

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 1900**

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On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. R. Philp, *Townsville*), it was resolved—

That the Clerk Assistant do discharge the duties of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly during his absence, and do take his chair at the table.

## PAPERS.

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

- (1) Report of the Commandant on Queensland Military Forces for the year 1899-1900.
- (2) Return to an Order, relative to land for tramway leased to Samuel Dixon, made by the House, on motion of Mr. Givens, on the 19th instant.
- (3) Return to an Order, relative to geological report on mines of the North Chillagoe Mines Company, made by the House, on motion of Mr. Browne, on the 20th instant.

## QUESTIONS.

## DREDGING AREAS, NETTLES CREEK.

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

1. How many dredging areas have been applied for on Nettles Creek, Herberton mining district?
2. Who are the applicants for those areas?
3. How many of those areas have been granted?
4. What is the total acreage and total length of dredging areas granted on that creek?

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

1. Four.
2. John Archibald, F. T. Brentnall, Henry Thorneloe Smith, and Acheson Overend.
3. All the above areas.
4. Total length of area, seven miles. Acreage not known, as areas are granted by length along the course of the creek.

## CLASSIFICATION IN GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

Mr. REID (*Enoggera*) asked the Home Secretary—

1. Was a board of experts appointed, in accordance with the recommendation of the Printing Office Commission, to classify and grade the various staffs in the Government Printing Office, with a view to its more efficient and systematic management?
2. Has the board presented its report; and, if so, has that report or any portion of it been carried out?
3. If not, why not?
4. If a report has been presented, will the Minister cause the same, together with any appendices, to be printed and laid upon the table of the House?

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*) replied—

1. Yes.
2. Yes. Some of the recommendations have already been carried out.
3. The remaining recommendations have been under the consideration of the Government Printer and the Public Service Board, and will shortly be given effect to in a modified form.
4. Yes.

## ESCAPED ABORIGINAL LEPER, GEORGETOWN.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*) asked the Home Secretary—

1. Is it true that the body of the aboriginal leper who escaped from police custody at Georgetown, on the 18th of December, 1899, has been discovered?
2. Is it a fact that before the leper's escape the police were in the habit of handcuffing him to a post night and day?
3. Is it the usual custom of the police in the Georgetown district to thus chain up casual lepers?

The HOME SECRETARY replied—

1. Yes.
2. I have no information, but think it highly improbable.
3. No.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER, 1900.

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

## ABSENCE OF THE CLERK.

The SPEAKER announced the absence of the Clerk of the House, owing to indisposition.

ALLOWANCE TO POST AND TELEGRAPH  
EMPLOYEES, CLERMONT.

Mr. LESINA asked the Premier—

1. Has anything been done yet in the matter of giving the men employed in the Post and Telegraph Department at Clermont the 1s. per day allowance?
2. If not, when will action be taken?

The PREMIER replied—

1. No.
2. It is not intended to take any action, as Clermont is not considered a place where Government employees should receive sustenance allowance, it being on the railway line within a reasonable distance of port.

COMPENSATION FOR WRONGFUL ARREST.

Mr. LESINA asked the Home Secretary—

1. Is it a fact that a sum of £4 has been paid by the Police Department as compensation to Mr. George Smith, who was wrongfully arrested at Logan Downs, 10th January, 1900, and charged with the larceny of a horse, saddle, and bridle?
2. Is it true that when arrested he was refused bail by the police?
3. Is it also a fact that he was remanded for seven days for the production of evidence, and that at the end of that time he was quietly discharged, as the police were unable to procure a shred of evidence to support the charge alleged against him.

The HOME SECRETARY replied—

The police held a warrant for arrest of one George Long, for larceny as a bailee at Barcaldine. Smith, who answered descriptions of Long, admitted to constable at Logan Downs that he had gone under the name of George Long at Barcaldine, and was arrested and remanded for identification. Constable from Barcaldine failed to identify, and he was released, and eventually was paid £4 to cover expenses and loss of wages.

There is no mention in proceedings as to application for bail.

COMMONWEALTH CELEBRATIONS.

Mr. HIGGS (*Fortitude Valley*) asked the Premier—

1. Does the Government know that, in consequence of the approach of the Commonwealth celebrations in New South Wales, the Premier (Sir W. J. Lyne) says he will not keep Parliament in that colony sitting after November during this year?
2. Is it the intention of the Government to arrange for any festivities or demonstration of any kind to celebrate the first day of the approaching Commonwealth of Australia?

The PREMIER replied—

1. I have no knowledge of the statement referred to.
2. The matter is now engaging the attention of the Government.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

APPOINTMENT TO LAND COURT.

Mr. LESINA: I beg to ask the Premier, without notice—Whether the fact that a petition has recently been circulated in this House, and signed by twenty-three members of this Chamber, asking the Government to appoint Mr. William Kellett as a member of the Land Court, is likely to influence him in his decision.

[No reply.]

ACCIDENT AT HAMBLEDON MILL.

Mr. LESINA: I desire to ask the Home Secretary, without notice—If he has made further inquiries with respect to the dead Japanese who was found in a treacle vat at Hambledon Mill?

The HOME SECRETARY: I know nothing about it. [After referring to "Votes and Proceedings"] The hon. member did not ask me that question; he asked it of the Premier.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE  
CHIEF SECRETARY AND THE  
WORKS COMMISSION.

On the motion of Mr. MAXWELL (*Burke*), it was resolved—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, copies of all correspondence between the Chief Secretary and the secretary of the Royal Commission to inquire into the Department of Public Works.

PORT NORMAN, NORMANTON, AND  
CLONCURRY RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. FORSYTH (*Carpentaria*): I think it may not be considered inappropriate for me to follow the speech of the hon. member for Flinders, Mr. McDonald, seeing that he is the member for the Cloncurry part of the district, and I happen to be the representative of the Normanton end of it. I think that the apology that he made to the House last night in connection with this matter, when he said he hoped he would not be wasting the time of the House in discussing this question, was quite unnecessary. I do not think that the hon. member had occasion to make any apology at all. I think if there is anyone who should have something to say in connection with the Normanton-Cloncurry line, it is certainly the hon. member for the district, Mr. McDonald, himself. Further, I may say that when the hon. member said he would curtail his remarks so as to allow hon. members to go home by the last train, I can well understand that he was practically forced into the position of having to cut short his speech, and that his effort to get in the little pieces that he wanted especially to bring before the House was a very difficult task for any member to attempt. I sympathise with the hon. member to a certain extent in the position that he was placed in, in that he could not possibly get the whole of his speech delivered, for we know that he went to a certain amount of trouble in getting up his speech. At the same time I have no doubt he will find the ways and means of getting before this House all he intended and intends to say in connection with this Bill. The hon. member told us last night that during the wet season teams have great difficulty in travelling between Normanton and Cloncurry, and between Hughenden and Cloncurry. That is quite true. We all know that in the wet season teams can scarcely travel at all, but on the other hand railways can always travel when teams cannot travel at all. We know, for instance, in connection with the Croydon line, that trains can travel when there is no possible chance of teams travelling. That is because they are ballasted and raised above the ground to a certain extent, and they are built in such a way, that the means of transit can be preserved, whether teams travel or not. In that connection I quite follow the hon. member, and I am quite in sympathy with him in the matter. There is no doubt that the people of Cloncurry and in the surrounding districts are placed at a very great disadvantage in the wet seasons, when they cannot get their supplies sent from Hughenden or Normanton. I know myself, in my own time in Normanton, that the people have been placed at great inconvenience at times, when packhorses had to be used to a large extent and at considerable expense to get even the urgent necessities of life carried to the various stations. The hon. member also mentioned that the Cloncurry district was a rich mineral field. There is no doubt on that score. We know that the mineral wealth of Cloncurry is of very great extent, and although that is the case, we must also bear in mind that the great mines of Cloncurry, or in that district,

are not very close to the township. Although we know that the freeholds belonging to the old Cloncurry company are there, a number of other mines are nearer to Normanton; in fact, that is where some of the richest mines are located.

Mr. McDONALD: And further south.

Mr. FORSYTH: And further south, as the hon. member says.

Mr. McDONALD: Forty miles further south.

Mr. FORSYTH: There are many others which at present we know nothing about. I hope that some time the people who own that property will have the means of getting their goods away. We have it that at the present time in connection with the Hampden mine, the owners are offering no less than £8 12s. 6d. a ton for the carriage of 500 tons of ore from the mine to Hughenden. Not only are they prepared to pay £8 12s. 6d. a ton, but they are willing to pay a bonus of £1 for every ton delivered there within three months. I think the hon. member must know that people who are placed in that position are at very great disadvantage, and the very fact of their giving that exceedingly high rate of £9 12s. 6d. per ton only proves to me—as I think it must to every hon. member in this House—the urgent necessity that there is for railway communication for people who are placed in that position.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. DAWSON: Private railway communication?

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not care whether they are private railways or public railways. What the people want is the means of communication to get their products to port; and if it is impossible to get State railways then by all means let them have private lines.

Mr. DAWSON: Why impossible?

Mr. FORSYTH: I say if it is impossible. Now, in connection with the Hampden mine, we know that they are offering teamsters £9 12s. 6d. per ton to carry 500 tons of ore, and they simply cannot get the teamsters. The roads there are in such a terrible state that the teams cannot travel. We know that these people also have 500 tons of rich ore that they want to get away, and they cannot get carriage for it. I say that is one reason why the people of that portion of country should have railway communication. Now, there is another point in connection with the speech of the hon. member last night, on which he laid great stress indeed. That was this: He said that if the question of a private line or a public State line were placed before the people of the Cloncurry district—that is to say, if those people had the option of saying whether they would vote for the line being built by the State or for a line built by private enterprise—they would certainly vote for the State line. Well, I do not think there is a single individual in this Chamber will object to that, but the hon. member has simply evaded the question. It is not a question of whether the people want a certain thing or not. The question is whether there shall be a private line or no line at all. That is the difference.

Mr. BROWNE: Is that the Government ultimatum that you are delivering.

Mr. FORSYTH: I am not giving the Government ultimatum.

Mr. BROWNE: It sounds very much like it.

Mr. FORSYTH: No, I am speaking in reply to the hon. member for Flinders. He distinctly said in his speech that if the people were asked to vote upon a straight issue, the issue being whether they would have that line built by private enterprise or by the State, they would vote for the construction by the State. No one denies that.

Mr. McDONALD: The Minister denies it. He says that 72 per cent. of the people in the Cloncurry district are in favour of a private line.

Mr. FORSYTH: I am not questioning what anyone else has said; I am simply discussing the question from the hon. member for Flinders' point of view. I quite agree with him that if the people had the option of deciding whether they would have a line built by the State or a line built by a private company, they would vote for the State line; but that is not the issue that is placed before the people at all. The issue is, whether they will have this private line or no line at all; and I say, if they were asked to vote whether they would have the line under those circumstances or have no line at all, they would say, "Let us have the private line." I venture to say that 90 per cent. of the people in the Cloncurry district would vote in favour of the private line. There is no doubt whatever about that. And, then, the hon. member suggests that, instead of a line being constructed from Normanton to Cloncurry, there ought to be one built from Hughenden to Cloncurry. He wants to force those interested in the producing interest and the mining interest of Cloncurry to carry their stuff 520 miles as against 240 miles. When the Premier was speaking on this question, and showed what a great injustice it was to force those people to carry their stuff over such a long distance, the hon. member for Croydon said, "Hear, hear!" The only two members on that side who have given any expression of opinion with regard to the line from Hughenden and Cloncurry are the hon. member for Flinders and the hon. member for Enoggera; and those hon. gentlemen want to force the people of Cloncurry, absolutely against their will, to take their stuff all the way from Cloncurry to Hughenden. Some of the richest mines in the Cloncurry district are a very long way from Cloncurry. There is the Argylla, which is supposed to be the richest in the district, forty-five miles from Cloncurry, and there are also large copper-mines at Culloolah Station, eighty miles from Cloncurry. Does the hon. gentleman want to force the people there to take their stuff 600 miles to Townsville, as against 150 miles to Normanton? Surely the people of the district know their own requirements; and I have dozens of wires showing most clearly that they want the line from Normanton to Cloncurry. Is it not the case in every country that the products of any district should be taken to the nearest and cheapest port? Yet the hon. member for Flinders wants us to carry stuff all the way to Hughenden, and run it on to Townsville—to carry it 520 miles that way as against 240 miles from Cloncurry to Normanton. The hon. gentleman states distinctly that ultimately the line must go to Normanton, that practically Normanton is the port, yet he asserts that he will neither vote for this line to be made by the State, nor for the line to be made by private enterprise; at the same time he says he wants the line from Hughenden to Cloncurry. I can scarcely understand the position the hon. gentleman is in. It is not long since he made the statement that the only way to properly develop the mineral wealth of the Cloncurry district was to have a line between Cloncurry and Normanton. He stated that there were no engineering difficulties, and the line could be easily and cheaply constructed, and that the distance was only 200 miles, and yet only the other day the hon. gentleman objected to the same line because of the enormous expenditure. The hon. gentleman is absolutely inconsistent. He states in one breath that it would be a cheap line with no engineering difficulties, and he next states that the line would be enormously expensive.

Mr. McDONALD: Quote what I said.

Mr. FORSYTH: If the House will allow me, I will read what the hon. gentleman said. It is on page 78 of *Hansard*—

Mr. McDONALD: I am afraid it will be a syndicate policy, as there is no doubt from the reports we have seen in the Press that the Government have got a number of those pet syndicate railways up their sleeve. I suppose we will get them in due course.

The PREMIER: You will have some Government lines too.

Mr. McDONALD: So far as Government lines are concerned, unless it can be shown that a railway has a reasonable prospect of paying, I hold that no man has a right to vote for it. The first duty of a member of Parliament is to satisfy himself that a line will pay, and it is criminal to vote for it otherwise. Of course all lines in the electorate I represent are sure to pay.

The PREMIER: Will you vote for the Normanton-Cloncurry line being constructed by the Government?

Mr. McDONALD: I have been asked that question at Normanton, and I said, "No." I took the same stand there that I take here to-night.

Mr. McDONALD: I was not in Normanton.

Mr. FORSYTH: It does not matter where the hon. member said it. I am reading what he is reported to have said—

I will not vote for the construction of any line that will plunge the country into an enormous expenditure without any prospect of a return being received.

Mr. McDONALD: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORSYTH: He said distinctly that he would not vote for it, and he now tells us that the line must go there. The greatest monopolist in the House is the hon. member for Flinders. He stated the other night that he did not believe in competition—if he had his way he would strangle all competition.

Mr. McDONALD: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORSYTH: What do we find now? The hon. gentleman now proposes to build a line between Hughenden and Cloncurry, and then he states that ultimately a line must go from Normanton to Cloncurry to compete with the same line. I say that the Government of the day, no matter what Government, who would try and force a position like that on the people of the country—try to introduce two lines to compete with one another—could not possibly pass such a measure through this House. If it is the belief of the hon. gentleman that a line between Normanton and Cloncurry will not pay, I say that is the finest argument anyone could use in favour of the line being built by private enterprise.

Mr. DAWSON: No. What about the credit of the colony?

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not say that is the opinion of every member of the House, but I say distinctly that if that hon. member believes in his heart and soul that the line will not pay, he should go upon that company for all it is worth, and allow them to build it.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No! And ruin the company.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is not a question of ruining the company. I say that if those people are prepared to spend their money on a line which the hon. member does not believe will pay, by all means let them do so. That is their business; it is not the business of the country.

Mr. McDONALD: Do you want members to be a band of swindlers?

Mr. FORSYTH: Then the hon. member raised the question as to whether there is any other port besides Normanton. There are only two rivers there—the Albert and the Norman; and anyone who has been there must know that the Norman River is the place to take the railway. The hon. member also states that he does not believe this line will suit the convenience of the population of the district; and, as a matter of fact, the line is changed altogether from the

original Government survey. The hon. gentleman also advocates a line to assist the Woolgar and the Etheridge.

Mr. McDONALD: The Lower Etheridge, I said.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is possible that it will assist the Woolgar, but the hon. gentleman knows that only the other day there was a deputation, headed by the leader of the Opposition, to try and get the line from Croydon to Georgetown. Surely that line would assist that part of the district. The hon. gentleman

[4 p.m.] said last night that this line from

Hughenden to Cloncurry would be a better means of developing the mines in that district.

Mr. McDONALD: I did not say that.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. gentleman did not say that?

Mr. McDONALD: I said it would assist to develop the mining industry.

Mr. FORSYTH: I have the first sheet of the hon. member's speech.

Mr. DAWSON: Oh, we have not got that yet.

Mr. FORSYTH: As far as I know the hon. gentleman said that.

Mr. McDONALD: I was too careful in preparing my facts to make a mistake.

Mr. FORSYTH: As a matter of fact, we all know there are the mines at Argylla, Crusader, Culloolah, and Gunpowder, and the very fact of there being a change of route would do away with the possibility of developing those mines. There is no doubt that the line from Normanton to Cloncurry would benefit the whole of that district to a very large extent. I think that fact cannot be disputed. The hon. member's words last night were: "I want to show that making the line from Hughenden to Cloncurry would be the proper means of developing those mines." I do not know whether that is correct or not, but if the hon. member did not say so, of course I will have to accept his denial. He also said last night that he understood a very large number of people advocated the building of this line which he advocates and opposed the line proposed to be constructed by the syndicate, which would not open up the mines in the district. Well I think if the hon. gentleman knows anything about the country and if he will look at the map of the district, and see where the mines are supposed to be, he will have very little doubt as to where the line should go from and what line would do the greatest amount of good to the district. And yet he tells us that the railway proposed to be constructed by the syndicate will not develop the mines of the district. What is the good of taking up a position like that in the face of all the reports and correspondence which we have on this subject? The hon. gentleman went on to tell us that apparently the company only wanted one thing, and that was a concession in order that they might be in a position to fleece the public. That was the argument of the hon. gentleman. I want to know in what way the hon. gentleman means that they will fleece the public. In every one of the debates which we have had on these private railways the Chillagoe Company has been brought forward as an example to be avoided, but I challenge any single member in this House to prove or to produce any evidence which will prove that the Chillagoe Company has taken the public in in any respect whatever.

Mr. LESINA: They have tried to do it.

Mr. FORSYTH: They have not tried to do it. That is only one of the hon. member's wild statements which he makes in this House. He told us the other night that the Chillagoe Company when they got their concession took it away with them and sold it for a million of money.

Mr. DAWSON: A hundred thousand.

Mr. FORSYTH: No; it was the hon. member for Charters Towers who mentioned £100,000, but the hon. member for Clermont said £1,000,000. Now, when a man is prepared to make rash statements like that, the least he should be able to do is to prove them. The Chillagoe Company never, in any respect, acted in any other way than honourably towards those they dealt with, and they never parted with their right to construct the railway. The hon. member for Cairns also informed us that the original shareholders of the Chillagoe Company did not care two straws about the line as they had sold all their shares; but what they wanted was to get the concession and go to London and float it, and then sell their shares. I interjected at the time that that was absolutely untrue, that it was utterly unfounded; and I challenge that hon. member or any other hon. member on the other side of the House to prove the truth of the statement. What are the facts of the case? The three original owners, the three gentlemen mentioned in the Chillagoe Railway Bill—Messrs. Reid, Moffatt, and Chapman—are at the present time individually and collectively the largest shareholders in the Chillagoe Company. One of those gentlemen has never sold a share in the concern. I wonder where the hon. member gets his information? Is the hon. member in the confidence of those gentlemen that he knows so much about what their transactions have been in connection with the Chillagoe Company? If the hon. member would take the trouble to inquire he could find out the facts for himself. What are the facts? Five hundred and twenty thousand of these shares were held by the company. One hundred thousand were sold at £1 per share, and 45,000 were sold at 25s. per share.

Mr. DAWSON: What about the wink shares?

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not know anything about them. I am giving a statement of facts which are published in the statements of the company. The hon. member asked where did the money come from. Well, I may tell him that the company raised no less than £202,000 in cash by the sale of shares.

Mr. KIDSTON: Are their statements as reliable as those of the North Chillagoe Company?

Mr. FORSYTH: The statements of the company are audited statements, and are, I should say, perfectly reliable. The hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, told the House recently that he would on no account have voted for the Chillagoe Railway Bill had he known that the company had not the money to carry out the proposed undertaking. Well, I can tell him that as a matter of fact the company had plenty of money, and that before the debentures were issued they raised no less than £100,000 by the sale of shares. I challenge any hon. member to prove to the contrary, and, if necessary, I can produce the balance-sheets of the company to prove that what I say is correct. As a matter of fact, the Chillagoe Company could have raised the whole of the money required by them without going to London at all if they had liked to sell their shares. I will come back now to the statement made by the hon. member for Flinders that the company which is desirous of constructing the line which we have under consideration only wishes to obtain the concession in order that they may fleece the public. Now, I want to make a deliberate challenge to the hon. member, or any man in this House, that he cannot produce one single instance in which a man who got a debenture issued by the Chillagoe Company lost money by it. That is a bold statement to make. I defy any hon. member in this House to produce one single instance in which anyone has lost money through the Chillagoe Company in connection with the

debentures. They were £100 debentures. £25 was to be paid down, and three payments of £25 each were to be made at intervals. I have made every possible inquiry, and there was never one debenture that was sold at par. And yet the hon. member for Flinders and other members on the other side have tried to say that the people who floated those debentures fleeced the public.

Mr. McDONALD: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORSYTH: Where does the fleecing of the public come in. The people who bought those shares were guaranteed 6 per cent. on their money, with the right of coming in and buying shares later on if they want them, and I have never been able to find one single debenture that has been sold at par. Why do not hon. members opposite bring some proof forward of their statement about the public being fleeced.

Mr. DAWSON: I accept your challenge.

Mr. FORSYTH: I shall be delighted if the hon. member will do that. I have taken every possible precaution to find out if any single individual—

Mr. DAWSON: This man is married.

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not care whether he is married or not. The hon. member knows very well that what I am stating is true, and yet one of the principal objections that is raised against the company being able to float debentures in London is that they simply want concessions, so that they can go and float them, and fleece the public. Now, there is no truth in that statement at all—none whatever. I should think that if any hon. member on the other side had bought shares from the original Chillagoe Company at £1 a share he would have made very good money, and he would have thought that, instead of the Chillagoe Company having fleeced the public, that they had done a very great benefit to the colony. Shares were purchased from the company at £1.

Mr. DAWSON: Don't hedge yourself round with conditions.

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not wish to hedge myself round at all. I have given a challenge, and I wish the hon. member to prove it. That is a straightforward challenge. We all know that there were debentures which went up to a very large premium, and people who purchased them at a very large premium may have lost money through being compelled to sell them. But that has nothing to do with the original Chillagoe Company.

Mr. DAWSON: What is the use of hedging like that?

Mr. CALLAN: He is not hedging at all. It is you that are hedging.

Mr. FORSYTH: I am not hedging. Anything that I have got to say I generally say straight from the shoulder, and I say that the debentures that were issued by the Chillagoe Company were sold at par—that is £100—and I challenge the hon. member to produce one individual who bought from the Chillagoe Company at that price who has lost money by them. I know as well as the hon. member—perhaps I know as much about these things as most people, as I often buy and sell shares myself, and I know about this business—and I know that the Chillagoe debentures went up to 200 per cent. over the original price at which they were sold.

Mr. McDONALD: Why?

Mr. FORSYTH: When the market came down those people who bought at 200 per cent. over the price at which they were sold by the company lost money, but that has nothing to do with the original Chillagoe Company, who are blamed for fleecing the public.

Mr. McDONALD: How much per man did each member of the Chillagoe Company put into it?

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not know how much they put into it, but I know there were 520,000 shares held by the company.

Mr. McDONALD: I am talking about previous to that?

Mr. FORSYTH: The company at the present time is £1,000,000 shares at £1 each.

Mr. McDONALD: There were 480 shares at £200 each, paid up to £70 or £75 each.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Carpentaria is in possession of the House, and he should be heard in silence. These interruptions are most disorderly.

Mr. DAWSON: He has invited hon. members into a 24-foot ring.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member will have an opportunity of replying to the hon. member for Carpentaria later on. I trust he will preserve order. Mr. Forsyth.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member for Flinders has tried to cloud the issue.

Mr. DAWSON: You know that he knows.

Mr. FORSYTH: If the hon. member, or any other hon. member on the other side, thinks he can get me off the trail, or if he thinks that I do not know exactly what I am saying, he is greatly mistaken. I say that the Chillagoe Company is a company with a capital of £1,000,000 in £1 shares, and that, as a matter of fact, 520,000 of those shares were held by the company for the purpose of raising money, and also for the purpose of paying debenture-holders if they wanted to take up shares. And yet we repeatedly hear the cry raised, "How is it the original share-holders did not sell their shares?" and "Where did the money come from?" and "Where did the shares come from?" I have explained that the Chillagoe Company raised no less than £202,000 by the sale of shares, and if they had never sold a single debenture they could easily have raised the necessary money in this country without going to London at all. The value of shares at the present time is 38s., and if the company placed 200,000 shares more on the market here they would all have been taken up.

Mr. REID: Why did they go to London?

Mr. FORSYTH: I suppose they went to London to get money.

Mr. DAWSON: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORSYTH: But that is not saying they could not have raised it here. What was the use of giving the company power to borrow if they did not wish to make use of that power? That is no argument. As a matter of fact, half of those debentures were not sold in England at all. They were sold in the colony. I know of one firm of brokers in Brisbane alone who were given the option of selling 60,000 debentures, and they sold the lot in five days in Brisbane, and every single man who bought those shares has made money out of them. The hon. member for Flinders evidently knows a great deal about the Norman River. He told us not long ago that the harbour at Normanton was no good, that it would take a great deal of money to dredge the bar and enable any ship to get alongside the railway wharf. Now, did the hon. member ever take the trouble to find out exactly how things stand? He said that, although there was a harbour at Townsville, there was no harbour at Normanton, and that it would take an enormous amount of expenditure so as to allow steamers to go inside the bar at the Norman River and load alongside the railway at Port Norman, or wherever it might be.

Mr. DAWSON: Can you quote where he said that?

Mr. FORSYTH: Yes.

Mr. DAWSON: I would like to have the page.

Mr. FORSYTH: If the hon. gentleman looks at page 75 of *Hansard* he will find it. In any case, I can get it if the hon. member wants it.

Now, what are the particulars with regard to the Norman River. If the hon. member for Flinders had taken the trouble to go to the Port Office and look at the plans and specifications, he would have got all particulars, which show that my statements are correct. As the hon. member for Croydon knows, we were promised that a dredge would go there as soon as it arrived from London, and we were delighted with that promise, because we want a dredge to cut through the bar at Normanton. Now, what is the probable cost of that dredging so as to enable vessels to get inside into deep water? I find, on the best computation that it would take one of Lindon Bates's dredges twelve months to dredge the bar, and the cost would be £1,000 per month; so that the cost of dredging the bar would be £12,000, and once you get inside there is 4 or 5 fathoms of water. At Karumba there is from 18 to 20 feet. Yet the hon. member for Flinders raises the question of the enormous expenditure of this work. He is only trying to cloud the issue in every way he possibly can. The leader of the Opposition knows that my facts and figures are correct. I have obtained them from the Port Office here, and I say that the Norman River is one of the best rivers in Queensland.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORSYTH: And I can tell the hon. gentleman that for the last sixteen years there has never been one shilling spent.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Sometimes they have no tide for a week.

Mr. FORSYTH: That doesn't matter. I can tell the hon. member that sixteen years ago I arranged with the old "Corea" to bring 600 tons of stuff as far as Double Island, thirty-eight miles up the river, and never one single shilling has been spent there.

Mr. BROWNE: Once across the bar, there is one of the largest stretches of deep water in the colony.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is so. It is one of the best natural rivers in Queensland, and I appreciate what the hon. member for Croydon says, because I know he has always taken a great interest in this river, seeing that he represents Croydon. If the expense in dredging this river will be only £12,000 in twelve months, does any hon. member think that "enormous expenditure"? I think it is a very small expenditure under the circumstances, especially when we compare it with the amount of money that has been spent in this way in Townsville and Brisbane. If hon. members make this comparison they will find that this £12,000 is a mere bagatelle. I know that wharves will have to be built, but I think £12,000 will be a very small amount to be spent on dredging this river in order that ocean-going steamers can get over the bar to deep water. I say that if the hon. member for Flinders had taken the slightest trouble to examine the plans and specifications, he could have seen the deep-water marks showing that there is 5 and 5½ fathoms all the way up the river to Karumba. The hon. member compares the harbour of Normanton with that of Townsville.

Mr. KIDSTON: If the members for the district had done their duty, the bar at Normanton would have been dredged long ago.

Mr. FORSYTH: It was dredged a short distance, and filled up again.

Mr. BROWNE: It was never completed.

Mr. FORSYTH: When the railway is built to Normanton, very likely a small dredge will be kept in the river to keep the bar clear. We have heard a great deal about the Normanton to Cloncurry line, and about the settled railway policy of the country being changed.

Mr. REID: Hear, hear! That's the point.

Mr. FORSYTH: But if we are progressive legislators—if we believe in the advancement of the country—the settled policy of the country must be altered from time to time.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Not from bad to worse.

Mr. FORSYTH: If hon. members will look up history they will find that the settled policy of France for 800 years was a monarchy, and that was all upset in twenty-four hours; and from 1800 to 1870 the settled policy of the country was changed fifteen or twenty times. What was the settled policy in Great Britain with regard to the great Electoral Reform Bill? If hon. members opposite had been living in England then, would they not have gone against the settled policy of the country? They would have given every man a chance to vote.

Mr. DAWSON: Then you admit that you are changing your policy?

Mr. FORSYTH: Most decidedly. We are always changing our policy, commercially, socially, and politically, if we are progressive. Do hon. members believe in being tied down hand and foot to hard-and-fast lines always? I, at all events, do not believe in that. If hon. members opposite say that the Government cannot build all railways, why don't they hold a conference in the Trades Hall and change their platform, so as to give hon. members on that side a chance of saying what they really believe.

Mr. KIDSTON: Do you believe in changing the settled policy of the country behind the backs of the electors?

Mr. FORSYTH: I believe in change when the will of the people demands it. Of course, I am not such an authority as the hon. member for Rockhampton, Mr. Kidston. He believes in electoral reform, but he must remember that Sir Robert Peel—one of the greatest men England ever saw—introduced certain corn-law legislation in England in 1841, and he was returned to Parliament; and yet in 1846 he was forced by the will of the people to give up that line of policy. I say the will of the people must prevail. Sir Robert Peel knew that the feelings of the people were in favour of the abolition of the corn laws, and he believed in the will of the people being carried out. The feeling was so strong that he knew that if he did not give in he would be knocked out.

Mr. DAWSON: He was returned by a large majority opposed to that.

Mr. FORSYTH: Yes, in 1841; and in 1846 he turned round completely, and altered the settled policy of the country in accordance with the will of the people. My statements are quite correct. I say that men like John Bright, Cobden, and others, did a great amount of good to the whole country by introducing the legislation they did in Great Britain at that time. The policy with regard to the corn laws was a complete reversal of the policy of the British Government. According to hon. members opposite, it was not right to bring in any legislation of that kind. The settled policy of the country should be stuck to.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Quite the opposite.

Mr. FORSYTH: Hon. members opposite talked a great deal about changing the settled policy of the country; but they are quite ready to change it to suit themselves. Let anyone look at the Labour platform and see if hon. members opposite have not changed their policy.

Mr. HARDAIRE: First of all, ascertain the will of the people.

Mr. FORSYTH: You have discovered the will of the people in connection with this matter. We believe that the people [4.30 p.m.] are entirely in favour of these lines, and I know that there are members on the other side who believe that if the referendum they wanted had been taken the majority of

the people would have voted in favour of the construction of these railways by private enterprise.

Mr. KIDSTON: And yet we were willing to take a referendum?

Mr. FORSYTH: Yes; hon. members were willing to take a referendum, but there is no doubt that there are members on that side who believed that they would have lost had the question been submitted to a vote of the people. The people of the country and the people who are particularly interested in these lines in various places, know that it is a matter of utter impossibility for the Government to build all the lines that are demanded, and that if we are to wait for a railway to be built from Hughenden to Cloncurry we shall never get that line. The hon. member for Flinders knows that many members on his own side of the House are entirely against that line.

Mr. REID: That does not prove that he is wrong.

Mr. FORSYTH: I am not saying whether he is wrong or whether he is right, but simply that there is a divided opinion on the matter on that side of the House. I would ask the hon. member for Rockhampton would it not be an injustice to the people of that district to compel them to carry their stuff 530 miles as against 250 miles? It would be a great injustice. The hon. member for Flinders and the hon. member for Enoggera say they want this railway built from Hughenden. If such a Bill were brought forward by the Government I should oppose it in every way I possibly could, because I believe it would be a great injustice to the people concerned to take it from Hughenden; and I venture to predict that there are plenty of members on that side of the House who would go against a measure which was likely to injure the interests of the people of that locality. We have been told also in connection with these private lines that they are being abandoned in the other colonies, and that they had not the slightest intention of going in for any more private lines.

Mr. TURLEY: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORSYTH: I am glad to hear the hon. member for South Brisbane say "Hear, hear." As a matter of fact, the Government of Victoria have accepted an offer for the construction of a private line.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Where to?

Mr. FORSYTH: I will tell the hon. member all about it. The line is between Lake's Entrance and Mount Deddick. The Government have accepted an offer to build 100 miles of railway in that district at a cost of £300,000.

Mr. KIDSTON: They have been led astray by the bad example of the Queensland Government.

Mr. FORSYTH: It does not matter whether they are being led by a bad example or a good example. All I am showing is that other colonies are prepared to construct railways by private enterprise, and if hon. members will look at the *Mining Standard* for the 12th of July last, they will get the whole of the particulars with regard to the line I have mentioned. The railway is to cost £300,000, and is supposed to assist no less than forty different places, and yet the Government of the day have accepted an offer for its construction by a private company. But even if there was no such railway construction going on in any of the other colonies, let anyone look at the extent of Queensland as compared with Victoria, and say is it possible for the Government to build all the lines that are required. I venture to say that if we are to depend upon the mining interests of Cloncurry being developed by the State, it will be many a long day before this line is built. The hon. member for Flinders said he was



entirely against the construction of this railway from Normanton to Cloncurry, either by private enterprise or by the State.

Mr. REID: He did not say that.

Mr. FORSYTH: The Premier asked the hon. member if he would vote for a line built by the State from Normanton to Cloncurry, and the hon. member deliberately said "No," because he refused to plunge the country into such an enormous expense as it would entail, as there was no possible hope of getting a return from the expenditure.

Mr. LESINA: Do you think that is a correct reply?

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not care whether it is a correct reply or not. I am simply stating facts. The hon. member stated in connection with the Normanton line that in the wet season the country was always flooded, and that the telegraph poles were under water. I was there for ten years, and during that time there was only one season that I can remember that taking place.

Mr. REID: The hon. member did not say that that had taken place at Normanton.

Mr. FORSYTH: Excuse me, the hon. member did say so; he said that all that country was under water during the wet season. As a matter of fact, we know that such is not the case.

Mr. McDONALD: I never said that. I said that a portion of the country between Normanton and Cloncurry was under water during the wet season, and I repeat that statement.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is what I say.

Mr. McDONALD: You said at Normanton; there is a difference between Normanton and thirty or fifty miles this side of Normanton.

Mr. FORSYTH: The only place where I have heard of the telegraph poles being under water is Normanton.

Mr. McDONALD: That is two places.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member further said that the expense of constructing this line would be very great as compared with the cost of a line from Hughenden. The rails of the Croydon line are covered with water in the wet season, but have the people of the district been very much inconvenienced by the fact that a foot or two of water has been over the rails? No, and yet the hon. member brings forward an argument of that sort. The thing is ridiculous. Then we have heard a great deal about the wonderful concessions that are to be made to this company. They are a mere bagatelle as compared with the concessions granted to companies elsewhere. Only last July a company called the Canadian Northern Railway Company were issuing debentures for the construction of a main line of railway in Canada 800 miles in length, exclusive of 120 miles in branches. The hon. member for Croydon referred the other day to the enormous mileage of this line from Normanton to Cloncurry. But the one to which I am alluding has a mileage of no less than 920 miles. We were also told that after the experience in connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway there was not likely to be any more railways built by private enterprise in that country. Let us look at the concessions made to this company, not twenty years ago, but to-day, when they might say we will profit by past experience. These people are getting from the Canadian Government no less than 2,500,000 acres of land. But the company which is to construct the Normanton-Cloncurry get no such concession.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: They asked for it.

Mr. FORSYTH: It does not matter what they asked for; we are dealing with the Bill which only provides that they shall get 10,000 acres. The Canadian company are getting 2,500,000 acres, and of that area they have

already sold 35,000 acres at an average price of 3½ dollars per acre. If such a concession were proposed in connection with the construction of railways by private enterprise in Queensland the whole colony would raise a howl against it. But that is not the only concession they have got. The State of Manitoba guarantee the principal and interest of 4 per cent. thirty-year gold bonds at the rate of 8,000 dollars per mile, which may be increased to 10,000 dollars per mile. And the Dominion Government have granted in cash 6,400 dollars per mile towards the construction of 208 miles of the Ontario division. They have also granted 3,200 dollars per mile for sixty-three miles. That is the Dominion Government. Then the Government of Ontario, the provincial Government, have also given 4,000 dollars on 271 miles.

Mr. MAXWELL: Any members of the House in the swindle?

Mr. FORSYTH: I have not the slightest idea, and I do not care. I am only giving you what Canada has done in the way of granting concessions, and showing you that, comparatively speaking, we have granted no concessions here at all.

Mr. JACKSON: What is the estimated cost per mile?

Mr. FORSYTH: About £2,000 or £3,000 per mile. Not only have the company got those concessions, but they get from the Dominion Government a promise that for twenty years they shall get the sum of 80,000 dollars for the carriage of mails and supplies. Now, if a Government in Australia or in Queensland was to bring in a proposal of that kind they would be howled down; there would be no possibility of getting such legislation through the House.

Mr. TURLEY: For what term do they hold the railway?

Mr. FORSYTH: For fifty years, and all the land they hold is freehold.

Mr. JACKSON: It is a wonder that the companies come here at all.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is not the point we are discussing. What I want to show to this House is that there is no comparison between the concessions asked for by this company, and the enormous concessions given by the Dominion Government in enterprises of the same kind. This line will be about 250 miles long, less than one-third of the Canadian line I have referred to. Now, suppose the Government were to offer a third of 2,500,000 acres for the construction of this line, where would they be? There would not be the smallest chance of passing such a scheme; but not only do the Canadian Government give them 2,500,000 acres of land, and £16,000 a year, but 80,000 dollars for the carriage of mails and passengers. I instance those concessions to show what concessions are given in Canada, and what happens there.

Mr. JACKSON: The country is very prosperous; there is no doubt about it.

Mr. JENKINSON: Owing to its network of railways.

Mr. FORSYTH: Then if you take America, its prosperity to-day has been built up by the enormous amount of railways there.

Mr. REID: What about the great amount of political corruption there?

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member is always harping on corruption. So far as the producing interests of America are concerned, there is no country in the world served better by railways; and there is no country where the cost of carriage is lower. And it has been gradually coming down. The same applies to Great Britain. In 1846, when the first railway was built in America, the cost of freight was 2·26d. per cent. per mile. In 1870 there were thirty-nine different lines of railway, and the rates were reduced to 1·31d.

per cent.; and then coming down to 1897, when we find there were no less than 131 companies there, and the average cost per mile was under  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per mile. That is an enormous difference, and it has all been caused by competition.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: They are carrying for less than that on the State lines of this colony.

Mr. FORSYTH: They do not carry for a half-penny all round, but they may carry some things for that. And in connection with this matter I say this syndicate have vast agricultural land granted to them, and they have the power to take up land wherever they like. Here we have these concessions, these very big and most liberal concessions, being granted by Canada; and yet the Canadians are a very shrewd, smart people, and their balance last year was over 4,000,000 dollars. I say that the great benefit that can be conferred on this country is to open up the country. Let us give the people every possible means of opening up the country that we can. If the Government cannot build railways, let us have them built by private enterprise. I venture to say no one can convince me, seeing the enormous demand there is for railways in Queensland at the present time, that there is any possibility of a great many of these places getting railway communication unless they get it by private enterprise. I say that the hon. member for Flinders did not get all his speech delivered last night, and I regret that he did not. I would like to have heard all he had to say. A great many people believe that we want to burke criticism on this Bill; but that is not the case. I hope that this line will be ably criticised. We want to have all the facts. We want to know exactly how things are.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORSYTH: If any hon. members have any facts, by all means let us have them. We know that public opinion must rule. Whenever we find that the public want a certain thing, they will be satisfied with nothing short of a clear understanding of the problems involved. We know that. We also know that public opinion may often be forwarded not only by criticism by the scepticism which is the instrument of a sincere desire to know and to find out the truth. That is the whole position of the case. We have no desire to shirk criticism in the slightest degree. Any members of this House who can bring forward information which will show that it is a bad thing to build this line, we shall be glad to hear them. I think we have heard all their arguments; but, summed up, all they amount to is that the policy of the Labour party is State lines and State lines only. They cannot depart from that policy. I say that what we have to consider is this: The conditions of things political, commercial, and social are always changing; and as things change we must change also. There is no doubt of that. And, therefore, I say that the evidence we have before us at the present time is entirely in favour of the Government giving every possible assistance to open up and develop the rich mineral wealth of the country. No one can prove to me that these mineral lodes are going to pay. As a matter of fact, the only mines that have been developed are the mines near the township.

Mr. McDONALD: What about the Hampden Mine?

Mr. FORSYTH: I am not speaking about that. Of course, that mine has been developed, and I am pleased that it has, but every hon. gentleman knows that there are other mines which have not been developed. Now, the Argvlla is one of the mines which is supposed to be very rich. Anyone who reads Mr. Jack's report in connection with that particular mine will say that he has a wonderful opinion of it; but he states it will require a very large amount

of money to open that up and develop it. Do you think—does any member of this Chamber think that anyone is going to spend large sums of money in developing that property if they have no means of getting away their stuff when they have developed it? And those people are not likely to spend large sums of money in opening up and developing this rich country unless they get a railway to take away their goods when they get the mine opened up. The hon. member for Flinders told us the other day that, so far as he knows, even the Chillagoe Company have got no permanent lodes.

Mr. McDONALD: I did not say that.

Mr. FORSYTH: If the hon. member will refer to page 75 of *Hansard*, he will see that he said—

Why, even at Chillagoe there are no proved permanent lodes at the present time.

And yet he says he did not say that. There is not a single statement that I have made in connection with any matter in this House that I am not prepared to give proof of.

Mr. McDONALD: You said I stated that there were no permanent lodes. I said there were no proved permanent lodes.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member said there might be some, but at present he did not know of them. Of course we can only speak of things as they are. I say that if ever there was an argument in favour of that line being built by private enterprise that is the argument. Does anyone tell me that the Government would have been justified in building the line when the country had not any proved permanent lodes? It would have been a most contemptible thing, in my opinion. We know that if it had not been for the Chillagoe Company coming forward and proposing to build that line, no Government would have built a line there. As a matter of fact, Mr. Moffatt had lost any quantity of money, and was simply going to give it up, because he could not make it pay, but this company came along. Though this company has been vilified, I say that it has done an enormous amount of good for the country and for Cairns too.

Mr. JACKSON: That would not justify your line all the same.

Mr. FORSYTH: I should like now to read an extract showing what Mr. Foster, late Minister for Mines in Victoria, said in regard to private lines. We are told that in the south they are opposed to the construction of private railways, but this is what he said—

He could see no sense whatever in the objection to the granting of concessions in return for the construction of private lines of railway in districts where the Government cannot build the lines itself. His view is thus tersely expressed: "The country is here with its resources undeveloped; the Government have not the means to develop these resources. If private enterprise will do it under such conditions as will enable the Government to resume the railway by giving reasonable notice and paying a fair valuation, I think it will be a suicidal policy not to take advantage of the opportunity offered. Nothing is lost, but everything is gained. The railway is there, and in time must fall into the hands of the State, and in the meanwhile it is doing work which the Government was unable to provide for."

Mr. BROWNE: He prescribed that for Queensland; he was not game to prescribe it for Victoria.

Mr. FORSYTH: I don't know where he prescribed it.

Mr. BROWNE: It was when he was in Brisbane he said that.

Mr. FORSYTH: Even the paper that supports the hon. member for Croydon, Mr. Browne, said that as long as there was a scintilla of hope of the Government constructing the line they would oppose its construction by a private company, but they could see no hope; and, therefore, in order to assist the people of the

district, they were willing to consider any proposal for the building of the railway.

Mr. BROWNE: Have you seen what they said since?

Mr. FORSYTH: No. I would very much like to know what they have said. The hon. member for Croydon made some very strong complaints about the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company and Burns, Philp, and Co. fleecing the people of that part of the colony in connection with the shipping trade and about how they had got the wharves; and for that hon. gentleman's information I am going to give a few figures to disprove the statements he made, and which I think he had no right to make—which I think he will own later on. I will show that there has been no crushing of the people.

Mr. BROWNE: I said they crushed the Government. I proposed that the Government should take over the lighterage plant.

Mr. FORSYTH: He talks about monopoly, and the people labouring under this monopoly, but what are the facts? In 1892 the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company lost £16,000 on the Normanton service, in 1893 they lost £20,000. With regard to the enormous profits made by the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company, I find that they paid a dividend of 2½ per cent. in 1896, the same in 1897, the same in 1898, and 3 per cent. in 1899; and for a good many years before 1896 they paid no dividends at all. This is a company that we are told is grinding the people down! With regard to the lighterage question, when I was there during the election, I went to the manager of Burns, Philp, and Co., and he told me that they had suffered a terrible loss, and he gave me the figures. In January last year the loss was £137 2s. 4d.; in February it was £69 11s. 8d.; and in March, £114 5s. 4d. That is the way Burns, Philp, and Co. have been fleecing the public. I know that those are the worst months, but we will take it for the last six years and see how much the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company has lost in connection with lighterage at Normanton. The figures are £3,211 8s. 11d.

Mr. BROWNE: It does not say much for their business capacity.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is not the point. The point is where they have been grinding the public down.

Mr. BROWNE: The Under Secretary of the Postal Department told you and me and the hon. member for Burke the same thing.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member knows very well that nobody took a greater interest in bringing about that mail contract than I did. I even went to Sydney about it. The company did not want it, and it was not until we were in a position to force their hands that we got them to accept it at £6,000 a year. The Australasian United Steamship Company lost last year on lighterage £407 4s. 6d., yet the hon. member tells us they are crushing people. If that company had done what any other business people would have done they would have raised the rates; but they had not done so—they had carried on year after year, dropping money all the time, and the hon. member knows that. The same thing was raised when I was at the election at Normanton, and I simply squashed the arguments raised by those men by stating that they could go to the office of Burns, Philp, and Co., and see the books and see how things stood. I heard no more about the lighterage question in Normanton after that. No less than twenty-five men are employed on the "Dugong" and other lighters there, and the steamers run there once in three weeks and the lighters can do the work in one week, and they have to pay those men for doing nothing the rest of the time. No one

knows that better than the hon. member, yet he brings forward arguments like this. I say he should have some proof—

Mr. BROWNE: I brought forward the same argument in Normanton, in this House, and everywhere else.

Mr. FORSYTH: I have taken the trouble to go to the manager of the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company to get the figures, and that is the position of things now. As a matter of fact the thing has never paid; and yet we are told they are trying to fleece the public. If I

were to tell the hon. member the [5 p.m.] amount of money which has been written off the books of Burns, Philp, and Co. during the last few years in that district it would astonish him, and if he had the interest on it he would not need to come to this House at all. It would keep him in a splendid position for the rest of his days.

Mr. BROWNE: If they made bad debts that was their fault.

Mr. FORSYTH: Statements have been made here in regard to this line which are entirely wrong, and when they are pointed out to hon. members they are not willing to admit their error. If I make a wrong statement in this House I am perfectly willing to admit my fault, but I have given the facts in connection with this matter. The same facts were given to the Labour party in Normanton, and when matters had been thoroughly explained to the objectors we have heard no more of their objections.

Mr. BROWNE: The fact that Burns, Philp, and Co. made bad debts at Normanton does not affect the case.

Mr. FORSYTH: As a matter of fact, I know there are hundreds of men in that district whom we will not get a shilling from, who have been assisted and who are still being assisted. The hon. member knows that only too well, and yet he speaks of Burns, Philp, and Co. and the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company as being a species of cormorant who swallow up everything. There is no doubt that they have lost heavily, and I shall not be at all sorry when the day comes when some substantial change will take place in the state of affairs in that district. No one knows better than the hon. member for Croydon that sixteen or eighteen years ago things were in a very flourishing state in Normanton, but half the town has gone to Croydon and the other half are simply waiting. That is the reason why the people want the railway, and if they cannot get it constructed by the Government then they are prepared to accept it at the hands of a private company.

Mr. LESINA: You said that private enterprise was losing in Normanton.

Mr. FORSYTH: I have stated what is a fact. I do not want to take up much more of the time of the House, but in connection with railways generally I wish to point this out: We know that some of the Government railways do not pay, and that others pay handsomely. Take the line from Townsville to Hughenden. That is 240 miles in length, cost £1,300,000, and paid last year no less than 11 per cent. interest. On the other hand the main line from Brisbane to Wallangarra, passing through the splendid lands comprised within the Darling Downs, and joining right on to the New South Wales and Victorian railways, only paid 16s. 7d. per cent. Those lines are under the same management. The same rates are charged on both, but if they were placed in the hands of a private company what would be the result? The rates on the Townsville line would have to come down and those on the other line would have to go up, and yet under present circumstances the money made on the Northern line simply goes to make up the deficiency on the

Southern one. I can only say in conclusion that I thoroughly believe in the line being built from Normanton to Cloncurry in the manner proposed by the Government. I believe if the Government do not see fit to build a line, which is more or less of a speculative nature, that those who desire to build it should have the opportunity of doing so. Hon. members opposite desire, on the other hand, that it should wait. Well, I do not believe in waiting when I see such great possibilities as lie before the construction of this line. I know for a fact that 750,000 sleepers will be required for the construction of a line of railway from Normanton to Cloncurry, and that it will take 30,000 tons of rails. Consider for a moment the enormous help it will be to the timber industry, to all those engaged in the carrying trade along our coast, to, in fact, all classes of workers in the colony. Everyone will reap the benefit of it. But the Labour party say, "No, we will let everything wait until an indefinite period when the Government may be able to build the line." I have little doubt that in addition to the benefits I have mentioned many other sources of employment will spring into existence in consequence of the construction of this line, and that commerce generally will be greatly benefited. I only hope the line will go through. I hope in committee if there is any difference of opinion that we will discuss the matter calmly and decide each point as it arises on its merits. I maintain that it is entirely against the interests of the hon. member for Croydon and his constituents to block this line. He knows that by its construction the lighterage that he complains so much about will be immediately done away with, and that the people of Croydon will save quite 12s. per ton on the goods which they receive.

Mr. BROWNE: Under this Bill they would be worse off.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. member has made much of the monopoly of the wharfage which he says this company will enjoy. I have taken the trouble to procure a plan, which shows that there is more than a mile of wharfage which will be available when the company have got what they are asking for. There is any quantity of land further down the river for wharfage purposes, and yet the hon. member says the company will take up the whole country.

Mr. BROWNE: I did not say that.

Mr. FORSYTH: That was the inference from the hon. gentleman's remarks. I thought it was distinctly understood that the Government could take over the railway and the wharves as well.

Mr. BROWNE: Not under this Bill.

Mr. FORSYTH: I certainly understood the Premier that he was willing to make that provision, and, as a matter of fact, the goods could be landed at the Government wharf, if necessary, without touching the wharfage properties of the company. I contend that the hon. member's support of this Bill would mean a large saving to his constituents, as I have already pointed out—a saving of at least 12s. per ton on the goods which they require, which includes at least 2s. a ton cartage from the wharf to the railway at the present time.

Mr. BROWNE: Some of your constituents advocate that the line should not go near Normanton at all.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is the first I have heard of it. I have had very many wires, and other communications from my constituents, but I have had no objection of that sort. At the present time the district is in a languishing condition. Plenty of men are living there from hand to mouth, hanging on by the skin of their teeth as it were, getting a little work whenever they can, waiting until they see if this line is going to be constructed, and praying that it may

be built. If we believe in the will of the people, if the people whose earnest desire is that this line should be constructed are to have their wishes respected, then I think no opposition should be raised to its construction. There is no fairer man in this House than the hon. member for Croydon, and I believe he will on consideration study the interests of his constituents, and see what will be saved to them by such a railway as this. I do not know how many thousands of tons are carried over the Croydon line, but at all events, upon every ton the people will save 12s. I believe that the people want this line, and if it is built I venture to predict that it will do an enormous amount of good to the country. It will open up a large mineral and agricultural district which has been languishing, and in fact going back for the last sixteen years.

Mr. BROWNE: Living on Government promises.

Mr. FORSYTH: I am not speaking of Government promises. We all know that they have been trying to get the Government to build that line, and even this company has asked the Government to build it, and yet people say that syndicates are anxious to build railways. They are not anxious to spend between £700,000 and £800,000 in constructing a railway if they can get the Government to build it for them, but the Government will not find the money for that purpose. And then the hon. member for Flinders says he will vote against this proposal, and I do not suppose the hon. member for Enoggera will vote for it.

Mr. REID: No—that he will not.

Mr. FORSYTH: I believe that this line will not only develop a large mineral and pastoral district, but I believe it will benefit the country in the same way as the Chillagoe Railway is now doing by helping to make good the loss on the Cairns Railway. I believe the same result will follow the construction of this line. We want a line there to open up our mineral and agricultural lands, and we also want it to go to the nearest port, and everyone is convinced that Normanton is the nearest port, and therefore it should go there. When we find the Commissioner for Railways saying that there is no hope of the Government building this line, does it not stand to reason that, if the Government will not build the line, we should have it built by private enterprise? I have nothing more to say, except that I shall have the greatest pleasure, if it goes to a division, in voting for the second reading of the Bill.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAXWELL (*Burke*): I am rather surprised at the way the hon. member handled the hon. members for Flinders, Croydon, and Enoggera.

Mr. FORSYTH: I handled them gently—like a child. (Laughter.)

Mr. MAXWELL: There is no doubt he handled them very gently. Although the hon. member for Enoggera and the hon. member for Flinders expressed the opinion that this line should not be built at all—

Mr. REID: We never said that at all—not at present—that is all.

Mr. MAXWELL: Although they said that this line should not be built at present, I hold the opinion that this line should have been built some considerable time ago, when the Government originally promised the people in that district that they would have railway communication. The hon. member for Carpentaria dwelt on what a splendid river the Norman River was, and the small amount of expenditure that was necessary to make it one of the best river ports in Queensland. I can bear out all that the hon. member said with regard to that. I have been

there, and I may say that it is probably superior to the Brisbane River, and that very little expenditure would probably make it one of the best river ports in Queensland. For thirty miles we find one of the finest stretches of water that can be found in any river in Queensland. I do not intend to touch on the question of the monopoly that has existed there for a considerable time. I think the hon. member for Croydon is of the same opinion as myself—that it is not the firm of Messrs. Burns, Philp, and Co. that has brought this monopoly about, but simply the continual promises that the Government have given to the people in that portion of the colony year after year. It strikes me that since this proposition was first made there have been considerable changes. We find that when the Government were first approached they were only asked for certain concessions, and then, after it had lain in abeyance for a considerable time, we find that the promoters came along again and asked for twice as many concessions as they had asked for previously. The Premier, when replying to the hon. member for Croydon, said that there was a considerable amount of wharfage accommodation in the Norman River. Whilst I certainly think that there is a considerable amount of wharfage accommodation there, the hon. gentleman forgot to inform the House that a fair amount of that accommodation at spring tides and in time of flood is under water, and I can bear out what was said by the hon. member for Croydon—that the amount of high and dry land there is very limited. In looking through the correspondence we have before us, we find two names standing out most conspicuously. One is the name of the present Chief Secretary and the other is the name of Mr. Brentnall. I expect the name of Mr. Brentnall is pretty well known just now, as it has come up for a fair amount of discussion during the last few days. I may say, so far as this line is concerned, that the general opinion in Normanton and Cloncurry is that the line should be built by the State.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAXWELL: Although it has been stated that the people there are quite willing to accept this line—it does it not matter who builds it. I also say that if the question was submitted to them whether they would have the line constructed by private enterprise or by the State, not 2 per cent. of the whole population of the Gulf country would support the building of the line by private enterprise.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAXWELL: In pure desperation they are willing to accept anything which will give them communication. They know that the whole Cloncurry district is a very valuable one, and that its pastoral and mineral resources are probably as great as those of any other district in Queensland. The hon. member for Carpentaria, when speaking not long ago, said that he had not seen quite recently an opinion expressed by some of the people in Normanton that the line should not approach Normanton at all, but should go from Port Norman towards Cloncurry. I may tell the House, especially for the information of the hon. member, that the general opinion in Normanton is that, if this line is built to Port Norman, the whole of the Croydon and Etheridge traffic will go direct from Port Norman. To come back on to this concession business, we find that the late Mr. T. J. Byrnes was approached by Mr. Lumley Hill, and he refused to grant the concession then asked for to a private syndicate, and Mr. Byrnes said he thought these concessions to private syndicates would give the colony a bad name. We have been told that if Mr. Byrnes had lived this Cloncurry line would have been built by the State, and the Cloncurry

people would have enjoyed the blessings of cheaper rates than they now have to pay. Now, about this time there was a great controversy between Mr. Phillips and Mr. Hill, and the feeling of the public was backed up by the *Courier* and other leading newspapers in Queensland. We see in a letter in the *Courier* of the 29th August, 1898, that it is pointed out that great injury was being done to various colonies in which there were privately-owned railways. This letter goes on to say—

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Who wrote it? Was it an anonymous letter?

Mr. MAXWELL: No. It was written by Mr. Derbyshire. He says—

But he most persistently asked: "Why do you people want to build this railway?—I do not suppose you are philanthropists?" Certainly we were not. We were quite sure the line would pay. "Very well," said Sir James, "if that is the case the Government will build them." And such was then done by a system then introduced for the first time in the colony—i.e., the *butty-gang*, and there is no better paying line in Victoria to-day.

The letter goes on to say—

As for the burden of debt, it will still be there, and who will be required to pay it—not the syndicate? I trust the present policy will never be altered, and you have hit the right nail on the right head when you say the good lines would go to the syndicates and the bad ones to the State. That is exactly how it will be. Your keen syndicate man sniffs the fat bones, tossing the lean ones to a supine Government.

This letter was commented on, and this is an answer to the letters published in the *Courier* by Mr. Phillips and Mr. Lumley Hill. We find in a leader in the *Courier* these statements—

The dog in the manger simile, which both of them are pleased to use, we repudiate as a libel on our position.

Remember, this appears in the *Courier*, which lately has changed its opinions. The article goes on—

The demand for the construction is therefore a challenge to the past railway construction of the colony. Let it be right or wrong we feel bound to press, is that a momentous change is involved in the demand.

That private construction has not been a success in other Australian colonies.

Taking the contention of our correspondents, what does it mean? That private enterprise should build the paying lines of railway and leave the State to build those which open up the country and do not pay.

So long as the price of copper was low they waited on the Government for a railway; now the price of copper is high, they are willing to build it themselves.

That is quite philanthropic. Then the article says—

The men that ask to build this railway expect to make a fat profit out of it. Well, why should not the fat profit come to the Government? Why the fat profit to the syndicate and the lean to the people? The Government won't do it, says Mr. Phillips. Let the facts be laid before them which are moving business enterprise, and they also will be moved.

I contend that although the *Courier*, the Chief Secretary, and probably a good many hon. members of this House, have changed their opinions as to the wisdom of the State allowing private enterprise to interfere with the settled railway policy of the Government, the people of the colony as a whole have not changed their opinions at all in this connection. And I am quite sure, if a vote of the whole of the people of this colony were taken, they would not be in favour of private enterprise interfering with the building and management of any of our railways. I go further, and say that the influence in this direction is the almighty dollar.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: £300 a year!

Mr. MAXWELL: No, it is not £300 a year, but considerably more. I say the probable pickings that will be made out of this Normanton to Cloncurry line will be considerably more than

any man would get if he stopped here a lifetime. I am in favour of the State constructing this line.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: That is a pious opinion.

Mr. MAXWELL: I have never known the hon. gentleman to give anything else but a biased opinion. In looking through the report of the Railway Commissioner, we find that the country to be served by this line contains somewhere about 1,000,000 head of cattle and about 500,000 head of sheep. The whole of this traffic, to say nothing of the mining traffic, will go to the Gulf. I hold that it would be one of the worst things if the people in these districts were forced to have railway communication with Townsville. Like the hon. member for Carpentaria, I see no reason why these people should be fleeced in order to get their stock and produce to market. It is the duty of the Government to take this line to the nearest port to which the people there can send their stuff, and from which they can receive their supplies. We find that the whole of the produce of that part of the country will have to be shipped away from this colony and the Government would only be doing right to the whole of the Gulf district if they built this railway from Port Norman to Clon-

[5.30 p.m.] curry themselves. The Premier said he was quite prepared to accept an amendment, or to move one himself, providing that the company should not carry the line beyond Cloncurry. While I object to a private syndicate being allowed to build the line south of Cloncurry, I hold that it is the duty of the Government to construct the railway so that it will take the whole of the traffic of the west and south-western part of Queensland to the Gulf, which is its natural outlet. The district has one of the largest and wealthiest mineral deposits in the whole of Queensland, comprising gold, copper, iron, bismuth, and probably a number of other metals too numerous to mention. Mr. Jack in his report says—

The country is very rich in mineral deposits, rich enough to justify the Government in building a railway to the Gulf port.

And if that is the opinion of a gentleman of the knowledge possessed by Mr. Jack the Government ought to act on his opinion. Other well-known mining men in Queensland have also expressed opinions on that district. The late Mr. Hodgkinson said—

The country is highly mineralised, and must ultimately become the seat of a large industry.

Whatever opinions may prevail as to the extent and value of the gold deposits of Cloncurry but one opinion can rule as to the extent, richness, and variety of the copper lodes, which surpass anything in Australia.

If you inquire from miners in the North of Queensland who have lived in the locality, or who have been there only casually, you will find that their opinion is that as far as its copper lodes are concerned, Cloncurry is one of the richest districts, probably, in the whole of Australia. Many of the newspapers have tried to compare the Cloncurry copper deposits with the deposits at Chillagoe, and the unanimous opinion is that they surpass anything to be found in the Chillagoe district. Every warden who has reported on Cloncurry has but the one tale to tell, and that is of the vast mineral resources lying dormant there.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: And likely to.

Mr. MAXWELL: I think so, as long as the present Government occupy the Treasury benches.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: As long as the Labour party talk everything out.

Mr. MAXWELL: Besides Mr. Jack and Mr. Hodgkinson, various other people have expressed their views as to the richness of the

Cloncurry field. In the correspondence which has been laid on the table of this House, we have this statement—

The Government Geologist, in a report on this field, says, "The Cloncurry, Leichhardt, and Dugald Valleys abound in copper and other minerals, which are destined to make this district a crowded manufacturing country." At present it lies almost a waste, owing to the want of a railway to connect it with the coast.

With reference to its pastoral capabilities, Mr. Kazser, who was there at one time, says there are from 25,000 to 30,000 square miles of sheep country in the district, and Mr. Kennedy adds, "As good country as there is anywhere in Queensland." One of the greatest injuries that could be done to the colony would be to hand over the construction of this line to a private syndicate, and allow them to compete with Government railways on which we have spent considerable sums of money in order to cater for the trade of the Western and South-western part of Queensland.

Mr. LEAHY: You will not get any trade from the South-western part of Queensland, so you may make up your mind on that.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. member does not know all that happens in the South-western part of Queensland, though he imagines he does. The hon. member for Carpentaria, in taking to task the hon. member for Croydon, quoted from the *Croydon Mining News* to show that that paper had changed its opinion as to the construction of this railway. I must admit that that paper went into the matter some time ago, but since then I believe it has expressed the opinion that the conditions under which this railway is to be built are favourable to the State. In its issue of 7th September, it says—

In their railway policy generally the Government are acting in such a peculiar manner that but little reliance can be placed on any promises that may be made at the present stage. Instead of taking the country into their confidence, and laying down a definite policy, indicating what State as well as syndicate railways they are prepared to propose for construction, they spring a batch of the latter upon the public, and keep the country completely in the dark regarding the former, be they two, a few, or many. During the first few weeks of the session no less than five private enterprise railway Bills have been introduced and persistent attempts made to rush them through the House, while all this time not a word has been said regarding the State railway policy of the Government, if they have got one. Surely this is not the way to inspire the public with confidence as to the motives of the Ministry in regard to those private railway Bills which they seem so anxious to pass. There are many people, hitherto bitterly opposed to the principle of private railway construction, who may be at the present juncture, in view of the condition of the public finances, and of the need for the development of the country, even at a sacrifice, prepared to sink their opposition if there were a reasonable hope of the public interests being safeguarded; but the methods of the Government in regard to their railway policy generally is now doing much to alienate public sympathy with their projects, and to inspire distrust of their motives.

With reference to the Bill itself, I find that there are a good many people who believe that the line should not be constructed by private enterprise, but by the Government, seeing that it will command such a terrible area of the colony. Speaking of the proposal to allow the company to charge 50 per cent. more than is charged on Government railways, the *Charters Towers Mining Register*, which is a strong supporter of the present Government, says—

The Chillagoe syndicate are allowed to charge a maximum of one and a-half times the Government rate for goods and passengers. In later private railway Bills the clause reads, "one and a-half times the present rate." As the country opens up, and population and traffic increases, we hope to see a substantial decrease in the railway rates, but the "one and a-half the present rate" means that the highest figure will be fixed for fifty years; possibly three times

the Government rate ten years hence. This is a concession which should be stoutly combatted. Far better that the lines should never be made than such an outrageous clause should become law.

That is the opinion which is expressed by a journal which gives consistent support to the present Government.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Would not you argue that its opinion must necessarily be wrong thereafter?

Mr. MAXWELL: I would argue, as the hon. gentleman no doubt would do, that it is probably right when it supports me, and it is certainly wrong when it disagrees with me. If one thing has led me more than another to come to the conclusion that it is undesirable for the State to give the construction of this line to a private company, and thereby hand over to a monopoly the whole of the trade of the Gulf, and the trade of the South and South-western part of the colony, it is what has been said about the motives of this company. I find on looking at page 14, No. 37, enough to convince us that this company are not building this railway from any philanthropical motives whatever, but simply with the object of getting all they can out of this district at as little expenditure as possible. As I have previously stated, I find that various changes have been made from the time that this offer was first made to the Government up to the present time. We find that the most serious change of the whole lot that has been made in this correspondence is that the Government were empowered to resume the line after a period of thirty years. That is altogether different to what this Bill provides for. I do not blame these people for trying to get the best consideration that they can from the Government. I simply blame this House if they give these people more than they ask for. If this is to be a pure business matter between us, let us cut them down as hard as we can. Why give them more than they ask for? They simply ask for thirty years.

Mr. DAWSON: That is too long.

Mr. MAXWELL: I contend that even that is too long. But to go back further, we find in the same correspondence that the company is to construct a railway of 3 feet 6 inch gauge from the mouth of the Norman River to Norman, and the Government are to have the right to resume such line at any time by paying the cost of construction. As the hon. member for Croydon pointed out, what does this mean? It simply means that the Government can purchase this line from the syndicate, and then we will have a small amount of wharfage accommodation in the hands of this company. I am very glad that the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government said he was quite willing to insert an amendment that these wharves should also be handed over to the Government at the same time. In looking over the correspondence we find that a firm of Coates and Co., of London—

Mr. JENKINSON: Which Coates do you mean? There are Coates, the broker; and Coutts, the bankers.

Mr. MAXWELL: The brokers.

Mr. JENKINSON: They are different people.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MAXWELL: If that is the Coates—if they are different people, I am not going on with the Coates now.

Mr. W. HAMILTON (*Gregory*): I have listened to the hon. member for Carpentaria, who spoke on this question, and I congratulate him upon making a very good speech from his point of view. There is one thing, however, that I wish to take exception to in his speech. He made the assertion that this Chillagoe Company had no necessity to go to London to get money that they wanted to build their line, because

they could have got it in Australia. If that is so, it is very strange that in the correspondence we have on this subject, at page 11, clause 30, Mr. Withers gives a most emphatic denial to that. Mr. Withers, writing to the Chief Secretary, says—

Permit me to congratulate you upon the strong support you have received throughout the colony at the recent elections, and I wish you a long and successful term of office.

I am returning to the colony, and hope to reach Brisbane about the 17th June.

I shall be glad if you can introduce the Cloncurry Bill early in the ensuing session. I have seen Mr. Coats and the various people interested in the undertaking. They are very anxious to be in a position to act in London before the end of the year. The Chillagoe people, after a good deal of trouble with various brokers, arranged for their debentures with Messrs. Coates, Son, and Company, who are really Mr. Coats' brokers, and who had previously agreed to bring out the Cloncurry scheme when legislative authority was obtained for the construction of the line.

These gentlemen say that late in the year would be a most favourable time for dealing with a large concern like Cloncurry.

Trusting that you are well, with kind regards.

It seems very strange if they had no necessity to go to London for the money, but could have got it in Australia, that they went to all the trouble of obtaining it in London. Now, speaking in reference to this line, I am not one of those who say that if the State cannot build this line, let it be built by private enterprise. If the State proposed to build this line, I would vote for it to-morrow. I lived in the Cloncurry country some years ago, and I have travelled over it, and I know a great deal about it; but even if I had not, the report of Mr. Jack, the late Government Geologist at that time, would justify anyone in supporting a line of railway to that place. Mr. Jack says he believes Cloncurry to be one of the finest mineral fields in Australia, and I think it is a shame that the country has languished as long as it has. I believe that if a line had been built into that district fifteen or twenty years ago, instead of 4,000 people being settled in that district, there would have been 20,000. I have been on Broken Hill, where there is only one great main lode, and the country round is not good pastoral country. The Cloncurry line would not only tap a vast mineral district, but also a very large pastoral district, and I think it would be one of the best paying lines in the colony; and that is the reason why I am opposing its construction by a private syndicate. I believe the Government would be far more justified in building this line than half the lines they are going to build. I would support the Jundah extension, because I believe in course of time it would be payable; but I would support the construction of this Cloncurry line before I would support the Jundah extension. It is time this part of the country got the advantage of some railway construction—not only Cloncurry, but the whole of the Northern district. A great deal is said about the Northern influence in the Cabinet; but with all the Northern influence when once we get north of Townsville, there is very little consideration from the present Government. The Minister for Railways said that on the Address in Reply he heard no objection to the construction of this line by a private syndicate. If that is the case, he must have been out of the Chamber, or he must have been deaf, because objections were raised by myself and other members on this side. The hon. gentleman said this would benefit the working man. I have not the slightest doubt that the construction of a railway in the district will benefit the labourer and the miner, and it will not affect him a great deal whether it is constructed by a company or by the State; but it will be a very different thing for the settlers in that part of the country with the concessions



these people get. Hon. members on that side seem to lay great stress on obtaining employment for the working man, but they don't put that theory into practice when they have an opportunity. When the Secretary for Railways was speaking, I interjected that he would not employ a white man when he could get a black-fellow, and the reason I said that was this—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is departing from the subject before the House.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: I just wanted to show the reason for making the interjection.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Again, he said that the success of this railway would depend very largely on the opening up of the mining industry. I don't think the success of this line does depend on the mining industry. It would open up a vast extent of grazing country, and if they were allowed to carry out these extensions or tramlines wherever they wished, I think they would interfere with the State line. It is evident that the Premier could not have seen the map attached to the Bill before it was introduced, because since he has seen it he has said that he would object to the line going farther south than Cloncurry. I suppose those interested in the syndicate last year had an idea that it would be allowed to get this extension and took up some leases at Chatsworth—out eighty or ninety miles towards Boulia—and that would bring this line into competition with the Northern line, if they were allowed to make an extension to those leases; but the people of Boulia would rather be attached to Townsville than to Normanton, because it is more their natural port. Therefore, I was glad the Premier said he would support or introduce an amendment to prevent the company going farther south than Cloncurry. The Premier also said this was a speculation, and quoted the lines to the Mount Perry and Clermont Copper Mines in support of his contention. I may tell the hon. member that the Clermont Copper Mine was pretty well worked out before the line was carried to Clermont, but I believe that if a few more miles had been added to the Clermont line it would have been a good paying line, judging by the Government Geologist's report. Mount Perry also was pretty well worked out before the line was made; but Sir Thomas McIlwraith was one of the principal shareholders, and they wanted to get rid of this mine, and he used his position, or his influence anyhow, as Premier at the time to get this railway constructed there.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. W. HAMILTON: It has been stated several times that this syndicate want to make this railway to develop their mines, and that they have no desire to come into competition as public carriers, or anything of the sort; but, on looking at the correspondence, I find that they are as hungry a lot of sharks as ever I met. The first letter we have to the Premier is from Mr. Manton, Scott's Hotel, Melbourne, and is dated the 12th February, 1898. I don't know whether Mr. Manton is interested in the syndicate or not, but this is the letter—

SIR,—I am prepared, on behalf of London capitalists, to construct a railway to Cloncurry from Hughenden, or from Winton to Cloncurry, or from Burketown to Cloncurry, on the following terms and conditions:—

1. The railway to be constructed on the same gauge as the lines now in existence in Queensland.
2. That I am to receive about 10,000 acres per mile in alternate blocks, the Government to hold block for block with me.
3. Within three months after Parliament agrees to grant the rights asked for, the applicants hereof are to lodge £10,000 with Government as a guarantee of this proposition being carried through within three years from date of acceptance.

Should you be inclined to favourably consider this proposition, but think the concession of 10,000 acres too large, you could, of course, make a suggestion.

I will leave for Brisbane on Wednesday next, and hope to have the pleasure of an interview with you. Of course, there are many things to be considered, but as this is only a preliminary letter I won't dwell on them.

I have no doubt you will immediately see the great advantage the country would derive from this project, necessitating large employment of labour.

The hon. member for Carpentaria says this company does not want to fleece

[7 p.m.] the public, but merely wants to construct the railway for the purpose of

developing the mines. Well, their own correspondence on the subject gives that an emphatic denial. They have not only been trying to obtain a vast mining monopoly, but they want a big pastoral monopoly, and a canning monopoly. Here is another letter from Mr. Henry J. Withers, who is always in the lobby of this House—in fact, he seems to live there. I think he sleeps on the floor of this House since this railway proposal has been introduced—

SIR,—I have the honour to submit a proposal from this company for the construction of a railway from the mouth of the Norman River to Cloncurry, in this colony. Such railway to be constructed *via* Normanton, Donor's Hills, and the Leichhardt River.

The terms upon which it is proposed to carry out the work are set forth in a draft Bill which has been forwarded for your favourable consideration.

The principal object in the construction of this line is to enable the owners to work the copper deposits between Dobbin's Creek to the north and Malbon River to the south of Cloncurry; in all, a total of about twenty different mines, undoubtedly of great richness. Without a railway these mines can neither be developed or worked, and the colony generally is losing both the direct and indirect benefit to arise from the development of a rich and extensive mining district.

If they obtain the necessary authority to construct the railway, it is the intention of the company to have these copper deposits thoroughly opened up and worked on an extensive scale. It is proposed to convey the richer ores by the railway to deep water, and thence by steamer to the neighbourhood of the coal deposits on the east coast of the colony, taking coal and coke as return cargo both for steamers and trucks, which will enable the poorer ores to be smelted locally. By these means fuel will be delivered at the mines at such a moderate cost as to enable even low-grade ores to be profitably treated. The company propose to erect extensive smelting furnaces for treating the ores in both localities, and it is estimated that the consumption of coal will exceed a quarter of a million tons annually, thus increasing by one-third the present output of the colony.

Of the reputed richness of these copper deposits, much has been said, and if their value is within even measurable distance of what has been authoritatively stated of it, their development will undoubtedly make this colony the greatest copper producing country of the world.

Could there be any argument stronger than that in favour of what has been said?

The Government Geologist, in a report on this field, says, "The Cloncurry, Leichhardt, and Dugald Valleys abound in copper and other minerals, which are destined to make this district a crowded manufacturing country." At present it lies almost a waste, owing to the want of a railway to connect it with the coast.

It is estimated that when these mines are in full work, employment will be given, directly and indirectly, to at least 4,000 men, and in addition to the local benefit to arise from the settlement of a large population in the far West of the colony, and along the line of route, the enterprise will make settlement advance from the east at a far more rapid rate than at present is possible.

I have been on many mineral fields. I have been on Cobar, that was only one mine, and it supported a population of 8,000 or 10,000 people.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: There was a good deal of gold there.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: There was no gold at that time. It was believed some years ago that gold and copper did not exist in large quantities in the same locality, but that was proved to be a fallacy in the case of Cobar. After the copper mine at Cobar was closed, they found some very



rich goldmines which they are working to the present day; but the population I speak of was there before the gold was found. At Broken Hill there was a population of 12,000. There was only one mine there, and it had not the same recommendation as Cloncurry, for it had no big pastoral district around it.

The company propose to introduce a large number of settlers from the United Kingdom, with the view of developing the land which the company proposes to obtain on lease from the Crown, and will generally assist the local productiveness of this rich district by providing facilities for freezing, storing, packing, and exporting frozen meat.

As is well known, the whole of this country is at the present time practically unsettled, and, in consequence of the difficulty in transport and expense in reaching the seaboard, settlement and production are practically at a standstill, to the manifest detriment of the colony as a whole.

The company propose expending a large amount of money in carrying out the works, which must necessarily increase the value of all Crown lands coming within the influence of the railway.

I can emphasise the statement of the hon. member for Carpentaria as to the difficulty of transport, especially in wet seasons. It is very great, and it requires a railway to overcome the difficulty. These are the proposals of Mr. Withers. Then comes a letter from the Commissioner for Railways to the Secretary for Railways—

Sir,—In returning the enclosed papers, which you handed to me a few days ago, containing a proposal from Mr. H. J. Withers, as attorney for the British Colonial Railways Corporation, Limited, for the construction of a line of railway from the mouth of the Norman River to Normanton, and thence to the township of Cloncurry, with three or four short tramlines, branching from the main line to certain rich mineral areas *en route*, which railway and branches are shown on the lithograph attached to the papers.

You will notice, he says, three or four short tramlines. Some of them are eighty or ninety miles in length, and goodness knows how much further they want to go.

I have the honour to inform you that I am somewhat at a loss to know what information the Government desire me to furnish, as the proposals are really rather a question of public policy than one in which the financial prospects of the railway, if constructed, are involved.

You will observe that the proposals of the company are contained in an adaptation, to a certain extent, of the Mareeba-Chillagoe Railway Act, but the terms under which the line is to be constructed are entirely different.

The proposals are simply these: The company undertake to construct the line throughout (a distance of 250 miles) on condition that the Government lease to them land on either side of the line, or elsewhere in the Burke and North Gregory districts, for a period of ninety-nine years, at an annual rental of 6d. per square mile, the total area of the land to be so leased being determined by an assessment by the Governor in Council of the actual value thereof in fee-simple, and the area to be so leased to be equal in value to the actual cost of the railway. Assuming, therefore, that the cost of the line, when constructed and equipped, totalled a sum of £625,000, or £2,500 per mile, the area of land (taken at an average value of 5s. per acre) for which the company would require leases, would amount to 2,500,000 acres.

THE PREMIER: There is nothing of that in the Bill.

MR. W. HAMILTON: No; but it is pointed out that these people are asking for the Bill for the purpose of developing the mines. I am showing that they want to get the country into their grasp. The people do not know the proposals made by this company, and it is only right that they should know what a lot of land-grabbers they have to deal with.

In addition to this the company ask for about 5,000 acres in fee-simple along the line of railway and branches for the purpose of erecting warehouses, smelting and freezing works, dwellings for the workmen, &c.

The line, when constructed, is to be the property of the company, but there is a clause in the proposals

giving the Government the right of purchase after fifty years at not more than one and one-tenth times the cost of construction.

They are to have it for fifty years, and then the country is to pay 10 per cent. more than it actually cost them.

These, sir, are the main features of Mr. Withers' scheme. The minor details are somewhat similar to those of the Mareeba-Chillagoe Railway Act, and I do not consider it necessary to refer to these at present as, in my opinion, the terms offered are not sufficiently attractive to admit of further consideration, nor do I think they are such as would be accepted by Parliament.

I should think they would not. Then we go on with Mr. Withers again—

SIR,—In reference to the draft Bill submitted to you on the 10th March, to authorise the British Colonial Railway Corporation, Limited, of London, to construct and maintain a line of railway from the mouth of the Norman River, *via* Normanton, to Cloncurry, I am informed that the Government have arrived at the conclusion that it would not be practicable to give effect to the scheme on the lines therein suggested.

I have now the honour to submit modified conditions that I trust may be acceptable, and which are as follows:—

That the leases of pastoral land be for a term of fifty years, at an annual rental of five shillings per square mile; that at the expiration of twenty-five years, the land to be reappraised as provided by the Land Act, 1897.

I forward herewith new clauses, in place of what may be considered the contentious clauses in the draft Bill.

I respectfully ask that you will give the matter your favourable consideration and support.

Now these are the modified proposals that they put forward, and I may state that when they were going to make these proposals to the Government, they sent round a petition. They obtained signatures from Camooweal and Urandangle to Burketown and Normanton; and yet, in all that extent of country they were only able to get about 200 signatures, and, from my knowledge of many of those who signed that petition, I am certain, that had they been aware of the proposals that they were supporting by their signatures, they would never have attached them to this petition. These are some of the proposals that they made—

Clause 23.—The Governor in Council shall, upon request in that behalf made by the company, by proclamation, set apart and reserve for the purposes hereinafter mentioned (which shall be deemed to be a disposition within the meaning of section 86 of the Land Act, 1897) a sufficient area of Crown lands within 100 miles of any part of the main or branch lines of the proposed railway of a character suitable for grazing or agriculture, to provide for leases which the company shall be entitled to receive from Her Majesty upon the terms and subject to the conditions hereinafter provided, that is to say:—

1. The railway shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed to be divided into five sections, as shown and delineated upon the plan forming the schedule to this Act.

2. If and when the Minister shall be satisfied that any section of the railway has been completed and is ready for public traffic, as in this Act provided, the company shall be entitled to receive grants from Her Majesty of leases of the Crown lands set apart and reserved as hereinbefore provided, or of any part thereof. Provided that the total area for which the company shall be entitled to receive any such lease or leases as aforesaid shall not exceed 2,000 square miles in respect of any such section.

Now, as the line was to be divided into five sections, their proposal amounted to this: that they were to get 10,000 square miles of country for pastoral and agricultural purposes; and they must have known well that in order to let them get those 10,000 square miles the Government would have to dispossess people who have been engaged in pastoral pursuits in the district for the last twenty or twenty-five years. I consider the proposals of the company were really exorbitant, and it shows that they were not asking for these concessions for the specific

purpose of developing the mines by the construction of this railway, but that they wanted to become a huge pastoral monopoly. I wonder whether any hon. member who has supported this Bill, supposing he owned a station along this line, would like to be dispossessed of it to make room for this syndicate. But it does not say that this land should even be along the railway route. They asked to be allowed to select land within one hundred miles of the line. They might have gone one hundred miles towards Richmond or towards Boulia and taken the country.

The PREMIER: Under the Bill they cannot go anywhere at all.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is discussing proposals that are not contained in the Bill. He has a perfect right, in passing, to refer to the correspondence, but he is taking an irregular course in discussing proposals which have not been submitted to the House for approval.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: I thought, as this information was laid on the table of the House in connection with this railway, that I would be quite justified in quoting it.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must not misunderstand me. I have not ruled that he is out of order in referring to the correspondence, but I say he is out of order in reading the correspondence at length, and in discussing at length proposals that are not contained in the Bill.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: I was just trying to show what they were wanting.

The PREMIER: We can all read, you know.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: I wanted to show that this syndicate did not come out here for the purpose for which it is stated they came by the hon. member for Carpentaria and other hon. members on the other side who are supporting this Bill. I want to show that they desired to become a huge monopoly, and they got people to sign a petition in ignorance of what they were signing. I am trying to show that if they had had their way, and if the Government had not refused to grant them what they asked, they would have ousted a lot of people in that part of the country. I consider that they got people to sign that petition under false pretences. They must have done so. As I do not wish to go through the whole of the correspondence, I shall just read sufficient of it to show the people up there what they may expect if we are not very careful as to what concessions we grant to this company. I quote again—

The company shall have power to deal by sale, mortgage, lease, or otherwise—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is continuing a course that I have already indicated he would not be in order in pursuing. I trust the hon. member will obey the ruling of the Chair.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: As you rule that I am out of order, Mr. Speaker, I shall proceed no further with that; but I have here Mr. Jack's report, and I can assure hon. members that, although I have lived in the district for a long time, I had no idea that the Western country had such potentialities. Mr. Jack, the Government Geologist, made this report at the time of the proposal to construct the transcontinental railway, and he was in favour of constructing a railway from Winton to Cloncurry, pointing out the possibility of large coal discoveries being made in the neighbourhood of Winton, and the advisability, if that was so, of establishing smelting works there for the treatment of the Cloncurry ores. This is what he says—

The fact that coal of good quality, although not of workable thickness, has been found in the downs gives rise to some considerations which concern the syndicate.

That seams of workable thickness and quality will be found in the Downs I consider very likely. When the area over which the coal extends and the thickness of the strata are taken into account, there is nothing to cause disappointment in the fact that the few wells hitherto sunk have not pierced any workable seam. In the course of the present year well-sinking will be carried on on a large scale, and I am confident that some coal discoveries will be made.

Granting that Winton may become the centre of a coalfield, it may be interesting to consider how this would affect the traffic from the metalliferous districts of the Cloncurry and Leichhardt.

It is always more economical to carry the ore to the fuel than to carry the fuel to the ore, for the reason that the smelting of a given quantity of ore requires a much greater weight of fuel than of ore.

On the completion of the railway, the comparative merits of smelting works at Winton and Point Parker will at once come into competition. The ore might go from Cloncurry to Point Parker (290 miles); there to be treated by coal brought by sea from the south, or it might go direct to collieries at Winton (210 miles).

He then shows that the cost of treatment would be more than £2 a ton in favour of the Winton scheme. I may say that since Mr. Jack wrote that report, it has been proved that large bodies of coal and other minerals exist there, and it is just on the cards that we may have large coal-fields between Winton and Cloncurry.

Mr. JENKINSON: Are they working coal there now?

Mr. W. HAMILTON: No, I will explain. Seams of coal have been found in wells sunk in Winton 2 feet and 15 inches thick, and I have been told by Mr. Cribb, who has had a good deal of experience in coalmining, that a seam of clean coal 2 feet thick would be payable to work, even down where coal is worth only 7s. or 8s. a ton at the pit mouth; whereas on the Northern lines they pay 25s. and 26s. per ton for coal. Mr. Jack's report shows what possibilities there are in the Winton and Cloncurry districts—in this western country—in regard to the coal industry. Since Mr. Jack wrote that report, in sinking a bore at Winton a seam of coal from 7 to 10 feet thick has been found. Here is what Mr. Jack says, as far as this is concerned—

If it cannot be said that any payable coal seams have yet been discovered in the downs, it may be said, on the other hand, that we know nothing to discourage the hope that they may shortly be found. No direct search has been made for coal, and there is nothing to cause surprise if no payable seam has yet been laid bare by the half-dozen or so wells which have been sunk in such a large area.

In any other part of the world such indications of coal as are here presented—a wide-spread, undisturbed, and unaltered formation, full of plant remains which have been proved to collect into coal seams in several places where they were accidentally discovered in sinking wells—would be eagerly and hopefully followed.

Again, Mr. Jack says—

The country is very rich in mineral deposits, rich enough to justify the Government in building a railway to the Gulf port.

And yet successive Governments have never turned their attention to prove whether these coal deposits existed there. I think anyone who reads Mr. Jack's report will say that the Government would be quite justified in connecting Cloncurry and Normanton by rail. I agree with the Premier and the hon. member for Carpentaria that Normanton is the natural port for that country, and that trade must go along the lines of least resistance to be payable. I am trying to show that it has always been considered the Normanton-Cloncurry line should be part of what we call "our main trunk lines," and that in the near future it may be necessary to connect all our railway systems, and that the Government might be justified in connecting the eastern seaboard with the Gulf. Then, what a nice position the colony would be in if some of the lines were owned by private syndicates and others by the

Government. Another thing is that under federation we don't know what may take place. The Federal Government may take over all our railways, and there may be a transcontinental line.

Mr. LEAHY: They cannot take them unless we permit them.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Possibly the opinion of this House would be to retain them, but others may come here after us who think it would be advisable to hand our railways over to the Federal Government. We see that South Australia is advancing her lines right up to the Queensland border, and in a few years we may have railway communication from one sea to the other, so that above all other private lines this Normanton-Cloncurry line should be built by the State, and I think some hon. members on the other side would agree with me if they only spoke out. Mr. Jack says this may turn out a very rich and extensive field, and if his report is correct, I consider that there will be a population of 20,000 settled there in eight or ten years. We know that in copper and silver-mining districts a larger number of men are employed than in goldmining districts. A large number of smelters are employed, and there is twice the amount of machinery used than on a goldfield. Look at the number of men employed at Broken Hill!

The PREMIER: Not so many now.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: No, perhaps not; because the rates are so high on the line from Coburn to Broken Hill. Another argument why the State should build this line is that these people do not own all the leases there are in the Cloncurry district. Their holdings are freehold, but I suppose there are several hundred leases, and these leaseholders will be completely at the mercy of this syndicate company.

Mr. LEAHY: Are the Cloncurry leaseholders in favour of this line?

Mr. W. HAMILTON: I don't know.

Mr. LEAHY: Of course they are.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: I don't know about that. This syndicate will own all the smelting works there, and everything else; and everybody there will be under their thumb. I do not intend to speak much longer on this matter, but I would just like to refer to one other matter. It has been stated that really no concessions are being given to this company; but I consider they are getting great concessions. They are getting 5,000 acres of mineral land and 10,000 acres for other purposes. Now, what are these 10,000 acres for other purposes for? For the very same purpose that the Broken Hill Company got the surface rights. We know that wherever surface rights are commanded by a company they command the working man. The Broken Hill workmen had to build on the leases of the company, and as soon as ever a worker there left the company's employ he had to leave his humpy. They could not build a respectable house, because they knew that if they left the company's employment they would not be able to take their house away with them; so they had to build houses out of bags, or hessian, or something of that description and live in hovels. And what has happened on Broken Hill will no doubt occur in this case. If the miners are dissatisfied with their conditions and strike, as sometimes happens on mining-fields, they will be told to clear out. The company will order them off their land.

Mr. BROWN: As was done at Lucknow.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Yes. They will call the police or, perhaps, the military in and get these workmen ejected. Now, I consider 5,000 acres of mineral land is a very big concession, and they cannot cover the other 10,000 acres with smelting works. Then, again, the Bill pro-

vides that the company shall be exempt from all rates. What a nice position the

[7.30 p.m.] divisional boards will be in in that district? The company will have their railways, their stations, their buildings and offices, their leases here, there, and all over the place. The roads will be cut up, and the divisional board will have to keep them in order, but they cannot call upon the company to pay a penny of rates. The funds for the maintenance of those roads will have to be gathered from people outside the syndicate. That is a concession which ought not to be granted to any company. The right to charge one and a-half times more than the rates at present prevailing on Government railways is another great concession, and I contend that if this company are to be allowed to compete as public carriers they should be compelled to serve the public at the same rates as are charged by the Government. As I pointed out on a former occasion, ores of the value of £8 or £10 are carried by the New South Wales Government at ½d. per ton per mile, while the Broken Hill private company charge on their line 1½d. per ton for the same article. The profits on that line amounted to £87,000 last year, and they all went into the pockets of the private company who owned and controlled the railway. Another objection to this proposal is that it is not only the 240 miles of railway to Cloncurry that these people want, but, as was pointed out by the leader of this party, they want to construct several other lines. One of these gentlemen went out to Chatsworth and took up some leases there in June of this year, and I believe that has been done in order that the company may have an excuse to run their railway some ninety miles further towards Boulia, and tap that country. The company not only want a great mining monopoly, but they would like to have a big pastoral monopoly, and a carrying monopoly. I think the information we have got on the subject justifies the attitude taken up by this party in opposing this Bill. I really believe that the line would be a paying one from the start, and I hold that it is one which the State ought to construct. If the Government were to come down to-morrow with a proposal to build this line by the State I would willingly support it. I know that the feeling of the people at Boulia and out that way is that the Northern line should be extended out there, and if this railway is constructed to Chatsworth those people will have a very poor show of getting any extension of the Northern Railway. I shall not say any more on this question at present, except that if the Bill passes—I hope it will not—there is a lot in it that will have to be knocked out. I hope that hon. members on the other side will not allow the railway to enter into competition with the Northern Railway, and that they will endeavour to make the company carry for the public on the same terms as the State does.

Mr. REID (*Enoggera*): The hon. member for Carpentaria seemed to be very much astonished that the hon. member for Flinders and myself should be so strongly in favour of a line from Hughenden to Cloncurry, and he pointed out, as the hon. member for Flinders pointed out, and as anyone who has been in that district must admit, that the Cloncurry people labour under a great disadvantage in any season, good or bad, but more especially during a drought. I yield to no man in my desire to see the people of Cloncurry prosper. When I visited Cloncurry it was during a very severe drought. The district was not at its worst then, but anybody who witnessed its condition must have felt that the district had been disgracefully treated by past Governments in the way they have misled the people by their promises to build

a railway to the place. At the time of my visit it was almost impossible for teams to travel. One or two struggled through from Normanton, but down the Flinders the road was impassable, and people were getting their provisions by parcels post. I can therefore understand the people of Cloncurry being desirous of getting a railway. When the Premier was speaking the other night I interjected that if I lived in Cloncurry no doubt I would be in favour of a railway being built by a syndicate, even though I was opposed to the construction of railways by private enterprise. And I believe that there is not a member in the House, whether he is in favour of syndicate railways or against them, who would not be almost prepared to go against his convictions in order to get a railway if he lived in Cloncurry. I am in this position, as far as a syndicate railway to Cloncurry is concerned, that the late member for Carpentaria, who was no doubt engaged by Mr. Withers to go to that township to lecture on the benefits of a syndicate railway, was to hold a meeting there. Mr. McDonald, the hon. member for Flinders, wired to me to go up and assist him in addressing a meeting on the other side. Unfortunately for me it rained, and I was two days late. I arrived at Cloncurry just as the hon. member for Carpentaria was leaving. But all the advocates of a syndicate railway from Chatsworth and nearly all the stations round the township were in Cloncurry. I devoted a whole evening to discussing the question with those station-owners, some of whom had lived nearly a lifetime in the district, and they endeavoured to influence me not to have any public meetings against the construction of the railway by private enterprise. Many of them were very sincere in their arguments. Some told me that they had gone out there with money and had spent nearly three parts of their lives in developing the district from a pastoral point of view, and had lost everything, and that their one hope of regaining their footing was to get a railway so that they might be able to sell their property or improve it in some way. When you look at it from the business point of view in Cloncurry, you can understand the anxiety of those people to have a railway. When you look at it from the point of view of the station-owners, you can understand their anxiety to get a railway. In fact, the people of Cloncurry would vote for a railway anyhow.

Mr. LEAHY : That is rough on them.

Mr. REID : I cannot understand the hon. member for Bulloo saying that it is hard against or rough on the people of Cloncurry. I do not see why it is rough on them. I say that they would vote for a line on almost any conditions, because they have been so long promised that they should get a railway, and have spent so much money in the development of the country, on the faith of the promises of past Governments, that they have lost faith in any Government. Now, in answer to the hon. member for Carpentaria as to the position the hon. member for Flinders occupies, I may inform him that twelve months ago, before the last election, the opponents of Mr. McDonald tried to make the most of his opposition to this railway, and endeavoured to prevent his return on that ground. It was made an issue among the Cloncurry people that the present member was deadily opposed to any syndicate building the line. Those who voted for him knew from his own published statements, and from his action in this House, that he would do everything in his power to block the railway. In fact, that was an argument that was used to me as a personal friend of the hon. member to try and persuade him, if he did not vote for the railway, not to oppose it. Now, I say he was returned in spite of that by a

majority there, and he has had a majority there every time. Now, I will deal with the arguments which have been brought forward in favour of this syndicate building the railway. There were numbers of the leaseholders who were miners in the district, some of whom, I might say, had gained fortunes and lost fortunes in mines in that particular district, who are the strongest supporters you could find of the hon. member for Flinders, and who will do anything to assist him and members of this House to get a State-owned railway constructed through the district. In the face of that information, the hon. member for Carpentaria could not prove that many of these leaseholders were in favour of this syndicate railway. I venture to say—and I can make the assertion without fear of contradiction from them personally—that they are totally opposed to the syndicate railways on principle, although, no doubt, many of them think that if a syndicate railway were made there, they would be able to sell out, make a profit, and clear out. The hon. member for Carpentaria also tried to accuse the hon. member for Flinders of saying that Normanton was covered by water in the wet season. The hon. member for Flinders made the statement that from thirty to forty miles of the country over which this line would pass is almost invariably covered by water in the wet season, and in a severe wet season the water comes up to the top of the telegraph posts. I made that statement from a platform in Cloncurry, and when my speech was over, we had the railway committee, one after the other, getting up and holding a discussion amongst themselves. In fact, I may say that I tried to draw them, because I wanted information. The secretary first made a speech, and then the vice-president made a speech diametrically different. The opinion of men in that township, and even men in that district, was contradictory, and it was just like the Government or the Minister for Railways introducing this Bill, or like the hon. member for Bulloo. If he wants any concession to the pastoralists in the South-western country, that country is the most God-forsaken part of Queensland, but if he wants a railway put there it is the garden of Queensland.

Mr. LEAHY : It is most God-forsaken now.

Mr. REID : It is just the same with these people, who, like the hon. member for Carpentaria, state that the country is so bad that they do not believe that it would pay the country to build it, and therefore why not induce a syndicate to invest money in it?

Mr. FORSYTH : I did not say that.

Mr. REID : Now, the hon. member this afternoon said that he was astonished at the hon. member for Flinders being against a syndicate building this railway. After the description that the hon. member for Flinders had given of that part of the country in the Gulf, he said he was astonished that the hon. member should oppose it. On what ground? Because the syndicate would come in to build a line that the State would lose money upon, the hon. member for Flinders was to open his arms to receive them and swindle them at the same time. That was what the hon. member for Carpentaria stated. The hon. member for Flinders and myself interjected at the time, "was that his style," and he repeated it, and he said he could not understand any member in this House opposing the syndicate building this line, because he thought we would lose money on it. Well, there are two or three ways of looking at that. As I stated, many of that railway committee were of opinion that it would not pay the State to build that line through there, and many of them thought that it would pay well. Now, the hon. member for Flinders, like myself, knows the Flinders

country, and he thinks it would be better for Queensland if the railway went down the Flinders and from Hughenden to Cloncurry. I say for the hon. member for Carpentaria, or any member in this House or any representative of the public, to say that we should hold out inducement to a syndicate to build this railway, because we think that if the State built it we should lose money shows a state of political and commercial morality which, to say the least of it, is new to me.

Mr. FORSYTH: I did not make that statement.

Mr. REID: I say that the hon. member did make that statement, and he repeated it.

Mr. FORSYTH: I did not.

Mr. REID: Now, I am not a kind of Dr. Talmage, lecturer, and I am not going to lecture anyone on morality. I am not going to put myself up as better than any other member, but certainly it is new to me for public men to get up in their places here, and argue that if we believe that country is so bad that a railway through it cannot possibly pay we should entice a syndicate to come here to lose money on it. That is certainly getting very low down. It is getting down that low that we are nearly as bad as the original holders of the soil in Australia. I say our morality and our commercial standards must be getting very low. I shall certainly raise my voice against that standard of morality being held up in this House, and an inducement being held out to people to come here to lose their money, because we are afraid to lose our own.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It was not put forward at all.

Mr. REID: I say it was. I took a note of it at the time, and it has been repeated by every member on the Government side.

Mr. FORSYTH: I quoted the language of the hon. member for Flinders.

Mr. REID: The Minister for Railways, and in fact every member on that side who has spoken, used that argument. The members on this side took up the position that these concessions were not asked for to develop this particular district that this railway would go into, but for the syndicate to make the best of them whether it paid or not. I pointed out that I did not believe that a line from the Gulf to Cloncurry would pay. We were told repeatedly with regard to every one of these Bills, that we should allow the syndicate to lose their money if they chose, as it was their business not ours. I say in the name of the people who sent us here we must have some standard, not only for outsiders, but also amongst ourselves, and I should just as conscientiously oppose trying to lead a syndicate to waste their money as I would oppose the Government building a line on the same conditions; and I say we are doing our duty in opposing the holding out of any such inducement in the name of the colony. We must not shut our eyes to the fact that it is not only the British Colonial Railways Corporation, Limited, as it is called in the Bill, but it will go forth that the Legislative Assembly of Queensland introduced this as a public Bill, and in the name of the Parliament of Queensland they will float this on the London market. Therefore, in considering this matter, we must bear in mind that if these privileges are granted they will be used in the name of the people of Queensland to float the concern. Suppose it is successful for a time, and suppose after a few years the syndicates commence to lose money, and the majority of them become a failure, then the reaction will set in, and the Parliament of Queensland will be held up in the same way as it has been held up in connection with the Queensland National Bank, and we shall have financial articles written in the

same strain about the Government as about those financial institutions. According to the financial papers in the old country, it smells rather strong in the nostrils of the British investor.

Mr. LEAHY: It depends on the kind of nose.

Mr. REID: There is just this difference between this Bill and the ordinary gold-mining lease. In connection with the ordinary mining lease there are mining laws laying down certain conditions under which investors can come in, but we do not pass special Bills to give them special concessions. This Bill is a sort of blessing on this syndicate to go forth in the name of Parliament—"We are too poor to build the railways. For heaven's sake, build them for us, and we will give you our blessing." In this Bill you are giving them 5,000 acres for fifty years; you exempt them from all labour conditions; you are giving them 10,000 acres of freehold; and you are exempting them from all taxation; you are giving them ten acres at Port Norman, and other concessions which other people putting their money into the mining industry don't get.

The PREMIER: And then you believe it won't pay?

Mr. REID: I say these concessions may put the syndicate in such a position that they may float the company for such an amount as may pay the original shareholders the same as the Chillagoe Company. The hon. member for Carpentaria told us this afternoon that the Chillagoe Company had done nothing by which the public of Queensland would fall in. I have been informed since he made the statement that there were 480 original shares of £200 each, and they were paid up to £75 each, and afterwards they were supposed to go up to £1,800 each, and yet in the interval there was not one of those shares sold.

Mr. LEAHY: You are quite wrong. There were shares sold in Brisbane.

Mr. FORSYTH: There were plenty sold. I have got some myself, if you want to know. There were any quantity sold in Brisbane at all prices.

Mr. REID: It was stated by the hon. member that the public had not been taken in. If the hon. member for Carpentaria and the hon. member for Bulloo were original shareholders at £200, and only paid up to £75, and in the interval their shares had gone up to £1,800, and were floated on the market at that figure, the individual who paid the £1,800 fell in to what the hon. member for Carpentaria and the hon. member for Bulloo would. The information I have here was got from the Supreme Court, and there is no record of any shares having gone from the original holders to the general public. If the information is wrong at the Supreme Court there is no way of getting it unless one could get it from a shareholder or from the manager.

Mr. LEAHY: Go to the Stock Exchange.

Mr. REID: No doubt if I quoted stock exchange evidence here it would be contradicted. That information is taken from the Supreme Court, but it seems to be wrong. In fact, there is nothing right about the Chillagoe syndicate except what the hon. member for Bulloo and the hon. member for Carpentaria inform the House.

Mr. LEAHY: I never said anything of the sort.

Mr. REID: By interjection. If an hon. member makes a statement it is directly contradicted, and it seems to me that those two hon. gentlemen are the only source of information in connection with the Chillagoe syndicate.

Mr. LEAHY: I only want to put you right.

Mr. REID: I am glad the hon. member for Bulloo is so anxious to keep me straight. I hope he will keep those people who got the £200 shares straight too. The hon. member for Carpentaria told us that all progressive legislators change

their policy. There is nothing wonderful in that; but they are changing their policy every day. We have had the same old Government turning the handle for years, and the music comes out like it does from a musical box.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Does not that apply to the Labour party?

Mr. REID: No, the Labour party, right or wrong, has stuck to their policy all the time, but the Government at every wind that blows gets up a new sail and floats in at every change. If the policy does not suit they get a leader, and when the leader fails they get a policy; and if both leader and policy fail they chuck them both over and get a fresh policy and a fresh leader and go swimming along as before. There is not a member of the Cabinet but has changed his policy nearly as often as he has changed his shirt. The syndicate policy that has been introduced

by the present Government has [8 p.m.] entirely changed the whole policy of the country, and on that ground the Labour party are totally opposed to it. Our experience from the first settlement of the colony all points to the desirability of the railways being owned by the State, and the only one excuse offered by the Premier in favour of this policy is that he cannot borrow money for railway construction. The Premier in an interjection the other night asked me what about my friend Kruger.

The PREMIER: Do you feel annoyed?

Mr. FORSYTH: Aristocratic company.

Mr. REID: The Premier no doubt thought it was a very smart remark, and the junior member for Maryborough also thought himself very funny and clever in repeating it, but I would just say, that the opinion I hold of Kruger is the same as I hold of the present Government.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You must be in love with the present Government.

Mr. REID: I have no more regard for Kruger than I have for the present Government or their policy, and the plea of Kruger in regard to this matter of syndicate railways is exactly the same as that made by the Government here to-day. He did not know where to get the money with which to build railways, he said, and therefore he invited private syndicates to come in.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: He was a huge syndicate himself, and commandeered two millions.

Mr. REID: I quite admit that he was a big syndicate himself.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Then why say he had no money?

The PREMIER: You should not back down on your friend?

Mr. REID: I never back down on anybody, but as for having any regard for that gentleman I just have the same regard for him as I have for any other boodler either inside or outside of Parliament. He was simply an agent for syndicates which proved the greatest curse that ever entered his country. I am just as convinced that a similar policy introduced here will have similar results as it has had in South Africa. The more you look into the history of civilised countries the more you must be convinced that the syndicate is the greatest curse that they have suffered from. No country which has permitted syndicates to flourish has been free from the curse of corruption and all the evils which are attendant upon it. It is unnecessary for me to quote illustrations—it is useless to quote figures. That has been done over and over again. The fact remains that wherever syndicates have been introduced for this purpose, and for many others, they have proved a heavy spot in the policy of any country.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: You have to prove it. That is an indictment of private enterprise under which the world has progressed for hundreds of years.

Mr. REID: We know that private enterprise has helped the world to progress for hundreds of years, and I would point out, also, that vice has helped the world to progress, because from vice in others we gather lessons which we take to heart. No doubt this syndicate will spend money in the country, introduce population, and increase trade and commerce. No doubt it will give the colony a fillip, and send it ahead, but then, we know that when this has once taken place, when once we have settled down to the policy, the harvest will have to be reaped, and the people will then begin to feel the pinch. I contend, therefore, that on broad general grounds the introduction of syndicates of this description can have no good effect on the progress of the colony. The hon. member for Carpentaria says we have to choose between a syndicate railway or no railway. I did not know he was the mouthpiece of the Government, and I think if what he says is true we ought to have that announcement from the Premier. The people of Cloncurry are told by the member for Carpentaria that they can have a syndicate railway or no railway. I do not think that is a position in which to place men who have spent two-thirds of their lives in the district in their efforts to develop it. I know some of those men personally, and I contend that that is a most unfair position in which to place them. Now, I have not the slightest objection to a railway going from Port Norman to Cloncurry, and I should be very much astonished if anyone was opposed to it, but I am in this position; that I am convinced, from my own knowledge of the Flinders route, having travelled over it and three parts of the Gulf route, that a railway down the Flinders would be one of the best paying concerns that Queensland could go in for. We are told that it would put the Cloncurry people at a disadvantage. I admit that; but in the development of any new country we cannot have a railway to every man's back door. I admit that Port Norman is the natural port for the Gulf. No sane man would deny it. But it is not a matter whether it is an outlet, or the only outlet. We have to look at these matters, not so much from a district point of view as from the point of view of what is best for the whole colony. I think the hon. member for Flinders and I agree upon this point: that a railway down the Flinders would be a better investment than any other railway that could be built in Queensland. The only other railway that would really pay would be the proposed line from Kilkivan Junction to Nanango. It has been pointed out that the route to which I now refer would be through country which is highly suitable for artesian boring. Water has been struck there at depths varying from 3,000 feet to about 100 feet. There is no country that I know of in Queensland—and I know a good deal of the back country pretty well now—that is more favourable to close settlement than the country between Hughenden and Cloncurry, and, if we are limited as to funds, we should certainly build this line down the Flinders to Cloncurry, even if it does compel the people of Cloncurry to go to Townsville or Bowen instead of to Normanton. As a matter of fact, more than half the goods that are now consumed in Cloncurry are taken by team from Hughenden, in spite of the nearness to Normanton. I have spoken to teamsters and business people there, and they have told me that for four months in the year you could not get a teamster to carry goods from Normanton to Cloncurry for less than £50 a ton, on account of the heavy rains and the fact that a great deal of the

country is flooded. Down the Flinders, on the other hand, there is no fear of that kind of thing, as there is no flooded country to go over, and there are only about a couple of watercourses that would trouble you between Hughenden and Cloncurry. I support the construction of the line from Hughenden to Cloncurry in preference to the proposed line from Normanton, because I know that it would pay better. I am astonished that the people of the North have been so long suffering with regard to the present Government as to allow the North to be handed over to syndicates. There is no proposal to build a syndicate railway in Central or Southern Queensland, but the North is to be put into the hands of the syndicates to be exploited just as they like. No wonder the Northern members object to this.

**THE PREMIER:** The people of the North like it. **MR. REID:** Well, from my knowledge of the people of the North they do not like it, and, looking at the fact that the Northern members sitting on this side, and who represent the majority of the people of the North, are opposed to this policy, I think we may reasonably infer that the people of the North do not like being handed over to syndicates. I oppose syndicate railways also from a defence point of view. Some day this line will be a portion of the main trunkline to the Gulf, and yet it is proposed to put it in the hands of a private syndicate. Another thing which I fear may result from handing over the North to these syndicates is that we may see Miss Shaw's prophecy come to pass. The special correspondent of the *Times*, when she was out here, was very anxious to point out how it would benefit the investors to develop the North by means of black labour, and she pointed out that a tropical country like that would encourage the creation of a white aristocracy and a servile population to develop its resources. Now, if we give all these concessions to powerful syndicates, they will no doubt use their influence with the black labour party to draw a line across the colony and hand over the North to these rapacious syndicates that are being created by the present Government. Even from a Southern point of view, and from the progressive point of view which the hon. member for Carpentaria was so anxious to dwell upon, I say that any man who makes a study of the question from the point of view of progress, could not conscientiously vote for such proposals as these, owing to the position they place the North in. The hon. member for Carpentaria is opposed to the construction of the line from Hughenden to Cloncurry, because he considers it would be an injustice to the people in the Cloncurry district. I would ask what right that hon. member has to get up in this House and challenge the right of the hon. member for Flinders and myself to advocate the construction of the railway down the Flinders. The hon. member certainly made an able speech from his point of view, and I must congratulate him upon some of the statements that he made, and admit that he gave some very good facts from his standpoint; but, at the same time, we must not forget that he looks at the matter purely from a commercial point of view, and we must also remember that the Premier has already announced that he is going to introduce, during the present session, a Bill to extend the line from Hughenden to Richmond. The hon. member for Carpentaria asked the hon. member for Flinders how that line would benefit the Etheridge. Well, I will tell him. When once those eighty miles of railway are constructed from Hughenden to Richmond, it is no great distance to the Woolgar, and I have no doubt that it will result in the employment of hundreds of men on that field where

at present there are now only dozens, and it is only a day's ride over the range from Woolgar to Gilberton on the Lower Etheridge. Although there is an exceedingly bad range to cross, yet they were able to take a boiler over it. Now, if that line is built to Richmond, it will be a further argument against the construction of this syndicate railway. There is one peculiarity about the speeches of hon. members on the other side—from those of the Secretary for Railways and the Premier down to the humblest member who has spoken—and that is that they all point out the great advantage that private railways have over State railways. They are continually referring to America, to England, and to every other country where there are private railways. Now, if these lines should turn out a success, there is a danger that those hon. members—or others holding the same views—will simply be sent here as the agents of syndicates. Look at the hold that this syndicate will have over the Cloncurry district, if they get this Bill through. The hon. member for Flinders and the hon. member for Carpentaria, and the hon. members for whatever other electorates they may go into, will simply be returned by this company.

**THE PREMIER:** But they may return Labour members.

**MR. REID:** There is no certainty that they will return Labour members. We see that in Mount Morgan. There, owing to families being settled in the town, their bosses look after them so well, and trot them up to the poll, that the workers there are afraid to vote against the sitting member; therefore he is always returned. This Cloncurry syndicate will practically have the same monopoly—the same power. They will take possession of the whole district, and have the power to absolutely wipe out all the business people of Cloncurry. They will have power to put up warehouses and shops, and introduce the "truck" system. There will be nothing to bar them doing anything except hanging people. They can practically starve people and turn them out of the district if they choose. I am astonished that the Cloncurry people have not looked into the merits of this Bill, because it means that this company will be allowed to do just as they like. The business people there will be bought over or ruined, just as this company chooses. Hon. members opposite are continually upholding the benefits of private railways as against State lines.

**MR. LEAHY:** No.

**MR. REID:** I would like to know any hon. member on that side who has spoken who has not praised up private railways against State railways. From the Premier down to the Minister for Railways, from the Minister for Railways down to the hon. member for Mackay, from the hon. member for Mackay down to the hon. members for Bulloo and Woothakata—

**AN HONOURABLE MEMBER:** And the hon. member for Nundah.

**MR. REID:** No; that is going too low down. Everyone of these hon. members has stood up and pointed out the benefits of private railways as against State railways.

**MR. LEAHY:** No.

**MR. REID:** Then I must be getting very dense or stupid, but I think hon. members opposite are so enthusiastic about these private railways that they don't know exactly what statements they make. The hon. member for Carpentaria told us about the great benefits Canada had derived from private railways; but we have not been told the other side of the matter—nothing about what happened in Sir John MacDonald's time. The Premier has repeated over and over again the benefits that private railways have been to America. We will all admit that private railways in America give cheap transit;



but, from an industrial point of view, they prejudicially affect industries, and lock up capital. According to the latest statistics, two millions of money have been spent on private railways in America, from which no return has been received. Then, again, influence in all directions has been brought to bear on State legislators there by these private railway companies. Cheap transit in connection with commerce is not everything. You must take the general benefits, and compare them with the general losses in this connection.

The PREMIER: In this case the benefits will counterbalance the losses.

Mr. REID: I don't think so. I have read all the literature I can find—in magazines and elsewhere—on the subject of private railways, and the general opinion is that these private railways have on the whole been a curse to America. The evil influence of these private railway companies in America is everywhere pointed out. Even when Jay Gould died, we find that even the pious man who then ran the *Brisbane Observer* had not a good word to say for him. Well, I believe that even if the devil was to die, someone would have a good word to say for him.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He never dies.

Mr. REID: The *Brisbane Observer*, we find, had not a good word to say for Jay Gould—that great railway millionaire—because he was a private enterpriser, a syndicate runner for all he was worth. Now we have the example of the Chillagoe Company. They have pressed the small man down, and have distributed their shares anyhow. That is how America has been ruined. I do not think it is necessary for me to refer to the corruption in America any further. Some hon. members on the other side have objected to the innuendoes thrown out by hon. members on this side with regard to bribes being taken or offered to hon. members of this House. I may say that I do not know any hon. member who has been offered or has taken a bribe from any private syndicate company. But there are hon. members in this Parliament who are shareholders in private syndicates, and they may be so influenced that they will be inclined to vote for further concessions to these companies. But it does not necessarily follow that a man in so doing is dishonest. They may be perfectly honest; but, all the same, I say that the colony may be getting cheated and swindled out of its wealth by granting further concessions to these private syndicates. Influence will overcome principle in that way. I have no doubt that not only shareholders in the Chillagoe Company are influenced in this way, but also others who are in the same swim. The hon. member for Carpentaria was very anxious to tell us that the Victorian Minister for Mines was in

[8.30 p.m.] favour of private railways, and that he had advised us that if we could not build our own railways there was no reason why we should not allow syndicates to come in and build those railways for us. We know that the Chillagoe Company has been more or less run in Melbourne, and the Victorian Minister for Mines may possibly be interested in these syndicates. What then could be more natural than for that gentleman when he is visiting the colony to state in reply to the questions of an interviewer that if the Government cannot build railways to develop the resources of the colony we should allow private enterprise or syndicates to come in and construct our railways? That is a very good illustration of how public men may be influenced in the formation of their opinions. We have also had examples of that lately in this

colony. We have had correspondence and prospectuses read in this House, from which we have seen how a report of an officer of the Mines Department was doctored in order to mislead the public. We have seen how public men who pride themselves on their probity of character and on the incorruptibility of the State of Queensland, have been misled because they shut their eyes and accepted positions in companies which would bring them in so many guineas per sitting. Those gentlemen may be the most honourable men we have in the community, and I am not going to say anything against them in that respect. I simply wish to point out that public men who hold those positions and have seats in either one Chamber or the other may be influenced by their self-interest when a question of granting a concession to their own particular syndicate comes to a vote in Parliament. In nineteen cases out of twenty a man in such a position will support the granting of a concession to the syndicate he may represent.

Mr. LEAHY: Does that apply to members of Parliament voting their own salaries?

Mr. REID: No, it does not do anything of the kind. Members voting their own salaries may be influenced to give a selfish vote; but that does not influence them as to the principle that is being laid down that a man shall be paid the value of his labour.

Mr. LEAHY: It is not laid down that they shall fix the amount of their salaries.

Mr. REID: The constituents send members here, and the House has to put up with them. The hon. member says it is not laid down that members shall fix the amount of their salaries themselves. There is no other power to fix those salaries. Are we going to allow the Government to do it, or is the hon. member for Bulloo to do it? Who is going to settle it, if this House does not do it? There is no analogy between that and the case to which I was referring. I am not glad that those gentlemen were misled, nor am I glad that the company doctored the report they got from the Mines Department, but I am glad that the exposure of their action has come so soon to warn the people against these syndicates. Why should men who are in Government positions use their weight and influence with the Government to grant these concessions? Is it not the case that in all legislatures more or less some strong man is picked out for the position of director or agent of a company in order that he may try to influence the Government? Why, in this very correspondence which we have before us with reference to the railway now before the House there is one letter dated from the Legislative Council. These things show that the public of the colony should keep their eyes open. I had several other things to say, but I do not suppose the heavens will fall if I do not say them. I wish, however, to refer to one other matter. The hon. member for Carpentaria has an inclination to be dogmatic when he is dealing with figures, and he was very strong in his statements this afternoon when referring to something the hon. member for Croydon had said in connection with Burns, Philp, and Co., and the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company. The hon. member in very strong terms denied the statement of the hon. member for Croydon that the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company had a monopoly. During last session there was a debate on this very question. The people of Croydon, Normanton, and other places in that part of the colony were suffering from some disease, as I may call it, brought about by the Government. They had no mail coming overland, and they had a very unsatisfactory service by sea. The hon. members for Croydon, Burke, and Carpentaria waited on the



Government and got those things remedied. During the discussion which took place in the House the hon. member for Croydon said—

There was not the slightest doubt that, as the Premier said last year, and as hon. members knew, the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company had practically a monopoly. He admitted that the department had been fighting that monopoly, but in the meantime the people of the Gulf had had to suffer. During the discussion of the matter the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce had chipped in with all sorts of requests and stipulations as to cargo, and the federal difficulty, differential rates, and all sorts of obstacles had been brought into the matter. He agreed that the department had been trying to put an end to the monopoly, but, as the *Telegraph* had pointed out, they had the matter in their own hands, and he remembered that two years ago Sir Hugh Nelson had said that he would not allow any steamship company to run the Government. The Hon. T. J. Byrnes said the same after he had been up North.

The speaker who followed was the hon. member for Carpentaria, and this is what he said, altogether different from what he said this afternoon—

He entirely endorsed the remarks made by the hon. member for Croydon—that there was a monopoly, that the people of the Gulf were not being properly treated.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is as far as a mail service is concerned—a very different thing.

Mr. REID: How can any steamship company hold a monopoly of mail service? When the Government give this service to a steamship company and pay them a subsidy for carrying the mails they create a monopoly. What is the difference in the monopoly in this case? Now, Mr. Forsyth said further—

He thought it would be a good thing to give somebody else an opportunity to tender, because the Government had practically been coerced into accepting any price the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company might ask. Ten or twelve years ago the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company were running a weekly service for £5,000 a year; afterwards they ran a fortnightly service for £2,750 a year. When the company sent in tenders they wanted £5,000 for a monthly service, £9,000 for a three-weekly service, or £18,000 for a weekly service. Those figures were absolutely absurd and exorbitant.

And, further than that, we have the present Chief Secretary getting up and, even in stronger terms, denouncing the company as a monopoly, and saying that they would not be dictated to by the company. And, as showing how monopolies can grow, and how these syndicates may grow, I will quote a sentence or two of the Chief Secretary as one argument against the present syndicate railways that this House is granting. He says—

One had been referred to by the hon. member for Croydon and the hon. member for Carpentaria, and that was that the department had to contend against a very powerful monopoly with the view of obtaining a contract which would be fair to the State, and that obstacle had been largely increased by the fact that this company possessed the only lightering plant in the Gulf. The Government had been approached by other steamboat proprietors from time to time, and they had had hopes that something would come of the negotiations which were initiated, but unfortunately those negotiations did not arrive at anything like a complete state, and the Government were, therefore, compelled to fall back upon these monopolists—

Strong terms for Government members to use, when they have been objecting to members on this side of the House talking about syndicates—

and obtain the best terms they could possibly obtain. Another difficulty was that the headquarters of the company who possessed this plant were not in Brisbane, and the local manager of the company had no power to treat directly with the Government, but had to submit everything for consideration to the head office in the southern colonies. The company were all-powerful for the purposes of this contract, and wished to dictate their own terms, which it was the duty of the department to resist in the interest of the whole community.

Now I say that these arguments used by the Chief Secretary and the hon. member for Carpentaria against this monopoly, that was strangling enterprise in the Gulf then, could be just as strongly brought against the private syndicates that the Government are willing to hand the Gulf over to now. In fact, between the private syndicates and the monopoly of the present steamship company, the people of the Gulf will be ten times worse off than they would be without a railway. Even the people of Cloncurry will be worse off than they are at the present time. As I pointed out to the station-owners of Cloncurry when they waited upon me, this private railway Bill is so drawn that the syndicate could charge over 50 per cent. more than the rates the Government were charging. Now, could the people of the Gulf, who already have to send their cattle out *via* Townsville or South Australia, even under the conditions that may exist at any time during the drought—how are these station-owners in that district going to fare under the thumb of this syndicate? During the present drought the Government have carried cattle, sheep, and horses for station-owners at rates simply to pay working expenses. They have carried this stock from the drought-stricken districts, and they have carried goods from the coast into the interior. How will these cattle-owners fare under this syndicate which can charge 50 per cent. more than the Government rates? They will be strangled by the company, which will take advantage of them in the same way as the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company took advantage of the pastoralists during the present drought. The produce which went from Brisbane and from the South was charged a great deal higher rates than were charged when there was no drought.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: A hundred per cent. more.

Mr. REID: Owing to the amount of produce sent in, of course, the boats got filled up, and, as one hon. gentleman says, they charged 100 per cent. more than they did at a usual time, while the Government were carrying produce as low as they possibly could. That is what the people and the financial institutions gained by having State railways. It has been stated that the Gulf country cannot carry sheep. Clonagh is the only place where sheep have been tried with anything like success. On the other stations they have been a failure. I know from conversations I have had with the manager of Clonagh and others, that sheep have not been too great a success there. Now, looking at it from a cattle point of view, how are these cattle-owners going to compete with other cattle-owners, who send in cattle to the coast, if they have to pay 50 per cent. more than the rates charged on the Government railways? I say that once these people feel the pressure of the 50 per cent. on the private railway they will see that instead of encouraging this monopoly they should have gone dead against it. We have been told by hon. members that we have nothing to do with posterity. I claim that we have something to do with posterity. We are fighting now so severely, because many people before us have been the same as the present Government, and were willing to sell the rights of the people to any syndicate that might come along. They simply sold concessions one after the other, until these monopolies became so strong that they were the greatest dangers to the civil liberties of the people. Now I say in regard to the stand that the Labour party are taking that although the Government may put us down by their majority, by brute force as far as numbers are concerned, so far as arguments go, and so far as the benefits to the country are concerned—I say the arguments

on this side of the House have been all against the concessions being granted to these companies, and I trust that the Government, even at the last hour, will open their eyes to the wrong and to the evil that they are doing. In fact, I hope that now is the accepted time, now is the hour of salvation, if the Government will only take advantage of it. If they do not take advantage of it, they may go down to perdition and take with them their own sins and the sins of all the private syndicates on their shoulders.

The PREMIER: Yours, too.

Mr. REID: I will certainly give them my consolation in the position into which they will be hurled in the near future when the people of this colony wake up. I have no doubt that the people will put them out of office, and send in a party that will hand over the benefit and the welfare of the whole community to private syndicates.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. LEAHY (*Bulloo*): The hon. member who has just sat down is a very old member of this House in some respects. He has been out of the House for some years, and he has been back in it for a month or two. I am sure that he has not lost any of his dialectical skill. It is always a pleasure to listen to the hon. member. He complimented the hon. member for Carpentaria upon the speech that he made. I think we all compliment the hon. member, for the speech which he made was founded upon facts. The hon. member's facts were well marshalled, his arguments were clearly stated, and his conclusions carefully drawn; and I would have been glad if the hon. member for Enoggera had followed on the same lines and given us a logical speech. However, he made the best of a bad case, and I doubt if many other members would have set forth a better abstract case than the hon. member did to-night, but most of the time he hedged round the question, and did not come to the point at issue. It was the same old story and the same arguments we have often heard before. It reminded me of the time eight years ago when I first had the pleasure of hearing the hon. member use the same platitudes. The argument has been one long argument against private enterprise. What has built up, not only the Australian colonies but the British Empire, and any other country in the world, ancient or modern, but private enterprise?

Mr. HARDACRE: He was arguing against syndicates.

Mr. LEAHY: The hon. gentleman was not speaking to-night altogether against syndicates, but against private enterprise in every shape and form.

Mr. REID: No.

Mr. LEAHY: We know how anxious they were eight years ago to settle people on the lands of the colony according to their own ideas. We know they were taken up beyond Dalby and started with the State Treasury at their disposal; and we know what an absolute and complete failure was that settlement on the hon. gentleman's lines inside of six months. That is the kind of doctrine he still wishes to preach. Then we had another exhibition, as the hon. member for Mackay frequently points out, in South America; and it was a complete failure inside three weeks, if not in three days. We know it has been tested in other places at different times, and has proved an absolute failure; and they want us to follow on lines that have proved a failure for no other purpose than to satisfy a fad they have.

Mr. STEWART: Is squatting a fad?

Mr. LEAHY: There has been squatting since the days of Abraham, only the difference is that squatting at the present day is tempered with selection. The question of the construction of

railways by private enterprise is mixed up in the whole of the Bills brought forward; and as I have already spoken on the question at some length, it is not necessary for me to go into the question now before the House to the same extent as if I had not spoken on the subject. However, there are issues in this Bill that do not apply to the same extent in the case of the other Bills. This question may be argued from a variety of points. The hon. member raked up the old bogey about corruption in America. That was gone into fully by the hon. member for Brisbane South the other night, and it is not necessary to go into it again; but I think it is necessary to some extent, if there is evidence which will assist the House in coming to a conclusion—evidence which has not already been given—that it should be given so as to allow the public to form their own conclusions from the evidence. We do not always limit ourselves to the experience of our own colony, or even to that of the neighbouring colonies, in dealing with questions that come up for consideration; and it is the practice here and elsewhere to send men to other countries to obtain special information on different subjects. For instance, the Government of Victoria sent Mr. Mathieson home last year to study the question of grain-lifting in America, and we have sent men to different parts of the world to acquire information on various subjects. And this question of private railways should not be treated differently from those other things in that respect; that is to say, we should get information as to how it applies to other countries similarly circumstanced to ourselves, especially with regard to the standard of wages and the standard of civilisation. The leader of the Labour party in a moderate, temperate, and able speech the other night—a speech removed from any kind of personal abuse, which is always to be commended, in which respect I shall endeavour to follow him—

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear! We will draw you. We won't lead you astray.

Mr. LEAHY: If the hon. member does draw me he must take the consequences. In the first place, I should like to point out, that it is extraordinary that in going to other colonies for what has been done in connection with the construction of private railways, the hon. gentleman should have gone to South Australia for information on the working of private railways in New South Wales. The whole of the railway from Cobar to Broken Hill is in New South Wales, and yet the hon. member went to South Australia. Why did he not go to New South Wales and tell us, from official sources, about those private lines?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: How many are there in New South Wales?

Mr. LEAHY: There are four private railways in New South Wales, at all events, and the hon. gentleman said the other day there was none.

Mr. BROWNE: No.

Mr. LEAHY: There are a great many more than four. And not only in New South Wales, but in every other British colony, there is not a single one that has not gone in more strongly for private railways than Queensland is going in for them at the present time. There is a thousand

miles of railway being constructed [9 p.m.] in Canada at the present time on this principle, and the hon. member for Carpentaria pointed out that a line is now going through the Victorian Parliament of the same character. Then, again, with the sanction of the Government, private railways are going through in New South Wales also. Do hon. members opposite dispute that? Do they know that there was a line passed as late as last December by the New South Wales Parliament?

Mr. TURLEY: Never built.

Mr. LEAHY: The hon. member says, "Never built." How could it be built since last December. Another line was passed in July. How could that have been built by this time? It is the principle that I am speaking of, and I want to impress upon hon. members opposite that it is not only the Governments of Victoria and Canada who are sanctioning these particular lines, but our neighbour, New South Wales, also. The oldest and richest colony of the group, the colony which is six times as closely settled as Queensland, and has three times the population, is endorsing the principle of privately-owned railways. I actually hold in my hands the Bills which they have recently passed. I do not make bald assertions which I cannot substantiate. It is true they are not long Bills, and that they do not deal with any great mileage of railway, but that is a further argument in favour of private railways; that is to say, that if the line is only six or eight or ten miles long it cannot be argued that the colony of New South Wales cannot afford to build it, but when we find the mother colony, the richest and most thickly populated in the group, consenting to build these railways by private enterprise, then, I say, it is a strong endorsement of the principle. They evidently approve of the principle under certain conditions.

Mr. STEWART: Let us know what they are.

Mr. LEAHY: I will let the hon. member know what they are. They may be lines of railway to mines. I believe they are, and that makes the analogy more perfect than ever.

Mr. KIDSTON: The one proposed to be built here is 250 miles in length, with branch lines eighty or ninety miles long.

Mr. LEAHY: Here is a Bill assented to on the 25th July, 1900, seven or eight weeks ago, to enable Samuel Clift and John Henry Adams, in the colony of Queensland, to construct a certain line. Actually, they are Queenslanders going to exploit the colony of New South Wales. Hon. members opposite, by their pettifoggish behaviour, are actually driving people out of this colony, and they have to go to New South Wales, where there is a Government kept in power by a Labour party, in order to find investment for money which if they had the chance they would invest in Queensland.

Mr. DAWSON: They have gone there to capture New South Wales.

Mr. LEAHY: This Bill contains all the necessary provisions for the carriage of passengers, and goods, and cattle, and in every detail is complete so far as the protection of the public is concerned.

Mr. KIDSTON: How many miles?

Mr. LEAHY: I have already stated that it is a short mileage, but I quote it merely as a proof of the principle being favoured in that colony. I think it is six and a-half miles in length. Here is another one which was passed and assented to last December, and there is another going through the House at the present time. There is the Caperty Tramway Bill, the second reading of which was carried on the voices—carried by a Government which, as I have said, is kept in power by a Labour party who are the friends of hon. members opposite. So that whatever may be the case in Queensland, it is a remarkable fact that opposition to private railways is not a plank in the platform of the Labour party of New South Wales. Then, there is the Stamford Coalmine Bill, providing for the construction of a line six and a-half miles in length. Surely, that is on all fours with the Callide Railway Bill.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Oh, no.

Mr. LEAHY: That was also carried on the voices, and the second reading carried on the

22nd June. There is also the Cobar Copper Mining Bill debated and carried on the voices, and supported by Labour members.

Mr. BROWNE: What does all this prove?

Mr. LEAHY: I thought I had reduced my argument to the level of a calculating monkey, but I find I have not, and must again impress upon hon. members that it proves that the principle of private railways is endorsed in New South Wales. If the New South Wales Government had not money enough to build that railway, they could, like our friends in the Gulf, have said that it was a necessity, and that they were prepared to accept any railway, private enterprise or otherwise. The New South Wales Government could have thrown their principles to the winds like the Labour party in the Gulf, who have said that they do not care so long as a railway of some kind is built. But they did not. They approved of the general principle. The members of the Labour party in the Gulf apparently, as soon as they became possessed of an allotment, became boodlers, and were ready to throw up their platform as soon as they saw a chance of a railway of any kind. The hon. member for Carpentaria dwelt upon the fact that private railways are permitted in Canada, and I wish to say a word about the corruption to which hon. members opposite have referred so much. Corruption to them is the source of all evils. If corruption is so rampant wherever private railways are constructed, how is it that the people of Canada still endorse the principle? The very persons who bullied Sir John McDonald out of office on account of his connection with private railways, would do exactly the same thing, or would have the opportunity of doing it, in connection with other things besides railways. Corruption, or whatever it is called, is something which is inherently wrong with a man, and if you placed him in any position, whether in connection with railways or not, he would go crunk. The lengthy line which is being constructed in Canada at the present time, is not being constructed with the sanction of the Dominion Government alone, but with the sanction of the State Governments of Manitoba and Ontario. They are also concerned in it. Is it to be supposed for one moment that every man in the State and Federal Governments is corrupt?

Mr. TURLEY: All the State Governments are connected with the other lines as well.

Mr. LEAHY: That only goes to show that other Governments hold similar opinions in reference to private railways, but it does not of necessity prove that they are corrupt. Not only does one Government hold that, but the Governments of the whole of the States through which these 800 miles of railway proceed at the present time all hold it. Now, some capital has been made by the leader of the Opposition from the fact that this line differs from the other lines which have been before this House, inasmuch as it is a trunk line. Now, what is this great line of 800 miles in length in Canada if it is not a trunk line? It proceeds from Port Arthur, at the head of Lake Superior, and it traverses the very finest region in British North America. It crosses the Canadian-Pacific Railway, and proceeds north-west through Manitoba, through North-western Territory, and right through the very centre of the finest wheat-growing fields in the world.

Mr. DAWSON: And because Canada does that, are we to do it too?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It has made Canada.

Mr. LEAHY: I am not saying that because Canada does it we should do it too.

Mr. DAWSON: You said that it has made Canada.

Mr. LEAHY: I laid down the principle that if we send our Railway Commissioner and other people round to see how things are being done in other countries, and if they see that the people in another country are progressing more rapidly than we are, and are developing their country faster than we are, it is a very good thing to assume that the method of procedure in that country is worth a trial. I do not think it is sufficient of itself, but taking it in conjunction with other things, it has led to that progress in Canada.

Mr. DAWSON: Well, you have not given us any evidence of that.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LEAHY: Does the hon. gentleman want any more evidence than my word?

Mr. DAWSON: I certainly do.

Mr. LEAHY: Well, the hon. gentleman cannot get it in Queensland—that is all I can give him, and I wish I could tell him I reciprocate. The point that hon. members opposite harp most strongly upon is that these companies are to become public carriers. Now I do not think that those people want to become public carriers, but we are forcing it upon them. We are anxious that they should become public carriers for the convenience of the people who are settled in those districts, and we say that they shall only charge a moderate rate, and that rate will not be more than 25 per cent. of what those persons are paying at the present time for carriage by teams.

Mr. STEWART: Read the correspondence.

Mr. LEAHY: When I get up to make a kind of a speech, I do not wish to start reading. Hon. members and the public can read for themselves, and I decline to read documents in this House for two or three hours. We have not come into a deliberative Assembly for the purpose of reading out other people's ideas. I am not like hon. members opposite, who get a book on their brains, and they cannot digest it or generalise it, and the weight of it on their brains is so great that they cannot move under it.

Mr. DAWSON: That is why you know so little—you never read.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: He knows too much for the Opposition already.

Mr. LEAHY: I know little, but I know that the beginning of wisdom is to know that a man's knowledge is limited, and that is a stage the hon. member has not reached yet.

Mr. DAWSON: You are the wisest man on that side of the House.

Mr. REID: That is not complimentary to him.

Mr. LEAHY: I wish I was, but I think I am not. We find that in the very best portion of Queensland—the Darling Downs—the yield of wheat has only been 14·5 bushels of wheat to the acre for the last ten years, and it must be remembered that this table of "Coghlan's" was constructed before the failure of last year's crop on the Darling Downs, so that that is not included. The yield for the corresponding period in Manitoba was 19·9 bushels to the acre, and in North-western Territory 18·6 bushels to the acre, and this railway that I have been speaking of is being constructed right through the heart of that country for the purpose of becoming the carriers for the people who have settled on the soil there. This line will open up the country to Lake Cedar on the Saskatchewan, from where it comes down through North-western Territory through Winnipeg and Manitoba and Ontario to Lake Superior, connecting it through the St. Lawrence with the Atlantic Ocean and the highway of the world. That line will open up the most prolific country in British North America, and, as the hon. member for Carpentaria pointed out, we must also look at the enormous subsidy and the

enormous grants of land they are giving. Why, in those fertile districts stretching from the Saskatchewan, in addition to giving the company about 6,000 dollars per mile, the Governments are giving 12,800 acres of that fertile land per mile, and the Government of Manitoba, as the hon. member for Carpentaria pointed out, has guaranteed the full debt and 4 per cent. on it for thirty years.

Mr. DAWSON: Do you approve of that?

Mr. LEAHY: I should not approve of anything in the interest of the State while I could get better terms; but it is an open question with me whether, if that was the best offer I could get, I would entertain it or not. At all events, I am not called upon to decide that just now. It is time enough to deal with a question of that kind when it presents itself. The question at present before us is distinct and clear, and I wish to differ from hon. members on the other side by confining myself to that question.

Mr. DAWSON: Then you have some wisdom after all.

Mr. LEAHY: I think I may turn now from this illustration and come back to North Queensland, although I think these things bear very strongly upon the question all the same. The hon. member for Enoggera made one statement to-night that has caused me to rise although I had not prepared a speech. The hon. member said that we on this side preferred railways constructed by private enterprise to railways constructed by the State.

Mr. REID: I did not say you preferred them.

Mr. LEAHY: The hon. gentleman said that we thought they were better. Did he say that?

Mr. REID: No. I said that hon. members on that side were praising the advantages of private railways over those managed by the State.

Mr. LEAHY: That is exactly what I said. I may say that that is not so.

Mr. DAWSON: It is so.

Mr. LEAHY: If the State was sufficiently strong, and had sufficient funds at its disposal to develop the whole of the resources of this country, I should be one of the very first to advocate the development of the country by the State. But we are not able to develop the resources of the country, and, as I have said, New South Wales—which is a great deal older established a colony than this, which is six times as thickly populated, and which is a great deal a richer country—is proceeding on just the same lines that we are now going on.

Mr. BROWNE: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. LEAHY: Here are the Bills.

Mr. REID: They are just like the Swanbank Company's Railway.

Mr. LEAHY: There is no provision made for the Swanbank Railway Company carrying passengers if the public require it, and I can tell the hon. member another thing, and that is that in the New South Wales Bills a provision which is dear to the ears of our friends on the opposite benches has been entirely discarded by the Radical Government of New South Wales, where the Labour party holds the balance of power, and that is that in New South Wales the syndicates or contractors are not debarred from employing Chinese, Asiatics, or any kind of alien labour. There is nothing to prevent them from doing that. That safeguard is in this Bill, and the same safeguard is wanting in the other colony. That shows that the Government of this colony looks after the interests of the whole of the people. Their interest in this respect is not manifested by mere windy words, but by beneficial actions. Those are the lines we proceed on here. We know that many parts of the country are languishing for development, which can only be brought about by railway

communication, and if the Government cannot construct railways there, we should accept the proposals of private companies to build these lines, as long as the people in the districts concerned are satisfied with the terms and conditions. Under the circumstances, I think these railways, which are very necessary, and which cannot be constructed by the Government, should be constructed by private enterprise. Now we have heard a great deal about this Normanton-Cloncurry line.

Mr. KIDSTON : Not since you have risen.

Mr. LEAHY : Well, so far, not about this line itself ; but, since I have risen, the hon. member has heard a good deal about the principles that govern these lines, and he will hear something about this line before I sit down. The hon. member must remember that we proceed on methodical lines on this side of the House. It has been admitted by hon. members on both sides that it is highly necessary to develop the great mineral resources of the Cloncurry. I think so, and I also think that the only way that can be done is by railway construction. That is also admitted by hon. members on both sides. There are, then, two questions to consider : First, where shall these lines start from, and, secondly, how are they to be constructed ? Some persons say the Government should and could build this line.

MEMBERS of the Opposition : Hear, hear !

Mr. LEAHY : I believe the Government could build this line if they wanted to build it. That would not be outside the possibilities of the Government. I should be very sorry to say it was. But the Government have something more to consider than the Gulf country. They have also to consider the Southern, Central, and Western divisions of the colony. We have heard a great deal about this Normanton to Cloncurry line, and about what has the Government done for Northern Queensland ?

Mr. DAWSON : Not much.

Mr. LEAHY : The hon. member says, "Not much." Well, I will give him some figures on that point. I have here the last report of the Commissioner for Railways, and, although he does not give the exact figures, any schoolboy can work them out. Now, we live in times when we are governed by population. The national debt is calculated at so much per head—

Mr. DAWSON : I thought you said you had not prepared a speech.

Mr. LEAHY : If the hon. member thinks I have prepared a speech, he is entirely mistaken. If he thinks that I do not read up all subjects that are likely to come before this House, he is making a great mistake. I read up all matters that have to come before the House, so that I can understand them, speak on them sensibly, and then cast my vote in an intelligent manner. And you cannot do that without having full information at your command. I do not rush into the Chamber, see where the leader of the Opposition is sitting, and vote with him, without knowing the true facts. That is what hon. members opposite do.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : We are always right.

Mr. LEAHY : No. We on this side are always right. If we were not right, we would not be here. That is why our majority rules. Population is the recognised standard on all these big questions. It is the standard under the Commonwealth Bill, and it was the standard by which the representatives to the great convention down south were elected—on the broadest possible basis. Taking that as our line of comparison, what do we find with regard to railway construction ? In Northern Queensland there are 687 miles of railway ; in Central Queensland,

591 ; and in Southern Queensland, 1,522. Now, the population of Southern Queensland is 97,000 ; of the Central, 53,000.

Mr. KIDSTON : No, 58,000.

Mr. LEAHY : Of course these numbers fluctuate, but I will say 53,000 on which to base my calculation. If the people of Northern, Central, and Southern Queensland had railways in proportion to their population, Northern Queensland would have 521 miles, that is 166 miles less than they have now ; Central Queensland, 313 miles instead of 591 ; and we find that Southern Queensland has got 435 miles less than it should have, if railway construction were based on a population basis.

Mr. DAWSON : What are the returns from these lines ? The Northern is the largest.

Mr. LEAHY : The hon. member for Charters Towers is now practically setting up "boodle." He asks what about "boodle." It is only men who smoke cigars and drink champagne that he wishes to consider.

Mr. DAWSON : The railway belongs to the people of the colony.

The SPEAKER : Order !

Mr. LEAHY : Quite so ; but the railways should be considered *per capita*.

Mr. DAWSON : What about the railway returns ?

The SPEAKER : Order ! The hon. member for Bulloo is in possession of the Chair.

Mr. LEAHY : Southern Queensland is the oldest settled portion of the colony and it should have the most consideration. Yet we find the North has 166 miles more than it should have, on a population basis, and now they ask for the construction of 240 more miles of railways, while many farming and pastoral districts in the South are languishing for want of railway construction.

Mr. DAWSON : They would not pay axle-grease.

Mr. LEAHY : That is one of the false statements the hon. member is in the habit of making.

Mr. DAWSON : Then I am following your noble example.

Mr. LEAHY : If the hon. member followed my example he would be sitting here. We have had other startling exhibitions from hon. members on the other side. The leader of the Opposition said that it would never do to build this line, because it would compete with the Northern and Central line. The hon. member for Flinders told us that a line should be built not only from [9:30 p.m.] Normanton to Cloncurry, but also a line from the port of Townsville to Cloncurry. Would not the competition be a great deal worse in that case ? Another hon. member on that side told us that we should not build these lines at all because there will be competition. They object to competition, and they object to monopoly in every shape and form. If they object to competition and also object to monopoly, I want to know what there is left that they will not object to. What would they propose ? We have not had an opportunity of hearing their proposals, but we may have at some future date. So far, however, they have not during the whole of the eight years they have been here submitted one scheme with the stamp of statesmanship upon it. They have criticised everything that has been brought forward in this House by men who understand their business, and who have practical experience in the affairs of government, but they have never submitted one statesmanlike proposal to the House. If the Government were prepared to bring in a Bill to build this line from Normanton to Cloncurry, for which money was never voted, although hon. members opposite have said

it was, I should oppose it. A sum of money for that line was put in some statement some twelve or sixteen years ago in a Bill for a £10,000,000 loan, but it was never appropriated by this House for that particular purpose, and we are not bound by the hands of dead men, by the hands of politicians who have passed away to join the great majority in the happier land, I hope. Are we to be bound by what they have done? Is there to be no change? Hon. members opposite have always held themselves up as the champions of progress, but to-night we find that their policy is worse than the most obstinate form of torism; it is a policy of stagnation, which is worse than torism itself. We have heard a great deal from those hon. members about the settled policy of the country. A great philosopher, I think it was Newman—known as Cardinal Newman—said that to live is to change, and to be perfect is to change very often. But hon. members opposite have a cast-iron platform, and they stick to that platform whether it is right or wrong. I believe there is any amount of ability among those hon. members, but they cannot change their course, because they are bound to stick to their platform. They talk a great deal about liberty, but I say there has never been any slavery since the days of Herod equal to the slavery under which hon. members on the other side labour. Talk about liberty! Their whole course of action, their whole attitude, is a violation of the very fundamental principles of liberty. They come here trying to impose on this House and on the country about the position which they are not following up, and which they know they are not following up. However they may be mentally adapted to act up to it, the cast-iron principles under which they are bound make them unable to act up to that position. I say that if a Bill were brought in by the Government to construct this line from Normanton to Cloncurry I should oppose it all I could in the interests of the country as a whole, in the interest of public justice to the whole of Queensland. The hon. member for Toowoong said he would oppose it.

MR. DAWSON: Not the hon. member for Toowoong.

MR. LEAHY: The hon. member is best known as the hon. member for Toowoong, but I will call him the hon. member for the Trades Hall if he likes. If it is necessary to find a candidate from the Trades Hall for some other portion of the country the hon. member goes there, so that if I was to describe him as the Labour party I should be more right than I would be in describing him as the hon. member for Enoggera. I could not pay the hon. member a greater compliment than that. The hon. member said he would oppose the construction of a line by the State from Normanton to Cloncurry. So would I oppose it, and I say there is no hope of building this line from public money, because the people would not tolerate it. There are places which have a stronger demand for public expenditure, and which want attention. Something has been said about bringing these syndicates to the colony. The hon. member who last spoke laboured to show that we were trying to bring this particular syndicate to the colony to construct a line which would not pay, and to work mines which would not pay, and that in so doing we should defame the fair name of Queensland. It has also been said that members on this side have stated that the line would not pay. Nothing of the kind has ever been asserted by members on this side of the House. I do not think the railway would pay as a traffic line for public trading, for carrying sheep and cattle, and other things that are to be carried as absorbable superficially above the surface of the

ground. But these men intend to make their profit out of the mines, out of something that is under the ground, and we do not know what that is. Nobody knows. But that is the business of the company. There are men engaged in this venture who are probably some of the greatest mineral experts the world ever saw, and they may know some scientific means of ascertaining the capabilities of the country which we have never dreamt of. And is this House going to set itself up as a judge and say that no venture shall be undertaken by a syndicate unless it has the approval of the House? These persons are at least as wise on certain lines as we are; they know what they are doing, and if they come here and fail they will do what other persons have done. There are several companies in Queensland which have put millions more into the country than they will take out of it; but it does not follow from that that Queensland is not one of the greatest countries in the world at the present time. I believe it is. The greater a country is, the greater will be its attractions, and investors will come to it from all parts of the world. Some of them may fail, but that will not prove that the country does not possess magnificent resources. We have not brought these people here; we have not invited them to come here. Folios of correspondence have been read by members on the other side of the House about the negotiations which have taken place with regard to this Bill, and it all goes to show that it was not the Government or the country that brought these people here. They asked for certain privileges, and the Government said: "No, you shall not come here on any better footing than other people have come." That was a wise proceeding, based on business lines, which would be followed by any person who has any practical knowledge of business. But it seems to me that in order to be able to manage the affairs of this country now the qualification is to make a mess of your own business, and that as soon as you know nothing at all about your own business you are thoroughly competent to know what the State should do.

MR. HARDACRE: Have you got many men of that kind on your own side?

MR. LEAHY: There may be; I may be one myself; the hon. member can take it which way he likes. At all events I think that this line to Cloncurry, if it is to be built at all, must be built under this proposal, or a similar proposal to that contained in the Bill. I believe that it is to the best interests of the country that this line should be built in the way proposed. I am satisfied that the great bulk of the people of the country are in favour of its construction. At all events it has not been disputed that the people of the Gulf country are in favour of this proposal. Whenever a great principle is involved, we are often told, and rightly so, that the people of a country have a right to regulate the affairs of that country if they choose. The members for Central Queensland claim that the disposal of affairs in that division should be according to the wishes of the people of Central Queensland, and the people of Northern Queensland hold the same view with regard to matters in their part of the country. What are the lines which separate Central, Northern, and Southern Queensland? They are merely imaginary lines or parallels drawn on the map. Why should not the people of the Gulf country say how the Gulf country should be governed? If the people of Croydon wished to say that the mines of Croydon should be regulated to some extent, why should not they? Surely the people of the Gulf country have an equal right to say with regard to the country in which they live and its resources that the Government have to take into consideration any scheme that will

advance their interests. We know what the interests of these people are and what their views are. Surely the logical conclusion is that the people of the Gulf have as much right to say that this line shall be built by private enterprise if it cannot be built by State enterprise, as we have, or any other person has, to say that any other transaction shall be carried out which has the general approval of the people of the country. The people of New South Wales say, and the people of Queensland say, that when hon. members opposite clamoured for Central separation and for Northern separation, there was only an imaginary line separating them. I am arguing only on what is based on moral grounds, and moral support, and moral respect, and I say there is as much reason for the people of the Gulf country to have the right to say that a line shall be laid down by which their country will be developed, as the people of Central Queensland would have if they were separated. But we are blocked. Everything is blocked where the object is to develop this rich country. The hon. members opposite block the way. We cannot go forward. The hon. members may not think so. I am prepared to admit that they are as honest as I am, and more honest if they like. I have no doubt some of them think they are. I think I should be perfectly satisfied if they were as honest as I am on every matter that will come before this House. I have come to the stage in politics at which I can differ from another hon. member on a question without calling him a knave or a fool; but a man is a fool, a knave, and very likely a rogue, too, if he differs from the hon. members opposite. I have said that every measure—every official measure brought forward for the development of this country—they have tried to block. I do not say they do not do it honestly.

Mr. BROWNE: That is not a fact.

Mr. J. HAMILTON: No, it is only stating the facts.

Mr. LEAHY: We differ from that, and the majority must rule. Instead of going forward the hon. members opposite are marching always backwards—backwards the whole time. There is in the animal world one animal which is well known for its backward movement. Up to the present time that animal had a monopoly of that backward gait, but it has got a rival lately.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: A donkey?

Mr. LEAHY: No, not a donkey. At the present time that animal has a rival, or, at all events, a partner. There are only two things that walk backward. One is the crab, and the other our friends opposite.

Mr. KIDSTON (*Rockhampton*): The hon. member who has just sat down and the hon. member for Carpentaria, who spoke earlier in the evening, made very good speeches on the subject from a spectacular point of view. They have been speeches which have not dealt very intimately or very closely with the matter before the Chamber. But one good thing has just come out of their speeches, and that is a frank admission that this policy of the Government—the private railway policy of the Government—is a change of the public railway policy of the country. That has always been denied hitherto. It has always been asserted that the Government proposition was not a change in the public railway policy of the country, but a sort of exception or compromise, but now we have these gentlemen not only admitting that it is a change in the policy of the country—the railway policy of the country—but attempting to justify themselves and the Government for making the change; and they attempt to do that by this argument: That men, even public men, are entitled to change their opinions sometimes,

and to change their policies sometimes. Now, we do not dispute that at all. We claim the right to change our opinions ourselves, and we admit the right of hon. gentlemen opposite to change their opinions and policy, but we say that with an important matter of this kind the proper time to change their policy is when they are consulting the electors.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. KIDSTON: They have no right to get returned to this House upon one policy in an important matter of this kind, and then, when they get secure in their seats, change that policy without consulting the electors.

Mr. COWLEY: It is a continuation of our policy.

Mr. KIDSTON: I do not know what to make of the hon. gentleman opposite. At first they told us it was not any change in their policy. Then they told us it was a change in their policy, and now they tell us it is a continuation of their policy. What are we to make of it? They twit this side of the House with holding occasional caucus meetings to discuss their line of action and to discuss their policy. I venture to advise the hon. gentlemen to hold a caucus meeting amongst themselves and settle whether it is a change of policy, or whether they are continuing their old policy. I think they are changing their policy, and the main objection that this side of the House urge to the passage of these Bills is that there is a change of policy in a matter of large public importance, affecting the well-being and the future well-being of the people of Queensland, which should not be carried out without consulting those people; and I think the hon. gentlemen opposite, while they pretend that they believe the country is with them on this matter, take the precaution, as they have done many times previously, of passing the legislation first, making the change of policy first, and then consulting the people afterwards. They consider that is a much safer line to adopt. Now, we have the hon. member for Bulloo using the old argument that he gave us in this Chamber before, that we are not able to develop Queensland. Now, I say that that is a libel on the self-reliance and the public spirit and capacity of the people of Queensland, the electors of Queensland, and I say, further, that the past history of Queensland does not justify any public man in making such a statement, either in this House or anywhere else. There is no half-million of people in the whole world who have done more to develop their country, or who have done as much to develop their country by railway extension, and by railway building, than the people of Queensland have done. No people in the world have so much railways per head of the population as the people of Queensland; and to say, in this House, that we are unable to develop our country by building railways where those railways are needed, and where they are likely to serve useful public purposes, is, to put it mildly, not in accordance with facts. I was somewhat amused at the hon. member for Bulloo, and the trouble that he took to justify this by showing us that they were passing, or had passed, a private railway Bill in New South Wales. And it must strike anyone as being a somewhat absurd parallel when we are told, as something to justify us in accepting the policy of the Government who propose to build somewhere about 700 miles of railway in Queensland by private syndicates, that in New South Wales they have actually permitted six and a-half miles to be built by that means. I wonder the hon. member for Bulloo has not a keener sense of the ridiculous than to give us anything of that kind as an argument. And then the hon. gentleman pointed to Canada. He was referring to the allegations that have been made repeatedly from

this side of the House, that this policy in regard to railways would, of necessity, because of the nature of the thing, lead to commercial and political corruption in Queensland, and he blamed us for doing that, and then he admitted that in Canada and in America very great corruption had accompanied their system of railway building and railway working. It is a thing nobody can dispute. But then he said, "Look at the results! Why it has made Canada—the building of the transcontinental railway. And he quoted a volume of statistics to show us that while on the Darling Downs we could only have some 14 bushels of wheat to the acre, yet in Canada, where they had private railways, they had 19 bushels of wheat to the acre. This House is asked to consent to private railways for reasons of that kind. Is it alleged that if we introduce private railways into Queensland it will give 19 bushels of wheat to the acre instead of 14 bushels to the acre? And if that is not the argument, what in the world is the argument—what does the quotation mean? I venture to say that the great development that has taken place in the western provinces of Canada by the building of the Pacific Railway would have taken place just the same if the Government had built the railway. Good gracious! Has not Queensland been opened up with Government railways just in the same way as Canada has been opened up with private railways?

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: It cuts both ways.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am not saying it does not. I am saying it is not an argument for building private railways. To point out the development in the western provinces of Canada as a consequence of private railway building is a fallacious argument, because the development would have taken place just the same if the railway had been built by the Government. But here is where the difference comes in. They would not have had the corruption, the bribing of public men, and the commercial immorality they had in Canada and America with their private railways. We have not had anything of that sort in Queensland in connection with our public railways to at all compare with what has happened in Canada and the United States of America. The development will take place all the same, whether the railway is built by a private company or by the Government; but the cleanness of public life will be very much better preserved where the railways are in the hands of the Government. That is our argument; and I don't think anything the hon. member for Bulloo said at all impairs its force. The hon. member told us he believes the Government could build this line. I quite agree with the hon. member for Bulloo in that, and I think that is a large part of the argument. I believe the hon. member believes that the Government could build this line; and I also believe it is the duty of the Government to build the line; therefore I am opposed to handing it over to a private syndicate. I am going over a number of these matters, not because I believe they have any relation to the subject in hand, but because they have been given out as arguments why this Bill should pass. The hon. member for Bulloo gave us the mileage of railway in the Central, the Northern, and the Southern portions of the colony, together with the population, and pointed out how the Northern and Central portions of the colony had a greater mileage already in proportion to the population than the South had. And as a matter of fact the Government are asking this House to allow these syndicates to build all these 700 miles of railway in the Central and Northern portions of the colony, and not a yard in the Southern portion of the colony; and in asking this they are asking the House to go against the settled policy of the country for the sake of

giving more to the Central and the North. So there is not much in that argument; in fact, I don't know what the hon. gentleman was driving at in using it. Then the hon. gentleman came round with that spurious kind of democracy to which he often treats this House.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: I suppose yours is genuine.

Mr. KIDSTON: The only genuine. He told us that, if we had any recognition of democratic principles, we must admit that the people of the Gulf country had a right to say whether this line should be built by private enterprise. Even if we admit that, what does it amount to? The people of the Gulf country don't want the line built by private enterprise; the people of the Gulf want the Government to build the line.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Of course they do, and half-a-dozen other lines.

Mr. KIDSTON: It is evident in all the papers and all the correspondence that they have only resorted to the construction of the line by a syndicate because the Government won't do its duty and build the line.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: That is only a matter of opinion.

Mr. KIDSTON: Is it in human nature to suppose that the people of the Gulf country are such unspeakable fools that they prefer to have a syndicate build a line and charge them 50 per cent. more rates than have the Government to build the line? No man but a fool would suppose that the people up there are such utter fools; and the people of the Gulf country are only resorting to a syndicate being permitted to build this line because they have no hope of the Government doing it. So that argument amounts to nothing at all. For myself, I am entirely in favour of this line being built. I have always been in favour of a line being built from Normanton to Cloncurry. I believe there is a fourth district in Queensland waiting development there if a trunk line is made from Normanton to Cloncurry and south to Boulia. I have been

[10 p.m.] twice or three times on deputations to various Secretaries for Railways, urging the Government to build this railway. Now, a great deal has been said during the course of this discussion which I think was somewhat far away from the question before us. That was as to the matter of route. The member for Flinders objected very strongly to any railway being built from Normanton to Cloncurry, believing, as he asserted, that it was better that the line should be built from Hughenden to Cloncurry. I must frankly say that I cannot understand the member for Flinders, or the member for Enoggera, proposing to open up the trade of that district by a railway from Hughenden. It was pointed out by the leader of the Opposition that the Bill before us would give the syndicate the power to go some sixty-five miles south of Cloncurry, and that it would compete with the trade now going to the Townsville line; and the Premier said, in reply, that he would move an amendment which would prevent the line coming past Cloncurry. He said—

I shall object to them going beyond Cloncurry.

And he further said—

I do not think the people of Cloncurry should be compelled to send their stuff over 500 miles of railway instead of 250 miles, and I think the Gulf trade should go to the Gulf ports.

Now, if that is true as regards the trade of Cloncurry, is it not equally true as regards the trade of Boulia or that copper district which lies forty miles to the south of Cloncurry? If it is desirable that the people of Cloncurry should have the shortest route to the coast, is it not equally desirable for the people of the Hampden



copper mines, or of Boulia, and right down to Hergott's Corner? I can understand the unblushing way in which the member for Flinders put this matter. He prefers that Cloncurry should be tacked on to Hughenden, and he says so, to my mind, without rhyme or reason, but I cannot understand the Premier objecting to the attitude of the member for Flinders and then taking up the same attitude when he thinks the trade of Townsville is going to be interfered with. It seems to me that if this railway is to be built at all it ought to be built for the benefit of the people it is to serve. I know that a very serious mistake has been made in building our main trunk lines of railway. Instead of going west they should have gone south-west. I know quite well that Longreach is nearer to Townsville than to Rockhampton, and I also know that Charleville is nearer to Rockhampton than to Brisbane. Why, even Roma is nearer Rockhampton than Brisbane. These have been mistakes which have been made in the past, and they cannot be remedied, but such mistakes do not justify us in making a similar mistake by building a railway from Hughenden to Cloncurry when a railway half the length can reach Cloncurry from Normanton. I think whether the railway is built by private enterprise or by the Government it should go from Normanton. I quite understand the very strong desire of the station-owners and mineowners of that district to be connected with the coast, and I am entirely in sympathy with them. I do not think the Government of Queensland has done its duty by that district, and I do not think they are doing their duty now. The real issue between this side of the House and the other side is not whether a railway shall be built to Cloncurry, but simply as regards the question who shall build it. We say that the Government should build it, and the Government put off their obligation, and want a syndicate to build it. The Premier told us—

Either the Government must build this line, or we must get somebody else to build it for us. I say that we are not justified in allowing that great district to lie idle, as it is now. It was discovered thirty-three years ago, and there was more settlement there twenty-five years ago than there is now, and without railway communication that country is likely to lie as it is for the next twenty-five years.

We entirely agree with the Premier in that statement, but we disagree with him when he says that the Government have no money, and cannot build the line. The Premier told us further—

They (the syndicate) are making £750,000 a year, and one year's income would build this line.

Now, where are they making £750,000 a year?

The PREMIER: Not the syndicate. I said some members of the syndicate—Messrs. Coats.

Mr. KIDSTON: Messrs. Coats. Where are they making it?

The PREMIER: Out of their own business.

Mr. FISHER: They are the Paisley bodies.

Mr. KIDSTON: And we know that Paisley bodies know how to take care of any money they make. I have no doubt that this syndicate could raise the £1,000,000 or the £2,000,000 which the Premier tells us is likely to be spent on this project; but I know also that the Government could do it, and that, as a matter of fact, they could raise it more cheaply than this or any other syndicate could do it. What will be the result if we give this syndicate power to build this line? Admitting that the individuals applying for this concession will use their own money and build this line, what will be the result? The result will simply be this: that the whole of that part of Queensland west of the 142nd meridian and north of Birdsville will come

under the commercial control of the syndicate to which we would hand over these concessions. The whole of the pastoralists, the whole of the miners, and the whole of the people living in that district of Queensland—about one-fifth of the whole of Queensland—will come under the control and management of this big syndicate. The Premier, when he says he cannot raise the money to develop this country, that it is wasted country, and a shame to Queensland that it should be lying waste as it is, and when he further says that he will hand over to this syndicate the development of that district, and the control of the people there, is simply confessing his utter inability and his utter incapacity to govern Queensland.

Mr. STEWART: Hear, hear! He ought to resign.

Mr. KIDSTON: That is so; and to hand over that district to this syndicate will mean that the syndicate will have more power over the lives and opinions of the people of that district than the Government will have. Any person who has lived in any district that is under the dominance of one large company knows quite well that what I am saying is true—that the large company has a more immediate and complete control over the lives and fortunes of the people of that district than the Government themselves have.

The PREMIER: I do not agree with you.

Mr. KIDSTON: The hon. gentleman may not agree with me, but it is true for all that.

The PREMIER: That is only your opinion.

Mr. KIDSTON: No, it is not only my opinion at all. It is a fact. The hon. member for Gregory, speaking on the Bill to-night, referred to one provision of it, and he showed that in other places where similar provisions obtained, where the land on which industries were carried on was in the hands of large companies, that the very houses in which the employees lived were the property of the company or were on land belonging to the company, and whenever any dispute took place the people could be turned off like so many sheep. I have seen the same thing at Mount Morgan. I have recognised how completely men were dominated, body, soul, and spirit, by the control which a company had because it controlled all the employment of the district. I remember when a boy in Scotland noting the same thing—noticing how different the men were who worked in Glasgow, where there were twenty foundries, as compared with men who were working in a foundry which was the only one in a particular place. Most men have come out to Australia that they may enjoy a larger freedom, and everything of this kind that is done in selling them back into the same bondage that they left at home. I do not care what the profit of the thing is or how profitable this may be to Queensland, future generations of Queenslanders, who will have to live under it will have good cause to curse the man that brought it on them, no matter how much money may be made out of it. We have been told that this line would not pay, but I do not think we have got any evidence on that head at all.

The PREMIER: The member for the district says so.

Mr. KIDSTON: The member for the district says so because he does not want it to go that way.

Mr. McDONALD: No, that is not it at all.

Mr. KIDSTON: The member for Enoggera says it will not pay, because he is backing up the member for Flinders, and the hon. member for Carpentaria says it will not pay the Government to build it, because he is wanting the

syndicate to build it. The Commissioner for Railways also tells us something of the same sort.

The PREMIER: He has had some experience of our railways.

Mr. HARDACRE: He has never been up there, though.

The PREMIER: He lived there before you came to the country. He managed a station called Carpentaria Downs thirty years ago.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am not saying whether he knows or not, but I am going to take what he says. He tells us that "the country traversed between Normanton and Cloncurry cannot be said to be useful for any other than pastoral purposes, indeed, about four-fifths of it is unfit for grazing any other stock than horses and horned cattle." Anybody knows that a large part of the country round about the head of the Gulf is not at all likely to be sheep country. In the map that accompanies this Bill the Commissioner for Railways has marked the numbers of cattle and horses on each of the places in the district that will be served by this railway. Now, it is a very curious thing that the Commissioner for Railways has not marked the number of sheep. I had the curiosity to look at the map which accompanies the Commissioner's annual report and I find from it that in this district that would be served by this railway and where the Commissioner has shown no sheep at all, or, I think, sixty sheep only, in one place there are over 750,000 sheep.

Mr. McDONALD: Where is that.

The PREMIER: They would not be served by this railway.

Mr. KIDSTON: That is within 100 miles of this railway. If anyone will look at the map which accompanies the annual report of the Commissioner for Railways, he will find that it is divided into squares of one degree each, and noted on each square is the number of sheep and cattle grazed there, as at the 31st December last year.

Mr. REID: Then he is out of it.

Mr. KIDSTON: I do not know the country myself.

The PREMIER: Go west, south, and east, and there is nothing like that number of sheep there.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not know where they are.

Mr. KIDSTON: I see a place here called "Talawanta." I do not remember the exact figures, but while on the map attached to this Bill there are only some cattle and horses marked there, the Railway Commissioner, in the map accompanying his annual report, shows that there are somewhere over 30,000 sheep.

Mr. REID: There is a mistake somewhere.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am not saying there are sheep here. I am only giving figures from official papers supplied to members of the House for the purpose of informing them, so that they may be able to discuss matters of this sort with some intelligence.

The PREMIER: He does not put the sheep under each station, but in certain squares.

Mr. KIDSTON: I have already explained that the map accompanying the Railway Commissioner's report is divided into squares of one degree each way, and in each of those squares he gives the number of cattle and sheep. When I look at that map, which is the latest official information I can get, I find that within 100 miles of this railway there are given 750,000 sheep and over 500,000 cattle. I am told that is a mistake. But what are members of the House to do if we are informed, whenever we use official information as an argument, that it is a mistake? If

that is so, I submit that the hon. gentleman ought to withdraw this Bill until we get proper information.

The PREMIER: That map does not show that there are 30,000 sheep on Talawanta.

Mr. KIDSTON: The matter is very material to the subject under discussion. We are told by the other side of the House that it will not pay to build that line. We are told by the Commissioner that there are only horses and horned cattle in that district, yet the Commissioner shows that there are 750,000 sheep in that district. There is the Commissioner's map lying on the table, and any hon. member can study it for himself.

The PREMIER: I think you must have extended your area.

Mr. KIDSTON: At page 14 of the correspondence on the subject laid before hon. members, I find this—

At the same time, we gather from recently published statistics that, at the present time, nearly 1,000,000 cattle and sheep will be served by such railway. This fact, combined with the large ore shipments from the mines, will make the port near Normanton a natural outlet for the trade of the North-west. This traffic, combined with the establishment of freezing works, ought to lead to direct communication with Europe, while India provides a near market for horses.

The PREMIER: One-half of those cattle will never see the railway.

Mr. KIDSTON: Here is the Railway Commissioner's map. In the very square in which Cloncurry is situated there are given 42,463 sheep. In the square to the right of that 153,347 sheep are given, and on the square at the bottom of that 339,333 sheep are given.

The PREMIER: That goes right down to Winton.

Mr. KIDSTON: On the square south-west of Cloncurry—the first square to which the railway would go—there are given 29,802 sheep. I have shown, although the thing is disputed, that there is a very considerable number of sheep in this district.

Mr. REID: As many sheep as there are Government supporters present in the House.

Mr. KIDSTON: I do not suppose there are many sheep in the Gulf country, but the district that would be served by this railway, south and south-west of Cloncurry, carries a considerable number of sheep. All those would be served by this railway. And it has been the invariable experience in other parts of Queensland, that as the railway was extended much of the country that was under cattle has been placed under sheep. And if this district, 200 miles from the railway, carries now that large number of sheep, I think it is fair to assume that the number will be enormously increased if a railway goes to Cloncurry. I have no hesitation in saying that much of that country, now under cattle, will be placed under sheep. All that country from the Gulf down to Birdsville—everything west of the 142nd parallel—would be served by this railway. And this is the district that the Government proposes to hand over, body and soul, to a private syndicate! What have the people of that district done that they should be treated in this way—so much worse than the people in other parts of Queensland? I do not know whether those people support the Government or not, but if they do they have very little reason for doing it. As to the desirability of the line being built there is no difference of opinion. But the Government contend that they cannot build it.

The PREMIER: That they are not justified in building it.

Mr. KIDSTON: Not that they could not raise the money if it was desirable, but that they would not be justified in building it, because it is somewhat of a speculative character. I think the Government would be amply justified in

borrowing the money to build the line. But the position the Government take up is this: That the Government must either borrow the money and build the line themselves, or they must permit a private company to build it. They say there is no other alternative. I say there are other alternatives. In several districts of the colony, where railways were wanted, and where the Government considered they were not justified in building them, they passed an Act for the purpose of enabling the local authorities to give a guarantee to the Government. The railway to Mount Morgan, for an instance, was built on that principle. The Mount Morgan Company joined their guarantee to that of the local body, and then the Government built the railway, which has turned out to be the best paying line in the colony; it paid last year £14 per cent. I think an arrangement could be made that would be better for the syndicate and better for the country. If this syndicate started to build this line—let us suppose it to cost £600,000—and if the mines afterwards turned out to be a failure, the syndicate will lose all that money. On the other hand, the Government say the thing is so speculative that they are not justified in putting £600,000 into it, because [10:30 p.m.] the ordinary passenger traffic of the district would not pay interest on such a large cost. But suppose the Government said to the syndicate, "Give us a guarantee, and we will build the line, and we will enable you to get to your mines, but we do not want to give you the over-lordship of a great district like this. We do not want to give you the right to tax the people in this district by giving you railway rights; but we are quite willing to help you to get to your mines, if you will give us a guarantee the same as the local authorities do." It might not be wise of the Government to take a guarantee from such a syndicate to pay the interest on the cost of construction, but they might say to the syndicate, "Give us cash down to the extent of two thirds of the estimated cost of the railway, and we will build the railway, and then you will have all the facilities for getting your minerals to port that you desire. You can have all the facilities that you would have if you owned the railway yourselves, and we will have all the right to protect the interests of the community that the Government should have." Why cannot the Government do that? Is it not the duty of the Government to encourage these people to open up these mines? Is it not also the duty of the Government to safeguard the general wellbeing of the people in the district? By the means I suggest they can do both those things. It would be a profitable bargain for the syndicate if the mines turned out a failure, while it would not be a very bad bargain for the syndicate if the mines turned out a success. The Government might arrange that they would pay the syndicate all the net revenue of the railway after the Government had received, say, 2 per cent. on the part of the capital cost of the line that they had expended. I think, taking into account the indirect return to the State through the development of the country, that any line which will pay the Government 2 per cent. in interest, would amply justify the Government in building it. If the mines turned out anything at all, surely they would return 2 per cent. on one-third of the cost of the railway, and, if it did that, the Government would lose nothing, and the men who wanted to speculate in opening up the mines would risk very little. If the mines turned out a success, and the railway proved a paying concern, as it very likely would if the mines turned out well, I would be quite willing to return the company their guarantee, which they had paid down in cash, with  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per

cent. interest for every year that the Government had held the guarantee, and I would be quite willing to do everything to give the syndicate every facility and every encouragement in opening up their mines on the best terms, except this one thing—that I would not give them the over-lordship of one-fifth of Queensland for fifty years. I am astonished that the Premier has the audacity to bring such a proposal before the representatives of the people of Queensland. I have tried to show that it is not true that there is no alternative but either to accept this Bill or have no railway. I believe that if the Government made such a proposal as I have suggested to the syndicate they would jump at it, and that they would be only too glad to be able to open up their mines at two-thirds of the cost that it will be to them under this Bill, while the position of the Government would be unmistakably better, because, even at the very worst, and if the mines turned out a failure, they would have 250 miles of railway at one-third the usual cost of construction. It is getting late, so that I shall be forced to pass over a number of matters which I would like to have referred to. I would like to have suggested two other alternative proposals, because I wish to make it clear that there is no truth in the allegation that the men who are opposing this Bill are opposing railway extension in the Gulf country. Although I never was there, I am as anxious to see a railway there as the Premier himself, but I am not prepared, for the sake of some temporary advantage, to hand over that district for fifty years to a foreign corporation. There is just one point I will mention, and it is this—that this is just the beginning. If this House accepts these five private railway Bills of the Government, then we may look forward to an era of private enterprise in Queensland such as no Australian colony has had any conception of so far.

Mr. HARDACRE: It will be the happy hunting-ground of syndicates.

Mr. KIDSTON: Yes, it will become the happy hunting-ground of syndicates. I do not see what is the use of keeping up an expensive engineering staff in our Railway Department if the Government are going to hand over the work of constructing the railways of Queensland to such an enormous extent to private companies. It seems to me that the railway men in Queensland—I do not consider this very much of an argument, but it may perhaps appeal to some people where better arguments will not—I do not think the railway men in Queensland will have very much to thank the present Government for if these five Bills become law, and so many private railways are worked in this colony. I think the railway men in Queensland will, before many years are over, have a good deal to be sorry for. I should have liked to discuss some of the special provisions of the Bill. One of them I cannot help mentioning, and that is that the syndicate will have the right, in those 5,000 acres which they may work apart from the mining regulations, to all minerals. Everything is surrendered to them. They have the right to "win, take, and acquire, and treat the same, all minerals, metals, ores, and earths," so that the minerals of those 5,000 acres are to be handed over completely to the syndicate. Without entering into the details of the Bill, I think that the proposal which the Government have made to the House for the purpose of giving the Gulf people railway facilities is about the worst proposal that they could possibly have made. Whatever difficulties there may be in the way of the Government building this line, I think I have shown that the Government could have this railway built without spending their own money and without putting the districts concerned at the mercy of a foreign syndicate. I

sincerely trust that even if the second reading of this Bill is carried, that long before Christmas we shall see these five precious Bills floating down the Brisbane River.

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

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL No. 2.

##### MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, returning this Bill without amendment.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. The first Government business to-morrow will be the resumption of the debate on the Normanton-Cloncurry Railway Bill, and I trust that the leader of the Opposition will assist me in getting the second reading through to-morrow evening.

Mr. BROWNE: I will do all I can.

The PREMIER: We have already taken three days in discussing this Bill.

Mr. KIDSTON: It is the only subject on which your own men have spoken.

The PREMIER: I think hon. members on both sides have taken part in the debate on this question; and I think, also, that some hon. members on the Opposition side have spoken on the matter more than once.

Mr. KIDSTON: No; we leave that for the hon. member for Mackay.

Mr. BROWNE: I may say that I will do all I can to assist the Premier in his desire; but I have no more control over hon. members on this side than the hon. gentleman has over hon. members on his own side. Some hon. members will continue talking, and how can we stop them?

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at a quarter to 11 o'clock.