

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 1900

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

PAPERS.

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

- (1) Report on visit to harbours in Europe and the United States by E. A. Cullen, Engineer.
- (2) Report, for the year ended 30th June, 1900, of the Commissioner for Railways.

QUESTIONS.

LEASES OF MINERAL LANDS FOR TRAMWAY PURPOSES.

Mr. GIVENS (*Cairns*) asked the Secretary for Mines—

1. Have any leases of mineral lands been applied for during the last three months in Herberton, Chillagoe, or Mount Garnet districts, under clause 94, subsection III. of the new Mining Regulations, for the purpose of enabling the lessees to construct tramways thereon?
2. Who has applied for such leases?
3. What is the area of the several leases applied for?
4. What is the total length of tramways proposed to be constructed on such leases?
5. In what particular localities have such leases been applied for?
6. Is it the intention of the Mines Department to grant such leases?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. R. Philp, *Townsville*) replied—

1. No. Leases of Crown land have been applied for under section 30, subsection 2, of the Mining Act of 1898, for the purpose of constructing tramways to be used in connection with the mining operations carried on by the applicant on land held by him under mineral lease.
2. Samuel Dixon.
3. 234 acres.
4. 27 miles.
5. The leases applied for are partly in the Walsh and Tinaroo mining district, partly in the Hodgkinson mining district, and extend from the applicant's Caledonia Mine, at Watsonville, to the site of the works about to be erected by the applicant on the Walsh River, thence to the applicant's mine at Eureka Creek, and thence to the goods siding at the 35-Mile Station of the Chillagoe Railway.
6. Yes.

DESTRUCTION OF PRICKLY PEAR.

Mr. MOORE (*Murilla*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

1. Will the Government this session, if time permits, introduce a measure treating with the prickly pear question?
2. Have any persons or firms laid claim to the reward offered by the Government for the destruction of prickly pear?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. W. B. H. O'Connell, *Musgrave*) replied—

1. Yes.
2. No reward has been offered.

EXPENSES OF FEDERAL DELEGATE IN ENGLAND.

Mr. McDONALD (*Flinders*) asked the Treasurer—

1. What amount of money, including fares and other charges, if any, was paid to the Hon. J. E. Dickson in connection with his delegation to represent Queensland in England on the Federal Bill?

2. Did the honourable gentleman receive his pay as Chief Secretary during his absence in addition; if so, what was the amount?

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

1. Personal disbursements (including £856 5	
clerical assistance, typewriting, etc.)	
Steamer fares	160 0 0
Total	£1,016 5 6

2. Yes.

As Chief Secretary	416 13 4
As Vice-President of the Executive Council	125 0 0
Total	£541 13 4

Mr. MAXWELL: A nice little picnic!

Mr. McDONALD: He seems to have been doing it a bit heavy.

THE PASTORAL INDUSTRY AND MR. J. M. CROSS'S SPECIAL REPORTS.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*) asked the Premier—
Is the pastoral industry dealt with in any way in the special reports prepared by J. M. Cross for the information of the Agent-General?

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

Yes; the reports deal with all the industries of the colony. When the Estimates are under consideration the hon. gentleman will have an opportunity of obtaining full particulars regarding Mr. Cross's appointment and the nature of his duties.

PETITION.

RAILWAY FROM NOOSA TO NORTH COAST RAILWAY.

Mr. JENKINSON (*Wide Bay*) presented a petition from 2,000 residents on the Gympie Gold Field and in the electorate of Wide Bay, praying for the construction of a railway from Noosa to the North Coast Railway, and moved that it be received.

Question put and passed.

Mr. JENKINSON moved that the petition be read.

The SPEAKER: According to the Standing Order, the hon. member ought to have moved that motion first.

Question put and passed, and petition read.

DIVIDEND DUTY PAID BY BRISBANE TRAMWAYS COMPANY.

On the motion of Mr. McDONALD (*Flinders*), it was resolved—

That there be laid on the table of the House a return showing the amount of dividend duty received from the Brisbane Tramways Company.

CAMBOOYA ELECTORAL ROLL.

PROPOSED SELECT COMMITTEE.

Mr. KIDSTON (*Rockhampton*), in moving—

1. That in view of certain allegations, that the names of some seventy persons who voted at the last election for Cambooya, and who were not entitled to have their respective names placed upon the Cambooya electoral roll, were placed thereon by means of false statements contained in certain documents lodged with the electoral registrar in support of the claims made in respect of such persons and names; and, further, the said documents, which are necessary in part to the proof or disproof of such allegations, having disappeared from the courthouse at Pittsworth, it is desirable that a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon all matters connected therewith.

2. That such committee consist of the following members:—Mr. Bell, Mr. Newell, Mr. Hamran, Mr. Boles, and the mover.

3. That such committee have power to send for persons and papers, and leave to sit during any adjournment of the House.

said: I called "formal" to that motion when it was called just now, not because I had any objection to discuss the matter, but because I think that in a matter of this kind it is better that the House should get all the information that it is possible to get before discussing it. Before I gave notice of the motion I consulted the Premier and two of the Ministers most concerned in such a matter. I consulted them, not only as to the names to be placed on the committee, but even as to the form of the motion, being desirous not to raise any antipathy from the Government benches in regard to the matter, and those hon. gentlemen agreed to allow the motion to go as "formal." But it is a curious thing that on both occasions, when the matter has been called in the House, prominent supporters of those same hon. gentlemen have called out "Not formal."

Mr. BRIDGES: On our own responsibility.

Mr. KIDSTON: I do not know, of course, but I am exceedingly unwilling—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You don't suggest that members of the Government knew of it?

Mr. KIDSTON: I do not suggest that any of the three members of the Government to whom I have referred feel any sympathy with those supporters of the Government who did that; I would rather attribute it purely and simply to the cussedness of those members who have called out "Not formal." The Premier continually twits the leader of this side of the House with a want of control over the members of his party, and yet here is a matter—a trifling matter comparatively as far as the Government are concerned—which three of the most prominent members of the Government have agreed to allow to go as formal, but to which one of their supporters has called out "Not formal." On a former occasion when one of their supporters called out "Not formal," I complained to the Premier, and he regretted that the thing had been done. Now another supporter of the Government, who considers himself a prominent member of the party, calls out "Not formal." However, I do not believe that the members of the Government would descend to do such a thing; I would very much rather believe that it is simply due to the individual cussedness of the members who called out "Not formal." I do not wish to detain the House very long on this matter, or to go into it very elaborately, because the hon. member for Cunningham, Mr. Kates, has a motion to come on after this, and he has asked me to be as brief as possible, so that he may get to his motion. I told the hon. member when he spoke to me that I was quite willing to allow the thing to go as formal. However, that has been put out of my power. Hon. members, of course, know that last year an election petition was lodged against the return of the present sitting member for Cambooya. It may be said that after the tribunal has heard the evidence, and given its decision in that case, it is an improper thing for the House to enter upon the matter again. I may point out to hon. members that the matter I am about to bring before them has nothing at all to do with the evidence brought before that tribunal, or with the verdict the tribunal gave. Some hon. members, who took notice of the thing at the time, will remember, perhaps, that after the petition had been filed, the petitioners found out some fresh facts in connection with the Cambooya election, which would have caused them to alter the terms of the petition, if they had

known them beforehand, and that when they did find them out they applied to the judge in chambers to get the petition amended, and to make those facts part of their claim. The judge ruled—I have evidence of that here in a letter from the solicitors who conducted the case—both in chambers and afterwards when the case came on in court, that it was not possible for him to permit any amendment to an election petition. One of the assessors admits by interjection that that is so. Although the things I am going to mention were quite well known to the petitioner and to many of those in court, yet they were not before the tribunal, and therefore, in asking the attention of the House to them, I am not in any way interfering with the verdict which the tribunal gave, or with the evidence placed before them. It is fresh matter entirely. I have here a list of some seventy-four persons whose names were on the Cambooya electoral roll at the last Cambooya election, and who voted at that election, but who had no more right to vote at the Cambooya election than I had—whose names had been put on the roll by fraudulent means—by means of false declarations contained in the electoral claims, by virtue of which these names were placed on the roll. I think it would weary the House if I read the whole list of those names. The matter has been investigated, and here is the electoral roll for Cambooya used at the last general election, and I have the numbers against the names here so that any hon. member can satisfy himself as to the facts so far as this is concerned. I will give the House a small sample; out of these seventy-four names—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You had better keep the details for the select committee.

Mr. KIDSTON: I quite admit that—I recognise that—therefore I will omit the names of persons and I will even omit the numbers on the roll of those persons. Hon. members can see the list, if they so wish. I will only give the results. The first thing that I wish to point out is that this sort of thing must have been going on for a long time in Cambooya previous to the last general election. For instance, I find that on the 7th January, 1896, two claims were put in for freehold qualification—I won't give the names or the numbers on the roll—

The PREMIER: It is a wonder the sitting member did not complain.

Mr. KIDSTON: Probably the sitting member in 1896 did not know anything of this.

The HOME SECRETARY: Perhaps they were his supporters.

Mr. KIDSTON: On the 7th January, 1896, two claims were put in for a freehold qualification—both for portion 31v, parish of Westbrook. Now, I say that after having inquired at the Lands and Titles Office, I am in a position to inform the House that that portion was not a freehold at all. It was a leasehold held from the Crown by John Johnson, the purchasing price of which was £70, and that man had no connection at all with the two men who claimed a freehold qualification for this property, and who got their names on the roll. The property was not worth £100, and it did not belong to either of the two men whose names were put on the roll in respect of that land.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Might the land not have been improved?

The HOME SECRETARY: Might there not have been a mistake?

Mr. KIDSTON: Here is the supplementary list for the electoral district of Cambooya—the last supplementary list before the last general election. There are a number of names on this roll, but I will only take twelve of them, and give the House the particulars without giving the names. On the 1st December, 1898, two

claims were handed in to the electoral registrar claiming a freehold qualification for portion V, parish of Haldon. Now that is not freehold at all; it is a lease from the Crown, held by a man named Carey. Again, on the 6th December, 1898, three claims were put in by three separate persons, the qualification stated being freehold, for portion 3362A, parish of Rolleston. Now here are the facts that I have ascertained on inquiry: that that portion would not entitle one of those persons to a freehold qualification in respect of the portion—and it did not belong to either of them. That land was in the name of a woman—Eleanor Mayes. Here is another instance: on the 23rd November, 1898, a claim was put in, the qualification stated being freehold, for subdivision 6 of the Westbrook Estate. Now I find that there is no such portion at all. There is no such property existing in Queensland. Portion 6, on the Westbrook Estate, was intersected by the railway, and two new deeds were issued to P. A. Jennings. The western portion was numbered subdivision 6A of portion 6, and the eastern portion subdivision 6B of portion 6. The qualification mentioned does not, and did not exist when the claims were put in. No man owns such a portion.

The HOME SECRETARY: There is, certainly, portion 6 of the Westbrook Estate—the repurchased estate.

Mr. KIDSTON: Have I not shown that portion 6 was divided into two subdivisions?

The HOME SECRETARY: I am sure you will find portion 6, Westbrook, on the map.

Mr. KIDSTON: The select committee will find that out. I am only giving the information supplied to me by the Lands Office, or an abstract of that information. I don't know all this of my own knowledge.

The HOME SECRETARY: It was a repurchased estate.

Mr. KIDSTON: The next claim that I would refer to is one put in on the 6th December, 1898, the qualification claimed being freehold for portion 51, parish of Westbrook, and the information that I got from the Lands Office was that there was no such parish in Westbrook. The same remark applies to the next case—the freehold qualification for portion 347, Westbrook. The information I have received from the Lands Office is that there is no such portion, and so on, with regard to the next claim put in on the 1st December, 1898, for portions 1 and 3 of portion 7 of Westbrook. The information I have from the Lands Office is that there is no such portion in the parish. Then there is a portion 7v, parish of Westbrook, owned by a man named J. Hefferman, but that is not the name on the roll for that qualification. Again, a claim was put in on 1st December, 1898, for a freehold, the qualification being portion 315, parish of Motley. I am informed by the Lands Office that there is no such

[4 p.m.] portion in the parish of Motley.

Then there was another claim put in for a freehold, the qualification being portion 15, parish of Ramsay. When I made inquiry about this I was informed that portion 15, parish of Ramsay, was a Government reserve, having been proclaimed a reserve for camping purposes in the *Government Gazette* of 1871, page 371. Then, again, a claim was put in on 3rd December, 1898, for a freehold, the qualification being given as portion 4v, Canal Creek. The information I got from the Lands Office is that portion 4v, Canal Creek, is included in the survey of portion 3v, and is owned by Mr. J. P. Greavey, and that is not the name of either of the men for whom claims were put in. Hon. members will doubtless say that there is some mistake here; but I have a list of these men,

and I find that at the first revision court after the election most of these names were struck off the roll again.

Mr. BOWMAN: That is good proof.

Mr. KIDSTON: I culled them out of the list given in the *Darling Downs Gazette*, and that, of course, only covers part of the electorate. In that list I found fifty of these bogus freehold qualifications which were struck off. I am only speaking now of those who voted at the election, but I know of others whose names were improperly on the roll who did not vote. These men did not vote, because they said that their names had no right to be on the roll; that they did not own the land which they were said to own, and which gave them the qualification; that they had never sent in any claim, and that they had not authorised anyone to sign any claim. I know a number of cases where men refused to vote when the canvassers came and asked them to vote for so-and-so, because their names were on the roll. Hon. members will possibly remember that when this matter was being discussed last year the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, gave an instance of this, which I shall just read to the House—

An elector's name appeared on the Cambooya electoral roll as a freeholder, and the number and description of his allotment was given. He, unfortunately, got into difficulties, and the trustee of his estate was written to to know if he had surrendered this allotment to his creditors as amongst his assets. The trustee wrote to him to know if he had this allotment, and if so, why he had omitted it from the schedule of his assets, and told him that, to avoid complications with the creditors, he had better send him the deeds. He wrote back to say that he had never had such land in his possession; that he had never placed his name on the electoral roll, had never signed any paper for such property, and therefore could not send him the deed of a property which he did not possess.

This was a case that came under the notice of the hon. member for Toowoomba, and I have here affidavits from two men whose names were on the Cambooya roll at that time, and who took oath before a justice of the peace that they never signed any electoral claims, and that they never gave any person authority to sign on their behalf, and that they did not know anything about it. That being the case, it is manifest, I think, to the most prejudiced person, and on the most casual observation, that illegal practices to a scandalous extent were carried on in the electoral district of Cambooya previous to the last general election. There is one thing that I would remind the House of, and that is that all these seventy-four persons whose names I have read out are persons who do not reside in the Cambooya electorate, and who have no more business to interfere with that electorate than I have. I now come to one very remarkable feature in connection with this case, and that is that these what I call bogus electoral claims lay in safe custody in the courthouse at Pittsworth for some years, and nobody seemed to trouble about them until their custodian was called upon to produce them in evidence, and then those Government documents mysteriously disappeared. There have been laid on the table of the House the papers and correspondence in connection with the disappearance of those claims from the courthouse at Pittsworth, and I would just like to say this in connection with the way in which those papers have been laid on the table: When the Home Secretary laid them on the table, he told us that, in spite of the fact that the House had passed a resolution that all the papers and correspondence should be produced, he had kept back a number of those papers, or extracts from those papers, because he did not consider it was in the public interests that they should be published, but that if the mover of the motion wished to see the papers which were kept

back from publication he was at liberty to see them. It is, of course, a somewhat unsafe thing for a Minister to take the responsibility of suppressing or keeping back papers that have been ordered by the House to be published. But I think the Hon. the Home Secretary was quite justified in doing this. I think, considering his position, that he would have been lacking in the performance of his duty if he had not risked the displeasure of the House, if he thought it was necessary in the public interest to keep back some of those papers. So that I do not blame him for that; and the fact that he offered to show them to the persons interested goes to show that he had no desire to hide anything. He simply wanted to protect the police. What I want to draw attention to in connection with those papers is a material discrepancy that has taken place in the various statements that have been made to us in connection with the matter. I have here in my hand a statement that was published broadcast over Queensland by the late member for Cambooya, Mr. Daniels, and I ask hon. members to notice the dates given in this statement. Mr. Daniels was asking to be permitted to see those electoral claim forms in the Pittsworth Courthouse, and the electoral registrar was refusing him permission. He applied to the Home Secretary, to the Minister for Justice, to the Principal Electoral Registrar, and he was still unable to get a sight of those disputed claims, and then he summoned the keeper of the claims, the electoral registrar, to produce them in court, and when he did that the claims had mysteriously disappeared.

Mr. GIVENS: Very conveniently.

Mr. KIDSTON: But that is not all the curious things in connection with this case. Mr. Daniels says—

On the 14th August I went in company with Mr. Dawson and Mr. Turley, M.M.L.A., to see the Home Secretary (Mr. Foxton), to ask him once more for permission to see the claims. He told us that he would see the Minister for Justice—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There is no Minister for Justice. He could not have told him that. That is inaccurate.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am just reading what is here.

He told us that he would see the Minister for Justice and see what reason he had for not allowing me to see them, and he would let me know next day. As far as he (Mr. Foxton) was concerned, he knew of no reason why I should not be allowed to see them.

Remember that was on the 14th of August. These claims are alleged to have been stolen on the 8th or 9th of August. Then he goes on to say—

I saw Mr. Foxton again on the 16th.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: What year was this?

The HOME SECRETARY: What date was that interview said to be?

Mr. KIDSTON: The 14th August.

The HOME SECRETARY: They had disappeared then.

Mr. KIDSTON: That is what I am telling the House.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What year was this?

Mr. KERR: 1899.

Mr. KIDSTON: It strikes me that the Secretary for Railways and the junior member for Mackay are seized with an unholy desire for information. Do they not know when the general election took place? Do they not know that this must have been last year? However, that gets me away from the thread of my remarks—

On the 17th Mr. Foxton told Mr. Turley that he had not seen the Minister for Justice about the claims, but that he would see him some time that day.

I called on Mr. Foxton in the afternoon of the same day, but I could not see him. I then told Mr. Ryder, the Under Secretary, that I had summoned some of the men who had voted on a wrong qualification, and that I had summoned the registrar to produce the claims.

The next morning Mr. Daniels heard in the Home Secretary's office that the claims had been stolen. I do not know what the explanation is, but that fact is significant. I am not making any charge in connection with this matter, but am simply giving the facts. Now, when I turn to the published correspondence I find in the first place that there is a telegram dated "Toowoomba, 10th August," from Durham, the Sub-Inspector of Police, to the authorities in Brisbane, informing them of this robbery of these electoral claims, and there is a minute on that telegram by Chief Inspector Stuart and dated in these printed papers "10th August, 1899." Now, here is a curious thing in connection with the affair, too. I have already said that, according to Mr. Daniels's statement, the Home Secretary knew nothing about this matter up till the 17th August.

The HOME SECRETARY: Which matter?

Mr. KIDSTON: The disappearance of these claims.

The HOME SECRETARY: I would imagine it from the papers.

Mr. KIDSTON: So would I. I would imagine it from the papers, but I would not imagine it from what took place between Mr. Daniels, Mr. Turley, Mr. Dawson, and the Home Secretary.

Mr. DAWSON: We had an hour's interview in the Home Secretary's office.

Mr. KIDSTON: I hope the Home Secretary will give me this much credit: That I am not trying to impute anything. I am simply stating the facts of the case as a reason why further investigation should take place. Now, here is one of those reasons: I have said that there is a telegram in the printed papers laid before us from Toowoomba dated the 10th of August. Now, a firm of Brisbane solicitors, Messrs. Atthow and McGregor, examined those papers at the end of last year, and at that time the telegram was dated by Inspector Stuart 19th August, but when we get them printed that "19th" is altered to the "10th." I say to the Home Secretary that I am not suggesting anything; I am not imputing anything.

The HOME SECRETARY: I did not catch what the hon. member said. An hon. member was speaking to me at the table. I am sorry I did not hear.

Mr. KIDSTON: On page 3 of the printed papers there is a telegram from Toowoomba dated the 10th August.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is Durham's telegram.

Mr. KIDSTON: Yes. And there is a minute made on that telegram by Chief Inspector Stuart to this effect—

Forwarded for information to the Commissioner of Police.

And that is dated "10-8-99." In the end of last year that telegram was copied by Mr. McGregor, of Messrs. Atthow and McGregor, and that minute of Chief Inspector Stuart was dated the 19th August, not the 10th.

Mr. DAWSON: It had been altered.

Mr. KIDSTON: I don't know whether it had been altered or not.

The PREMIER: There will be no trouble in producing the original.

The HOME SECRETARY: Probably Mr. McGregor made a mistake in copying it.

Mr. KIDSTON: I may say that the extracts from the papers seem to have been very carefully made. It is possible, of course, that a mistake may have been made, and perhaps that is the whole

thing, but I will show in a minute that the circumstances attending the case suggest something else. However, while on these extracts, there is one of them here which the Home Secretary kept out of the printed papers which is so good that, as it is not betraying any official secret, I really will give it to the House. It is a philosophic policeman at Pittsworth—

The HOME SECRETARY: I think this is distinctly a breach of confidence.

Mr. DAWSON: Do you know what it is?

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not, especially. I take it from what the hon. member says.

Mr. KIDSTON: I don't think it is any breach of confidence.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do.

Mr. KIDSTON: But I think it is so good that I ought to be excused if I give it to the House. I would not give it to the House if I thought it would hurt the Public Service or the Police Department in any way, but I don't think it will. In trying to explain to himself and to his department how these papers had disappeared, he writes to this effect—

Several persons in Pittsworth were violent partisans of the Labour party, and would be quite capable of committing the offence— (laughter.)

The HOME SECRETARY: He might be much nearer the mark than he thought.

Mr. KIDSTON:

On the other hand, the supporters of the Government were mostly more staid and rational.

The HOME SECRETARY: A man of great discernment, evidently.

Mr. KIDSTON: Consequently this policeman is thrown back on his beam ends, and he has to say he does not know who would be in the least likely to steal the claims. (Laughter.) I can quite imagine that coming from a country policeman who looks upon the Government as being the benevolent institution that pays him, that finds him in bread and butter, and who looks upon these extreme wild and dangerous persons called the Labour party as being very objectionable persons indeed. Mr. Daniels, when he found in the Home Secretary's Office that the claims had disappeared, said he then went down to Chief Inspector Stuart to ask what was being done in connection with the matter. Remember this is on the 18th August, nine days after the claims are said to have disappeared, according to the official documents here, and Chief Inspector Stuart then tells Mr. Daniels that he never heard anything about it, although, according to the official paper now in my hand, Chief Inspector Stuart had minuted the telegram eight days before, which told him and the Commissioner of Police about the theft.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is all on the statement of Mr. Daniels.

Mr. KIDSTON: There is something else in connection with the matter, which, though Mr. Daniels could not know anything about it, gives a sort of semblance of truth to Mr. Daniels's statement.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It may be the semblance of truth? Falsehood often is.

Mr. KIDSTON: According to the official papers there is a wire sent down from Toowoomba on the 10th August, and it comes to the Chief Inspector of Police in Brisbane, and he minutes it on the 10th August, and yet on the 19th August nothing had been done. The Home Secretary did not know anything about it. No action had been taken by the police in all those nine days to find out how it was those claims had disappeared or where they had gone. No action had been taken by the department at all.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is not correct. Look at the papers.

Mr. KIDSTON : I will show from the papers that it is correct. But immediately after the 18th, when Mr. Daniels discovered that the claims had disappeared, Chief Inspector Stuart promises to send a man, and he sends a man within three days after that to Pittsworth to inquire into the disappearance of those claims. How was it that all that time elapsed after the telegram, and so prompt action was taken after Mr. Daniels had been informed that the thing had been done? There is another matter in this connection. When the police authorities in Brisbane sent a detective to Pittsworth to make inquiries into this matter the detective goes up to Pittsworth and comes back to Brisbane and reports that Sergeant Knox informed him that it was the instruction of Sub-Inspector Durham that no special effort was to be made to recover those claims. Remember, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a statement that I am making. This is a statement which I am reading from Constable Carew's report on page 4 of the published papers—

On the constable's arrival at Pittsworth Acting Sergeant Knox informed him that it was the express order of the sub-inspector that no inquiries should be made *re* the missing claims until such time as the cases of illegal voting then pending came before the court.

That was a very curious statement for the police officer to make in his report to his department, and here is the curious thing about it. The Chief Inspector waits for over three months after this statement is made in an official report, and then he writes or makes a minute calling upon Sub-Inspector Durham to report as to the accuracy of Constable Carew's report, and asking his reasons for giving such instructions. Now, there are three statements here in regard to this matter. There is the statement [4'30 p.m.] of Constable Carew, there is the statement of Constable Knox, and there is the statement of Sub-Inspector Durham; and the curious thing—and I call the attention of the Home Secretary to this matter—the curious thing is that no two of these three statements agree. Each one of them says something substantially different from the other.

The HOME SECRETARY : Will not you read Sub-Inspector Durham's explanation and put it alongside the others?

Mr. KIDSTON : Does the hon. gentleman want me to read it?

The HOME SECRETARY : The straightforward way is to read it.

Mr. KIDSTON : Well, I did not want to take up more time than was necessary. This is what Constable Carew says—

The HOME SECRETARY : You have given us that.

Mr. KIDSTON : Constable Carew states—

Acting Sergeant Knox informed him that it was the express order of the sub-inspector that no inquiries should be made *re* the missing claims—

The HOME SECRETARY : "Until"—finish it. Don't suppress half the sentence.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE : It does not suit him to read the lot.

Mr. KIDSTON :

Until such time as the cases of illegal voting then pending came before the court.

Now Acting Sergeant Knox's statement is—

On 11th August last, three days after larceny, when in Toowoomba, the acting sergeant informed the sub-inspector—

Mr. DAWSON : Read further on—the quotation of Sub-Inspector Durham's instructions.

Mr. KIDSTON : Yes, that is what I am coming to. Acting Sergeant Knox states—

The acting sergeant informed the sub-inspector that up to then he had not made any direct inquiries, and the sub-inspector said, "I think for the present you had better not, but yourself and Keap must pay particular

attention to any reference you hear made to the matter, and if anyone makes inquiries about them, carefully note what is said."

He says further—

Constable Carew's account of what passed between him and the acting sergeant *re* stolen claims is totally incorrect.

The HOME SECRETARY : Why could not you have read that without it being dragged out?

Mr. KIDSTON : Then Sub-Inspector Durham says—

I told him he had better not speak about it, but keep watch.

Now, that surely substantiates what I have said—

The HOME SECRETARY : No.

Mr. KIDSTON : That substantiates, as I have said, that these three statements are substantially different as to the central fact in regard to it.

Mr. HARDACRE : One accusing the other.

Mr. KIDSTON : No. I do not wish to accuse one or the other. I am only pointing out—

Mr. HARDACRE : I say that each statement accuses the other.

Mr. KIDSTON : I am only pointing out what I think are the circumstances in connection with the case which warrant this House in inquiring further into the matter. That is all I desire to do. I do not wish to blame the Home Secretary or any of the police authorities in connection with this matter. I do not know sufficient about it to justify me in doing that, but I think, from the statements which I have called attention to, it is very desirable that inquiry should be made; and indeed that seems to be the opinion of Sub-Inspector Durham himself. He says on page 6 of the published statements, in a letter to Chief Inspector Stuart—

The objects in stealing these records were to get access to certain particulars or to obliterate all information as to the qualifications, names of persons applying, and justice attesting certain claims.

A recent case at the police court here showed very plainly for what purpose they were going to be used.

The persons interested in this matter are all residing in the district, and if a reward was offered it might induce some person to give information.

Now, I think that I have shown sufficient both as to the extraordinary amount of illegal practices that must have been carried on in the Cambooya electorate previous to the last general election, and as to the ground that there is for supposing that a large number of these claims put into the courthouse at Pittsworth were not signed by the persons by whom they were alleged to be signed, or by whom they professed to be signed—I think I have shown that there is good ground for believing that all these things are true. I have shown some curious things in connection with the disappearance of these claims at Pittsworth, and I submit that every hon. member of this House who has any regard for the political morality, or the cleanliness of our public life, ought to feel some interest in investigating a case of this sort, and if the matter should be as the facts I have given seem to indicate, to find out and punish the perpetrators of these practices. It was said by Sub-Inspector Durham, for instance, in his report on the loss of these claims—I need not quote it as it was not disputed—that the theft of these claims had been announced in all the Southern papers long before Constable Carew was sent to Pittsworth to find out about them. Now if that is so, I would ask the Home Secretary, who is probably aware of the fact, to tell us what were the Southern papers in which the thing was noted.

The HOME SECRETARY : I know nothing at all about it. I know of no papers.

Mr. KIDSTON: I may mention that it is one of those general statements which, I think, a man in Sub-Inspector Durham's position ought not to make. In point of fact—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Do you know that he made it?

Mr. KIDSTON: Here it is.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: That is an allegation.

Mr. KIDSTON: The allegation is in the printed papers, in the official report. It is the kind of allegation that I am in the habit of making in this House. On page 6, if the hon. member for Mackay will look, he will see in Sub-Inspector Durham's letter—

Long before Constable Carew arrived at Pittsworth the larceny of the claims was public property, as it had appeared in all the Southern papers.

Now I venture to assert that that is not true.

Mr. DAWSON: That must be a forgery.

Mr. KIDSTON: The hon. member for Mackay cannot prove that it is true.

Mr. TURLEY: Why do you say it is an allegation?

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: So it is. It may be a true one.

Mr. KIDSTON: I do not wish to take up the time of the House more than is necessary. I would not have discussed this matter in this way except that I have been forced to do it. I have avoided giving any names or imputing any motives to any person. I have simply stated the facts as they seem to me, and so far as I know them; and if this plain statement of facts seems to impute this or that to certain persons, I cannot be held responsible for that. I only wished to show the House sufficient evidence to justify the request for further investigation. The Premier, Attorney-General, and Home Secretary probably do not take my view of the matter, but they have agreed with me so far as to allow the motion to go as formal, and I hope no purely trivial or contentious objection will be raised to an inquiry which I think I have shown that the facts of the case amply justify.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. BRIDGES: Mr Speaker—

MEMBERS of the Opposition: The Home Secretary.

Question stated.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*): I may say at once that the Government have no intention of opposing this motion.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: None whatever. It is quite sufficient that certain allegations, of the character set forth in this motion, and which have been dilated upon by the hon. member for Rockhampton, have been made, to secure the assent of the Government to the proposition which is embodied in this motion.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: Now, let me go back a week or two. If I remember rightly, the hon. member gave notice of this motion to come on upon a day set apart for Government business—having first ascertained, however, as he says, from the Premier, the Attorney-General, and myself, that the Government would have no objection whatever to the motion going as formal. In fact, I may say at once that the hon. member consulted me as to the form the motion should take, and I actually drafted this resolution for him, or a great portion of it.

Mr. KIDSTON: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: Then when the motion came on and the Speaker put the question as to whether it should be regarded as formal or not, an hon. member—on this side of the House, it is true, but certainly within his rights as a member of this House—called, "Not

formal." The consequence was that in order to get it on, I fancy, the hon. member seeing that it had been called "Not formal," withdrew that notice and substituted a notice of an exactly similar nature, for to-day—anticipating that it would be again called "Not formal," and he would then have an opportunity of discussing it, and it would not get to the bottom of the business-paper. The hon. member was good enough to say that he did not wish to impute to the Government any collusion between themselves and their followers, but the very fact of his putting it in that way shows that the hon. member had in his mind a certain suspicion that there was some collusion, and he even went so far as to suggest it.

Mr. KERR: You are a bit of a Mahatma.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The suggestion was merely that the Government thought a member would call "Not formal."

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member recognises the possibility of it, notwithstanding his disclaimer that the Government could be guilty of a meanness of that kind. I repudiate it absolutely. If the hon. member asks the hon. member who previously called "Not formal," or the hon. member who did so to-day, he will be quite satisfied that—to use his own phrase—there was not the semblance of truth in the statement that the Government suggested that a member should take that course.

Mr. BRIDGES: The Government knew nothing about it.

Mr. TURLEY: He made no such statement.

The HOME SECRETARY: He suggested it.

Mr. KIDSTON: No.

The HOME SECRETARY: I say he did, and hon. members around him also suggested that the Government would do that sort of thing.

Mr. REID: No, we would not do such a thing.

The HOME SECRETARY: Well, there is a French proverb, which I will not give you in French, but which says that he who excuses himself accuses himself.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No one here is excusing.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hon. members are now excusing themselves.

Mr. REID: No.

The HOME SECRETARY: I hope hon. members will allow me to proceed without interruption.

Mr. REID: Then don't misrepresent us.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am not misrepresenting. The suggestion was made by the hon. member, while still discarding the idea that he was making any such suggestion, that the Government put up one of their supporters to call "Not formal," after having agreed that the motion should go as formal. He also instanced this as showing the want of discipline on this side of the House. Well, let me tell the hon. member that the party sitting on this side of the House is not run on the Labour party lines. (Opposition laughter.) Hon. members on this side are not dragooned into what course they shall take. (Hear, hear! and laughter.) They are doing what they like independently, and they do not always vote in a body solid. (Laughter.)

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Don't they? What about last night?

The HOME SECRETARY: I need only point to the division which took place here last night to show the sort of dragooning that takes place on the opposite side.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: On your side.

The HOME SECRETARY: On this side hon. members may lack discipline, but there is independence. (Hear, hear! and laughter.) If an hon. member of the Labour party votes against his own party, what becomes of him?

We know. Let him once sit in a division in opposition to the majority of his own party, or let him raise his voice as the hon. member for Nundah did to-day, and call "Not formal" in opposition to the wishes of his party, and he will be called by the epithet which was used the other night by the hon. member for Clermont, and by which the hon. member degraded this House.

Mr. HIGGS: Absolute nonsense!

Mr. LESINA: I did not call him a lawyer, and that is the worst name I could call him.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member for Rockhampton, by innuendo—and while disclaiming it all the time he was doing it—has abused the Government and members on this side of the House.

Mr. KIDSTON: Oh, shocking!

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member has done so. Having no case, he must abuse the other side.

Mr. REID: Are you not abusing now?

The HOME SECRETARY: No, I am showing hon. members the position, and it is evident from their interjections that they do not like it. I am showing them that a private member on this side may assert his rights as a member of this House, and as an independent member. I absolutely repudiate the imputation that the Government have in any way desired that this motion should be called "Not formal," or that they in any way wished to go back upon the expression of their opinion that it might fairly go as "formal." As the hon. member for Herbert, who called "Not formal" on the previous occasion, explained to me afterwards, "You may be satisfied that there is a case for inquiry, but I want to know more about it."

Mr. REID: Why is he not here to-day?

The HOME SECRETARY: That is his business. That was his reason, and a very proper reason; and the probability is that if I had been sitting on the back Treasury bench as a private member, and without the special knowledge which I have of this matter from my official position, I should have called "Not formal"—as it was open to anybody to do—to this motion. The hon. member, at all events, after the statement I have made that there is no possible objection to this motion going and the committee being appointed, must surely see that his innuendo that there was any such collusion as he suggests is altogether unfounded.

Mr. REID: Let him apologise straight away.

The HOME SECRETARY: I never knew a Labour man do that yet. They have not got it in them.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. REID: You are very rough.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

The HOME SECRETARY: Some of the matters the hon. member touched upon are of sufficient importance that special notice should be taken of them. But I will first refer to the alleged malpractices. I do not say there have not been malpractices. It is quite possible that Cambooya is not an exception to the general rule, and that the same malpractices or mistakes will be found to occur in any electoral roll in the colony you choose to take up. But how easily they are made! I am, say, on the electoral roll for Oxley in respect of my qualification as a freeholder. If anybody were to ask me now what was the number of the portion I could not tell him. And those claims may have to be filled up when a man has not access to his deeds, which may be in a bank or some other safekeeping. You can easily understand, therefore, how mistakes as to the numbers of portions can be made in electoral forms. Nothing is more simple. The hon. member mentioned subdivision 6 of the Westbrook

Estate as freehold. I happen to know, as a late Minister for Lands, that there is a subdivision 6 of the Westbrook Estate in that electorate—at least, I assume it is in that electorate; but upon that point I cannot be certain.

Mr. KIDSTON: Freehold?

The HOME SECRETARY: It would be leasehold at this moment. It is necessarily so, because the whole of the Westbrook Estate was selected. The error clearly has been that it is described as freehold. I am only suggesting this as a possible mistake that may have been made—that the man had contracted to purchase the freehold.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: And it was freehold before.

The HOME SECRETARY: Mistakes of that kind, I am quite sure, are made every day in filling up claims, but that is no reason why men should be disfranchised. They are technical errors which should not lead to a man's disfranchisement. I have always understood that that was one of the principles which hon. members on the other side were very fond of advocating. The hon. member mentioned also, as a very damaging fact, and one which apparently, in his opinion, would tell very seriously against the Government, or against those who ran the Cambooya election in the Government interest, that the whole of those claims—or a large portion of them—I think he said all—had been struck off the electoral roll at the revision court next following the election.

Mr. KIDSTON: Fifty out of seventy.

The HOME SECRETARY: I thought it would not probably be all. But what is more natural? The member or somebody—probably Mr. Daniels, the late member for Cambooya, who was defeated at that particular election—has evidently been diving into records, and looking up information at the Government offices, and so on; and what is more natural than that the information he had gleaned should find its way into the hands of the electoral registrar, with the result that those names were omitted from the electoral roll?

Mr. REID: It shows they should never have been on.

The HOME SECRETARY: It shows the correction was necessary. What is the revision court for but to make those corrections? The hon. member seems to think there was something very remarkable about it, and that the Government or some of the Government officials were greatly to blame for having done what was clearly their duty when the late member, Mr. Daniels, was found to have certain information.

Mr. KIDSTON: I gave it as a cumulative piece of evidence.

The HOME SECRETARY: It was the most natural course to follow. Are we to suppose that Mr. Daniels would keep this information bottled up until the hon. member for Rockhampton could give it here to-day, and not give it to the electoral registrar? Clearly if he thought those men were likely to poll against him at any election he would be the first man to give that information to the electoral registrar, and the result would be the omission of their names if the information were proved to be correct.

Mr. HARDACRE: That proves they were wrongly put on.

The HOME SECRETARY: No; they may have become disqualified years ago; hundreds of men do on many electoral rolls throughout the colony.

Mr. KIDSTON: Inside of six months!

The HOME SECRETARY: It is quite possible they lost their qualification years before, but apparently Mr. Daniels did not look after his roll properly, and did not get them off when he ought; and he paid the penalty, apparently.

I have a complaint to make against the hon. member as to the manner in which he has put the case before the House. Certain official documents in connection with the case were held back, with the apparent approval of the House and with the certain approval of the hon. member; and I consider the hon. member is guilty of a distinct breach of faith in reading to the House a portion of one of those documents which I had withheld, and which the hon. member approved of my withholding.

Mr. KIDSTON: Which won't do any harm.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is not the question. It is a matter of principle. The hon. member may not understand principle. It is possibly only a convenience with him in those matters; but if I had been actuated by the same motives—

Mr. KIDSTON: You are a nice gentleman to complain of insinuations.

The HOME SECRETARY: What am I insinuating now? I am insinuating nothing. I am telling the hon. member a plain fact. I said the hon. member may not understand principle in those matters.

Mr. REID: Is not that an insinuation?

The HOME SECRETARY: Certainly not. I am saying that this is a matter of principle, and that a confidential report, no matter which way it might tell, should be held sacred in this House; especially after I had withheld them as confidential reports, and the hon.

[5 p.m.] member had given his approval of my so withholding them. If I had desired I could have put that in the papers. I know that as a matter of fact the publication of it does very little harm, but what I object to is that the report of any person who writes it and sends it as a confidential report should be made public here, whether it does harm or not. The hon. member ought not to constitute himself the judge as to whether it will do any harm or whether it will not. The harm that its publication will do is this: that the constable who wrote that report will feel that while members holding the views of the hon. member for Rockhampton are in this House his confidential reports are not safe or sacred. The report was written by him in good faith, and it should not have been revealed by the hon. member, whether it was of importance or whether it was not. It is possible that I might feel very much inclined to agree with a good deal that the report contains, but notwithstanding that I took it upon myself to suppress it; I did not want the fact that the constable expressed somewhat freely his opinion about certain political supporters of Mr. Daniels to be put in the papers. Because that would tell in favour of myself, or of my party, I did not desire that that should be printed, and I suppressed it.

Mr. KIDSTON: You published part of his report.

The HOME SECRETARY: Certainly.

Mr. KIDSTON: And I published another part.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member gave to the public that which was confidential.

Mr. DAWSON: Was it true?

The HOME SECRETARY: Very likely a good deal of it was true; I do not object to the publication of it on that ground.

Mr. HARDACRE: Was not the part you published confidential?

The HOME SECRETARY: No; I do not think it is. I am afraid that hon. members are unable to distinguish between those portions of a report which ought to be treated as confidential, as mere expressions of opinion, and those portions which are a relation of facts. I do not care about my views concerning hon. mem-

bers and their supporters being public property, but it is a matter of some consideration for a public official to have views of that sort made known, because necessarily he will be a marked man.

Mr. STEWART: Who marks him?

Mr. REID: The Home Secretary.

The HOME SECRETARY: There is another matter I want to mention. The hon. member has quoted from the papers, and he has quoted them in a way which I do not think was quite ingenuous. The hon. member stated that according to the papers nothing was done by the department prior to the 18th of August. He did not read my minute of the 11th of August; he never mentioned that, he suppressed it.

Mr. KIDSTON: Because—

The HOME SECRETARY: Oh, no, the hon. member has had his say.

Mr. KIDSTON: I said the police had taken no action.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member said nothing had been done by the department.

Mr. KIDSTON: Oh, no.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member may deny it as much as he likes, but *Hansard* will prove that that is what the hon. member said—that nothing had been done by the department. And I interjected, "No, that is not correct."

Mr. KIDSTON: The Police Department.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member did not say the Police Department. He was talking about the Home Secretary's Department at the time.

Mr. DAWSON: It is all the same.

The HOME SECRETARY: Very well; let it rest at that. This is what was reported on the 9th of August by James Knox, electoral registrar, to the Principal Electoral Registrar—

SIR,—I have the honour to report that, between 10 a.m. yesterday and 10 a.m. this morning, the whole of the used electoral claims, including those of August bi-monthly list, for the Pittsworth division of Cambooya electorate were stolen from here. The forms were in one lot, standing on top of a press in this office.

In my capacity of officer in charge of police here, I have reported the matter to my inspector.

That letter was sent to Mr. Boyce. Mr. Boyce lost no time in dealing with the matter, and on the following day he minuted the letter as follows:—

B.C.—Under Secretary, Home Department.—J. A. Boyce, P.E.R., 10-8-99.

My minute, made the day after, is as follows:—

The perpetrator of this robbery should be brought to justice if possible to detect.—J.F.G.F., 11-8-99.

That was sent on to the Commissioner for Police the same day for action. I could do no more. I am reminded by the hon. member that he stated on the strength of a document alleged to be under the hand of Mr. Daniels, that two members of this House and Mr. Daniels waited upon me on the 14th of August. I have a distinct recollection of those gentlemen coming to me, and of having a long conversation with them, and I also remember stating to them that personally I saw no reason why the documents which they wanted should not be open to their inspection. I regarded them as public documents. If I remember rightly, there was a telegram from Pittsworth in the hand of one of those gentlemen to the effect that there was a refusal on the part of some official to allow an inspection of those documents. I said I could not see why there should be any objection to their inspecting any documents of the sort.

Mr. TURLEY: But that you would refer the matter to the Attorney-General.

The HOME SECRETARY: As far as I know, the statement made in that paper which

the hon. member read, but which had not previously come under my notice, although the hon. member stated that it was sent broadcast all over the colony—as far as I can remember what the hon. member read is practically correct. The only thing that seems to me to be doubtful is the date. I certainly have not the slightest recollection of the day on which those gentlemen called on me, and I should be very sorry to say that it was not the 14th, but the internal evidence of the documents appears to me to indicate that it must have been before the 11th.

Mr. TURLEY: You had been away, and had just come back; it was your first morning at the office after you came back.

The HOME SECRETARY: From where?

Mr. TURLEY: I do not know where you had been.

The HOME SECRETARY: I could not have been away very long, because I was in the office on the 11th, five days previous to that, and had minuted on a letter that the perpetrators of the robbery should be brought to justice if possible.

Mr. TURLEY: I know you had been away, and that the reason is that Mr. Daniels had started this matter in connection with the Crown Law Department, and you said that you would consult the Attorney-General before you gave any instructions.

The HOME SECRETARY: It is quite possible that those hon. members saw me on the 14th, but it would have been absurd for me to have said what I am reported to have said on the 14th. Of course it is a very difficult matter for a man to throw his memory back twelve months, especially when he has received a lot of information since, and to say what frame of mind he was in on a date which he cannot recollect. It is quite possible that it was the 14th; and if it was the 14th, and I knew it five days previously of this report, it is quite possible that I did not realise that these papers which Mr. Daniels required were the same papers which were stolen. On the letter dated the 18th, I minuted—

Ascertain as nearly as possible what claims have been stolen, having special reference to their dates. Do I understand that all the claims for the Cambooya electorate that were on record at Pittsworth have disappeared? If so, how far back did they extend in point of date.

And the Commissioner of Police minuted—

Very urgent.

It is quite possible that Mr. Daniels and the other gentleman are quite correct in saying that it was the 14th, and it is also quite possible that I did not realise that the papers that were called for were the papers that were stolen. Of course, the only information I had was from the official documents before me, and they were of the most meagre character. In justice to the police, and in reference to what the hon. member calls the conflicting statements by them with regard to certain instructions supposed to have been given by Sub-Inspector Durham to Acting Sergeant Knox, I want to put the various statements in closer juxtaposition than the hon. member has done. I would point out that the hon. member only quoted part of Mr. Durham's report. He stopped short in the middle of a sentence, and did not quote the whole of it.

Mr. KIDSTON: I read the whole of it before.

The HOME SECRETARY: It was dragged out of him. He quoted what Carew said Knox had told him, but I will read what Carew, Knox, and Durham said. Carew, reporting what he did in the third person, as is the usual practice, said—

The constable did not see Sub-Inspector Durham when going through Toowoomba to Pittsworth on the 21st August instant, as that gentleman was away on a tour of inspection in his district, and on the constable's

arrival at Pittsworth, Acting Sergeant Knox informed him that it was the express order of the sub-inspector that no inquiries should be made—

The hon. member wanted to stop there. Then Carew goes on to say—

re the missing claims, until such time as the cases of illegal voting then pending came before the court. This, and the fact of the constable not seeing the sub-inspector, prevented him from making very extensive inquiries, fearing that such action would clash with Mr. Durham's views, but on the 24th instant the constable saw Sub-Inspector Durham, and from that date to the 28th instant the constable made exhaustive inquiries in Pittsworth and Toowoomba, but has been unable to recover the missing claims or obtain a clue to the offender.

Mr. KIDSTON: I read the whole of it before.

The HOME SECRETARY: Now I will read what Knox says, and you can put the two together. On the 15th December he reported as follows:—

On the 11th August last, three days after the larceny, when in Toowoomba, the acting sergeant informed the sub-inspector that up to then he had not made any direct inquiries, and the sub-inspector said, "I think for the present you had better not, but yourself and Kean must pay particular attention to any reference you hear made to the matter, and if anyone makes inquiries about them, carefully note what is said."

Their very silence was to facilitate private inquiry into the matter. Knox also said—

In conversing with Constable Carew about the matter the acting sergeant told him this not, however, with any view to interfering with his inquiries, but in reply to his questions.

Mr. KIDSTON: Then the statements of Knox and Carew disagree.

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes; but if you put the whole of the statements together, they do not disagree as much as when the hon. member only read portions of them. Sub-Inspector Durham says—

I have the honour to forward a full report from Acting Sergeant Knox, *re* electoral claims stolen from the courthouse, Pittsworth.

When the acting sergeant saw me on the 11th August at my office, I asked him had he spoken or informed anybody about the larceny of the claims, and he said "No." I told him he had better not speak about it, but keep watch—

I think that is where the hon. member stopped. Why did he not finish the sentence? Now, let us read what Mr. Durham further says—

and if anybody asks you if the claims have been taken it might give you a clue in what direction to look for them. I also gave him special instructions in case they were recovered. I never said anything about the matter standing over till the case that was pending at the police court had been heard.

Then comes the passage which the hon. member says is not correct—

Long before Constable Carew arrived at Pittsworth the larceny of the claims was public property, as it appeared in all the Southern papers.

That shows that Knox, to a certain extent, apparently, misunderstood his instructions. I think the instructions given by Sub-Inspector Durham were very properly given—that the police should keep their eyes and ears open.

Mr. KIDSTON: Although all this was published in the Southern papers?

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member says that last statement is not correct.

Mr. KIDSTON: But the sub-inspector says it is correct.

The HOME SECRETARY: At all events it seems very excellent advice for Mr. Durham to have given. It shows that he was anxious to elucidate the matter as far as he could, and this applies also to the men under him. I do not know whether this has very much to do with the question of the appointment of this select committee, but I think the hon. member for Rockhampton has entered into this matter most unnecessarily and has cast grave reflections not only on the Government but on the police

force; and I deem it my duty, as Minister in charge of the department affected, to assure the House that we have every desire to bring the perpetrators of this robbery, whoever they may be, to justice, and that the fullest inquiry should be made into the subject matter of this motion. I do not think that I need take up the time of the House any longer. The Government have certainly no desire that this motion should be negatived. Their desire is that any inquiry that the hon. member or the public wish to have should be made, and that all possible light should be thrown on the matter.

* The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge, *Maranoa*): I do not intend to say very much on the question, but I must refer to what the hon. member for Rockhampton said about the understanding that was come to with regard to allowing the motion to go as formal. I may say that, when the hon. member rose to move the motion, and began to speak, I turned to my colleague, the Home Secretary, and said to him, "He is out of order. Formal motions cannot be discussed," as I was not aware at the time that the hon. member for Nundah had called "Not formal" to the motion. I was surprised to learn what had been done, and I have no doubt that the hon. member for Nundah—who rose to his feet a while ago—will explain that there was no complicity whatever in his action on the part of any hon. member of the Government. The members of the Government had no desire to have a discussion on this motion at all.

Mr. DAWSON: How was it that the Home Secretary was provided with his references? He must have been fully prepared.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I suppose that while the hon. member for Rockhampton was speaking my colleague got the papers from his despatch-box, or that he got them in the Minister's room. I suppose that if anyone looked into his box now, they would find there all the documents relating to his department printed by order of the House since the commencement of the session. There is nothing peculiar about the Home Secretary having the papers ready to his hand. A suggestion has been made that in some way I influenced somebody in endeavouring to prevent access to the claim forms that have been stolen. Now, to show my own *bona fides*, I may say that when the hon. member for Rockhampton first contemplated bringing this matter before the House, he came to me and asked me what was the best mode of getting a thing of this sort exposed and dealt with. I asked him what it was that he wanted to bring forward, and he told me his idea in a way that would have had the appearance of constituting this House a court of appeal from the Elections Tribunal. The hon. member admitted that the way in which he expressed himself to me would bear that construction, but he said that that was not his wish.

Mr. KIDSTON: Hear, hear!

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. member asked me how it could be done, and I told him that the best plan would be for him to move for the appointment of a select committee.

Mr. KIDSTON: Hear, hear!

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Then, afterwards, when he asked me what would be the best mode of framing his motion, I gave him an outline of what I thought should be the wording of such a resolution as he desired to bring forward, and he approved of my suggestion. Then he saw the Home Secretary on the subject, and the Home Secretary was assisting him to draft the motion when I came into the room, and my assistance was invoked, and among us we really drafted the resolution which is now before the House.

Mr. DAWSON: Consequently, you have no objection.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: So far from the Government having any desire to throw any obstacle in the way of this matter being referred to a select committee, I have shown that two members of the Government actually assisted the hon. member to bring it forward, because if it had been brought forward in the way that the hon. member thought of introducing it at first—of course his want of legal knowledge would be accountable for that—there would have been no alternative but to throw it out by a vote of the House; but, being anxious to get to the bottom of this matter, seeing that allegations of this sort were made, I thought it was only fair to the hon. member to give him the benefit of any legal knowledge I possess so as to get his motion before the House in the least objectionable way—in fact, in such a way that there would be no justification for opposing it. I may say that no man can feel more strongly the outrage upon our electoral laws and our institutions than myself, as shown by these allegations, if they are found to be facts. It is a shocking outrage upon the liberty which we enjoy in securing the franchise, and I think that there is really justification for endeavouring, when serious allegations of this sort are made, to get to the bottom of them for the purpose of exposing the wrong and the fraud upon the community that has been perpetrated by the persons who are guilty of that wrong and that fraud, if the facts can be proved; and I think the best way of ascertaining the facts is by a select committee. Now with regard to the matter that was referred to me some time ago, and which was mentioned by the hon. member for Rockhampton. He said that my name was mentioned with regard to these particular documents. Well, I do not understand that my functions in the office that I hold authorise me to give any directions affecting any other department. It would be a gross impertinence on the part of one Minister to poke his nose into the business of some other Minister, and say, "You must do so-and-so."

Mr. DAWSON: You can recommend.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I never even recommend unless I am applied to. I always wait until I am approached by the head of some other department, either for a recommendation or for an opinion, before I tender it; and, in this case, before I was approached by the Home Secretary—I am not quite sure, but it was about the time that the Home Secretary referred the legal point to me—I was waited upon by Mr. Daniels, and the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dawson. Mr. Daniels was insisting that he had a legal right to investigate certain documents, and I think I had the day before—I am not quite sure—but I think I had given a legal opinion upon that right, or alleged right, before they called upon me. But Mr. Daniels thought I was wrong in the matter, and wanted to use arguments to get me to alter my opinion. I then went through the Act of Parliament in the presence of Mr. Daniels and the hon. member for Charters Towers, and I showed them—I think entirely to the satisfaction of the hon. member for Charters Towers—that there was no alternative but to give the advice I had given in the matter—in other words, that there was no legal authority in the electoral registrar to submit those documents to anybody but a revision court. The hon. member for Charters Towers really verbally assented to my legal view of the position being the correct one, and, whether I was right or wrong, that was the view that I entertained, and when I was applied to by the Home Secretary for advice upon that point, I gave an honest opinion.

Mr. DAWSON: But we have fresh evidence now.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That was quite apart from the question of fact. It was simply the legal point—"Has any member of the public a right to call for certain claims, and to investigate those claims?" I went through the Act, as the Act is the only authority. It is entirely a question of construction, and I think I convinced the hon. member for Charters Towers at that time that the position I took up was the legal position, and that there was no power to give any member of the public access to those documents, and that they could only be called for by the revision court. That is all I had to do with the matter. I have not in any way stood in the path of investigation of the matter.

Mr. DAWSON: You gave advice only.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is all—I gave advice on that point. With regard to other matters, I may say that Mr. Daniels called upon me a long time before that about other matters, and I suggested to him the impropriety of taking any criminal steps while the cases were pending before the Elections Tribunal; and I mentioned to him that there were two cases brought under my notice in connection with the election for the Warrego, which, if they could be proved, certainly furnished grounds for a criminal prosecution. Although the persons alleged to have voted were persons who voted against the [5:30 p.m.] Government candidate, I would not be a party—and I gave that decided advice—to any prosecution of those persons while the action was pending before the Elections Tribunal. I gave Mr. Daniels the same advice when he saw me with regard to the prosecution of persons in connection with the Cambooya election, and I thought it would be really improper to do anything which might have any effect whatever in prejudicing the fair trial of the petition lodged by him against the return of the sitting member. I do not think there is any need to discuss the thing at all, because when there is no opposition to the motion on the part of the Government I do not see why we should go into the facts. I have not gone into the facts as disclosed by the papers. It is perfectly immaterial what passed between the constables, or between the department and the police, but I thought it my duty to give an explanation which entirely exculpates the Government from any charge or any suggestion of unwillingness to facilitate the carrying of this resolution by the House.

Mr. BRIDGES (*Nundah*): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. HIGGS: Waste the time of the House.

Mr. BRIDGES: I think it is certainly not the duty of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Higgs, to accuse anyone of wasting the time of the House. When I approach anything like the waste of time that that hon. member is guilty of I will thank him to remind me, when I will cease, and give him an opportunity of overtaking me. I called "Not formal" to this motion on my own responsibility, and no member of the Government knew anything at all of my contemplated action.

Mr. DAWSON: Swim out of it.

Mr. BRIDGES: I really do not think there is any necessity for me to make any such assertion. The two members of the Government who have spoken have told the House that they even assisted the hon. member for Rockhampton to bring this motion forward so that it is not very likely that they would put me or any other member up to stonewall the motion.

Mr. DAWSON: What is your objection to it?

Mr. BRIDGES: I will tell the hon. member at once that I have no objection to it or to the select committee, but I do think that a motion of this sort should not go as formal. I think that the member moving it should at least give some reason for wishing a select committee

to inquire into this matter. I did not think when I called "Not formal" that the question would take half-an-hour. In fact, I was very much in sympathy with a member on this side who wished to get on to his business.

Mr. KIDSTON: You have shown it in a practical way.

Mr. BRIDGES: When an hon. member on the other side gets up I certainly do feel that there is likely to be very little time left for any other business. Still I felt I was justified in calling "Not formal," and I do not think the hon. member was justified in getting his rag out and becoming abusive.

Mr. HIGGS: That is very unparliamentary language.

Mr. BRIDGES: Well, then I would say he was not justified in losing his temper. Surely an hon. member is justified in calling "Not formal" to any motion if he thinks fit to do so.

Mr. DAWSON: An important member too.

Mr. BRIDGES: Whether the hon. member considers me an important member or not it matters very little to me, I can assure him. I fully reciprocate his feeling in the matter, and I trust we will not fall out as regards that. But I can assure him that if at any time I think that reasons should be given for the passing of a motion in this House I am quite prepared to call "Not formal." I think it is a serious thing, when a matter has been decided by our Elections Tribunal, which has the confidence of members on both sides, that the House should take the matter up and refer it to another tribunal. Before that is done, at all events, we ought to have some good reasons given to us for adopting such a course.

Mr. HARDACRE: This does not refer to the matter that came before the courts at all. It is quite a different thing.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That decision cannot be affected.

Mr. BRIDGES: I am well aware that the decision of the Elections Tribunal cannot be affected.

Mr. DAWSON: Because you have just been told so.

Mr. BRIDGES: I certainly would not go to the hon. member for Charters Towers for advice, because I question very much whether he would be able to advise me, and if he did, I would not be prepared to accept his advice. I do not think there are any members of this House so dense as to think that the decision of the Elections Tribunal can be upset. However, I do not see that any good end can be served by discussing the matter further. I regret that through calling "Not formal" my hon. friend has lost the opportunity of bringing on his business. He has lost his opportunity this afternoon, but I trust he has not lost it for long.

Mr. HIGGS: Make way for the next stonewaller.

Mr. BRIDGES: We will call on you.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Mr. Speaker,

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. DAWSON: As usual.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: One reason why I think I am justified in rising is on account of the intolerance shown by hon. members opposite to any discussion save that which proceeds from themselves.

Mr. TURLEY: Why, you were cheered when you rose.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It is the subject of public comment—it is the subject of numberless articles—that hon. members opposite are in the habit of speaking at great length, repeating one another, and saying the same things hundreds of times over; and yet, if an hon. member on this side intimates that he has

something to say, he is at once met with derisive cheers, or something of that sort. It is clear to me that while hon. members opposite respect liberty of speech, it is with the condition that that liberty is enjoyed solely by themselves.

MR. BROWNE: We have not tried to ring in two speeches on one question yet.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: With regard to certain explanations offered by certain members of the Cabinet as to their want of knowledge of what was going to take place, I think it was really necessary, because the hon. member for Rockhampton practically wished it to be understood that it was so extraordinary that a member on this side should desire information, that the only way in which he could explain the occurrence was to impute to certain members of the Cabinet that they, while affecting to assist him, had surreptitiously obtained a volunteer to oppose the motion. The other alternative offered by the hon. member for Rockhampton was cussedness. I don't know what the hon. member means by cussedness. Does he mean that hon. members curse other people, or does he mean that they themselves are cursed? As has been said already by those who have addressed the House, it is a very singular thing that a member on this side cannot use his independent judgment to get an explanation as to why a committee should be appointed without being vilified, and it shows clearly that hon. members on the other side do not respect either liberty of thought or liberty of action. I venture to say that if a considerable amount of talk has taken place over it, the hon. member for Rockhampton is himself to blame. First of all, he imputes motives to the Cabinet, then he uses terms towards the hon. member for Nundah which are at any rate superfluous, and lastly he himself occupies, I should say, at least one hour. When a man is extravagant of the time himself, I think a lecture from him proceeds with very ill grace on other persons' extravagance of time. There was not the slightest necessity, in my opinion, for the hon. member to make out his case at any very great length; it was only necessary to give an explanation, and a very short one. There was no desire to oppose him at all; but because the hon. member for Nundah, in the exercise of his judgment—and he is entitled to exercise his judgment—he does not come here manacled and fettered—because the hon. member exercises this right and simply asks that something should be said, the hon. member, without any necessity whatever—because he had already secured the support of the Ministry—the hon. member considers it necessary to make a speech as long as if he himself was accused of the most terrible offence and was on his trial. Although I have no objection to the matter being dealt with by a committee, especially after the Attorney-General has stated that he has no objection—because I take it that he is a very much better authority than I can possibly be—at the same time, exercising my individual judgment, I do not think the reference of this question to a committee is on the whole a good plan if what the hon. member tells us is his object is the one that he wishes to obtain. He says that a crime has been committed—a most serious offence—and he wants a committee appointed in order that the delinquents may be found out. That is actually the reason, or the chief reason, which the hon. member gives us why the committee should be appointed—not to perform the ordinary duties of a select committee, but to perform the duties of the police. Suppose the hon. member lost his carpet bag, would he get a committee to inquire into the circumstances as to how his carpet bag happened to be stolen, and where the delinquents were?

MR. REID: Get the committee to find the carpet bag.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Just so. That is why it occurs to me that the appointment of a select committee under such circumstances to satisfy the ends which are aimed at by the hon. member for Rockhampton is highly improper. It is evident that, if the hon. member lost his carpet bag and a committee were appointed to inquire into the matter, the obligation of the committee would be to find the carpet bag; and that shows—thanks to the generous interposition of the hon. member for Enoggera—clearly to my mind the very absurdity of appointing a committee for any such purpose.

MR. HARDACRE: What carpet bag is that?

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Although it is my opinion that to appoint a committee to inquire into a case of crime, to appoint that committee to detect the delinquents, or to find the stolen papers—although to my mind it is absolutely useless, still I am quite willing to be guided by the opinion of the Attorney-General, and more especially by the arrangement entered into—namely, that no formal opposition is going to be offered by any hon. members on the front bench to this proposal. If there was any desire to take up time, Heaven knows the hon. member for Rockhampton has provided the most abundant material. He has actually read the opinion, the confidential opinion, of a constable as to the Labour party. I really must ask who would gain by taking these votes away? Were they used? And if they were used, who did those persons vote for? Who, in fact, put them on the roll?

MR. REID: That is for the committee to find out.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: How can the committee find the claims if the police cannot find them? Is it to be supposed that the inquisitorial propensities of members—is it to be supposed that there are such born detectives in this House that they can do work of that kind which the police cannot do? However, I am not on the committee; and I am sure I should decline to do duties of the kind, because I should be entirely unfitted. I am not a policeman; I am not a detective; and I have no ambition to become one. If the hon. member desires that this committee shall be formed in order to detect crime, I shall offer no objection, but I should be very sorry indeed to be a member of that committee.

Question put and passed.

ADVANCES TO SETTLERS.

* MR. KATES (*Cunningham*), in moving—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is, in the interest of Queensland, and of the agricultural and dairying industries in particular, highly desirable that during the present session a Bill be introduced to enable the Government to make advances to farmers and selectors at reasonable rates of interest on the credit foncier system, now successfully established in France, Germany, Victoria, New Zealand, South Australia, and other agricultural countries with marked beneficial results—

said: I very much regret that the time for private members is so short, and I hope that when we get Friday sittings the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government will give us the whole of the day for private members. A week or twelve days ago I asked the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government whether it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill during the present session to enable the Treasurer to make advances to farmers and selectors on the credit foncier system, and the answer was "Yes." But that was qualified with the words, "if time permits." Well, I hope that time will permit. In fact, time will have to permit.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. KATES: This is a very important question, and it is a most important question to the present Parliament. We have been promised assistance in this direction by previous Ministers—by Sir Hugh Nelson, by the late Sir Thomas McIlwraith, by the late T. J. Byrnes, and by the members of the present Government. Now, it is my intention to speak very plainly, and I hope that what I say will be received in the same spirit in which it is given. I am a supporter of the present Government, but I have a duty to perform to my constituents, and to the country, and to the Government also.

Mr. HIGGS: Hear, hear! Form a new party.
Mr. KATES: On the 12th September last year, the Governor told us—

The agricultural industry continues to justify the hopes of those who have always held that in this field Queensland need fear no competition. The area under cultivation increases year by year, and the results obtained are such as to justify the most sanguine anticipations. Nevertheless, in a young country such as this, settlers have many difficulties to encounter, and a Bill to enable them to obtain financial assistance will be submitted to you.

That was last year; and where is the Bill?

Mr. HIGGS: It is not here because of the Royal Bank and other banks. That is the reason.

Mr. KATES: I say, Where is the Bill?

Mr. McDONALD: In the box.

Mr. KATES: Now, last session was a barren session, but there was some excuse for that. We had to deal with the South African war and the federation business. This session we have no circumstances of that kind to face, and unless this can be done this session it will not likely be done next session. For that reason I feel myself constrained to introduce this motion, and I hope it will be given effect to. I may as well tell the Government that if they do not introduce this Bill I shall introduce a Bill in that direction myself, and I hope that members on both sides of the House will carry it through.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HIGGS: They won't give you a chance. You will have to leave.

Mr. KATES: I hope there will be no necessity for me to do so. I would rather the Government should do it, because it should be a Government measure. In all the other colonies it has been a Government measure, and I hope it will be a Government measure here also. Now, how can I face my constituents if this is not done? They will say, "Why do you support a Government that do not keep their word or their pledges." I am going to speak plainly, and in doing that probably I am the best friend that they have got in this House. I say when a man points out to me what my faults are that makes him my best friend. We are on the eve of federation, and I think, as I have told the people on the Darling Downs, that with the introduction of such a measure as this they will be able to compete with the southern colonies in agricultural produce, because a measure like this will cheapen production and enable the producers to compete. This question to my mind goes hand in hand with the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act. So far back as 1887 I introduced a resolution for the repurchase of arable estates, and on that occasion I was assisted by the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom. I was also well assisted by other hon. members—by the Hon. John Douglas—and even previous to that time your late lamented father, Sir, Mr. James Morgan—and the father of the hon. member for South Brisbane, the late Mr. T. B. Stephens, were in favour of an Agricultural Lands Purchase Act. But in those days my resolution was too advanced for the then Conservative Government. I am glad to say that that Act has become law, and is now on our statute-book. I say that this should go

hand in hand with cheap money for the farmers; and this is not a new thing. As far back as 1770, after the seven years' war, Frederick the Great, when the prices of produce were low and money was dear, established a credit foncier system with £50,000 to give it a start; and it has become a great success. Where will we find more agricultural prosperity than in Germany or in France, where there are 10,000,000 of peasant proprietors. This system it was that enabled the French Government to pay the indemnity imposed by Germany after the Franco-Prussian war. That indemnity was chiefly raised from the peasant proprietors. But we need not go so far away as that. We have our southern colonies to look to. There is Victoria, there is South Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and Western Australia. They have all introduced the system of cheap money for the farmers and selectors with considerable beneficial results. Let us see what Victoria has done. It is not very long ago since the Treasurer of Victoria said: "It is with gratification that I come to one of the most successful experiments that have been made by the State, the advancement of money under the Act passed by the late Treasurer on the credit foncier system. The amount actually advanced to farmers under the new Act during the year—"

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

ALBERT RIVER, BURKETOWN, AND LILYDALE TRAMWAY BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. FISHER: I do not know whether the state of the House at present is due to the lack of interest taken in these Government measures, which the Premier recently stated were of all importance. I think some further consideration is necessary in dealing with the measure now before the House. It is not usual that a debate commenced a fortnight ago, and in connection with which so much discussion has intervened, should have had so little relation to the principles of the Bill which is before the House for its second reading, and I agree with the Premier when he asks that all the same ground should not be traversed again on the second reading. That, I think, should be avoided.

The PREMIER: You will be very clever if you can do it.

Mr. REID: The previous discussion was all about sending it to a select committee.

Mr. FISHER: We will try. It was asked that on the amendment moved the discussion should be confined to the question of sending the Bill to a select committee, and in the few words I said on the amendment I confined myself to that. It will be seen that the object of the Bill is the construction of about 120 miles of a tramway, from the mouth of the Albert River, *via* Burketown, to the Lilydale mines, occupied, we are told, by "certain gentlemen." I think that from the outset we should have known more as to who these "certain gentlemen" were. That is one of the weaknesses of the Government, that they did not clearly point out who the members of this company were. The concessions to be granted to them are the freehold of the land on which the railway and the railway buildings will rest, and the exemption from labour conditions of an area of mineral lands amounting to 2,000 acres in extent.

Mr. FORSYTH: One thousand acres.

Mr. FISHER: I am glad of the interjection by the hon. member, because I do not want to be misled myself or to mislead any member of

this House in this matter. If the hon. gentleman will follow me in reading the preamble of the Bill he will see that—

The company is the occupier of certain mineral lands at Lilydale and Lawn Hill, in the district of Burke, the situation of which lands is approximately shown in the schedule to this Act, and is the lessee, under the provisions of the Mining Act of 1898, of certain pieces or portions of such lands: And whereas the company is desirous of obtaining leases, under the provisions of this Act, of the said lands, and is also desirous of selecting additional mineral lands in the said district not exceeding in the aggregate 1,000 acres in area, and obtaining leases for the same under the provisions of this Act.

The hon. member will see that that is 1,000 acres of "additional mineral lands."

Mr. FORSYTH: There is only 1,000 acres altogether exempt.

The PREMIER: Two thousand acres.

Mr. FISHER: Yes, this refers to an additional 1,000 acres which the company may select. Still the hon. member for Carpentaria—who prides himself on knowing all about the district and the Bill—says that only 1,000 acres will be exempt. Could there have been a better reason shown for sending the Bill to a select committee to provide information for hon. members? Unfortunately, that was decided before the hon. member knew what the Bill said. I find that the concessions are the freehold of the land on which will be the railway and the buildings connected therewith, and 2,000 acres of picked mineral lands. Let hon. members understand that as the Bill is drafted this company, or these "certain gentlemen," as the Secretary for Railways calls them, are not bound to select in one, two, or three blocks in the case of the additional 1,000 acres, but they may pick it out anywhere within forty miles of the railway and at any time between now and fifty years hence. Is that a desirable thing? Is it desirable that they shall get 1,000 acres, and then as new development takes place and anything is discovered, they may pick out the better pieces and deprive the prospecting miners of their legitimate rights to some advantage from the mineral country.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: They cannot have much advantage if they have no road to take their ores to market.

Mr. FISHER: The hon. member for Mackay does not know, apparently, that gold, and silver, and copper may be treated at the mines.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: There is no necessity for a railway to the Etheridge on that argument.

Mr. FISHER: There is a necessity for railways all over the colony, and especially in a country like this where the rivers do not provide means of transit. The hon. member knows well that people need to travel as expeditiously as possible, but he does not know, apparently, that goldfields may be prospected without railways. Low-grade goldfields can never be very prosperous without cheap communication with a seaport, whether by railway or otherwise. And these 2,000 acres are to be entirely free from labour conditions and also entirely free from estate taxation—that is, excepting the £1 per acre. I doubt whether we should be justified in doing this—whether the usual royalty charge should not be made against the mines of this company just as they are against the Mount Morgan or any other company. If they get gold the Treasurer has no right to exempt that company from the usual royalty charge. If he does, he may be doing a thing that he will perhaps regret afterwards—that is, if the Bill is carried. There is a further concession, and a very handsome one. The company are to be permitted to charge 50 per cent. in excess of the rates charged by the Commissioner for Railways. In a previous debate there was a good deal of comment on the fact that permission was granted in that

Bill to charge an excess of 25 per cent. In this Bill it is proposed to give the right to charge 50 per cent. in excess of the Commissioner's charges on the railways of the colony—not, be it observed, at the time the charges are made, but at the time of the passing of the Act. Although twenty, thirty, or forty years hence the rates on the State railways may be reduced to one-half what they are now, this company will still have the right to charge 50 per cent. more than the rates charged by the Commissioner at the time this Bill becomes law. It is no doubt a desirable thing, from the company's point of view, that they should be able at once to fix the rates 50 per cent. in excess of those charged on the Government railways at the time the Bill passes, and to keep them so for the next fifty years, but I trust that will be considerably modified if the Bill gets into committee. The company are to be subjected to certain restrictions. They have five years in which to build half the length of the proposed line, or a stated distance of sixty miles. If that has been completed at the end of five years, they may get an extension of time of one year for the balance of the work. That gives the company six years for the construction of 120 miles of a tramway which may not exceed two feet in gauge. The time is exceptionally liberal, to say the least of it. For six years after 1901 the company will be able to parade the concessions given under the Bill, and they may or they may not parade them to their own advantage and to the disadvantage of the country. At any rate the time is exceedingly liberal, and it can only be expected that the company will make the best use of the statutory concessions they are hoping to get under this measure. They are further restricted by a 5 per cent. deposit on the estimated cost of the line, which is said here to be £140,000. It is further provided by way of restriction that they are not to be permitted to run the Railway Commissioner off the field. That is, they are not to be permitted to charge a less rate for the carriage of goods and passengers than the Commissioner may be charging for the time being. I draw attention to this because the construction of the two subsections of clause 15 are different. In the case of the preventing of the company competing unduly with the Commissioner, that is to apply at the time the competition may take place. In the other instance, the 50 per cent. is to be on the rates charged at the time of the passing of the Act. It seems a singular thing that there should be two different ideas in the same clause, and both particularly in favour of the company. Anyone looking at the Bill will see that, although the Minister for Railways stated that this railway was not likely to be built unless by a private company of this kind, the Bill contemplates the State building part of the line or extending the State line beyond this railway. Notwithstanding the impoverished district, we are told that the State reserves to itself the power to either construct a branch line or to extend the line further into the country. This seems to show that, although this may be an unsettled district at the present time, it may be very valuable. As was the case with regard to the Darling Downs, referred to the other night by the hon. member, Mr. Groom, the Government may be altogether deceived as to the nature of the country. The Minister for Railways stated that this is a remote part of the colony. So the place where we are now standing was but a short half century ago a remote part of New South Wales. Fifty years hence it may not be a remote part of the colony, and the people living there then may blame us for allowing these concessions to be given to any company for fifty years. The hon. member told us he was scoffed at and denounced for saying that the Darling Downs land was of

any value; it is now known to be one of the finest parts of the colony. It is just possible that the same may apply to the land in the Gulf country. I have heard some hon. members say very good land has been found in that district; others say that is not so. An ex-Minister for Lands tells me that some of the finest land in the world is there.

Mr. HARDACRE: On the authority of the ex-member for Carpentaria.

Mr. FISHER: That is a phrase very commonly used by anyone representing a district. At the same time there is just a possibility that in that vast territory in the North of the colony there may be some very fine land, and it is undesirable that it should be given away, or the construction of a railway to it should be given away, to any private syndicate. There is one clause in the Bill which provides that there shall be no differential rates—and a very necessary provision it is—to prevent the company or syndicate from victimising any man or any number of individuals with whom they may have quarrelled. But the remedy provided is so difficult that it will be practically impossible for any individual to avail himself of it. If a person feels aggrieved he must apply to the Supreme Court. I think the Secretary for Railways will agree with me that no ordinary selector or ordinary citizen living alongside that line, and suffering from some grievance, could afford to go to the Supreme Court to get it remedied. The hon. gentleman will do the right thing if he will accept an amendment giving the Commissioner for Railways power to decide such matters, and making him the sole arbiter. If the hon. gentleman will turn to subsection 3 of clause 21 he will see the provision to which I am referring. However much I may differ from the principle of the Bill I desire to see that enactments which are passed should work as fairly as possible for all parties concerned. I should like further to point out the disadvantage of allowing the company to select their additional 1,000 acres at any time, and in any place within forty miles of any portion of the railway.

Mr. JENKINSON: It is a most obnoxious principle.

Mr. FISHER: Yes, it is; and on this matter I appeal to mining members particularly. Here is a syndicate which has already got the best part of the mineral lands in that particular district, and they are to all intents and purposes monopolists in that district. They will have command of political influence, and of all sources of information, and if any other good mineral land is discovered there they will be the first in the field. With their sources of information, and with their resources, they will be able to defeat every poor prospector who may come along; they will be able to seize every valuable piece of land that is discovered. Under the provisions of this Bill, the land in that district for forty miles on each side of the railway—that is, for a width of eighty miles by 120 miles long—will be practically barred to the prospectors of this colony for fifty years. And, as I am reminded by the leader of the Labour Opposition, who is the greatest authority on mining in this House, as the company will not come under the provisions of the Mining Act they will practically have a monopoly of all the minerals they can get, be they gold, copper, platinum, tin, or any other mineral, and they will be exempt from any taxes whatever. I appeal to the Minister on this matter, because I think that is a fatal defect in the Bill from a mining point of view. It is not wise to insert provisions in this measure which may be injurious to the mining industry in the future, and I hope that when we point out errors in the Bill, or matters which are likely to work injury

to an important industry, the hon. gentleman will receive our representations in the way they are made, and give them the consideration they deserve.

Mr. KIDSTON: What do the company want the concession for?

Mr. FISHER: Notwithstanding what has been said by the Premier and the Secretary for Railways, I think they want the concession wholly and solely to make money. I know of no other motive for carrying on business, and it is utter nonsense, if the hon. gentleman will excuse me for saying so, to imagine that the gentlemen composing this company are philanthropists.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are not to blame; they are not doing it for philanthropic purposes.

Mr. FISHER: The hon. gentleman is to blame for that idea getting abroad, for he, and the Premier, and the Attorney-General, stated that the company were not coming along to make a profit—they were coming along to provide means of communication for the people. Did not the Attorney-General say that? Let the hon. gentleman look up *Hansard*, and he will see that that is what he said. And I can show the Premier's own words, in which he said that this was not a company coming along looking for profit.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: A company of philanthropists?

Mr. FISHER: They are not.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is what you say.

Mr. FISHER: No, I do not say that; I am quoting what Ministers said in connection with the company when they were most anxious to get this Bill through. They then claimed that this was a philanthropic company coming along to help to develop the resources of the country, and to help the colony along. Did not Ministers bewail the state of the country, and say that this company was coming along to save the colony and save its reputation? That is practically what they said—that this company was coming along to save the colony in its desperation.

Mr. BROWNE: They need not work their line for five years.

Mr. FISHER: The Bill says six years. The Chief Secretary will remember what took place in 1884 when the House passed the Urangan Railway Act, and gave a concession to a syndicate, which for years and years they dangled before the public, and then utterly failed. For five years, that is up to 1889, that company prevented that district from getting legitimate railway communication. £2,000 was the deposit made by the company, and by an enactment of Parliament it was duly forfeited to the Crown. What was the result? In 1899 they were able

—I suppose by a little judicious [7:30 p.m.] manœuvring—to get a sufficient number of members on both sides of the House to agree to that £2,000 being refunded. That is one of the results of one of the most recent attempts to build lines by private enterprise—by syndicate companies. Therefore, the fact that this company are called upon to make a deposit is of very little importance, and can hardly be relied upon. As a matter of fact that very concession prevented the construction of the Pinalba railway for a number of years, and in all probability prevented it from coming in under the ordinary loan scheme. If that concession had not been passed the people there would have had a State railway, to which they were justly entitled. If the hon. gentleman will look at the discussion when that railway proposal was going through, he will see that it was contended that there was no possibility of any line being built in that direction. Yet the lines from Maryborough to

Burrum, to Howard, to Bundaberg, to Gladstone were built within sixteen years of that Bill being passed. And now these continual repetitions of that old worn-out argument have been tried to be made apply to this district. But I feel sure that the experience of the past will be the experience of the future. I believe there will be a State railway from Normanton to Cloncurry in a few years' time, and also from the Albert River towards this mineral field. I submit that it is not a wise policy for the Minister for Railways to say that the State will not be able to build this line for a very long time. "A very long time" is a big phrase. I would like to know what the hon. gentleman means by that.

Hon. G. THORN: Very soon we shall have no money, on account of federation.

Mr. FISHER: In my opinion we will have as ample funds after federation as before it. The hon. member need not be anxious on that point. After federation takes place the possibilities of getting money will be just as easy as now.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You are sound on some subjects, I see.

Mr. FISHER: Perhaps there are a pair of us. The hon. gentleman is always sound when he agrees with me, and that is very seldom. What reason can be given for exempting this company from the payment of royalties on the minerals won? I ask why should they be exempt from taxation—for it really amounts to that. Every mine taken up under certain conditions may be taxed, but this company is to be free from all taxation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Until the termination of their lease.

Mr. FISHER: Yes, and that is fifty years hence. What right have we to exempt this company from taxation; to restrict all the Treasurers that come hereafter from imposing the taxation they think necessary? Is this not putting extra taxation on the mineral fields which are now open, or may be opened up in the future? When a small company takes up a lease of mineral lands they are taxed, but when a large company comes along they are to be exempt from this taxation; so that the smaller companies will be put into unfair competition with these larger companies. I ask, why is it desirable to exempt this company from taxation, and whether it is statesmanlike or right to restrict future Treasurers as to what taxation they will impose, and on whom they shall impose it? I don't think that is wise, and I think the hon. gentleman will see that it is not wise later on. Then, if the contention of the hon. gentleman opposite is correct—that the gentlemen who are the promoters of this Bill are wealthy, and have all the necessary cash—why do they ask in this Bill to be allowed to let, assign, or mortgage their rights and privileges at any time they think fit? It has been stated that the gentlemen who are promoting this matter are wealthy; that they are going to spend their own money in the venture, take their own risk, and that the State will not be put to the expense of one penny—well, if all this is true, why has this provision been so carefully put into this Bill—that this company may be able to let, assign, or mortgage their rights at any time?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Would you like to prohibit them from doing that?

Mr. FISHER: No; but I think the hon. gentleman will agree with me that this privilege should not be allowed until five years after the passing of this Act. Will the hon. gentleman agree to that? This is a most important question that the Minister should consider seriously. He says the intentions of these gentlemen are *bond fide*; that they have money, and that they have entered into a speculation that they believe in thoroughly. But will the hon. gentleman

admit that it is a sound principle to only allow them to let, assign, or mortgage their rights five years after this Bill is passed?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. FISHER: Or one year after.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. TURLEY: Not one hour after.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is purely a matter of business.

Mr. FISHER: What is the reason for the Minister refusing to prohibit this company from exercising this privilege until twelve months after this Bill is passed? It is an indication that this matter is inaugurated for the purpose of certain people making money on the London market, at the expense of the people of this colony.

Mr. LESINA: They are waiting for a cable now announcing the passage of this Bill, and they will have to wait.

Mr. FISHER: Reference was made on moving the second reading of this Bill to the state of the finances of the colony; to the necessity of receiving with open arms syndicate proposals; and subsequently reference was made to the unfavourable reception the last loan received on the London market. Is it not possible that this syndicate—which is a large and influential one—may be connected with the syndicate which wishes to build the railway to Cloncurry?

Mr. FORSYTH: Not at all.

Mr. FISHER: Is it not possible that they may have some influence on the stock exchange—some under-current to defeat our loan.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is no saying what may happen.

Mr. FORSYTH: There is no connection between the companies.

Mr. FISHER: It is a fair inference to draw. Ministers themselves have declared that this is a powerful syndicate, and I am inclined to think that there are very high and prominent titled men connected with these syndicates, and that there are lions on the London Stock Exchange who are dabbling in them, and do you think they are going to stand by and allow anything to pass if it conflicts with their own interests? And if that has been the case in the past before they got the concessions, what will it be after they have got these large concessions that the Government are offering them under the various Bills that are now before this House? It will then occur that whenever this Government, or any subsequent Government, endeavours to purchase these lines, we shall have of necessity to go to the London Stock Exchange to get the money, and, if these syndicates are unwilling to dispense of their railways, they will work their very best to ruin the interests of the colony, and prevent the Government getting the money they want.

Mr. BOWMAN: Unless they get their own terms.

Mr. FISHER: If they are against the Government purchasing they will certainly have no pious qualms about preventing the Government doing what they desire. By the action of this Government they may be binding for fifty years all future Governments to continue a line of policy to which they are opposed. This is no mere idea of what may take place, but it is a possibility. It is an everyday occurrence. It is considered part of the business of speculators—to use no stronger term—on the stock exchange to "bull" and "bear" the market and, certainly, if it is to their interests, they will do it, whether it is the Queensland Government or any other Government that is going to suffer. There is one question I would like to mention, and that is the question of urgency. It has been stated by the Premier that this is a matter of urgency. Now, the leader of the Opposition has pointed out that it is not necessary to construct

the line for six years—which is an altogether unnecessary length of time—so that the question of urgency does not apply. But it may be brought forward for another reason. It is more likely that the Government are so poverty-stricken in legislative work relating to railways that they have applied to private companies to build some lines, while, at the same time, the Secretary for Railways has in his box applications for about £24,000,000 worth of State railways, and yet private enterprise takes precedence of all the State demands by the people of this colony.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It gives them a possibility of paying.

Mr. FISHER: That is an argument that is used in favour of syndicate railways—that, if you allow a syndicate to build this line, the money will be available for the next one. But, if that principle had been carried out in the past, we should have stood here to-day—not as a colony owning our principal lines of railway, but as a colony with its railways entirely constructed by private syndicates.

Mr. BROWN: We should never have had a railway at all, because they would not have started them.

Mr. FISHER: Well, there is something in that. They would not have started them until they found that they would pay, and, when they did start them, they would take good care that they paid well. The farmers may cry out now that the rates on the State railways are too high; but if the railways were owned by private syndicates they might squeak or agitate as much as they liked, but they would have to pay considerably more in rates than they do at the present time.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Question!

Mr. FISHER: I am quite sure that if the hon. member for Lockyer came down to the manager of a railway run by private enterprise, he would receive the greatest courtesy, and every consideration would be given to his representations, but, at the same time, he would be politely informed that the exigencies of the company necessitated the making of a profit, and the hon. member would have to go away with the consolation that the rates could not be reduced.

Mr. KIDSTON: That was exactly what was said the other day by the shipping companies.

Mr. FISHER: That is exactly what happens in every country in the world. I am quite sure that, though the hon. member for Lockyer questioned my statement, he has the feeling that it is much more desirable to have the State to deal with than to be at the mercy of a private company. There is another matter that I may refer to in a casual way, and that is that it is unfortunate that the Commissioner for Railways should have had to report on these private railway schemes just before the expiration of his term of office. I do not for a moment suggest that that has influenced him one iota, but I suggest this to the Government—that if they had had any delicacy of feeling, knowing that there was no urgency for these measures, they would not have placed the onus on the Commissioner of having to decide in favour of these private railways at this juncture. They should have brought in legislation to strengthen his hands for a term of years, and then allowed him to decide finally what he believed regarding these private railways. No man is free from some influences, and, however free the Commissioner for Railways may be, he must remember that the Government have the renewal of his term of office in their hands. Of course I am only mentioning this in a casual way, and I mention it against the Government, because they could easily have delayed this matter till next year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It has been delayed for a great number of years.

Mr. FISHER: There is a declaration made for the first time, after much debate, that these matters have been delayed for a great number of years, and, so far as I remember, the first communication in the correspondence is dated November, 1898. That is a proof that we are simply in the dark regarding the state of affairs. We are told by official papers that the first communication took place a little more than two years ago, and now the Minister interjects that they have been delayed for a number of years. What does he mean by "a number of years"?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They have been delayed for all eternity.

Mr. FISHER: That is shifting the ground altogether. I venture to think that it would be a most desirable thing if this Bill could be delayed for all eternity, because I am opposed to the principle of the measure altogether. This measure cannot possibly have been delayed for a number of years if the correspondence which we have before us is all the correspondence which has taken place. Why, if there has been more correspondence during a series of years, has it been kept back from this House? I should just like to mention here that I am in a position to state that a late Commissioner for Railways in this colony has been dabbled and is interested in some of these private railway proposals.

Mr. LEAHY: While he was commissioner.

Mr. FISHER: No, I do not say that. I do not want to say things that are not correct, or which would be better left unsaid.

Hon. G. THORN: Why should he not?

Mr. FISHER: I am not going to argue that. It is too debatable a question to argue at this stage. I do not intend to discuss this matter at any great length, but, speaking as a representative of miners, who will be the people to make this tramway a success or a failure, I wish to put before the Minister, for his consideration, a suggested amendment. If the Bill is going to be passed, let it be passed in as perfect a form as possible. Under the Mining Act miners have the right to occupy a piece of land on the field as a residence area, where they can live. Now, under this Bill the whole of the land will be in possession of the company, without any restriction at all. I ask the hon. gentleman if he will be agreeable to an amendment to permit of the surface rights being given to miners who will be able thereon to erect their residences? I think that is a fair thing to ask.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I should think the company would do that themselves.

Mr. FISHER: The company seek the ownership of the surface rights for a different purpose altogether. They desire to have the whole control of the land so that they may build labourers' dwellings, and thus they will have full control over the miners, and in case of any labour dispute they will simply take possession of any houses the miners have put up, because they will be on their property. The miners are on the land on sufferance, and they will be commanded to leave the property of the syndicate company. There are hon. members here who know of that having been done, if they have not seen it done. Does the Minister believe that that is a right position to put the miners in? Is it a desirable power to give to the syndicate company? If they have that power they have the workmen in their hands, and can crush them as they choose.

Hon. G. THORN: You are letting the cat out of the bag.

Mr. FISHER: Does the hon. member for Fassifern not agree with that? Does he desire to see the independence of the miners of this colony sapped? Does he desire to see the independent miners of this colony become the mere

serfs of a company? I always understood that the hon. gentleman all through his political life had endeavoured to get freeholds for all those who desired them. I understood that that was the desire of the Government, and yet they propose to give absolute power to this company to take possession, not only of this mineral wealth, but of the surface rights also, and establish such a monopoly that the working miners will be at their mercy.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We give the grazing farmer the right over 20,000 acres, and this company the right over only 1,000 acres.

Mr. FISHER: The grazing farmer alone is the resident on that particular block, the miners are in an entirely different position. They naturally desire to live as close to their work as possible. The hon. gentleman says the company are limited to 1,000 acres. They are exempt from labour conditions on 1,000 acres, but they might take up 10,000 acres, and lease another 10,000 acres. There is nothing to prevent any single man from taking up 10,000 acres of gold-fields leases. But under this agreement the company will have absolute rights over those 1,000 acres for a term of fifty years. There is one other aspect of this question which I desire to bring forward, and I shall then conclude. The persons interested in those leases will have an absolute monopoly over them, and being speculators from Great Britain and other distant parts of the world, they will not have the interests of the working miners at heart in the same way as the people who have been brought up in the country and who know the conditions under which labour works here. They will imagine that labourers should work as cheaply in the north of Queensland as in Great Britain, and they will constantly and persistently endeavour, if they cannot get labour cheaply, to indent it to suit their own convenience.

And there is nothing in our laws to prevent them; and there is nothing in this Bill to prevent them. They may indent any kind of labour they like—bar Asiatic labour—to work their mines, and they may deprive the working miners of Australasia of all the rights and privileges which they have hitherto had under more beneficent Governments than this can possibly be.

Mr. GIVENS (*Cairns*): I think if hon. members will consider the matter they will find that this is one of the most important Bills ever introduced into this Chamber. Not only does it propose to make a new law, but it also proposes to repeal two other Acts, so far as they relate to the property of the company. The Minister for Railways seems to regard that statement with incredulity, but if he looks at section 24 he will find that it repeals the Mining Act of 1898 as far as their property is concerned. They are to be absolutely free of all labour conditions, free of all the conditions which are usually placed on all mineral leases under the Act of 1898, and this is a most important point. When they are free of all the provisions in that Act they are also free of all the conditions which are in the mining regulations made under that Act to provide for the safety of the miners and the proper working of the mines. They can work them in such a manner as to be an absolute death-trap to everyone working in them, with the result that some day we may see a wholesale slaughter, and this Parliament would have absolutely no power to do anything. If this Bill gets into committee, I think it is desirable to amend that part at any rate.

Mr. LEAHY: Let us get into committee.

Mr. GIVENS: The hon. member seems to be in a very great hurry. I have heard hon. members opposite times out of number declaiming

against hasty legislation; and it has been put forward as a cheap argument in favour of the existence of the other Chamber that it should and did prevent hasty legislation; and now because we want to have fair and free discussion on this Bill the hon. member says, "Let us get into committee." I think every individual member has a right to express his opinions as well as the hon. member for Bulloo; in fact, I believe the hon. member for Bulloo represents fewer electors than any other member in the House.

Mr. LEAHY: I represent more intelligence than you do.

Mr. GIVENS: If the hon. member represents more intelligence it must be of a very inferior kind; and the people who have that intelligence must be very ignorant of the fact, or else they would have used it to better advantage. The principal population in the hon. member's electorate consists of rabbits. Coming back to the Bill, I contend that it is a dangerous innovation to exempt any individual or association of individuals from the law which compels every other individual carrying on operations of this kind to provide for the safety of his workmen. Then, again, this Bill repeals the Valuation and Rating Act of 1890, as far as the property of this company is concerned. They are going to be allowed to have their very large and valuable concessions, including a very large area of valuable freehold land, and they are to be given the privilege of being free from all rating by local authorities on this land. Every shilling that will be spent by the local authority in making roads will add to the value of the company's property, as well as the properties of those who have to pay the rates in that district; and I don't see why the company should be exempted from paying their due share towards the revenue of the local authority. It is very seldom that we see valuable concessions given to any individual or association of this kind, and I have heard no good reason why these concessions should be granted in this case. It is said by hon. members on the other side that if these mines were proposed to be opened up as goldmines there would not be the same necessity for this railway, and further, that the only way in which these mines can be developed is to provide some means of cheap transit from the mines to the coast. In addition to the first 1,000 acres which the company may take up under this Act, which they may hold fifty years without coming under the labour provisions of the Mining Act of 1898, they can also take up another 1,000 acres in time to come as mineral lands may be discovered in the vicinity of the line within forty miles on either side of the railway, and that will also be exempt from the labour conditions. It is common knowledge that that part of the colony has not been one-fiftieth part prospected, and there may be valuable goldmines discovered in the vicinity of the railway hereafter, and the company would have power to take up the most valuable of these goldmines and hold them under the provisions of this Bill, and be absolutely free from all the provisions of the Mining Act of 1898. A second Mount Morgan might be discovered there; a second goldfield like Charters Towers, Croydon, or Gympie might be discovered there; and this company would have power to take 1,000 acres under the provisions of this Bill, and we would have no power to stop them without going in for repudiation, which, I believe, is very distasteful to hon. members opposite. These facts should not be lost sight of, and in estimating the value of a concession to be granted to the company, I think it would be as well to remember the possibilities of the enormous developments that may take place in the way of new mineral discoveries in that part of the colony. That

is a thing that should be considered in dealing with this Bill, under which the company will have power to step in and monopolise the greater part of these valuable goldfields that may be discovered. Of course it may be said that these mines are useless to us at present, and will be useless until this company develops them; but that does not at all follow, because even if this company was never called into existence, the miners of Queensland have energy and enterprise enough to develop the resources of the country if they only get a little time and the opportunity. In 1867 or 1868, Charters Towers was not discovered; and if the Government of the day had given power to a syndicate to construct a private railway from Townsville to Charters Towers, will anyone contend that the colony would have benefited by the transaction? Certainly not. And Charters Towers would not have been developed to one-twentieth the extent to which it has been developed if it had been under the operation of a syndicate instead of being, as it has been, under the operation of the ordinary working miners of Queensland. It was just the same with every other goldfield—and every mineral field; and before we give away the enormous unknown mineral wealth of a great mineral district in the colony, I think we should be very careful—we should subject any proposal of that kind to the closest possible scrutiny.

Mr. RYLAND: Charters Towers is not more than 2,000 acres altogether.

Mr. GIVENS: The hon. member remarks that there is not more than 2,000 acres of mineral land at Charters Towers. I think he is wrong, because I believe there are considerably more than 2,000 acres of gold-bearing land at Charters Towers. But he is right to this extent—that the best mines there could be put very much inside 2,000 acres.

Mr. RYLAND: Within 1,000 acres.

Mr. GIVENS: I believe that the hon. member is right, that 1,000 acres would cover all the payable goldmines of Charters Towers. I do not intend to occupy the time of the House to any very considerable length on this Bill; but there are one or two points which I wish to emphasise. I will take a further opportunity when this Bill gets in committee to try to amend it in a few directions, which I will indicate. In the first place the Minister for Railways says we must develop the resources of this part of the country. I ask, is this Bill going to help to develop those resources? I say it will lock them up for the next ten years; that is what this Bill will do. As a matter of fact the company need not construct within the next five years more than half the railway, and that means that for the next five years everybody will be debarred from looking at it. They may look at absolutely nothing for the next five years, and this House and this country have absolutely no remedy whatever. And, I ask, is that going to rapidly develop the great mineral country up there? Most certainly it is not. And after waiting for five years for this company to come along and build one-half of the line—because that is all they need do under the provisions of this Bill—after waiting all that time, we may find that the association of individuals which has been got up for the purpose of getting these concessions, in order that they may hawk them round all the stock-jobbing markets of the world, are unable to float their concessions. What will be the result then? They will come back, cap in hand, to this House for an extension of time; and if we refuse to grant it we shall be exactly where we began, only that the development of that land will have been retarded for five

years. Therefore, this Bill, instead of being the means of developing the resources of this portion of the country will have obstructed it. Then, again, the enormity of these concessions escapes notice a good deal, because, although ostensibly they have only the right to construct some 120 miles of railway, they are given powers to construct as many branch lines—to the extent of twenty miles each—as they like. They may build five or ten or twenty branch lines each twenty miles long, and that will give them the control of a great part of the north-western portion of our colony. That is a concession which should not be granted to these particular individuals, or to any particular association of individuals, because in the near future it is anticipated that this continent will be traversed by a great trans-continental railway running from north to south, which will probably serve all that portion of the country better than any of these private syndicate railways will serve it. Then, again, we are told a great deal about the powers of the Commissioner on this proposed line. We are told that the Commissioner is to have almost as much power as he has over Government railways. He is to have the power of inspection, the power of veto over their by-laws, and he is to have the running power over this railway. Now, what is the good of the Commissioner having running powers for 3 feet 6 inch gauge engines, carriages, and trucks over a 2 feet railway?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: This is a tramway.

Mr. GIVENS: It does not matter whether you call it a railway or a tramway. They are all railways or tramways, just as you choose to call them. I am not going to split hairs over the title. The Commissioner is given running powers over the line, and he has 3 feet 6 inch gauge carriages, trucks, and engines, and I want to know how he is going to run them over this particular railway line? Now, those are two directions in which the Bill should be amended, and most certainly I shall strive to the utmost of my power to amend it, so that we shall have one uniform gauge throughout Queensland, whether for public or for private railways. It is absolutely essential in the railway interests of the colony, and in the interests of the colony in every other respect, that the railway gauge should be uniform. Some of the greatest evils that exist in the railway systems of the old country, and of other countries, have occurred through the break of the gauge. Some have one gauge and some have another; and there is also a third gauge, which is usually known as "the mortgage principle." And it appears to me that this line is going to be built on the third gauge—on mortgage principle. The company will get their concessions, and will hawk their mortgages all over the country in order to get the money to build the line. Again, in estimating the value of these concessions, we have to consider that they will have land one chain wide for the full 120 miles of line, and also for the length of every branch line of twenty miles in length that they choose to construct. This syndicate get an absolutely free gift of the land in those areas, and not only that, but in places like stations, and other places, they are to have more than a chain wide, for the purpose of station buildings and any other works that they may require; and they will be able to build townships altogether independent of the country, and in fact they will be able to carry on a State within a State, and be able to defy this House altogether, because they will have the freehold of the land on which they construct their works, and we shall be unable to bring them under either the Mines Act of 1898 or the Valuation and Rating Act of 1890. This House will have no power to interfere, and they

will be able to set the colony at defiance. Then, again, they are allowed to take up land for the purpose of storing their materials on. Under cover of that they may scatter their materials over thousands of acres, and practically get the freehold of that land for ever. I say that this is another direction in which this Bill should be carefully amended, before it is allowed to become law. There is nothing in the world, as the Bill stands, to prevent the company scattering their materials broadcast over thousands of acres, and demanding from the Government the absolute freehold of it. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent it, or if there is I would like the hon. gentleman to point it out to me. However, I am not going to press that point further, because I believe I can do it with more success when we get into committee. I wish to point out to the hon. gentleman in charge of this Bill what really are the provisions of this Bill, and to indicate the directions in which I think it is desirable that they should be amended, so that he may not be taken by surprise when the Bill gets into committee. In addition to having a monopoly, or what amounts practically to the same thing—because no Government would ever build a line alongside their line at least for many years to come, and no private company would offer to build one, and I do not suppose the House would give them permission to do so if they wanted—they are also given the monopoly of a telegraph line. Now, after this year, that will be a matter entirely outside the control of this Parliament. The telegraph systems of the colonies will be under the federal authority, and it seems to me to be little short of a political scandal that this particular Government should in the year preceding federation propose to hand over a portion of the telegraph business of the country to a syndicate like this. Why not allow the Federal Parliament to make their own arrangements rather than allow a syndicate like this a concession in the matter for the next fifty years? That is another clause which I shall do my best to insist shall be amended. The Secretary for Railways seems to think that notwithstanding we are a young country with great resources, and great possibilities of development, we are going to have no progress at all in the next fifty years. He thinks that because freights are comparatively high on the railways now they will always remain at the same rate throughout the colony. At least it is only charitable to suppose that he thinks that, because he provides in this Bill that the company shall be allowed to charge during the whole fifty years, one and a-half times the rates for the carriage of goods and passengers over this line, that are charged at the present time—when this Bill is passed—on the Government railways. Though the fares and charges on the Government lines at the present time may not be very high, yet as the population becomes greater and the traffic becomes greater, it is reasonable to suppose that in the next fifty years the fares and charges on the Government railways will be reduced 50 per cent. It is evident that the Secretary for Railways has not considered the enormous charges this company may make for traffic on their railway if this Bill becomes law in its present form. One and a-half times the fares on the Government railways now will mean, fifty years hence, several times as much as will then be charged on the Government railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You may have a Government at that time running railways free.

Mr. GIVENS: If we do have a Government at that time running railways free, the hon. gentleman will be very fortunate in not being alive or in being buried outside of Queensland,

for if he is buried in Queensland I believe he will turn in his grave with horror at such a thing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will please you all right.

Mr. GIVENS: Most certainly. I hope the time will come when we will have railways as free as roads. That would not be fair at present when every individual is not equally served with railways, and it would not be just that people who are not served by railways should help to pay for the carriage of people who are served by railways over those railways.

Mr. FISHER: He does not understand that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I thank you for the information.

Mr. GIVENS: I am very glad to give the hon. gentleman a little information as I go along. I would like again to emphasise the point that although ostensibly this Bill gives the company the right only to take up silver, copper, and other mineral areas of that kind, there is nothing whatever in it to prevent them taking up goldmines. No matter how rich or extensive they may be, they have the right in the future to take up 1,000 acres of any mineral lands within forty miles of the line. If the Secretary for Railways had any idea of how mineral lands are taken up in this colony he would know that it is usual for two prospectors to go around, and they have the first show, as it is only right they should have, if they report the discovery of gold. But if a discovery of the kind is made in this case, this company may step in and get the best portion of the newly-discovered goldfield.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It would be at the will of the prospectors if that occurred.

Mr. GIVENS: If the hon. gentleman knew the conditions under which prospectors work, he would know that he is making a huge mistake. They have the right to take up a certain portion, but this company would then step in and take up all the choicest and richest portions around them, and would grab the richest and largest portion of the whole of the new goldfield. And it is highly probable that very rich goldfields will be discovered in that country, which is known to be a very auriferous portion of the colony. I ask whether this company should have the power to take up not only the silver, lead, and copper mines, but also the goldmines which do not require any syndicate railway to open up and develop them? Recently we heard hon. members opposite proclaiming the iniquity of allowing a monopoly of wharf frontages. The hon. member for Bulloo, a little while ago, made a very excellent speech on this subject, and one with which I entirely agreed, but we find that in this Bill this company is allowed a wharfage concession.

Mr. LEAHY: No, not in the Bill.

Mr. GIVENS: I ask the hon. gentleman to read clause 25, which says—

In addition to the Crown lands taken, used, and occupied by the company for the tramway, the company may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, select and shall be entitled to a grant in fee-simple of a suitable and sufficient site, not exceeding ten acres in area, at the terminus of the railway, on the Albert River, for wharfage and storage accommodation.

Mr. LEAHY: That is not the foreshore.

Mr. GIVENS: What is the use of splitting straws? The hon. member would build a wharf on the top of the Blackall ranges, and engineer sailing vessels and steamers to anchor alongside the wharf on the top of the mountain. It is ridiculous, and I wonder at a man of the intelligence and acumen of the hon. member—

Mr. LEAHY: Do you know that under our laws the right to the foreshore cannot be given away except by a special Act?

Mr. FISHER: That applies equally to the wharves we have now.

Mr. LEAHY: No, it does not.

Mr. GIVENS: Are we not passing a special Act here?

Mr. LEAHY: No; not for that purpose.

Mr. GIVENS: Then what does clause 25 mean?

Mr. LEAHY: It does not refer to the foreshore.

Mr. GIVENS: That is all absolute nonsense. Everyone knows that no one has the right to give them anything below high-water mark. They get it above high-water mark. That is the foreshore.

Mr. LEAHY: No, no! I will tell the hon. gentleman, for his information, that the foreshore is between high and low water mark. I will be his schoolmaster for once.

Mr. GIVENS: I will not admit that the hon. gentleman can be my schoolmaster. The foreshore is that portion of the shore abutting on the shore. I know what the foreshore is, and it does not matter whether it is perpendicular or otherwise. The hon. gentleman can look it up in the dictionary.

Mr. LEAHY: It will tell you that it is the portion of the shore between high and low water.

Mr. GIVENS: They are to be allowed to get ten acres of this, and as it may be given to them one chain wide, that will mean that they can get 100 chains—a mile and a-quarter—frontage, which may mean a monopoly of all the water frontage there, and very probably will mean a monopoly of the best of the water frontage there. That is another direction in which this Bill requires amendment, and a direction in which I shall most strenuously advocate in committee that it shall be amended. I would like also to mention the danger which exists in passing such a measure as this, giving a private association a monopoly of railway construction in this colony. We know, as a matter of common knowledge, the undue influence exercised upon the Governments in America, and other places where private syndicate railways are rampant. Their influence on Governments and members of Parliament in those countries has become one of the greatest evils of those countries. We know also that in the southern colonies, in times not long gone by, they have exercised an enormous influence over the legislatures there. To come a little nearer home, we find that in the one instance where we gave concessions to a company, the influence they exercised on the Government is always going on. We find that the Government have even entered into illegal contracts to oblige that syndicate—I am speaking of the Chillagoe syndicate—to give them further concessions. We know that the Commissioner for Railways has had his action endorsed by the Executive to lease a portion of the Cairns Railway to them—the most valuable portion, the wharf end. That is a concession which would be granted to no other person or persons in the colony, especially for fifty years. That was illegal, because if the Commissioner has the power to part with one inch of our railways he has the power to part with a mile of them, or the whole lot of them. Let me come to a more recent case. I am only bringing this matter forward as an illustration of what may follow the giving of these concessions to private companies, and as a reason why we should hesitate before we enter into any further transactions of the same nature. In a short time there is to be a Government sale at Chillagoe, by public auction, of town allotments. It is a well-known fact that the Chillagoe Company will require, for their own use and the use of their friends, several of the choicest of those lots, and of course

they desire to get them on the most favourable terms possible. I know, as a matter of fact, that the Cairns agent of the Chillagoe syndicate has applied to the Government for the right to be declared the auctioneer of those allotments, and the Government have kindly acceded to his request. When the Chillagoe Company comes along to buy those allotments for themselves and their friends, the auctioneer, being friendly to them, may perhaps not see the nod from somebody else, and will knock them down at a lower price than they would otherwise fetch to his kind employers, the Chillagoe syndicate. To show how this matter is viewed outside, I will read an extract from a letter I received to-day from one of the most prominent citizens of Cairns. He writes—

It is rumoured here that John Cairns is making application to the Government for to conduct the approaching land sales of town lots at Chillagoe. Competition will probably be keen, and it is needless to tell you the relations existing between John and the Chillagoe Company, who will be requiring choice lots for themselves and friends, and the power that a friendly auctioneer would have in the matter. As we have a Crown land agent and also a commissioner who are competent to do the work, and as they would do the work without a percentage, I think it would be a long way fairer for the public and better for the public purse if the sale was conducted by one of them.

I contend that that is unanswerable. Why, having a land agent and a lands commissioner of their own to do the work of the department, should the Government employ an outside auctioneer to do it?

Mr. JENKINSON: Do not land agents generally sell Crown lands?

Mr. GIVENS: I do not know what is the ordinary practice, but I have seen at least half-a-dozen times the land agent at Cairns conducting Crown land sales. If they say he is not competent to do so now, how is it he was competent to do so then? If he is not competent they are making a very serious reflection on their own officer.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GIVENS: I am instancing this to show how undesirable it is that those concessions should be given to private syndicates. I want to show that some outside influence must be at work to induce the Government to act as they have done; and that if such outside influence can be used by the one syndicate now in existence, there is every likelihood that it will be used by every other syndicate that may be brought into existence. I would like to add this: If the Government did not think it desirable that the land sale should be conducted by the land agent or the lands commissioner, why did they not give the work to one of the Cairns auctioneers? There are at least four highly reputable auctioneers in the town of Cairns. But I suppose they appointed the agent of the Chillagoe syndicate simply because they wanted to oblige that syndicate. Times out of number I have brought forward these coincidences on the floor of the House, until I am tired of believing they are coincidences. I am now inclined to believe there is very much more in them than mere coincidences. There is in Cairns, I may add, an auctioneer who is the returning officer for that constituency, which work he does for nothing; and if the Government had a favour to give to any man, he is the man to whom they should have given it.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. GIVENS: I will not trespass further in that particular direction. I think I have said enough to show that we have some justification, at any rate, for believing that there will be a certain amount of undue influence brought to bear by these syndicates upon the Government, and upon members perhaps in this Chamber or

in the other Chamber, to get concessions and favours for themselves. That is a very dangerous influence—an influence which I hope will never get a footing in this colony, and which I certainly shall do all I can to prevent. I do not intend to occupy the time of the House longer. Hon. members have been accused of taking up a great deal of time in discussing this measure, but I do not think it has been discussed enough. But rather than give any justification whatever for the charge that is so ruthlessly hurled at hon. members on this side of unduly occupying the time of the House in discussing it, I will defer what I have to say until the Bill gets into committee, when I shall do what I can to have it amended in some of the directions I have indicated. In dealing with a measure which repeals the statutes of Queensland, so far as this particular property is concerned, and which proposes to give away concessions, not only valuable at present, but of great prospective value, we should go slowly and be very careful what we are doing. In trying to safeguard the interests of the people we cannot be too careful, and I for one refuse to believe that any time given to the safeguarding of the interests of the public is wasted, and no charge of the kind will deter me from doing what I believe to be my duty to the people who sent me here and the general public of Queensland.

Mr. HIGGS (*Fortitude Valley*): I do not propose to take up more than ten minutes of the time of the House on this occasion, because I recognise the futility of appealing to hon. members opposite to abandon their land-grant railway proposals. Hon. members on this side have endeavoured to impress upon hon. members opposite how injurious it will be to the people of Queensland to depart from our settled railway policy. We have continually stated that to allow private companies to establish railways will mean an interference with trade. We have pointed out that the companies will undoubtedly give certain railway customers concessions to the disadvantage of others, and we have told the House and the country that it will be impossible, almost, to deal with these companies once we give them the concessions. I have discovered a paragraph in a recent *London Times* which, I think, should be published broadcast throughout the colony, because it supports in almost every particular the arguments which have been offered from this side of the House.

Mr. LESINA: Where are the Ministers?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The hon. member for Bulloo is present.

Mr. HIGGS: I think the Ministry have an exaggerated notion of the hon. member's influence. They apparently think that the hon. member has a lot of influence with this side of the House, and that he might at any time break away from them and lead a party on this side; but the day when the hon. member might lead a party from this side of the House has gone by. His influence, if he ever had any, was used long ago; a very great deal of trust was placed in the hon. member, but when the time came he was found wanting. He gave his vote to upset the Chief Secretary, and, having succeeded in doing that, he left us, and when he left us I think his influence over this side left him. Hon. members opposite need not think that the hon. member has very much influence with this side of the House, and if they could only get that idea out of their heads they would not allow him to pull the strings as he has done.

Mr. LEAHY: That is from the *London Times*, I suppose?

Mr. HIGGS: No; it is from the *Queensland Times*. The hon. member has a great interest in syndicate railways.

Mr. LEAHY: You have a perfect itch for making statements which you cannot verify.

Mr. HIGGS: I appeal to hon. members opposite whether the statements I have made with regard to the hon. member's influence are not quite correct?

Mr. RYLAND: "Once bitten, twice shy."

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You admit you have been bitten then?

Mr. HIGGS: I do not know that we do. We did our best to overthrow the Ministry, but the members at the tail of the Ministry had not sufficient confidence to join us, and carry on the Government of the country. This is the little paragraph from the *London Times* of 22nd February, and it should be printed in letters of gold—

RAILWAY MANAGEMENT AND TRADE—At the monthly dinner of the London Chamber of Commerce—

the hon. member for Bulloo, as president of the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce, will be specially interested in this—

held last night at the Trocadero Restaurant, the subject of "Railway Management as Affecting Trades" was discussed. Mr. T. F. Blackwell (chairman of the Council of the Chamber) presided, and among those present were Mr. Tomlinson, M.P., Mr. Charles McArthur, M.P., Mr. J. Innes Rogers, Mr. John Dickson (Southampton Docks), Mr. Rowland Whitehead, Mr. George Barham, Mr. William Cooper, Mr. T. T. Lindrea (president of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce), Mr. Edwin Clements, and Mr. E. Le May. In opening the discussion the chairman said that, as far as he was able to judge, legislation as affecting railways had entirely failed. The railway companies certainly oppressed traders by the classification of goods, and their preferential rates to some traders over others were also to be condemned. [A voice: And especially to foreigners.] He believed that the fairer the rates charged to traders the better it would be for the railway companies themselves. A great injury to business was also caused by the action of the companies in regard to "returned empties," which some of them at one time recently absolutely refused to carry at all. He regretted that they had not been afforded the pleasure that night of entertaining some of the railway managers, who, however, had politely declined the invitation. The great improvements which the companies had of late years introduced for the comfort, convenience, and safety of their passengers were generally recognised, but many things were still wanted, and the importance of the question of workmen's trains was certainly not sufficiently realised by the companies. Another grievance was the want of punctuality, especially on the southern lines; but he could testify, from long personal experience, to the remarkable punctuality of the North-Western Company's service. Mr. Tomlinson said that an improvement was certainly required in regard to the working of the Railway Commission. The railway companies ought to be compelled to keep proper books, which would let traders know what their rights were.

Hon. members will know that in the railway statutes of Great Britain there are clauses which endeavour to compel companies to keep those books and allow the rates they charge to be known to everybody.

The idea of the Board of Trade was to leave everything alone. In the discussion which followed a general opinion was expressed as to the uselessness, in present conditions, of resorting to the Railway Commission for redressing any evil of which traders had to complain; and the system of preferential rates, especially in favour of foreigners, was strongly condemned. The companies' charges generally, especially in comparison with those prevailing in the United States and abroad, were regarded as excessive, and the deficiency of railway trucks and other accommodation was complained of.

I think that brief paragraph supports hon. members on this side in almost every argument they have used as to why we should continue to hold to our policy of State railway construction, and not allow any private company to have the control of our railways.

Mr. LEAHY: Is that the paragraph about me?

Mr. HIGGS: That is the paragraph. It has so affected the hon. member that he cannot stand any more; he is leaving the Chamber. But I do not think it is the paragraph which has

affected him so much; it is rather the statement that I made about his lack of influence in this House that has influenced him. That paragraph from the London *Times*, giving the views of the London Chamber of Commerce, which represents the trading interests of that great city, is a valuable piece of information, and should lead hon. members on the other side to hesitate before departing from our policy of constructing railways by the State. I do not propose at this stage to say any more on the question, but I will endeavour in committee to introduce amendments taken from the Railways Acts of the old country. If the hon. gentleman intends to force this measure through the House, I dare say it will turn out as the president of the London Chamber of Commerce stated the railway companies in England have turned out. At one time I thought there was a great deal of verbosity and unnecessary language about the law, but I have, to a certain extent, altered my opinion on that matter. The action of railway companies is of such a nature as to compel legislators to search the English language for terms with which to circumvent their proceedings, and instead of finding in the English law, as we find in this Bill, that the company shall carry the mails, we find that the House of Commons thought it necessary to say that they should "receive, take up, carry, convey, and deliver" the mails, because the railway companies would endeavour in every possible way to drive their railway engines and carriages through the law. Looking at the experience of Great Britain, we cannot hope to circumvent these companies. Still it is necessary that we should try, and when this Bill goes into committee—as I suppose it will—then it will be for members on this side of the House, and also, I hope, for Ministerialists who are not so keenly interested in the passage of private railway Bills, to try to amend the measure, and bring it into line, as far as possible, with the Acts of Great Britain, and even to improve on those Acts.

Mr. KERR (*Barcoo*): I do not intend to speak long on this Bill, but, as a representative of an important electorate, I think I should at least place on record my opinions with regard to these private railways. The hon. member for Cairns, in speaking about the Minister for Railways, said that possibly fifty years hence we should have free railways in this colony, and that, if the Minister was buried, that would make him turn in his grave. Now, the hon. member for Cairns must not know very much about the Minister for Railways, because he is a man who can change his opinions whenever he likes. We have heard him stand up in this Chamber and declare that he would die fighting against electoral reform.

Mr. HIGGS: And he said he had no confidence in the Government, which he afterwards joined.

Mr. KERR: I had the privilege, during the last election campaign, of hearing the hon. gentleman recant all that; and he informed a very large audience at Barcardine that he would no longer fight against electoral reform, but that he was in favour of it.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I never said anything of the sort.

Mr. KERR: There is an old saying, "As long as the lamp burns, the greatest sinner may return." (Laughter.) It is possible that the Minister for Railways may change his opinions; may turn round and believe that railways should be free to the people of this colony. But then it would not be so easy for him to change his opinions about railways as it was for him to change his opinions about electoral reform.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have never changed my opinions about electoral reform.

Mr. KERR: By introducing these Bills, he is doing something that he will probably be very sorry for afterwards. Various hon. members have dealt with this Bill from a mining standpoint. They have endeavoured to show what effect this measure, if passed, will have on the mining industry, and on the miners themselves. During the brief time that I have at my disposal I shall endeavour to show the reason why I am opposed to syndicate railways, and particularly to this syndicate railways—owing to the powers given to this company under this Bill. Now, we are told on the authority of the agent of this company—and I suppose we must believe what he says—in the correspondence laid on the table of the House. He says—

We have the honour, as agents for the Queensland Silver Lead Mines, Limited, a strong company.

This is from R. Newton and Co. Mr. Newton informs the people of this colony that this company is a strong one. Now, a number of us know that Mr. Newton always believes in being associated with something that is strong—with something that is connected with "filthy lucre." Many of us remember that in 1893 the then leader of the Opposition, Mr. Charles Powers, moved for a return, showing the amounts paid to certain commission agents; and we can now read in "Votes and Proceedings" that in 1891 R. Newton and Co received £1,494 19s. 8d. as commission on special sales of land. That shows that Mr. Newton believes in being connected with anything that is strong. And now we have Mr. Newton—who is well known in the colony—posing as the agent for one of these private syndicate railways. If hon. members will cast their minds back to the time when Sir Thomas Mellwraith brought forward his land-grant railway proposals, they will remember that Mr. Newton was the author of the famous "yellow pamphlet" against these land-grant railways. He was then engaged by the Pastoralists' Association to write this pamphlet, and it had a great effect against the then Government passing their land-grant railway. Now we find the same Mr. Newton the agent of a syndicate railway company which is asking for certain concessions—shall I say certain concessions? I say they are unlimited concessions. If we look at the correspondence laid on the table of the House, for the information of hon. members and for the information of the people of the colony, we find that no names of the members of this company are given; and we have no means of gauging what their financial status is. I consider the powers to be given to this company are unlimited. They will not only be given the power to mine, to build a railway, to carry passengers and goods, but under this Bill they are to be given the privilege of having stores also. We have been told a great deal about the advantages of syndicates like these; of the amount of money they will circulate; what benefit they will be to the business people in the particular districts where they have their lines, and so on. But here we have one company going to get the power to have stores of their own to supply their workmen with whatever they require. Some of us have had some experience of the "truck system" in the old country, and know that legislation had to be passed to abolish that system—a system in which men employed by large employers were compelled to buy their stores from the company's stores, and pay the price the company exacted. And now it is proposed to have the same thing existing in Queensland. We have been led to believe that Queensland was ahead of the old country in this respect. We thought—seeing the grievances, the disabilities that working men labour under in the old country—that no Government, however strong, would bring down a Bill which would give this

power to any private company to supply their workmen with whatever they require at whatever prices they like to put on their goods. No doubt it would be all very well for the company, but then I always understood

[9 p.m.] that the aim and object of any Government was to protect those who were not able to protect themselves. It appears, however, that that is not the aim and object of the present Government of Queensland. The aim and object of this Government seems to be to help the strong; to help the syndicator; to help the financial institutions; and to help those who are coming here to make out of the labour of the people of this country as much as ever they can. Then this company is to have power to erect warehouses. They are not satisfied with getting large mining areas under exceptionally good conditions; they are not satisfied with getting the right to construct a railway to deep-water; they are not satisfied with getting the concession to sell stores to their labourers; but they also want the right to erect warehouses. Some of us remember what took place when the great rush took place to Croydon. At the time all the lighterage, wharfage, and warehouse accommodation in Normanton was in the hands of the "octopus of the North," and if anyone in business on Croydon purchased goods from any southern or home firm it cost them a great deal more than if they dealt with this firm, on account of the heavy charges for lighterage, wharfage, and warehousing that they had to pay to this firm.

Mr. McDONALD: They had to be registered under the "B.P. Act" at that time.

Mr. KERR: What the hon. member for Flinders says is very true. You had to be registered, not under the "C.D. Act," but under the "B.P. Act."

Mr. LESINA: It is the same now.

Mr. KERR: Then they ask for the right to erect labourers' dwellings. The senior member for Gympie, in referring to this matter, pointed out what would be the effect of this concession. In the old country it is a common practice for the owners of large mines or factories to erect dwellings for their workpeople, and those of us who have been in the old country know that when disputes took place between employers and employees the first thing that happened was that the employees were turned out of their residences. The same thing happened in New South Wales in connection with the strike at the Bulli coalmine some years ago. A dispute took place between the employers and the employees when I was down there on business. Many of the miners had erected their dwellings on the land of the company, and when the dispute took place—and, unfortunately, it lasted several weeks—the first thing that the owners did was to put on the screw and turn these men out of their houses, on which they had expended something like £60. Now, the same thing is going to take place under this Bill if we give this company the same powers as the Bulli Company had in New South Wales. In the event of any dispute arising between employers and employees, the screw may be put on the men, and they may be turned out of their residences. The suggestion of the hon. member for Gympie is a reasonable one: That the surface rights should be retained by the Government, and that the workmen should have the same privileges as miners on gold and mineral fields—that is, by virtue of their miners' rights, they should have the right to apply for a residence area, and that the Crown should be their landlord. That would place them in a much better position than they would be placed under the Bill as it stands. Then the company asks the further concession of the right to erect freezing, smelting, and crushing works.

Now, we can come to no other conclusion than that this company is to be a very large monopoly. It is endeavouring to get as many concessions as possible, and after they have got them, I believe, as other members have said before me, they will never put a pick into the ground. They will make no attempt to work their mines, but will go off to the old country and hawk their concession about London, and float it into a huge company in the same way as the Chillagoe Mines and Railway Company did. We are told also that they desire to erect wharves. The hon. member for Bulloo tried to split hairs with the hon. member for Cairns, when it was pointed out that the construction of wharves would give the company the right to the foreshore. I think it will be within the memory of some hon. members how the Government and their officials were made laughing-stocks of by the construction of wharves at Broadmount, which, after they were finished, had only two inches of water at the end, and which had to be extended into deep water before they could serve the purpose for which they were erected. According to the hon. member for Bulloo, if the wharves are not going to give this company the right to the foreshore, what would be their use to the company? They would be a white elephant to them. What would be the use of the concession to them if they only had the right to erect wharves on the top of a mountain, and to my mind it is a certainty that if this Bill goes through, and the company gain the right to erect wharves, they will also require all the rights which will make those wharves of every practical use to them in carrying away their produce. We have been told that the fullest information has been given to the House, and yet we were told only last night by the hon. member for Carpentaria that if we would only dispose of the amendment to refer this Bill to a select committee and get on to the main question he would give us some information which we had not previously in our possession. The hon. member has now the opportunity of giving us that information. He has been present here all this evening, but he has made no attempt to give it to us, and I consider that, if the hon. member really has the information which he pretends to be in possession of, he is not doing his duty to his constituents by suppressing it. As he does not give it to us, the only logical conclusion we can come to is that he has not got it to give. I believe that if this concession is given to the company it will block further prospecting in the district, because if people of small means discovered a mine in close proximity to the property of the company, they would be placed at a tremendous disadvantage through the company charging them practically prohibitive freights for the carriage of their ore and other produce to deep water. I believe, therefore, that the small parties who have mines in that part of the country will be handicapped to a great extent if these concessions are granted to the company, and if they will not pay the rates which the company demand their mines will have to be shut down. I have looked very carefully over the correspondence relating to this matter, and I cannot see that any evidence is forthcoming of the existence of any large quantity of ore—certainly not the large quantity which we are led by some people to believe exists in the locality. I believe it is not the aim and object of this company to work the mines at all. I believe their sole aim and object is to gain concessions from Parliament which they intend to float on the London market, and I have every reason to believe that the day will come when the people of this colony will have every reason to regret that they listened to the pleadings of the syndicate or ever granted them a concession of any kind.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*): I do not intend to delay the progress of this particular measure this evening, because I know a very large party has been organised to go away fishing to-night at about 11 o'clock, and I have no desire to rob hon. members opposite of the relaxation which they have earned after their arduous labours. We know from a casual glance at members opposite the amount of labour which they are in the habit of indulging in this Chamber. Very often I regret to say that when I am sitting here and take a casual glance at the opposite benches, there is one, and sometimes two, and occasionally three members on the other side, and as often as not, no Minister at all. The work and business of the country is conducted largely by the Opposition, who manage to maintain a quorum in the House, despite the fact that members on the other side do not do their duty. But hon. members opposite may be assured of this fact, that, though they take no active interest in keeping a House together for the purpose of discussing this Bill, it will receive the close attention of members on this side. I may say unhesitatingly that I do not know of any member on this side who is not opposed to the passage of this Bill. As many reasons have been given against this Bill by other hon. members, it is just as well that I should, in my own small way, offer one or two small objections to the Bill. Then, I will sit down and let this organised party go fishing—let them perform the duty of inspecting the harbour. I have here a record of an address delivered early in the year by the leader of the Government. At that meeting, which was held in the Brisbane Stock Exchange, on the 24th May, the Premier delivered a speech in which he foreshadowed the policy the Government have presented to this Chamber with respect to syndicate railway legislation. If I might quote the hon. gentleman's exact words without unduly trespassing on the time of the House, I would say that according to the report in the *Courier*, and in the *Rockhampton Record*—both Ministerial organs—the Premier said—

The Government were prepared to meet any legitimate mining propositions which covered the building of railways to places where the nature of such undertakings made the risk too great for the Government to undertake. The Government had under consideration proposals for five or six private lines, and were inclined to extend their approval to any private syndicate that would come to Queensland to build railways to open up mines which it was undesirable, on account of the risk, for the Government to undertake. It had further been abundantly proved that private enterprise could work mining railways better than the Government.

I want to lay special emphasis on this point. I think it is a most extraordinary thing for a statement of that character to be made at a meeting of stock exchange adventurers and speculators—persons who live on the credulity of the community—by the Premier, in whose hands rests the prosperity of the colony, and to whom we look for safe and honest administration. It is extraordinary that he should make a statement of that character—that the Government are not so capable of administering mining railways in Queensland as certain private adventurers, who raise their capital at a high rate of interest, and speculate in the construction of certain railways. That is a most extraordinary admission for a gentleman occupying the position of Premier to make at such a gathering. That statement was made on the 24th May. That is long before our last loan was floated. The chief argument of the Minister for Railways and every other speaker on that side, including the Premier himself, in favour of handing over this line to a private syndicate to build—this and the other lines for which Bills have been introduced—is that Queensland cannot raise the necessary money to construct the lines, and that

it would not pay the colony to undertake the risk. Here is the important point. That is to my mind merely a later development; it is a recent discovery. The argument has only been used since the loan turned out a partial failure. Two days before it was floated the Premier pointed out in an interview with a *Courier* representative that though it was to be placed at a minimum of 94, he expected to receive 95 or 96; but the loan did not turn out so successful as he anticipated, and the argument now is that the credit of Queensland is not sufficiently good for us to undertake the borrowing of money for the construction of these lines. In 1896 we received 97 for our loan; in 1900 we received 94. Has the administration of public affairs so destroyed our public credit that Queensland, which in 1896 could raise a loan at 97, can only get 94 for a loan in 1900?

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Perhaps the interest is less.

Mr. LESINA: The interest is not less. And if a syndicate had to borrow money for the construction of a line they would have to pay more than the Government for their capital. I think the argument will appeal to all those who take an intelligent interest in the matter, and are not led by mere party considerations. Unfortunately party considerations prevail to an alarming extent in the settlement of all questions in this House. Members are led more or less by party fealty to their leader, and not so much by the arguments placed before them, or by the facts which are placed before them by hon. members on either side of the House. They are led by a feeling of faithfulness to the hon. gentleman who, by a series of accidents, happens to lead the party. Hence it is that the argument I have used, and which I in my humble and modest way believe has a certain amount of weight, will not prevail with the hon. member for Bulloo. And by the way I take this opportunity of noticing that the hon. member for Bulloo is sitting in his old seat on this side, the seat he graced for many years with his presence and the weight of his mature judgment. I hope he will stay here. We want a man of his ability and political acumen here, a man of his eloquence and research, his political knowledge and experience; and I think if we could deprive the Government of his assistance they would be very far astray indeed. It has been said that the chief and only argument to justify the construction of this line by a syndicate is that we have not the money to undertake the risk of constructing such a line, and that it is impossible for us under present conditions to borrow money abroad for the construction of such a line. That is a left-handed compliment to the administration of the present Government, because they may fairly be considered responsible for the state of our public credit. But I will just take another attitude in connection with this question. Let us grant that it would be right to hand over the construction of the line to a private syndicate. How much better off would they be? If they did not possess the money themselves they must raise it, and the only thing they could do would be to take the concession and advertise it in the most attractive way, getting the names of the most prominent persons on their prospectus, and by that means inducing certain pigeons to place their money in this particular concern. Will they fare much better than the Government in floating a loan? My impression is that they will have to pay a great deal more. No private company that could be formed has the same standing in the money market as any Government in the Australian colonies, even though that private company included some of the most prominent persons not only in Australia but even in the old country.

I think the evidence of that is overwhelming. When this particular private railway came on for discussion, and when the leader of the Opposition moved an amendment to refer it to a select committee, I spoke for a few minutes on that matter, and as a result Mr. Featherstonhaugh, secretary of the Queensland Silver-Lead Mines, in a letter to the *Courier*, dated the 10th September, 1900, in reply to one or two things I stated in my speech, made a statement to the effect that the company consists of 140 shareholders who hold 5,000 shares, and about one-fifth of the mine is held by Queensland shareholders. Now, does any member of this House know anything about those shareholders? Does any member know anything about the *bona fides* of those shareholders? Does

[9.30 p.m.] any member know anything at all about the financial standing of those shareholders? Do we know anything of the mine or the company at all? We have got Mr. Cameron's report with respect to the mine. Well, Mr. Featherstonhaugh, the secretary of the company, states that they have spent £12,000 on the mine. Upon what that £12,000 has been expended, even the member for the adjoining district, Mr. Maxwell, who knows something about the place, knows nothing at all whatever. There is no evidence given by Mr. Featherstonhaugh, the secretary of the company, in his communication to the *Courier* on the date I have given, that justifies us in believing that that statement is correct. Furthermore, there is one statement which is not borne out by Mr. Cameron, whose report we have in our hands to-night. He says—

I have spent some twelve months on the Lawn Hill Field, and although nothing can be done without cheaper transport, I am confident that, once the mines are connected with the seaboard by rail, the immense deposits of galena and copper which abound in the district will be extensively and profitably worked to the advantage, not only of the present holders, but of those who will doubtless flock to the field, and to the advantage of the whole district.

Now there is no mention in Mr. Cameron's report about copper at all. Well, if we convict Mr. Featherstonhaugh there, we may take the whole of his letter with a grain of salt. He states that the company have spent £12,000 on the field, and I feel we may also to some extent doubt the veracity of that statement. However, we will drop that as a point not altogether worthy of emphasis. We will take another point. The hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, in the discussion of the Callide Bill on the 21st August, in response to an interrogation made by myself, I believe, and repeated by other members on this side of the House, as to the persons who were connected with the Callide Bill, gave a list of the names of persons interested in this particular measure. They are as follows:—

William Spier, director Rockhampton Gas and Electric Light Company; General Sir Richard Sankey, Royal Engineers; Mr. A. Colleridge Tupp, ex-Accountant-General of India; Sir Curtis Pontifex, retired judge; Hon. Allen Cadell, Deputy Governor of one of our Indian provinces; Mr. D'Avignar Goldsmid, heir of Sir Julius Goldsmid, financier—who could lend the money himself if he chose.

Mr. J. HAMILTON: I may say that Mr. Archibald, of the Upper House, desires me to say that he is connected with it.

Mr. LESINA: We will add Mr. Archibald, of the Legislative Council; and in connection with one or two other Bills certain other members of our Upper House are intimately connected. One of them, Mr. Ferguson, is now waiting in the old country for the passage of the Callide Creek Bill, and so soon as a cable is sent from Brisbane announcing the passage of that Bill, he will no doubt go to certain financiers

in London, and before the company who have got the concessions put a pick in the ground it will be floated on the London market at a magnificent profit to the promoters. Without a penny of expenditure in the company, these gentlemen will reap perhaps £100,000 for simply putting their names to this prospectus. Now, the point that the hon. member for Cook strove to make—the point which he insisted upon was the respectable character of the persons whose names he gave as the directors of this particular company.

Mr. J. HAMILTON: No, I simply mentioned the fact.

Mr. LESINA: I admit the hon. gentleman mentioned the fact as specially worthy of consideration.

Mr. J. HAMILTON: I simply mentioned what the names were.

Mr. LESINA: I would like to know what is the value of the names in a matter of that kind. I have here *Reynolds' Newspaper* of Sunday, 15th July, 1900. Under their commercial heading they have got the following advertisement. It is clipped from the *Financial News*. It reads—

Directorship.—A retired Anglo-Indian Chief Justice desires above; managing or otherwise. If capital invested, exceptional, substantial, and independent security required. Address ———

This most righteous Anglo-Indian judge is apparently prepared to join any directorate, provided he is not called upon to take a pecuniary interest, but if the promoters desire the investment of his own capital, he will require "exceptional, substantial, and independent security." Now, the hon. gentleman mentioned one or two persons who were retired Indian judges. Is one of them this Anglo-Indian judge—a mere guinea pig—who will place his name to any prospectus so long as he gets one, or two, or three guineas a sitting? Is it on the face value of the name of an Anglo-Indian judge that the Government endeavour to induce the English investor to put money into this line, or the Callide syndicate line, or the Glassford Creek line? If that is the kind of directorate we have to deal with, I am perfectly satisfied in my own mind that on the passage of this legislation, the granting to syndicates of certain unknown adventurers of these concessions, the moment they get the concessions, their agent—who is in London waiting to receive a cable from Brisbane—will float them on the London market, and the syndicate will make a fortune without putting a pick into the soil. Where are the unemployed going to benefit from that? That is the chief argument that has been used to try and make us look ridiculous in the eyes of working men. It is said, "You set yourselves against a proposal which will find employment for men; you set yourselves against a piece of legislation which is going to open up large areas of country in the West, North, and South; you set yourselves against the investment of capital in this particular part of the country; you call yourselves labour men; how comes it that you do not desire to give the unemployed work?" That argument, to my mind, is defeated in its object by the action the hon. gentlemen themselves have taken on the other side of the House. They have taken this course, as the Hon. the Minister for Railways says, in reply to the speech of the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Fisher, because he did not think that a company such as this, or the Callide Company, or the Glassford Creek Company, should be asked to put down a penny. He also said he did not believe that they should be tied down to twelve months to pay down a deposit to guarantee their *bona fides*.

Mr. HIGGS: To give them time to float the company.

Mr. LESINA : The point we take is this : If it is necessary to build a railway to connect these mines with some port, with some market, it would be better for the country to do it. If it will pay a syndicate to do it, it will pay the country to do it. Even the *Courier*, in a leading article dealing with this, thought that logic was irrefutable, that it was unanswerable; and that is the logical position we take up, and we will not depart from it a solitary inch. If on the other hand it is going to be a failure, this country has no right, or this Government has no right, to say to the English investor, put your money into this enterprise, which we know beforehand will be a failure, because that is sure to injure the credit of the country. Every enterprise that fails in Queensland, if the English investor has been bitten, is bound to injure the credit of the country; for every person who puts money into that enterprise complains to the Press or to his friends of the worthless Queensland investments into which he has put his money. To that extent our credit is injured, and injured in a natural way. It is injured more than by writing revolutionary articles, or by making revolutionary speeches. There is one other point I would like to insist upon before I conclude. It is this: We have been assured by the Secretary for Railways that the argument upon which he and his party chiefly rely to justify the passage of this legislation is that we have no money to undertake the construction of these lines. This is an argument which I referred to earlier in my speech, but which I had no time then to develop, because other matters in connection with this proposal loomed larger in my view, and I followed them. The whole of this matter came up for consideration in Tasmania some time ago, and there a proposition was made by the Great Midland and West Coast Railway Company to the Government of Tasmania that they should be granted the right to construct a railway 100 miles in length, and that in return for the right to construct this railway the Government should make the syndicate a very handsome present of 200,000 acres of land by way of encouragement. In constructing railways in Queensland, if we endowed every line constructed by a private company with a telephonic monopoly, a telegraphic monopoly, and the right—which is proposed in this Bill—to charge 50 per cent. more than the Government charge in freights and fares upon their line, it seems to me that any company ought to make it pay. But say the Government undertook to construct a line of that character, and endowed the line, as it is proposed to endow this syndicate line, with 2,000 acres of State lands, and they paid the increased revenue resulting from the construction of the railway and springing from the occupation of these 2,000 acres of land into the revenue produced by the railway line, then any railway constructed by any Government in Queensland anywhere is bound to pay. You see, when a private syndicate constructs a railway line and gets a concession from the Government in the shape of land, the increased value of the land resulting from the construction of the railway, and the money derived from its occupation, is paid into the total revenue derived from the line, and it is all credited to the railway. But in Queensland we do not act in that way. When we construct a line the increased Customs and land revenue resulting goes into the revenue for those different departments; and though on the revenue credited to the line itself it may appear to be a failure, other departments may benefit considerably by its construction, and, if one thing was calculated against another, it is probable that every railway in Queensland would be found to have been a success. The *Sydney Bulletin*, in an article published on 5th August, 1899, deals

with the matter before us in the form of this Bill, and which has been before us in the form of other measures from time to time, and will be before us again, I suppose, when this measure is disposed of. I do not know that it is possible to reply to these arguments. I do not think it is. If it was possible, it is more than likely that hon. members on the other side of the House, or their particular barrackers in the newspaper Press, would have taken the article up and answered it long ago. The *Bulletin* article deals with "Land Grant Swindles and Other Swindles," and as nearly all the proposals we have got to consider to-day may be grouped under that broad, general, and comprehensive heading, I make no apology for quoting one or two bits from this article. It says—

But every Australasian State has been seized, at one time or another, with the delusion that in some way the community saves the expense of a railway (that it gets the railway for nothing, in fact, or at least gets it a great deal more cheaply) by letting a crowd of private booblers build it than by doing the work on its own account. In fact, some of them have that crazy inspiration permanently.

As a simple and obvious matter of fact, the average privately-owned railway must cost the community vastly more than the publicly-owned one, and that Tasmanian railway is a case in point. They say with respect to it—

Assuming that the 100 miles of the Great Midland line costs £10,000 a mile for construction and equipment, the Tasmanian State could build it for £1,000,000. It would do the good old borrow in London, and if it offered 3½ per cent. it could get £1,000,000 net—that is to say, it could sell the loan at a premium which would cover all expenses. All the railway would have to provide under Government ownership would therefore be working expenses and £32,500 a year interest. If the people are charged enough in freights and fares to cover these outgoings—well and good. If they are not, they are charged the difference in some form of direct or indirect taxation. Either way, the community pays the above amount and no more.

And here they insist upon a point I would like to impress upon the leader of the Government. I notice that when a person makes a point at all he needs to impress it upon the leader of the Government, but, as a matter of fact, to impress a point on the leader of the Government in a way to make it stick I would want a 16 lb. hammer, and I would want to swing it vigorously and with all my muscular strength bring it down fairly upon the poll of the hon. gentleman, or it will be utterly impossible to impress him with any point at all. It is as difficult to impress the hon. gentleman with a political point as to impress the average Scotchman with an ordinary joke. The *Bulletin* says—

The private syndicate doesn't build the line any more cheaply than the State; it advertises for tenders in the same way, and accepts the lowest tender in the same way, and probably the same contractor does the job. But it has multitudes of extra expenses, from which the State is free. It spends money shoving its Bill through Parliament.

That is a point I must certainly stop to emphasise for about two minutes. The private syndicate spends money to pass its legislation through Parliament. Has this particular Lilydale Tramway Company spent any money to push its railway through Parliament? Can the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government answer that very pointed query? Can the Sphinx-like gentleman who presides over the Railway Department answer that particular query? Can the oracle, the Minister without portfolio, answer that query? Evidently they are all dumb. These queries receive no response. These anxious inquiries are unanswered. When we ask this very important and somewhat personal query: What money has this particular syndicate spent in pushing its Bill through

Parliament?—at the expense of public legislation—we receive no answer. Why is this? Is it because their consciences strike them?

Mr. STEWART: They have no consciences.

Mr. LESINA: It has been alleged by interjection that they have no consciences. I believe they have, and I believe they are perfectly new because they have never been used. (Laughter.) The *Bulletin* says—

Very often the syndicate which gets the concession sells it to a company for £100,000 or £250,000 or £1,000,000 of clear boodle, according to the size of the job.

What a nasty word that word “boodle” is? (Laughter.)

Which simply means that it sells a certain portion of the Tasmanian people to the company for the purpose of being squeezed, just as the monarchs of the Middle Ages used to raise the wind by selling a rich Jew or two, who seemed as if they would crush well, to some speculative subject. This necessarily increases the cost of the railway. Then the private company has to maintain an expensive office in Tasmania, and generally another in London (the State needs no office in London, and a new railway makes only an imperceptible addition to the cost of the already existent railway offices); it has to pay directors (the State needs no directors); it hires a manager (the State can run an extra railway, or two, or three, or six, extra railways, with the manager it has already); and it requires enough rolling-stock to cope with the traffic at the busiest season (the State in many cases only requires a little new rolling-stock, and meets the demands of extra busy periods by shifting cars and locomotives from other lines where the closing of the wheat or wool season has left things temporarily slack. Then the syndicate has company-floatation expenses to pay, also brokerage, advertising, and multitudes of other charges, from which the State is exempt. By reason of all these matters the line which costs the State £1,000,000 seldom costs the private companies less than £1,500,000. The private company generally borrows all that it can of this at 5 per cent. (the Emu Bay Railway Company, of Tasmania, is raising the wind at 5 per cent., and the Wellington and Manawatu Company, of Maoriland, paid no less than 6 per cent. on its borrowings). Also, it wants a 5 per cent. dividend, or more if possible, on its own capital—the Silverton Railway Company charges enough to make a 50 per cent. dividend on its capital. Therefore the private company aims to make the line pay working expenses, and at least 5 per cent. on about £1,500,000 (£75,000 a year), against the State's burden of working expenses and 3½ per cent. on £1,000,000 (£32,500). And the people of the country where the line is located have to supply the money in each case. It is as much the people's burden when a private syndicate finds the capital as when the State finds the capital. The £1,000,000 which the State would pay for the line appears in the statement of the public debt, and the £1,500,000 which the syndicate pays does not, but it is only a difference on paper. The people owe the money either way, because they have to pay the interest either way. The only difference is that, when a private syndicate builds the line, they have to find twice or three times as much interest, and they pay the difference, partly in higher rates, and partly in land grants.

That argument to my mind is unanswerable. What we have to judge between—and it has been insisted upon by every speaker on this side of the House—is that this line has got to be built; the question is whether it should be built by a private company or by the State? The State, through its Premier and its Minister for Railways, says it cannot build it because it has no cash, and its credit is so bad that it cannot raise money except at a usurious rate of interest.

The PREMIER: That is quite untrue.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Nothing of the kind has ever been said.

Mr. LESINA: Both the oracle of the Government and the Premier interject simultaneously that no such statement was made. They did not state, as a matter of fact, that the credit of the country is so low that they cannot borrow except at a usurious rate of interest. I am glad to hear it, and I therefore presume that our credit is just as good as ever it was. If that is the case, why not borrow the money now and construct this line? If our credit is just as good as ever it was

why cannot the Government borrow £1,000,000 or £5,000,000 at a nominal rate of interest, and undertake the construction of all those lines, especially if they are profitable. If the lines will pay the private companies under the conditions which the *Bulletin* has set forth, why will they not pay the Government, which is able to borrow money for the purpose at a lower rate of interest and has not to pay the charges which the private companies have to meet? There is no possible escape from a position of that kind; and the result is that I am thrown back on another assumption, which may be correct or not—that this Government are desirous of encouraging syndicate railway legislation; that they are willing to depart, in a covert kind of way, from the system of State railway construction which has hitherto characterised our policy. I hear an hon. member say, “Perish the thought!” I suppose we are all inclined to echo that sentiment. But here, on the 24th May, at a meeting of half-a-dozen private syndicators, and stock exchange speculators and penniless adventurers, the Premier of Queensland states, long before the loan was proven to be a failure, that his policy was to encourage private syndicate railway legislation. It is a curious thing, and one worthy of a certain amount of disapprobation. It matters not that we are anxious—and I speak on behalf on every hon. member on this side—to push forward legislation. We regret the waste of time that takes place through the introduction of measures of this contentious character. We strongly disapprove of legislation which is being passed in order that a few private individuals may make fortunes out of the people of Queensland, and we regret that legislation of this kind should intervene between the passing of legislation of a general character such as the people are demanding, and which we have come here to assist to pass. And I say it is a matter we should strongly deprecate that the Premier, representing the people of Queensland, should go down into a narrow den, made hideous by the clangour of certain unknown stock exchange speculators, and there announce the public policy of Queensland. What are we apt to conclude from an action of that kind? Are we not apt to conclude that the leader of the Government is a member of that adventurous gang of speculators? Of course I, knowing the hon. gentleman as I do, should not imagine anything of that sort; but there are persons outside who are apt to make deductions of that kind, who take a low, coarse view of the matter, and who, when they see the leader of the Government, the respected Premier of Queensland, surrounded by persons of plethoric abdominal development, standing up in the Stock Exchange and announcing his policy to them, who would come to that conclusion. It, to my mind, is a most degrading and disreputable position for the hon. gentleman to occupy. Therefore, I am not surprised that, under the circumstances which surrounded that particular occasion, he should have announced his policy as a distinct, emphatic, free encouragement of private enterprise in the construction of private railways.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LESINA: I trust I am not out of order in the statement I have just made.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LESINA: I have read in the *Courier* and in the *Rockhampton Record*, which is also a Ministerial organ and one which practically makes the politics of this particular Government, a statement made at the Stock Exchange by the Premier in which he announced that the policy of the Government was free encouragement to private enterprise in constructing our railways. Only yesterday afternoon you, Mr. Speaker, on

the point of order submitted to you by the hon. member for Flinders, ruled that all those Bills are perfectly in order because they represent a declaration of public policy by the Government. Those Bills are public Bills, and to that extent they represent a part of our settled policy of railway construction. We have not had that matter settled by the people outside. They have not given their decision, and no hon. member can say that when before his constituents he was particularly asked his opinion about this question. If any hon. member says so I shall be very

pleased to go into the library to-morrow, and on Saturday, and on next Monday, and go through the election speeches of every prominent member on the Ministerial benches, and find out precisely what opinions they did express about private railway construction, if they had any opinions to express—and it is to a large extent evidence of my generosity that I admit they had opinions to express. But I undertake to say that if I went through all the papers published in the various Ministerial constituencies I should not find that a single member on that side of the House declared himself in favour of railway construction. That question was not before the country at the last general election. The principal question before the electors on that occasion were the exclusion of coloured labour, adult suffrage, and probably, in some constituencies, federation. But the Government have sneaked in this policy, and under cover of the large majority which they have got, and which has been cemented together with bonds as strong as steel by certain commissions during the last few months, they know that they can carry this legislation, even if they have to put the gag on. Let them put the gag on. I only hope they will try it before this session is over. I can assure them that it is my profound impression that this Bill will not see the light of day after it goes into committee. If it does it will only be by throwing out every hon. member on this side of the House, and if that is done the country, and the syndicates, the unknown adventurers, and the persons on the other side of the world who desire to exploit the colony, will know that the only hope of passing such legislation is by taking every member of the Opposition and putting them outside the House neck and crop. The people will know that when the Government have strangled free speech they can hand Queensland over to speculators to exploit its rich resources. Let them try it. I only hope they will try it on, because we want an issue created, and the sooner that issue is created the better for us and for the people of Queensland. We throw down the gage now, and we want them to take it up, and prove by their actions that they are prepared to go to the full extent of their belief, to strangle free speech, and to carry this monopolist legislation that is so dear to their hearts. I believe they will do it. They have already been counting noses and taking counsel among themselves as to whether they shall try this particular thing. Let them try it; I only hope they will.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. LESINA: However, as you remind me, Sir, I am digressing. I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill, and if we are defeated on the second reading I shall come along with the small amendments that I have when we go into committee. I have about 247,000 amendments, a few members sitting behind me have also their share, and I have no doubt that during the next six or seven years we may get this Bill through, much to the satisfaction of the adventurers who have whispered to the Government asking them to introduce the measure into this Chamber. I cannot congratulate them on the small success they

have achieved so far. In conclusion, I may say, and I think the whole of the members on both sides of the House will agree with me, that we strongly object to the waste of time which takes place in the passage, or attempted passage, of legislation of this character. It is our earnest desire to help the Government to pass legislation which will redound to the credit of the colony, and help on the prosperity of the people of Queensland, and we regret very much—our feelings are poignant on this point, and we suffer painfully, mentally and spiritually—that the time of the House should be wasted in introducing legislation of this character. We are desirous of promoting the welfare and prosperity of Queensland, and there is certain legislation on the business paper which we are anxious to pass. But there is set up between us and our desire a certain barrier, and that barrier is syndicate legislation—the Lillydale, Callide, Glassford Creek, Cloncurry, and other Bills of that character, which tend to the profit of, I suppose, about fifty persons in Queensland. If we can only induce the Premier to stiffen his back—a thing he has never done yet—and withdraw that legislation, he would be astonished at the agility with which we would come to his rescue, and assist in the passage of legislation of a useful character. But if he will persist in pushing that legislation through, he may take it from me, as one member on this side, that he will have all the difficulties possible placed in his way. I desire to assist in passing useful measures, and I regret very much to see that the Government are wasting the time of the House in such a prodigal manner.

Mr. STEWART (*Rockhampton North*): I need hardly say that I intend to vote against the second reading of this Bill. I intend to do so for a number of reasons which I shall endeavour to explain to hon. members. In the first place, we have in this measure a clear and distinct departure from what has been considered the settled policy of the country in regard to railway building and control. Up till now, with a few trifling exceptions, our railways have been entirely constructed by the State, and managed by the State. That system has worked admirably. I would just ask hon. members to reflect on what the system of public ownership, construction, maintenance, and control of railways has done for the colony of Queensland. I do not think that anywhere upon the face of the globe can we find an instance of railway construction being pushed ahead in a country like Queensland, so thinly populated, and all that sort of thing, as we find here, and all this has been done, not by private enterprise but by the community. When we find that such a system is operating so advantageously to the country, why abandon it? And why, I would ask the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, abandon it without getting the sanction of the electors? The hon. gentleman must have known perfectly well what he intended to do, and his predecessor—whom I see sitting beside him—must also have known perfectly well that the Government intended to depart from the settled policy of the country when they went before the electors at the last election. Why did they not then ask the country's decision on the question? I find some very indefinite references to private railway lines in the speech of the Chief Secretary; but it was never even hinted at that the construction of lines by private enterprise was going to take precedence of the settled policy of the Government. That was never hinted at during the whole election campaign, or for months preceding that campaign. The Chief Secretary was interviewed on numerous occasions by people who wanted railways built, and he promised them all. He never sent a deputation away with a sore heart. He

gave them all to understand that the Government would do their best to suit them all, and he said that when the time came they would find that the Government had a policy. Now, the time has come, and we find that the Government has no policy. Nothing has been placed before this House but these syndicate railway Bills. When they had the opportunity why did they not submit the matter of railway construction by private enterprise to the country? Were they afraid? Yes. I am perfectly certain that they were afraid. They knew perfectly well that if they had gone to the country on a question of this character that they would have been swept into oblivion. They know, as well as I do, or as well as any man in the community knows, that the people of this colony would not agree to any departure from the settled policy of the country—that is, the State ownership and control of railways. And why should they? Why should the people of this colony throw what they know from experience to be a good thing on one side simply to please the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, and those associated with him? Again, I would ask the hon. gentleman to consider what the present system has done for Queensland. Let the hon. gentleman look at the map, and let him consider how our present railway system has pierced the continent almost to its very heart. There is not a portion of the colony, where two or three men are gathered together, but where there is a railway to their very doors, or within a few miles of where they live. Would that have been brought about if the country had been left to the tender mercies of private enterprise? I say not. Hundreds of miles of railways would never have been constructed if the State had not taken the matter in hand. Queensland would never have reached its present state of development by 50 per cent. if railway construction had been left to private enterprise. Many portions in the colony which have been developed, would still have been in a state of nature for the want of communication. And still the system that has done so much good—that has forced Queensland ahead more rapidly than any of the other colonies—is to be thrown overboard and abandoned at the behest of cormorant railways syndicates. I again ask the hon. gentleman why he did not submit this matter to the different constituencies? Why does he act in this underhand fashion, behind the backs of the people? Why does he endeavour to force on the people of this colony a policy that will in every way turn out to be detrimental to their interests? The hon. gentleman does not seem to have any faith in his own party; because we find him practically saying to the members of his party the other day, "Rouse up, and help me to ride roughshod over those fellows on the other side; if you don't, I'll resign." Well, I wish the hon. gentleman would resign.

Mr. LESINA: Fancy Lord Roberts saying that!

Mr. STEWART: I object to the hon. member for Clermont comparing Lord Roberts in any way to the Premier. It is a most deliberate insult to Lord Roberts.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. STEWART: The hon. gentleman will be doing a great service to the colony if he carries out the threat he made on the German steamer the other day—that he would resign. Let the hon. gentleman resign; let him go to the country on this question.

The PREMIER: You would never come back.

Mr. STEWART: It has been said before in this Chamber that I would never come back. One hon. member referred to me—I forget the exact words—as a bird of passage, I think; but I am still here, and that same hon. member is

also still here, and probably I will come back again to this Assembly if I live long enough. And if I do come back here my voice will always be raised—outside and inside this House—against the policy of the hon. gentleman so long as it continues to be as it is. I ask again why did not the hon. gentleman put the matter before the people at the last election in a manly fashion, and tell them that he found that the present system of railway construction was a failure, that he proposed to alter it, and ask them—What do you say? That would have been a manly course. But he went to the country on the bogey of the Labour party.

Mr. LESINA: They are living on that.

Mr. REID: They have been living on that for the last ten years.

Mr. STEWART: And the diet seems to agree with them, but I hope that they will soon be deprived of their means of existence in that respect—that they will be vagrants having no visible means of support. (Laughter.) The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government the other day complained bitterly that he was not able to get legislation passed through Parliament—these private railway Bills of his. Well, I hope he will never get them passed. If they are passed I believe they will be the worst measures that have ever gone through this House, or ever will go through it, so far as the welfare of the people of the colony are concerned. I believe nothing good can come out of them—either industrially, politically, socially, or in any other way. They will not be the slightest benefit to the colony, but, on the other hand, I can see a great many dangers ahead in regard to them. I have listened with pleasure to the late hon. member for Carpentaria when he has told us that this portion of Queensland was one of the richest provinces in Australia—for it is a province—when he descanted on the glories of this particular portion of the colony, upon its riches, upon its great resources—

Mr. LEAHY: Didn't he favour this system for it?

Mr. STEWART: I do not know whether he favoured this system, but he favoured a great many things which were neither for his own good nor for the good of other people. I am merely telling hon. members what the late representative of this district used to say about it. And yet the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government proposes to hand this district, with its immense latent resources, over to a syndicate. Every man, woman, and child, every acre of land; in fact, everything in connection with the district will be under the iron heel of this syndicate if this measure is passed. Why, they propose to get everything! They will have control of the mining industry! Just imagine the position of any mining company which starts development anywhere near the railway line of this particular syndicate! It would not be possible for any mining company to exist except by the goodwill of the syndicate. Then take the pastoral industry: We find that any pastoral company would be in exactly the same position. This company proposes to erect meatworks and a great many other things—stores and all that sort of thing—and I ask hon. gentlemen opposite what position would other companies be in as compared with this particular company if they came into conflict with it? I say that it would not be possible for any other company to carry on business in that particular portion of the country except by the good grace of this syndicate. And what would be the political condition of the people there? Why, they would be merely serfs. If they did not vote as the syndicate wanted them to, they would have to leave that portion of the country.

They would not merely be compelled to leave the employment of the syndicate, but they would be hunted out of the district. They would have to leave their bag and baggage, and go somewhere else in Australia to earn their living. What would be the industrial position of the people there? Why, they would be practically slaves. The labour conditions, so far as the mining industry is concerned, are practically abolished. No labour conditions whatever! At any moment this syndicate could shut up its mines, could stop its railway from running. Well, probably, it could not stop the railway from running altogether, but it could shut up its mines; it could close its stores; it might abandon the working of its meatworks; it could throw the whole industrial life of that district into confusion—could stop it right away, and cause the direst distress to the people living there. I am bound to come to the conclusion that, when we give this syndicate the powers asked for, we are not only handing over to the shareholders the mines, and the power to make a railway, and the power to erect meatworks, and that sort of thing, but we are handing over to their control the bodies and souls of human beings. Now, I object to irresponsible people like that getting control of this character. This sort of thing is not in consonance with the spirit of the age, and it certainly is not in harmony with the ideas of government that exist in Australia. We say that freedom is more than food—that a man who is free has everything. But what is the condition of the individual, who, if he gets three meals a day, and a bed to lie on, and a house to live in, is yet a serf to some person outside himself? I say that that individual is not a man. He is not living a man's life; he is not living the life of a human being at all—he is simply leading a dog's existence. We do not desire that those things shall come about here. We have all read, I suppose, about a certain individual named Esau, who came in from the chase one evening very hungry. I do not know whether he had killed anything or not, but he had gathered a keen appetite out on the moors hunting game, while his good brother Jacob—that cunning individual—stayed at home at his ease, like a spider spinning his web. When Esau came home, he growled about the appetite he had got. There was nothing ready for him to eat, and Jacob—like the cunning individual he was—proposed that if he gave Esau a mess of pottage, he should sell him his birthright, and Esau, like a fool, agreed. That is just what hon. gentlemen opposite are asking the people of this colony to do at the present moment. They now say openly—they make no pretence otherwise—"The colony is in a bad way. There are a great number of unemployed about, and they will be very hungry soon, if they are not hungry already. Now sell us your birthright, and we will give you a mess of pottage." Well, I hope the people of the colony will not be like Esau, and sell their birthright for the sake of a few feeds. Better endure hunger; better live in the desert for forty years, like the Children of Israel, than suffer the bondage of Egypt.

Mr. LEAHY: Didn't they long for the fleshpots of Egypt?

Mr. STEWART: The hon. member interjects that the Children of Israel occasionally looked back with longing to the fleshpots of Egypt, but still they kept pressing on, and I suppose the people of Queensland may occasionally look back upon the fleshpots—I do not know that there has ever been much of that sort of thing here—but, in any case, if we get to the Promised Land of Liberty—

Mr. REID: Not in Queensland at present.

Mr. STEWART: Not at present, but I believe we are marching through the desert, and if we only have faith to keep marching on, instead of looking backwards and going backwards, the day will inevitably come when we will have a higher system of life in this colony and in this community than there is anywhere else that I know of. What reasons have hon. gentlemen opposite for wishing to abandon the present State policy? The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government was very frank upon one recent occasion. He said that he had come to the conclusion that private companies could manage our railways much more economically than the State. What does that mean in plain English? It simply means that private companies would get men to work for them at a lower rate of wages than the State pays. By making that declaration, has not the hon. gentleman publicly stated, as Premier of the colony, that our railway employees are paid more than their labour is worth? Is the hon. gentleman prepared to reduce the wages of the railway employees? Is he prepared to see the standard of living amongst our labouring classes lowered? I can come to no other conclusion than that he is of the opinion that our workmen are living riotously—that they are paid far too much for their work; that they can be employed at a very much cheaper rate, and that it is extremely desirable that such should be the case. But if the hon. gentleman thinks that, I do not believe that the people of the colony, as a whole, are of that opinion. Suppose the railway employees got lower wages than they get at present, who would benefit? Why, the absentee. The lower wages you pay here the higher the dividends that [10.30 p.m.] are payable to absentees in the old country. The less money you pay your workmen here the more there is to be spent in London and on the continent of Europe, or wherever the holders of Australian investments congregate. But there is another aspect of the question. In addition to the lower wages the railway employees would have to work harder. Now, my belief is that at the present moment the men employed on our Queensland railways work quite hard enough and long enough. It is not the easiest job in the world to slog away with a pick and shovel for eight hours under a burning sun, and with the temperature between 90 and 100 degrees. I say it is work that ought to be more highly paid than it is; and yet, if the hon. gentleman's policy is brought into operation, we will see a sudden drop in wages of the railway men throughout the colony. And not only a sudden drop in wages, but also added work. Their hours will be lengthened, the pace will be faster, and in every way their labour will be much more exacting than at the present time, and their lives will be much less pleasant. Then, again, there is another evil which you will bring in with private enterprise, and that is the greater exposure to accident on the part not only of the travelling public, but also on the part of those employed by the railway company. We find that the average of accidents is much lower where the railways are managed by the State than where they are under the control of private companies. We find that in Great Britain, year after year, Parliament has to be invited to pass measures restricting the hours, compelling the companies to adopt greater precautions, doing everything they possibly can to save life. The companies never by any chance do these things of their own free will. They have to be forced into them by the community, and what we find is the case in Great Britain and America we will also find here. I have dealt with one reason given by the Premier in favour of private railways. Another reason given by the

Secretary for Railways why we should cultivate private enterprise was contained in an alarming array of figures, quoted to prove that our railway system had been an absolute failure. I admit that political railways have, in many instances, been built where they ought not to have been built. Log-rolling in this Chamber has sacrificed the public interest, but, with all its disadvantages, I say our system of Government railways has been a magnificent success. No doubt the taxpayers have been called upon to put their hands into their pockets and make up a deficiency year after year, but I do not know that they have complained very much about that. And even if our railways passed into private hands, who would have to maintain them? Would not the people of the colony have to do it? Does any hon. gentleman imagine that the syndicates will put their hands into their pockets and maintain the railways? I do not think so for a moment. We find that private railway companies wherever they exist are the most severe tax-gatherers the community have got to contend with. We find that in America they are coming into continual conflict with the people of every State. In every State there has been an agitation against the power of the railway companies, and their wings have had to be clipped, their extortions have had to be put an end to, and in very many cases there has been a continuous clamour for the railways to be taken over by the State. We find that in other countries the drift of things is quite different from what it is here. In Great Britain and in America, the cry is for the nationalisation of their railway system. In those countries they have tried private railways, and they have found that they are wanting. Some hon. members point to America and say, "That country has been developed under the system of private railways." I say that it has developed in spite of private railways.

Mr. LEAHY: They are building them as fast as ever.

Mr. STEWART: It is not very easy to throw off an incubus when it is on top of us. Why, the railway corporations in America have become so powerful that their ramifications reach into every department of State. They use their power more tyrannously than the Czar of Russia. Any individual or company that ventures to raise its head in protest against the exactions of those corporations is ruined. The member of Parliament who cannot be bribed or bullied is dealt with in some other fashion.

Mr. LEAHY: And yet the people rule there.

Mr. STEWART: We find the railway corporations have corrupted the people and the Parliament and everything in connection with the United States, and yet the member for Bulloo says the people rule there.

Mr. GIVENS: What do they rule when the syndicate has hold of everything?

Mr. LEAHY: Who gave the power to the syndicate?

Mr. STEWART: The people of America gave it to the syndicate, I suppose, just as hon. members on the opposite side propose to hand over Queensland to syndicates. What I desire is that the people of this colony shall avoid the pitfalls of the people of the United States. The member for Bulloo admits that every word I have said is true.

Mr. LEAHY: No, all wrong.

Mr. STEWART: And yet the hon. gentleman invites the people of Queensland to walk into the same trap. I do not think that is patriotic of the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman may say now that what I am saying is all wrong,

but he seemed to admit that what I said was all right, and he added, by way of reply, "And yet the people rule." The hon. gentleman may say that syndicates are all right, but I say that they are all wrong.

Mr. LEAHY: How can the people be wrong?

Mr. STEWART: The people in the United States of America are wrong, and when they go wrong they are not responsible. The people living at the present time are not responsible. It is those who came before them who are responsible. They are trying their level best to do away with the errors that previous generations heaped upon them. I will just read for the benefit of hon. gentlemen an extract from an American magazine on the State of Texas dealing with this very question, and I recommend this to the hon. member for Oxley, who takes a very great interest in the farmers—

During Governor Ross's administration, the Farmers' Alliance was active in politics because of the general belief that the railroad charges for freight were exorbitant, and antagonism toward the railroad interests was intensified. This agitation ultimately extended to all kinds of trusts and corporations; and, being taken up by the dominant political party, under the leadership of Governor Hogg, it overwhelmed all other subjects of consideration. The State Democratic Convention of 1886 denounced the unlawful interference with corporate or private property; declared against foreign capital acquiring and controlling railroads in the State; and demanded that railroad companies should maintain their general offices within the State. . . . By 1890 the whole political attention of the State was concentrated upon the questions involving the rights and limitations of railroads and other corporations; and a gubernatorial campaign was made in that year upon a question propounded by the successful candidate, Governor James S. Hogg—namely, shall the people or the corporations rule the State of Texas?

Now that is the position hon. gentlemen opposite are attempting by these Bills to drive us into. The question has not arisen yet, but if these private syndicate Bills are passed we shall inevitably be driven into an exactly similar position as the people of Texas, and the question here will have to be fought out, "shall the corporations rule or shall the people of Queensland?" Now, to quote again—

The grievances of the people against the railways were in most cases just. The management of corporations chartered by the people had lost all local character and sympathy by consolidation with great systems, having their management beyond the legal jurisdiction of the State. The roads were not operated for the convenience or benefit of the people. Local charges were high and unjust, and were sustained by pools and combinations. The stocks of the railways had been watered beyond all proportion to their true value, in violation of the State Constitution. By this process the railroads of Texas acquired a tremendous and fictitious capitalisation, upon which interest had to be paid out of the charges wrung from the people. Furthermore, these corporations avoided payment of their share of taxation. The corrupt practices of the railway corporations were exposed by the action of the twenty-second legislature, which adopted a concurrent resolution to investigate the case of Jay Gould against the International and Great Northern Railroad Company. The committee appointed to examine into the case made a report that gave much information about the manipulation of railroads which had been placed in the hands of receivers, still further arousing popular indignation. At first the railroads defied State control, claiming that their franchises were in the nature of private property, whose profits could not be materially affected by any regulation of the legislature; and they made powerful combinations in the nature of pools to prevent the rates of tariff from being made lower by one of them in competition with the others. That the State had the power of limited control over railways had already been shown by the validity of a law passed during the administration of Governor Roberts, reducing the passenger fare from 5 cents to 3 cents per mile, and by an Act passed by the twenty-first legislature, requiring railway companies to provide separate coaches for white and coloured passengers. The twenty-first legislature submitted to the people an

amendment to the Constitution providing for a State Railroad Commission. This became law by the election of 1890. At the head of this commission was placed the Hon. John H. Reagan, who resigned his place in the United States Senate to accept the position. The work of the commission has been of incalculable value, and those who were its most violent opponents now testify to the fact that it has saved millions of dollars to the State, and has brought the transportation system of Texas out of chaos into order, and made it profitable. The twenty-third legislature, in 1893, passed a law giving the State supervision and control over the issue of stocks, bonds, and other securities, by railroad companies, and to prevent illegal or injurious increase of their indebtedness by watering stock or bonds, so that the Railroad Commission might justly fix freight rates with reference to the value and expenses of the roads. In addition to their regulation by the commission, the railways were further made to comply with the laws of the State, and to make restitution for past offences, through a series of suits in the federal courts, instituted by Governor Hogg. Companies were compelled to bring back their principal offices and officials into the State from other States to which they had been removed. Other suits broke up the footing that prevented competition in transportation. By suits against railroad companies for the recovery by the State of land which had been illegally obtained and held, 1,437,000 acres were restored to the public domain. Governor Hogg, in his Address, called attention to the fact that over 3,000,000 of dollars were saved to the producers from traffic taxation alone, without diminishing the receipts of our transportation companies.

That gives a very concise account of the struggle which the people of Texas had to maintain against the extortions of the railway companies. In fact, the whole thing appears to have been almost of the nature of a civil war. Here, upon the one hand, we had the railway companies; on the other hand, the vast body of the people; and continual strife waged for a number of years. At last, fortunately, the people were triumphant, as they usually are in these matters. But our desire is to save the people of Queensland from any struggle of this character, and if we go on with our present system of railway building there will be no need to waste the energies of our people in conflict with railway corporations or otherwise. We shall be free to devote our talents, our energies, and our time to the development of our territory, instead of occupying our days and years in fighting greedy corporations. Another reason which was given was that we cannot borrow. This is a most extraordinary reason to give. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government—the Treasurer—borrowed a short time ago at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and he appears to think that this rate of interest so extortionate that it practically puts an end to all borrowing, so far as the colony is concerned, for the present. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that railways have been built in various parts of the colony with money borrowed at a much higher rate of interest. There is not a single Northern railway that has been built with money borrowed at so low a rate of interest as $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; so that reason cannot be said to hold water for a moment; in fact, the whole thing is a pretence of the most flimsy character. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that if he wanted £5,000,000 he could get it. I believe, if the hon. gentleman floats a loan upon the Australian market, he can get it at the present time. There are any number of millions sterling in Australia waiting at present for profitable investment. Why, money is so plentiful that the banks charge people for keeping it. Their rates of interest are extremely low. They cannot find profitable means of investment. As I have said, if the Hon. the Treasurer is exceedingly anxious to borrow money upon the excellent security offered by the State or colony of Queensland, I believe that he could borrow any amount that he wants without going outside the bounds of Australia at the present moment. But this is a most convenient reason to bring forward. I

think in 1880 the very same reason was advanced for having recourse to the land grant system. Sir Thomas McIlwraith told the people that they had come to the end of their tether with regard to borrowing. He said, we cannot borrow any more money, and unless we go in for this land grant system railway extension will have to be stopped, but he was opposed by Sir Samuel Griffith and other men of light and leading, and since then millions upon millions have been borrowed; hundreds of miles have been added to our railway system, and there is not the slightest reason why we should not go on in the same way for the future that we have done in the past. I certainly think that it would be very much wiser, and very much better for the colony as a whole that we should follow the well-used and beaten track in which we have been so successful, instead of branching out in a direction that we have never yet trod, and that we have very little knowledge where it will lead us to. If the experience of the other colonies is of any value so far as private railways are concerned, it is before us. We know that in each of the other colonies they have been tried, and with very few exceptions had been found to be a failure. The companies have landed themselves in no end of difficulty, and they have given any amount of annoyance to the State. Now, this company, in addition to a great many other concessions, which I do not think it should receive, wants to have the supreme control over this particular locality for fifty years, for half a century. If this measure is passed this year, the iron grip of this monopoly will be relaxed somewhere about the year 1951. Now what do we know of the state Queensland will be in at that particular period of time?

Mr. BOLES: It will not trouble us much.

Mr. STEWART: It will not trouble us much. I think any hon. member in this House ought to be ashamed to utter such a sentiment. If ought to trouble us. What would be said of a man who built a house of brick, and when erecting the chimney he found, we will say when he was ten feet off the ground that he was six inches out of plumb; and when someone called attention to it he said, "What does that matter; I will be leaving to-morrow; let the next fellow bring it back to the plumb?" That is just the argument that the hon. gentleman is advancing. He does not care what is happening so long as he is out of it. I do not think that is a proper sentiment to animate a member of a legislature. I think it ought to be our ambition and every man's ambition to build plumb if we can, so that the people who come afterwards may not have to heap opprobrium upon us as we lie in our graves.

Mr. BOLES: That is what we are going to do.

Mr. STEWART: Now, I say it is exceedingly wrong to give this company this concession at all. I object particularly to the length of time for which it is proposed to be granted. I say that if it is granted at all twenty years is quite long enough. I think twenty-one years is the term in Great Britain, and I think that ought to be quite sufficient in a young and rapidly growing colony like Queensland.

Mr. BOLES: You cannot have too much of a good thing.

Mr. STEWART: Now, there is a great deal more that I could say upon this subject, but I have no particular desire to keep hon. members upon this side out of their beds, nor hon. members on the other side away from their fishing, and that being the case and having entered my protest in this fashion against the second reading of this Bill, I will sit down.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Question—That the Bill be now read a second^d time—put; and the House divided :—

AYES, 35.

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

NOES, 22.

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

PAIRS.

Ayes—Messrs. Forrest, Bartholomew, and Smith.

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

The Bill was read a second time, and the committal made an order for Tuesday next.

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