

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 1900

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER, 1900.

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) Return to an Order, relative to working of the first section of the Mareeba-Chillagoe Railway, made by the House, on motion of Mr. Givens, on the 21st instant.
- (2) Further correspondence respecting alternative routes for the proposed railway to Mount Garnet,

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

REPORT OF WORKS COMMISSION.

Mr. BROWNE (*Croydon*) asked the Premier, without notice—Has the hon. gentleman noticed the charges made against his colleague, the Secretary for Public Works, in the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the management of the Works Department, and the criticisms of the local Press on those charges? If he has, does he intend to take any action in the matter, and, if so, when

The PREMIER (Hon. R. Philp, *Townsville*) replied—I have not had time to go through the report of the Works Commission, and have only read the head lines. I promise the House that when the Estimates for the Works Department come on for consideration I will give a day to discuss the report of the commission.

Mr. DAWSON: Not on the Estimates.

Mr. HIGGS: You are too kind.

The PREMIER: That is all I have to say at present.

ALLEGED AFFRAY BETWEEN
KANAKAS.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carmarvon*): I desire to make a statement in connection with a question asked by the hon. member for Clermont on the 21st instant with reference to an alleged affray between kanakas at Ingham. I said then that I would have further inquiries made, and I have done so, with the result that the Commissioner of Police has received from the sub-inspector there the following telegram:—"Yours of yesterday. Acting Sergeant Mackay wires 'no affray between kanakas at Ingham on 15th instant.'"

Mr. FISHER: Was there one on any other day? It might have been the 14th or 16th.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is the date mentioned.

QUESTIONS.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN AS DIRECTORS OF
COMPANIES.

Mr. DAWSON (*Charter Towers*), in the absence of Mr. Lesina, asked the Premier—

1. Will he consider the advisability of introducing a measure this session providing that no member of Parliament shall be eligible to become a Minister of the Crown who is a director of any public company or financial corporation?

2. If not, why not?

The PREMIER replied—

1. No.

2. Because such a measure is not considered necessary.

PASTORAL LEASES IN SETTLED
DISTRICTS.

On the motion of Mr. PLUNKETT (*Albert*), it was resolved—

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

1. All runs in the settled districts, the leases of which have expired.

2. The runs that have been thrown open.

3. The runs which are still held by the late lessees.

4. The tenure under which they are held.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

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

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended for this day as will admit of the immediate constitution of the Committee of Ways and Means, and of the reporting and receiving of resolutions from the Committees of Supply and Ways and Means on the same day on which they shall have passed in those committees; also of the passing of an Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day.

The last Bill which was brought in provided for £450,000 to be expended from the consolidated

revenue fund, £50,000 from the trust funds, and £250,000 from loan fund. Of these moneys, up to yesterday, the 24th instant, we had spent £373,000 out of £450,000, £126,000 out of £250,000, and £13,000 out of £50,000. I am now asking for £350,000 out of the consolidated revenue fund, which will enable the Treasurer to go on paying expenses until the first or second week of November. In asking for this I am only carrying out the custom adopted by my predecessors, and I cannot see how any possible objection can be made against the vote being granted. We are now on the Estimates, and I trust that we shall get them sufficiently through to more than cover what I may require next time I ask for a temporary appropriation.

Mr. BROWNE (*Croydon*): I called "Not formal" to this motion, as I desired to enter my protest against the suspending of the Standing Orders. Members, not only of this party, but of this House, are continually protesting against this practice. It seems to me that the Standing Orders, more especially in regard to revenue, are about the only safeguards that this House has, and I think that we should be very chary in giving up those safeguards every time the Government like to ask. On this occasion I think it is particularly reprehensible. In spite of the protests of this side of the House, the House was called together at a very late period of the year, a great deal later than it should have been considering the very large amount of very important business we have to go on with. Immediately after this House assembled, on 25th July, the hon. gentleman in charge of the Treasury had to come down and ask us to suspend the Standing Orders in order to get through an Appropriation Bill for £750,000—for two months' Supply ahead. Since then nine weeks have elapsed, and during that time the hon. gentleman, if he had liked—being in charge of the business of this House—has had plenty of time to pass sufficient of the Estimates to do without asking for any favour from this House. Instead of doing that the hon. gentleman comes down and asks again for the Standing Orders to be suspended, and appropriation to be granted to pay expenses for one month in advance. And the hon. gentleman has given a very good reason, this afternoon, in the brief answer he gave to myself, why it should not be given. In answer to a question about the Public Works Commission report, he says that he is going to give an opportunity for discussing it when the Estimates of that department come before the House. I remind the hon. gentleman and hon. members that a very voluminous and lengthy report was presented to this House last session, and a distinct promise was made that the earliest opportunity should be taken this session to discuss that report. I refer to the report of the Royal Commission on the Police Force. I have asked the question several times this session when that opportunity would be granted; but it is very evident that the only way in which we will get to the discussion of that report will be when the Home Secretary's Estimates for the Police Force are before the House. And then, again, I may remind the hon. gentleman that there are four or five other Royal Commissions whose reports will be voluminous affairs, and if the same plan is to be followed, we shall get no opportunity of discussing them until the particular Estimates come on. I ask the hon. gentleman how—knowing as he does the discussion that will be entailed, and knowing that that will be the only opportunity for discussing them—he can imagine that in a month's time he will be through enough of the Estimates to come down to this House and obtain Supply without asking for it as a favour. I ask that more especially, when he thinks of discussing the Estimates only on Fridays, when we

know that the afternoon is taken up with private members' business. That will give us only four half-days to discuss all these matters. For these reasons, I say it is very unreasonable that this course of proceedings should be taken, and that this House should be asked to suspend the Standing Orders and vote Supply for one month ahead. It is taking practically the whole charge of the purse out of the control of the House. We all know that after money has been once voted in an Appropriation Bill, no matter how hon. members feel inclined afterwards to cavil at any item, we may be sure of the reply, "It is no use talking about it now; you should have spoken before it was voted." For that reason I make my protest to-day, as I intend to do all the time, against this very objectionable practice of continually suspending the Standing Orders of this House, and asking us to vote money without knowing how it is to be expended, or whether it is required or not.

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. R. Dickson, *Bulimba*): This is the old stock argument that hon. members opposite always use against the Treasurer when he is asking this House for Supply—to raise their voices against what they call the iniquitous custom of suspending the Standing Orders in order to procure money to carry on the public service of the colony.

Mr. BROWNE: I could quote your own words to that effect, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member says it is an objectionable system, but he does not offer to suggest a remedy. Can the hon. member suggest any system which will give this House more control over the finances of the colony than the present system? Does he advocate a special session in July for financial business—to grant an Appropriation Bill for the whole of the ensuing twelve months? He would object to it at once, and unless that system is adopted there is no other means by which the Treasurer can obtain parliamentary sanction to expenditure, without coming down from time to time during the session until the final vote is passed for the whole of the Estimates.

Mr. DAWSON: How was it the late Sir Thomas Mellwraith never had to ask for temporary Supply?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We had temporary Appropriation Bills in his time.

Mr. DAWSON: Very few.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Every Treasurer will have to do it unless Parliament is prepared to grant Supply for twelve months in advance. Such a proposal would never be heard of in this House, and, I for one, would be sorry to see any Ministry with it in its power to dissolve Parliament at any time, having once got Supply, and before necessary legislation was passed.

Mr. FISHER: It is not the power of dissolving we are afraid of. It is the keeping you in power.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the hon. member, or any other hon. member on the other side, can suggest a better plan, I am sure the Treasurer will gladly consider it, but I am quite certain every hon. member has given his very best consideration to the subject from time to time. It is equally unpleasant to the Treasurer to have to ask for these instalments in finance, and it would be far more satisfactory for him if some system could be devised under which one application, and one only, should be made; but I contend that the present system is the best that can be adopted, and that this continuous declamation on the part of hon. members opposite should come to an end unless they are prepared to suggest some mode of procedure which would be better from their point of view, and would be equally convenient to the Treasurer. We are not singular in this mode of conducting

financial operations. The Estimates in the sister colonies are not completed until the end of each session, and from time to time the Governments of those colonies have to get authority from Parliament to meet the necessary requirements of the colony. I merely rose to point out that I think we have had sufficient of these complaints made from time to time, and, unless they are accompanied by some suggestion whereby some other system can be adopted than that which has been invariably adopted in this Parliament, and which, I think, safeguards the interests of the country on the truest lines, by preventing the Government from having too large a control of the public finances, it is about time that they stopped what I may respectfully term idle declamation, and that we should be allowed to proceed with public business, which is of much greater moment than any objection to the passing of a temporary Appropriation Bill.

Mr. GROOM (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): The present system of asking for temporary appropriations has arisen in this Parliament undoubtedly through the alteration in our financial arrangements. The hon. gentleman who has just sat down knows well that our financial year in times gone by terminated on 31st December, and that then the House had complete control over its finances and over its Estimates, and hon. members had a fair opportunity of discussing both past and prospective expenditure. Ever since this system has been introduced of having our financial year terminate on 30th June, I contend the Opposition have been entirely deprived of their right to criticise both the expenditure and the actions of the Government. I do not believe anyone can give any reason why the change was made in the close of the financial year, except that it was a fad on the part of the then Treasurer, Mr. William Hemmant. He altered the system, and from that time to this there has been a continuous clamouring against it. The Chief Secretary should also remember this—that when our financial year ended on 31st December, Parliament invariably met in the month of May.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. GROOM: And the result was that all our work was over by the end of September or the beginning of October. But since the alteration was made, Parliament has never been called together till July, after the close of the financial year, and thus all this trouble about temporary Supply Bills has arisen. The hon. gentleman asks for a remedy. Well, the only remedy is to call Parliament together as it was before, in the month of May—two months earlier than we now meet. We could then get through the business of the session in cool weather, instead of having to sit here in a temperature of 100 degrees. Such a thing never occurred in the early days of the colony. If we were called together earlier, a great deal of this difficulty about temporary Supply Bills would be got over.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Treasurer only had an appropriation up to the 31st of December.

Mr. GROOM: The hon. gentleman knows the political and parliamentary history of the colony as I do, and he knows that on one occasion, when there were only thirty-two members in the House, sixteen of them sent a memorial to Lord Normanby, asking him to dismiss his Ministers on account of the way in which they had expended the public funds. The answer that Lord Normanby gave them was that it was the duty and prerogative of the members of the Opposition to criticise in their places in Parliament the financial operations of the Government, and, if they failed to do that, they could not come and ask him to dismiss his Ministers. That is exactly what an Opposition is for, and if we were all on the one side there would scarcely

be any need to call Parliament together at all, and we might as well have an autocratic Government. I contend that every opportunity should be given to the members sitting on this side of the House to criticise in a fair and honourable way the expenditure of the Government, both prospective and past. Even this session we have seen a remarkable illustration of what I think I never witnessed in the whole of my parliamentary career before, and that is that the Auditor-General's report was not laid on the table of the House until the morning after the debate on the Financial Statement had closed.

The TREASURER: Who is to blame for that?

Mr. DAWSON: The Government is to blame for it.

Mr. GROOM: The Chief Secretary knows as well as I do that if he had been sitting on this side of the House, and the late Sir Thomas McIlwraith had introduced a practice of that kind, he would have been one of the very first—and rightly so—to get up and protest against it, because how can you discuss a Financial Statement as it ought to be discussed in the absence of the Auditor-General's report? With regard to temporary Supply Bills, the only way to remedy it is for the Government to call Parliament together earlier in the year—say, in the month of May—because if it is to remain the practice to meet in July we must have temporary Supply Bills. We know that last session the Estimates were not finally disposed of till Christmas Eve, and it is impossible for the Government to conduct the affairs of the colony if the Estimates are not put through earlier than that unless they get temporary Supply. The cure for it—if there is a cure at all—is to summon Parliament together earlier in the year, and so give the Government an opportunity of bringing in the Estimates earlier.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member referred to what used to occur [4 p.m.] in times past when the financial year ended on the 31st December, and pointed out that the House then usually met in May, but he did not mention up to what date the Appropriation Act covered the expenditure prior to the meeting of Parliament early in May.

Mr. GROOM: We had Supplementary Estimates then as we have now.

The HOME SECRETARY: The Treasurer at that time, if the House met in May, 1874, as the hon. member says, had not had his appropriation up to a later date than the 31st December previous. Our present system is one which is absolutely necessary if we are going to always have the advantage that the previous financial year and its results shall be known to Parliament prior to the discussion of the Financial Statement gives us. If Parliament is to meet, and the Financial Statement is to be made, and the Estimates gone on with while the previous year's appropriations are still running, then we shall lose all the advantage of having the results of the previous year's transactions before the House when the Financial Statement is made and the Estimates considered.

Mr. GROOM: That is exactly how it was in 1874. The Estimates were generally voted at the end of the year.

The HOME SECRETARY: Does the hon. member mean to say that when the House met in 1873 it voted the Estimates up to the end of 1874?

Mr. GROOM: Decidedly so.

The HOME SECRETARY: A year ahead?

Mr. GROOM: Yes.

The HOME SECRETARY: Is that an advantage? That certainly would not suit us at the present day—that we should at this moment meet for the purpose of passing next year's

Estimates instead of this year's Estimates—and required appropriations exactly in the same way. The thing is absurd on the face of it. The hon. member must be perfectly well aware that if we adopt the suggestion he has inferentially thrown out—that we should vote the Estimates one year ahead—then we lose all the advantage we have at the present time of knowing the past transactions of the Treasury before we break new ground in regard to the new financial year. With regard to the Auditor-General's report, the hon. member knows very well that the Government have nothing to do with controlling the date when the Auditor-General shall present his report, and the hon. member's reference to that can only be interpreted as a plea for the further postponement of the Financial Statement until the Auditor-General's report comes before the House, and hon. members have had sufficient time to consider it. That is the only logical conclusion that can be drawn from the statement that the Auditor-General's report was not in the hands of hon. members in sufficient time to enable them to discuss all the details of the Financial Statement. The Auditor-General's report, I presume, was presented to Parliament at the earliest possible date. He alone is responsible for that, and if the hon. gentleman's contention is that the two—the Financial Statement and the Auditor-General's report—come too closely together, then it is distinctly an argument out of his own mouth for the still further postponement of the Financial Statement, and all the proceedings which follow thereupon in the shape of Estimates.

Mr. DAWSON: Unless we had a new Auditor-General.

The HOME SECRETARY: I doubt whether we would get a better one, or one whose report would be on the table one day earlier; and I think if hon. members will compare the date on which the Auditor-General's report in this colony is presented with the dates on which similar reports are presented in the other colonies, they will find that the comparison is very favourable to this colony.

Mr. GROOM: No one said anything to the contrary.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member used it as an argument why our proceedings were irregular and to be deprecated, and the hon. member's argument can only be used as an argument for the still further postponement of the financial business of this Parliament. When a temporary Supply Bill is asked for, the question is always raised as to whether the Government has got sufficiently far with the Estimates to warrant a temporary appropriation. There seems to be an idea that it is necessary that the Treasurer should have obtained votes in Committee of Supply sufficient in amount to warrant the temporary appropriation. That seems to me to be an illogical contention, for this reason: that these votes cover only certain departments; and if there was anything in the contention at all, it would mean that only expenditure connected with those departments should be paid from the temporary appropriation, but everyone knows that the temporary Appropriation Act is for the purpose of covering the whole expenditure of the colony, and that of course cannot be covered fully until the last item on the Estimates has been passed. The two things appear to me to be totally unconnected with one another. The real question is whether Parliament shall control the expenditure as it is now asked to do in this respect—whether the Government has the confidence of a majority of this House, and is therefore warranted in carrying on the business of the country on the lines laid down in the Estimates already

passed in the previous year. Of course an undertaking is given, or always implied, that the expenditure on salaries and other expenditure of a similar character shall proceed merely on the lines of the previous year's Estimates until the final Appropriation Bill is passed; and it is for the House to say whether it has sufficient confidence in the Government to entrust it with the expenditure on those lines pending the passing of the final item in the Estimates, and the consequent general Appropriation Bill for the year.

Mr. JACKSON: Have the two things no bearing on each other?

The HOME SECRETARY: I cannot see that they have. It seems to me extremely illogical to connect one with the other. For the sake of argument we will say that the votes which might have gone through would have been the Chief Secretary, the Home Secretary, and the Works Department. If the Estimates had proceeded so far, will anybody contend that the temporary appropriation is only to cover the items included in those particular votes? Nobody will. Where is the argument when you come to consider the votes in connection with all the other departments.

Mr. JACKSON: You might keep the Estimates back till the end of the session, and then there would be no opportunity to discuss them.

The HOME SECRETARY: The question is whether the House has sufficient confidence in the Government of the day to entrust them with a temporary Supply on the lines of the Estimates passed in the previous year. If the House had not that confidence, it would refuse to grant the Supply asked for, and the Government would have to resign.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge, *Maranoa*): I should not have said a word but for an interjection made by the hon. member for Charters Towers.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman has spoken. (Opposition laughter.)

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I did not.

The SPEAKER: I understood the Attorney-General to second the motion.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear! and laughter.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is a point, however, as to whether an hon. member who seconds a motion by merely lifting his hat, or bowing in response to the call from the Chair as to whether the motion is seconded or not, should, for that reason, be debarred from speaking; and I think the point is one that ought to be settled.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: Unless it is settled to the contrary, I shall regard it as in accordance with reason and fair play that a member should not lose his right of speech. The strict letter of the rule seems to indicate that a member who seconds a motion by raising his hat or bowing has forfeited his right to speak—that he has lost his opportunity—but I do not think it is in accordance with the wish of the House that the rule should be so rigidly enforced.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: There should be a clear understanding on the subject. I would point out that rulings have been given in the Commons in both directions. Mr. Speaker Peel ruled, as late as 1886, in these terms—

It is a well-understood rule, that if any member seconds a motion by simply raising his hat, he is not precluded from subsequently taking a part in the debate.

In 1892, Mr. Speaker Peel ruled that—

A member who takes off his hat in response to the question put from the Chair, whether anyone seconds the amendment, has lost his right of speaking.

Those two rulings appear to be at variance. My own interpretation of the position—and I believe

to be the sense of the House—is that a member who seconds a motion by bowing or removing his hat is not to be regarded as having forfeited his right to speak. I propose to follow that course in future.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am sorry that I conveyed the impression to the Speaker that I seconded the motion of the Premier, because I thought to myself that I would be on my guard. I may have seconded it unconsciously, and unconsciously moved my head, but not with the idea of seconding the motion. I rose simply for the purpose of saying a very few words in reference to an interjection of my hon. friend, the member for Charters Towers, who says that coming down in this way for temporary Supply was never done by Sir Thomas McIlwraith.

Mr. DAWSON: I did not say that. I said it was not the usual thing.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I think it was the usual thing in every year. I also want to say in reference to the argument that if the House met in May there would be no need for this kind of thing, that it is a curious circumstance that the very first year Sir Thomas McIlwraith held office as Treasurer, the House had met on the 13th of May, and there was plenty of time to do what hon. members contend now should be done. He had just ejected the Douglas Government, and there was plenty of time to have passed the Estimates through sufficiently far to avoid the necessity for coming down with a temporary Supply Bill, and yet I find that on the 22nd July—considerably more than two months after the House met—Sir Thomas McIlwraith came down with a temporary Supply Bill. I find, further, that on that occasion hon. members on the other side of the House—the members of the ejected Government—did not take exception to the course followed. In fact, Mr. Douglas, who was head of the late Government thrown out by Sir Thomas McIlwraith, said—

It would be admitted that it was desirable that the whole of the Estimates should be passed before the end of the financial year, but the practice of Parliament had been such that this was an impossibility. They might deplore this circumstance, but they must recognise the fact, and were bound to vote these sums as required. They could not pass the Estimates before the end of the financial year.

Mr. Douglas, the then leader of the Opposition, was making his comments on the action of Sir Thomas McIlwraith in coming down so long after the commencement of the session and asking for temporary Supply. The same thing happened in 1880 and in 1881. Sir Thomas McIlwraith came down more than once with temporary Supply Bills, and there was no strenuous opposition on the part of hon. members who had had long experience to the granting of Supply Bills. It was universally recognised, as the hon. member for Toowoomba pointed out, that an altered condition of things had been brought about, and, under the circumstances, there was no alternative but for the Assembly to bow to the inevitable, and pass these Supply Bills. The thing having been established by long usage, it really is too late, I submit, for hon. members to refuse the present Treasurer Supply under conditions exactly similar to those with which we are familiar in the past.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat seems to me to take up a most remarkable attitude considering that the hon. member was a member of this House at the time when members were very jealous of their privileges, and were very careful, if they happened to be in opposition, that the Government should not take undue advantage of its position. I may say that the hon. gentleman was a very prominent member of the party who

always opposed actions similar to the one taken on this occasion. In not a single instance did the hon. gentleman, while in opposition, ever agree to the Government coming down with a temporary Supply Bill, and a motion to suspend the Standing Orders, unless a certain amount of work had been done on the Estimates.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have just pointed out an instance.

MR. DAWSON: I shall be perfectly willing to humbly apologise to the hon. gentleman if he can point out a single instance in which the Opposition of which he was a member approved of the suspension of the Standing Orders for this purpose unless progress had been made with the Estimates. As a matter of fact, when Sir Thomas McIlwraith was Premier, and the hon. gentleman was in opposition under his then leader, Sir Samuel Griffith, the Opposition were very jealous of the rights and privileges of members—a great deal more so than they are at the present time. We would do very well indeed, I think, to follow in their footsteps in that particular. Now, I wish it to be distinctly understood, as far as members on this side are concerned, that their objection to temporary Supply Bills is not because we desire to deprive Civil servants of their salaries, but we object to the method adopted by the Government in carrying on the business of the country. The method adopted by the present Treasurer is certainly not one to be commended or encouraged, and I think it is about time that a protest was urged against it. If hon. members sitting on the other side—old parliamentarians—do not raise their voices in protest, then we must do so. My parliamentary experience has been this: I came into this House in 1893—one of the most troublesome and stormy years we ever had in Queensland—a period when members of Parliament had to keep their heads level, and when there was a tremendous amount of work to be done in order to pull the people of Queensland out of very great difficulties. What was the method of procedure adopted by the then Premier, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, who was certainly not in very good odour with the Opposition? As soon as the House met of course certain panic Bills went through; but a certain day was set aside every week for the discussion of the Estimates, and it was not necessary for him to ask the indulgence of the House, or beg for the charity of the House, in order to get a temporary Supply Bill through. When money was due to Civil servants he was able to come down and ask for a temporary Supply Bill for the amount already passed by Committee of Supply. But since Sir Thomas McIlwraith has left this House a different system has been adopted. Sir Hugh Nelson introduced it first, and the present Treasurer has gone a step further than Sir Hugh Nelson. He has postponed everything of a contentious nature. Everything is done on strict party lines. The line of demarcation between the opposite sides of the House is strictly drawn, and everything of a party nature is postponed. He defers going on with the Estimates as long as possible, and when the money is actually due and he is bound to pay Civil servants, he comes down with a temporary Supply Bill, and we are asked to vote money when the Estimates have not passed this Assembly. That is a very bad system and a very dangerous one. The Home Secretary and the Attorney-General have taken the leader of the Independent Opposition to task about the Auditor-General; but I think he has been misrepresented by those hon. gentlemen. He stated that it was a very peculiar thing that of late years hon. members had been compelled to debate the Financial Statement without having one of the most important documents—the Auditor-

General's report—in their hands. Both hon. gentlemen said that it was not possible to supply that report any earlier, and because of that they say the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba thought there should have been a postponement of the discussion on the Financial Statement—until hon. members had that report in due time, and that there should be later sittings of the House. I did not understand the hon. member to say that at all. I think the hon. member meant that the old system we had here for many years—before even I saw the green carpet of this Chamber—he meant that the financial year should end on the 31st December, and that the House should meet in May. That would give the Auditor-General, and the officers under him, ample time to prepare his report, and furnish hon. members with copies of it, so that the Financial Statement could be properly discussed. I see no reason why we should not revert to the old system. It is a monstrous thing that hon. members, who are the guardians of the public interests, are only permitted to see such an important report a few hours before the Financial Statement is delivered. Hon. gentlemen talk about waste of time, but I think the present Treasurer is the most fortunate man in the world—far more fortunate than other statesmen sitting in this House.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Who were they?

MR. DAWSON: Mr. T. Unmack, Sir Samuel Griffith, and Sir Thomas McIlwraith, and the bosom friend of the hon. gentleman, the late Mr. John Macrossan. In those days hon. members will find, if they make a diligent search into *Hansard*, that the debate on the Financial Statement very seldom took less than a fortnight, while our party have allowed it to go through in two days. In this connection, I may say that it affords me a certain amount of amusement, tinged with a certain amount of surprise, that the present Chief Secretary should defend the action of the Treasurer on this occasion. When I first came into the House, in 1893, the present Chief Secretary was then sitting on the cross-benches, and he was then known as a "candid friend of the Government"; and if hon. members will look up *Hansard* for 1893—I have not done so, but speaking from recollection—I believe they will find that this candid friend of the Government objected to this method of granting temporary Supply, notwithstanding that nearly the whole of the Estimates had been put through Committee. Now we find he is a member of the present Government, and he does not object to this.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: You are not stating the facts fairly.

MR. DAWSON: As far as my recollection goes, I think I am stating what is correct; but I have not looked up *Hansard* on the matter. There are quite a number of members here now who were present at that particular time, and can bear out what I state.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: My objection was then raised to the Appropriation Bill passing before all the legislation of the session was concluded.

MR. DAWSON: I remember the point was raised by the then leader of the Opposition (Mr. Charles Powers), by Mr. Glassey, and others; but the then candid friend of the Government went even further than hon. members of the Opposition. When the case was put so strongly by many members, including the candid friend of the Government, Sir Thomas McIlwraith gracefully caved-in; and that is how the thing was carried.

MR. LEAHY: Sir Hugh Nelson was Treasurer.

Mr. DAWSON: Yes, but we know who was boss. I think the objection that [4.30 p.m.] has been urged by the leader of the Opposition is very well justified, and I believe that if hon. members sitting on the other side were awake to the danger of a proceeding of this description they would cheerfully, if not enthusiastically, support the contention of the leader of this side of the House. The day may come at any time, it may come next week, when hon. members sitting on the other side may find themselves in opposition, and in view of that prospect they ought to endeavour to look at this question from the position of the Opposition. I have not suggested that the Government are doing this from dishonest or dishonourable motives, but I say the practice is a dangerous one. The great safeguard of the public, and the great strength of the Opposition, is that the Opposition should have a certain control of the purse strings. If any Government—I do not care what Government it may be, or how honest and upright their motives might be—are given absolute control of the public purse, that very control may lead to practices which might fairly and honestly be called corrupt, and which might be detrimental to the welfare of the public of the colony.

The TREASURER: The Opposition do not lose control at all.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman is extending a pernicious practice which was introduced by Sir Hugh Nelson, after Sir Thomas McLlwraith was Treasurer. Sir Thomas McLlwraith, so far as my experience is concerned, never did that kind of thing; he always passed a certain amount of his Estimates before he asked for temporary Supply.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No. In 1880 he did not pass a single line of his Estimates when he got a temporary Supply Bill through.

Mr. DAWSON: The session of 1880 was a most extraordinary one.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not at all.

Mr. DAWSON: Yes, it was; next to the session of 1893 it was the most extraordinary session we had. However, I think the practice is a very bad one. The principal business of the session is the Estimates, and the proper practice is that as far as possible the Estimates should be passed before the Government come down with an Appropriation Bill. There is one other objection, and it is a very serious one—it is not altogether an objection from a public point of view, but from a party point of view, and so long as we retain the system of party politics it is a very serious objection—and that is that the Treasurer gets Supply a month ahead. Immediately that Supply is granted, on the very next question that comes before this Chamber, he may be defeated on a distinct Government measure, and what happens? The Government resign, and the Premier names somebody who should be sent for by His Excellency.

Mr. LEAHY: Not of necessity.

Mr. DAWSON: I do not say it is of necessity, but I say it is the custom. The member sent for undertakes to form a Ministry, but finds he cannot do it. The old Ministry then hold on. An election is necessary, and the question arises who is going to conduct that election, the defeated Ministry or the gentleman who was sent for by His Excellency? That is determined by Supply. The leader of the Opposition cannot ask His Excellency for Supply, because it has already been granted a month ahead, and the result is that notwithstanding the fact that on a fair and legitimate party issue he has defeated the Government, he is unable to go to the country in charge of the elections. To my mind that is a very serious matter, and one that deserves the consideration of every member in this Chamber.

As a matter of simple fact my experience was pretty well like that. When the present Chief Secretary was Premier I had the distinguished distinction of defeating the hon. gentleman, and I had the pleasure of being sent for by His Excellency to form a Ministry. Things were very much mixed at that time; there was a possibility of various combinations, but the greatest possibility was going to the country to test the question at issue and allow the electors to decide it. The great difficulty in the way of that was the question of Supply. I could not come to this House and ask for Supply for the simple reason that the House in its foolishness had already granted the hon. member for Bulimba Supply for a month ahead.

Mr. CAMPBELL: And refused you a majority.

Mr. DAWSON: It was not a question of refusing me a majority. As a matter of fact, I could not make any claim for Supply on His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Samuel Griffith, because the House had two or three days previously granted Supply to the then Government for a month ahead. This is a matter of very great concern, and it is certainly worthy of the grave consideration of members on both sides of the House. I have nothing further to say, except that I wish the hon. gentleman who is responsible to this House for the placing of the business on the business-sheet distinctly to understand that, so far as I am personally concerned, I will object to give Supply unless the paper is put in proper order, and the real business of the country gets its due share of time for discussion in this House.

Mr. HIGGS (*Fortitude Valley*): I dare say it would contribute to the harmony of this gathering if the Opposition were to make no protest against the proposal by the Premier, but I do not regard that as the attitude that the Opposition should take up at all. I think it will be a very sad day for the country when this House becomes a kind of family party—a sort of mutual admiration society. I think that, although I would not go so far as to say that we should apply the old saying—"when rogues fall out honest people come by their own," to this Assembly; still, I will say, that when politicians fall out it is far better for the country. Now, the very name and function of the Opposition implies that it should oppose the proposals of the Government, and for that reason I wish to offer my protest against it, and to take this opportunity of ventilating one or two grievances. Now members opposite indulged in a good deal of hilarity and they were very amused, when the Dawson Government was spoken of. It seems to be treated as a huge joke, but if certain members of this House—the hon. member for Enoggera and the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba—had only seen their way to join this side of the House, I believe that it would not have been very long before they would have had a good following, because the members on the opposite side, although they would have the public believe that they are a very united party, we on this side can see signs that the policy of the Government is not meeting with favour—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HIGGS: Now, very probably another opportunity may be given to me to refer to that matter, but I do not think that we should fall in with the Premier's views even though he approaches us in such a humble way, and promises that if we grant this request he will not allow it to occur again. He promises to get through the Estimates, and give us a whole day to discuss the Works Commission report. His boundless generosity is almost appalling. He will give us a day to discuss the Estimates. Well, at the rate that the Estimates are going

through the House, I think it will take some weeks, whether the Premier likes it or not, to pass the votes that are put before us. Now, I understand this is not a proper stage at which to bring up a little matter which is almost a question of privilege. I was attacked in this Chamber, which I always understood was sacred to the privileges of members of this House. I was handed a letter.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HIGGS: Well, I will refer to it later on. (Laughter.)

Mr. McDONALD (*Flinders*): I object to the suspending of the Standing Orders generally, on different grounds to most of the hon. members that have spoken this afternoon. I have always made it a practice to object to the Standing Orders being suspended, especially when I know it is not for the convenience of this Chamber but for that of the other Chamber. I object to the convenience of this Chamber being subservient to that of the other Chamber. Though I suppose, under the present order of things, we must regard them as on an equality, I certainly think we have no right to bow down to suit their special convenience. I think, with other members who have spoken, that if this House had been called together in April or May, and we had got on with the general business of the country, when the financial year closed there would have been ample opportunity of dealing with the Estimates. I also agree with the hon. member for Croydon, Mr. Browne, the leader of this party, when he says it is only fair that the Government should have a certain amount of their Estimates passed before they come to ask for temporary Supply, so that there may be some guarantee that their financial scheme has been accepted by the House. The hon. gentleman now asks for a suspension of the Standing Orders to enable him to get £300,000 or £400,000 to carry him on for one month. Surely, the hon. gentleman never expects that the final Appropriation Bill, as well as the Estimates, will be passed in a month's time? If they are not, the hon. gentleman will come down with another temporary Supply Bill, and the same talk and the same objections will be heard again. I do not blame the hon. gentleman, the Treasurer, for this, for this is the way things have gone on for the last seven or eight years. I think that May is the earliest month Parliament has been called together, and even then it was adjourned for a month shortly afterwards. That was in 1893, when there was the financial crisis. I think it would be far better in the interests of the country if the Government called Parliament together in May, and for all contentious legislation to be introduced at an early stage, so that there would be ample time for discussion. The Government, however, leave it until they cannot possibly leave it any longer. On this occasion they left it until late in July, although they knew that a few days after Parliament met they would have to come down and ask for temporary Supply. They would probably have left it until August or September if they had had the means of getting the necessary supplies, but not having the necessary means, they were compelled to come down in July, because they could not get their supplies in any other way. What I want especially to say, however, is that here, at this late period, we have rushed upon us more contentious measures than has ever been introduced in this Assembly for the past seven or eight years.

Mr. LEAHY: You make them contentious.

Mr. McDONALD: No, it is not so. The Elections Bill is not contentious so far as this side is concerned, but it is so far as the other side are concerned, and a considerable time will be taken up in the discussion of that measure. We

have twenty different measures before us, and a number of them are very old friends. Some of them we have seen year after year brought down to this House, and finally we have seen them cast away, and come up again when the succeeding session came along. The Government must have known before they summoned Parliament together that they had this very contentious programme to lay before us; and, further, they knew that they would have a great deal of federal business to deal with during this session. There can be no excuse in connection with that, because the head of the Government was asked at the close of last session when he was going to summon Parliament together, and he said somewhere about June; and members on this side got up and pointed out to him that June was too late, as there would be a large amount of federal business to be dealt with. The hon. gentleman must also have known that he was going to introduce the various Bills which are now before us in connection with private railways, which propose to reverse the settled policy of railway construction; and he surely never had the slightest idea that legislation such as that was not of a contentious character. Under those circumstances, the hon. gentleman should have called Parliament together earlier. I have always held, and shall continue to hold so long as I have the honour and privilege of having a seat in this House, that it is our duty to oppose the suspension of the Standing Orders. The hon. gentleman knew last week that we would need money, and he should have come down to the House in the ordinary way and gone through the usual formalities without asking for the suspension of the Standing Orders. How do we know that the suspension of the Standing Orders will merely apply to the passing of a Supply Bill. In the past it has been pretty well confined to the passing of Appropriation Bills, but we know that on one occasion in 1894 the Government suspended the Standing Orders to enable them to get through a very obnoxious Bill—although they did not succeed in passing that measure on that particular day. Still we can see the danger that is likely to crop up through the suspension of the Standing Orders, as it may not always be confined to Supply Bills, but may be done in connection with other Bills. How do we know where this thing is going to end? That is one of my strongest reasons for saying that we should be very guarded in agreeing to the suspension of the Standing Orders. It is not a matter which is of concern only to those on this side of the House. Every hon. member is just as much affected by it as we are. The Government may have a majority to-day, and they may be able to use that majority in a way which is beneficial to the country, or they may be able to use it in a manner which is not beneficial. I have heard the leader of the Government repeatedly say, "Well, we are not always going to be on this bench." Hon. members who now sit on this side may be over there, or, if not the present members sitting on this side, some other hon. members may be over there, and they may then turn round and quote the precedent which has been set by this Government. Then we shall see hon. members who sit opposite rise in their places on this side of the House and protest against such a violation of the Constitution. To show that this is not altogether a fanciful picture, I may remind hon. members of what took place in the House of Commons with reference to the closure rules. They were introduced by a very Conservative Government. Did the Conservative Government use them? No. A Liberal Government came in on top, and, in order to pass certain business which the Conservative party desired to

obstruct, they put in operation against them the very rules that they themselves had passed. The Chief Secretary also reminds me of another very important matter that happened in connection with an Appropriation Bill. At the time Sir Hugh Nelson was Treasurer he desired to pass an Appropriation Bill immediately after the Estimates had been passed. If that had been done, the House would have placed itself entirely in the hands of the Government. Objection was raised by the then hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Powers, by the hon. member for Toowoomba, and by the present Chief Secretary, as well as by a number of hon. members sitting on this side. They pointed out what was likely to follow if such a course was adopted, and the Chief Secretary was so emphatic on that occasion, and the House took it up so strongly, that Sir Hugh Nelson gave way and withdrew the Bill. I merely mention this to show that it is not an objection that comes purely from this side, and I also want to show that it is not right, because hon. members on this side object to a certain procedure for hon. members on the other side to try and treat the matter lightly, because the observance of all these things is necessary to the conduct of business in this Chamber. I shall always raise my voice in protest against the suspension of the Standing Orders so long as I have the honour of a seat in this House, because I feel that there is a danger of something cropping up at some future time which may violate the Constitution.

Mr. STEWART (*Rockhampton North*): As hon. members on this side may possibly be accused of wasting time as usual in making this protest against the suspension of the Standing Orders, I propose to show that on a previous occasion several hon. gentlemen who held distinguished positions in this Assembly and in the country were most emphatic in protesting against the method of conducting business which is pursued by the present Government. For instance, we have Sir Hugh Nelson, then Mr. Nelson, speaking on the 27th July, 1893, upon a motion exactly similar to the one we now have before us, and this is what he said—

It amounts to this: whatever Archer, Macrossan, or Norton did, and Mellraith approved, cannot be wrong; and as long as the present Government find that a thing was done by the previous Government they think that is a perfect justification for doing the same; though at the time I suppose—I have not had time to look up the records—the present Treasurer condemned most thoroughly what was then done. Another thing is that the practice is becoming established; the disease is getting chronic as it goes on from year to year; and it is a very serious matter, because succeeding Governments will argue that they have a sort of prescriptive right to this practice of demanding a vote on account, without going through the forms and securities which have been established. It is a matter for the whole House to consider whether we are not giving up our rights by allowing this thing to go on year after year, and I think some protest should be entered against it. The calling of Parliament together at this time of the year is very inconvenient, and seriously interferes with the interests of the country.

I find that Parliament met that year on the 19th July, or two days later than the opening on the present occasion. Mr. Nelson emphatically protested against Parliament being called together so late in the year; and I think it must be evident to everyone that it is exceedingly improper that Parliament should not be called until a fortnight after the expiration of the financial year. The disease appears to be becoming more and more acute every year, and the remedy is obvious. I think it must be obvious to any hon. member, with the exception, perhaps, of the members of the Government. Why not call Parliament together earlier in the year? Why leave it over to the middle of July? Why not summon us here in May? If that

were done there would be no need to adopt this method of procedure. Of course I am aware that the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government desires to be free from the supervision of Parliament as long as possible. Neither that hon. gentleman nor any of his predecessors, so far as my experience goes, ever summoned Parliament together until they wanted money, until they could carry on no longer, until the Treasury, so far as they were concerned, was empty. Then, when they found that they were brought to a standstill they summoned Parliament together. If by some means or other they could get unlimited command of Supply, then Parliament would never be called together, and members would have an exceedingly happy time. They would probably be drawing their salaries for doing nothing, while the Executive would be running riot with the affairs of the country. Now, it appears to me that the chief objection to this sort of thing lies in this: That the governing power is drifting more and more into the hands of the Executive; that Parliament is becoming a mere shadow, as it were, and that the whole authority over the affairs of the country is being concentrated in the hands of a few men. I know that so long as the Government commands a majority this sort of thing will continue; but I maintain that it is an exceedingly unhealthy state of affairs. It is a degradation of government by Parliament; it is weakening the control of the people of the colony over their own affairs, and anything which does that I contend must have an evil and prejudicial effect. Not only was Mr. Nelson emphatic in his protest against the suspension of the Standing Orders, and against votes on account, but also another hon. gentleman who was held in high estimation, and whose memory is green in the minds of a great many of the citizens of Queensland, and that is the late Hon. J. M. Macrossan. He also protested against this sort of thing; Mr. Morehead also raised his voice against it, and, it appears to me, with excellent reason. That being the case, I think it is exceedingly desirable that hon. members in opposition should protest against this continuous suspending of the Standing Orders. Why should we not meet earlier and get through the business in a decent time? Then there would be no necessity for outraging the Constitution in this manner.

Mr. REID (*Enoggera*): I would just like to say a few words before this closes as a protest against the proposed suspension of the Standing Orders. This is the second time this session, and the Chief Secretary was very emphatic in asking members on this side of the House to offer a suggestion that will remedy this state of affairs. One member after another has suggested the same remedy; and it seems to me that it is the right and only possible remedy for the Government to adopt, and that is to call Parliament together earlier. Then there would be no necessity for suspending the Standing Orders in order to carry a measure through all its stages in one day. All the contentious business could be laid before the House early in the year, and the second readings could be carried—that is, the principal measures the Government intend to bring forward should be laid before the House early. Before Supply comes on they would be fairly well discussed, the second readings would be carried, and the table would be clear for Supply. Certainly an Appropriation Bill might be required before we got Supply all through; but then we must take this into consideration—that as soon as the House meets, the first thing the present Government do is to ask for Supply, and they are getting worse and worse every year. The contention of this side is that if Parliament was

called together earlier more business would be done, the Estimates would be half through by this time, and the Government would have the use of all the money passed on the Estimates. I got up to enter my protest—as I shall do every time a similar course to this is adopted—against calling Parliament together at so late a period. I think the Government ought to take this lesson to heart, and when in future they have so many contentious measures on the paper as at present, that Parliament should be afforded a better and earlier opportunity of discussing them. At present we are taking Supply only on Friday evenings. Half a day per week is certainly not sufficient. It is not fair either to the Government themselves, to members, or to the country that the Estimates should be jammed into Friday evenings. The Premier has told the leader of this party that when the Works Estimates come on he will grant a special day for their discussion; but if the present rule is followed, how can we be expected to discuss that matter on a Friday evening only? I suppose also we shall be allotted one evening after 7 o'clock for discussing the Police Estimates and the commission's report. I say that owing to the late period at which Parliament is called together all the Estimates are jammed into a few days, and we are not able to discuss them properly. I know the Civil servants are not to blame for the misconduct of the Government, but if it would teach the Government a lesson, I would even consent to keeping the servants of the country out of their pay for a month. I know it would be an injustice to them, but the ultimate good to the country is beyond doubt. It is very hard to keep men out of money that they have earned; and, therefore, Parliament is more or less compelled to pass a temporary Supply Bill. But if the Civil servants were kept out of their money for a month there would be such an outcry by them, and by the business people with whom they have dealings, that the Government would be taught a good lesson, and the resulting good to the country would be very great. I enter my protest against the action of the Government, and should like to record my vote against it if there was an opportunity of doing so.

Question—Suspension of Standing Orders—put and passed.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER: Mr. Speaker,—I move that you do now leave the chair.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government was asked a question this afternoon in connection with the Public Works Commission. I think it is a very serious matter, and the Government should not allow it to remain over their heads for a solitary moment. Immediately the report of the commission was presented, the proper course to have adopted was to have come down and asked Parliament to discuss the whole matter. Very serious charges have been made in that report against the Secretary for Works, and I think it would be an injustice to the Ministry, to the Under Secretary for Works, and to every officer in that department, if this matter was not immediately dealt with. The hon. gentleman has told us that he is not going to deal with the matter at once, but that it is to be allowed to drift on until we come to deal with the Works Department Estimates. Now, I would point out that last year a Royal Commission, costing something like £3,000, sat in connection with the Police Department, and owing to the report having been brought down rather late, we were asked to waive our right to discuss it, although the hon. gentleman in charge of the Estimates

had postponed them for some considerable time in order that they might be discussed after the commission's report came in. The result is that twelve months have passed by, the matter has become stale and dead, and the whole labours of the commission are practically a dead letter. As far as we know, none of the recommendations have been adopted. This matter of the Works Commission report raises an even more serious question, because it reflects upon a Minister of the Crown. That is a reflection that no Premier ought to allow to remain upon one of his Ministers for a solitary moment. I think he ought to try and have that reflection removed. I don't say whether it is right or wrong, because I have not had time to go through all the evidence. The whole of the members of the Commission signed that report, and then there is a minority report.

The TREASURER: All the commissioners do not agree to what you have stated at all.

Mr. DAWSON: They give very poor reasons for not agreeing.

Mr. McDONALD: There is one report sent in signed by the whole of the members of that commission, and there is a minority addenda signed by the chairman, by Mr. Petrie, and by Mr. Plunkett. Very strong strictures are placed on the hon. gentleman, and I think that, in justice to the House and to the hon. member himself, they should not be allowed to be passed by lightly or without some explanation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I can easily clear myself of them all.

Mr. McDONALD: I am very glad to hear the Minister say so, and he should take the very first opportunity of so doing. I have merely got up so that—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You were put up to it.

Mr. McDONALD: The hon. gentleman says what is not true.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: I defy the hon. gentleman to prove it.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: I am not like the hon. gentleman—I will never be a cat's paw for anyone.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: When I brought forward the Jack inquiry, I did it in the interests of the colony. I have brought similar matters before the notice of this House in the interests of the country, and I will do so again. Let me tell the hon. member that I am not the putty man that he is. People cannot squeeze me into any shape they like. I bring this matter before the House because I think it is necessary to be discussed at once. The hon. gentleman has made a disclaimer, and I am not going to accuse him. I say that when the public Press of the colony—the leading papers in this city—publish a report of this nature, that no such reflections should be allowed to rest on the head of any member of this House for a solitary moment—let alone a Minister. I have brought this matter forward in order to let the Minister have an opportunity of defending himself. If the House allows these reflections to rest on the head of an hon. member, every hon. member is equally guilty. The report, as published in the *Telegraph*, says—

1. The Honourable John Murray, Minister for Works, was examined at considerable length on matters connected with the department, and we must express our regret at the attitude assumed by him during his examination.

Then it goes on with "3." I think that is a typographical error.

Mr. BRIDGES: Quote from the *Courier*; you will find the report correct there.

Mr. McDONALD: Well, I will read from the *Courier*—

1. The Honourable John Murray, Minister for Works, was examined at considerable length on matters connected with the department, and we must express our regret at the attitude assumed by him during his examination.

2. The Minister does not appear to have had a grip of the operations of this important Department of Public Works.

That is even more strong than the *Telegraph's* report, and I thank the hon. member for Nundah for his suggestion. The report goes on—

We venture to express the opinion that the action of the Minister in authorising the expenditure of £316 in trying to prove one of his subordinate officers guilty of either incompetency or neglect of duty was both unnecessary and unjustifiable.

Now that is a very serious charge—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: "Trying to prove"! It was proved.

Mr. McDONALD: That is his business; not mine. My business is to point out these serious charges which are hanging over the head of the hon. gentleman, and practically over the Government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Government is always wrong.

Mr. McDONALD: It is no use the hon. gentleman coming along with these empty platitudes. He should have sufficient knowledge to know that when one Minister is seriously accused that that affects the whole of the Government. How was the last Liberal Government in England wrecked?

Mr. HARDACRE: Yes, and in New Zealand.

Mr. McDONALD: I am going to reserve my judgment in the matter until I hear what the hon. gentleman has to say in his defence, and I hope that when he does get up to speak, he will leave no shadow of doubt in the minds of hon. members as to his position in this matter. The report goes on—

4. We regret that the Minister for Works, when he saw the nature and extent of the defective work at the Stock Institute and Agricultural Buildings, did not immediately take action in regard to Messrs. Brady, Pye, and Murdoch, as well as to Inspector Jack. We consider that blame attaches to all of these four officers, and, in our opinion, the action of the Minister in singling out only this one officer for punishment has the appearance of an act of persecution.

That is another very serious charge. I think that if any Civil servant has been persecuted, there is every reason why the matter should be brought up at the earliest possible opportunity. The report also goes on—

5. At the Minister's request we tested the accuracy of the reports of the evidence taken at the Jack-Robertson inquiry. We caused an examination and comparison of the shorthand notes and the transcript copy to be made, and the report furnished to us shows that the official report of the evidence in the main is substantially correct.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you blame me for that?

Mr. McDONALD: No; I have tried to make myself clear to the House. I don't blame the hon. gentleman at all. I have no desire to say any more on this matter just now. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government has stated that this matter can be discussed when the Estimates for the Works Department come along. I certainly think, considering the grave

accusations made by the commission [5:30 p.m.] against the Secretary for Public Works, it should not be left hanging over the head of the Minister or the Government for a solitary day, and I hope the hon. gentleman, and the Government also, will take the first opportunity that presents itself to clear the hon. gentleman of the charge made against him by the Works Commission.

The TREASURER: I should like to make a few remarks on this matter. I was informed by the Secretary for Public Works that he had heard that the members of the Labour party were going to discuss the whole of the Works Commission report this afternoon. I do not think it is fair for any member in the House to bring on a debate on that subject until hon. members have gone fully through the report.

Mr. COWLEY: We have not got it yet.

The TREASURER: The only report I have seen is the report published in the newspapers. The Secretary for Public Works is quite prepared to defend himself, but I do not think the hon. gentleman or the Government feel that the Government have lost the confidence of this House. When the report of the commission is fully debated, the Government are quite satisfied to take the opinion of the House as to whether they are guilty or not guilty of the matters alleged against them, but I do not think it is wise at this stage of the proceedings to commence a debate on the report, which very few hon. members have read. I know I have not read it, and it will take a little time before we get the report.

Mr. DAWSON: It is not the report; it is the position of the Minister we are discussing.

The TREASURER: I do not think it is wise to commence a debate on the report until hon. members know all about it. There are members on both sides of the House who take sides as to the merits and demerits of this question, but it will be far better for all hon. members to stay their hands until they have read the report carefully.

Mr. FISHER: You said until the Estimates for the department came on; that is not the right time for such a discussion.

The TREASURER: I am certainly not going to take my instructions from the hon. member for Gympie as to what is the right time or what is the wrong time for the discussion. I say that in justice to the Secretary for Public Works, who asks for time, it is only fair that time should be given. There is not the slightest doubt that when the proper time comes he will be able to enter into full details, but it is not fair at the present stage to spring a debate like this on the House.

Mr. BROWNE: I may say at once that it is not my intention to go into this debate at the present time, or to discuss the merits or demerits of the report of the Works Commission, because we have not yet read it. The only thing I wish to refer to now is the remark made by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government to the effect that the Secretary for Public Works had informed him that he had heard that this party had decided to go through with this matter to-day. To that statement I give a most emphatic denial. I suppose the hon. gentleman has been influenced by a paragraph which appears in the second edition of the *Telegraph*. I did not see it until the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McDonnell, the whip of the party, showed it to me. It is headed, "Labour Party. Caucus Meeting this Morning. Rumours of Stormy Debate."

Mr. FISHER: It is a joke.

Mr. BROWNE: A thing of this kind is not a joke. Whoever wrote that paragraph may have thought it a joke, but I, as leader of this party, am not taking it as a joke. The paragraph reads as follows:—

The members of the Labour party were in caucus this morning. It was their weekly meeting, but it was rumoured that something special was in the air. What the precise object of their meeting was has been kept a close secret. There were, however, rumours flying about the lobbies that an attack was to be made on the Works Commission. There were nervous inquiries afloat, but, except that the atmosphere was disturbed

no one could say what was in the wind. One member of the Works Commission was in complete ignorance of the grounds on which any attack could be made. A licensing commissioner could not tell what was impending.

Mr. KEOGH: I am sure that neither Jackson nor I know anything about it.

Mr. BROWNE: The paragraph goes on to say—

A Labour member said he had not attended the meeting, and was unaware of what was in the wind. Certain it is there is a storm brewing, but what form it will take is not known.

I was in this House this morning from about twenty minutes past 9 o'clock till five minutes to 1, and certainly I did not see any sensational meetings about the lobbies, or any disturbed state of the atmosphere. Indeed, the whole of the House seemed particularly quiet. With regard to the caucus meeting, I may inform the House that this party have a caucus meeting every Tuesday morning, so that members of the party may know exactly what is going to be done. Very often when there is a lot of business that caucus meeting takes up the whole of Tuesday morning. Hon. members can therefore imagine what a terrible stir there was this morning when I tell them that the meeting commenced about twenty minutes to 11 o'clock, and dissolved about twenty minutes after 11. There was no intention expressed there, and no resolution come to, that an attack was to be made on the report of the Works Commission. So far as I personally am concerned, I am not at all inclined to go into a lengthy debate on the matter at the present time. Earlier in the sitting I asked the Premier what he intended to do in the matter, because I do not think the oldest member in this House—I appeal to the Chief Secretary and the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, on that point—can show any case in which a Royal Commission in this colony has pronounced a distinct censure on a Minister, as the Works Commission have done. The Premier, in reply to my question, stated that the matter could be discussed in the ordinary course on the Estimates. I suppose that is what induced my friend the hon. member for Flinders to refer to the subject, because we know that it is a mere farce talking about discussing it on the Estimates. We have a lot of other things to go on with, and if we were pushing on business and did not want to waste time the probability is that this particular Estimate might come on after midnight when there are no reporters in the gallery, and the result would be that there would be no discussion. I distinctly deny that anything has been arranged by the Labour party to obstruct business, but I say that when a charge like that is hanging over a member of the Ministry he ought to take the earliest opportunity of defending himself, and members of the Works Commission should have an opportunity of proving the charges they have made, if they can prove them. That is all I ask, and I ask it in fairness to the members of the Works Commission, and in fairness to the members of the House.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. J. Murray, *Normanby*): I think hon. members will agree with me that it would be very unfair and very unwise to raise a discussion on this subject at the present time. Hon. members are not prepared to enter into a discussion on it, as they have not yet seen or studied the evidence or the report. For my own part, I can assure hon. members that I do not think there is a member in the House at the present moment who is more anxious than I am to have a full and free discussion on the merits and demerits of the report.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am most anxious for an opportunity to defend myself. I feel that I discharge my duty according to my lights, and I think I shall be able to prove that when the proper time comes.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I agree with the Premier that the proper time will be when the Estimates for the Works Department come up for discussion. It is said that they may come on at a late hour in the evening, but it can easily be arranged that they shall come on when the House opens in the afternoon, and I can assure hon. members that, as far as I am concerned, I desire to shirk nothing. I am anxious for an opportunity to put my views before this House and before the country in connection with this matter.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FISHER (*Gympie*): I would just like to say why I object to this matter coming on for discussion with the Works Estimates. Each estimate, in my opinion, carries enough complaints, without adding this special one, and I submit that it is the duty of the Premier, in a case of this sort, to provide the fullest possible opportunity for the House to discuss it on a specific motion. A body was appointed by the Government to investigate into matters concerning the characters of certain public officers, who were under the charge of one of the Ministers, and that commission were bound to find according to the facts that were brought before them. They have made certain declarations which, more or less, involve the political character of a member of the present Administration, and to propose to relegate a question like that to one night on the Estimates is incredible. The Administration are not entitled to shelter one of the Ministers in that fashion.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He requires no sheltering.

Mr. FISHER: On that view I wish to support the hon. gentleman. I say that the earliest possible opportunity should be afforded to him, as soon as he has prepared his defence, to make that defence, and it is the duty of his chief to give him the opportunity to do so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You want to discuss it before we are ready.

Mr. FISHER: I have not discussed it with a member of the House. I have not said a single syllable about the merits of the question, but I say a competent body appointed by the Government have passed their decision on certain facts; their decision has already been published; and it is the duty of the Government to afford the earliest possible opportunity to the hon. gentleman to defend himself against the charges made against him by the commissioners.

The PREMIER: The opportunity has not been denied, has it?

Mr. FISHER: Yes.

The PREMIER: I say it has not.

Mr. FISHER: I say the Hon. the Premier has relegated the matter to a night on the Estimates.

The PREMIER: That is the proper time to speak about it.

Mr. FISHER: I say it is not a proper time, and I am giving my reasons.

The PREMIER: It is only a matter of opinion.

Mr. FISHER: I say it is a matter of opinion, and surely, although I am only a member of the Opposition, my opinion is as worthy of being put on record as the opinion of the Hon. the Chief Secretary, and in my opinion it is a matter involving the character of the Administration, and the character of an Administration is not a question to be brought up and discussed on the Estimates of a Minister. Why, it has been the constant endeavour of this Administration to get

the cloak of time thrown over their misdeeds; and surely this is an occasion when they have all to gain by delaying the matter. They endeavour to hold on to the seals of office as long as possible, and to do that may be quite right, from a political point of view, but it is not a proper thing for the Opposition to assist them in doing those things.

Mr. STEPHENSON: Why not move a vote of censure?

Mr. FISHER: I say it is not in my opinion—

The PREMIER: Move a vote of want of confidence.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: We want some of the facts first. We want to hear what you have to say first.

Mr. FISHER: I simply contend that in my opinion it is the duty of the head of the Administration to bring this specifically on at the very first opportunity, when the Minister for Public Works is ready with his defence. I am quite sure that permission will be readily given to him to express any opinion. As for myself I express no opinion on the merits of the question. I leave the matter entirely open, until I have heard what is to be said upon it.

Mr. DAWSON (*Charters Towers*): If hon. members will only listen they will hear the elements thundering against the Minister for Railways.

Mr. COWLEY: It is a great waste of time on your side.

Mr. McDONALD: Do you want to get that billet on the Land Board?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DAWSON: I think it is a very unfortunate thing that the Hon. the Minister for Railways, who was the first person involved in this discussion, should have thought fit to retain his seat while the Hon. the Premier gave him a lead. I think the hon. gentleman who was involved should have immediately risen after the statement made by the hon. member for Flinders and defended his own conduct during the progress of the inquiry.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: His own what?

Mr. DAWSON: His own conduct during the progress of that inquiry; and though he neglected to take advantage of the opportunity afforded to him when he did rise, he should have given the members of this House the opportunity of understanding exactly what was defence against the charges made by the Royal Commission that was appointed by the Government, in which the hon. gentleman is so distinguished a member.

Mr. GIVENS: And chosen chiefly from his own side of the House.

Mr. DAWSON: And chiefly from his own side of the House. I might say in regard to this, it is not a matter of party politics at all. It is not a matter of personal friendship, or anything of that description. It is a matter between a responsible Minister of the Crown and a Royal Commission that have taken evidence and brought up a public document as a record to this House, for the benefit of members and those whom members represent; and when the hon. Minister for Works, who was the member most concerned, is charged with—I will not say of grave crimes—but he has been charged with maladministration of very grave character, and I think that when the hon. gentleman is called upon to defend himself he should furnish this House with some evidence to show that he was not guilty of the charge made against him by the Royal Commission appointed by his own party.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Will you call upon me?

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman knows that I cannot call upon him. He has already spoken, and I am following the hon. gentleman. I am very much surprised indeed that the hon. gentleman did not make an effort to protect himself in some way or other, to show whether the Royal Commission were justified or not in the very severe strictures they have passed on the administration of the Works Department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will defend myself; you need not trouble yourself about that.

Mr. DAWSON: If the administration of the hon. gentleman has been all that is desirable, then these strictures of the commission are unjust. If it has not been, then the strictures of the commission are just, and the position remains this: that the hon. gentleman should be turned out of office, or his colleagues, if they desire to retain him in office, should share his responsibility and resign their position as the Government of this colony. The Hon. the Chief Secretary and the Premier have stated that if the members on this side of the House, or if any other hon. members of the Chamber, desire to move a vote of censure—if they dissent from any action taken by the hon. the Minister for Works, Mr. Murray—they should do so. I deny that absolutely. It all depends. The Premier has already spoken, but he did not intimate to the House in the slightest degree that he supported the action taken by the Secretary for Works. He did not say that he would hold himself and his Ministry responsible for, or that he would endorse, the action of the hon. gentleman.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He told you he had not seen the evidence or read the report.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman was not silly enough to say that he had not seen the evidence. If there is an hon. member who has not seen the evidence, then he is not fit to be a member of this Chamber. As a matter of fact, we are in this unfortunate position that the bulk of the evidence was taken in Brisbane, and the two daily papers furnished the essential points of the evidence from day to day; and the man who has not seen the evidence, and who has not followed the whole controversy between the commission and the Secretary for Works, is not alive to his public duty, and consequently is not fit to occupy a seat as a public man in this Chamber.

Mr. LEAHY: I have not followed it all, for one.

Mr. DAWSON: Then the hon. member had better resign for the Bulloo and go into private life for the benefit of the public.

Mr. LEAHY: I never read the whole of the evidence taken by a Royal Commission yet.

Mr. DAWSON: I never said that anyone should read the whole of the evidence. I said that the essential points were published in the daily Press of Brisbane, and that any man had only to read the daily papers to exactly understand what the position was.

Mr. LEAHY: Why, the first paper that was read on the subject was wrong.

Mr. DAWSON: I venture to say that, when the Government Printer furnishes us with the whole of the evidence, not a single hon. member will read the whole of the evidence.

Mr. LEAHY: That is exactly what I say.

Mr. DAWSON: If hon. members desired to follow the progress of the Royal Commission, they had only to read the daily Press, because they have a system, being experienced and practical, of culling out the essential points, and publishing those, and leaving the rest to be relegated to the wastepaper basket.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They publish those portions of the evidence that suits themselves, and omit the rest.

Mr. HIGGS: Do you accuse the Press of partisanship?

Mr. REID: That is exactly what they do.

Mr. DAWSON: Referring again to the point I started with—hon. members on the other side seem to think that if we desire to do anything we should move a vote of censure on the Secretary for Works.

Mr. KEOGH: No; a vote of want of confidence.

Mr. DAWSON: Well, I have got this to say—that there has been a Royal Commission appointed, that they have sat for a long time, they have examined all available witnesses on both sides of the question, they have very carefully sifted the whole of the evidence, and they have submitted a report to this House; and in that report they have passed a vote of censure on the Secretary for Works.

Mr. KEOGH: No; I do not think so.

Mr. DAWSON: I say so distinctly. The clause of that report which has been read this afternoon by the hon. member for Flinders is distinctly a vote of censure on the Secretary for Works; and I say that it is not necessary for members on this side of the House, who are opposed to the hon. gentleman on the general principles of party politics, to move a vote of censure. What we claim is that the Royal Commission which was appointed by the Government, of which the hon. gentleman is so distinguished a member, has already moved and published a vote of censure.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You are prepared to endorse it.

Mr. DAWSON: If the Government disagree with the Royal Commission it is their duty to call for a vote of this House to see whether the majority of the members of this House support the view of the Government or the view of the commission.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. KEOGH: Well, put it to the test by a vote.

Mr. DAWSON: If the Government disagree with the Royal Commission about the vote of censure, and put it to the vote, I feel so strongly about it that I am prepared to back the view of the Royal Commission.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Even before you hear me in my defence.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman says, "before you hear me in my defence."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Exactly.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman has already had one opportunity this afternoon of defending himself; but, apparently, he was not "game" enough to do it, because he knew that there were members of that commission here who were prepared to reply to him, if he was "game" enough to defend himself.

Mr. McDONALD: He knew it this morning.

Mr. DAWSON: As a matter of fact, I have no need to hear the hon. gentleman in defence, as I made it my particular business to be present when the hon. gentleman was on the stool of repentance, and under cross-examination before the Royal Commission. I was one of the audience, taking very careful notes. I heard the whole of the hon. gentleman's evidence.

Mr. LEAHY: You did not hear the telephone?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You did not hear the half of it?

Mr. DAWSON: No, I did not hear the telephone. I candidly admit that, but the chairman of the commission knows that I was in the room day after day while the hon. gentleman was testifying.

Mr. KEOGH: Why didn't you come and hear the liquor commission?

Mr. DAWSON: I will tell the hon. member why I did not come and hear the liquor commission. I only went in there once, and it struck me as being a barmaids' commission, and, being a respectable married man, I did not care about going there again. There is another matter that I wish to direct attention to. It has been suggested here—and apparently it is the opinion of the Premier—that the discussion on the report of the Works Commission should take place on the Works Department Estimates. Well, I have a very strong objection indeed to the matter being discussed on the Works Estimates. It is not only the administration of the Secretary for Works that will be dealt with, and severely dealt with.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You have not said "fairly dealt with."

Mr. DAWSON: That is what I mean. If it is fairly dealt with, it must be severely dealt with.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Then I have nothing to be afraid of.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman is getting distinctly white. There is not only the hon. gentleman's administration to be dealt with, but there is another very grave question—the treatment that has been meted out to various officers in the department who have rendered good service to the State.

Mr. ANNEAR: Hear, hear!

Mr. DAWSON: There are pages and pages of evidence to show that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Hear, hear! The disgraceful treatment that has been meted out to some of them. I shall be able to prove it.

Mr. DAWSON: I thank the hon. gentleman for the interjection; the absolutely disgraceful treatment that has been meted out by the superiors to certain officers of the Works Department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You are saying this before you have heard me.

Mr. DAWSON: I am in the position of having heard the hon. gentleman [7 p.m.] give his testimony before the Royal Commission.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You were not there half the time.

Mr. DAWSON: I was there from the time the Commission opened until it rose, and I even attended when the hon. gentleman was called upon to give testimony, and he point blank refused, because the cross-examination was too severe.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: A deliberate falsehood!

Mr. DAWSON: That is entirely out of order.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I never refused to attend.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. member for Bulloo interjected something about the telephone episode. What is the telephone episode? When the hon. gentleman was called upon he point blank refused to come. He was not going to be put on the stool of repentance to be browbeaten by the Works Commission.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No such thing ever occurred to my knowledge.

Mr. DAWSON: Here is the hon. member for Bulloo now. Does the hon. gentleman mean to say that in my presence, simply as an onlooker in the committee-room down below, he did not distinctly tell the members of the commission that he was not going to come any more to give evidence, and that when he was further called upon he refused?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I never was called upon but I answered to the call.

Mr. BRIDGES: I think the hon. gentleman came every time we called him.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. member thinks so; and he is a member of the commission.

Mr. BRIDGES: I am sure of it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am certainly sure of it; I ought to know.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman objected to being cross-examined at all.

Mr. REID: You don't blame him, do you?

Mr. DAWSON: I don't blame him, so far as he is personally concerned; but I think it was not a good thing for the effective working of the commission. I suppose the more reticent he could be about the working of the department the better, perhaps, it would be for himself and his Under Secretary, but it would certainly be the worse for the working of his department and for the public. I know, as a matter of fact, having attended the sittings of the commission, that the hon. gentleman decidedly did object to giving evidence, and any testimony he did give had to be dragged out of him. You would think he went to the dentist with a wisdom tooth, to be put under an operation.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Are you opening a discussion upon the report?

Mr. DAWSON: I am not. I am discussing the attitude of the hon. gentleman in charge of the department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It is very unfair, at any rate.

Mr. DAWSON: I don't think it is unfair. The statements have been made public; they are before the public now. And I may say there are certain officers in the department under the direct control of the hon. gentleman who are in jeopardy now.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Who may be sacked at any moment.

Mr. DAWSON: Yes. I don't wish to enter into that phase of the question at all, because I think that would be more effectively dealt with in a special discussion; but I want hon. members to bear in mind that this Works Commission is one of the most important we have had for many years; and I believe the officers in that department have a lot to thank the commission for; and the public have reason to be grateful for the stand taken by the commission. I certainly do object to some of the commissions lately appointed, but I have no intention of objecting to the Works Commission.

Mr. JACKSON: Why are you so hard on other commissions?

Mr. DAWSON: I have an objection to the barmaids' commission which I will state later on. A little while ago I was blaming the Minister for Works for the unfair treatment he had meted out in his administration of the department to officers occupying responsible positions to whom he had an objection.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Upon my word, that sort of thing should not be allowed.

Mr. DAWSON: It is shown by the report presented by the Works Commission and by the evidence furnished to members of this House, and even by the Public Service report, that certain officers to whom the hon. gentleman had an objection had been severely dealt with, and I think I am justified in making that statement according to the evidence furnished to hon. members of this Chamber.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: You cannot get a reply to-night.

Mr. DAWSON: Why?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Minister must have a certain time to consider the report and the evidence.

Mr. McDONALD: It was published last Saturday.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Have you had a parliamentary copy yet?

Mr. McDONALD: We don't want it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: You do want it, and the public want it.

Mr. DAWSON: As far as I am personally concerned it is not a matter of any personal antagonism to the hon. gentleman; it is not even party hostility.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Query.

Mr. DAWSON: It is not query.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It is from my point of view.

Mr. DAWSON: I do not accept the hon. gentleman's judgment. He has got a vaporous mind. I say it is not a matter of party hostility. It is a matter of public policy; a matter of whether the personal prejudices of a Minister—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Or a member of the Opposition.

Mr. DAWSON: Shall empower him to punish an officer whom he does not personally like. It is a matter concerning the protection of the public service. It is only on those grounds that I am pursuing my present line of argument.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You are begging the question.

Mr. DAWSON: I am not begging the question. The Government of which the hon. gentleman is a discarded member—

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Not correct.

Mr. DAWSON: The member without portfolio.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You are a member without portfolio.

Mr. DAWSON: I am not, because we have no portfolios on this side to distribute.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It is not your fault; you wanted one.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. gentleman wanted one.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I did not.

Mr. DAWSON: Well, the hon. gentleman got what he did not want.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Perfectly true.

Mr. DAWSON: And if he got what he deserved, he would not be interrupting me here to-night.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You provoke it.

Mr. DAWSON: I was pointing out that my remarks are not actuated by personal hostility towards the Secretary for Works, but the Government of which he is a member appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the working of the department over which he presides. The Government itself had the appointment of that commission, and I believe they made very good appointments. Certainly a majority of the commission were supporters of the hon. gentleman who presides over that department. In my opinion, notwithstanding their party proclivities or their political opinions, they did honest and conscientious work, and they have revealed to the House and to the country the absolute disorganisation of that particular department. They have exposed a large number of grave and very serious abuses that have taken place in the department, and which, as far as we know, are still existing. I say, therefore, as far as the attitude of the Royal Commission is concerned they have done good and effective work, and that the people of this col—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I rise to a point of order. I think the hon. gentleman is certainly out of order in discussing a question which is not before the House. Hon. members have not yet been supplied with copies of the commission's report and evidence. The hon. gentleman is discussing the question from every standpoint knowing that it is impossible for me to reply. I think that is very unfair, if it is not out of order. I am perfectly

prepared to answer charges when they are brought up against me in a proper way, and at a proper time.

Mr. HIGGS: The House will give you a second speech if you want one.

The SPEAKER: In reference to the point of order raised by the hon. gentleman, I think the hon. member for Charters Towers is within his rights. The matter is one of taste rather than of order.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Then I shall leave the Chamber until he has done.

[The hon. gentleman thereupon left the Chamber.]

Mr. DAWSON: That is also a matter of taste.

Mr. McDONALD: Bad at that.

Mr. DAWSON: The ruling which you have given I anticipated because it is understood on a motion to go into Committee of Supply that there is redress of grievances before Supply is granted, and I am perfectly entitled to conduct the line of argument that I am conducting. I regret very much that the hon. gentleman should take so much to heart the criticism that I have thought fit in my judgment to indulge in, and that it should induce him to leave the Chamber. I may say that probably it would have been a good thing for the hon. gentleman and his department if he had taken the same stand when giving evidence before the Works Commission instead of writhing under the cross-examination of those members of the commission who were endeavouring to elucidate the truth for the benefit of the general public. I will not go further into the matter than to say that I believe the Works Commission has done good work for the benefit of the public of Queensland, and I admire them for the thorough manner in which they have accomplished their labour.

Mr. BRIDGES: Will we get a bonus?

Mr. DAWSON: I do not wish the hon. member for Nundah to interrupt me. I am speaking of the members of the commission as a whole, but if I began to differentiate between the various members, the hon. gentleman might not come out so well.

Mr. BRIDGES: Drive in, drive in.

Mr. McDONALD: There is plenty of room in the upper story.

Mr. DAWSON: I admire the thoroughness with which they carried out their work, together with their fairness and courage, and I believe the work they have done will be of great benefit, not only to the general public, but will be a protection to the officers of the department.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is throughout all British communities a feeling and desire to give fair play as between accuser and accused, and the hon. gentleman who has just addressed us in his usual impassioned fashion I think will regret, after consideration, that he has allowed a spirit of partisanship to influence his calmer judgment. I think his action is the more to be regretted when we consider the excellent example set him by the leader of the Opposition, whom I congratulate on the attitude he assumed in connection with the consideration of this report. I go with hon. members who have spoken to this extent, that the report is a document which will demand the very full consideration of the Government, but considering that it contains no less than 13,999 questions and answers, and that only three or four days have elapsed since the report was presented, it is hardly fair to expect that it can be discussed at such short notice. The report has not yet been circulated amongst members, although we all knew the Press have received a copy and have published it. But before hon. members should pass any judgment in the matter they should refer to the whole of the evidence in its continuity. Hon. members require to refresh their memories by the evidence when weighing the charges they have made

against my hon. colleague, the Minister for Public Works. I am quite sure that that Minister will be able to vindicate himself from the charges made against him. The report was not a unanimous one. I also agree with the hon. member who has just addressed us that this report is unique in its character. I must say that in all my experience as a member of Parliament I have never seen such a report—a report initiated in such a form, reflecting on the character of a member of the Government. The Government are fully aware of the nature of these charges, or reflections, and I think it is only fair to them and to the Minister for Works that reasonable time should be allowed in order to deal with this report and the evidence. But I regret to have to say that the matter has been accentuated unwisely by the hon. member who has just sat down. I think he is a too fair-minded man to enter into the arena of debate on this matter when the persons concerned have not an opportunity of properly defending themselves.

Mr. BROWNE: Do you think this report can fairly be discussed on the Estimates?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is a matter for the Premier and the leader of the Opposition to decide. I am not advocating that it should be discussed on the Estimates, and if my hon. friend the Premier will allow me I will say that I think a special night should be devoted to this matter.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The real matter may be obscured in the discussion on the Works Estimates, and the whole subject should be thoroughly thrashed out. But I deprecate an hon. member, who occupies the position of ex-leader of the Opposition, and a gentleman whom we always listen to with interest, standing up as a violent accuser of the Minister for Works at this time, and even proceeding so far as to say that he is prepared to pronounce judgment on the matter. That is most unfair to all concerned, because he cannot have had time to read through this voluminous evidence, which will more or less influence hon. members in discussing the matter. The hon. member has only read the newspaper reports.

Mr. DAWSON: No; I listened to the evidence given in the committee-room before the commission.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Well, that is even worse, because, as he admits, there has often been an hiatus in portions of the evidence appearing in the Press. Hon. members should read the whole of the evidence, in its continuity, in the revised form—the whole revised evidence and the report, which we must accept as the correct views of the witnesses. This report has only been laid on the table five days, including Sunday. Altogether there are 14,000 questions.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Could you not read the evidence on Sunday?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I read the report on Sunday, but I could not wade through 14,000 questions and answers on Sunday. There is no doubt that this is a very important report, and it should be discussed in a fair and impartial spirit. I agree with the Premier and the leader of the Opposition that this is too early a period to discuss the matter properly.

Mr. DAWSON: The Premier wants the matter brought upon the Works Estimates.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, I don't think he pressed that; but the hon. member who has just sat down delivered judgment on the Minister for Works. That is manifestly unfair, because none of us are fully seized of the whole of the circumstances of the case. I have not risen to waste the time of the House, but to deprecate hon. members entering into a discussion on this matter at the present juncture,

because I think that is manifestly unfair to my colleague, the Minister for Works and Railways. I think he will be prepared, at the proper time, to fully vindicate himself from the charges which have been made against him. I do not ask hon. members to express their opinions for or against the hon. gentleman; but, according to all British fair play, the hon. gentleman should have a reasonable time in which to defend himself.

Mr. DAWSON: I heard the evidence of the hon. gentleman given.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member admits that he only heard the evidence partially, and yet he has prejudged the Minister for Works.

Mr. HIGGS (*Fortitude Valley*): I do not agree with the hon. gentleman who has just sat down.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Of course not.

Mr. HIGGS: I say that the gentlemen who comprised the Works Commission are not the accusers of the Hon. the Minister for Works. They occupied positions similar to those occupied by the Chief Justice, Mr. Justice Real, Mr. Justice Chubb, or any other judicial authorities who have to try cases.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Nonsense!

Mr. HIGGS: It is not nonsense at all. Why should the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, be charged with being an accuser of the hon. gentleman? This commission was appointed to take evidence, weigh it, and give their decisions; not to be accusers of any persons. They were not in the position of prosecutors or accusers. If their decisions had been favourable to the Government, we would have heard nothing of this kind. The Minister for Works pleads on his knees for time.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Nothing of the sort. You never made such a mistake in your life. You don't know me.

Mr. HIGGS: He says, "Give me time."

Mr. STORY: You said the same when you were elected.

Mr. HIGGS: I think the electors of Fortitude Valley repose every confidence in me; and I can say that no ballot-papers were counted on stations.

Mr. STORY: Are there any stations in the Valley?

Mr. HIGGS: We heard no complaints from electors in the Valley about the way the ballot-papers had been counted there, as they were in the Balonne electorate.

Mr. STORY: You never heard anything wrong about the Balonne election.

Mr. REID: Bonna Vonna.

Mr. STORY: "Bread or blood."

Mr. HIGGS: I think the hon. member seems to have thrived very well on "bread and blood." He certainly looks far better now than when he was engaged by Cobb and Co. in the early days.

Mr. STORY: He was never engaged by Cobb and Co. in the early days. Verify your facts. A nice friend of the working man!

Mr. HIGGS: It is no disgrace to be a working man. I repudiate any charge that I wish to cast any reflection on working men.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Have you had any experience as a working man?

Mr. HIGGS: Yes, ever since I was thirteen years of age I have been working. I was brought up to that. I have worked as much

[7.30 p.m.] as any hon. member in this House. I never went out into the country and took up land and started with a set of brands, or anything of that kind. I am proud of having worked all my lifetime, and I honestly believe that it is a natural law that a man should work right throughout his life. I do not for a moment cast any reflection on any man who has to earn

his bread by the sweat of his brow, but I challenge the men who have been working men, and then because they have been successful in life pretend that they have not been working men, and set themselves up as superior to working men. The greatest enemies the working man has are those men who have been working men, and who have become well off, and then affect to despise and spurn other working men.

Mr. LEAHY: What has that to do with the Works Commission?

Mr. HIGGS: I have been led off the track by the interjections of the hon. member for Balonne, but I shall get on to it again. The Premier knows the value of time; he is a little more astute than the Secretary for Public Works. The Premier was careful to get up before his colleague, and, as an hon. member on this side said, give him the lead. If the Premier had allowed the Secretary for Public Works to rise first the hon. gentleman would have defended himself, and the Premier knows that such a proceeding would have led to complications. Therefore he wishes for time. The hon. gentleman asked for time in connection with the report of the Police Commission, and time is what he always asks for, knowing that the public are very forgetful, not only of a good action but also of a wrongful action. The Government have asked for time on any occasion where there has been criticism of Ministerial maladministration. It has been said that this report of the Works Commission with regard to the Ministerial head of the department is not a unanimous one. That is a misleading statement. The commission are unanimous with regard to that portion of the report, except as to paragraph 2, to which Messrs. Cowlshaw and Bridges disagree. Mr. Cowlshaw objects only to paragraph 2. He does not object to paragraph 3, which says—

We venture to express the opinion that the action of the Minister in authorising the expenditure of £316 in trying to prove one of his subordinate officers guilty of incompetency or neglect of duty was both unnecessary and unjustifiable.

Mr. Cowlshaw, and even Mr. Bridges himself, has signed that report.

Mr. BRIDGES: Why even Mr. Bridges?

Mr. HIGGS: Because Mr. Bridges has shown himself to be a very strenuous supporter of the Government, and one who to my knowledge has never challenged them on any occasion.

Mr. BRIDGES: I support them as well as you support your own side.

Mr. HIGGS: Then, the whole of the commission agree that the singling out of one officer by the Minister for punishment has the appearance of an act of persecution. That is a very grave charge against the Minister—that he is a persecutor, a tyrant, a sort of Nero without a backbone. Will anybody believe that the Minister did not go through the evidence day by day concerning his own particular case, and that of the officials of his department? Does anyone for one moment believe that the hon. gentleman did not know what was going on at that commission? He was perfectly well aware of it. And are we, after the commission has been sitting for some weeks hearing evidence, going to say, because those gentlemen have brought up a report adverse to the Government and to the Minister, that their opinions are not of any value, and that their decision ought not to be accepted? Must we wait until the public mind has become seared to the report before we attempt to discuss it? Must we wait until the business of the House prevents, as it will undoubtedly prevent, a full and free discussion of the matter? Last session, when the Police Estimates came on, a desire was expressed by hon. members on this side to take up the report of the Police Commission. We were then told that there was no time

to discuss it, and that members would have an opportunity of considering the question this session. Now we are nearly into the month of October, and the Police Commission report has not yet been brought up in the House, nor is it likely to be brought forward, and the public have become accustomed to the recommendations which were made by the commission. That is what the Premier wants in the present case, and he therefore begs members to allow this matter to go without discussion.

Mr. STORY: We got accustomed to your recommendations at one time.

Mr. HIGGS: The hon. member no doubt read some of the reports which appeared in the *Worker* from time to time. Probably he read with great interest the report of the minutes of the pastoralists who were successful in securing the ear of the Minister in regard to certain proposed legislation. That journal is still doing good work. Because the organ has found it necessary to disagree with men it does not follow that I am going to round on the organ.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It is doing good work then.

Mr. HIGGS: Perhaps it is. It always was independent, and it is a good thing for the men in the West, for many working men in the Balonne electorate, and for the public of Queensland, that it is independent. What is the good of paying money to commissions if we are going to disregard their verdict? Thousands of pounds are spent on taking evidence in order for the commissions to arrive at a decision, and when it is known that that decision reflects on the Ministry, or a Minister, the House has a right to hear from the Minister what he has to say with reference to the charge of persecution, and whether he proposes to continue to be a persecutor and little petty tyrant.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You will hear all that in due time.

Mr. HIGGS: The hon. member knows that if he asks permission the House will listen to him for an hour, if he wishes to make an explanation. A charge has been made by the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Cowlishaw, M.L.C., Mr. Petrie, and other members of the House. Why has not the Minister replied? No, he will put it off until near Christmas time, when hon. members want to go home, and are sick and tired of all belonging to the House, and will let the matter slip through. Now, this is practically a vote of censure on the Government. The strange part of it is that if a vote of censure were moved by the hon. the leader of this party the Ministers would accept it and debate it, but because it happens to come in another form, from members on their own side of the House, they wish to ignore it, and shove it out of sight. They want to postpone it, as they have postponed everything, and later on when we come to refer to this matter we shall be told, as we were told in connection with the Queensland National Bank matter, "You are bringing that in again; you are continually bringing that old matter up. Why not let it rest?" We know the hon. member for Mackay will be one of the first to say, "Why bring up this stale, dull, flat, and unprofitable stuff—why bring it up?" Now, the commission's report was good enough for most people. I am sure the majority of the public will agree that the members who comprised that commission are men who would not take a mean advantage of their position as judges and attack the Minister in an underhand way.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You don't know them.

Mr. HIGGS: Does the Minister for Works mean to say that the hon. member for Mary-

borough would be guilty of such a mean and contemptible action? I am sure hon. members, however they may disagree with the hon. member for Maryborough's politics, will admit that he is a fair-minded man.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: Who gives every man a show.

Mr. HIGGS: However I may disagree with the hon. member for Maryborough politically, I do not believe that he would go and stab a man in that way. I believe he has done a fair thing, and I believe he got every tittle of evidence that would have been of advantage to hon. members, and he did not allow himself to be drawn away from the path of rectitude by the ebullitions of temper of the hon. gentleman, or the discourtesy and defiance of the hon. gentleman. Now, if the Minister is willing to exist or remain two or three months under this stigma which attaches to him, if the Ministry will hang on to the Treasury benches as long as they possibly can, I do not think it is right that we should trust hon. gentlemen who are so anxious to retain their seats. Why, if as is supposed, the average politician has a hide like a rhinoceros, I would like some definition of the hide of hon. gentlemen opposite, to use a vulgarism. I will leave the matter, as the hon. gentleman will not avail himself of the opportunity of asking the permission of the House to make another speech. I did not think that he would. I think that he is anxious to shelter himself behind the majority, who would probably vote against an adverse motion. I think he is probably willing to shelter himself, and we must only wait until the Ministerial followers grow sick and tired of the weak Premier who leads them, and assist us to turn him out. Now, there is a little matter that I referred to in the earlier part of the day. It is a grievance. One evening when I was about to leave this Chamber a letter was thrust in my hand signed by F. T. Brentnall and J. Archibald, two of the provisional or ex-provisional directors of the North Chillagoe Mines, Limited. I suppose it would be taking up too delicate an attitude to claim that no one should approach a member in that way—threaten him on the floor of the House, call him a sniper—a man who is guilty of sniping behind his privileges; but I do not think that it is an attitude which should be taken up by provisional directors of a company. They know the addresses of the hon. members of this House, and they can send letters through the post in the ordinary way. I hope the leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Cairns do not feel too terrified at the attacks of those gentlemen, and that they will go on undeterred by such attempts at intimidation. Now, in connection with this, I wish to know whether the Government propose to take action to prosecute the persons who were guilty of having garbled the report of the Government Geologist—persons who, to my mind, on the face of it, are guilty of a criminal offence. Exception has been taken by hon. members to my criticisms of the people who would garble such a report as knaves, cheats, swindlers, rogues, and vagabonds. But I will ask hon. members what epithet would justly describe a man who would take a report of a Government Geologist and mutilate it for the purpose—as admitted by the hon. member for Mackay—of deceiving and beguiling the public?

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: The persons who altered it need not necessarily be directors. They may be quite innocent.

Mr. HIGGS: Who said directors? I said the persons who mutilated and garbled a report—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You said syndicators generally.

Mr. HIGGS: The hon. gentleman knows very well that I did not say syndicators generally. I made an exception of the men who were legitimately working the mining industry. There are men engaged in the mining industry as honourable as any men in this House—men whose word can be taken, and true men who would not be guilty of any dishonourable action. But there are other men who would be guilty of any iniquity. Because we chose to criticise adversely the conduct of persons who endeavour to deceive and beguile the public, are we to be branded with making an impeachment against the whole of the persons engaged in the mining industry? I say it is gross misrepresentation to assert that. I did not for a moment make that charge. I have friends who are engaged in the mining industry, men whom I am proud to know, but there are other men—parasites in the mining industry—who I never want to know. The business of mining promoting is a perfectly legitimate one. It is just as legitimate as growing corn, making boots, or being a member of Parliament.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: That is a new doctrine for you, at any rate.

Mr. HIGGS: The hon. gentleman admits that frequently when I am speaking he goes to sleep, and does not hear what I am saying, and, because he surrenders himself to the arms of Morpheus, he says I am advancing a new doctrine. If objection is taken to my language—if I do not give expression to my sentiments in a sufficiently delicate manner—

Mr. STORY: In a delicate manner! Ha, ha!

Mr. HIGGS: The delicate susceptibilities of the hon. member for Balonne seem to be aroused. I suppose the hon. member is so accustomed to hearing expressions of opinion given in the language of the man "out back" that he is tickled at what I say.

Mr. STORY: The man "out back" would be ashamed to imitate you.

Mr. HIGGS: I would like to hear the language of the man "out back" on the issuing of this garbled prospectus. I am sure the hon. member for Flinders could give us a very good idea of what would be the language used by the man who camps on the banks of the billabong when he reads all about it. I am sure, if the hon. member for Balonne is disturbed by my delicate references, he would just about become paralysed if he heard the man "out back" on the point. When I was interrupted by the hilarity of the hon. member for Balonne, I was about to say that, if exception is taken to the terms in which I express myself, I will call to my aid the Rev. Dr. Talmage—one of the greatest preachers that ever lived. Dr. Talmage, in speaking of the Stock Exchange, says—

But while there is a legitimate field for the broker and operator, there are transactions undertaken every day in our cities that can only be characterised as superb outrage and villainy; and there are members of Christian churches who have been guilty of speculations that in the last day will blanch their cheek and thunder them down to everlasting companionship with the lowest gamblers that ever pitched pennies for a drink.

The hon. member for Mackay said the other night—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You must not quote from a previous debate.

Mr. HIGGS: I do not want to quote from a previous debate. Surely I can refer to the hon. gentleman's remarks.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Not in a previous debate.

Mr. HIGGS: He said: "Assuming that there is something improper that has been done—and I confess that it appears that something improper has been done in connection with this prospectus"—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I have not the slightest doubt about that.

Mr. HIGGS: The hon. gentleman said, in effect: "It is a matter for the Attorney-General and the Department of Justice, who will take action if the law allows." The hon. gentleman will not deny that. Now I want to know, before we give the Ministry what they want, whether the Government has taken any action to discover the man who mutilated that report? Indeed, I will go further, and ask: Has the Premier not read a letter from gentlemen connected with that proposed company offering the Government Geologist, provided he was friendly, an interest in the North Chillagoe Mining Company for nothing, and adding that it would be £2,000 or £3,000 in his pocket? The Ministry must have information to put them on the track of these offenders against everything that is fair, and why has action not been taken? If hon. members are willing to rest supine under the stigma attaching to the Secretary for Works, here is another matter which should be taken up at once by them, not only for the benefit of themselves, but for the credit of the colony. Has the Attorney-General taken the matter up? Has the Department of Justice taken it up. Are we in Brisbane like the people spoken of by the Rev. Dr. Talmage? The doctor, in that very eloquent little book, which I commend to the hon. member for Mackay—"Abominations of Modern Society"—says—

If a man find on his farm something as large as the head of a pin, that, in a strong sunlight, sparkles a little, a gold company is formed; books are opened; working capital declared; a select number go in on the "ground floor;" and the estates of widows and orphans are swept into vortex. Very little discredit is connected with any such transaction if it is only on a large scale. We cannot bear small and insignificant dishonesties, but take off our hats and bow almost to the ground in the presence of the man who has made 100,000 dollars by one swindle. A woman was arrested in the streets of one of our cities for selling molasses candy on Sunday. She was tried, condemned, and imprisoned. Coming out of prison, she went into the same business and sold molasses candy on Sunday. Again she was arrested, condemned, and imprisoned. On coming out—showing the total depravity of a woman's heart—she again went into the same business, and sold molasses candy on Sunday. Whereupon the police, the mayor, and the public sentiment of the city rose up and declared that, though the heavens fell, no woman should be allowed to sell molasses candy on Sunday. Yet the law puts its hand behind its back, and walks up and down in the presence a thousand abominations and dares not whisper.

There are scores of men to-day on the streets, whose costly family wardrobes, whose rosewood furniture, whose splendid turn-outs, whose stately mansions, are made out of the distresses of sewing-women, whose money they gathered up in a stock swindle. There is human sweat in the golden tankards. There is human blood in the crimson plush. There are the bones of unrequited toil in the pearly keys of the piano. There is the curse of an incensed God hovering over all their magnificence. Some night the man will not be able to rest. He will rise up in bewilderment and look about him, crying, "Who is there?" Those whom he has wronged will thrust their skinny arms under the tapestry, and touch his brow, and feel for his heart, and blow their sepulchral breath into his face, crying, "Come to judgment!"

First, an attracted circular, regardless of expense. It must have all the colours and hues of earth, and sea, and heaven. Let the letters flame with all the beauty of gold, and jasper, and amethyst. It must state the date of incorporation, and the fact that "all subscribers shall get the benefit of the original undertaking. While it does not make so much pretension as some other companies, it must be distinctly announced that this is a safe and permanent investment."

Then the circular must have good names attached to it. How to get them? The president and directors must be prominent men. If celebrated for piety, all the better. The estimable man approached says: "I know nothing about this company." "Well," says the committee waiting upon him, "we will give you 500 dollars' worth of shares." Immediately the estimable man begins to "know about it," and accepts the

position of president. Three or four directors are obtained in the same way. Now the thing is easy. After this you can get anybody. Ordinary Christians and sinners feel it a joy to be in such celebrated society.

Now, Sir, are we in Brisbane people of that character? I want to know is the

[8 p.m.] Premier too weak to take action in this matter. What are the influences at the back of the Government that they have taken no action in the matter, so far as the public know?

Mr. JACKSON: They are waiting to be spurred on.

Mr. HIGGS: I am afraid it will take a great deal to spur them on. I think that hon. gentlemen opposite have brought down a number of schemes which they hope to get through, and they say to themselves, "Well, after us the deluge." And all we can say to stir them up to do their duty will be like so much water on a duck's back. But if the Ministry remain silent, there is no reason why the members of the Opposition should remain silent; and I feel sure that the historian of the future will say, whatever people may now say about the party on this side wasting time—he will certainly give the party on this side credit for having criticised in a forcible and accurate way the acts of omission and the acts of commission on the part of hon. members opposite. To return for a moment to the letters. The leader of this party is busy enough, goodness knows, and it is too much to expect him to look into all the correspondence of Mr. Brentnall and Mr. Archibald, the two ex-provisional directors of the North Chillagoe mines. Mr. Brentnall has in a very long letter obscured the question. The question is, "Who garbled the report?" That is the question we have been asking; and we want to know why Mr. Brentnall and Mr. Archibald, who set themselves up as authorities, came to ask the public to take shares in this company without first satisfying themselves that the prospectus contained a true and accurate account of the Government Geologist's report on those mines.

Mr. DAWSON: They might have been deceived.

Mr. HIGGS: We grant that; but, as the hon. member for Leichhardt interjects, had they a right to be deceived? Why did Mr. Archibald and Mr. Brentnall permit their names to appear in a prospectus issued in all the colours of the rainbow without first satisfying themselves that the report was the report of the Government Geologist? If they did not first satisfy themselves, then they were guilty of wrongdoing—culpable negligence—and if they did go and see the report, then what words should be applied to their conduct in allowing their names to appear as provisional directors?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Don't you accept their denial?

Mr. HIGGS: I am not called upon at the present stage of this inquiry to answer that question, though I quite appreciate the hon. gentleman's courtesy to this side, which contrasts strongly with the attitude of some hon. members opposite in regard to members on this side. That is the point for Mr. Archibald and Mr. Brentnall to explain how they came to allow their names to be published throughout this colony as directors of this company, and how did Mr. Brentnall—

Mr. BELL (*Dalby*): I rise to a point of order. I regret very much, on personal grounds, having to do so, but whenever there is an apparent breach of the Standing Orders committed I must allude to it. The hon. member is discussing the conduct of members in another place.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No, no!

Mr. BELL: I am addressing the Speaker. If you will turn to page 263 of "May," the chapter

dealing with matters to which reference may be made by members on going into Committee of Supply, you will find on looking at the bottom of the page that although the liberty of discussion on going into Committee of Supply is exceedingly wide, yet there are limitations. There are certain matters which can only be dealt with by specific substantive motions, and amongst the list I find the conduct of the Sovereign, the heirs to the Throne, the Viceroy of India, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, the Speaker, the Chairman of Ways and Means, and members of either House of Parliament. I rose to ask whether the remarks of the hon. member at the time I interrupted him, and for some time previously, were not a distinct breach of that precedent laid down by "May."

The SPEAKER: I understand the general tenor of the hon. gentleman's point as to whether the hon. member for Fortitude Valley is in order in the remarks he has been making. He urges that the hon. member has alluded to members of the other House of Parliament. I have not understood the hon. member to do that yet.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

The SPEAKER: And therefore I have not felt called upon to intervene upon that ground. I on a recent occasion pointed out the rule to which the hon. member for Dalby has referred. The rule, as stated in "May," in reference to this subject, is as follows:—

Abusive language, and imputations of falsehood, uttered by members of the House of Commons against members of the House of Lords have been met by the immediate intervention of the Chair to compel the withdrawal of the offensive words, or, in default, by the punishment of suspension.

Mr. BELL: Might I ask for the page?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member will find that passage on page 318 of the tenth edition of "May." I have not gathered from the remarks of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley that he has transgressed the rule up to the present stage. The hon. member has been referring to certain persons whose names appear as directors on the prospectus of a proposed company, not to members of Parliament as such; and I have not felt it my duty to intervene. With regard to the references to "May" given by the hon. member for Dalby (pages 263 and 264), I would point out that the rule in regard to these matters in the House of Commons is much more rigid than the rule in force here. Thus far the hon. member has not exceeded the limits which our Standing Orders give him in respect to debating "grievances" on the motion that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply, or Ways and Means.

Mr. HIGGS: I was very careful in my remarks to make no reflection upon members of another Chamber, because everyone can recognise that the rule in relation to that matter is a very wise one, and, if broken, may lead to a very undesirable state of things. I was referring to Mr. F. T. Brentnall and Mr. J. Archibald as provisional directors of the North Chillagoe Company, No Liability, and the action of those gentlemen prior to the 14th September, 1900, when they wrote a letter to the *Courier*, and said that, the report having been published in a garbled manner, they had no alternative than to withdraw from the company. But on the 19th of September they appear to have been satisfied in their own minds that some error had been made, and so they waited upon the Under Secretary for Mines to explain all about it. According to the *Courier*, during this interview they explained to the Under Secretary for Mines that Mr. Dunstan's report appeared in a Sydney paper, and that there were certain errors and omissions uncorrected. I submit that members of this House are not likely to be intimidated by the action of

Mr. Brentnall or Mr. Archibald. Mr. Brentnall, I know, is a very eloquent writer. In fact, he is very voluble indeed in the use of epithets—more voluble, the hon. member for Mackay would say, than some members on this side.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Oh, dear, no! He could not compete with you at all.

Mr. HIGGS: Parliament should not be silent on this matter. I will conclude my remarks by a quotation from Mr. Talmage, who asks—

Where is the Church of God that she allows in her membership such gigantic abominations? Were the thirty pieces of silver that Judas received denounced as unfit, and should the Church of God have nothing to say about this price of blood? Is sin to be excused because it is as high as Heaven, as deep as hell? The man who allows his name to be used as president or director in connection with an enterprise that he knows is to result in the sale of 20,000 shares of an undeveloped nothing—God will tear off the cloak of his hypocrisy, and in the last day show him to the universe—a brazen-faced gambler. His house will be accursed. God's anathemas will flash in the chandelier, and rattle in the swift hoofs of his silver-bitted grays; and the day of fire will see him willing to leap into a burning oil-well to hide himself from the face of the Lamb. The hundred thousand dollars gotten in unrighteousness will not be enough to build a barricade against the advance of the divine judgment.

Now, the Rev. Dr. Talmage asks why should the Church be silent? I ask why should Parliament be silent? Why should Parliament refuse to discuss this question and refuse to discuss the failure of the Minister to take action to protect widows and orphans whose trust money is often invested in these mines.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: No trust money is ever invested in mines. You know that.

Mr. HIGGS: The hon. gentleman knows that trust funds are often invested in this way.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Nothing of the sort. Never heard such a thing.

Mr. HIGGS: Of course the hon. gentleman cannot know everything. He cannot possibly know from whence come all the moneys invested in the colony. When banks or companies or corporations of any kind are discussed by this House, has it not constantly been asserted that the trust funds of widows and orphans were invested in these institutions? Now, who would refuse—on the face of that gilded, highly coloured prospectus, with the names of such prominent men connected with that company—who would hesitate to invest the funds of orphans and widows under the circumstances? Many people, many trustees, would not hesitate. Mr. Brentnall and Mr. Archibald and others connected with this company were willing to allow this company to take no action, but if the Government do their duty they will take some steps to deal with the persons who are responsible for this garbled report in a proper manner, so that in the future widows and orphans may be protected, and that trustees may have some confidence in future prospectuses which are likely to be issued in this colony. I think some punishment should be meted out to the guilty parties in this instance, for guilty parties there are. I don't pretend to say who they are; but even the hon. member for Mackay has admitted that this prospectus might beguile and deceive the public.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I said it was done by someone.

Mr. HIGGS: Then let us find out who this someone is—these persons who are attempting to cheat, deceive, and rob the public—because all the time they may be robbing widows and orphans. I will not pursue this course any longer; but I do hope and trust, if hon. members opposite are not satisfied with the rough-and-ready way in which we have characterised this garbled report, that they will, at all events, pay

some attention to the eloquent and forcible statements which I have quoted from the writings of the Rev. Dr. Talmage.

Mr. FITZGERALD (*Mitchell*): During the last five minutes we have heard a lot about men named Brentnall and Archibald, and I say bother the two of them. The leader of the Opposition has written letters to the Press in answer to these two gentlemen, and I wish the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Higgs, had answered them in the Press also, instead of wasting our time here with his long rigmarole speech. The hon. member seems to think this is the time for stonewalling; but it is not. A very serious question has been brought before the House, and the hon. member for Fortitude Valley has evidently treated it in a jocular manner. Now, I want to come back to that question, and I hope hon. members will allow me to say a few words on it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FITZGERALD: The old British idea of "redress of grievances before Supply" has been adopted in this case. Grievances and complaints have been made against the Minister for Works. As the only member of the Ministry representing the Central districts, I respect that hon. gentleman very much; and as a Central member I object to the slurs and sneers that have been levelled against him, unless they are proved. The Chief Secretary suggested that we should wait and discuss this matter when the Works Estimates came on.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No; I said the Premier and the leader of the Opposition should agree to a day for discussing the report.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I understood that, yet the Premier sat there and said nothing. I would like to know if a certain day is to be set aside for the discussion of this report, and if so, when? If there is going to be no answer, we are thrown back on what the Premier said—that we will have to wait until the Estimates come along. I remember something of the same sort occurring last session, when the Police Commission report came on—which dealt with the Gattou tragedy, grievances against the police and by the police, and other matters—I remember the Home Secretary appealing to hon. members on this side to let everything stand over till this session. He said that one of the first matters to be discussed this session would be the Police Commission report. Now we have not had a single chance of discussing that report, no chance of expressing our views on the matter, and I therefore look upon the Premier's suggestion with a great deal of suspicion, especially when we know that hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches have the full control of the business of the country. Good gracious me, year after year when the Estimates come on I have many grievances to bring up but rather than waste the time of the House I keep my mouth closed. I go out and have a smoke and a chat with members rather than protract discussion. I am talking in all earnestness, and I am perfectly certain that if all grievances were fully discussed on the Estimates alone we would be here till Christmas. Hon. gentlemen on the front Treasury bench say: wait till the Estimates come on, then we can tackle the reports of the Police, the Works, the Railways, and the Mining Commissions. Well, I say, God help us! if we have to wait until the Estimates come on to discuss all these matters. If the Premier or the Chief Secretary will say now that they are going to appoint

[8.30 p.m.] a special day for the discussion of the report of the Works Commission, I will sit down at once, but if not I am not going to sit down. I have been returned as a member of a party which is at the present time in a minority, but I have always said on public

platforms and elsewhere that if I am beaten I obey the majority rule. As a matter of fact the first rule the Labour party teaches is the rule of the majority. Many a time I have been in a minority in our caucuses and I have obeyed the majority. I am always willing to respect a gentleman who sits on the Ministerial bench, because I recognise that, as a member of the Ministry, he belongs to the party who are in the majority in this House. I would like to see the members on that bench shifted and be there myself, but still I recognise that they belong to the party which at present carries the majority of votes in Queensland. We have seen in the *Telegraph* a résumé of the report of the Works Commission, and from that summary it appears that the commission make a direct charge against one of the members of the Ministry, and that member the only Minister who represents the Central district. Before we go any further we should have some information from the hon. gentleman in reply to that charge. Of course it is only a majority report, Mr. Cowlshaw and Mr. Bridges disagreeing with certain statements therein. There are some charges with reference to an officer of the department named Jack.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: The house that Jack built.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I am talking seriously, but the hon. member for Mackay will not be serious.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: This debate is simply of that character—the character of the house that Jack built.

Mr. FITZGERALD: First of all, a man named Jack makes, or is supposed to have made, some mistakes. The Public Service Board hold an inquiry into the matter, and, after they have sent in their report, a Royal Commission is appointed, and they report directly against the findings of the Public Service Board. I want to know what on earth we are doing. Something is wrong. Either the Minister or the Public Service Board is wrong, or the hon. member for Maryborough and all the members of the Works Commission are wrong. Very likely the whole lot of them are wrong. At the same time, before we go any further—before we grant Supply—I think it is only right that we should have a little information on the subject. Judging from what I have seen of the proceedings of the commission in the newspapers I have come to the conclusion that it was not Mr. Jack's conduct that was under consideration by the commission, nor was it really the department that was considered. It was the Secretary for Public Works who was placed on his trial by the commission. Although the commission were not appointed for that purpose, but rather to inquire into the organisation and administration of the Works Department, they had the Minister on his trial the whole time. So far as I have been able to read the evidence, I have the utmost sympathy with the hon. gentleman; for I must say that, so far as the hon. member for Maryborough and the hon. member for Toombul are concerned, their questions from the very start indicated bias against the Minister. They wanted to prove a certain thing against the Minister. I really think myself that the whole thing was a farce. Of course that is what we on this side say with reference to commissions.

Mr. REID: They are "consolation stakes."

Mr. FITZGERALD: Yes; they are "consolation stakes." On this commission the Government, unfortunately, appointed two members—

Mr. REID: Who would not be consoled.

Mr. FITZGERALD: Who would not be consoled. At the same time, I must say that in reading the evidence from an impartial point of view it struck me that almost every question that was asked was what lawyers would call "a

leading question." I really do not think the Secretary for Public Works was properly treated by the commission. The commission were appointed in the first instance, not to discuss the merits or demerits of a Minister of the Crown, but to inquire into the working of the Works Department. A great many of the suggestions made by the commission will no doubt meet with favour in the House, but they were not appointed to criticise the Minister. The hon. gentleman was a member of the Government when the commission was appointed, and either the commission is wrong, or the hon. gentleman is not worthy of his position. He has either to leave that position, or justify himself. My sympathies go with him to this extent: that I do not believe he had the ordinary fair play that a man on his trial gets in a court of justice. In the first place the Minister was not expected to be placed on his trial, and I quite agree with the hon. gentleman when he says he wants time to answer the charges made against him by the commission. When the Minister gave evidence before the commission I believe there was a bit of naughty talk; some few unpleasant interjections made between the parties there; and let me say at once that there was some bias shown. You could see at once, reading the reports in the newspapers, that there was some bias somewhere, and the whole thing wound up afterwards with a report against the Minister. I looked upon the whole thing as a pure farce. I object to hon. members getting up and trying to draw the Minister for Works at the present time, before he is prepared to meet the charge made against him. I am glad the hon. member for Maryborough and the hon. member for Toombul are here, because I think they were the members of that commission who were really biased in the matter, and really wanted witnesses, when they were asked questions, to answer them in a certain way. Reading the evidence in the papers showed me that they did not give the Minister for Public Works the fair play that he would have received in any court of law or justice. Of course they will be able to answer that. I have simply read the newspapers, and as a young Australian and a member belonging to the minority I hope that some good may come from the minority.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You were over here a short while ago, and perhaps may be again.

Mr. FITZGERALD: I hope I shall, and when I see the hon. member for Mackay in opposition—from the shades of which he will never emerge—I hope he will be guided by the same rule as I shall be, when I am returned, with others, to that front Ministerial bench; and whenever any aspersion is thrown upon any member of the Ministry on that bench, he will see that they are given fair play. I hope that hon. gentleman will be the first man to get up and stick out and argue for the purity of politics and for the protection of Ministers or officers by the majority. That is the reason I have spoken against the constant haggling and worrying of Ministers. I think the commission has been honest, but I think we ought to know more about it before we go further. I think it is only right, under the circumstances, for a member on this side of the House to get up and ask, what on earth is the matter? Is the Hon. the Minister for Works guilty or not guilty? The commission appointed by the present Ministry have decided that he is guilty, and I will just give one instance of what they recommend. One of the recommendations is that Mr. Jack be refunded his legal expenses, because he was led into those expenses through the action of the Government, or rather through the action of the Minister for Works. Well, the Minister for Works seems to have

engaged—not the Crown Solicitor, and I am very glad he did not, because he would have had a bigger hornet's nest around his ears if he had—but he engaged a private solicitor, which is bad, but not so bad as the other way. Now, as against that, Mr. Jack comes along and engages a solicitor, too; and the Royal Commission recommend that he should be refunded the expenses so incurred. Now that of itself is a vote of censure on the Minister. Right through the whole piece the Minister was wrong; he was wrong here, and he was wrong there. In the examination of witnesses you can see that the majority of the commission thought that the Minister was wrong. I am very glad that this question should have been brought up before we get into Supply; and I was very glad indeed to hear hon. members opposite complimenting my hon. leader upon his having brought it up. He brought it up without any feeling on one side or another, and I trust that hon. members will understand that I have spoken on the matter the same way. As long as I am a member of this House and belong to the minority, before I shall be content to see officers and persons representing the majority of this House maligned or traduced, as this commission traduces the Minister for Works, I want to hear the other side. I want to hear what the Minister has to say; and I hope the hon. member for Mackay will do the same thing for this side.

Mr. BELL (*Dalby*): I think if the hon. member were to give a little more evidence in this Chamber of that respect for majority rule which he so ardently professes on behalf of himself and his colleagues the efficiency of this Assembly as a legislative machine would be very much improved. It is rather remarkable to hear the hon. member—who after all is not quite so young a member as he is disposed to make out—with the seniority of his official standing as an ex-Attorney-General, utter the reverential allusion to majority rule which he has made, and then contrast it with the actual conduct in this Chamber of the hon. member and his colleagues. It forms the most notorious case of inconsistency which I can at this moment think of. Now, I say this with regard to the hon. member that I think it is the only adverse comment I am disposed to make upon his speech, because, if he will allow me to say it, I think that in tone and fairness, it was one that did him credit, and certainly was the more agreeable inasmuch that it was distinctly a surprise coming from the quarter that it did.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Oh, oh!

Mr. BELL: Before I come particularly to the subject of this commission I would like to refer to the speech of the junior member for Fortitude Valley. Now, the tactics of the hon. gentleman and his party are, of course, no business of mine, other than as a matter for casual criticism or allusion; but I cannot help saying this in regard to the hon. member's tactics in the speech he made—that it was about as bad an example of party tactics as I have ever seen in this Chamber. The hon. member's party had got on to a remarkably good line so far as the vulnerability of the Government was concerned, as they probably knew very well—as some of us on this side know very well; and yet the hon. member, not content with following up the very good trail that his party were upon, must needs go off upon a side-track, and resuscitate a matter that—so far as any interest in this House and in the country is concerned—is as dead as mutton.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Don't you believe it.

Mr. BELL: The hon. member's party feel that, I believe, as well as I do, and they recognise that the hon. member for Mitchell was perfectly right in his criticism, from his own party point of view, when he complained of the

speech of the junior member for Fortitude Valley. The tactics of the hon. member and his party are no concern of mine, but I do say in regard to the speech of the junior member for Fortitude Valley—although when I took the particular point, it did not meet with your approval, Mr. Speaker, and of course I respectfully bow to your pronouncement on that matter—but I cannot help saying, as a general principle, that undoubtedly we play our part as a Parliament very much more efficiently, and we are undoubtedly more in accord with the spirit of Parliament, and with the mother of Parliaments—the House of Commons—when, if we have any criticisms to make of a definite and damaging nature, or when we have got any deep suspicions to state, even if they do not attain to the dignity of accusations—I say we are acting much more in accord with the spirit of the House of Commons—we are acting, in fact, on the direct directions of the House of Commons—if we have the pluck to formulate those accusations or those suspicions in the shape of a definite motion. And, undoubtedly, if we have not the pluck, if we are not prepared to go to that extent, then it is much fairer and much better to abstain from any allusions at all; and, although I have still got your ruling in my mind, Sir, I cannot help saying that it will be difficult for anyone to have heard the allusions that were made to two members of another place to-night and the other afternoon, and come to any other conclusion than that, if they were not accusations, at all events they were statements and allusions of such a kind that they raised suspicions of the deepest dye in one's mind.

Mr. MAXWELL: They were founded on fact.

Mr. BELL: If they were founded on fact, why does not the hon. member for Burke come forward and put his facts into the shape of a definite motion and let us consider it.

Mr. KERR: You may get that yet.

Mr. BELL: Then let us wait till hon. members on the other side have prepared their case. Surely that would be the correct procedure. Are they merely going on suspicion now and making these speeches in this House in order to create damage in the country against the Government and against those two gentlemen? I am not prepared to say they are doing that—I do not wish to think they are doing it—but if they have got some card up their sleeve which they are going to play at the proper moment in regard to this matter, I venture to say it would be more in accord with parliamentary tradition if they waited until that psychological moment arrived, and when their case was perfectly matured. But to make allusions that are not veiled, and to make statements that are almost definite, is a practice that I, at all events, humbly think is to be deprecated. Going back to the matter which has been the chief topic for discussion to-night, I cannot help saying that if I were Secretary for Works, and a Royal Commission had made the references to me that have been made, I understand, by the Works Royal Commission, which has just presented its report—although I think I am correct in saying that that report has not yet been circulated, at all events I have not seen it—if those accusations had been made against me, I assert that I should leave no stone unturned to induce my leader to name the earliest possible date for a discussion on the matter.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. BELL: I do not know, of course, what goes on in the Cabinet; but, so far as I can see, the Secretary for Works is prepared to meet those charges, and is most anxious to meet them. I did not hear the whole of the speech of the Premier, but, so far as I could learn, he is not

disposed to name a day. I can only hope that he will reconsider that determination, and name a day at a fairly early date.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. BELL: It will be an absolute farce if we appoint commissions that are dignified by the name of "Royal"—that are appointed under the commission of His Excellency the Governor to carry out certain investigations if, when those investigations are carried out and the report of the commission is presented to Parliament and to His Excellency, and a definite charge is made against a Minister of the Crown—I say it will be an absolute farce if the members of the House, on either side, are going to sit down and wait until the Estimates or some equally remote period such as that arrives, in order to discuss the matter. There can be no doubt whatever that, whenever a charge is made by a body such as that against a Minister of the Crown, it is the duty of the Government to name as early a date as possible, to give the House an opportunity of discussing it. I say "as early a date as possible; for it should not be a date too early, because there is a duty for hon. members to perform before we proceed to sit in judgment upon a Royal Commission. We have got to take care that those of us who are going to speak or those of us who are going to pronounce by our votes a decision upon the matter, master the evidence that has been given before the Royal Commission.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. BELL: I heard it stated before tea by the ex-leader of the Opposition, and ex-Premier—I use that expression advisedly—that there was sufficient evidence already before the House and in the possession of hon. members—that through the medium of the newspaper reports we have got all we needed to go upon in the matter. I find it difficult to believe that an hon. gentleman who has been in office—who has led a party—should ever in seriousness make a statement such as that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Mr. BELL: Are we to come down—I speak most respectfully of the Press—are we to come down to this House and say we are going to frame legislation—that we are going to sit in judgment upon a Minister of the Crown—merely upon a report which, after all, is a mere *rechauffé* of some of the evidence that has been given before the commission, and which, after all—like everything that appears in the newspapers—is published with the chief end in view of interesting the public. The titbits, so to speak, are picked out of what has been said, and they are reproduced in order to make the columns of the newspaper as interesting as possible.

Mr. JACKSON: Seventy-five per cent. of the evidence taken by any commission is omitted.

Mr. BELL: I should say that 50 per cent. at all events was omitted, and it [9 p.m.] was omitted imperatively in obedience to considerations of space. As

a rule newspapers can only get in a great part of the evidence which is sensational or which approximates sufficiently to the sensational to tickle the jaded palate of the public. So when we are asked by an ex-leader of the party opposite to form our judgment on what we have seen in the newspapers, it is the most extraordinary invitation I have heard for some time even from the senior member for Charters Towers. I am absolutely without bias in this matter. I say that the rank and file on both sides should go into the evidence thoroughly, and we should remember in regard to that commission that it is not the same as a court of law, as an absolutely judicial body; that it is composed of men taken either from one side of the House or the other, or from both sides, and that, rightly or wrongly, there

attaches to that commission what inevitably attaches to all commissions appointed from inside Parliament—the taint of party feeling, if not party feeling it may be personal feeling—and we have to make sure whether those statements which have been made, that the dominating impulse of that commission was not so much impartiality as mere chagrin, or whether after all the commission was as unbiased a body as could have been chosen from within the four walls of this Chamber. Upon that subject I have no opinion myself one way or the other. I prefer to believe—as I do believe—that that evidence was honestly collected and honestly elicited with a desire to get at the truth, and I shall, so far as I can, apply myself to the salient parts of that evidence as it affects the Minister for Works, and I respectfully say it is as much the duty of every other hon. member to do that as it is mine. Though it is not of much use on a subject of this kind urging that its consideration should be free from party feeling, I hope we shall, at all events, recognise that it is not a light thing to make a charge of this kind against a Cabinet Minister, and we should try to dissociate ourselves as much as we can from party feeling in this investigation. I will conclude with the remark I made at the beginning—namely, that undoubtedly this investigation ought to take place; and, speaking as a supporter of the Government, I say unhesitatingly that a mistake was made in not fixing a date for the consideration of the matter at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. ANNEAR (*Margborough*): I am very much pleased indeed at the speech delivered by the hon. member for Dalby, and, as the chairman of that commission, on behalf of the commission, I say that all we ask is that hon. members will read the evidence, and after reading the evidence will form their own judgment. As regards the reports that appeared in the Press, I think I can safely say that not only the Press of the metropolis, but the Press in the North wherever we went, reported fully 90 per cent. of the evidence taken before this commission, and it appeared in the papers, and has been read by the public. The hon. member for Kennedy seemed, I think, somewhat disappointed that as much attention or as much publicity was not given by the Press to the evidence given before the Licensing Commission as to the evidence given before the Works Commission.

Mr. JACKSON: They are giving us as good reports as they gave you in Brisbane.

Mr. ANNEAR: I don't think so. I don't think those hon. gentlemen are giving the public the solid matter in which they are interested the same as we did. (Laughter.) I would like to say a few words as regards the speech delivered by the hon. member for Mitchell. I think that hon. member blew hot and cold in the remarks he made. He condemned not only the Minister for Works, but the whole of the Government, and in two or three minutes he began to praise them. The hon. member referred to the commission, and he pointedly referred to myself, and said it was evident to him that the Minister for Works was on his trial, and that the members of the commission were biased against him. I want to know what was our duty. Was it not the duty of the commission, after calling the Under Secretary and the head of the professional branch, to call the Minister when he was available to give evidence before the commission? I think that was our duty, and the hon. gentleman came and gave evidence. And as regards the remark of the hon. member for Mitchell about me being biased against the hon. gentleman, if the hon. gentleman will speak the truth he must say this—that I handled him like a child. (Loud and continued laughter.) I had as chairman of that

commission to keep my temper, and had I not kept my temper, and spoken kindly, nicely—I ask hon. gentlemen to read the evidence to bear out the statement I am now making—had I not handled the hon. gentleman gently he would have run away on several occasions. With all respect I say that I have no political or personal feeling of any kind against the hon. gentleman, nor have I ever exhibited it; and I challenge the hon. gentleman—I challenge any man in this country—to say that there was ever any bias, not only on my part, but on the part of the other commissioners who sat on that commission and received what they could get from the hon. gentleman in the shape of evidence. Now, I should not have taken part in this discussion had it not been for a remark made by the Secretary for Works when the hon. member for Flinders was speaking. When the hon. member was on his feet the Minister kept insinuating, and amongst other things he said, “You were put up to it.” What did the hon. gentleman mean? Anyone who knows the hon. member for Flinders knows quite well that he does not want prompting by anyone when he considers he has a duty to perform. The hon. member is quite capable of taking care of himself. It has been said again and again that the witnesses were prompted and led by some of the members of the commission. I hurl that statement back with scorn and contempt to those who make it.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Oh!

Mr. ANNEAR: I do wish the hon. gentleman would keep his temper. I will say nothing to ruffle the hon. gentleman. I do not know what position he occupies in the Ministry, but I do know that he interjected to-night that the commission were prosecutors, and I ask the hon. gentleman to point out in what manner we persecuted or prosecuted anyone who gave evidence before us. I agree with the remarks made by the hon. members for Dalby and Mitchell. The report and evidence were only laid on the table on Friday last, and they are not yet in members' hands. Before we discuss the question hon. members should wait until they have the report in their hands and have read the whole of it together with the evidence. It was the desire of every one of the commissioners, and they have carried out their intentions thoroughly, not to colour the report, and I say, when compared with the evidence, it will be found a mild report.

Mr. STORY: Where is the original report—the draft?

Mr. ANNEAR: I do not know to what the hon. member for Balonne alludes. There is only one report, so far as I know, and I claim that according to the evidence we have not overstated the case in any degree whatever.

Mr. DAWSON: You have been plucky enough, anyhow.

Mr. ANNEAR: I can speak for every one of my brother commissioners. We had a very important duty to perform, and we claim that we have performed it fearlessly, respectfully, and to the best of our ability in the interests of the public of this colony. I was very pleased with the speech made by the Chief Secretary. The hon. gentleman said there should be fair play. That is all I want. I want fair play for the Minister, and the commission have recommended that fair play be given to one man against whom, when the report comes up for discussion, I will show there was a combination—a most unworthy combination—to down him in the public service, and in the eyes of the public.

Mr. BRIDGES: Question, question!

Mr. JACKSON: Why did you not put that in your report?

Mr. ANNEAR: We have put it in the report. I ask hon. members to read the report in conjunction with the evidence. We had a duty to perform, and our characters and conduct as regards this commission have to be upheld before our constituents just as much as that of any Minister of the Crown. I do think that a most reasonable request has been made, and that the Premier should fix a night two or three weeks hence on which this report may be discussed.

Mr. DAWSON: Not on the Estimates?

Mr. ANNEAR: No; that would be impossible, in my opinion. It would be impossible to do justice to it when discussing the Estimates. I think the people of the country expect that the report will be discussed in all its bearings. I trust now that we will get on with the business and pass the Appropriation Bill, but before doing so we are entitled to a statement from the Premier that he will give a night on which members may discuss this important question.

Mr. JACKSON (*Kennedy*): I think it quite legitimate on the part of members on this side to draw attention to the very remarkable report issued by the Works Commission. I do not think this is the proper time to discuss it, but I think it is justifiable to draw the attention of the Premier to the matter, and I ask what action he intends to take in connection with it. The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has said that the Press has given very full reports of the evidence taken by his commission. Although I have had no opportunity of knowing what evidence was taken, yet, judging from my experience on the Licensing Commission, I am quite sure that if the Works Commission sat, say, from 10 until 1 the evidence they would take would fill at least three columns of a newspaper instead of one. Let us consider what the newspaper reports of the proceedings in this House are. Would any hon. member like to be judged by the report of his speeches which appears in the daily Press. I contend that the reports in the Press of the evidence taken on these commissions are something similar to the Press reports of the speeches of hon. members in this Chamber. Whilst I do not intend to say anything on the evidence taken by the Works Commission, I would like to say that the Premier of this colony is placed in a very awkward position. When he has to deal with a report of this sort, he should have a week or a fortnight in which to consider this report. I think a fortnight would probably be sufficient. If the hon. gentleman takes no action in that time, I take it he will be flaunting the verdict of this Royal Commission. On the other hand, if the hon. gentleman thinks the verdict of that Royal Commission is a true one, it is his duty to ask his colleague, the Minister for Works, to send in his resignation.

Mr. McDONALD: Suppose the Minister refuses?

Mr. JACKSON: I am not such a great authority on constitutional practice as the hon. member for Flinders, as to express any opinion as to what the Premier should do in that event, but I have been told that it is possible for the Premier to gazette a Minister out of office.

Mr. JENKINSON: It has been done before.

Mr. JACKSON: I have heard that that is possible. I take it that if the Premier takes no action in a reasonable time, that he is prepared to stand by his colleague, the Minister for Public Works. It would, then, I think, be the duty of hon. members on this side of the House to move a vote of want of confidence in the Minister, which means a vote of want of confidence in the Government.

Mr. GROOM: Not necessarily.

Mr. JACKSON: I understand that is the case. It has been suggested that the Government should appoint one day for the special consideration of this report. But I ask what would be the question submitted to the House, and how would it be submitted? In what way would hon. members discuss the report? I would like to know how hon. members could express their opinions as to whether the findings of the commission are correct according to the evidence? We must have some concrete question submitted to the House. I think the proper course would be for some hon. member of the Opposition to move a vote of want of confidence in the Government.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no! Hear, hear!

Mr. JACKSON: That is, if the Premier does not take any action in the meantime. If the Premier had time to fully consider the matter, and if he asked the Minister for Works to resign, that would settle the whole matter. Therefore, I think it is premature to discuss the matter now. A great deal of time has been occupied unnecessarily to-day in discussing this report and the evidence taken by this commission. I think the Premier should make some definite statement, for the hon. gentleman's mere suggestion—that the matter can be discussed on the Works Estimates—is not satisfactory to hon. members on his own side, and if that is so, it is certainly not satisfactory to hon. members on this side. This is a very serious matter. It has been stated that we have never had such a report of a Royal Commission as this.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Never.

Mr. JACKSON: But it does not follow that such a report should not be presented. If it is proved that a Minister is incompetent I see no reason why a commission should not bring up a report censuring such a Minister. I should say it would be the duty of a commission to do so. I do not say that the findings of this commission are correct, because I have not had time to read through the whole of the evidence—I have only skimmed through portions of it—but I think a good deal of heat was displayed on both sides. I think the Premier should make some definite statement so that hon. members may understand the position the Government take up in the matter.

Mr. GROOM (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): There is no doubt that this report is an unique one in the history of this colony. It is the first time that a Royal Commission has been appointed by the Government to inquire into the working of a public department, in consequence of the decision of the Public Service Board not giving general satisfaction. This commission has brought up its report; but hon. members of this Chamber have not been furnished with a copy of that report or of the official evidence taken; so I think it would be unfair to hon. members, and equally unfair to the hon. gentleman most concerned, if we were to discuss the matter fully now. Hon. members know that newspaper reports are greatly abridged, and many salient points are frequently left out. On the whole, I do not think it would be proper for us to discuss this matter now, and, in all fairness, I do not think it is right to make any unnecessary attacks on the Minister for Works. This is the first time that a Royal Commission has brought up a report affecting the administration of one of the Ministers of the Crown; but—if it should so happen—it will not be the first time that the Premier of this colony has asked one of his colleagues to resign. I remember one case where the Premier gazetted one of his colleagues out of office, locked the door, and took the key in his pocket. That was done in the

early history of the colony, and this House then made no objection to that action. The Minister was gazetted out of office, but he took his seat in the House on the next sitting day, and I can assure you we had a pretty lively time on that occasion.

Mr. BROWNE: The House might consider such a proceeding quite unnecessary.

Mr. GROOM: On that occasion it was thought that such a severe course of procedure was quite unnecessary; that much milder methods might have been adopted. I contend that hon. members, not having received a copy of the report of the evidence, are not in a position to say whether the findings are in accordance with the evidence. As the chairman of the commission said, it may be a mild report; but that is for hon. members to say when they see the evidence and compare it with the report.

Mr. JACKSON: They took evidence all over Queensland.

Mr. GROOM: I know it has been stated that the report of this Royal Commission can be discussed when the Estimates for the Works Department come on; but they may come on, perhaps, the last week before the session closes. I know that last year, Estimates amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds were rushed through at the end of the session in a few days without anything like adequate debate. To discuss an important document of this kind on the Estimates will be virtually

[9:30 p.m.] shelving the whole question. Therefore I think the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government would be doing right if he fixed a date for the discussion of the report. I am sure that his colleague, the Chief Secretary, will bear me out when I say this report is a unique one in the history of this colony. It is the first time a Royal Commission has brought up a report which virtually condemns a Minister. It is due to the Secretary for Works himself that those paragraphs reflecting on him should be decided by the House as soon as possible. If the charges against him are substantiated by the evidence, let the House say so, and if the evidence does not disclose sufficient ground for the charges, let the House express its opinion to that effect.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There must be a motion made.

Mr. GROOM: It is not fair to the hon. gentleman, or to the Government as a whole, to ask hon. members on either side to make a motion in connection with this matter. When the Public Service Board did not do justice to the department in their investigations, the Government in their wisdom appointed a Royal Commission, consisting of three members on that side, one member of the other House, and one member from this side of the House. That commission have brought up their report, which contains certain reflections on the Minister in charge of the department. What, then, is the proper course to adopt? Not for any member of this House to table a motion on the subject, but for the Government, who appointed the commission, to fix a date for the discussion of the findings of the commission, after hon. members have had an opportunity of reading the evidence. It is not for any member of this House to say that the findings of the commission are incorrect, but for the Premier to relieve his colleague of the reflections cast upon him by the commission. You, Sir, as Speaker of the House, are familiar with the practice of the House of Commons. How often is it the case there that a member rises and gives notice that on the motion being made that the Speaker leave the chair for the House to go into Committee of Supply he will call attention to such and such a matter or grievance? Is that not the ordinary and proper course. When the

hon. gentleman proposes to go into Committee of Supply next Friday, or on any other day, he can, on the motion that the Speaker leave the chair, invite an expression of opinion with regard to this matter. But it would be suicidal for a member on this side to move a motion involving the position of the Secretary for Public Works, or affirming that the commission had brought up a report which was not sustained by the evidence. The proper course is for the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government to say that on a given day he will give hon. members an opportunity of discussing the report, with a view to relieving his colleague of the imputations cast upon him by the commission.

Mr. JACKSON: You cannot get a vote on the matter in that way.

Mr. GROOM: What vote is necessary? All that is required is an expression of opinion on the part of members as to whether the findings of the commission are right or wrong, and on that expression of opinion the Government can act. When those hon. members who suggest taking a vote on the question have been here as long as I have, they will see that these things can easily be got over without raising unnecessary feeling or prejudice on either side, but I think that in justice to the Minister himself as early a date as possible should be set apart for the discussion of this matter, and hon. members can only discuss it after carefully reading the evidence to see whether the charge is, as stated by the chairman of the commission, a mild one, or whether it is sustained by the evidence.

Mr. REID (*Enoggera*): I do not wish to take any side in this discussion at the present stage. As a member of the House I am very much interested in the Works Department, and as serious charges are made by the commission against the Minister and certain officers of the department, I think the Premier should set apart a day for the discussion of the report. The supervision of public buildings, on which we spend thousands, I might almost say millions of pounds, is a very important question, and cannot be adequately discussed on the Works Estimates. I therefore trust that the Premier will see his way clear to fall in with the wish expressed by members on both sides of the House and fix a special day for the discussion of this report.

Mr. LEAHY: What would be the good of one day, with all your talk? You would want a week.

Mr. REID: I am not asking the hon. member or anybody else to talk. But, knowing something about buildings and the amount of money spent on their erection by the Works Department, I contend that if we spent a week, or even a fortnight, over the discussion of this matter, it would not be time wasted. I trust the Premier will give us an assurance before we adjourn that he will fix a special day for the discussion of the report, and for taking the opinion of the House upon it in some way or other.

The PREMIER: I regret that so much time has been wasted over this discussion. I personally have no objection to devoting one day to the discussion of this report, but so far as I can see at the present, unless we have a motion to discuss, we shall not be a bit the wiser when the matter is finished.

Mr. BROWNE: There could be a formal motion moved for the adoption of the report.

The PREMIER: Perhaps I may not view it in as serious a light as hon. members do. I certainly have not been reading the papers every day, and I have not read all the evidence that has been given, but so soon as the Minister

for Railways is prepared, I will arrange with the leader of the Opposition to give one whole day for the discussion of the report.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I have been in the House a good many years, but I do not think I have ever seen a Royal Commission report discussed specially, and have never seen a day devoted to it.

Mr. REID: Have you ever seen one that makes a serious charge against a Minister?

The PREMIER: Certainly this is a unique report. It is a report which stands by itself in the history of the colony, and perhaps on that ground it may be deemed much more serious than it really is. I understand the report is not in the hands of members yet. We might have saved the afternoon's discussion, and waited until the report was before hon. members.

Mr. BROWNE: It has been circulated all over the country.

The PREMIER: Not the full record. As soon as the Minister for Works is prepared I will arrange with the leader of the Opposition to devote the whole of a day to it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. STEWART (*Rockhampton North*): Perhaps I may be pardoned for coming in behind the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government. I certainly would not have done so if he had not hurled the usual charge of wasting time against this side of the House. He insinuated that the whole of the evening has been wasted.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. STEWART: Well, I contend that if it has been wasted it has been because the hon. gentleman did not do at the beginning of the debate what he has now felt constrained to do. If he had consented before to a day being set apart for the discussion of this report no debate would have taken place, but the hon. gentleman said in a most supercilious manner, that it would be dealt with in due course on the Estimates and hon. members very properly took exception to that statement. The hon. gentleman ought to learn to take more time to make up his mind instead of deciding on the spur of the moment as he appears to do. If he had done that only for a minute at the beginning of this debate, he would have seen how reasonable it was that a day should be set apart for the discussion of the report. I am very glad he has consented to that, but I repudiate the charge that he has made of wasting time against this side of the House.

Question—That the Speaker leave the chair—put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

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

That there be granted to Her Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1900-1901, a sum not exceeding £350,000, towards defraying the expenses of the various departments and services of the colony.

Mr. BROWNE asked was this for one month's supply?

The TREASURER: It would carry them on for a little more than a month—to the 1st November.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW (*Maryborough*) asked what was the reason of the delay in carrying out the improvements of the station at Maryborough?

The TREASURER said it was not on account of the Treasury. So far as the Treasury was concerned, the money had been voted for the work.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution, and it was agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS.

COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the TREASURER, it was resolved—

That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1900-1901, a further sum not exceeding £350,000 be granted from the consolidated revenue fund of Queensland, exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the loan fund account.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution to the House, and the resolution was agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL, 1900-1, No. 2.

FIRST READING.

This Bill, founded on the foregoing resolution, was introduced, and read a first time, on the motion of the TREASURER.

SECOND READING.

The TREASURER: I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. HARDACRE: I merely wish to point out an objection that I have made on several previous occasions, and that is that there is no certainty that the Appropriation Bill contains the precise sums that we agree to vote in Committee of Supply and Ways and Means. Of course, on this occasion there is not the same likelihood of a mistake occurring, as there is only the one amount, but it often happens that, besides the amount that is voted from the consolidated revenue fund, there are also sums from the trust and special funds, and from the loan fund account. It would be an easy matter to give the Government Printer instructions to pull off proofs showing the total amounts voted from each account, for the information of hon. members. No harm can be done on the present occasion, but a case might arise where it might lead to a very serious discrepancy.

The TREASURER: There is only one amount in this Bill, and I cannot conceive what possible object any Treasurer could have in deceiving hon. members with regard to the amounts. Personally I have not the slightest objection to doing what the hon. member suggests.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE AND THIRD READING.

The Bill was then passed through its remaining stages, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence.

PORT NORMAN, NORMANTON, AND CLONCURRY RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. McDONALD (*Flinders*): When the Bill was last before this Chamber I moved the adjournment of the debate. The

[10 p.m.] Minister for Railways stated on the introduction of the Bill that it was a most important one; and considering that I represent a portion of the district this railway is to go through, and my name has been pretty well mixed up in the correspondence, and also in leading articles in certain newspapers, it is necessary that I should say something on the matter; and I hope the charge of wasting time will not be continually hurled against myself by hon. members on the other side. While these Bills have been before Parliament I have very rarely had an opportunity of speaking, and I certainly claim the right to have a word or two without the charge of wasting time being hurled at me. As to the importance of the Bill, I think most members of the Chamber recognise its

importance; certainly members on this side do, because we believe that it is going to completely revolutionise the settled policy of this country in connection with railway construction. At the outset I may say that in the Cloncurry district itself there is no one more anxious than I am to see that district developed, and to see the mineral resources of that portion of the colony developed to their fullest extent. I also recognise that the district would have given employment to a large number of people if there had been better means of transit. We all know that in a wet season it is an impossibility to get from Normanton to Cloncurry, or from Hughenden to Cloncurry; and we know that for some considerable time after a wet season it is very difficult for teams to get to one or the other of those places; and the consequence is that that portion of the colony is isolated. Again, we know that in very severe seasons such as the present, it is also a very difficult matter to get to Cloncurry, owing to the want of grass and water. We also recognise that there is in that district a large extent of country 240 miles long by 40 wide, which is known to contain various kinds of minerals. We have had various geological reports from time to time presented to Parliament, and I dare say most hon. members have read those reports, which will bear out the statement that it is one of the richest mineral districts in the whole of Queensland. But they say it wants developing; and the only way it can possibly be developed is by railway communication. Apart from the ordinary mineral deposits it is known, and has been known for many years, that from time to time there have been patches of gold found in considerable quantities; and it is the general impression with most men I have seen, who have worked for some years in the Cloncurry district, that up to the present time the true matrix in which gold exists has not yet been discovered in that district. Whether that is so or not, I cannot say; I am only stating what I have heard old miners say. Still, I think the fact that large indications of copper exist together with iron in that district goes to bear out a good deal of what is said in that particular line. Not only that, but there has been a good deal of alluvial gold found, and a large number of very rich leaders. There was one rich leader on the Leichhardt, where about 900 oz. of gold were almost rolled off the wall in a sheet. Some of the leaders have been very rich, but the great difficulty has been that when the show appears on the surface, and a start is made to sink on the reef, a huge deposit of some particular kind of rock is met which cuts off the lode, and, according to geologists, that goes to show that the whole of the country is of recent formation, and it is a difficult thing to say where that particular lode might crop up again. Still, we have the fact that there has been gold found there in very payable quantities, and we know from our exhibition here that large deposits of native copper have been discovered in different places in the district; and though geologists will say that where there are rich deposits of native copper as a rule that particular country is never permanent, that is a thing that is yet to be proved, because though in other parts of Australia we find that where very rich deposits of copper have been discovered they have not been what are called permanent lodes, that is a question still to be proved in connection with the Cloncurry district. I may just draw the attention of the House to a statement made by myself five or six years ago. I recognised then that a line should be built from Normanton to Cloncurry. I recognised that ultimately the port of Norman must drain a very large area of the Western part of this colony—somewhere about one-fifth or one-sixth of the whole of Queensland.

will be drained to that particular port—almost, I say, from half-way between Boulia and Birdsville—roughly speaking, equidistant from Port Augusta, South Australia, in the south, and Port Norman in the north—I recognise that sooner or later a line will come down there, whether it is built by the Government or by a syndicate. Of course, the Government want to let a syndicate build the line, and we are told that not 2 per cent. of the people there are against the construction of this line by a syndicate. I make bold to say that if we took a referendum, and put the question to the people, whether a railway should be built by a syndicate or by the Government, not 2 per cent. would vote in favour of the syndicate.

Mr. FORSYTH: At Cloncurry?

Mr. McDONALD: Yes.

Mr. FORSYTH: You will get some information about that later on.

Mr. McDONALD: I am prepared to admit that a large number of people want the railway, no matter how it is built, but if a referendum was taken 90 per cent. of them would choose that the line be built by the Government instead of by a syndicate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The question is whether a syndicate shall build it, or it shall not be built at all.

Mr. McDONALD: That is not the question as put to us. The Secretary for Railways has informed us that not 2 per cent. of the people object to a syndicate building the railway. I say the reason that they are prepared to grab at a railway of any sort is because the Government are not prepared to take up the proposal, but if they were, few persons would favour the advent of a syndicate into the district.

Mr. FORSYTH: You are against the Government building it yourself.

Mr. McDONALD: I will tell the hon. member what I have said on that subject later on. The hon. member relies upon special agents to supply him with news.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is in *Hansard*. I will read it to you if you like.

Mr. McDONALD: The position I take up is this: I say if there is no possible prospect of a line paying the Government they have no right to build it, because there are plenty of lines that are urgently required and which would pay both working expenses and the interest on the cost of construction.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This line will not cost the Government one penny.

Mr. McDONALD: I will deal with that matter later on. Now, we have the Secretary for Railways telling us—

I think there is hardly any Government likely to be in power that would have the hardihood, I may say, to ask this House or the country to construct the line, seeing, as I have already pointed out, that the hands of the Government are full and overflowing with proposals for railway construction that will be of more general good in developing the resources of the colony to a much greater extent than the construction of this railway will do.

And that brings me to another point in connection with railway construction. It is admitted that the Gulf port, Port Norman, will ultimately drain all that portion of the country sooner or later, although there are probably other rivers besides the Norman which offer as great facilities for trade. But admitting, for the sake of argument, that Port Norman is the port which will drain that part of the country, I wish to point out that there are other ports along the coast which are the natural ports for their respective districts, and to which produce does not go

at the present time. I need only to mention Bowen and Gladstone, which ultimately must be the ports for all the back country behind them. I say therefore that there was another alternative if the Government had chosen to follow it instead of proposing this line to be built by a private syndicate. A line could have been built which would have ultimately reached Cloncurry, and which, if it had been built, would have been paying handsomely at the present time. We know that originally it was intended to build our main trunk lines all due west from the eastern coast. Had the Government followed out that policy continuously, the line would by this time have reached Cloncurry, and we would have seen very much greater development of that portion of the country than has taken place. If they had taken the line down the Flinders, keeping on the high ridges until they got to Cloncurry, they would have passed through magnificent sheep country up to within a few miles of Cloncurry. I would point out that Richmond Downs, although still a cattle station, the resumed portion has been largely put under sheep; then we go a short distance further on to Clutha and Nella Ponds and other stations which, a few years ago, were under cattle, and which are now stocked with sheep. We go along then until we come to Eddington, which at one time was an enormous cattle station, and which is now being put under sheep, and which will turn out one of the finest sheep stations in Queensland. The owners have gone to enormous expense in finding water. They have also purchased the adjoining station of Lilyvale, and as soon as the cattle can be removed that also will be put under sheep. It has been admitted by the Railway Department that if that line could be run out the whole distance it would not only pay working expenses, but a handsome rate of interest; and in proof of that I may say that the short distance between Hughenden and Winton, for the short time it has been opened, not only paid working expenses, but returned a profit of £2,000. It is a well-known fact that the cattle would be brought in from the outlying districts to the meatworks at Townsville, Bowen, Torrens Creek, Charters Towers, and Hughenden, in addition to being brought in to supply the butchers and other small consumers. If you take the population there, and the consumption of meat and the continual stream of stock passing through the district, I think hon. members will see that the construction of this line by the State would pay handsomely. Then, again, artesian waters can be obtained easier in Flinders District than in any other portion of the colony. They can get water there at an average depth of 1,000 feet, and the biggest flows are obtained in that district, which is eminently suitable for settlers because they can obtain water at cheap rates and settle down there permanently. The line I advocate would return the State a handsome profit and the whole colony would benefit by the construction of this line. It would be the means of assisting small farmers and graziers, and it would also be the means of throwing many thousands of acres of land open to selection. Apart from that, there is another very important matter. The line I propose would materially assist the Woolgar and the lower Bheridge. There is a vast amount of mineral land there that would greatly benefit by the construction of this line, inasmuch as it would give the people there a means of transit for their ore. Then, again, the survey of this line shows that it is almost a straight line from Hughenden to Cloncurry. Excepting seventy or eighty miles, it is in a straight line; so that there would be very little engineering difficulties on this route.

Mr. SPOON: What is the length of the survey from Hughenden to Cloncurry?

Mr. McDONALD: I think about 240 miles. While I recognise that the Gulf country should have a line built from Normanton to Cloncurry, yet I think the proper course now would be to construct a line from Hughenden to Cloncurry, which would greatly assist the people in those districts and would also assist the Cloncurry mine.

Mr. STORY: Could not the Cloncurry ore be sent to Townsville?

Mr. McDONALD: Yes; but I want to show that making the line from Hughenden to Cloncurry would be the better means of developing these mines. If these mines are a success, it would be easy for the Government to build this line, and even if they were not a success the Government would still have a handsome return from the railway. I say this line can be built without the assistance of any syndicate—by the Government. A large number of people in those districts do not think that the construction of this line by private syndicates would tend to develop these Cloncurry mines. I quite agree with the hon. gentleman that we don't want to build a line that will not pay axle-grease. The Cloncurry mines may be very valuable, profitable, and permanent. I hope they will be; but even if these mines prove not permanent nor highly profitable, still if the Government built the line I advocate, it would pay all the same. If a line were constructed from Normanton to Cloncurry, anybody who wanted to get to the eastern side would have to use the line I recommend. All business men would use that. The Normanton-Cloncurry line would be simply useless as far as passenger or mail traffic are concerned. The Minister told us that after years of fruitless effort, a number of gentlemen had come forward who had sufficient enterprise to embark on the construction of this line. He said, "I may say that they have secured the freehold of most of the mineral deposits of the locality." I interjected at the time, "That is not true."

The hon. gentleman then said, [10:30 p.m.] "That is my information." I ask the hon. gentleman where did he get that information? Did he get it from the Mines Department? That is where he ought to have got it from, and if he had looked up the report of the warden he would have found that that was not true.

Mr. FORSYTH: They have only got freeholds, not leaseholds; there are plenty of leaseholds there.

Mr. McDONALD: I hope the hon. member will not interrupt me, as I have a good deal to say, and I want to say it as quickly as possible. I may tell the hon. member that out of twelve freeholds in that particular portion of the district some of the people who are going in for this syndicate own eleven, but there are over two hundred other leases in the district. The hon. member for Carpentaria held two or three blocks of about 160 acres each some time ago, and I do not know why he has given them up.

Mr. FORSYTH: I was acting for somebody else.

Mr. McDONALD: Oh, the hon. member was acting for somebody else—acting for the syndicate?

Mr. FORSYTH: No.

Mr. McDONALD: Again the Minister assured us that 72 per cent. of the people were in favour of this line. I reiterate that if the question was put to them to-morrow as to whether the Government or the syndicate should construct this railway, there would not be 2 per cent. of them in favour of its being built by the syndicate. The hon. gentleman then tried to

get at me through a paper called the *Cloncurry Advocate*. He evidently had not read the article himself. It was slipped into his hand, and he, stupid-like, read it; but if he had known as much about the article then as he does now, I do not think he would have read it to the House. First of all, the article says—

A small majority of voters here favoured Mr. McDonald's candidature at the last election, and the time has now arrived when they have reason to regret having assisted to return the hon. member for Flinders. The hon. gentleman said that a telegram had been received from a number of gentlemen who were among my supporters. What does that telegram say? That "our member in opposing the Normanton-Cloncurry Railway Bill now before the House does not represent the feelings or wishes of the district on the subject, and that a telegram signed by his leading supporters here urging him to assist in passing it has been sent to him." That telegram was signed by Messrs. Donner, Johnstone, Low, Hensley, Macgillivray, Henry, Weir, Absolon, Brown, and Watson, none of whom voted for me. Again, in a telegram from Mr. Pearce, we are told—

Townpeople very indignant and consider McDonald's policy is to keep his billet safe by serving Hughenden end of electorate which has majority votes. Indignation meeting probably be held also to agitate separation from Flinders electorate and incorporation in Carpentaria as McDonald's obstinate refusal assist development this district clearly satisfies many his old most faithful supporters that he is determined to studiously neglect their interests.

If they did separate from the Flinders electorate there would be no possible hope of the present member for Carpentaria getting back into this House, because, although the electors there may be opposed to me in connection with this line, if I were to go before them for election to-morrow, I would secure their unanimous support, and the hon. member knows that. In the 1899 election I scored forty-nine votes as against my opponent's forty-five, but it must be remembered that two extra polling-places were appointed there which were not appointed in 1896. In 1896 they sought to defeat me by refusing to appoint a polling-place at Sunny Gully, so that some old men were compelled to ride ninety miles to record their votes. At Glenroy I got seven votes and my opponent two, and at Hampden I got thirty-four and my opponent three, so that altogether I secured a majority of forty at those places. If we take the Cloncurry division, which includes Dalgonally, Devon Court, Eddington, Granada, Hampden, Manfred, Mackinlay, and Toorak, it will be seen that I secured 163 votes, while my opponent only obtained ninety-six, so that I had a majority of seventy-one. In the whole of the Flinders electorate I got a majority of 100, and in the Cloncurry end, where they say I am pandering to the Hughenden people, because that is where I got my majority, I got seventy-one out of that 100, so that as a matter of fact it was the Cloncurry district which gave me my big majority. So much for the report of Mr. Pearce, and the telegram as to whether I represent the feeling of the electorate. I do not want to be unkind, but if I did want to be so I think I could show that Mr. Pearce ought to be the last person to send wires about anybody. I will let the matter drop at that. As far as I am concerned, I am not afraid to go to the Cloncurry people to-morrow, or to any portion of the electorate, in spite of anything the hon. gentleman may say to the contrary. I must certainly take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Pearce, the writer of that article which the hon. gentleman read, for paying me one of the highest compliments any man could have paid to him as a politician. Mr. Pearce is one of my most bitter political opponents, and for years and years has tried to write me down, with the

result that every time he has tried to do so I have got a big majority. In the article to which I have referred, he says—

Are things what they seem, or are visions about? And yet even Mr. McDonald's most bitter opponents cannot charge him with inconsistency. He has signed the Labour platform. And if he supported any railway construction by other than State funds, he would be false to his declarations of allegiance to the lines of that platform, and would deserve to be treated with the contempt always felt by honourable men for renegades, political or otherwise.

And then the Hon. the Minister for Railways goes on to state that this line is purely for the purpose of developing a mining district, and for the development of private property. Well, I was under the impression that this was a public Bill, but the hon. gentleman says that it is for the development of private property, and that private property was held by the gentlemen he had already named. I merely mention this in passing, because the hon. gentleman will insist that this is a public Bill. It has been decided by the House that those are public Bills, and I think the hon. gentleman should remember the fact. That brings me to another point in the correspondence where I saw the Railway Department had sent in a voucher to Mr. Withers for £105 for the drafting of that particular Bill. I would like the hon. member to state if that £105 has been paid?

MR. REID: If it was a public Bill, why should he pay it?

MR. McDONALD: I believe that Mr. Withers haunts this Chamber more than any man in it, and I believe he has become a perfect nightmare to the Chief Secretary and the Minister for Railways.

THE PREMIER: He has not troubled me.

MR. McDONALD: But you are not the Chief Secretary—you are the Premier. There are two notable characters who are always to be seen about this Chamber. One is the gentleman who is looking for a reward for the discovery of Clermont, and the other is Mr. Withers; and I think they can run well in double harness, because they are never away from the hon. gentleman.

HON. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Probably it is the eloquence of hon. members that attracts them.

MR. McDONALD: Now, again, we have been told by the Premier that the Government are in such an impoverished condition that they cannot borrow money. I decline, for one, to believe that. I think that if the Government were desirous of constructing railways they could get just as much money as they wanted. When the hon. gentleman talks about the £20,000,000 required for railway construction he knows very well that a large number of those railways are not urgently demanded at the present time. For more than three-fourths of them there is no urgent demand. The bulk of them are mere political or paper railways, which have been proposed from time to time, and the hon. gentleman makes them an excuse for saying that, owing to the large number of railways desired, it is necessary to ask private enterprise to step in, because the Government are not able to cope with the demands that are made. There is only one deduction to be drawn from that, and that is, that the Government are not able to manage the country or to manage the development of the country, or the progress of the country has been so fast that the Government are unable to cope with it. Well, if the Government are in that position, then the best thing they can do is to make room for someone else—someone who will manage the affairs of the State better than they are conducting them at the present time. What is the use of the hon. gentleman telling me or any person that the Government cannot borrow money for

the construction of railways if they want to do it? Does the hon. gentleman tell me, for one moment, that the Government are not in a better position to borrow money for railway construction than any private company? We have only got to refer to the position of the Chillagoe Company to find that that company has had to pay through the nose for the money that they required for the construction of their particular railway, and that will be exactly the position in connection with this railway at the present time. Ultimately, however, the unfortunate taxpayers of the colony will be compelled to pay for it. Now, I wish to take exception to the hon. gentleman and other members of the Government decrying the mining industry of the colony. We were told by the hon. gentleman that mining in this colony was not a very profitable thing, and he instanced the case of Gympie as being typical of the character of the mining industry throughout the colony. The Hon. the Premier also went on to say that at the present time none of the copper lodes of Queensland were known to be of a very permanent character. Here we have two responsible Ministers of the Crown describing two of the most prosperous districts in the colony, and an industry that has employed more men than any other industry in Queensland, and an industry which has done more to develop Queensland than any other industry in it. Yet the Premier tells us that this industry is not of a remunerative character, and that practically—

THE PREMIER: I alluded to copper-mining.

MR. McDONALD: I said that—

THE PREMIER: What has copper-mining ever done for the country?

MR. McDONALD: I am not talking about that. Here we have one Minister decrying the goldmining industry, and the hon. gentleman himself saying that copper lodes are not of such a permanent character as to induce any particular investors to risk money with their development. Now, what I want to say is that the hon. gentlemen are prepared, when they want to get any particular Bill through, to turn round and decry any particular industry. That I think is a very unfortunate affair. I do not think it is a thing which should be indulged in by Ministers of the Crown. Now, as to the Bill itself, there are just a few things I would like to say. First of all, the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill told us that it was on all-fours and exactly the same as the other Bills that have been introduced. The Premier, however, himself comes down, and says that this Bill is far different to any of the other Bills, and the hon. gentleman goes so far as to say that it is so much different from the other Bills that he will himself move an amendment to cut off sixty miles of the railway, so that it shall not be carried past Cloncurry. Further, he said he did not see why the company should not be compelled to sell the wharves, which Mr. Browne, the leader of this side of the House, strongly protested against—the hon. gentleman said that he did not see why the company should not be compelled to sell these wharves when they sold that portion of the line from Port Norman to Normanton. The Chief Secretary said that we are getting this line built for nothing—it is not going to cost us a penny. Does he really believe that? Is there any sane man outside Woogaroo who believes it? Certainly not. First of all we are asked to give 5,000 acres of mineral land for fifty years free of all labour conditions, and without any reservation as to gold, which in all other leases is reserved to the Crown. That is a most important concession to give to this company, when we take into consideration that Charters Towers, one of the richest goldfields in Queensland,

which has done so much for the development of the colony and has employed such a large number of men—that the whole of the gold area there covers something less than 2,000 acres.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Premier said the other night he would modify that with regard to the gold.

Mr. McDONALD: The Premier said nothing of the kind. Any way, I am glad to accept it, and if this Bill gets into committee I hope the hon. gentleman will take that course and make that reservation as regards gold. I have already pointed out that there is no telling that Cloncurry may not develop into one of the richest goldfields in Queensland. In every creek or ravine you can find gold—I do not say in payable quantities—which must have come from some portion of the district at some other period. There is iron everywhere, and iron is said to be the mother of gold. Whether that is so or not I do not know, but it is only reasonable to suppose that in that district some day, considering also its strong affinity for copper, there will be a huge deposit of gold found. I sincerely hope there will be. Then, again, we are asked to give 10,000 acres of land in fee-simple for subsidiary works in connection with this line, to be selected when and where they like. They do not tell us where this land is to be selected.

Mr. FORSYTH: What is it worth?

Mr. McDONALD: That is not the question. They have their choice as to where they will take it up. The municipality of Charters Towers occupies about a mile square. Here we are giving this company an area of ten or twelve miles square. Again, we are asked to give ten acres of land at Port Norman. I am glad the Premier has stated that he is prepared to compel the company to sell that as soon as they sell the Normanton to Port Norman line.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It would go with that portion of the line.

Mr. McDONALD: I hope, it will, but that is not in the Bill. And that reminds me that in the correspondence Mr. Withers points out that if it is not allowed to remain in the hands of the company it will affect the company in London. It may prevent the floating of the company. Again, we are asked to give this company exemption from all taxation during the fifty years. Is not that a huge concession? Presuming that those mines turn out well, this will become one of the largest corporations in Queensland, and yet it is to go altogether free from taxation. Again, we are going to give these people the right to levy and collect tolls over the highway of that portion of the colony for fifty years—over a district which represents one-fifth or one-sixth of Queensland. Is not that also a huge concession? And we are also allowing them to come into competition with the existing lines. And it must be remembered that this company are to construct stores, warehouses, labourers' dwellings, freezing works, wharves, and so on. What does that mean? It means that if this company starts freezing works they are going to make it very rough for Townsville, Bowen, and the other freezing works on the coast, because at present there is nearly one-sixth of the cattle in the colony in and about that particular district. Out of the 5,000,000 cattle in the colony there are over 1,000,000 there, as may be seen from the map issued by the Railway Commissioner. So we find that there they have got a huge concession. They can freeze the meat there, and what is the use of sending it along your railway from Richmond if you build that line.

The PREMIER: Freezing works at Cloncurry will not injure the coastal meatworks.

Mr. McDONALD: It does not follow that they will be erected at Cloncurry. They will select their land at the spot most suitable for that particular industry, and that is going to prevent cattle being sent to the East, which will result in a great falling off in the cattle traffic from Hughenden. And yet the Chief Secretary told us we are going to get this line constructed without the cost of a penny to the colony. For my part, rather than give the company these vast concessions, I would vote them a million of money, and I believe the country would be better off. We are giving them a complete monopoly of the Gulf district and country for fifty years, and we are practically giving the people of it too. I am surprised the people of that country cannot see that we are giving them that huge monopoly for fifty years. I will not go further into that matter now, but I would remind hon. members that in the correspondence on this subject there is a list of the shareholders of the company, amongst whom we find gentlemen interested in mortgage companies who have under their control vast areas of pastoral lands in Queensland. They are going to develop that particular portion of the country they own in the Gulf, and they will see that their produce goes over the company's line. Again, we find, despite what was said the other night about Burns, Philp, and the British India Company, that the British India Company is more or less interested in this syndicate, since the name of its chairman, Sir Edwin Dawes, appears on the list of shareholders. The result will be that, as a large shareholder,

he is going to make as much as he [11 p.m.] can out of this concession for the benefit of his company. If he does not he is a fool and is not worthy of the position he holds. I know I would do it if I were in his position, and I do not think he is different to anyone else. Again, we find that the company which the hon. member for Bulloo represents—the Union Mortgage Company—is among the shareholders in this company, and they are going to use this line for the carriage of their produce. Of course it is only natural that they should do so. If we look through the share list we find that the men who are going to run this company are the men who at the present time hold the land in the Gulf district, either by mortgage, or in fee-simple, or by leasehold. Now, being interested in this company, they are going to develop this particular part of the country for the benefit of themselves, so that this district—which represents one-sixth of the whole colony—is going to be monopolised by this company for the next fifty years. And yet the hon. gentleman turns round and says that we are not going to give this company any concession, although they will be relieved from taxation for the next fifty years. That in itself should make anyone very guarded in granting the concession. I would also like to point out that the company is in a different position to the Government. It cannot borrow money as cheaply as the Government can, hence it would be better for the Government to build the line. In the next place a syndicate cannot wait for a return like the Government can, hence the Government should build the line. Then, again, the Government do not require to make provision for redemption, interest, and big dividends, like a syndicate, so that it would be better for the people in the district if the Government built the line. I am sorry that I have not got another ten minutes, but I understand that most hon. members wish to catch their trains. I thank hon. members for listening to me, and I may tell them that, if this Bill gets into committee, I shall make every effort to get as many safeguards as possible put into it. I did hope that the hon. gentleman

would have put in some of the safeguards from the English Acts in connection with these Bills, but he has not done so. I am opposed to all these Bills, and I am just as much opposed to this one as I was when I told the people of Cloncurry that I would oppose it. They would much rather see the Government build the line, and one gentleman from Cloncurry told me just a week or so ago that, although he was an old man, he would rather see no line at all built to Cloncurry than see this syndicate railway built.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear! I was with you when the statement was made.

Mr. McDONALD: Although the great bulk of the people in that portion of the country are desirous of having a line built, they would infinitely prefer to have a Government line. I am as desirous as anyone else of seeing a railway to Cloncurry, and if anyone likes to look up the reports of my speeches at Cloncurry, they will find that I have never lost an opportunity of advocating the construction of a line to that district. I claim to have done more for the Cloncurry district than any representative they have ever had. I have gone more among the people, and know more about the country than any member they have ever had. I do not say this in any spirit of boastfulness, but when men get up who know nothing about the place, and who have only been out there for a couple of weeks, and have never crossed the Cloncurry River, which is only about half-a-mile from the town, I certainly object to them dictating to me. Some of the truest and staunchest friends I have are in Cloncurry, and, notwithstanding my opposition to this Bill, if there was an election to-morrow, they would work just as hard for my return as they did at the last general election when I told them I was going to vote against this concession. I shall not keep the House any longer.

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

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

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