Railway Bill. That was long before it was ever dreamt that a Labour party would tread within the sacred precincts of this House. The object of that Bill was to give a concession to a private company to build a railway line from the Burrum Coal Field to join the Maryborough-Gympie Railway at some point or other. I believe the members of the company were known. It has been asked two or three times by hon. members on this side—by the hon. member for Clermont for one—who are the people who want this railway, and the names were given; but we know nothing at all about those people, and we are in exactly the same position that hon. members were in in 1880 with regard to the Burrum railway scheme. The result was that an amendment was moved in committee by an hon. member who is now a member of the Upper House—the Hon. Mr. Morehead—to the following effect:—

Provided that before they are allowed to begin the construction of the line they will be required to prove to the satisfaction of the Colonial Treasurer that the company has a capital, subscribed in good faith and by responsible persons, equal to £1,000 for every mile of railway agreed to be constructed, and a paid-up capital actually available for the purposes of the construction of the railway equal to not less than one-third of such subscribed capital.

Then Mr. Morehead went on to say—

There were several members of the House who did not believe in this scheme—for it was nothing but a scheme; and he would give his word that he should do all he could to obstruct it.

I think he was wrong in talking like that. It is very wrong on the part of any hon. member to stand up and deliberately state that he is prepared to obstruct business.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It is very wrong to confess it.

Mr. TURLEY: Not only is it wrong to say it, but the intention of doing it is wrong.

Mr. KROGH: Mr. Morehead has always been honourable in everything.

Mr. TURLEY: Mr. Morehead went on to say—

He had no personal reason for obstructing it, but he believed the Bill to be bad *ab initio*. He believed the intention of these schemers was, if this Bill were passed, to transfer all their powers to some other persons. They wanted to get concessions from the State, and go and hawk them about; if they could get rid of them well and good, and if they could not there was no harm done. There was much more important business on the paper to go on with, and what was the use of wasting time? The Bill should go no further if he could help it; and he asked the Government, seeing that a number of members from purely honest reasons were opposed to it, and believed that if passed it would bring discredit on the colony, not to press it. For that reason alone he should use every effort he was capable of to prevent the Bill passing. He described it as a swindle the other night, and he described it now as a swindle; and, therefore, hon. members must not blame him if he used all the means in his power to prevent the Bill going through.

Mr. LEAHY: Do you describe this as a swindle?

Mr. TURLEY: I have not described it as a swindle at all, for the simple reason that I do

not know sufficient about it to describe it as a swindle. If I had the information that we ought to have, and I thought it was a swindle, then I should state on the floor of this House, straight out, that I believed it to be a swindle. But, until I get that information, how am I able to do that? We are in exactly the same position with regard to this Bill that the Hon. Mr. Morehead was in with regard to the Burrum Railway Bill in 1880. He said: "They will probably transfer all their powers to some other person." Does not this Bill admit of that being done? Does it not admit of these people, whoever they may be, whether it is a swindle or whether it is not, hawking their concession from one end of the world to the other until they are able to find people who are prepared to take it off their hands? He pointed out—"They wanted to get concessions from the State, and go and hawk them about; if they could get rid of them, well and good, and if they could not, there was no harm done." I submit that those words are applicable to the Bill that we are now considering. He himself, being a commercial man, probably knew a great deal more regarding the standing of those people in the commercial world than we do of the people who were named here the other night. At the same time he saw the danger. He saw how it was possible for those people, by the use of all sorts of influence, to get a valuable concession from the State, and then take it from one end of the world to the other until they found someone who was prepared to go on with the work. I ask hon. gentlemen opposite to tell us what there is in this Bill, excepting that the company has to deposit something like £2,000 as a guarantee that it is able to go on with the railway? The Bill is absolutely silent regarding anything of the sort, and we want all sorts of information about it before we are prepared to say that the Government shall give this concession. It is a very pertinent question to ask who these people are? If members of the Government were selling something, or were granting something, to private people, as a commercial transaction, they would not do so without inquiring into the financial status of the people with whom they were dealing. Supposing the hon. member for Bulloo was transacting business with anyone regarding a pastoral property, or about the disposal of some stock, and he did not know whether the person with whom he was dealing had a farthing or not, he would have to be satisfied as to the *bona fides* of that person, and as to whether he was able to keep up his end of the contract.

Mr. LEAHY: I would want his cash. I would not ask him foolish questions.

Mr. TURLEY: I would like to point out that in various instances that have

[7 p.m.] come before this House, where private companies have appealed to the Government to be allowed to build railways for the furtherance of their own interests, the Government have taken up the position that they required proof of *bona fides*. Hon. members will remember that certain rights were given to persons on Charters Towers to construct lines for the purpose of conveying their quartz to the mills, and for the development of the industry generally. In one case the Minister who introduced the Bill to the House pointed out that the company had actually deposited with the Government an amount of money equal to the engineer's estimate of the cost of the line, and further, that they had given a guarantee that if any further expenses were incurred by the Government they were prepared to make good the amount. I would urge upon hon. members that something like that might be gathered from the representatives of this company if they had an opportunity of

coming before a select committee. We know what is in the Bill now, but we also know the power that is given to a select committee. While they are not permitted definitely to make amendments in a Bill, they are able to make recommendations to the House, and that course greatly facilitates business. Seeing that in former cases the promoters of private lines have been prepared to deposit with the Government the total estimated cost of their lines before the concession has been granted, how do we know that these people are not prepared to do the same thing if we do not make inquiries into their intentions? That, I think, is a point worth considering. Hon. members opposite must know that our only object is to gain information in order that we may be convinced, and they can easily understand that the evidence which may be brought before a select committee may be of such a convincing character that it will be made manifest to us that in the interests of the country it may be desirable, with proper safeguards, to give permission for the construction of this line. Who knows but that members on this side, with proper information before them, may be prepared to give the company all the assistance in their power in order that the Bill may be passed into law? I submit that there would be a distinct gain, even from the point of view of the Government, in submitting the Bill to a select committee. The evidence that may be adduced might convince every member of this party that the best thing that could be done in the interests of the country would be to build this line. I am satisfied therefore that if the Bill was referred to a select committee it would not be a waste of time. It would be an absolute saving of time.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: The Labour party would have to be born again before they would be convinced.

Mr. TURLEY: If they are born again, I have great hopes that they will be provided with wings.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I hope so, for their sakes.

Mr. TURLEY: We have been accused of wasting time. I do not like accusations of that kind being made. I very well know that such a statement will not be believed among very many thinking people outside, but there are a great number of unthinking people who are inclined to accept the statements of hon. members opposite, and the statements of members of the Government made at banquets and shivers of various kinds, as absolutely correct, and they do not take the trouble to make inquiries into the true facts of the case. If we had this Bill relegated to a select committee, all manner of information could be elicited which would be of value to Parliament. I have been on two select committees, and we had before us the persons who were directly interested in getting certain measures through the House. We found out the duties that had been performed by those persons in a sort of public capacity, and we discovered exactly what their financial arrangements were. The result was that the measures were passed through the House with a considerable saving of time—a result that would not have been attained if the Bills had not been referred to select committees. After all, it is only by discussion and the rubbing of ideas together that we are able to arrive at satisfactory conclusions. I admit myself practically in ignorance over this matter; but by interchanging ideas with members on both sides, and by hearing the evidence given before a select committee, people like myself will be able to make up their minds on the merits or demerits of the case. I take it that those hon. members do not want an arrangement like this simply carried through the House because they, in their own minds,

believe it will be in the interests of the community. Seeing that there are other people who hold different opinions, I submit that the evidence that could be adduced would probably have some influence in changing the opinions of those people who at present have not definitely made up their minds on the subject.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Have you definitely made up your mind on the subject?

Mr. TURLEY: I have proclaimed my ignorance a number of times already, and the hon. gentleman knows very well that a man who publicly proclaims his own ignorance on a question has not made up his mind. How can he? He wants information.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: He may be playing a game, perhaps.

Mr. TURLEY: The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that nothing of that sort would be done by hon. members on this side. When a man proclaims his ignorance of a subject it is only by getting information dealing with that subject, or bearing upon it in some way, that he is enabled to make up his mind. The hon. gentleman himself says he has made up his mind, because he has had a good deal of information given to him by other people. Let us suppose the Secretary for Railways was on this side of the House, and that members of this party were on the other side and had introduced a Bill of this sort. While we might believe, in all sincerity, that it was the best thing for the community that such legislation should pass, the hon. gentleman, to whom no information had been supplied, and who had simply been told it was necessary to pass it in the interests of the country, would not have to be blamed if he asked for information. I would not blame him; I should say he was perfectly right, and if we had no information to offer him I should say he would be perfectly justified in using all the influence he could in endeavouring to prevent the Government from passing that measure. He would not have been supplied with the necessary information to enable him to make up his mind. To show that there is something in this argument, I need only state that the Premier, the other day, when this amendment was first moved, said that, had the amendment been moved in connection with the Callide Railway Bill, and he had believed that we were in earnest—and I submit that we were demonstrating all the time that we were actually in earnest over this amendment—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You are demonstrating right enough. (Laughter.)

Mr. TURLEY: The hon. gentleman chooses to be facetious because I contend that every hon. member of this party, in getting up to advocate the carrying of this amendment, is endeavouring to demonstrate to the House and the country that they are in earnest over this question. As I was saying, the Premier stated that if this had been proposed as an amendment in connection with the Callide Bill it would then have applied to all Bills of the same character, and he would have been disposed to accept it. That shows that the Premier himself is at least favourably disposed towards the acceptance of an amendment such as this. I submit that if we appeal to the intelligence of every hon. member opposite they will realise that that is the actual position—that we on this side really wish to demonstrate that we are in earnest over this amendment because we wish to get the evidence of experts on the matter. We have got the evidence of one expert—the Government Geologist. There are other experts, surely, in connection with the Government departments, or outside them, whose opinions we could get. Those people would not all be of the same way of thinking, but from the friction of their

opinions we should have some chance of arriving at the truth, and making up our minds on the subject. Supposing this committee get before them the persons interested in the construction of the line, and ask them, "Are you prepared to deposit with the Government the cost of the line, as estimated by an engineer, before you get the concession you are asking for?" I contend that that is a fair proposition to put before the people who are asking this concession. I am satisfied that hon. gentlemen in dealing with any private matters from their own point of view would ask questions like this before entering into a contract. Even though they objected that they were not prepared to go so far, we should know exactly where we were. They may be prepared to go considerably further than the deposit of a few thousand pounds, which is all they are asked to do here. It is estimated the line will cost £150,000. They may be prepared to deposit 50 per cent. of the estimated cost of construction. If so, there is a guarantee which every member of the House would be prepared to accept as something definite. But unless we get these things out by examination it is impossible to say how far they are prepared to go. There is another aspect of this question that I should like to point out, and it seems to me that it is worthy of consideration. Taking the Callide Bill as an example, quite a sheaf of amendments—I do not know how many foolscap pages—have been printed in connection with that measure; and seeing that this Bill is practically on all fours with the Callide Bill, there is every reason to believe that a large number of amendments will be submitted in connection with it. Now, if this Bill were remitted to a select committee, evidence bearing on the subject-matter of those amendments could be obtained from the witnesses who were under examination. No doubt there would be numbers of people prepared to give evidence in connection with matters of this sort. Every outside witness, for instance, will be satisfied that there should be something put into these Bills for the protection of the persons who may be employed in connection with those companies.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. TURLEY: I am only giving an example of the work that may be done by a select committee. While the Bill is under their consideration, they may prepare, for submission to the House, a number of recommendations that may cover to a very great extent the same ground as the amendments that have already been printed and circulated. In that case what would be the result? Would it not be a valuable saving of time to the House? Would it not be better to have the matter considered and reported upon by a small committee, than for the House to have to consider and debate such a number of amendments? We know from experience that a small body of seven, eight, or ten persons can get through a great deal more work in a short time than a large body. I have been in large conventions which consisted of ninety or 100 delegates, and their practice was to submit nearly every matter of importance to committees for the purpose of saving time. Such conventions, having only a week, probably, in which to do their business, would never have got through all the matters set down on the paper had they not followed that course. The referring of matters to committees saved time, and in nearly every instance the reports of the committees were adopted. And I submit that a great deal of time would be saved by submitting this Bill to a select committee. A large number of members have stated that they want information on the subject. They want to know particularly how this company stands financially;

whether they are prepared to go further in connection with a guarantee than is proposed in the Bill before the House; whether it is not wise that we should have the plans and specifications of the railway laid on the table of the House; and, in fact, everything that can be said in favour of or against the measure by persons who are disinterested and by persons who are interested, and by experts and others who have been over the country, and know what are its mineral resources and what is its value from a pastoral point of view. All those things we want to know. If this Bill is referred to a select committee, and that committee gets evidence showing that there will be sufficient traffic over the line to make it pay the same amount of interest and working expenses as State railways are now paying, what will be the result? We have no knowledge that such evidence cannot be obtained by a select committee, but it may possibly be procurable, and if we did get that information I am inclined to think that hon. members opposite would be disposed to ask the Government to withdraw the Bill and have the railway built by the State. That, at any rate, is a possibility of a reference of the matter to a select committee. We do not know what might be the result of their inquiries. No one can say what their report would be until the question has been referred to a committee. If an hon. member has a case which he takes into a court of law he does not know how he will come out until the judge gives his verdict.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This House can give its verdict.

Mr. TURLEY: This House can give its verdict! Does a judge, or does one man, make up his mind on a case without getting any evidence? Does the hon. gentleman think that if he went into a court of law, he would simply have to state his case and that he would get a verdict without giving evidence to buttress it up, and without the person on the other side offering evidence in support of his contention? The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that if there is only a jury of twelve men they require evidence before they make up their minds, and that all possible evidence is submitted to them before they are asked to give their verdict. This House will make up its mind as soon as it gets sufficient evidence on which to come to a conclusion. But until we get that evidence how is it possible for hon. members to arrive at a reasonable conclusion? And what is worse than hasty legislation? There is nothing in the world that is worse for a community than hasty legislation. Hon. members opposite have got up, time after time, and denounced members on this side because they have tried to rush legislation through the House. The hon. member for Mackay has often argued that legislation proposed by members on this side was ill-considered, and that members on that side had not had time to digest the evidence on the subject in order to be able to give a verdict on it. I submit that we are in exactly the same position with regard to this Bill as hon. members opposite have said they were in when progressive legislation has been proposed by this party. We are now simply taking a lesson from hon. members opposite. When we have introduced legislation which we believed was for the benefit of a large section of the community, they have often spoken at great length, and sometimes, I think, with considerable reason, asking that we should give them information. And we have always endeavoured to meet them; in nearly every case we have said, "Yes, if you will appoint a select committee or a commission to inquire into the merits of the case, we will submit evidence." And I contend that when hon. members opposite submit something which they believe is in the interests of the community,

but which we maintain is not in the interests of the community, simply because we have no evidence to convince us to the contrary—and that is the only reason which would induce a sensible man to oppose a measure—they should give a reasonable opportunity to obtain the information required to enable members to come to an intelligent conclusion on the subject. The Premier distinctly said that, had this amendment been proposed when the Callide Railway Bill was before the House, he would have been disposed to agree to it. Well, we are prepared to adopt exactly the same procedure with regard to that Bill and all the other private Railway Bills. I submit that hon. members on this side have made out a good case. They have quoted numerous instances where this House has done the same thing before.

MR. BROWNE: It was done this session in the case of the Brands (Store Cattle) Bill.

MR. TURLEY: Yes, and hon. members have demonstrated that they are in earnest in supporting the amendment. I contend that if hon. members opposite can make out any decent case at all in favour of their proposal, their only course is to agree to the amendment, and let this Bill be referred to a select committee. Then those of them who have any information to give on the subject can give evidence, and they can induce others to give evidence; members on this side who know anything at all about that part of the country, and other persons who may be interested in this proposal and who can give information from their own experience, or from a knowledge of reports which have been submitted by the Government Geologist and others during a number of years, will also have an opportunity of giving their testimony. That being so, I submit that the best thing that can be done is to refer this question,

[7.30 p.m.] and all other questions of a similar character, to a select committee with the object not only of being convinced themselves and convincing their own followers that it is necessary to build this railway, but also with the object of at least endeavouring to prove to members on this side that it is in the interests of the community that they should submit measures such as this for the consideration of members of Parliament.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE (*Mackay*): Whatever the Premier is reported to have said as to what might have been done, we have sufficient evidence of the opinion he entertains at present by the fact that he will not accept this amendment. Of course the hon. member who has just spoken put his case very plausibly in pointing out that we should fall in with what has been done previously in connection with some other railways—of a different character, I venture to submit—and refer it to a select committee. He told us that if the House had a report from a select committee in favour of the Bill in all probability the House would adopt it. I do not know that the House would adopt it. The hon. member cited the Mirani Railway, amongst others. The committee reported in favour of that railway, and the House was in favour of it, but the hon. member's party thought fit to stonewall it, and prevent the House from coming to a decision. The hon. member says that if this Bill was referred to a select committee, and the committee brought up a favourable report, the House—and the Opposition—would then probably entertain it favourably.

MR. TURLEY: That is reasonable.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: What nonsense this is! Those hon. members could not accept it without being false to their forty-one planks, and they would then be cast out as apostates who had denied the faith. The hon. member tells us that

they would accept it if the report was favourable, and he has been arguing against it on the ground that it is a private railway.

MR. TURLEY: I never said anything of the kind. I spoke on the Callide Bill, not on the second reading of this Bill.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It does not matter in the least. Do not hon. members opposite hold that no private railway should be allowed to be built?

MR. TURLEY: You should not misrepresent me.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Have they not libelled some of their mates and friends and accused them of bribery, because on one occasion they thought it was advisable to construct a private railway? It is quite evident that all this demonstration, as the hon. member calls it, about referring this to a select committee is merely a means of postponing the time for arriving at a decision. In the first place allow me to mention, to show the hollowness of the whole of the proceeding, that under no circumstances can the hon. member vote for the Bill.

MR. TURLEY: How do you know?

THE PREMIER: You said so.

MR. TURLEY: I did not speak on this Bill before.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: If I cited anything from the speeches of the hon. member during the present session I should probably be called to order; but is it not a matter of public notoriety that it is a part of the platform of the Labour party to oppose all private railways? And are they going to deny their platform of the year 1890?

MR. TURLEY: They are not seeking to deny it.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I should like hon. members opposite to show a little more frankness in this matter and admit that it is one of the articles of their belief that private railways must not be allowed, even if they have to be stonewalled in this Chamber. We are told that if this amendment is allowed, in all probability the committee may bring in a favourable report and the railway will go through.

MR. TURLEY: I said it was possible.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I say that we shall have the same opposition under any circumstances.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Hon. members cannot vote for this Bill unless they are false to their own platform, and I do not think for a moment that they would be false to a platform to which I understand they have had to put their names. Then, again, we are asked to refer these matters to the people, to treat them as though we were dealing with a new constitution. What does that mean? It is simply to gain time. "It is not convenient for us to go and say point blank to a constituency such as that of Burketown or North Rockhampton or Gladstone that we, the Labour party, who tell you how anxious we are to do our best for the people we regard as a fond father looks upon his children; it is not convenient to go to them and say, 'Here is an opportunity by which we should be enormously benefited, the country would be opened up, our businesses would be better, communication for which we have prayed for many years would have been afforded, and altogether this district would be in a better state, and the people prosperous.'"

MR. TURLEY: They would vote for the railway if they thought that.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It would not be convenient for them if they then had to say, "We prevented you from getting this. We did our best to prevent you from getting it because we have an inconvenient platform." I have no doubt that those who did so would suffer at the

hands of their constituents. The friends of the Labour party in the Burke district—we are told by the hon. member for Carpentaria many of the prominent labour men there are pressing him to endeavour to get this railway.

MR. MAXWELL: That is not in the Burke district.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It is no matter whether it is in that particular district or not. We will take the district of Gladstone. The hon. member who represents Gladstone has said on several occasions that his district is in favour of a particular railway. The Labour party say, "One of our planks is that you must not have a private railway." There is no possibility of Gladstone getting any other. The hon. member for Gladstone knows that, and the electors who returned him know it; and therefore they know that the Labour party are their greatest enemies in that district. That happens to be so in the case of the Burketown Railway. Burketown was founded many years ago. It had a very good chance of prosperity at one time, but affairs have turned out badly with it. They expect some prosperity, however, if this railway can be constructed, and the mineral wealth lying dormant in their district be developed. Now, hon. members opposite know that it is very inconvenient for their friends in the North to discover that they are the stumbling blocks in the way of progress by means of which those districts are kept stagnant, and they would a great deal rather be able to say, "We did not want to prevent your railway being constructed. We are not stagnants. We always live and prosper under the great name of 'Progress.' We are the advance party. We wanted the railway really; but it was not brought in in a regular fashion. As a rule, railways are referred to select committees." They would not point out that this was a different kind of railway, but would talk of the conservatism of parliamentary practice and say that they wanted information. They say—"We were thirsting for information; it was not because we were opposed to the railway—although in all probability we would not have been in favour of it if it was referred to a select committee—but they would not allow us to refer it to a select committee, and in order to defend the rights and privileges of the House you must suffer." That is exactly, I imagine, the reason that they would give for the delay. This is undoubtedly the reason why the Premier opposed it, because he was afraid that a variety of pretexts would be started to prevent business being done. I have recited some of the reasons. There is the platform by which you are bound. There is your referendum which you brought in to juggle with. Now something else is brought forward, and that is, refer the Bill to a select committee, and in all human probability if it came back from the select committee, if there was a probability of it being passed by the House, the Labour party would serve this particular railway as the Labour party served the Mirani Railway—stonewall it. That, they hold, is the most convenient way of keeping several important electorates in this colony in a state of stagnation. It is the least risky to the Labour party, and that I take it to be the true reason for bringing forward this amendment, and not any desire to get any information. But what information can be got? Hon. members seem to forget that there is a very great distinction between this railway and either State railways or such railways as the Swanbank Railway. There are no clashing interests in the district of Burketown. It is not the junction to a main line such as the State might possibly make. The Burketown district has very little population at the present time. There are no claims to adjust. There is not the remotest chance, as there was of the State

making such a railway as that to Swanbank, or such a railway as that to the Burrum. The State might have built those railways, but there is not the remotest chance of the State making a railway under these circumstances. Now the only difficulty in the way of this company making this railway is the land. There is no other difficulty. If any of these companies or any private individuals could buy up tracts of land for hundreds of miles, then this House would have no right to interfere at all with their laying a line of rails down, and if it were not for these things in the United Kingdom—

MR. McDONALD: I rise to a point of order. I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker, as to whether the hon. gentleman has not already spoken on this question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member is quite right. It escaped my notice that the hon. member for Mackay has spoken, though I now find, on reference to my notes, that he is one of those who spoke to the amendment when the question was last before the House.

MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION: Hear, hear!

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Who is stonewalling now?

THE SPEAKER: Order!

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: By permission—(Opposition laughter)—I would like to say that I was in ignorance of that—

THE SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman has spoken.

MR. HIGGS (*Fortitude Valley*): I hope that to-morrow morning we shall have a lecture from the Ministerial organ, the *Courier*, about hon. members wasting the time of the House. (Ministerial members: Hear, hear!) Now, if a member on this side of the House had spoken twice on the amendment, I suppose we should never hear the last of it. Now, I wish to say a word or two as to why this matter should be referred to a select committee. Under ordinary circumstances, the Bill would have been so committed; but as it is proposed to do away with that practice, I think it is only right that the people whose interests may be interfered with by the construction of this line should have a chance of stating their objection before a select committee. The other night we were told by the Home Secretary that there were certain laws already in existence by which we might gain certain ends; and as has been pointed out by the Commissioner for Railways, under the Tramways Act, this company could, with the consent of the Government, construct this line. Clause 6 of this Tramways Act reads—

1. When a constructing authority desire to undertake the construction of a tramway, they shall apply to the Minister for an Order-in-Council to construct the same, and shall cause to be prepared—

- (a) Plans, sections, specification, and book of reference of the proposed tramway; and
- (b) An estimate of the cost of the same.

2. A certified copy of such plans, sections, specification, book of reference, and estimate shall be deposited with the Minister, and in the office of every council or other local authority having jurisdiction over the streets in which the tramway is proposed to be laid.

3. When the constructing authority is a company they shall also deposit with such plans—

- (c) A certified copy of the memorandum and articles of association;
- (d) A statement showing the name and place of residence of every shareholder, and the number of shares held by him;
- (e) And a statement of the amount of capital paid up to date.

4. The company shall also deposit in the Colonial Treasury a sum equal to one-twentieth part of the estimated cost of the tramway, which sum shall be detained by the Treasurer as security for the due completion of the same.

5. A notice stating that such application, with plans, sections, specification, book of reference, and other documents (if any) have been deposited as aforesaid, and are at all reasonable times open to the inspection

of every ratepayer interested therein, shall, at the cost of the constructing authority, be published for one month at least—

(f) In some newspaper generally circulating in the district through which the tramway is intended to be laid;

(g) In the *Gazette*; and

(h) In one of the Brisbane daily newspapers.

6. A true copy of every newspaper containing such notice, and a reference to the dates and pages of the *Gazette* containing the same, shall be deposited with the Minister before he submits an application to the Governor in Council.

Clause 7 provides for petition against the tramway by corporation or persons interested. Then there is an opportunity given to any person to lodge a protest against the passage of this Bill. The Ministry seem anxious to force the thing through the House with as little information as possible. Even the route is not defined. No one can say in this House what country this line will pass through. The schedule merely states approximately. Well, "approximately" may mean anything—any indefinite limit that the Government may put upon the route. I think if this were referred to a select committee, a number of protests against the construction of this line would come in. Many people will have an opportunity of doing that which they will not have if this Bill is rushed through the House. The hon. member for Carpentaria has laid a good deal of stress upon the fact that Mr. Cameron has made a report. Now, under ordinary circumstances I think we ought to be willing to accept the advice and information of Government officials; but Mr. Cameron may have been unconsciously biased in favour of this company, having seen that the Government were prepared to go beyond the opinion of the Commissioner for Railways. The Commissioner has told them the proper method that this company should pursue to get their Bill through the House, and, having seen that the Government apparently were willing to go beyond the Tramways Act, and were anxious to get these concessions through for the company, is it not likely that Mr. Cameron was unconsciously biased when he gave that report? That report in itself is not a very valuable one for the company. It merely states that there will have to be further development of the field before it can be decided whether the mines are likely to pay. A select committee would be advantageous in this respect: It would ascertain whether there is any truth in the statements made by the petitioners, or whether the hon. member for Carpentaria is right in saying that the line would not pay for greasing the wheels. I imagine that when a company is prepared to invest £140,000 in constructing this line it means that the mines are likely to pay. This is not only going to be a mining line, but a pastoral and agricultural line as well, because it is proposed to give the company power to construct branch lines up to twenty miles in length, and there is no limit to the number of such branch lines they may run from this line, which—if ever constructed—will be a trunk line. The hon. member for Carpentaria told us that members on this side would not vote for the railway if it was proposed to construct it with State money. Those who have followed the agitation in connection with these land-grant railways will have observed that the Government have endeavoured to create a public opinion that State money is unavailable for this purpose. They first conspired to make our last loan a failure, to lead people to believe that it is impossible for the State to get money; and then hon. members opposite try to create the impression that members on this side would not vote for the construction of the line with State money. They may succeed in convincing the public

that it is impossible to raise a loan for this purpose, but we would be false to our trust if we allowed their accusation that we would not vote for the construction of the line with State money to have any effect upon us. I am prepared, if this proposal goes before a select committee, and sufficient evidence is forthcoming that it is a line that will pay, to vote for its being constructed by the State. The hon. member has asked how is it possible to estimate the value of the concessions it is proposed to give to this company. How was the value of the concessions given to the Chillagoe Company estimated? How were those people able to convince the public that they had concessions from this Government worth something like £1,000,000? They were so successful in estimating the value of the concessions that members of this House are said to have made as much as £10,000 out of the Chillagoe concession.

Mr. DAWSON: Members of this House?

Mr. HIGGS: Yes, members of this House. One gentleman is said to have made as much as £10,000 out of the Chillagoe concessions.

Mr. BOLES: Are you sorry you are not one of them?

Mr. BELL: A member of this Assembly?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Name, name!

Mr. HIGGS: Oh, you all know his name as well as I do.

Mr. BRIDGES: Then it must be Higgs.

Mr. HIGGS: No. I make my money—well, never mind how I make my money, that is not a matter for the hon. member. But I do not make my money out of concessions granted by the Government. It is evident to me that the gentlemen who are at the back of this proposal—to construct a railway line under the title of this Bill—know full well the value of the concessions they are likely to get from the Government; otherwise they would not be prepared to put £140,000 into the construction of the line. The select committee would ascertain what is the value of the concessions which this Government is apparently willing to force through this House, and the select committee might decide to recommend to the House that it would be in the interests of the general public not to grant the concession to the gentlemen who know so well the run of the Government backstairs, but that it would be better to advertise the concessions to the world and give them to the highest tenderer.

Mr. LESINA: Sell them by public auction.

Mr. HIGGS: Yes, sell them by public auction. We might hand them over to the firm represented by the Chief Secretary, and that gentleman might possibly get an immense amount of money for the general public by selling the concessions. I am satisfied that he is so eloquent that he would make a much better bargain by that means than by the means now proposed by the Government for parting with those concessions. The hon. member made a good deal out of our settled policy. Our settled policy is to endeavour to prevent the passage of bad legislation. Our settled policy is to endeavour to have the government administered in the best possible way, and to prevent maladministration.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is your view of it, of course.

Mr. HIGGS: That is our view of our policy, and we are better judges of what is our policy than hon. members opposite. Possibly they may say the same thing of what we say with regard to theirs. The hon. member who spoke last sought to show that if we voted for the construction of a private railway we would be cast out as apostates who had denied the faith. But because we are willing to submit this railway proposal to a select committee, it does not follow that we are going to vote for the construction of it as a private railway. We say if you can produce evidence before a select committee to prove that

this will be a payable line, we are prepared to support a proposal to build it with Government money. If you refuse to submit the matter to a select committee, then we do our duty in this House by pointing out how wrong it is to take the course proposed by the Government. Hon. gentlemen opposite must surely—as public men invested with the confidence of the public, and as patriots who wish to do their duty to the country—see that it is their duty to try and protect those persons who have money to invest and who wish to invest it in sound businesses. If they have no fear as to the success of this line, why do they wish to do this thing in the dark? Why do they wish to establish a kind of railway star chamber? The hon. member for Mackay twits us with having cast out as apostates men who denied the faith of the Labour Opposition. Hon. members will remember what the Ministerial party have done, when any of their party has wished for one moment to question their political faith. I remember reading a speech by the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, when criticising the Queensland National Bank proposals. Having been twitted by the present Attorney-General with not having spoken his mind, the hon. member, in effect, said that to have spoken his mind at that time would have meant ruin to him. For any man to have spoken his mind at that time, and to in any way disagree

[8 p.m.] with the practice and methods of those who were ruling the country,

would have meant that he would have been deprived of his livelihood. That is the common belief round about the country now—that many men dare not question the political faith and practices of the hon. gentlemen opposite. Any man who a few years ago dared to get up and express a want of faith in the Ministerial Bank, in which hundreds of thousands of public money—

Mr. STEWART: Millions!

Mr. HIGGS: Yes, in which millions of public money had been placed, as it were, in a sink, would most probably have lost his means of livelihood.

Mr. STEWART: Of his life.

Mr. HIGGS: Probably, if not deprived of his life, he would have been deprived of his living; so that, as far as the treatment of apostates goes, hon. members opposite are far more severe than our party. With regard to the Mirani to Cattle Creek Railway, that was opposed by this side because the route went right through the property of several legislators in this Parliament, and the proposal to enhance the value of their land was so barefaced that the Government did not dare to go on with their proposal after these facts had been pointed out. When the main question comes before the House, I may have a little more to say, but if the Government wish to get along with the business of the country, and do away with what hon. members opposite call “a waste of time,” but which we consider only carrying out our righteous duty, they should refer this Bill to a select committee so that the fullest information can be gained, and in order that those who wish to protest against the construction of this line may have an opportunity of giving their evidence and their opinions.

Mr. STEWART (Rockhampton North): I have very great pleasure indeed in supporting the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition; and I am extremely surprised that the amendment has not been accepted by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government. Now, what is our position in this Assembly? I would like to ask hon. members to seriously consider the position they stand in in this House. What are we here for? What is our business in this Chamber? Is

it not to look after the interests of the community? Are the interests of the people of Queensland not entrusted to our care? Are we not placed in the position of agents for the people of this colony? Is it not our bounden duty to see that in every bargain, in every contract, and in every obligation entered into between any individual or number of individuals and the people of Queensland that the rights and interests of the people are conserved? That to my mind is our business in this Chamber, and that also appears to me to be our duty. As far as I can see, hon. members on the other side do not care two straws—not a single rap—for the people. They are only concerned in getting a set of syndicators to fix their talons on the property of the people of Queensland. I am not in a hurry if hon. gentlemen wish to indulge in private conversations—little quiet talks—in the corners of the Chamber. I can wait till they are ready. Our position is that we have to look after the interests of the people of the colony, and, as far as the party on this side of the House is concerned, we are determined to do so, no matter what insinuations may be thrown out by hon. members on the other side. Some hon. members taunt us with wasting time. Why, I dare say that during the late war the Boers taunted Baden-Powell with wasting time in his defence of Mafeking. I say we are in exactly the same position. We are holding the fort. We are defending the community against the assaults of people who desire to introduce measures which will be to the injury and detriment of the people of the colony. And if we do not stand to our guns, and if we did not carry out the behests of the people, we would be traitors, and would be deserving of the severest punishment that could be inflicted upon us. But I don't believe there is a single traitor on this side of the House. We are determined to die in the breach if need be—to fight to the last against schemes which we consider will be ruinous to the country. Why do hon. gentlemen opposite refuse to submit this matter to a select committee? Certain individuals come along and ask for particular powers. They say, “Here you have mines; we are desirous of developing them; but we can't do that without a railway. If you give us leases of these mines and the power to construct a railway, we will develop the mines.” But we want to know who you are; what you are; have you any capital; and how much, or are you mere speculators—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Adventurers.

Mr. STEWART: No, I will not say adventurers. I will say speculators—that reeks of the stock exchange—and it is parliamentary, at any rate—speculators who only wish to raise the wind when they have failed in every other way. We want all that information. Why, in the old country, in the Parliament of Great Britain, when a railway Bill is introduced, the shareholders, or those who propose to build the line, are compelled to disclose how much capital they have, the names of the shareholders, whether they propose to ask for more capital, also to say where the railway is to begin and end, and the plans of the entire route, and the specifications, have to be produced. All this information is demanded from the people who desire to construct a railway. But here we are asked to act in the dark—go at it blindly—to open our mouths, shut our eyes, and swallow whatever the Government likes to give us. I want more light. That is our demand. We desire more information with regard to this railway, and we sincerely trust that hon. gentlemen opposite will see the necessity of giving us that light. Now, as I was pointing out, we want to know who the shareholders are. We want to know who are “The Queensland Silver Lead Mines, Limited.” Are they men of substance, or are

they men of straw? Have they got any capital, or have they not? Why are not these facts divulged to this Chamber? Why is everything attempted to be done in secret—under cover? In the report of the Department of the Labour Bureau, the clerk of petty sessions in this district points out that the construction of a railway to these mines would cause a greater demand for labour in the district than there is at the present time, and he goes on to say—"The company has a Bill prepared to be submitted to Parliament." That report was evidently written over six months ago. This agent of the Government knew what was going on, but the Parliament of the colony did not know anything about it. I doubt if the Secretary for Railways knew either. Probably the Premier did, as he appears to be the engineer-in-chief for the syndicator. In addition to the information I have just hinted at, we want to know what is in those mines. We want to know whether they will justify any syndicate in putting its money, if it has any, into them. We have no desire to see the foreign investor juggled out of his money. It is our desire that articles such as were written about the colony of Queensland, and about the financiers of Queensland, in the *Investors' Review*, some time ago, shall never again be written in any British or other newspaper. What did they say about Queensland? They said that the rulers of Queensland were a band of thieves—men who simply stole the money of the British investors—

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. STEWART: I am not accusing anyone of theft, Mr. Speaker. I am simply repeating what appeared in an English newspaper.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. STEWART: We do not want the like of that said now about the colony. We desire that the colony shall stand well with the English investors. We know perfectly well that we are not yet able to go alone, so far as borrowed money is concerned, and we want to keep our credit good, so that when we desire to borrow for works that are really needed, and which will be reproductive, we can go with the assurance of success to the people who have got the cash; and that is the reason why I say we should be extremely careful about allowing these men to invest their money. We know perfectly well the influence that flaming prospectuses have.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is now discussing the general question. The question before the House is the amendment to refer the Bill to a select committee.

Mr. STEWART: I was under the impression that I was discussing the amendment. The whole point of my contention is that we want more information. That is the only reason we can urge for referring the Bill to a select committee, and I submit that I was perfectly in order in the line that I was pursuing.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. STEWART: Our objective is information; and when I referred to the care we ought to take that the foreign investor should not be taken in, I was merely pointing out how necessary it was that we should get more information upon this point. This measure should not be permitted to pass through this House until we get more information. Does the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government imagine that we are a lot of children? Does the hon. gentleman think that he is going to browbeat us into accepting any measure he brings in, whether we like it or not—whether he gives us information, or whether he withholds it? Does he assume the rôle of a dictator? Has this colony relapsed into a state of barbarism, and is it now under the heel of a despot? Well, if that is the case, or if any attempt is made to

do this sort of thing, it will be resented by every true citizen of the colony. I, for one, mean to resent this sort of thing; and, so far as I am concerned, this Bill will not pass its second reading until the hon. gentleman promises to give us more information. The procedure adopted by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government is in direct violation of the Constitution. I say he has outraged the Constitution under which we live.

Mr. LESINA: That is nothing; he is used to it.

Mr. STEWART: We have your ruling this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a private Bill, that it has been properly introduced, and that it is a public Bill. Well, if it is a public Bill, why is it not treated as other public railway Bills are? Why are not the plans and specifications of this railway laid on the table? Why is the Commissioner's report upon the line not laid on the table? Why are not the estimates of the cost of the line here? Why all this secrecy? Why all this divergence from the common routine of dealing with such Bills? Will the hon. gentleman give us the reasons for the procedure he has adopted in this case? There is only one reason that I can give for it, and that is, that there is something to conceal, and the hon. gentleman is desirous of concealing it. I say that this is no place for concealment. The business of this colony should be done in a fair and aboveboard manner. We have had too much concealment in the history of this colony. Why, this colony is in difficulties to-day because previous Ministers of the Crown have dealt in evasion and concealment, and, so far as the party on this side of the House are concerned, we will not permit, if we are able to hinder it, this sort of thing to go on. I again ask the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, or his Secretary for Railways, to explain why the ordinary procedure has been departed from in the case of the present Bill? If it is a public Bill, why have we not got the documents that I referred to before us?

Mr. LESINA: Ask the Secretary for Railways.

Mr. STEWART: I might as well ask the man in the moon—if there is a man there; the answer would be just the same. The hon. gentleman does not know, and I do not think his leader knows, and I do not know if anybody knows. All hon. gentlemen opposite know is that they have got a majority, and that they can carry anything they please through this Chamber.

Mr. LESINA: Why?

Mr. STEWART: Why? The hon. member is surely not such a novice as not to know why.

Mr. LESINA: I would like to know the reason.

Mr. STEWART: If the hon. member does not know the reason, then I invite him to ask some hon. gentleman opposite. They will be able, and perhaps willing, to enlighten him. I am not willing, however able I might possibly be. We are further told in the preamble—and this is another very important reason why this Bill should be referred to a select committee—that this railway will open up large areas of pastoral land. We want to know whether that pastoral land exists in reality, or whether these acres are merely creations of the imagination of the syndicate—whether they are merely stuffed in there for prospectus purposes, or whether they exist in reality, and are capable of carrying so many sheep to the square mile. If we had a select committee, we could get all that information. We do not know anything about it. We have no report from the Lands Department, or from any other department, or person. We certainly do not know anything at all about the subject, and, being in that unfortunate position, we are asked to legislate upon the matter. What a ridiculous position to put the chosen representatives of the people in! We are sup-

posed to know all about everything. We are supposed to have the very fullest information upon every subject that is brought before the House. The confiding public outside believe that we have that information. They think that we know all about it, but we do not; and the hon. gentleman opposite, who either has the information and refuses to give it, or has not got it and refuses to get it, sits still in his seat and makes no sign. Well, I say our cry is still for more information and more light, and I trust the Premier—notwithstanding his majority—will agree to the very reasonable proposal of the leader of the Opposition. If he does not agree then we can come to no other conclusion than that he does not want to give any information—that he is simply going to force this measure through the House by brute force; that he is going to compel us to accept it, whether we know anything about it or not. Well, it may be all very well for the hon. gentleman to take up that position, and perhaps he will be able to carry it through, but that will not make his action any more right. I say that any business in connection with this colony, or in connection with any community whatever, that will not bear to have the utmost light shed upon it, cannot be a business of an upright character. I say that fearlessly, and I challenge hon. gentlemen opposite to contradict it. If they have nothing to conceal, why refuse the select committee? Hon. gentlemen will say, "Oh, it will take up time; this amendment is simply brought forward for the purpose of obstructing the Bill, and for delaying the syndicate from getting into operation." The junior member for Mackay has said this evening that this amendment was merely brought in for obstructive purposes. Well, if the hon. gentleman holds that opinion I believe he would hold the same opinion if we objected when it was proposed to dispense with the second and third readings of the Bill. I say it is quite a legitimate motion to move that the Bill be referred to a select committee. It is a great deal more than legitimate. It is absolutely necessary in the interests of the country, and I say we would not be doing our duty towards the people who sent us here if we did not ask for all the information which it is possible to obtain on the subject. We find also that these gentlemen propose, in addition to going in for mining, to erect stores, warehouses, labourers' dwellings, freezing, smelting, crushing, and other works, and to build wharves, and provide wharfage accommodation. Well, I want to know where it is proposed to erect these wharves, and where the freezing works are to be, and all about the labourers' dwellings, and all about the warehouses, and the stores—and all the rest of it. We want, in the interests of the country whose representatives we are, to get all the information it is possible to obtain on those points, and for that purpose we ask the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government to refer the Bill to a select committee. The hon. gentleman has said that he will not do so. He refuses to give us the information, but he has not alleged any particular reason, so far as I am aware. That hon. gentleman is usually very chary about giving information about anything. He has obtained a reputation for wisdom by zealously keeping his mouth shut upon most occasions. I think it extremely desirable, if the hon. gentleman will not accept the amendment, that he should tell the House and the country why he will not do so. Is he afraid that a select committee might discover that it would pay the State to build this railway? Is he afraid that if that were the case the syndicators would be burked of their prey? It appears to me that that is the position which the hon. gentleman takes up. He is not the agent of the colony of Queensland, but the agent of syndicators, and I

say that is a position which no Premier of any colony should hold. A man cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. He cannot at once be the servant of the community and the servant of exploiters of the community. I would like the hon. gentleman to remember that, and perhaps he has not heard the last of it. It is just as well to be frank, and say what we think, and let the country know why we take up the stand we do. The ex-Minister for Public Instruction twitted us about the forty-one planks in our platform, and about the State ownership and construction of railways being one of those planks. I observe that when hon. gentlemen opposite are in need of a platform they sneak over to this side of the Chamber, grab one of our planks, and rush back with it to the Treasury benches as fast as they can.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. STEWART: If hon. gentlemen go on at the rate they have been going we will not have a plank left.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. STEWART: We find further in the Bill that it is proposed to give this syndicate power to construct branch railways here, there, and everywhere. The only restriction imposed upon them is that no single branch shall exceed twenty miles in length. Well, now, surely if this syndicate asks for power to construct branch lines, it should have some idea where they are going to construct them; and we want to know something about them as well as the syndicate. It will not do for the syndicate to have all the knowledge, and for us to have none. It is usually considered a fair thing, when two persons enter into a bargain, that one person should have as much knowledge of the subject matter of the contract as the other. That is all we claim now. We want to be put on a level with the syndicate; and in the interests of the country the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government ought to put us on the same level as the syndicate so far as the terms of this bargain are concerned. The syndicate evidently know where they are

going to build the railway, what it [8.30 p.m.] will cost, where it will end, where the branch railways are to be built, where the freezing works and the wharves are to be erected, and all the rest of it. They also know, I suppose, how much capital they have got, or how much they expect to float their company for in the London market. We, being the other parties to this proposed contract, all we desire is to be placed on an equal footing with the syndicate. We want to know just as much as the syndicate knows, and that is the reason why this amendment has been moved by the leader of the Opposition. I do not suppose it is any use appealing to the Premier to do justice in this matter. Having adopted the policy of concealment that he has apparently adopted in connection with these syndicate railways, I suppose he will pursue that policy to the bitter end. He has stated publicly—not in this House but elsewhere—that these private railways he is determined to push through at all hazards.

Mr. REID: Where did he state that?

Mr. STEWART: I read it in a newspaper. It was at a shivoo. The hon. gentleman always seems to disclose his mind over the wine and the walnuts. This was on board a German steamer. The hon. gentleman apparently went into foreign territory to disclose his policy, to tell the people of the colony exactly what he meant to do. He was afraid to do it under the British flag. He had to go under the German flag. I only wish the hon. gentleman would betake himself to Germany, and become a subject of King William. I do not know whether he would be much good to William, but I am certain of this: that

Queensland would be very well rid of him. I do not know that I can say very much more on this subject. I think I have said as much in support of the amendment as I can. But I will not sit down without making one more appeal to the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government. I ask him to consider nothing that I may suggest, but only for the sake of the people of Queensland. There are two parties interested in this matter—the people of Queensland upon one side and the syndicate upon the other. The syndicate have all the information, and the representatives of the people of Queensland have not any. We want some of the information. I would just like to hint to the hon. gentleman that if he does not give the information, so far as I am concerned at all events, every device, every form of the House, will be exhausted in blocking the passage of this or any other Bill of a like character. I consider he is outraging the Constitution by adopting this method of procedure. I think he is acting in direct violation of the principles of representative government. He is withholding information that should be laid on the table of the House. He is asking the representatives of the people to act in the dark. He is endeavouring to blindfold us. He is inviting us to go into some dark chamber while he carries out his evil designs against the community. I hope we shall not act the part of the fly in the old fable about the spider—"Will you walk into my parlour?" We are not going to walk into the hon. gentleman's parlour, but we are going to knock down his front door if we possibly can. Perhaps we may not be able, but we will have a very good try, at any rate, unless the hon. gentleman climbs down from his high altitude and consents to give us information that we consider essential before this measure is read a second time.

Mr. GIVENS (*Cairns*): While I do not desire to offer any factious opposition to the Bill, I should like to say a few words upon the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition. In the first place I would like to point out that if the directors of a company decided to sell a portion of the property of that company, the shareholders would insist upon knowing what portion of their property the directors proposed to sell, and also what was the value of it. The present Ministry, in this case, occupy exactly the same position towards the country that the directors do towards a company. They are, for the time being, the directors of the property of the citizens of Queensland; and it should be their bounden duty, and their pleasure, to give to the citizens of Queensland, who own that property, the fullest information about any property they wish to dispose of to any syndicate. That is one of the reasons why I think it is essential that this amendment should be acceded to by the Government. But I think the Premier, if he is really sincere and earnest in his desire to get on with public business, would have acceded to it gracefully long ago. The Minister without portfolio, Mr. Dalrymple, said a little while ago that the object of this amendment was simply to block business. I might point out that if the amendment is accepted it would greatly facilitate the passage of public business. While the select committee were engaged in collecting information on the matter and considering what recommendations they should make to the House, the House could be going on with other public business which is very necessary, and which the country has been clamouring for for years. Therefore, instead of being in any way obstructive, or a waste of time, if the amendment were acceded to it would enable us to get on with the affairs of the country, which are of much more pressing importance than this Bill is. There is

another reason why the amendment should be acceded to. It has been contended that the portion of the colony in which it is proposed to give this concession to the syndicate is in a very remote place. That is an indisputable statement of a fact which I, at any rate, do not propose to dispute. But the very fact that it is remote, the very fact that there are not many people in Queensland who are at all acquainted with its resources or the nature of the concession proposed to be handed over, should make it all the more necessary that a select committee should be appointed in order that we may have the fullest available information as to the value of the concession, as to the need for the railway, as to the quality and quantity of the land, and all other matters in connection with it. Again, I think before we give this concession to any syndicate, it is absolutely necessary we should know who those people are. The hon. member for Bulloo was asked during the course of the evening by the hon. member, Mr. Turley, if he, in the conduct of his private business, would be willing to treat for the disposal of property or give a concession to an individual when he did not know that individual; and the hon. member for Bulloo said all he would require was the cash down. Did those gentlemen offer to give Queensland cash down to build a railway, I am certain the people of Queensland would be willing to build the railway for them. Those people try to make the House believe that they do not desire to get this concession to build a railway for speculative purposes; that their only desire to build a railway is in order that they may be enabled to develop their mines. Let us accept the same conditions from those people that the hon. member for Bulloo tells us he would accept from his clients; let them plank down their money, and the people of Queensland will build the railway for them without demur. But until we know who those individuals are with whom we are dealing, we might very reasonably suppose they might be certain individuals in this House. They might be the Premier, or the Secretary for Railways, or perhaps the hon. member for Bulloo.

The PREMIER: I have not a farthing of interest in it.

Mr. LEAHY: Nor have I.

Mr. GIVENS: I am not saying any member of this House has an interest in it, only that we have no proof to the contrary until we find out who those people really are. Although the Premier, the Secretary for Railways, and the hon. member for Bulloo may not have a single share in this company, yet there may be a dozen members of this House who have shares in it, and who are interested in the passage of this measure. In that case we would have the pitiable spectacle of members of this House voting concessions to themselves, and people outside, knowing that such things have indisputably happened in the past, may fear that the same thing is happening at the present time, until it is proved to the contrary.

Mr. LEAHY: Do you say that they have been done in this House?

Mr. GIVENS: I have spoken plainly enough, and I am not going to repeat what I said. I think that in the interest of the Ministry, in the interest of this House, for the purity of parliamentary government, and for the dignity of hon. members, the Premier might gracefully accede to this amendment and let us have a select committee, so that we may be able to get all the information available regarding the construction of this railway. The Secretary for Railways, in moving the second reading of this Bill, stated that there are valuable resources in that portion of the country which can only be developed by this railway. That is a bare

statement made by the hon. gentleman. We want to know what is the value of those mines, whether it is desirable that a railway should be built there, and whether, in passing this measure, we shall be acceding to a legitimate request on the part of the gentlemen who say they wish to build the railway to develop their properties; or whether on the contrary we shall be offering facilities for a huge gambling transaction by which people in the other colonies and in the old country may be taken down by sharks. It is quite legitimate for hon. members to ask for that information. Indeed, I contend that before this measure becomes law, before it is proceeded with any further in this House, it is absolutely essential, in the interest of the Government and in the interest of the country, that we should have all the information available on the subject. There are one or two other points in connection with this Bill which make it absolutely necessary that we should refer it to a select committee. It is proposed to hand over on lease for fifty years, without labour conditions, 1,000 acres of certain mineral lands which may or may not be valuable. I think it is very desirable that we should know the approximate or prospective value of those leases at the present time. We may be handing over a second Mount Morgan, which would certainly be too dear a price to pay for building this railway. But not only are we handing over the lease of 1,000 acres of mineral lands at the present time; we are also going to give the company by this Bill a pre-emptive right to select another 1,000 acres anywhere they like along the line afterwards. Would it not then be desirable to have a report from the Government Geologist as to the prospective value of the lands along the route of the railway? If they should be found to be good mineral lands there is nothing in this Bill to prevent the company from taking them up, or even from taking up good agricultural land. In fact it is expressly provided that they may take up good agricultural land. We have no information before us as to whether there is a large quantity of mineral land in that district. Then, again, they may take up land for several purposes. As was pointed out by the hon. member for North Rockhampton, they may take up land for wharves and for several other things. It has been contended over and over again in this House that it is not desirable to give the foreshore to any person whatever, and there is no member in this House who has argued that more strongly than the hon. member for Bulloo, and yet he is now assisting the Government to pass this measure which gives the company the privilege of taking up land for wharfage purposes.

Mr. LEAHY: That is a matter of detail; we can fix that up in committee.

Mr. GIVENS: I am not willing to trust the hon. member in committee any more than I am to trust him in the House. He would do exactly what he thought proper in committee in regard to this and any other matter. I want some assurance that hon. members opposite will not go back on the principle they have enunciated in this House time after time simply when it suited themselves to do so. This Bill gives the company power to erect wharves, and hon. members opposite have argued strongly, and I believe rightly, against the giving of such a concession to a private company. This might be a very valuable concession, and it is absolutely essential that we should know something of its prospective value.

Mr. LEAHY: I do not think it gives the foreshore away, does it?

Mr. GIVENS: I do not think the hon. member has ever seen a wharf on the top of a mountain or anywhere but on the foreshore.

Mr. LEAHY: Yes, I have seen places where the coast was perpendicular.

Mr. GIVENS: It does not matter whether the shore is perpendicular or not; it is the foreshore.

Mr. LEAHY: No.

Mr. GIVENS: I think the hon. member will find that it is so if he looks the matter up. That is one thing about which we want a little more information—the place where it is proposed to erect these wharves. Then, let the hon. member assist us to get a select committee to acquire that information; and he can give that evidence before the committee.

Mr. LEAHY: Let us go to a vote on the question; it is unnecessary to argue that.

Mr. GIVENS: It is necessary to argue the matter from every point of view, and to repeat our arguments over and over again, because hon. members opposite are either so stupid or so obstinate that it takes a great deal to convince them. According to this Bill the company can not only lease mineral lands, but they can take up under a lease for fifty years land under any law for the leasing of Crown lands, so that they may take up pastoral land or agricultural land. That being so, it is desirable that this House should have information as to the quality of the agricultural land and the pastoral land which the company may take up. We may be paying too dear for the privilege we are giving this syndicate. I submit that in order that we may acquire a fairly accurate knowledge of the value of the concession which we are giving them it is absolutely essential to have a select committee to take evidence on the subject, to collect and collate the facts, and to draw fairly accurate conclusions from those facts. If it required any arguments at all to convince us that a select committee is necessary, I think those arguments were supplied to us in superabundance by hon. members opposite last year, when the Government staked their existence upon the passing of a measure providing that all railway proposals should be submitted to a parliamentary committee.

Mr. LEAHY: Did you vote against that?

Mr. GIVENS: I did vote against that last year, because it was proposed to appoint a paid committee. What we propose is an entirely different thing. We propose a non-paid committee, which would not have a tendency to debauch hon. members, and all that we ask is that this one particular railway Bill should be referred to a select committee. When Government railways are placed before this House, the plans, sections, and books of reference of those railways are placed on the table for the information of hon. members, but there is no such information in connection with this Bill. If we look up the House of Commons practice, we find that railways involving millions instead of thousands are always submitted to the scrutiny of a select committee; and I contend that what is good practice for the House of Commons is good practice for us also in these matters. How do we know that the line will be built by this company on proper conditions so as to safeguard the interests of the public? The only way we can get any information with regard to this mythical company, which we don't know—we don't even know whether it exists at all—

Mr. FISHER: They say there are some names that are not given.

Mr. GIVENS: If they know them and do not give them that shows that they have something to conceal. We have no safeguard that this mythical company will ever build the line under proper conditions, or conduct it under proper conditions after it is built, unless we have a select committee to inquire into the *bona fides* of the men asking for the concession. I remember that in the case of another railway proposal

which came before the House the Government stated that the persons asking for the concession were in possession of all the necessary capital to build the line, and did not want the concession for speculative purposes; but those statements have since been amply disproved, because it was found when they got the concession that they did not have the money—or if they had the money they were not prepared to risk it—and they borrowed the money at a ruinous rate of interest to build the line. In this case we want to know whether the people asking for this concession are prepared to plank down the money to build the railway, or whether they are merely asking for a concession in order that they may take down the investors of this and other countries of the world. We were told by the hon. member for Bulloo the other evening, and by the hon. member for Mackay, Mr. Dalrymple, this evening, that hon. members on this side cannot help themselves, but must conscientiously vote against the proposal under any circumstances.

Mr. LEAHY: Not "conscientiously."

Mr. GIVENS: I was told that by one of the most prominent members on the other side, and I don't mind giving his name. It was the hon. member for Mackay, Mr. Dalrymple. That hon. gentleman said that if we had any conscience at all we are bound to vote against it.

Mr. LEAHY: If you have any conscience.

Mr. GIVENS: The hon. gentleman seems to insinuate that we have not. I should certainly want a microscope to look for the conscience of hon. members opposite, and if I had any hope of catching it I should arm myself with a search warrant before I could hope to get it. There are private lines which might be favoured by the Labour party and passed without demur. There are branch lines in connection with companies on Charters Towers which, I believe, would obtain the support of hon. members on this side of the House. The plank of the Labour platform is State ownership of railways, and nobody is better aware of that than the hon. member for Bulloo. There is nothing in the Labour platform to prevent an individual from building a tramway for his own purposes, but if he proposes to build a railway for the exploitation of huge tracts of mineral country, not only for his own use, but for the exploitation of everybody else who may take up land in the vicinity, we most decidedly object. Again, though the party might be conscientiously opposed to the passage of any private railway Bill, as a matter of principle, nevertheless, if it goes to a select committee, such a case may be made out in favour of a particular private line that, though they might vote against it, they might not be prepared to oppose it with the same strenuous opposition which they would perhaps offer to other lines.

Mr. LEAHY: You mean to say they would compromise their principles.

Mr. GIVENS: There is no compromising principles in the matter. I have been opposed to some propositions brought forward in this Chamber. I have contented myself with speaking once on the subject, because I found there was very little hope, or perhaps not so much difference of opinion as to require my speaking oftener, and perhaps other members have thought the same, and the Bills or motions have passed this Chamber without a great deal of trouble. It might be the very same way in this case. It might be that if a select committee took this matter in hand, and brought up a strong recommendation in favour of the Bill, that would obviate to a very great extent the strenuous opposition that would be offered to it on this side; and I think from the point of view of hon. members opposite that would be a very great

deal gained for them. The hon. member for Brisbane South spoke of referring even Government measures to the scrutiny of a select committee, and I think it is a very good practice. Instead of having the whole House debating the matter in committee, and occupying a very long time, would it not be better to have five or seven members debate the matter in the privacy of a committee room, where they can consult authorities and make it their special business to acquaint themselves with the facts relating to the proposal and the details of the Bill? Would not that greatly facilitate the passage of business through the House, and the passing of this particular Bill itself? The hon. member for Bulloo said the reason this Bill was brought in as a Government measure was that a Government measure was the result of mature consideration, whereas private measures are introduced without sufficient study. That does not always hold good. We know that time after time the Government have introduced measures that have been submitted to the closest scrutiny of the committees, and have been discussed a long time by hon. members, and yet grave errors have been retained in those measures, and amending Bills have been brought in soon afterwards. There have been cases of that kind without number, and yet hon. members

[9 p.m.] opposite say that we have all the information available with regard to this Bill that it is possible to get; that we cannot get any more information; and therefore we should proceed to place it on the statute-book almost without further consideration. Now, we know that the experience of this House in the past is in direct contradiction to that statement; and we cannot be too careful about the passage of this Bill, which will involve so grave and such large interests. And that is an important reason why it should be subjected to the scrutiny of a select committee. Notwithstanding that we have the Railway Commissioner's recommendation for this Bill, I think it would be very wise to subject the Railway Commissioner to the cross-examination of a select committee, in order to find out the value of his recommendation. I remember the last thing he recommended—and not only recommended, but carried out as far as he was able to carry it out by the acts of the Railway Department—and that was the illegal contract to lease the Barron Falls to a private syndicate. That is a matter of common knowledge of every member of this House, and I think it would be advisable to have the Commissioner for Railways subjected to the pressure of a select committee, in order to find out what the value of his recommendation is in this case. Everyone knows that the Commissioner for Railways is not infallible. I do not suppose that he claims that he is himself. Is it not desirable that we should know what his motives are for recommending this—his reasons for recommending it, what he expects the Government to gain by it, and what he expects the Railway Department to gain by it? We may find out that it was entirely different considerations which animated the Commissioner for Railways in recommending this, and I think that the colony and the House are entitled to find out what were his true motives, before they give absolute credence to his recommendations, unsupported, as they are, by evidence. Now it was also pointed out by the hon. member for North Rockhampton that this company will not only have the right to build railways, but to take up huge areas of the best and richest mineral land in the colony for aught we know to the contrary, subject to different conditions to those under which ordinary goldminers have to work. They have also the right to build warehouses, workmen's dwellings, freezing works, smelting and crushing works,

and several other works. Why they may monopolise a whole township, and say that they require it for workmen's dwellings, and farm it out afterwards at enormous rents. They may constitute themselves land jobbers. I contend that it is only a fair thing that we should have a select committee to inquire fully into the matter and see exactly what the company propose to do before we grant them these concessions. We know, as a matter of fact, that some of the most valuable buildings on the goldfields are placed on tenements of which they have only a bare tenure; and yet it is proposed to give this company a tenure of fifty years, so that they may use it for land-jobbing purposes afterwards. I would like the Government to give evidence before the select committee as to the reasons that induced them to offer this syndicate of unknown persons, who may be the veriest stock exchange gamblers in the world, for all we know to the contrary, to offer these magnificent concessions to these people, while the honest working miner of Queensland can only get a mining tenement from year to year, and he has to fulfil labour conditions upon it, while these people are to get land for fifty years on any residential area, without any labour conditions at all. I would like to know from the hon. member at the head of the Government, who is also the head of the Mines Department, and knows the working of the Mines Department very well—I would like to ask him, what is the reason which has induced the Government to offer these magnificent concessions to unknown persons, while the miner of the colony, who has borne the burden and heat of the day in the development of its mineral resources—

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. GIVENS: I would like to know from the hon. gentleman why he offers such magnificent concessions to these unknown persons, while he is not prepared to offer anything of the kind to the ordinary working miners of the colony, who have done so much to develop its resources?

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. GIVENS: Now, there is another matter which I wish to point out, and it is very grave and important in connection with this Bill, and in order that this House may be able to grasp the vast importance it is to the Bill, I would like to point out the large quantity of pastoral land which is proposed to be appropriated. Now, a select committee, if it were appointed, might very reasonably inquire as to whether this proposed railway from Burketown to Lawn Hill may not form a portion of a main transcontinental railway by and by; and if so, it is going to develop such a large quantity of pastoral and mineral and other areas—perhaps it may be the most valuable portion of the Gulf country—and it may be most essential for the transcontinental railway to be fully considered. That would be very desirable to know, and at present we have no means of finding it out whatever. There are, perhaps, only one or two members in the House who have ever been in the vicinity of the line at all, and there are very few men who know anything at all about the country who are at present available to inform hon. members on either side of this House at the present time; and the only way in which we can get that information is to have a select committee, which will have power to send for persons and papers and examine them, and find out all the information that is to be obtained on the subject. Now, if this is going to be a portion of a transcontinental railway line, I would like to know why a private syndicate is to be allowed to forestall the Federal Parliament? If there is any intention to build a transcontinental line, this House has a right to

know it. It has a right to know what will be the probable route of the transcontinental railway, and the only way in which we can find out that, is to appoint a select committee and get all the available information there is upon the subject. That is another reason why a select committee should be appointed. I do not propose to occupy the House to any further length upon this matter. Probably at a later stage of the Bill I shall have a considerable amount more to say about it, but at the present time I shall only emphasise again one or two of the points that have been made about the appointment of a select committee to inquire into this matter. Speaking generally, the chief argument in favour of the appointment of a select committee is that we require more information—we want more light. We should not be asked to make a leap in the dark, nor should we be asked to do anything which afterwards we may be very sorry for doing. Therefore I contend with the hon. gentleman who has charge of this Bill, who is desirous to see it become law, that unless he wants this colony to take a plunge in the dark, unless the Government desire to part with property which may be very, very valuable in the near future, and unless they are going to give a number of concessions to a number of unknown individuals about whose *bona fides* we have no guarantee—unless they are desirous of doing all these things, it is their bounden duty to appoint a select committee, which will be able to collect all the available information on the subject. Is it an unreasonable thing to ask for information? Is it an unreasonable thing to say that before we give away a valuable portion of the property of the citizens of this colony, that we should be placed in possession of information which will tell us the value of that property, which will tell us what is likely to be the result accruing from that railway? It would tell us what are likely to be the results of constructing the railway, and whether it is likely to benefit the people, or only the private syndicate which builds the line. Is that an unreasonable request to make to the head of the Government? I submit that it is not. We have made the request and hon. members opposite sit and are silent in the matter. Without any reason at all, and without themselves being accessible to reason, they are relying upon the strength of their majority to force this matter through the House, without the House being in possession of the necessary information. That is not a desirable or a proper attitude for any Government to take up. If they have that information—and presumably they have a good deal of information which they have not given to the House, otherwise they would not have brought in this Bill and urged it upon the attention of hon. members in the way they have—but if they have that information, it is their duty to give us that information, and allow us, who are the guardians of the property, welfare, and well-being of the people, to judge whether the railway proposed is desirable or not. They say they have all the information they require. Probably they have, but why take up so unreasonable an attitude as to refuse to let us get that information also? For myself, I know absolutely nothing of the *bona fides* of the people who propose to build this line, and absolutely nothing of the value of the concession it is proposed to give them. I can only go upon the supposition that these people are coming along here to make money—that they see a good thing sticking out in front of them; and that in order to induce the people of Queensland to give them that good thing, they refuse to give any information to the people of Queensland. If we had a select committee we could force them to give that information. It is

necessary that I, as a citizen of Queensland, before I give away any portion of my property to individuals of that description, should know the value of that property. Why should they be allowed to bamboozle me? For that is simply what it amounts to. They are trying to bamboozle the people of Queensland into parting with a valuable concession, without allowing them to know what the concession is worth. I contend that the people of Queensland are entitled to that knowledge, and unless the Government are prepared to concede the appointment of a select committee to obtain that knowledge and make it generally available, they are not doing their duty either by the people of Queensland or by the members of this House. It is unfair to members of this House to ask them to take a leap in the dark and legislate upon a matter about which they know so little, and with the facts about which they are not fully seized. They should not expect this House to deal with a large portion of valuable property of the people in such a haphazard fashion.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Burke*): I presume the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government wishes to come to a vote to-night, and I do not intend to keep the House waiting very long. I have gone through the report made by Mr. Cameron on the mines in this locality, and from the information given in that report I am more than ever of the opinion that this proposal is nothing but a huge, gigantic swindle. I have no hesitation in saying that. In the first place, Mr. Cameron says—

The four lodes described above are very well worthy of vigorous development, as a means of ascertaining, with some approach to certainty, whether they are capable of turning out ore in sufficient quantities to warrant the expense involved in procuring cheap transit of ore to the coast, by means of railway or tramway construction.

I have followed mining for some time, and I contend that there has been no developing work whatever done at these mines. The deepest shaft we find is somewhere about 103 feet, and the average run of the reef or lodes in that locality is two feet. I am sure, from the Premier's own knowledge of mining, he knows that a lead and silver lode of that size will never pay in that locality. So far as the country the line passes through is concerned, there is some of the best cattle country in the whole of Queensland on the route. At the end of the line there is nothing but the silver or lead mines to depend upon, and beyond that there is some fair sheep country. If the Normanton-Cloncurry Railway is constructed, it will draw the whole trade of wool from the border right up almost to the north-west part of the colony.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is discussing the main question, which is not before the House. The hon. member must address himself to the amendment.

Mr. MAXWELL: I think the information supplied to us in the reports of the surveyor of the route and the assistant geologist is such as to warrant us in asking for the appointment of a select committee to further inquire into the construction of this railway. Then we may get at the whole of the facts, and may know whether the Government are justified in handing this railway over to a syndicate to construct, or not. We are not justified in sanctioning the construction of this line by a syndicate without further information. It has been said that it does not matter because, if we hand it over to a syndicate, we can lose no money; but we are here to guard the interests of the taxpayers, and, during the time I have followed mining, I have noticed that if you place on the market anything that does not give the speculating public an ample return for their money they fight very shy of further

speculating in that locality or in that colony. I can bring under the notice of the House no better instance of that than the various "wild cats" in the North of Queensland that have been floated on the English market. I contend that this House is not justified in trying to assist any party or syndicate in endeavouring to "lamb down" the British speculating public. Therefore, on that one point alone, I contend that we have not sufficient information to justify the Government in asking hon. members to pass this Bill. I have no doubt myself that the general opinion in this Chamber is that this Bill will pass its second reading; but I contend that it is the duty of hon. members on this side to voice whatever objections they have to this measure. I take it that the object of the amendment, as moved by the leader of the Opposition, is not only to assist this House—

Mr. BOLLES: To block the Bill.

Mr. MAXWELL: No; not to block the Bill. The information that the hon. member for Croydon seeks is information which will lead us to come to some sort of a conclusion as to whether we are justified in granting this syndicate these concessions, and whether it would be to the best interests of the colony that this line should be built. I may go a little further. My own opinion is that, in getting this information we will also be assisting the speculating public. It will show them if there is anything to recommend this property which it is proposed to offer them. I confess I cannot see anything in the Government Geologist's report to recommend it. He has pointed out that in every claim he has inspected the reefs are small, and no developing work whatever has been done; and at the finish of his report he even points out that not sufficient has been done there to warrant the building of any railway there. This is a field that I would call a good field for fossickers if they had the facilities for getting rid of their ore.

The SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: That can be dealt with in committee.

Mr. MAXWELL: I want to get one speech in and make it do the lot. I want to save time. As I understand the leader of the Government wants to get this business over, I do not intend to go on any further now; but I will have something more to say on the main question when this amendment is disposed of.

Mr. RYLAND (*Gympie*): It is with feelings of regret that I rise and make a speech at this period of the debate.

Mr. REID: Don't apologise.

Mr. RYLAND: I thought that with the evidence that has been given to this House the Premier might have accepted the amendment. But seeing that the matter appears to be still in the balance, I will just say a few words. What we now ask is no new idea in legislation of this character. It has been adopted before in Queensland, and it is the common practice in similar legislation in the old country to refer such matters to select committees. The hon. member for Carpentaria, when speaking to-night on the amendment, referred to the report of the Government Geologist, Mr. Cameron. He put it forward as containing evidence which should convince any "doubting Thomas" in the House with regard to the advisability of going on with this project. I have gone through this report, but I cannot see anything in it that gives us the information we desire. I think it is most necessary that a select committee should be formed to go into the whole question. This report only reveals information as to little pot-holes and surface workings. It gives us no information as to what the resources of the district are likely to be; in fact, the report really gives no information at all to justify this

House in passing this Bill. There are many things we want to find out before we can pass a measure of this character. We want to know the prospects of the success of this venture, and whether it will be beneficial to the colony generally.

Mr. BOLES : You can get that in committee.

Mr. RYLAND : The matter does not only affect those in the immediate vicinity of the mines. We must consider the people in the country through which the line passes. The map only shows dotted lines, and there is a lot of country that we want information about ; and I don't think there is any better way of getting this information than by appointing a select committee. The line goes from Ballast Ground, through Burketown, West Burke, Woods Lake, Red Cliff, Lawn Hills, and other districts. We want to know the effect this line will have on the districts between Ballast Ground and the mines? We want to know if this syndicate line will in any way hamper the industries of this country? We want to know who it is that is going to build this line? In the preamble the company is only referred to as "The Queensland Silver Lead Mines, Limited," hereinafter called "the company." We want to know a little more about this company—how much money they have to spend, and how much they can afford to lose? It is very necessary to know that. We would not like to see a company losing their last shilling in any venture—to come out of it absolutely poverty-stricken. How much money can this company afford to lose in the venture?

Mr. JENKINSON : Don't you think that syndicators are well able to look after themselves?

Mr. RYLAND : No.

Mr. JENKINSON : My experience is that they are.

Mr. RYLAND : If this was to be a State railway we would have a Royal Commission, which would cost a lot of money. It has been decided that this is a public railway—a national question—and we should have all the *pros* and *cons* respecting it before a select committee. Then branch lines are going to be constructed. We want to know about them. There will be stores there, and trades of all descriptions connected with the commercial world.

They will also be permitted to erect [9.30 p.m.] warehouses. They are going to embark in all kinds of industries. They are to be given power to import their own labourers, and we want to know where they are going to get them from. The company is also going to build dwellings for its labourers, I presume.

The SPEAKER : Order !

Mr. RYLAND : It is very necessary that the committee should know a little more about that matter. As a mining member, I know there is a feeling among miners that they like to get a little home for themselves ; but this company may erect dwellings for its employees, and let them at a high rent. If men are not willing to become tenants of the company they will not get work there, and, consequently, a good deal of their wages may have to go in paying high rents to the company. We have been accused of changing our tactics on this question. Before we wanted a referendum, and now we ask for a select committee. Well, I do not think that that is any detriment to this side of the House. It only shows our resourcefulness, and that we have more than one idea. Although I would prefer that all these questions should be submitted to a referendum, I think the next best thing is to have this select committee, and get all the information possible on the question.

Mr. STEPHENSON : You will get it.

Mr. RYLAND : We have been denied information. The Secretary for Railways has told us that it is practically a waste of time to read books—that what he wants is practical experience. He does not want to hear the views of men like Bryce, Henry George, and John Stuart Mill, and all those people who have written on the construction and management of railways. All that goes for nothing, in the opinion of the hon. gentleman, and he says, "Give me a man with practical experience." That is our position, and the proposed constitution of this select committee could not be improved upon. Of course, we have to give up books, as the Secretary for Railways has told us that he knows more than all these men. "Behold a greater than all these is here."

The SPEAKER : Order, order !

Mr. RYLAND : I think that we require this committee to find out all that can be learned when such large interests are at stake. Referring to the *personnel* of the committee that is proposed by the hon. member for Croydon, there is, first, the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Bartholomew. He is a merchant, and he is connected with the timber industry, which is one of the greatest industries in Queensland. I am sure that this tramway will prove of benefit to the timber industry, because every railway that is introduced in this House, we are told, will be of great benefit to that industry, and, therefore, the connection of the hon. member for Maryborough with that industry will enable the committee to obtain valuable information on that subject. He is also a native of the colony, and a general merchant, and, seeing that this colony is going into general trade, I think we should have that matter investigated. Then there is the hon. member for Brisbane North, Mr. Macdonald-Paterson. Where could we get a better man to appoint to this committee than that hon. member? He has the legal faculty, and he is a man of great experience, being an ex-Minister of the Crown, and he is a man of whom the colony expects great possibilities, and consequently no better man could be chosen. Then there is the hon. member for Cunningham, Mr. Kates. He has had great experience in farming, and I am sure that this tramway will be of great assistance to the farming industry up there. I am sure that up there the farming industry will be very extensive. An hon. member reminds me that the hon. member is also a miller, so that he will be able to sift the wheat from the chaff, and will be able to put the question before the House in an intelligent manner. Then we have the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom. He is the "Father of the House," and consequently he has a good deal of the wisdom of the House, and there is no man in this House whom I respect more than the hon. member for Toowoomba. Then, of course, there is the leader of this party, the hon. member for Croydon. He is a man with vast mining experience, and a man who has travelled over the whole of the Northern portion of this colony. He has not, perhaps, gone on picnic excursions, as some other hon. members have done when seeing the country. He has taken his pick and shovel in his hands, and with his tent and his blanket on his back and his billycan in his hand he has gone out into the wilderness and prospected the country. He has lived for many years in the Northern parts of this colony, and he has cooked for himself and has built his own house and lived there. He will be able to give the benefits of his experience to the committee, and I am quite confident the committee will be in a position to bring up a report from which not a single member would dissent, and which would greatly facilitate business.

Mr. KERR: Do you believe in this select committee?

Mr. RYLAND: I believe in the principle, and I also believe in the *personnel* of the committee. I have known committees appointed, and I would not give a snap of the fingers for their reports, because they were composed of men of no experience. What is the good of sending a draper's assistant to report on a gold-field? We want men who know something about the subject. We would also like to know who are to be employed by this company. Of course we have been told that the construction of this line will find employment for large numbers of men, and we want to find out who these men are going to be. Will they be old hands in the colony, or will they be the immigrants who are coming monthly to our shores? Or is it the dingoes of civilisation, as some hon. members called the bush workers, who are to be employed? Are the people who are going to get this employment the deserving members of the community? All these things would, of course, be discovered by a select committee. Under all the circumstances, I think it would be a wise thing to consent to the appointment of the committee. The construction of this railway is not a circumstance that is going to pass away in a year or two. Such a line will have a lasting influence. Its effect will be felt for years and years, and even during our lifetimes the effect of our votes on this question will not be effaced from the history of Queensland.

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): I admit that in considering this question I am in an unfortunate position, for I venture to say that nine out of ten members in this House simply do not know anything at all about the question before us. They do not know whether this is likely to be a good or a bad bargain. They simply have no information whatever. I have no doubt that the Government think that in any case the appointment of a select committee will be waste of time; that, broadly speaking, it will not pay them to build the tramway, and that, seeing it will not pay them, they might just as well let a private company construct it; that it can do no harm, whilst it may possibly do good. But that is a position to take up which I think is not fair to members of this House, or fair to the public outside. It does not give a member a chance to justify his vote to his constituents one way or the other, and it is not even an honest method which the Government would be prepared to advocate with regard to other questions that might come before us in future. Therefore I think, without being biased one way or another, that the appointment of a select committee would be a very good thing indeed. We have been asked on this side if we would vote for the Government building this tramway. Well, I candidly say that I do not know anything about it. Possibly I might be prepared to vote for the Government building such a line, but at present I do not know. I remember a few years ago the Government brought in a proposal to build a railway from Croydon to Georgetown, for the purpose of opening up a very large mineral district, reputed to be extensively auriferous, and that proposal was carried in the House. I voted for it because I had heard a great deal about the district, and my opinion was that we would be justified in building such a line for development purposes. Now, if we were justified in voting for that railway, it might be that through information given to us by this proposed committee we might feel ourselves justified in voting for the Government building this tramway. And even if we decided that it would not be wise to build the line with Government money, it might not be any more wise to allow a private company to construct it. In-

stead of advancing railway construction in that district, it might actually retard it. I understand that this company need not build the tramway for five years, and, therefore, for at least five years railway construction might be retarded instead of being advanced in that district.

Mr. JENKINSON: But the company must build some portion of the line within that time.

Mr. HARDACRE: Not necessarily. They may take the whole five years to consider the matter.

Mr. JENKINSON: Before starting?

Mr. HARDACRE: Yes, before starting. Now, we have already this session sent to a select committee a Bill introduced by the Government—the Store Cattle Brands Act—and, being a member of that committee, it would not be right for me to disclose the result of their labours, but I think I may say that their labours are very likely to lead to a modification of that measure. If, therefore, we have a select committee upon this Bill, it may, while not actually going against the Bill, recommend certain modifications which will assist us in making it a more perfect measure. One of the strangest assertions made during the debate was made by the hon. member for Carpentaria. In opposing the appointment of the committee he said he thought there was no information to be obtained; that there were no experts who knew anything about it; and that there was no information with regard to the land which could be got. He afterwards told us that if we got on to the main question he would give us information which we had not got before. Is that not a piece of ridiculous nonsense? Does he mean to tell us, or does any member of this House think for one moment that the gentlemen who propose to build this railway have not more information than we have got? Are they going to the British investor saying: "We have no information; the mines are not developed; we do not know anything about them; we do not know what the character of the land is, but we want you to lend us some money for the construction of the line." Is it not evident to every member that whatever knowledge we have, the company must have a great deal more? And if they have got the knowledge to give to the British investor, why should we not have the same knowledge? I think that is but fair. If there is really no information to be obtained, then that is the best of all reasons, I think, why we should vote against the proposal altogether. If there is no reason at all for the construction of the tramway, then there is no reason at all for voting for the passing of the Bill. We are not here to scatter about concessions wholesale for no reason at all.

Mr. JENKINSON: It looks very much like it.

Mr. HARDACRE: It does look very much like it. It appears as if the Government asked us to build a railway to the moon, or to Timbuctoo, or some other place about which we know nothing, we should be expected to pass it. No legislature in its senses would do anything of the kind, and before we are asked to pass any legislation it should be amply justified by the information which is supplied to us. My opinion is, from the information afforded to us, that the real purpose of this Bill is not so much to enable them to construct the railway as to give them certain concessions which would enable them to borrow money, not for the purpose of constructing the railway, but for the purpose of prospecting the mines which they have obtained. That is the only conclusion we can come to from reading the geologist's report. There are quite a number of lodes there, and in every case Mr. Cameron tells us it is by no

means certain whether they will be remunerative or not. For instance, he says of Kant's Silver King—

South-west of the junction of the two reefs prospecting has disclosed several small veins of galena, but none of these have been more than bared for a few feet along the surface.

With regard to another lode he says—

The work done has been mainly on the wider portions of the lode, and has not been sufficient to allow of more than a rough guess being made at the prospective value of the lode as an ore producer. The lode without doubt occupies a true fissure, and may almost certainly be expected to carry as good mineral at any depth to which it is likely to be worked as it does on the surface.

This is mere surmise—a mere possibility. Then with regard to the Mended Hill mine he says—

The cap of the lode has been exposed for some 130 feet east of the trenching mentioned above, and shows patches of galena at many points, but none of any considerable thickness. South of the shaft it is obscured by surface accumulation.

And he adds further on—

The prospects of this mine are also very good, but, in the present state of lack of proper development, it is impossible to make anything like a satisfactory estimate of its value. The presence of good veins of clean and valuable ore have already been proved, and the fact that they occupy a true fissure, which can be traced along the surface for some distance, gives hope of others like them being found with further prospecting.

With regard to the Lilydale mine, he says—

The lode in this mine shows a good body of ore, and is well worthy of systematic development to test its value.

And with regard to another mine, he says—

This lode is well worthy of systematic prospecting.

With regard to Watson's lode, he says—

Several patches of galena have been found in the siliceous sandstone west of the shaft, but they have not been opened up as yet.

Then, near the conclusion, comes the *crux* of the whole thing—

The first four lodes described above are very well worthy of vigorous development as a means of ascertaining, with some approach to certainty, whether they are capable of turning out ore in sufficient quantity to warrant the expense involved in procuring cheaper transit of ore to the coast by means of railway or tramway construction.

They want to find out whether it would be worth while to build the railway or not.

Mr. BOLES: Let the syndicate build the railway and develop the mines.

Mr. HARDACRE: That is not the position; it is the other way about. Judging from his report, the object of the Bill is to give the company a concession as a make-weight in order that they may go to the money market and borrow money—not to build a railway, but to prospect the mines.

Mr. BOLES: What about the pastoral country it will open up?

Mr. HARDACRE: If the mines are not payable there will be no opening up of pastoral country. Surely the hon. member does not suppose the company will build a railway if the mines are not payable. The development of the pastoral country can only follow on the paying of the mines, and that will have to be proved before the company attempt to build the railway. The position is entirely different from that in the hon. member's district. In the case of the Callide Coal Field it is now pretty well certain, from the geologist's report and general knowledge, that it will pay to build a railway there. There is not the slightest doubt that the mineral is there, and therefore as soon as the company in that case gets the concession and float it on the English market, they will commence the construction of the railway. But in this case they will have to test the mines before they can decide whether to

construct the railway; and if the mines do not develop they can drop the whole thing and not build the railway at all.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HARDACRE: I admit I am verging on the border of the main question, still I have in my mind the select committee. If this report is all we have to guide us, there certainly should be no passing of the Bill.

Mr. JENKINSON: And the report is dated less than three weeks ago.

Mr. HARDACRE: Surely the Government have more information than this. If they have not, then it is very necessary that the whole matter should be referred to a select committee. It is not my intention to stonewall the Bill, and I will only say in conclusion that the amendment ought to be adopted, so that we may get every available information on the subject.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted—"now read a second [10 p.m.] time"—stand part of the question—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 34.

Messrs. Philp, Foxton, Rutledge, Dickson, O'Connell, Murray, Dalrymple, Moore, J. Hamilton, Forrest, Tooth, Hauran, Newell, Armstrong, Petrie, T. B. Cribb, Stodart, J. C. Cribb, Campbell, Bartholomew, Mackintosh, Story, Forsyth, Stephens, Stephenson, Bell, Leahy, Boles, Curtis, Callan, Bridges, Macdonald-Paterson, Cowley, and Lord.

NOES, 23.

Messrs. Hardacre, Browne, Fisher, Lesina, Kerr, Reid, Bowman, McDonald, Dunford, Jackson, Dibley, Givens, W. Thorn, Turley Maxwell, Dawson, McDonnell, Ryland, Higgs, Stewart, Jenkinson, Fitzgerald, and Kidston.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Messrs. Smith, G. Thorn, and Keogh.

Noes—Messrs. Fogarty, W. Hamilton, and Groom.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—stated.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Burke*): I promised the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government that I would have something to say on the main question, and I now intend to have that say. I am very glad that the amendment has been disposed of to the satisfaction of the Government. In looking through the correspondence that has been placed before the House I find that it contains various petitions. There are two petitions here praying that this railway from Burketown to the Lilydale silver, copper, and lead mines should be constructed. These petitions are about equal to other petitions which have been presented to the House, and other petitions that we have seen throughout the country. Many people who sign petitions are not particular what they sign, and I find that on this petition there are two similar names for the town of Burketown. It is a most remarkable thing that the population in the whole of that district is so small that they had to get the same man to sign the same petition twice. I see no reason in the correspondence laid on the table to lead me to alter the opinion I have held that the construction of this line is not for the benefit of the district at all, but that it is simply for the benefit of some concession-mongers, who wish to take these mines to the London market, and float them on the strength of the concession granted them by the Government of Queensland. The mines in that locality, as far as the size of the lodes and the quality of the ore are concerned, are not worth 3d. The agricultural products that will be carried on the railway are about *nil*. I do not see why Parliament should grant leave for any person or persons to hawk round on the English market the credit of Queensland. If we are going to give these concessions to people to hawk round on the various continental and English markets, we shall find that it will be

almost impossible to approach the speculating public with even the very best of our claims. The position Queensland ought to take up is what is advocated in New Zealand to-day, to stop "wild cats" from being foisted on the speculating public.

Mr. JENKINSON: How can you tell what are "wild cats"?

Mr. MAXWELL: Things that are placed on the market backed up with a fictitious report. Those are what I call wild cats. If the Government were prepared to do what is already being agitated for in New Zealand, that is, to make a report upon every property which is to be offered to the speculating public—

Mr. JENKINSON: Who makes the report?

Mr. MAXWELL: A Government inspector.

Mr. JENKINSON: Paid by the company?

Mr. MAXWELL: Paid by the Government; not paid by the company. That person would be responsible to the Government for his report; and the sooner Queensland takes that stand in the matter and endeavours to offer to the British speculating public something that is at least a fair speculative chance the better it will be for Queensland.

Mr. FISHER: You will interfere with private enterprise.

Mr. MAXWELL: I don't care whether I interfere with private enterprise or not. I don't think for a moment that the Premier believes that this railway will ever be constructed by the promoters. This concession is simply asked for to enable the promoter to get hold of British money and lock up his pocket. There are other objections I have to the Bill in its present form; and when the Bill gets into committee I shall endeavour to amend it, so as to remove those objections if possible. The syndicate is allowed to take up a large amount of land under the present Bill, not under our present Mineral Act; and what is to hinder this syndicate in the event of gold being got in that locality from also holding that land under their mineral license? We are told that the promoters of this company are prepared to give £1 per acre. That is only the rent already paid for goldfield leases. It certainly is 10s. an acre more than is given for mineral leases, but in the event of gold being found in that district—and there is every possibility of that being so—I don't see why the fossicker or the man who has carried his swag through the length and breadth of North Queensland looking for gold should be debarred from going on these people's property, or their holding under mineral lease, and endeavouring to better his condition by looking for gold. Before this syndicate should be granted any concession in this matter they should first have been required to place a certain amount of money in the hands of the Government to pay the expenses that would arise out of drawing up Bills. The hon. gentleman said that these people have already paid that; but there are various other charges. For instance, there is the gas—not the gas that is going to waste, but the gas that is burning here, to the cost of which those people should at least contribute something. As to the class of country this railway is going through, I have already said that I have a very fair knowledge of that country, and I again contend that as far as the reefs in that locality are concerned there has not been enough development work done to give any-one confidence in building a railway up to those mines. As for the work that has been done in that locality, one train would take away all the ore that has ever been raised there; and if that train service is to depend on all that comes from the mines—and I will go further and say all the agricultural produce of that district, too—one train a year would be quite sufficient

for all the traffic that will go over that line. There is one clause under which the company will be allowed to take, use, and occupy all Crown land; and included in the Crown land which the company are about to take, use, and occupy is the frontage to the Albert River. Not long ago that question was brought up in this House by the hon. member for Bulloo in connection with our wharfage frontages in Brisbane. I don't mean to say that ever the Lilydale mines are going to bring about a population on the banks of the Albert River the same as we have in Brisbane; still, there is the granting of that concession to that syndicate, which I totally object to.

Mr. LEAHY: This Bill does not give it. It only says the Governor in Council "may."

Mr. MAXWELL: That is an old dodge. It allows it; and I am quite satisfied that anything this Bill will allow the Governor in Council would be prepared to grant, and probably more if wanted. We have had the same thing crop up in connection with the Chillagoe concessions. The very same question has cropped up time after time. The hon. member for Cairns has continually had to refer to the concessions which have been granted to the Chillagoe Company.

Mr. DAWSON: The Barron Falls.

Mr. MAXWELL: Not only the Barron Falls, but the wharfage frontage in Cairns, which the hon. member for Cairns has very often brought under the notice of this House. Besides that, we find out that the concessions which have been granted to the Chillagoe Company have been so numerous that it is probably impossible to mention all they have received from the Government, simply because the Governor in Council "may."

Mr. DAWSON: They are very fond of "may."

Mr. MAXWELL: I think the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, during the previous discussion of this Bill, said he was quite prepared to accept an amendment in the Bill to the effect that on the construction of the line from the ballast pit to Burketown the Government may take over that portion. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman will be prepared to abide by that when the Bill gets into committee; but I shall certainly feel it my duty to move an amendment in that direction.

The PREMIER: And I am prepared to accept it.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAXWELL: I am very glad to hear that the hon. gentleman is prepared to accept it.

Mr. LEAHY: Sit down before you spoil it.

Mr. MAXWELL: I know the hon. member for Bulloo has not a great interest in this railway. He is quite contented with the little Chillagoe affair. He has one little baby to nurse, and that is quite sufficient for him.

Mr. LEAHY: If I have a baby I don't run away from it.

Mr. MAXWELL: I feel compelled to make a serious objection to the term for which this concession is to be granted—that is, the fifty years. I do not think—

The PREMIER: As you are quite satisfied that the line will never be built, why bother about the terms?

Mr. MAXWELL: Why bother about the terms! I mean to make objection in any case to the terms upon which it is proposed to construct this line. These are terms under which they are endeavouring to bleed money from the speculating public. If any person comes here and builds a house on a piece of property, he will find at the expiration of his lease that that house falls to the property-holder. I see no reason whatever, at the expiration of fifty years, why this railway should not fall to the State. It is a fairly long term, a very long term indeed in the life of railways in any colony. Fifty

years ago, what were the railways of this colony like? There was not one inch of railway in the whole of the colony.

The PREMIER: We had no colony at all fifty years ago.

Mr. MAXWELL: I grant there was no colony here, but there was a colony further south, and there was not an inch of railway there fifty years ago; and in fifty years hence there is no saying what the railway policy of this country may be. There is no saying when we may have a transcontinental railway.

The PREMIER: They will probably go by balloons. They may have abandoned railways altogether fifty years hence.

Mr. MAXWELL: I am quite satisfied that in fifty years hence it will be a big item in the railways of this country; and probably we shall have a large population and a greater need for the railways of the colony to be in the hands of the Government. The whole history of railway construction—the whole history of private owned railways, as has already been referred to in this House—has shown that private railways have never been for the welfare of the colony in which they have been started.

Mr. BOLES: What about the railways in America.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. gentleman says what about the railways of America? Why go to America? Why not come nearer home? What about the railways in our own country? What about the railways in Tasmania? What about the railways in Western Australia? What about the railways in New South Wales, coming nearer home?

Mr. LEAHY: What about the railway to take us home to-night?

Mr. MAXWELL: If the hon. gentleman wants to get into a tram to take him home, I will soon drop him, and let him go. I have certain other objections to this Bill. I have a batch of amendments drawn up already, and I certainly intend to endeavour to protect the interests of the public as well as it is possible for me to do in the matter of the construction of this railway, although, as I have previously said, I believe it will never be built.

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

Question put and passed; and the resumption of the debate made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I move that this House do now adjourn. The business to-morrow evening will be the resumption of this debate; and I hope that members on both sides of the House will be quite satisfied to go to a division to-morrow night. We have had a good deal of private railway Bills during the last five or six weeks, and I think every member on both sides has pretty well made up his mind how he is going to vote. I hope the leader of the Opposition will assist in coming to a division to-morrow night.

Mr. BROWNE (*Croydon*): I may say that so far as I can I will help the hon. gentleman to come to a division to-morrow night. We have had a good deal of discussion, but I do not think there can be any complaint as to the length of the speeches. I do not think the hon. gentleman can say we have gone in for any stonewalling. I would like to ask when he expects to go on with the Federal Elections Bill?

Mr. HIGGS: A most important Bill that. The public are waiting for it,

The PREMIER: I hope that within a fortnight we shall be able to table one Bill.

Mr. DAWSON: When are you going to start the Estimates?

The PREMIER: We will start the Estimates very likely next week.

The House adjourned at thirty minutes past 10 o'clock.