

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 6 DECEMBER 1900**

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## PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table, was ordered to be printed:—Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into all the facts and circumstances connected with the issue in August, 1900, of a prospectus of a company proposed to be registered in New South Wales under the name of “The North Chillagoe Mines (No Liability) Company,” and especially as to the falsification of a report by Mr. Benjamin Dunstan, Assistant Government Geologist of Queensland, as contained in such prospectus.

## QUESTIONS.

## RAILWAY FROM JERICHO TO BLACKALL.

Mr. KERR (*Barcoo*) asked the Premier—

Is it the intention of the Government to lay upon the table of the House the plan, section, and book of reference of the railway from Jericho to Blackall this session or next session?

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

It is not the intention of the Government to table plans this session. What the Government intend doing next session will be disclosed in due course.

## NORTH COAST RAILWAY TO NOOSA.

Mr. JENKINSON (*Wide Bay*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to proceed with the permanent survey of the line from the North Coast Railway to Noosa?

2. If so, when?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Murray, *Normanby*) replied—

Time will disclose the intention of the Government.

## FEDERATION CELEBRATION MEDALS.

Mr. JENKINSON (*Wide Bay*) asked the Premier—

1. Is it a fact that it is the intention of the Government to present each scholar attending a State school with a medal to commemorate the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia?

2. If so, will the scholars attending other schools be similarly treated?

3. As the establishment of the Australian Commonwealth is a national event, will the Government consider the advisableness of presenting each child in the colony, whether attending school or not, with a medal commemorative of the event?

The PREMIER replied—

1. It is the intention of the Government to present each child enrolled for the month of October in the schools under the Department of Public Instruction with a medal in commemoration of the inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth on the 1st January, 1901.

2. No. The supply of medals ordered will only meet the requirements of the Department of Public Instruction.

2. The Government consider that the arrangements already made in regard to the distribution of medals are sufficient.

Mr. STEWART: What about provisional schools?

The PREMIER: They are State schools; they will be included.

## FEDERATION CELEBRATIONS—SCHOOL PICNICS.

Mr. JENKINSON asked the Premier—

Will the Government render any assistance to local school committees in arranging for picnics in connection with the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1st January?

The PREMIER replied—

A circular memorandum has been addressed to teachers and school committees requesting them to impress on the minds of the children the significance of the inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth, and expressing a hope that all persons interested in the schools will unite in making the day festive in character, and a day to be pleasantly remembered by the children

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

THURSDAY, 6 DECEMBER, 1900.

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

## ASSENT TO BILLS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of messages from the Governor intimating that His Excellency had assented to the following Bills:—

Gladstone to Callide Railway Bill.  
Pacific Cable Enabling Bill.  
Pastoral Leases Bill.

throughout their lives; but the Government are of opinion that all expenditure in connection with such festivities should be defrayed locally.

#### VISIT OF IMPERIAL TROOPS.

Mr. STEPHENSON (*Ipswich*) asked the Premier—

Whether he is yet in possession of any definite information as to the visit to Queensland of the Imperial troops now on their way to Australia?

The PREMIER replied—

The Government are still in communication with the Imperial authorities on the subject. I lay upon the table the correspondence that has already taken place.

Ordered to be printed.

#### CAMBOOYA ELECTORAL ROLL.

##### REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

Mr. KIDSTON (*Rockhampton*) laid on the table the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the alleged improper registration of certain names on the Cambooya electoral roll, and the disappearance of certain documents connected therewith, and moved that the papers be printed.

Question put and passed.

#### PARTICULARS OF ROYAL COMMISSIONS.

On the motion of Mr. JENKINSON (*Wide Bay*), it was resolved—

1. That there be laid on the table of the House a return giving the number of Royal Commissions, and the names of the members of each, appointed during this Parliament.
2. The number of days each commission sat.
3. The total cost of each commission.
4. The amount of money paid to each member as fees and travelling expenses respectively.
5. The amount expended otherwise than as fees and travelling expenses.
6. The total cost of printing in each case.

#### CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

That leave be given to introduce a Bill to provide that a member of the Parliament of the Commonwealth shall be incapable of being summoned, or elected, or of sitting as a member of the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly in the thirteenth or any subsequent Parliament of Queensland.

##### FIRST READING.

The Bill was presented and read a first time, and the second reading made an order for tomorrow.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence.

#### CONSERVATION OF WATER.

Mr. KATES (*Cunningham*), in moving—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is in the interest of all classes, farmers and graziers in particular, highly desirable that diligent inquiries be instituted into the best methods of conserving the rainfall, and of searching for and developing the underground reservoirs and subterranean watercourses supposed to exist in the interior of this colony, and of conserving the water in our various rivers for the purposes of irrigation and general water supply, to avert the disastrous consequences of the periodical droughts this country from time to time is subject to—

said: Considering the condition of the drought-stricken West, the discussion of this motion is, I think, particularly *appropos* at the present time,

and there is good reason to believe that it will commend itself strongly to the favourable consideration of hon. members on both sides of the House. The object of this motion is to ascertain the disabilities and capabilities of our water supply in different parts of the country. For my purpose I have divided the subject into three heads—(1) Water supply for domestic purposes. (2) Water supply for stock. (3) Water supply for irrigation. It is true that we have not in this colony any such great rivers and watercourses, such as the Murray and Murrumbidgee, as they have in the southern colonies. Nor have we in this country snow-capped mountains as they have in India, and in America, in Los Angeles, Colorado, the Cordilleras, and the Andes. But we have in this colony of Queensland watercourses large enough and deep enough to encourage us to go in for the conservation of water by water storage. West of the Main Range we have the Condamine, the Severn, the Warrego, the Maranoa, the Landsborough, the Thomson, and the Flinders; and east of the Range in the coastal districts we have the Burdekin, the Fitzroy, the Mary River, the Burnett, the Logan, the Albert, and many other permanent watercourses. I think that by impounding flood waters we can obtain a very fair supply. We have hitherto allowed thousands of tons of water to flow westward of the Main Range to lose itself in the sand, and east of the Main Range to lose itself in the sea. What I want by this motion is to better ascertain the physical features of this colony to see how far we can effect water storage by impounding our flood waters. I am talking now of impounding flood waters, and directly diverting all flood waters into natural depressions, and storing the water by means of weirs and dams. We know that a large water surface has a great effect upon the humidity of the air, and that has a direct influence upon the rainfall. We know that cheap water has been obtained in other parts of the colonies. I have only to point to Tasmania, where, at Campbelltown, they have secured 6,048,000,000 gallons of water at the small cost of £7,600. The hon. member for Balonne says that he knows this, and can bear out what I say. In South Australia water has been struck at a depth of 1,220 feet, or 1,040 below the level of the sea, and it rose 20 feet above the surface; whilst at Hergott Springs it was struck at a depth of 339 feet, and the flow was 65 feet above the tubes. Now, with regard to water for domestic purposes, we know that not very long since the Railway Commissioner was compelled to run water trains to the Western districts in the Southern and Northern portions of the colony, and I remember well, not very many years ago, we had to run water trains even to the Rosewood to save the people from a water famine.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: They are running them now in some places.

Mr. KATES: It is not long since we passed a Health Bill, and I am sure a pure water supply will considerably assist in carrying out that measure. With regard to the second part of this scheme—that is, water for stock—I need hardly tell you, Sir, and other hon. members, that we have lost thousands, tens of thousands, and millions of pounds through the want of a good water supply in our Western districts. I was in communication with the Chief Inspector of Stock, Mr. Gordon, and I asked him to be good enough to give me the stock returns for this colony—not up to the end of last year, but to a much later date, and he has supplied them up to the 1st of last month. He says that in 1892 we had 21,708,310 sheep in this colony, and he thinks that now the number has shrunk to 9,000,000, and I believe that both cattle and sheep are still dying in the

West on account of the drought. He tells us that in the year 1870 we had 8,100,000 sheep; in 1871 there were 7,493,000; in 1872 there were 6,600,000. Those were three years of drought. When the drought broke in 1873, there was an increase of 1,000,000 as compared with 1872; in 1874 there was an increase of another 100,000 sheep; in 1875, another increase of 100,000; in 1876, 1877, and 1878 there was another three years' drought, the numbers falling in 1877 to 6,200,000. In 1878 the number was 5,600,000. Then we had four good years, when we recovered, and in the year 1881 the number of sheep had risen to 8,600,000, and 1882 to 12,000,000. Then we had three years' drought again—in 1883, 1884, and 1885—and we had a fall to 9,000,000. In 1886 we commenced to rise to 9,000,000; in 1887 to 12,000,000; in 1888 to 13,000,000; in 1889 to 14,000,000; in 1890 to 18,000,000; in 1891 to 20,000,000; and in 1893 to 21,700,000. That is the greatest number of sheep we have had since the separation of Queensland from the mother colony. Then the numbers began to fall. In 1893 we had 18,000,000; in 1894, 19,500,000; in 1895, 19,800,000; in 1896, 19,500,000; in 1897, 17,700,000; in 1898, 17,500,000; in 1899, 15,000,000; and now this year we have come down to 9,000,000. This shows the necessity for this motion. The Chief Inspector of Stock also tells us in connection with our stock routes—

Had there been defined stock routes, with water available at convenient distances, the losses would not have been anything like so heavy, as even in the case of sheep trucked to the coast for agistment very heavy losses occurred while the sheep were being travelled to the nearest trucking station.

We know that a great many losses have taken place on account of there being no water on our stock routes. Sometimes they had to travel 50 or 60 miles to where they were trucked, and they had not a drop of water all the way, so that if we can provide water along these stock routes by some means, we shall do a good thing for the Western pastoralists, as it will prevent the loss of half their sheep on the road. The next part of my remarks applies to irrigation. This irrigation question is not a new one. It is a very old one. It was practised many, many years ago in Egypt, and it was practised in South America by the Incas long before the advent of the Spaniards. In modern times in India, and in the south-western portion of the United States of America, the greatest pains have been taken to develop the water supply upon a very large scale indeed; but it is not necessary, neither is it practicable, to irrigate all the lands available for such purposes. For instance, in some parts of America there are areas of 1,000,000 square miles fit for irrigation, but only 2,500,000 acres have been brought under the influence of irrigation, and in the Madras Presidency in India, out of 90,000,000 acres only 2,600,000 acres, or less than 3 per cent., have been irrigated by public works, and, including private tanks and wells, the proportion irrigated does not exceed 5 per cent. of the whole area. In Spain it is only 5 per cent. In Lombardy, at the foot of the Italian Alps, where there is a very thrifty class of people, who by beneficial legislation have been able to irrigate

[4 p.m.] largely, even there the percentage is only 2½. If we could establish in this colony such a scheme, I shall be able to point out, from reports from the irrigation engineer, that our settlement would be like bees in a hive by means of intense cultivation. I wish now to make a few remarks about intense cultivation. We are apt, coming from the old country, to run in the old groove of growing potatoes, wheat, maize, hay; we forget that we are in an altogether different geographical posi-

tion. We have a tropical and semi-tropical climate; and I think, by means of intense cultivation, we can produce articles of a much higher value than maize, wheat, potatoes, and hay. In connection with flax cultivation, we know that the manufactured article representing an acre of flax is worth £2,000. We know also that hops, which can be cultivated in this country, have been sold on the poles in the county of Kent in the south of England at £200 per acre. Skill and enterprise combined with labour will certainly produce a greater value per acre than we have hitherto produced in this colony. I have been carefully looking over the reports that have come to hand in connection with irrigation in this colony, and I have here the report sent in to the Government by Mr. Riggby, the irrigation engineer. He points out the different watercourses in the colony where irrigation is highly practicable. With regard to the Severn River, he says—

This is the first good supply of water that I have yet met with in the colony. Judging by the indications of this stream and from all local information that I can gather, I have no doubt that even in dry seasons there is a considerable volume of water flowing.

And after making investigations in the Warwick district he says—

In this neighbourhood I have examined most of the town common and the adjoining Sandy Creek reserve. I have taken levels from the centre portion of the town common down to the Condamine.

It would be possible to bring under irrigation about 2,000 acres of this land lying near the river by pumping up to a height of 90 feet.

This land is undulating and partly cleared. The soil is light and sandy, generally sloping northwards down to the river, and should be very suitable for vine culture.

Two thousand acres under irrigation is of greater value than 40,000 acres under dry cultivation waiting for rainfall from the clouds. Then he reports on the Condamine River, especially that portion between Warra and Chinchilla—

It will be seen that by constructing three weirs, each 14 feet high only to the permanent sills, and with an additional 6 feet height of removable waste boards, or 20 feet high in all, over 1,700,000,000 gallons of water can be impounded, without reckoning the amount which would be backed up into the various creeks and billabongs.

Just imagine 1,700,000,000 gallons being impounded for irrigation purposes! I consider it is an enormous volume of water. Properly distributed it would be of immense benefit to that part of the country which is at present in the hands of the lessees, and which could be resumed by the Crown and made so highly productive and beneficial to the country. Then he tells us—

Having then this 1,700,000,000 gallons available, and pumping twenty hours per day, or practically day and night, at the rate of 40 cubic feet per second, or 18,000,000 gallons per day, it would take sixteen weeks' pumping to empty the reservoirs.

This shows what quantity of water is at our disposal if we only apply ourselves to secure it. He says fuel is plentiful there. Then, with regard to the area, he says—

The area of the land bounded on the north by the Western Railway and on the south by the Condamine River and extending east to west from Warra to Chinchilla is, in all, about 56 square miles, or 35,840 acres; of these 18 square miles are selected, leaving 38 square miles, or 24,000 acres. About one-third of these, or say 8,000 acres, are under prickly pear, leaving 16,000 acres of Crown land to be dealt with. Of this probably one-half, or 8,000 acres, will be found within reach of the water and suitable for irrigation. In addition to the above there are about 8 square miles, or 5,000 acres, of good sandy loam forest land on the northern side of the railway, and adjoining Chinchilla, which could be partly irrigated from the river and from Charley's Creek.

I want to say this: If we would even go so far as to spend £1,000,000 on water storage and

irrigation in this country, the money would not be lost; in fact, we would get it back tenfold. Then he talks about the Coudamine River between Dalby and Macalister—

Two timber weirs could be placed in this portion of the river—one at or near Macalister, and another nine miles higher up the river.

The height of the permanent sills of these weirs should not exceed 12 feet above the low level of the river, with an additional 6 feet of removable flood boards, or 18 feet total height.

The quantity of water impounded by these two weirs would be 356,000,000 gallons, or sufficient for three waterings of 4 inches each over an area of 1,300 acres.

All these are feasible, and the cost would not be very much. And if we were to go in largely for irrigation there would be no necessity for putting £50,000 on the Estimates for immigration; and there would be no necessity for additional taxation; and we would improve our Crown lands considerably. Where we are at present leasing lands at  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per acre, we would be able to dispose of them at £5 or £6 per acre, seeing that they are so near the settled districts. We have never done much in that direction, and it is time we did something. What is the use of spending millions to take railways into the Western districts when the stock is all dead, and the people are all going to leave?

Mr. W. HAMILTON: What is the use of building the *via recta* if there is no water there?

Mr. KATES: The *via recta* is not in drought-stricken country. The *via recta* is in the proper place. We have already borrowed about £32,000,000, and if we had borrowed another £5,000,000 and spent it on water supply for the Western districts we would have had more than 9,000,000 sheep alive. I wish to point out what has been done in the Western district even this year, in time of drought. I have received from a gentleman in the drought-stricken district, Mr. Baker, of Bingabango, a parcel of wheat grown on an irrigated patch of country this year, and it compares favourably with any wheat grown in the Australian colonies. If a man can grow a small quantity like that, there is nothing to prevent him producing it in a larger quantity by the extension of his cultivation and the application of water.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: They grow it successfully at Barcaldine.

Mr. KATES: This was grown between Mitchell and Charleville. I shall have something to say about Barcaldine later on. His Excellency the Governor, during his Western tour, had his eyes open and saw what was going on, and what did he tell the newspaper reporter of the local paper? He said he considered it possible that some system of water storage might be adopted to minimise the effects of droughts. Regarding the country near Winton, he said that several grassy paddocks were noticed, but there was no water, though some of the grass was very green. And then we have the agricultural adviser to the Government, Mr. Peter McLean, who has just returned from the Western districts, and he says—

The deplorable conditions in the West are more serious than many people imagine. Many of the wells are giving out, and though some of the bores on the higher lands have ceased to flow an inexhaustible supply of water can be obtained with the aid of an engine.

He tells us that it can be done, and if it can be done, why is it not done?

Mr. JACKSON: The expense is too great.

Mr. KATES: Mr. Campbell, a member of the grazing company, when he was in Brisbane stated that he and others had made good use of desert country about Barcaldine by sinking wells, and good water for stock, 20 feet deep, rose up to near the surface when tapped. Troughing was

supplied, and 7,500 sheep and 150 horses and cattle were watered. Well, if one man can do that, why cannot others do it?

Mr. BOWMAN: What about the country where they cannot get bore water?

Mr. KATES: But they have not tried. Now, there is the Alice River settlement, where a remnant of the strikers of 1891 are settled. A creditable lot of people settled on the Alice River, and though they have diminished from ninety to eight, still they have shown what can be done by means of irrigation. This small number of men, by means of a bore, are supplying the whole district with fruit and agricultural produce of the value of £700 or £800 a year. If a small settlement can do that, there is room for a hundred such settlements to do likewise. Now, in connection with this irrigation, a gentleman named Nixon tells us—

Within a distance of 5 miles below St. George and 10 miles above it there are sixteen different falls. In a distance of 16 miles there is a fall of 45 feet. At one place there is a fall of 6 feet 9 inches in a distance of 600 feet. There are two other falls above that in a distance of 8 miles, and nine smaller ones, aggregating at least 35 feet, in a distance of 12 miles. With a fall of that sort any intelligent person must see at once that the natural facilities for irrigation existing here are not equalled in any other part of Queensland, when you take into consideration the adaptability of the soil for producing anything you put into it. With a view of proving what is possible under a system of irrigation, I applied it on a small scale during the past dry season, and the result so far exceeded anything I thought possible, that I have since leased 1 acre on the bank of the river and completed negotiations for a 9-inch centrifugal pump, which I shall work with an 18-horse power engine.

Wherever it has been tried it has been a success. Mr. Henderson, the Hydraulic Engineer, in his report, tells us that irrigation has been practised on a small scale in various parts of the colony. He tells us with regard to sugar and tropical products there has been none in the South and none in the Centre, but 6,839 acres in the North; fruit, including bananas and vegetables, 186 acres in the South, 156 acres in the Centre, and 231 in the North; maize, lucerne, and cereals, 171 acres in the South, 190 acres in the Central, and 54 in the North; potatoes, 35 acres in the South, 27 acres in the Central, and 44 in the North; and grasses, 16 acres in the South, 8,080 in the Central, and none in the North. Water by gravitation from flowing streams, he states, has been applied in the South to 25 acres, and in the North to 135 acres; by gravitation from flowing bores, 119 acres in the South, and 8,264 in the Centre; by pumping by steam power, 48 acres in the South, and 6,964 in the North; and by pumping by other means, 212 acres in the South, 189 acres in the Centre, and 69 acres in the North. That is the report of the Hydraulic Engineer last year. Now, not only have these modes of water conservation been found practicable in the Northern districts for such purposes, but Mr. Rigby mentions the Flinders River. In connection with this river he tells us that all the country in the neighbourhood of Hughenden is suitable for water conservation for a greater part of the year. We are allowing thousands of tons of water to escape. Why not impound this water? Why not conserve it? Why not divert it into a depression, or secure it by means of excavations? Mr. Rigby not only mentions the Flinders River, but the Burdekin—

In the delta there are about 150,000 acres, for the most part flat country, so that nearly all of it could be irrigated. Besides that, above the delta there is a large extent of flat country along the river bank up as far as the gorge—in area also about 150,000 acres. This country above the delta is not so rich as that forming the delta itself, and can only be called good grazing country as it is at present; though with irrigation it could be utilised for agriculture.

Of course grazing country can always be utilised for agriculture with a plentiful supply of water, and wheat grows better on the lighter soil than on the black-soil flats, if there is a plentiful supply of water.

If water can be stored on the different heads of the Burdekin, and a reservoir formed in the gorge, it is possible that enough water can be had for the irrigation of 300,000 acres. A dam at the gorge, of concrete, could be built 150 feet high, and from here open channels would convey the water along both banks of the Burdekin down to and over the delta, and supply water all along their courses.

This gentleman, I might point out, had been travelling all over the colony making personal investigations and taking levels in order that he might make reports upon what land is available throughout the colony for irrigation purposes. Speaking of the Leichhardt district, he says—

A large portion of this rainfall, now worse than useless, could be conserved in the above-mentioned valleys, and in the upper part of the main channel of the river by suitable overshot weirs, and afterwards distributed by gravitation over the rich flats above and below the Dee township.

These flats being now, to a large extent, subject to floods and consequently of little value, should be protected and reclaimed from the floods by suitable levees or embankments. Six thousand acres is a fair estimate of the area of first-class agricultural land which could be by these means reclaimed and subject to irrigation.

This land is almost level, having a gradual fall in the direction of the river.

I consider the best site for a weir and a principal headworks in the river channel to be at a point between Pichald Mountain and Long Hill (see map), about 2½ miles above Callungal head station.

The cost of the required works for the irrigation of this district would be, approximately, £50,000.

I know of places where people would give £1 a year per acre if they could bring their lands under the influence of irrigation, rather than continue on the present unsatisfactory system. Mr. Rigby also speaks of the Dawson River, and says—

This river, the principal tributary to the Fitzroy, drains an area, including that of the Dee and Don Rivers, of 18,000 square miles, or one-third of the entire watershed of the Fitzroy River.

It may be described as flowing in a northerly direction through a large plain or basin, which contains few elevations in the vicinity of the river. The length of this plain, in the direction of the stream, or from south to north, is 187 miles, with an average width from east to west of 91 miles.

Most of this is open country with rich black soil of excellent quality, possibly decomposed basalt, and of volcanic origin.

Taking into consideration the above-described formation of this river basin and the quality of the soil, I consider that this district contains facilities favourable for irrigation on an extensive scale, and I am convinced that a large quantity of water could be diverted from the river on to the land by gravitation through the requisite irrigation canals.

Speaking of the Leichhardt, he says :—

The principal watercourses are Retreat, Tomahawk, and Theresa Creeks, though the two latter are by no means permanent streams.

Retreat Creek has a larger and better watershed in the Drummond Range, also its course lies generally through a superior class of country.

Proceeding towards the heads of these creeks, I desire to call your attention to the existence of a large natural basin situated between two high spurs of the Drummond Range, and several miles in extent.

The outlet by which Tomahawk Creek issues from this valley is a narrow gorge between projecting rocks. This gap is not more than 200 feet average width and the height of the rocks on both sides 70 to 80 feet.

If this were closed by a stone dam a very large body of water would be locked up in the valley, which widens out immediately above the gorge. The size of the lake so formed would be approximately 4 miles in length and ¾ of a mile wide, and of considerable depth.

Then he touches upon the Logan, the Albert, and other rivers. Now, I think I have said sufficient to make it evident that this matter is worthy of the consideration of the House. What

is the use of us having such a large territory when it is not utilised to the best advantage? That can only be done with the aid of a good water supply for stock and for irrigation. We know very well that stock can exist for a very long time on a very little grass, but they cannot live any length of time without water. I am convinced that hon. members will agree with me that money would be well spent in obtaining a competent engineer to find out the spots in our Western territory where a system of irrigation could be established with advantage, and I thought I should only be doing my duty in bringing this matter under the attention of Parliament. We have suffered quite long enough. I believe we are losing every day. We do not know when our losses will terminate, or what will become of the great colony of Queensland if the pastoral industry goes down. Hitherto it has been the mainstay of the colony. I believe the Treasurer knows that the interest on the large amount of money which we have borrowed has been chiefly supplied by the pastoral tenants of the Crown, and if they are not able to carry on we shall have to resort to additional taxation, which I think would be extremely undesirable. I have not moved for a Royal Commission or a select committee, because Royal Commissions, I know, are at the present time rather in bad odour. I hope the Government in their wisdom will take this matter into earnest consideration.

Mr. HIGGS: The wisdom of the Government!

Mr. KATES: Yes, the wisdom of the Government. They must be wise men, or else they would not be where they are. This is merely an abstract motion, and I do not think I need say any more upon it. I believe it would be of immense service to the colony if we spent £2,000,000 on water conservation and irrigation. It would be money well laid out, and there would be great settlement wherever a system of irrigation was introduced, especially between Chinchilla and Warra, where the land is at present utterly useless and covered with prickly pear.

Mr. SMITH: What about Mildura?

Mr. KATES: Mildura, which was first established by the Chaffey Brothers, was at first a failure, because of want of sufficient means to carry out the system of irrigation properly, but since the Government have taken it over they have exported large quantities of fruit from that part of Victoria to England and elsewhere. I believe there are great possibilities in an effective system of irrigation, and I commend the subject to the favourable notice of the Government. I know there are several hon. members who desire to say something on this motion, and without saying anything further I will simply move the motion standing in my name.

The PREMIER (Hon. R. Philp, *Townsville*):

It is very desirable indeed that we should

know the best methods of conserv-

[4.30 p.m.] ing our rainfall, and the best

methods of irrigation; but I would

like to point out to the hon. member for Cunning-

ham that for a number of years past the various

Governments have done a great deal in that

direction, and we know now what parts of the

country are suitable for artesian boring. Mr. Jack,

who was one of the best authorities in Australia,

and his assistant, Mr. Maitland, have been all

over Queensland, inquiring into suitable places

for artesian boring, and we have also the

Hydraulic Engineer's map, showing the country

which is artesian water bearing. For a number

of years the Government has spent money in

sinking bores, and only ten days ago a splendid

supply of artesian water was struck near Ada-

vale, about 100 miles away from any other supply. I find on the Estimates for this year there is a sum of £56,000 for this work.

Mr. KATES: We want £5,000,000.

The PREMIER: I dare say; but you can't get everything in one day, or one year. I may also point out that a great deal of money has been spent by leaseholders in Queensland—by private persons in the colony—in boring for water.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: And by local bodies, too.

The PREMIER: Yes, in providing water for different towns. I know one place on the Burdekin where a considerable sum of money was spent in irrigation—on a plantation called "The Pioneer Plantation," owned by Drysdale Brothers. For seven or ten years they have been irrigating 2,000 or 3,000 acres of sugar land with success. They are satisfied with what they have done. Water is got there at a depth of 20 or 25 feet by pumping, and the supply is almost inexhaustible. Personally, I would like to see some of the Western boards doing something more in this direction. Two or three years ago the Hydraulic Engineer handed over to some of these authorities some of the tanks, dams, and bores in the West, with the view of their doing this kind of work; but dry seasons have prevented these operations being started. Hon. members must remember that this is only a young colony—this is the fortieth year of our existence—and I consider in that time a great deal has been done by our various Governments in this respect.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: It is only lately that we have gone in for artesian boring.

The PREMIER: It is only of late years that it was discovered, and a great deal more money has been spent here in this way than in New South Wales.

Mr. REID: Publicly or privately?

The PREMIER: Both publicly and privately. We have offered to share with New South Wales half the expense of putting down a bore at Hungerford. The Government Geologist has some doubt about artesian water being found there, but it would be a great boon to that part of the colony if it should be discovered. Mr. Henderson, the Hydraulic Engineer, has taken a great deal of interest in the question of water supply, and his annual reports are well worth reading. Mr. Rigby has had a great deal to do in inspecting the country with a view to irrigation, and he has made several surveys, but nothing practical has been done owing to the drought. I would like to see some experiments made in connection with the Western bores, so as to show what can be done in this way. I don't know whether irrigation for the growing of sheep there would pay.

Mr. HARDACRE: They do that in America.

The PREMIER: But in many places in America the water comes down from the snow-capped mountains and the expense is comparatively small. Again, I would point out to the hon. member for Cunningham that the losses of stock are not so much due to the want of water as to the want of grass. I know many stations where there is a good supply of water, yet they have lost their stock.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Yes, in some places where there are running streams.

Mr. JACKSON: Is there no cure for that?

The PREMIER: Yes, but the cost of irrigation would be too great in proportion to the benefit. It is astonishing the amount of money that has been spent in this direction, and every year we are spending money in this way. This is a question on which we might speak for a week, and I don't think more can be done now than we are doing at present.

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): I have very great sympathy with this motion, but, as it is worded here, it is very abstract. Its object is to call greater attention to the question of water supply, and especially to the question of irriga-

tion, and these are very important matters especially in Queensland, and especially in drought-stricken districts, where the natural rainfall is not sufficient for the people there to produce their crops. If this motion will call attention to the conservation of water in the West, it will not be altogether lost time. In America, India, and Southern Europe, they are spending large sums of money in this way. In India they have spent £14,000,000 on irrigation works, and in some parts of America they have spent large sums.

Mr. JACKSON: But look at the population there.

Mr. HARDACRE: I don't say that we should spend so much here in this connection as they do in India or America; but I think the Government might do a great deal more than they have done and are doing now. I am of opinion that we cannot spend public money in a better way than in the conservation of water and irrigation. That is one of the planks in the Labour platform, and it has been so for eight or nine years. There is no more important plank in our platform than that one.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: It is one of the planks that has been ridiculed.

Mr. HARDACRE: I believe it is even of more importance to spend money in Queensland upon the conservation of water than upon the construction of railways. It would be better to do something in this way which would make our existing railways pay than to extend them to districts where they are not likely to pay for many years. In America especially, the utilisation of water for the growth of crops has been particularly successful—in California, Arizona, Nevada, Dakota, and the Salt Lake Valley, it has, to use a proverbial expression, made the desert blossom like the rose.

Mr. KATES: And in Colorado.

Mr. HARDACRE: And in Colorado as well. I have a statement here, taken from the *Century Magazine*, which describes what has been done by irrigation in Arizona. It is said that—

The transcontinental traveller who passes through Southern Arizona carries away the impression that this great territory—this State of the early future—is an almost hopeless waste. He sees only the vast desert, its soil-like ashes marked with no vegetation save the grim pillar of the cactus and the gnarled branches of the mesquit. But if the traveller would leave the main line at Maricopa the train would carry him in an hour into the heart of the real Arizona. Here he would behold the miracle of irrigation. The Salt River Valley has felt the touch of living water, and its deserts have been transformed into green pastures, gardens, and orchards. The productiveness of the gray soil, when watered, surpasses description. Phoenix, the capital, is surrounded by tens of thousands of acres of irrigated land; and here the flag of civilisation has been planted in the heart of the primeval desert.

What has been done in America may as well be done in Queensland. I would like the motion to go a little further than it does and commit the House to take some action in the matter beyond making diligent inquiries, which I know the department is doing. I think the department should obtain all the information possible as to what is being done in other colonies, and should embody that information in a report. I would have no objection even to a motion which would commit this House to the establishment of a department of irrigation, as in America they have National Commissions on Irrigation. The Department of Agriculture might well devote more of its attention to obtaining information as to the best methods of irrigation to be adopted in Queensland. There is one matter I wish to refer to, and in connection with which I wish to insert an amendment in this motion. Some members may think it a fad, too ideal, and too much beyond the standard of possibilities, but what I refer to is the production of artificial rain.

Mr. REID : What do you call "artificial rain"?

Mr. BOWMAN : You want Professor Pepper.

Mr. HARDACRE : It may be derided at the present time, but there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that before many years are over we shall successfully precipitate rain from clouds hovering near the earth.

Mr. W. HAMILTON : They are building a special gun in Mackay to bang at the clouds with.

Mr. HARDACRE : The amendment I wish to move is the insertion, after the words "water supply," of the words "and that experiments should be made for the production of artificial rainfall, by the precipitation of moisture from clouds." Some years ago the experiment was made with some success, but it was not followed up to any great extent, and no final conclusions were arrived at. We know the celebrated experiment made in Queensland some seventeen years ago by Professor Pepper, and recently, I understand, it has been proposed to make a fresh attempt in Mackay.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : Pepper did not bring down rain.

Mr. HARDACRE : No, he did not ; but I think there is a great deal in the idea, and when clouds full of moisture are near the earth it may be possible by concussion to precipitate their moisture. The writer of an article copied into the *Brisbane Courier* from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in commenting upon the proposal made at Mackay, makes what in my opinion is a most valuable suggestion. He says—

In a country like Australia, where so much depends upon the rainfall, it seems surprising to see so little done experimentally. I see by your paper that in Queensland some effort is being made to produce rain by concussion, but the result will be very doubtful.

With the presence of a nimbus cloud, cloud-rain can be precipitated with absolute certainty by a sudden and great reduction of temperature within the cloud area.

This can be done by means of a shell containing liquid air timed to burst in or near the cloud, reducing the temperature several degrees below zero. The result would be precipitation of the vapour in the form of snow, sleet, and rain. Should the experiment be undertaken success would be absolute.

I am not sure that success would be absolute, but I do say that there are sufficient reasonable probabilities in the idea to warrant some experiments being made. A very small sum of, say, £500 a year, so spent would result in very valuable information being got, and might result in successful operations. I would be glad if the Agricultural Department particularly would make exhaustive inquiries, and submit a report as to what is being done in other countries, and as to the cost of irrigation and the conservation of water, for the information of agriculturists and the public generally.

Mr. W. HAMILTON (*Gregory*) : I was rather surprised to find the hon. member for Cunningham bringing this up, because it has for years been one of the planks of the Labour platform. Hon. members on the other side annexed a good many of those planks at the time of the Toowong election, but if they keep on annexing them like this there will be no such thing as a Labour platform left to use as a bogey at the next election. I am entirely sympathetic with the hon. member in this motion. Of course, in the form in which it is brought up it is a pretty big order—the conservation and storage of the spare water of our rivers in flood time. Why there is enough water goes down one of our Western rivers in a wet season as would irrigate the whole of Queensland the whole year round if it was possible to conserve it in some way or another. In speaking about putting down artesian wells for irrigation purposes, the hon. member referred to what has been done at Barcaldine. But it must be remembered that Barcaldine is particularly

favoured in this respect. Not only is the water found at shallow depths, but it is remarkably free from minerals, while the soil is sandy. Mr. Campbell, Mr. Cronin, and several others have carried on agriculture successfully there by means of irrigation, but it is a very large order to attempt the same thing out on the Western downs in the neighbourhood of Winton, where you have to go down 4,000 feet to strike the water, and then you do not get a very great supply.

Mr. KATES : Well, conserve the rainfall.

Mr. W. HAMILTON : That will take a great deal of money.

Mr. STORY : And where are you going to put the water?

Mr. W. HAMILTON : The water would spread all over the country. There are not many places in the Western rivers that I know of where there are facilities for constructing reservoirs.

Mr. REID : They would dry up in a dry season.

Mr. W. HAMILTON : It might be a good thing in future years to dam those rivers, but it is a very big order at the present time. The hon. member spoke of putting down artesian wells for stock. That is very much needed, and on a great many stock routes the local authorities have put down artesian wells. The Winton Divisional Board is now considering the advisability of putting one down on the road from Ayrshire Downs to Winton, merely to open up the road for the travelling public. I must give the Government credit for having done a great deal in that way. As the Treasurer pointed out, there is a sum of £56,000 on the Estimates this year for artesian wells, and I know that several of them are to be in very good positions. They are to be put down where there are no wells at present, so that they will practically prospect the country, and ascertain whether it is artesian, and at what depths water is likely to be obtained. That is a very good idea, and I do not think that anyone would have grudged the money if the amount asked for was £100,000. In New South Wales they have passed an Act enabling loans to be made to groups of selectors to put down bores. The system has proved a success, and it would be a very good thing if our Government initiated the same system in this colony. I know that a few years ago a group of selectors out near Longreach wanted the Government to lend them money for the purpose of putting down a bore, and they were willing to make themselves jointly liable for the payment of interest and redemption, but the Government could not see their way to lend them the money. If such a system was adopted, it would go a long way to ameliorate the condition of things in the West, and it certainly is more practicable to put down bores than to construct reservoirs in the Western rivers. I shall be only too pleased to support the motion, because I believe the hon. member's intentions are good. As he said, it is merely a suggestion to the Government, but it is one that they might well act upon. All branches of the pastoral industry are deserving of assistance from the Government. All the other industries have been largely bolstered up in the past at the expense of the pastoral industry, and very much to its detriment, and an industry that is responsible for more than half of our exports deserves far more consideration than it has had in the past. As to the amendment talked of by the hon. member for Leichhardt of blowing the clouds to pieces, I see by the papers that they are building a gun specially for that purpose at Mackay, and it would be a good thing to wait and see how the experiment gets on there. I am very pleased to support the motion.

Mr. TOOTH (*Burrum*) : The motion has my entire sympathy, and it certainly shall have my

support. The few remarks I am about to make will refer more especially to the latter portion of the motion, dealing with the conservation of the water in our rivers. I do not need to say—because it is a well-known fact—that all our coastal rivers and creeks are tidal, and I think that with very little expense in most instances, by throwing dams across those streams at suitable places, miles and miles of water frontage—which is now useless on account of its being salt or brackish—could be made available for pastoral, agricultural, or domestic purposes. I shall give the House one or two instances which have come under my personal observation. Take the Maryborough water supply. The town of Maryborough, with a population of 13,000 or 14,000 inhabitants, obtains its water supply from Tinana Creek, which runs into the Mary River something like a couple of miles above the town, and that creek is consequently tidal. When they went in for a water supply they found that by throwing a concrete dam across the creek—which, to my personal knowledge, did not cost much more than £500—they were able to keep back the tide, and by that means, and at very little expense, they got an ample water supply for the town. The council have never yet, since the waterworks were established, had to caution consumers to be careful with the water, simply because they know the supply is unlimited. I noticed last week a report from the engineer to

[5 p.m.] the fact that, though there had been no rain in consequence of the drought

for the last two years in the district, the council need have no fear whatever with regard to any scarcity in the water supply. There is an instance where a small expenditure has had a good result. There is also another case which has come under my notice during the last three or four months. At the township of Howard the Railway Department found it necessary to have an ample supply of water, and to get that water a dam was put across the Burrum River, close to the town. I believe the dam itself was built at a cost of less than £600. At all events, building the dam across the river has been the means of blocking the tides and giving miles of frontage to that river suitable for agricultural, pastoral, and domestic purposes, which has hitherto been totally useless. I know that the Mary River and the Burnett River could be treated similarly at very small expense; but the question is: Who is to go to the expense of building those dams where practicable? Some people say the divisional board; but I think the divisional boards have quite enough to do with their money without going to the expense of the conservation of water. I trust that the motion will be carried, and also that it will be acted on by the Government.

Mr. BOWMAN (*Warrego*): I also intend to support the motion, particularly in reference to the conservation of water on our stock routes, and in some of our Western towns. In Augathella there is almost a water famine, the nearest surface water being 13 miles away; and hon. members may have noticed a report stating that teamsters coming in had to go 4 miles to a private well to get water for their stock. I had a letter to-day from that locality stating that they anticipate that most of the persons with families in that district will have to leave, so that there is a very strong necessity for the Government conserving water and endeavouring to procure it. I will say that, when the Treasurer was approached with the view of getting a permanent water supply, he signified his willingness to put a bore down if arrangements can be made with the Murweh Divisional Board to pay half the expense. There would be a very great difficulty in some parts of the Western

country in conserving large quantities of water by means of tanks, for the reason that the ground is so porous. I have known very large tanks constructed there, and no matter how heavy may be the rainfall they are unable to retain the water on account of the porous nature of the soil. But still there is a stern necessity for putting down tanks on several of our roads and stock routes for the benefit of carriers and drovers. There is a very successful flow of water at Adavale now, but last year they had to travel 7 miles to the Lily Waterholes to get water to supply the town. Anything that can be done by the Government to relieve the necessities of the people in the drought-stricken parts of the colony in the matter of water supply will meet with general favour. In connection with artesian boring, I believe in the principle suggested by the hon. member for Gregory—namely, that the Government might make special provision for assisting selectors, particularly where there is a number of them grouped together, so that they might be able to get a bore put down without having to borrow the money from private individuals at extortionate rates of interest. I may mention that irrigation has been tried to a limited extent at Thurulgoona, in the electorate of Balonne, where cultivation has been carried on with very great success; but I think there would be great difficulty in carrying it out to the extent indicated by the hon. member who moved the motion this afternoon. I am pleased to think the Agricultural Department is to be approached with the view of trying experiment farms near some of the bores, and I think there are some most suitable places in the district I have the honour to represent. I trust that the Government will not be backward in spending money to provide a water supply for the persons in the outside towns of the colony, and also for persons travelling with stock. Any motion for the better conservation of water will receive my hearty support. It is pitiful to see the suffering existing in the West from want of water, and I think the hon. member deserves every credit for having brought forward this motion.

Mr. STORY (*Balonne*): It is almost impossible in a country like this, devastated as it often is by droughts, for any hon. member to move any motion in connection with the conservation of water, however impracticable the motion may be in some cases, without meeting with approbation; at the same time, the mere discussion of the question may lead to some action being taken by the Government later on. Those hon. members who are acquainted with the Western country know how seldom our rivers run, and that when they are in high flood there is an immense spread of water; also that, in spite of anything that can be done, it is impossible to save the flood water. If the large excavations were made that the hon. gentleman seems to think possible the water would sweep over and simply leave these tanks full of silt. There is another thing. In making a dam the most important thing is to arrange the bywash so that the spare water may go clean away into another channel, which will distribute it over the country almost like a flood. In most black-soil country the soil is so friable that it goes away with the water like flour, and the result would be that in a large flood the water would get round the end of the dam and not spread outward, but go back to the river again. I may point out that where the Widgegoara Creek and the Nowra Creek leave the Warrego River, and run for 20 or 30 miles watering the country as they go, I think it would be a good thing for the Government to erect where these watercourses leave the river a dam of sufficient magnitude that in a half-flood, or what we call a "banker," the water which is

entirely lost because it runs down the channels would be arrested and made to spread over the country as it does in a high flood. You will understand that the river must be over the banks before it can get into the channels to get away down through the country. I do not think there is a great deal to be done in the way of irrigation from bores. The irrigation which takes place in the Western country is on such an enormous scale when the rivers rise in a great flood that nobody can imagine any other means of carrying it out. The water from a bore or anything of the kind could not be applied except to some cultivation paddocks. Rain is about the only thing we can depend upon for irrigation. My friend the hon. member for Cunningham produced a sample of wheat grown at Mr. Baker's, Bingabango Farm, and he says it is as good a sample as any produced in Queensland. I know also that through the same means there has been splendid wheat grown at Thurlgoona, and I know of fine gardens and fine lucerne paddocks kept going by means of artesian water. All that, however, is necessarily on a small scale. Probably the most that could be done by irrigation, even with a large bore, would be to grow some fodder for working horses, or perhaps some feed for dairy cattle. There is no scheme possible that would feed the enormous amount of stock that we have to look after in times of drought like these. I am sorry to have to say so, but men who know the great extent of country and its varied conditions will admit that it is impossible to apply any scheme of irrigation that would do away with the effects of drought. The watering of stock routes certainly is a matter very easy of accomplishment, and in a great many instances it has been done. The Government in one border township, where nearly the whole of the cattle from Western Queensland cross into New South Wales, started a bore for the purpose of watering travelling stock. So necessary was it that when the travelling stock arrived at the border fence, where they had to be inspected for ticks, it was impossible to do anything with them owing to the fact that the nearest water was 12 miles distant, and by the time the cattle got back to the fence it was necessary for them to turn back to get another drink. Fortunately the Premier realised the difficulty, and he has arranged that a bore shall be put down at this particular place, so as to leave the road open to the travelling stock from Western Queensland. So far it has not been a success, but we are hoping that something more may be done to make it the success that it deserves to be, as there are immense artesian bores in the same district. The suggestion of my hon. friend the member for Leichhardt, that something might be done with the clouds, is a novel one. We have plenty of clouds, and I do not know but that we might do something in the style of the Elijah business. People do pray for rain a good deal, but not very successfully, whereas Elijah certainly was successful. The difficulty is that clouds overshadow a great lot of country, and the man firing the liquid air might burst a cloud, and the rain might descend upon another man's country. The question would then be, How would those two men stand in relation to one another? Would the man who supplied the liquid air and caused the rain to fall on another man's land be entitled to damages or compensation for the expenses which he had been put to to bring down the rain? I would suggest that the proper way of settling the matter would be to allow the man who supplied the liquid air to trespass on his neighbour's country. I think when the next Land Bill is introduced, that ought to be made so definite that there can be no misunderstanding about it, and if you could not

cause a shower of rain to fall on your own country, possibly you might go to a considerable amount of expense, and get very little satisfaction; unless the Government or the divisional board were to take the matter in hand and charge by results. I think the motion moved by the hon. member for Cunningham is a most admirable one; but to put it into operation to the extent that he wishes would cost an immense amount of money. But a start having once been made, there is no doubt that the Government would find that it paid in every conceivable manner. I shall support the motion.

Question put and passed.

#### SPEAKER'S RULING.

Mr. FISHER (*Gympie*), in moving—

That Mr. Speaker's ruling, as it appears in *Hansard*, 3rd December last, page 2323, as attached, is not in accordance with our Standing Orders:—

"At this stage the members of the Opposition, with the exception of Messrs. Maxwell and Glassey, left the Chamber in a body.

"Before passing the bar, Mr. FITZGERALD, turning to the Ministerial benches, said, 'You ought to be—d—d well ashamed of yourselves.'

"The SPEAKER: The conduct of the hon. member for Mitchell is of such a nature that the chair cannot refuse to take notice of it. I name the hon. member for his conduct, and I present his name to the House.

"The PREMIER: I move that the hon. member for Mitchell be suspended from the service of the House for one week.

"Question—That the hon. member for Mitchell be suspended from the service of the House for one week—put.

"Mr. MAXWELL called 'Divide.'

"The SPEAKER: The call for a division is of so frivolous a nature that I declare the question resolved in the affirmative; and I call upon the hon. member for Mitchell, Mr. Fitzgerald, to leave the House"—

said: In bringing forward this motion I have one idea in view, and that is, that the Standing Orders of the House ought to be observed in every particular, both by Mr. Speaker and every member in the House. I am of opinion that the ruling you, Sir, gave on the 2nd instant, when the hon. member for Burke, Mr. Maxwell, called for a division, was an erroneous one, and not in accordance with the Standing Orders. I have therefore felt it to be my duty to move in the House to that effect. The question at issue which I raise is, that Mr. Speaker has no power to declare when a division is frivolous. Our Standing Orders provide that any member may call for a division, and it is then Mr. Speaker's duty to instruct an officer of the House to ring the bell to enable members within hearing to record their votes on the question. I question your competency to decide whether a call for a division is frivolous. If you are competent to do that, then you can say to the Premier when he calls for a division that it is a frivolous act, for the Premier is only a member of the House as any of us are. To prevent any misunderstanding I would like to say that I have the word of honour of the hon. member for Burke, Mr. Maxwell, that it was in consequence of your declaring that he was not competent to call for a division that he refused to obey your order to act as a teller in the succeeding division. The hon. member for Bundaberg and the hon. member for Burke were the only two members on the Opposition benches. In one case the hon. member for Burke called for a division, and you refused to allow it, saying that it was frivolous. When the succeeding question was being put half a minute later, the hon. member for Bundaberg called for a division and you accepted the call. I submit to hon. members that if it be left to Mr. Speaker to discriminate between one member and another as to whether they are competent to call for a

division the position would be intolerable. It would certainly lead to a great deal of recrimination and feelings of partisanship. I ask hon. members to read our Standing Orders Nos. 69 and 70. No. 69 says—

A question, being put, shall be resolved by the majority of voices—aye or no.

And No. 70 says—

Mr. Speaker shall state whether in his opinion the ayes or noes have it; but if his opinion is not agreed to by any member, the question shall be determined by a division.

Then it is provided by Standing Order No. 335 that—

In all cases not specially provided for by these Standing Rules and Orders, or by Sessional or other Orders, resort shall be had to the rules, forms, and usages of the Commons House of Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland as existing at the date of the passing of these Standing Rules and Orders, which shall be followed and observed as far as the same can apply to the proceedings of the House.

I submit that in this instance we cannot go to the rules of the House of Commons because our Standing Orders are so definite that there is no reason to go to them. This action is quite unprecedented. You cannot discriminate between one member and another, but a division must be taken if called for, and if there are not two tellers on either side then the division falls through. The House of Commons rule is perfectly definite on this point. I

[5:30 p.m.] direct hon. members' attention to the rules relating to divisions in the House of Commons as laid down in the tenth edition of "May." Rule 28 reads—

That so soon as the voices have been taken, the Clerk shall turn a two-minute sand-glass, to be kept on the table for that purpose, and the doors shall not be closed until after the lapse of two minutes as indicated by such sand-glass.

Rule 29 reads—

That the doors shall be closed so soon after the lapse of two minutes as the Speaker or the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House shall think proper to dire .

Then Rule 30, which was agreed to on the 29th February, 1888, says—

That Mr. Speaker or the Chairman may, after the lapse of two minutes as indicated by the sand-glass, if in his opinion the division is frivolously or vexatiously claimed, take the vote of the House or Committee, by calling upon the members who support and who challenge his decision successively to rise in their places; and he shall thereupon, as he thinks fit, either declare the determination of the House or the Committee, or name tellers for a division. And in case there is no division, the Speaker or Chairman shall declare to the House or Committee the number of the minority who had challenged his decision, and their names shall be thereupon taken down in the House and printed with the list of divisions.

Now, there is a sensible provision, which the House of Commons, consisting of 600 members, makes.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: It is a division.

Mr. FISHER: Yes; it is practically a division. But what are the facts in this case? The Speaker did not call upon any members to support the hon. member for Burke; the division bell was not rung, and you, Mr. Speaker, ruled that—

The call for a division is of so frivolous a nature that I declare the question resolved in the affirmative; and I call upon the hon. member for Mitchell, Mr. Fitzgerald, to leave the House.

Yet when a similar call for a division was made by the hon. member for Bundaberg—when it was moved that "the question be now put"—it was granted.

Mr. GIVENS: He sat alone.

Mr. FISHER: No. Two members were on the Opposition side then. I have the hon. member for Burke's word of honour that it was

because he was derided his temper would not allow him to respond to the second call of the Speaker. Well, can anyone blame him?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Mr. FISHER: I do not excuse him for disobeying the call of the Speaker, but I think this palliates his action.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not in the slightest.

Mr. FISHER: I do not justify his disobeying the ruling of the Chair. I think he was wrong in doing that; but I would like to call hon. members' attention to this: that the Speaker said that the call for this division was of so frivolous a nature that he declined to put the question. If the Hon. the Chief Secretary was in his place and that did not rouse him, I would have less respect for him than I have even now.

Mr. BOWMAN: Less than that would rouse him.

Mr. FISHER: I will now quote a case in point, to be found in the House of Commons *Hansard* for 1893, page 907, vol. xiii. He had moved the adjournment of the House, and less than forty members, but more than ten, having risen in their places to support the motion, Mr. Keir Hardie said—

I claim a division, Sir.

The Speaker said—

Certainly more than ten and less than forty members stood up. If fewer than forty and not less than ten hon. members rise in their places, the hon. member can claim a division and then the House will decide, on the question being put, whether or not the motion should be made. That is, if the hon. gentleman troubles the House to go to a division, it will be for the House to say whether he shall have leave or not.

Mr. Keir Hardie said—

I will take a division, Sir.

The question was then proposed, and the Speaker said—

I have been asked to desire hon. gentlemen who called "Aye" to stand up in their places. I am bound to say I cannot do that. The Standing Order expressly contemplates more than ten and less than forty rising, and then it is competent to the hon. gentleman to claim a division. As he has acted under the Standing Order, I do not think I can hold that the division is frivolously or vexatiously claimed; but the hon. gentleman will observe that the minority is very small.

They have a Standing Order there specially providing for this.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: That does not apply to this case at all.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In this case there were only two members left on the Opposition side.

Mr. FISHER: At any rate, if that has not any direct application to this case, it certainly points to the great care that is taken in the House of Commons to preserve the rights of the minority. That is the point I wish to bring out. What do we see here? That the Speaker took upon himself to declare the call for a division frivolous, and I hold that you, Sir, are not competent, under our Standing Order, which says that any hon. member may call for a division, to say that he is calling for it in a frivolous way. Provision is made that the division bell is to be rung in order to indicate to hon. members who may be in any part of the building that a division is going to be taken in regard to the particular question at issue in the House. For these reasons I am bound to move the motion standing in my name. I move formally that your ruling, Mr. Speaker, is not in accordance with the Standing Orders of this House.

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. R. Dickson, *Bulimba*): I am of opinion that the hon. member who has moved this motion would have shown a better sense of the proprieties of this House if he had remained silent on this matter, but since he has chosen to obtrude this matter in a definite form—and in a form which

I consider is offensive to the Chair—I do not feel inclined to remain silent. This motion relates to matters that are extremely regrettable, and which reflect, Sir, on your conduct in the Chair. I am sure hon. members on both sides will recognise that your action in connection with that regrettable matter was in accordance with the dignity of the position you occupy, Sir. I think this motion is one that should be distinctly discountenanced by hon. members on both sides.

Mr. BOWMAN: It won't.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is one of the responsible duties of the Chair to maintain order, and although hon. members opposite on this occasion may be in sympathy with the motion of the hon. member for Gympie, for party purposes, the majority of hon. members must feel that there is nothing else left for us to do but to say that you, Sir, acted in a manner becoming your position, and that your action upheld the honour and dignity of this Chamber. This is a reflection upon the Chair.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No, no!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I say so distinctly.

Mr. FISHER: It is a question of a ruling. I pointed that out clearly.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is a distinct reflection upon his ruling.

Mr. FISHER: Hear, hear! Quite right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is a reflection upon his ruling, and I say that the Speaker, under the circumstances, was perfectly justified in regarding the demand for a division at that time as frivolous, and in opposition to the general feeling and desire of the hon. members who remained within the Chamber.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: How did he know that?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Hon. members have put themselves out of court because they left the Chamber, as this very report indicates. They were not here to claim a division. Had hon. members remained in the Chamber and called for a division—

Mr. W. HAMILTON: They left as a protest against your action?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Had they remained in the Chamber, and had there been a desire shown by members in the Chamber to have a division, I have not the slightest doubt that the Speaker would have acted as he always does, with a due regard for the protection of the minority—with a regard, at any rate, for the proper conduct of debate in this Chamber—and would have readily admitted the claim for a division by ordering the bell to be sounded.

Mr. DAWSON: Don't you know that they left to avoid a disagreeable scene?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This report of the proceedings says—

At this stage the members of the Opposition, with the exception of Messrs. Maxwell and Glassey, left the Chamber in a body.

Mr. BOWMAN: What for?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know.

Mr. DAWSON: To avoid a scene.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is no justification. If hon. members choose to vacate this Chamber, the responsibility rests upon themselves, and they cannot surely claim that their absence should be regarded virtually as substantiating their claim for a division when they voluntarily absented themselves from the division?

Mr. DAWSON: They had a right to go out if they liked.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: What occurred after that? Two hon. members of the Opposition remained in the Chamber, and when the Speaker announced that certain conduct of an

hon. member demanded his naming that member to the House—and I am sure we all regret that such conduct should have occurred—one of the two remaining called for a division, while the other members were outside the Chamber, showing that the Speakers was perfectly justified in saying on that occasion—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They were at the bar of the House.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They were outside the bar of the Chamber, and the Speaker, I say, was perfectly justified, under the circumstances, in considering this as a frivolous case. (Uproar.)

Mr. GIVENS: What Standing Order gave him the authority?

The SPEAKER: Order, order! I trust that, particularly when a motion disagreeing with a ruling of the Speaker is under discussion by the House, order will be preserved. The motion is one which should be decided on its merits, and I trust it will be so decided, after debate, without warmth.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not wish to introduce unnecessary warmth into this matter.

Mr. DAWSON: You have made a good start.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As one who has had the honour of occupying a seat in this Chamber for years, being an old member of this House, I feel that any reflection upon the Chair—especially when, according to my views, the dignity of this House has been maintained, and the office of Speaker is filled by a gentleman who, to my mind, maintains the best traditions of Parliament, by his conduct in the chair, I feel a natural resentment that any motion should be presented to this Chamber which in any way indicates, or is intended to convey, even in a veiled manner, a reflection upon the impartiality of the Speaker who presides over our deliberations. If I have said anything in warmth I regret—no, I won't say I regret it, because really, as a member of Parliament, I feel that it is the duty and the privilege of members of this Parliament to maintain the dignity of our deliberations, and hon. members opposite, instead of reflecting upon the conduct of the Chair, should admit that during the heat of debate hon. members have conducted themselves in such a manner as called forth the reprobation of the Chair, and should unite with me in expressing regret that such circumstances occurred, and should endeavour to bury those circumstances in oblivion. I think it is only right that in addition to that sentimental expression, I should say that I consider the conduct of the Chair on that regrettable occasion to which I refer, was such as not only tended to maintain the dignity of our proceedings, but was perfectly justified in consideration of the fact that hon. members opposite voluntarily abrogated their position and went outside the Chamber. When, of the two members remaining, one called for a division, while the other side was full of members, surely it was properly said that the call for a division under those circumstances was entirely frivolous. (Dissent.) I know it entirely rose through the heat of the debate, but hon. members know that if the call for a division had been granted it would not have achieved the hon. member's object.

Mr. GIVENS: How do you know?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We know what was the electrical condition of the atmosphere at that time. We know that if the call for a division had been allowed there would never have been a division, as was subsequently shown to be the case, when we found that there were no tellers for the "Noes." What was the action of the hon. member subsequently? Instead of proving the necessity for a division, he substantiated and proved conclusively that the Speaker's

estimate of his call for a division was correct, by himself refusing to become one of the tellers in a division.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: That was subsequently.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There was no justification for that. I am surprised that the hon. member for Gympie should have attempted to justify the action of the hon. member for Burke in obstinately refusing—in disobeying the order of the Chair.

Mr. BROWNE: You know that was a subsequent matter.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He says that on account of the Speaker not allowing a division on a frivolous call justified the hon. member for Burke in refusing to perform his duties as teller.

Mr. FISHER: I said nothing of the kind.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member said it was a palliation.

Mr. FISHER: Ah! That is the case.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: What is the use of quibbling with words? I consider that "palliation" is interchangeable with "justification," or at any rate, as applied by the hon. member, with a moderate justification of the action persisted in by the hon. member. I say there can be no palliation or entire justification for an hon. member remaining in this Chamber to refuse to obey the legitimate commands of the Speaker in connection with a division. I do not wish to take up too long a time in debating this matter, but I esteem it a privilege, as being one of the old members of this Legislative Assembly, to justify the Speaker in the action which he has taken—entirely apart from party grounds. I need not defend it on party grounds, because we know that had the division been granted, the result would have been still the same, as was shown upon the subsequent occasion when the hon. member for Burke refused to fulfil the mandate of the Chair. I rise not only to support the action of the Speaker, but to justify him in his performance of what I conceive to be his duty in the chair, and in no way in the sense of a partisan; and also to express my regret that the hon. member for Gympie should take advantage of this question to endeavour—well, I do not wish even to imply that he has done so—

Mr. HIGGS: You have done so already.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not wish to say that he intends by this motion to cast a reflection upon the impartiality or wisdom of the gentleman who presides over our deliberations.

Mr. FISHER: I would not do such a mean thing. I want to protect the rights of members of this House.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am glad the hon. member has had an opportunity of expressing himself in contradiction of any such view.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He did not say so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not accuse him of any such unworthy motive.

Mr. FISHER: It would not trouble me a bit.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Still the hon. member lays himself open most distinctly in this motion to the suspicion of conveying a veiled censure of this House upon the hon. gentleman who occupies the chair, and who, to my mind, has so ably discharged his duties at a time when passions were considerably excited and when the atmosphere was electrical, under what I am sure were most trying circumstances he discharged his duties to this Chamber in a manner which elicited not only the commendation of hon. members here, but the commendations also of all who desire that our deliberations shall be conducted with that dignity and that propriety which ought to obtain in the Parliament of Queensland.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. KIDSTON (*Rockhampton*): If anything should make the hon. member for Gympie regret having introduced this resolution, it should be that it has led an old member like the Chief Secretary to make such a sorry exhibition of himself.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. BROWNE: It is not the first time, either.

Mr. KIDSTON: The hon. gentleman did not say one word to justify the action of the Speaker on the ground that it was in accordance with the Standing Orders. He has simply dealt with the matter in a partisan way, and tried to stir up angry feelings on this side of the Chamber. He appealed to the House to maintain the dignity of the House and the dignity of the Chair. There is very little dignity left to this House.

Mr. BROWNE: Hear, hear!

Mr. KIDSTON: As a deliberative Assembly, there is very little dignity left to the House.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. KIDSTON: And what little is left will not be maintained by supporting the Speaker when he overrides the Standing Orders—

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. KIDSTON: When he overrides the rights of every hon. member of this House—rights which every member of this House has equally with all others.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That has not been done.

Mr. GIVENS: It has been done, no matter how the question is decided.

Mr. KIDSTON: That is the question—whether that has been done or not. I am glad to hear the Chief Secretary say that it has not been done. I assume that if it had been done he would have spoken in another way, and that he would have blamed the Speaker for acting partially. I will show that that is exactly what has been done. On page 2323 of *Hansard* I find that the Speaker put the question—"That the hon. member for Mitchell be suspended from the service of the House for one week." That question was put. Mr. Maxwell called "Divide," and then the Speaker said, "The call for a division is frivolous," and refused to put it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There were only two members on your side of the Chamber.

Mr. KIDSTON: Then half-a-dozen lines further on, in the same column of *Hansard*, the Speaker put the question—"That the question be now put." The hon. member for Bundaberg called for a division, and the House divided. I should think that not more than two minutes had elapsed since the hon. member for Burke had called for a division, and I do not suppose there was any more question in anyone's mind as to how the vote would go in the one case than there was in the other. If that is not showing partiality, Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. REID: It might have been a mistake, without partiality.

Mr. KIDSTON: I wish you to understand, Mr. Speaker, that I am not wishing to infer that you were more partial to the hon. member for Bundaberg than to the hon. member for Burke, or that you had any greater liking for the hon. member for Bundaberg, or that you had any interest—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Surely the word "partiality" is not the word to use, in any event.

Mr. KIDSTON: I want to show that you acted differently towards one member to the way you acted towards another, and I submit that the action of the Chair ought to be the same to all members equally. The Standing Orders distinctly provide for that, and I claim that the

Speaker did not act to those two hon. members alike. I am not going into the Standing Orders or the rules of procedure in regard to this particular matter, as the hon. member for Gympie has done so very effectively. But it seems to me from Standing Order 137 that it was almost the fault of the Clerk of the House rather than of the Speaker that the division was not taken. Standing Order 70, which was quoted by the hon. member for Gympie, provides that any member who is dissatisfied with the Speaker's decision regarding a question, may call for a division, and Standing Order 137 says—

When a division is demanded, the Sergeant-at-Arms shall ring a bell, and a two-minute sandglass—to be kept on the table for that purpose—shall be turned; and the doors shall not be closed until after the lapse of two minutes, as indicated by such sand-glass.

Mr. FISHER: The Sergeant-at-Arms rings the bell at Mr. Speaker's order.

Mr. KIDSTON: I know what the custom of the House is, of course; but there is no provision in the Standing Orders for the Speaker ordering the bell to be rung.

Mr. BROWNE: We have no Standing Orders now.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am only pointing out that when a division is demanded it is imperative that the Sergeant-at-Arms shall ring a bell and turn a sandglass. I am aware that the custom of the House is that the Sergeant-at-Arms acts on instructions received from the Speaker, and I have no objection to that course of procedure. I only quote the Standing Order to show that there is nothing in our Standing Orders to indicate that the Speaker has the power to refuse to grant a division. I also point out this, Mr. Speaker: That, if you have that power, then nothing can be carried in this House that you are not pleased to have carried, because if you declare that a question is carried in the negative, and it is taken to a division, you can declare that carried in the negative. You can declare every question carried in the negative, because you will refuse a division. If you have power to refuse a division when a member calls for one, then nothing can be carried in the House that the Speaker is not pleased shall be carried.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There is an old legal adage—*De minimis non curat lex*.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am not concerned about old legal adages; but it is manifest to any person of common sense that, if the Speaker has power to refuse one division, he has power to refuse all divisions; and, if that is so, it is an end of all orderly parliamentary procedure.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL rose to speak, and said, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. FISHER: Move the adjournment of the debate.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move the adjournment of the debate.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: Why not finish it?

Mr. FISHER: How can you finish it when it is 6 o'clock?

The SPEAKER: If there is a desire on the part of hon. members to further debate this question, I shall put the question for the adjournment of the debate; but if there is no general desire on the part of hon. members to speak, I would respectfully suggest that this is a matter which should be decided now.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I beg leave to withdraw my motion. I only moved it for the reason that I wanted to say a few words; but this is not a matter which should be standing on the paper week after week. I do not think it would be at all seemly or desirable that that should be so.

Mr. FISHER: Give an hour to it after tea.

Mr. JENKINSON: Why not continue it after inner?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It might go on for two or three hours. We can go to a division now.

At two minutes past 6 o'clock,

The SPEAKER said: I shall resume the chair at 7 o'clock.

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

#### GLADSTONE TO ROCKHAMPTON RAILWAY.

##### MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message, intimating that the Council had approved of the plan, section, and book of reference of this railway.

#### PASTORAL LEASES EXTENSION BILL.

##### MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message intimating that the Council had agreed to this Bill with amendments, in which the Council requested the concurrence of the Assembly.

Ordered, that the amendments be taken into consideration to-morrow.

#### EVIDENCE FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL.

##### FIRST READING.

This Bill, received by message from the Council, was read a first time, and the second reading was made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

#### WARWICK TOWARDS GOONDIWINDI RAILWAY.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Murray, *Normanby*) moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions:—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed branch, Southern line, from Warwick towards Goondiwindi, in length 24 miles 23 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the fourth day of December instant.
2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

##### COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving the resolutions, said: The motion involves a subject of some considerable importance, and one on which I expect to hear a variety of opinions expressed. We had a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the wisdom of constructing a line from some point on our main trunk line in order to protect as far as possible the border traffic for this colony. That commission considered this proposal of a line from some point towards Goondiwindi and St. George. They brought up a report which is now before hon. members, and it will be noticed that the commission are not unanimous in their decision with regard to this line. Two were in favour of the line starting from Warwick, and three in favour of the line starting from Pittsworth. A great deal of importance has been attached to this subject, more particularly to the aspect of the question that the line is intended as far as possible to secure for Brisbane the border traffic, and prevent as far as possible the traffic running to Sydney. I am inclined to think that on the advent of federation, which will be in operation

in a few months' time, that, as far as traffic purposes are concerned, the border line between one colony and another will be practically abolished, and people living along the border will have absolute freedom to send their produce to whatever port or market suits their purpose best. There is no doubt that traffic, like water, will flow along the line of least resistance; and I am inclined to think, whatever expense this colony may incur in constructing a line along our border, if the object was to secure for Brisbane the traffic along the border, it would utterly fail in that direction under federation. We recognise that if federation is to do anything for these colonies, we are to look upon ourselves as one people with one common interest, and there is to be no embargo placed on one colony as against another; and, for this purpose, under federation an interstate commission will be appointed to see that no one State imposes any particular burdens upon the producers of the country to force them to send their produce to any one port in preference to another. There will be no differential rates allowed, and, more than that, I do not think there will be any attempt made to force people to send their produce to any but the nearest market. I think that the greatest protection that we can have, and the only protection we can have, is that of being the nearest port to any particular district along our border. That alone will secure to us the traffic from that district, and I think, so far as my knowledge of the country goes, certainly the whole of the traffic from the border line above Goondiwindi, and for some considerable distance west of Goondiwindi, will naturally flow into Brisbane—will naturally flow into Brisbane, because the distance from there to Brisbane is so much shorter than the distance from there to Sydney. Whatever traffic we may lose in the far Western districts along the border, I feel sure that we shall get from some other point along the border. I think the people living on the South-western border will be nearer to Sydney *via* Bourke than they will be to Brisbane, and hence they will probably send their produce to Sydney. I think it would be a waste of money on our part to construct any line along the border with a view to forcing traffic to come to Brisbane, because, under federation, traffic will have free and uninterrupted access to its nearest market. That I look upon as one of the great objects to be accomplished by federation. I do not think that Queensland should be in the least apprehensive with regard to traffic in that respect, because whatever traffic we may lose in the far Western districts we shall gain in the Eastern districts. I feel assured that the traffic of the Richmond district in New South Wales, which naturally belongs to Brisbane under federation—once it is connected by rail, which, I hope, it will be at no distant date—must necessarily flow into Brisbane. Now, the construction of this line from Warwick to Thane's Creek is proposed with a view to its extension to Goondiwindi. It is a line which, I think, can be recommended to this House, because I believe the 24 miles to Thane's Creek will give facilities to a vast number of settlers along that route, and the character of the country, as far as the 24 miles go, is of the very best description. It is closely settled and produces a vast amount of produce. I feel assured also that before very long a line will also be constructed from Pittsworth to Mount Domville, through a large extent of undoubted agricultural land. I have travelled over a good deal of the country, and I am satisfied that the construction of that line would be fully warranted even now, because I believe it would pay, and open up for settlement a vast amount

of country. I believe also that, at no distant date, we shall have a line extended from Yeulba to St. George or Surat. At Surat, undoubtedly, there is a magnificent stretch of country. I think the hon. member for Daiby, a few evenings ago, mentioned the matter of the construction of branch lines.

Mr. BELL: I do not regard the line to Goondiwindi as a branch line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Well, the lines I am speaking of are essentially branch lines of railway.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Agricultural railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; and I think branch lines that offer facilities for settlers would be fully warranted at the present time, but it is impossible to do everything at once, and probably some of these branch lines will have to stand over for some time at least. There is a great question involved in this line at the present time, and no doubt it will be alluded to to-night, and that is the question of the ultimate construction of the *via recta*, which will bring Warwick 60 miles nearer to Brisbane than at the present time. It is a long way in the distant future, and I am not going to allude very much to it, but I think, notwithstanding all that has been said about it, the time will come when this line will be constructed. In the meantime I am only speaking of this proposal as a branch line from Warwick to Thane's Creek with a view to its extension to Goondiwindi. I feel sure that before very long the New South Wales Government will extend their line from Moree to Goondiwindi. I think, from the nature of the country, that if that line is not passed now it is a work that New South Wales will carry out at an early date, and whether one line is extended to Goondiwindi, or whether it goes further west, that looms in the future. If that were done it would undoubtedly form another through line to Sydney, and there are many things to recommend it. Still, no matter whether New South Wales extends her line from Moree to Goondiwindi or not, the traffic of this part of the colony, and a great deal of the traffic south of Goondiwindi in New South Wales territory, will come to Brisbane in the near future; because it is so much nearer Brisbane than it is to Sydney. So, I feel assured of this: that we are attaching too much importance to securing what we call border traffic. I think under federation it does not matter how much money we spend upon lines running along our Southern border, if the object is to secure traffic for Brisbane which otherwise would not come into it, we shall not be successful; and before many years have passed the lines will be found a very bad investment, because where the distance is greater to Brisbane than it is to Sydney the traffic will go to Sydney. On the other hand, if the distance is shorter to Brisbane than it is to Sydney it must flow into Brisbane. I reckon that under federation there will be hardly such a thing as a border line for traffic purposes.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Oh, will there not!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say that border lines are practically worked out. One of the greatest objects that will be achieved by federation will be that people in these colonies will be able to trade with that particular port which offers them the greatest facilities for trade. There will be no barriers whatever. That is one aspect of the case that must not be overlooked, but I do not know whether it will be favourably considered by the Committee or not. In the meantime, I have the utmost pleasure in recommending this line to the favourable consideration of the

House. No doubt the report of the Royal Commission who inquired into this subject will have an important bearing on the decision arrived at; but, as I have already said, out of the five gentlemen appointed to investigate the matter, only three were in agreement, the other two taking a different view. If, therefore, when there were only five minds to satisfy it was impossible to arrive at unanimity, how much more difficult will it be in a committee of this House? I do not expect this Committee to be unanimous, and doubtless the majority will decide which of the two routes, if either, this line shall take. I need not weary the Committee by quoting from the Royal Commission's report, which I assume hon. members have read; but there are a few leading features in the Railway Commissioner's report that I desire to draw attention to. On page 2 of the report he says—

The estimate provides for fencing the line throughout, and for gates with the necessary gatchouses at level crossings of the main roads; at by-roads, however, open level crossings protected by cattle grids will be adopted.

The length of the line to be constructed is 24 miles 23 chains, and the estimated cost, exclusive of land, rolling-stock, and surveys, is £104,040, or at the rate of £4,366 per mile with 61-lb. rails, etc.; and £95,650, or at the rate of £3,938 per mile with 42-lb. rails, etc.

The question of which class of rails should be used on the line is more a matter for the engineers to determine. Further down he says—

I have so far refrained from drawing comparisons between the alternative routes from Warwick and Pittsworth to Goondiwindi and St. George, because the proposed line has been referred to me as a branch *per se* to Thane's Creek. If, however, this branch is intended as a part of the projected extension to Goondiwindi and towards St. George, I should certainly be afforded an opportunity, after examining the district, of expressing my views, as from what I have heard of the country traversed by the trial surveys from Warwick and Pittsworth, the information in my possession is such that the Government should certainly hesitate before committing themselves to the construction of any very great length of line by either route, as I am clearly of opinion that neither line will be a profitable investment; under any circumstances the proposed extension should not go beyond the Toolburra Gates, say 14½ miles out from Warwick.

With regard to the alternative routes, I have at present but little to say, but I think it right to direct attention to a few facts to which I do not think sufficient prominence has been given in the report of the Royal Commission. I will refer in the first instance to the question of distance.

The line as surveyed from Warwick to Goondiwindi, the first section of which is now proposed, traverses a distance of 120 miles, or 188 miles from Toowoomba. The distance from Pittsworth by trial survey to a point about 15 miles north of Goondiwindi is about 95 miles, or 131 miles from Toowoomba, or a distance of 37 miles in favour of Pittsworth.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: How do you get over that?

Hon. A. MORGAN: It is not in accordance with fact.

Mr. DAWSON: Do you dispute it?

Hon. A. MORGAN: Yes, I dispute the distance.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I assume that the *via recta* will be constructed some day, although I do not know when, but unquestionably when it is constructed this will be the shorter route. The Commissioner goes on to say—

The Chief Engineer's estimate of the cost of the line from Warwick to Goondiwindi is £346,000, and from Pittsworth to the point north of Goondiwindi before referred to, £220,000; or a difference of, say, £126,000 in favour of Pittsworth.

For the first 25 miles out from Pittsworth I do not think there can be two opinions as to the value and extent of agricultural land, which extends for miles up and down on both sides of the surveyed line, and which would be very closely settled were transit facilities available.

I have already alluded to that aspect of the question, and I say, irrespective of the question of this line being extended to the border it will be the duty of the Government at no distant date to project a line through the very valuable land described by the Commissioner from Warwick to Yandilla by way of a branch line. The line that I am introducing now is from Warwick to Thane's Creek, and I am speaking of it simply as a branch line, having in view the ultimate object of extending to Goondiwindi, when it will become an important addition to our railway system.

Mr. KIDSTON: A branch line to St. George!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have had the advantage of travelling from St. George to Goondiwindi.

Mr. DAWSON: You are not the only one.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have travelled across the country from St. George to Goondiwindi, and from Goondiwindi to Warwick.

Mr. DAWSON: What did you think of it?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I saw the country west of Goondiwindi, and I was not very favourably impressed with it. Between Goondiwindi and St. George there is a considerable extent of flooded country. Unless it was a low-level line that was built it would be a most expensive line to construct. I feel sure that it would never pay to construct anything but a low-level line through that country above flood marks which I have myself seen. For miles and miles I saw flood marks that were 15 feet over my head, and at one place I was told that 60,000 sheep were washed away in one night. In speaking on this subject I must again draw attention to the fact that on the accomplishment of federation it will be impossible to lay any embargo upon those people who are nearer to Sydney using the New South Wales line for the purpose of sending their produce to market. People cannot be forced to send their produce along the line to Brisbane if it does not suit their purpose. Further on the Commissioner for Railways says—

As the question of the *via recta* may possibly be urged as a reason for the extension from Warwick, I need only say that the construction of this line, which can only be regarded as a luxury—

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

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS:

And which will probably involve an expenditure of £431,500, will only effect a saving in the through distance to Brisbane from Goondiwindi of 63 miles, whereas the distance from the point 15 miles north of Goondiwindi to Brisbane by way of Pittsworth and the Drayton deviation will be about 3 miles shorter.

That is a difference that is hardly worth quarrelling about. The Commissioner's report goes on to say—

It is impossible for me to give an estimate of what will be the probable receipts from the proposed extension to Thane's Creek, but I would observe that the Killarney Branch, 27½ miles in length, with a capital expenditure of £140,000, has, during the last five years, fallen short of the payment of working expenses by an average of £700 per annum, and I do not think it will be argued that the extension from Warwick to Thane's Creek, with the proposed capital expenditure of £106,040 or £95,650, according to the weight of rails used, without rolling-stock, will serve a larger extent of agricultural land than is met with on the Killarney Branch.

What I have quoted is practically the report of the Commissioner for Railways on this proposal. I don't think I can say very much more on this proposal, and I am very anxious to hear what other hon. members of this Committee have to say with regard to this line.

Mr. DAWSON: The more you say, the better for us.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I purpose going on with this line as a branch line. That will develop the magnificent agricultural district along the valley of the Condamine.

Mr. BELL: You are not so very much concerned about getting the border trade.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have already pointed out that we cannot expect, either by railway construction or by any other means, to get one ounce more of the border traffic than naturally belongs to us.

Mr. DAWSON: We can get more of the traffic that does belong to us if we construct the railway in the proper direction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say that we ought to give the people in these districts greater facilities for getting their products to Brisbane, and it is only by shortening the distance that you can do that. I have much pleasure in moving the resolutions standing in my name.

Mr. DAWSON (*Charters Towers*): I was very anxious to hear what reasons the Minister for Railways would give to this Committee for asking us to agree to this proposal. I have listened to the hon. gentleman for about half-an-hour, and I only regret that he did not go on for another half-hour, for then we would be more convinced that there is absolutely no justification for this proposal. The longer the hon. gentleman went on to explain why the Committee should accept this proposal the more hon. members were convinced that it should not be accepted at all. I think the Warwick people might well say, "Save us from our friend the Minister for Railways." If any Minister ever damaged and damned his own case, it is the Minister for Railways. He did that not only in the beginning and the middle of his speech, but in the end of his address he pointed out that the great consideration that hon. members had to carefully think over was the bringing of the legitimate border trade to Brisbane, and that we could not expect to get any more of that trade than naturally belongs to us. No one has claimed that we should get more than belongs to us. All we desire is to get what we are entitled to, and we can only get that by shortening the distance from the border to Brisbane; that if we shortened the distance from this wealthy district there would be much more chance of our getting more of the trade from the border to Brisbane. I agree with the hon. gentleman in that respect. But what is the evidence before us? We see that a Royal Commission has been appointed at great expense to the taxpayers of this colony, and they went very exhaustively into this very vexed question, which Government after Government have refused to ask hon. members of this House to decide. That Royal Commission sat and took evidence, and went over the country concerned, and they presented their report to the hon. gentleman, by whom it was afterwards presented to this House. With what result? They were absolutely opposed to the starting point of this line being Warwick. Three of the members of that commission were in favour of the starting point being Pittsworth, and the other two members who did not agree to the Pittsworth route were not Warwick advocates.

Hon. A. MORGAN: Yes.

Mr. DAWSON: No. I am glad that I am able to contradict the hon. member without being called to order. (Laughter.) I ask hon. members to look at this report of the commission, and to see if the majority of the members of that commission were Warwick advocates—if they advocated that the starting point of this line should be Warwick. The majority of the members of this commission recommended the starting point to be Pittsworth.

Mr. KATES: Against the evidence.

Mr. DAWSON: Does the hon. member for Cunningham claim to be a better judge of the evidence than the members of that Royal Commission?

Mr. MACKINTOSH: Hear, hear!

Mr. DAWSON: If he does, I would certainly like to hear some explanation from that hon. member, for the members of this commission have personally examined witnesses and have travelled over the country from point to point, and I think they are better judges of the evidence adduced than an hon. member who has simply read the evidence in cold print. I am perfectly content to support the opinion of the majority of the members of that commission; but, in addition to that, we have expert evidence to guide us, and that is contained in the report of the Commissioner, Mr. Gray, which I now hold in my hand. The Railway Commissioner has no axe to grind—he is quite an impartial person, outside the influence of the Minister for Railways, outside Cabinet influence, outside the influence of the people in Warwick, the people of Yeulba, of Pittsworth, of Goondiwindi, of St. George—and he is beyond the influence of hon. members sitting on this side. He is an absolutely impartial person, and if hon. members will look at his report on this railway they will see that there is not a solitary line in favour of this proposal. I ask the Minister and the hon. member for Warwick if they can find in the whole of this report a solitary line that can by the greatest stretch of imagination be shown to approve of this line starting from Warwick?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Not a word.

Mr. DAWSON: Not a solitary word. But even if there was not a solitary word, we might still have had some doubt if the Railway Commissioner, an impartial expert to whom we pay a high salary, and whose salary we increased by £500 not long ago, had been silent against other starting points, but he is most emphatic in his opposition to this line going from any other starting point than Pittsworth. The Secretary for Railways was so infatuated with Warwick, or knew so little of the meaning of the report, that he damned his own case by reading the paragraph in the report in favour of Pittsworth. It is no use for the hon. gentleman to suggest that this gentleman does not understand anything at all about his business. If he really believes that, why did he vote for the increase of Mr. Gray's salary a little while ago? This is one of the most important railway proposals that has come before this Assembly for many years. It has been a bone of contention between hon. members on both sides of this House for many years. That is the real reason why the Railway Commission was appointed to settle this very much vexed question. If Mr. Gray is not a competent man to furnish a report to this House which hon. members can believe is reasonably near the truth, then Mr. Gray is not a fit person for his position, and he ought to be discharged. I would like to know if, out of all the reports upon railway proposals submitted to this House by Mr. Gray since he became Commissioner for Railways, hon. gentlemen can show me one so strong in condemnation of the proposal made as this is in condemnation of Warwick as the starting point for this line. Can such a thing be shown in any report furnished to this House by Mr. Gray, or even by Mr. Mathieson, his predecessor? If the hon. gentleman in charge of this matter can produce such a report, he will certainly surprise me. Probably he has not such a retentive memory as the hon. member for Warwick possesses, and I would ask that hon. gentleman to dig into the cells of his memory,

and see if he can rake up some document presented to this House, either by Mr. Mathieson or by Mr. Gray, that is so emphatic upon any point as this is against Warwick and in favour of Pittsworth? While the Secretary for Railways read some damaging statements from Mr. Gray's report, there is one still more damaging, also on page 2, where the hon. gentleman started from. Mr. Gray says this—

I cannot conscientiously say that the prospects of this extension are encouraging, certainly not beyond the first 15 miles, and in this connection I think it my duty to point out that for the first 10 miles the surveyed route runs almost parallel with the line from Warwick to Brisbane, within average distance of not more than 2 to 4 miles.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: It is not so shown on the map.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: It is quite true.

Mr. JACKSON: Is that true?

Mr. FISHER: What is the map for?

Mr. DAWSON: Hon. members ask me if this is true. So far as my own personal knowledge is concerned, I do not know whether it is true or not.

Mr. JACKSON: The member for the district does not challenge that?

Hon. A. MORGAN: I do not know what an average of not more than two to four means.

Mr. DAWSON: Within two and not more than four, I should imagine—an average of three, or two and not more than four. What a ridiculous thing it is that the first section of what is practically a border line, a trunk line, should run parallel with another trunk line, and within from 2 to 4 miles of it for the first 10 miles! I think we have had enough of that kind of thing already in this colony. Mr. Gray goes on to say—

Whether the farmers on the south side of the Condamine have access to the main line I cannot say, but I should think that this could readily be attained by a traffic bridge over the Condamine; then also the question arises why this line should not start from a point some few miles on the Heendon side of Toolburra Siding, and cross the Condamine River about the 10-mile peg on the proposed extension. If this be practicable, about 5 miles of costly construction would be saved, and about 15 in transit from the terminus to Brisbane, although it would increase the distance to Warwick by about 5 miles. By starting off the main line in the manner suggested, an expenditure of about £20,000 would in all probability be saved, and the settlers on the south side of the Condamine equally well served.

Mr. KATES: What would be the cost of a bridge over the Condamine?

Mr. DAWSON: If the hon. and anxious member for Cunningham would only read the report, he would not ask me a question of that kind. Mr. Gray has not given a tabulated statement, or attached a schedule to his report, stating what the cost of the line would be, and comparing it with the cost of a bridge over the Condamine, but what he has stated is that by a deviation, such as he suggests, those on the south side of the Condamine, who want the use of the railway service of the colony, would be equally well served by a bridge across the Condamine, and the taxpayers of this colony would be saved not less than £20,000.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: Read the latter part of the paragraph.

Mr. DAWSON: He says—

I am, of course, assuming that there are no engineering difficulties in the way, which I hardly think possible, as the Condamine River is for a considerable distance below Warwick a very narrow stream, and the bridge crossing is not likely to be a costly undertaking. I think in matters of this kind we certainly have to be guided, to a large extent, by our public officers holding responsible positions. We expect from them the absolute facts and the real truth, so that we may come to a sound and wise judgment upon any proposal which comes before this Committee. When the officers of the depart-

ment fail, we have recourse to another means of getting information—that is, by the appointment of a Royal Commission. That commission in this case has been appointed, has done its work, has furnished its report, and is against the Warwick and in favour of the Pittsworth route.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: They did it honestly, too.

Mr. DAWSON: I am very sorry that while the Secretary for Railways was reading this report the House was rather thin; but I direct the attention of hon. members who desire to give a conscientious vote upon this question, and who believe that Mr. Gray is a competent man to express an opinion, to page 3 of this report, on which he deals with the question of distances. He is on this point most emphatic in favour of Pittsworth.

Hon. A. MORGAN: He is most erroneous.

Mr. DAWSON: The hon. member for the district says he is most erroneous.

Hon. A. MORGAN: Just so, and I not only say it, but I will prove it.

Mr. DAWSON: I shall be happy to furnish the hon. gentleman with an opportunity of proving it. If the statement made in a public document, furnished for the information of hon. members of this Chamber by a responsible head of a department like Mr. Gray, is most erroneous, I think it is time the Secretary for Railways took him in hand and dealt with him something like he did with Mr. Bell or Mr. Jack.

Mr. REID: He gave him £500 a year extra.

Mr. DAWSON: I would ask the hon. member for the district if he can prove that the report of the Commissioner is incorrect as to distances, because distance is an item of very considerable importance in railway construction. In addition to the matter of the initial cost, it is also a matter of concern in regard to the future cost of maintenance, and, if a dozen trains a day have to run 50 miles instead of 20, it involves considerable expense to the taxpayers at large as well as to the unfortunate people who have to pay carriage over the greater length of line. It is not only the distance from Goondiwindi to Brisbane that has to be taken into consideration, but the distance from Goondiwindi to Toowoomba; and if the desire is to bring the traffic from this district to Brisbane to serve the Brisbane market, distance comes in again, and certainly Toowoomba, being much closer to Brisbane, is a better centre for the agricultural district of the Darling Downs than Warwick, and deserves very much more consideration. Then even on the question of first cost, Mr. Gray agrees with the Royal Commission. There is a saving in construction in favour of the Pittsworth route of £126,000. Does the hon. member for Warwick say that that statement also is erroneous? Why, a saving of £126,000 would revive nearly all our stagnant goldfields, and guarantee a surplus to the Treasurer next year.

Mr. GIVENS: And build a couple of the private railways.

Mr. DAWSON: Yes; and give the hon. member for Cairns one of his guarantee sugar-mills. I do not wish it to be understood that I have any objection at all to a line going towards Goondiwindi. I think that our railway service should tap a rich agricultural district like that; but the question is the starting point, and all the evidence that has been furnished to us of a reliable character by public officers is certainly against the Warwick and in favour of the Pittsworth route.

Hon. A. MORGAN: That is not so.

Mr. DAWSON: I will quote the evidence taken by the Royal Commission, the finding of the commission, and the report of the Railway Commissioner, who is most emphatic about the matter. It is a very great pity that there is not

a member of the Royal Commission in this Chamber, and I should be very pleased if the Premier would amend our Standing Orders to allow members of this Chamber to hear a member of the other Chamber now and again, and I should be very pleased to move for an invitation to be sent to the Hon. Mr. Barlow to come here. It would be a very good thing if we occasionally exchanged members, and sent some of the rowdy members from this Chamber to wake the members of the other House out of their sleep—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. DAWSON: And if they sent some of their members here to send us to sleep. In endeavouring to make a point about the *via recta*, the Secretary for Railways entirely missed his object. Certainly, the Commissioner points out that by the construction of the *via recta* there will be a saving of 63 miles, but he further points out that if the line goes to Goondiwindi *via* Pittsworth, the line would be 3 miles shorter than by the *via recta*. He is scathing in his criticism of the *via recta*, and is as sarcastic as a public officer can be about it. He says that it can only be regarded as a luxury. Taking everything into consideration, the Committee ought to be careful about passing the motion proposed by the Secretary for Railways. I do not know whether it is an official thing or not—I doubt it very much—but it is apparent to me that if Mr. Gray could have found it in his conscience to recommend this Warwick route, he would have done so. But the case was so fearfully bad that he could not conscientiously recommend it and sleep at night, and he winds up with this concluding paragraph—

I much regret that I am compelled to report unfavourably of the proposed extension, but I consider I should be failing in my duty to the State if I omitted to place as clearly as possible before the Government the financial prospects of this extension, and the extent of the liabilities involved—

showing distinctly that, while he might have a natural prejudice in favour of the Warwick district, the case was so bad that his conscience would not permit him to do it, and therefore he was obliged, very much to his regret, to issue an unfavourable report. I shall certainly vote against the proposal.

HON. A. MORGAN (*Warwick*): Perhaps the fact that the constituency I represent is deeply interested in the project before the Committee will be accepted as a sufficient justification by the Committee for my action in departing from what is a wholesome rule. It always is so, and it is so this year, when the Government are bringing down a series of railway proposals, that when a majority of the members have got their little bantlings through, and they feel upon perfectly safe ground so far as the interests of their constituencies are concerned, there is a temptation to fall upon some unfortunate project and have a little enjoyment out of it, and even go the length of killing it. I have listened to the leader of the Opposition for this evening (the hon. member for Charters Towers), and I have also listened to the Secretary for Railways, with a very great deal of interest, and, I feel bound to say, with a little astonishment at both speeches. I was rather astonished to hear the Secretary for Railways talk in the strain he did about the hopelessness—in fact, the sinfulness—of endeavouring to divert to the port of Brisbane the trade of any portion of our border territory which might be as well, if not better, served by lines stretching northward from the port of Sydney or the port of Newcastle. I must say the speech of the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr.

Dawson, impressed me as the [8 p.m.] speech of a man who rather enjoyed his contribution to the slaughter of this project. I could have wished that the

information on which he based his onslaught upon this proposal was a little more reliable than it is.

Mr. DAWSON: Do you accuse a public officer of not giving accurate information?

HON. A. MORGAN: I make no accusation. But I do say that the document furnished by the Railway Commissioner to the Secretary for Railways contains many serious inaccuracies, and I propose to endeavour to justify that statement before I conclude. It is well, I think, that some attention should be paid to the history of this proposed railway from Warwick towards the Southern border. It dates back to the time of the much-abused £10,000,000 loan of 1884. It was included in the schedule of that loan, £250,000 being authorised for the construction of a railway from Warwick towards St. George. It received parliamentary authority on that occasion, showing that the Parliament of that day approved of the project to build a line along the Southern border from Warwick. The plans were submitted to the same Parliament in 1886 for practical ratification. The plans were submitted to, and were adopted by, this Chamber, but they were thrown out in the Legislative Council by the casting vote of the presiding chairman, who was a Toowoomba man—a gentleman who had, in common with others, expressed himself as determined to oppose the proposal to construct a line from Warwick even before it came before that Chamber. In the following year the proposal was again submitted to this House; and there is no doubt whatever that a large majority of the members of the House, as then constituted, were prepared to vote for the adoption of the plans, but they were prevented from coming to a division by stonewalling tactics resorted to by the Opposition, and supported by a number of members sitting on the Government side of the House. About the details of that little incident, which is one of very great interest in the political history of this colony, I may have something to say at a later stage of this debate, if the necessity should arise. Nothing was done with regard to new railways anywhere for a number of years; but when the colony proposed to again resume railway construction we found that there were rival towns claiming to be made the starting point of this railway—Roma, Yeulba, Dalby—Dalby more clamorous than most of them—

Mr. BELL: With more justification. (Laughter.)

HON. A. MORGAN: And Pittsworth also put in a claim. Action was stayed, not because the railway was not urgently needed in the interests of the colony, but because some of the officials of the Railway Department, from the Minister downward, failed to recognise the necessities of the country, and because Ministers were a little timid about coming to a decision which, whatever it might be, would give offence to someone among their followers. I believe that to be the fact. I state the circumstances because I believe they ought to be stated as explaining the extraordinary delay that has taken place in coming to a decision on this matter, a delay which has prejudicially affected the interests of the colony generally, and particularly the interests of the city of Brisbane, to an extent which I fear it is now almost impossible to completely repair. That is rather an extraordinary statement to make after the speech we have heard from the Minister, but I believe it accurately describes the situation. The railway was an urgent need for the commerce of Queensland sixteen years ago; it is a still more urgent need to-day, because, while we have been sleeping, while we have been inactive, our neighbours on the other side of the border have been making full use of their opportunity, and have put themselves in a position so commanding that, unless we are prompt to construct a railway from some point on our Southern

or Western Railway to the southern border district, the trade will be lost, and lost for ever. I speak of this matter now in its broad sense, not as affecting merely the interests of Warwick. It is a matter affecting the commerce of this country to-day and for all the years that are to come. It is a mere secondary consideration where this railway shall start from—

Mr. BELL: Oh!

HON. A. MORGAN: The hon. member laughs.

Mr. BELL: You are standing up now as the advocate for Warwick.

HON. A. MORGAN: I am speaking now, not as a Warwick man, but as a Queenslander, and I say that the interests of Queensland demand that we should project this railway from the point of departure best calculated to serve the interests of Queensland and not merely the interests of any particular district. The question of the starting point is altogether a subsidiary matter. There is a magnificent district along the southern border of the colony—a vast area with a great trade now and a still greater trade in the future—and what have we done to conserve the commerce of that district? Absolutely nothing. And indeed, from the tone of the debate up to the present, it seems that we are likely to do absolutely nothing for some years to come. I say that a railway to that district is urgently needed. We have been blind to the fact hitherto, or if we have had our eyes open we have not had the courage to give effect to our opinions. And in this connection let me say in passing that I think the Minister has not treated this Chamber with the consideration that ought to have been shown in regard to illustrative maps in connection with this project. There is a map on the wall and there is a map on the table. The latter I provided, and it is an infinitely better map than the official map on the wall.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Is it official?

HON. A. MORGAN: It is official in this sense: It was made at the Survey Office under the Surveyor-General's direction at my request, and it is absolutely accurate. I am glad it is there, because it will enable hon. members who may study it to see the danger to which we are exposed in our south-western border districts by reason of our remissness in the way of providing railway facilities for our own people. I say that while we have been sleeping our neighbours have been watching and acting; and what is the result? We see that they are now successfully competing for the trade of our south-western border districts at half-a-dozen points. They have a line to Bourke in the west. They have a line to Moree.

Mr. STORY: They have not been successful in tapping our trade at Bourke.

HON. A. MORGAN: I will accept what the hon. gentleman says, and will reply by saying that "one swallow does not make a summer." I submit that the general statement I have made, that they are successfully attacking our trade at half-a-dozen different points, is quite accurate. They have built a line to Bourke, and if they are not now successful in attacking our trade at that point it is only for the last year or two that they have failed in their attack. But I would remind the hon. gentleman that a moment or two ago he showed me an extract from a paper published in his own district in which a leading business man states that, the moment the Bourke railway is extended, the trade of that part of the colony will begin to go not to Cunnamulla but over the New South Wales railways. They have a railway to Bourke. They have a railway to Moree, south of Goondiwindi about 70 miles. They have a railway to Wallangarra. These three railways are already controlling the trade of our southern border districts. Now, there is

the official map which, I understand, was before the Royal Commission; and upon that map a railway on the New South Wales side now in course of construction, and approaching completion towards our border, is actually not shown. If hon. members on that side of the Chamber will look for Byrock, and trace from there to Brewarrina, they will see the points between which a railway is being built in New South Wales, and which will shortly be opened for traffic. If they look further east they will see the railway stretching to Moree, and, looking a little further east, they will see the important town of Inverell marked. There is a railway approaching completion from Moree to Inverell, stretching along the Southern border, and threatening the trade of the Texas district. That, also, is not shown.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The distance is too great.

HON. W. H. GROOM: Hear, hear!

HON. A. MORGAN: The Hon. the Minister for Railways may sit comfortably back and say the distance is too great for them to get that traffic, and the hon. member for Toowoomba, deeply interested in a rival project, says, "Hear, hear!"

HON. W. H. GROOM: You must not impute motives. (Laughter.)

HON. A. MORGAN: I am stating what is a patent fact. Now, they already have these railways—the railway to Bourke, the railway to Moree, the railway from Byrock to Brewarrina, the railway from Moree to Inverell—all either working or upon the point of completion, successfully competing for the trade of the southern border districts of this colony. And yet they are not satisfied. They are going to build yet another line. The best, the most incontrovertible evidence of the importance New South Wales attaches to the trade of the Queensland border districts is to be found in the fact that she has already spent millions, and is prepared to go on spending still more money, in order to capture it—

Mr. DAWSON: Are they spending it on private syndicate railways?

HON. A. MORGAN: While the Queensland Government, supported by the Queensland Opposition, stand listlessly by and propose to do nothing to retain the little trade that is left to us, or to recover that which has been, temporarily I hope, lost, I say that they have these railways built, and yet they are not content with what has been done, and are going to do more. Within the last week there has passed the New South Wales Parliament a Bill to authorise the construction of a railway from Narrabri—which is shown on the map on the table—to Walgett, and thence from Walgett north-easterly to Collarenebri. That is very important as showing that notwithstanding all the mother colony has done, and all the money she has spent in the past to capture the trade on our southern border districts, she is still prepared to do more to that end. Now, the new line, which was authorised by a Bill that received its final approval in the Legislative Council of New South Wales on the 28th of last month, provides for a railway that is to cost a great deal more than the railway proposed from Warwick to Goondiwindi would cost. The cost estimated of that line from Narrabri to Walgett, and thence north-easterly to Collarenebri, is over £500,000, and the New South Wales Parliament voted it cheerfully. It went through in the Assembly after half-an-hour's debate, and in the Council the debate did not exceed more than an hour. I have the *Hansard* by me, and I could show hon. members, if I thought it necessary to do so—if I thought it would affect their

decision in this matter—that one of the strongest reasons urged in support of this new railway was that it would secure a large portion of the trade of Queensland. Now, I say that that action is a reproach to us, and is the strongest evidence that the policy we have failed to pursue in the past is the policy that ought to have been pursued in the interests of the whole of Queensland, and more particularly in the interests of the Southern portion of Queensland and of the capital city of the colony.

Mr. FISHER: Are you arguing generally in favour of Warwick?

HON. A. MORGAN: I am trying to establish the general proposition as the first stage. I was laughed at by my hon. friend, the hon. member for Dalby, because I put this forward as a matter which should be determined first in the interests of Queensland—that the proposal for a border line should go through in the interests of the colony as a whole, and, having decided that, we should decide the minor question where the railway should start from.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JACKSON: I think the moot point is where it should start from.

HON. A. MORGAN: It seemed to me after the extraordinary report that has been presented by the Railway Commissioner upon this project, following the report of the Royal Commission, that something more than a mere casual intervention in this debate was necessary to endeavour to induce members to give full and serious consideration to the question of providing railway facilities for our South-western border districts. Now, these railways that New South Wales has built—and they are much longer railways than we will have to build to get to those districts—have involved a capital outlay of something like £2,500,000. We propose to spend only £500,000 on one railway which would serve Queensland's interests, whether it started from Warwick or Pittsworth, or any town between those two points, more thoroughly and more effectively than the railways which it has cost New South Wales four or five times that amount to build, and we would have all the advantage of competing for that border traffic successfully with a railway that involved a capital cost of £500,000 against railways which involve an interest charge on £2,500,000 or £3,000,000. I think, under the circumstances, we would be in a very much superior position to compete successfully for that traffic. I would like now to make a commentary on the report that has appeared lately over the signature of our Railway Commissioner, and which the hon. member for Charters Towers has quoted with so much gusto. The matter of the border trade must not be so lightly dealt with as it is dealt with in this report on the present project. Two years ago Mr. Gray addressed to his Minister a report on the border traffic between Queensland and New South Wales. He then appealed most strongly for extraordinary power to resist the encroachments the New South Wales commissioners were successfully making against the colony of Queensland. We know what extraordinary means this Parliament placed in the hands of the Minister to enable the Commissioner to successfully compete against New South Wales. In pleading for that power Mr. Gray used these words—

Mr. FISHER: Was that in 1893?

HON. A. MORGAN: No; at the end of 1898. Mr. Gray then said—

It must not be forgotten that wool sent to Bourke from holdings in our South-western districts means the loss of the railage on station supplies for these holdings, the loss of the trade to Queensland merchants, and the loss of freight to oversea ships visiting the port of Brisbane.

Another very cogent reason why the traffic from our South-western border holdings should be diverted to Brisbane arises from the fact that the loss of the wool from these holdings would materially affect the efforts now being made to successfully establish wool sales in Brisbane. You are no doubt aware that considerable areas of the South-western districts are held as grazing farms, and I am of opinion that the bulk of the wool sold in Brisbane will for some time be drawn from these and other small grazing areas in the colony. These are some of the arguments which Mr. Gray used in favour of being vested with extraordinary power to deal with the encroachments of our neighbours.

Mr. DAWSON: He did not say anything about the starting point being Warwick.

HON. A. MORGAN: No. But the hon. member misses the point. I am quoting that as a contrast against the attitude which he takes up in his later report on the subject, bearing date December, 1900, two years later.

Mr. DAWSON: He has more experience and knowledge now.

HON. E. B. FORREST: Exactly the same set of circumstances exist now.

HON. A. MORGAN: Mr. Gray argued most successfully in favour of the action he asked Parliament to take two years ago in defence of the trade of our border districts. I am very sorry that he has ever departed from the position he took up on that occasion. However, he has done so, and I am very much inclined to fear that the colony's interests are going to suffer in consequence. Now, this line along the Southern border was projected sixteen years ago to do what two years ago Mr. Gray was strongly contending for, and now, two years later, when Parliament is asked to give consent to a proposal which would do what Mr. Gray wanted done, that gentleman rises up and condemns it.

Mr. JENKINSON: He only condemns a particular proposal.

HON. A. MORGAN: I must differ from the hon. gentleman. Mr. Gray condemns both projects, and says in express terms—

I should certainly be afforded an opportunity, after examining the district, of expressing my views, as from what I have heard of the country traversed by the trial surveys from Warwick and Pittsworth, the information in my possession is such that the Government should certainly hesitate before committing themselves to the construction of any very great length of line by either route, as I am clearly of opinion that neither line will be a profitable investment.

Mr. JENKINSON: I am very sorry to hear that.

HON. A. MORGAN: I think the hon. gentleman will now admit that I have established the proposition that I set out to establish. I wish now to say a word or two in reply to the hon. member for Charters Towers, and I will endeavour to be as brief as possible.

Mr. DAWSON: You had better, or we will put the gag on you.

HON. A. MORGAN: I want to show, in spite of the condemnation of this line in high official quarters, that there is a great deal to be said in its favour, sufficient to warrant Parliament in authorising its construction, and I wish further to show that both the majority of the Royal Commission and Mr. Gray are wrong in the conclusions they have arrived at. I say—and I speak with an intimate knowledge of a great deal of the country to be traversed—that the Warwick route is the best route to serve the purposes that Parliament ought to have in view.

Mr. DAWSON: The member for Cambooya differs from you.

HON. A. MORGAN: I am aware that the majority of the Royal Commission and the Commissioner for Railways take a different view to that adopted by myself. We have before us the grounds upon which they have formed a conclusion opposed to that which I have formed on this subject. The hon. member

for Charters Towers, in supporting a conclusion different to mine, said we had the evidence of the Royal Commission and the Commissioner for Railways against the Warwick route, and in favour of the alternative route—the evidence, as he said, of expert advisers of the Government—and he asked how we could go against that? The majority of the Royal Commission, I admit, recommended the Pittsworth route by a bare majority of three out of five, that majority embracing the non-professional members of the commission, whose opinions, I think, ought not to weigh against the judgment of the other members of the commission. I want also to point out to the hon. member who used the argument to which I am now replying, that the Railway Commissioner, though he occupies that position, is not in any sense an expert in railway management.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Oh, oh!

Mr. REID: Someone sang a very different song to that lately.

HON. A. MORGAN: Hon. members who sang those different songs are responsible for them. I am not. I say the gentleman who occupies the position of Railway Commissioner to day—and who succeeded to the position by an extraordinary set of circumstances, having in view the general purpose with which we passed an Act of Parliament to take the management of the railways out of the hands of the Minister and put it into the hands of commissioners responsible only to Parliament—is not in any sense a railway expert. That, I think, will be admitted everywhere. I think the gentleman himself who occupies that position would be one of the first to admit it.

Mr. DAWSON: What do you call him?

Mr. BELL: He is a thorough common-sense man.

HON. A. MORGAN: I entirely agree with that. Mr. Gray is thoroughly a common-sense man, and is one of the best Public [8.30 p.m.] Service officers we have under the Government of this colony, but I repeat that he is in no sense a railway expert. Nearly all the railway experts, whose advice we should take in this matter, recommend that the starting point of this line should be Warwick. Now, I want to draw the attention of hon. members to this fact: That the Deputy Commissioner for Railways and the General Traffic Manager, Mr. Thallon, gave evidence before this Royal Commission and strongly favoured this line starting from Warwick; and I think, in justice to the case I am advocating, that I may be permitted to make one or two quotations from his evidence. I can reassure hon. members that I am not going to weary their patience by making long quotations from the evidence. On page 4 of Mr. Thallon's evidence—question 73—he is asked—

Do you consider it would be in the interests of the colony to construct this border line from Warwick to St. George?

And he replied—

Yes, in the best interests of the colony.

Then he was asked—question 74—

And you think it is a line that should be constructed?

And his reply was—

I think it should have been constructed twenty years ago.

Then, again, I want to quote the evidence of Mr. Stanley, the Chief Engineer for Railways, against what the hon. member for Charters Towers says.

Mr. DAWSON: Right!

HON. A. MORGAN: In reply to Mr. Cross, on page 70, question 1437, Mr. Stanley said—

The line from Pittsworth, leaving the surveyed line at 102 miles, and running to the north of the Weir River to the crossing of the Moonie; or the line starting 3 miles to the south of Warwick, running down to

Trevelton, and between Inglewood and Texas, joining the Stanthorpe route at about 55 miles, passing through Goondiwindi, crossing the Weir River, and on to the crossing of the Moonie at the objective point of the line from Pittsworth. Looking to the future development of our railway system, I strongly recommend the line from Warwick.

Further, Mr. Lethem, whose report, it was hoped, would solve the difficulty as to the route this line should take, was sent out in 1897 to examine the various routes and to advise Ministers, who, it was understood generally, were prepared to take the advice of a competent officer. That Mr. Lethem is a thoroughly qualified man I assume from the fact that he occupies the position of officer in charge of the survey branch of the Railway Department. After examining the various routes, he reported in favour of the line starting from Warwick. So we have the Deputy Commissioner and General Traffic Manager, who is the most experienced man in railway management in this colony, saying that this line should start from Warwick. Then, again, the Chief Engineer, under whom most of our railways have been built, says that this line should start from Warwick. And Mr. Lethem also says that the line should start from Warwick, and he made an inspection of all the routes with the exception of the Dalby route.

Mr. BELL: A very important omission.

HON. A. MORGAN: The reasons why Mr. Lethem recommended this route are: That it is the one that will be most likely to secure the border traffic; that it is the route on which there is the greatest extent of existing settlement; and also that it is the route that has the greatest prospect of inducing future settlement. These are very cogent reasons, and I quote them against the hon. member for Charters Towers, who says that this line should not start from Warwick. What more do we want? We have the recommendations of these officers, on whose advice most of our railways are constructed. Then, again, Mr. Drew, who is acknowledged to be one of the most competent officers in the survey branch of the Railway Department—

Mr. KERR: A very good officer.

HON. A. MORGAN: I have not the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance, but that is the character I hear of him from those who are competent to give information on the matter. He also advocates the Warwick line. And in addition to all these capable and disinterested witnesses we have the testimony of Mr. Walter Cross, one of the members of the commission, who is also one of the most experienced men in the colonies in railway construction, who has not only built a large length of lines here, but who had charge of many of the lines after their construction—and he says that this line should start from Warwick. Again, we have the opinion of Mr. Curnow, whom we know was, and still is, capable of expressing an opinion on these matters, saying that this line should start from Warwick.

Mr. BELL: Not along this route.

HON. A. MORGAN: Three miles south of this route.

Mr. BELL: A different line altogether.

HON. A. MORGAN: If the hon. member will split straws, I have not time to engage in such an encounter. But I say that Mr. Curnow says that this line should start from Warwick.

Mr. BELL: He does not advocate the line we are now discussing.

HON. A. MORGAN: That is quite correct. He advocates a line 3 miles south. Whether it is 3 miles south or 3 miles north of the proposed route, I do not care—

Mr. DAWSON: So long as you get the line.

HON. A. MORGAN: So long as the line is built. Mr. Curnow advocates the line from Warwick. In addition to all the evidence I have

quoted, we have the evidence of the whole of the people in the districts westward of Warwick which this railway will serve. And this is a point I wish to impress on the hon. member for Charters Towers, who is so confident that the interests of the people concerned should be of paramount importance. I think the hon. member will agree with me that it is to be assumed that the people mostly concerned—except so far as payment is concerned—may be taken as pretty good judges of what they want, and the people at Texas, Inglewood, Goondiwindi, and along the McIntyre Valley, almost as far west so Mungindi, all want this line, and they all want it to start from Warwick. The hon. member for Charters Towers said that they did not want anything of the kind.

Mr. DAWSON: I said nothing of the sort.

HON. A. MORGAN: Well, he said he did not know what good use this line would serve.

Mr. DAWSON: I did not say that either. I think I must call the hon. member for Warwick to order. (Laughter.)

HON. A. MORGAN: I understood the hon. member to say that the line should go by some other route than from Warwick, and I say that the people in these districts are likely to be better judges than the hon. member as to the route this line should take in order to serve their interests. Now I want to establish a statement I made when the hon. gentleman was speaking, and when he was quoting the report presented by the Railway Commissioner, Mr. Gray. It must be said, and I say it with a feeling of regret, that that report seems as if it had been written for the purpose of destroying this project.

Mr. DAWSON: That is a hard thing to say.

Mr. BELL: I think it is going too far.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: What would be his object in doing that?

Mr. BELL: Hear, hear! It is a very serious statement.

HON. A. MORGAN: If hon. members will allow me to say it, I believe Mr. Gray is quite capable of taking care of his own reputation, and in this matter I do not propose to do anything that will injure it. I am convinced that Mr. Gray conscientiously believes what he has written, that he believes that the position which he has taken up with regard to this railway is justified by the facts, and, believing that, he has written strongly in order to prevent the Government making what he believes would be a mistake as to the starting point. But I say this, as one familiar with the country and knowing the arguments in favour of the Warwick route much more thoroughly than Mr. Gray: that as I read his report what are meant to be arguments against the Warwick route are magnified, and what arguments there are in favour of it so strong as not to be overlooked are given in a grudging spirit in the Commissioner's report. This is not a report upon the Warwick route; but a report in favour of a route from an alternative starting point. I submit that the Commissioner when asked to report upon this proposed railway was not asked to report upon rival lines, and that is why I blame Mr. Gray for doing in respect of this line what he has not done in respect of any other.

Mr. DAWSON: That is what I pointed out, I think.

HON. A. MORGAN: The hon. gentleman has talked about the settlement along the line of route for a distance of 15 or 20 miles from Warwick. Mr. Gray says that—

For the first 5 or 6 miles out from Warwick, the country traversed by the survey is, for the most part, interior agricultural land, and only isolated patches have been put under the plough.

Now, I want to state the fact. From Warwick westward, within sight of this line for the whole

distance, there is 20 miles of an almost unbroken stretch of wheat fields, and Mr. Gray saw them—if he did not see them for the whole 20 miles he saw them, to my knowledge, for 15 miles. Then, with regard to the comparison there exists between the routes *via* Warwick and *via* Pittsworth in the matter of the through distance from Brisbane, there is here in the Commissioner's statement, in the whole of the paragraphs dealing with that question, a confusion of routes which have led the Commissioner to erroneous conclusions. I particularly regret that there is not a better map before hon. members, so that I might demonstrate clearly what I want to show. When I was before the Railway Commission there was a map showing the various projected routes through to Goondiwindi. The original proposal was to go direct from Pittsworth to St. George. That line would have followed a route that would have taken it very much to the north of Goondiwindi—about 20 miles—and being a direct line, of course it would have been much shorter than the line as recommended by the commission—going down from Pittsworth south-westerly to Inglewood, and then going due west to point A, near Dirranbandi, on the Moonie River.

Mr. STORY: Dirranbandi is on the Balonne.

HON. A. MORGAN: It does not matter where it is.

Mr. STORY: It really does not.

HON. A. MORGAN: What I said was that point A was on the Moonie River. The Commissioner in his report speaks of the distance from Brisbane *via* Pittsworth to a point 15 miles north of Goondiwindi, and he says—

As the question of the *via recta* may possibly be urged as a reason for the extension from Warwick, I need only say that the construction of this line, which can only be regarded as a luxury, and which will probably involve an expenditure of £431,500, will only effect a saving in the through distance to Brisbane from Goondiwindi of 63 miles, whereas the distance from the point 15 miles north of Goondiwindi to Brisbane by way of Pittsworth and the Drayton deviation will be about 3 miles shorter.

Now, let it be understood that there is no proposal to construct a line to 15 miles north of Goondiwindi from Pittsworth. The Commission's recommendation is for a line south-west to Inglewood, and then due west to point A. The distance is exactly the same from Pittsworth to point A as from Warwick to point A, and in estimating the distance *via* Warwick or Pittsworth you can get a set of figures that will do equally well for Goondiwindi and point A, so far as the comparison is concerned. What are the facts? The Commissioner says there would be some 3 miles in favour of Pittsworth. I say he is talking of the wrong route. In one paragraph he speaks of a route *via* Inglewood, and in another of a route *via* a point 15 miles north of Goondiwindi. Taking the figures from the report of the Royal Commission, the distance from Warwick to point A is 213 miles, and the through distance from point A to Brisbane is, by the existing line, 381 miles. The distance from point A to Pittsworth is 213 miles, and the through distance from point A *via* Pittsworth to Brisbane is 350 miles. Now, by the *via recta*, according to Mr. Stanley's evidence (see question 1426, page 70, of the report of the commission), you can save 63 miles, thus reducing the through distance *via* Warwick to 318. *Via* Pittsworth the through distance is 350 miles, and by allowing for the Drayton deviation—9 miles—the through distance *via* Pittsworth is reduced to 341 miles, leaving the distance in favour of the Warwick route at 23 miles, and not 3 miles.

HON. E. B. FORREST: That is allowing for the Drayton deviation?

HON. A. MORGAN: That is giving full credit for the saving in each case. I only mention this because the Commissioner mentions it. I want to say to the Committee that we are not putting forward a claim for the *via recta* in connection with this railway; but I argue in the strongest possible manner that, when you are projecting a railway that will serve the important district in the south-west portion of the colony, you cannot, if you are true to the interests of the colony, overlook the fact that there is a means by which you can ultimately shorten colonial and intercolonial distances by 63 miles.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. A. MORGAN: I say that you are bound, when you are determining the route of what will be a main line by and by, if it is not now, to have regard to the circumstances which will place the people of that district in that position of advantage which they ought to occupy, and which they do not occupy now. That is the only connection in which I advance the *via recta* in dealing with this matter at all, and I would not have done that if the Commissioner had not raised it in his arguments against the construction of the Warwick route.

Mr. BELL: A very strong argument, too.

HON. A. MORGAN: It is a strong argument in the opinion of the hon. member who is interested in another route. I blame the Commissioner very seriously for stating that he is not in a position to supply the House or the country with information as to the traffic that this proposed line of 25 miles will secure. Surely the head of our Railway Department, above all people, should be able to supply information on this point. That he has not done so is deeply to be regretted, because I am in a position to say that the information is in his possession.

Mr. DAWSON: He says he is not satisfied on the point.

HON. A. MORGAN: I beg the hon. member's pardon. I refer him to the last paragraph but one of the Commissioner's report, where he says, "It is impossible for me to give an estimate of what will be the probable receipts."

Mr. DAWSON: What does that mean? That he has not got full particulars—not that he has not got any information. He wants to be accurate.

HON. A. MORGAN: He says, "It is impossible for me to give an estimate of what will be the probable receipts from the proposed extension to Thane's Creek." Then he goes on to institute a comparison between the possibilities of that line and the actualities in connection with the Killarney branch, which runs through what every hon. member who has visited the Downs knows is a very fine farming district. Now, the comparison is not a fair one. The Killarney line is a purely agricultural one. It carries freight which is the worst class of freight from a revenue point of view, though, at the same time, it represents the highest possible development to which the land can be put—

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. A. MORGAN: Whereas the proposed line from Warwick westward would get not only agricultural produce, but a big timber trade, some mineral trade, and the trade of a vast pastoral district—traffic which would pay maximum freight rates, and, therefore, in that respect place the line in a much better position than the Killarney line. I said that the Commissioner should have known this. It was his duty to have known it; and I will add to that, that to some extent at least he did know it. I took the trouble to advise the Commissioner as to some of the traffic which this line would inevitably get. I showed him by the actual returns from the Warwick railway station that during the

twelve weeks ending 23rd November there were nearly 4,500 bales of wool despatched from that station, and every bale of that wool would be carried over this line if it were built. There is not one bale carried on the Killarney line. How, then, can he institute anything like a fair comparison between the railway to Killarney and the railway that is now under discussion?

Mr. DAWSON: Would not that wool be carried over the line if it started from Pittsworth?

HON. A. MORGAN: I do not think all of it would. Some of it, I know, would not, but that is not the point.

Mr. DAWSON: It is the point. The starting point is the very thing we are arguing about.

HON. A. MORGAN: The point just now is that the Commissioner says that he is not in a position to estimate the traffic, and I say that he is in a position to give something like a reliable estimate of the traffic that the line would secure. I can tell the Commissioner further that in the districts this line would serve there are nearly 1,000,000 sheep—he can estimate the produce of those sheep—and on the New South Wales side of the border there are over 350,000 sheep, and the evidence of representative witnesses who were examined before the Royal Commission, and who were sent there by the Selectors' Association, was that they wanted a railway along the Queensland border, that they wanted it from Warwick, and that, if they got it, the wool from those 350,000 sheep would be shipped over that line to Queensland ports.

Mr. STORY: You are wrong.

HON. A. MORGAN: I am speaking from facts—facts which were available to the Commissioner—and yet he says that he is not in a position to estimate the traffic that this railway will secure. Now, this information was in Mr. Gray's possession before his report was presented to this House containing that statement. I challenge contradiction. I offer the evidence given before the Royal Commission; I offer the facts supplied by Mr. Gray's own officers at Warwick in support of the statements I make to this Committee, and I make them because I know they are absolutely true.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. A. MORGAN: I must apologise for trespassing even to this extent upon the time of the Committee.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, go on!

HON. A. MORGAN: No, I will not go on. I believe I have said sufficient to show that the report that has been presented to us is not such a report as, under the circumstances, ought to have been presented. I have said enough to show that the requirements of the south-western border districts—aye, and the requirements of Brisbane and Southern Queensland generally—demand that we should have a railway to carry the trade of those districts, and to bring it to our own ports, and I hope that no difference as to which starting point should be adopted will induce this Parliament to delay even for another year a work which, according to our highest railway authority, ought to have been undertaken twenty years ago. I deeply regret that the differences between the hon. member for Balonne, the hon. member for Dalby, and the hon. member for Cambooya, and the hon. member for Cunningham and myself as to which should be the starting point has resulted in what I believe to be a cruel wrong to the trading interests of the community and to the port of Brisbane particularly. I say that, even if that question is to be decided against the district which I represent, let it be decided against me, if it is to the interests of the colony that it should be so decided; but let not the Government, let not this Parliament shilly-shally with this question any longer.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. A. MORGAN: It is one that should be dealt with now, before this session closes, and I hope Parliament will deal with it. There is just one local point that I ought to deal with before I sit down. I hear there is a great deal of alarm expressed upon a point to which Mr. Gray draws attention in his report—the fact that, for some miles out of Warwick, the proposed line to Thane's Creek and Goondiwindi will traverse territory within 3 or 4 miles of the existing line to Toowoomba. My local knowledge enables me to explain—to

my own satisfaction, at any rate, [9 p.m.] and I hope to the satisfaction of the Committee—the reason why that is so. The line to Toowoomba and Ipswich and Brisbane runs along the north side of the valley of the Condamine; the line to the west will follow the south side of the valley of the Condamine. Between them there is a distance of about 4 miles for, say, 5 miles. Mr. Gray says that by building a line from Toolburra Siding across the Condamine, he could do away with 4 or 5 miles of construction. That is so; and that would not jeopardise Warwick interests in this matter. It is not a matter that I would oppose if it were considered wise; but Mr. Gray will save that 4 miles at the cost of building an expensive bridge across the Condamine a mile in length, a bridge that will cost nearly the whole of the £20,000 that will be saved in the 4 miles of construction. The Condamine is a mighty stream when it is in flood. At Warwick, some miles further upstream, it required a bridge  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile in length to bridge the Condamine. As you go farther west the valley opens out, the flats are wider: it is subject to periodic floods; and it will be necessary to have a high-level bridge with flood openings the whole of the distance, because the Condamine would inevitably sweep to destruction any embankments that might be put there. Therefore there will have to be flood openings and steel girder spans; and the cost of that bridge would absorb, if not the whole, nearly the whole of the £20,000 the Commissioner would save in shortening the distance by 4 miles. And for what benefit? Simply that Warwick might be excluded as the terminus. You see the same thing in going out of Toowoomba. On the Brisbane line you go up the north side of Gowrie Creek to Toowoomba; going out to the west and to Warwick you run down the south bank; and if you look out of the carriage on your right you would probably see a train keeping pace with you for some miles coming from Sydney while you are going to Sydney. That, however, is a mere detail. I only allude to it as offering an explanation of a little difficulty which might suggest itself to members of the Committee not familiar with local circumstances as a rather formidable matter. If Mr. Gray thinks well to start from Toolburra, I have not the slightest objection, though I think it would be a foolish thing to do. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that I strongly recommend this line to the consideration of the Committee. I recommend it first as a Queensland interest in the future prosperity of this colony; and I have no compunction in saying that I also recommend it as the representative of Warwick. I am not in the least ashamed to stand up here and advocate it in my capacity as member for Warwick; but I say it is a line which should commend itself to us chiefly because it is a line that will serve the common interests of the country.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on both sides: Hear, hear!

M. BELL (*Dalby*): Whatever opinions the representatives in this Parliament of the various

competing starting places may have as to the merits of the respective routes, we are united in one point at all events, and that is as to the excellence of the speech which the hon. member for Warwick has delivered in defence of his case. He may or may not be a successful pleader for his cause, but he at all events has been an ardent and fervid pleader, and the electors of Warwick could not have been better represented than by the hon. gentleman who has been advocating their cause to-night. I feel a certain sense of loneliness in taking part in this debate, because in the various discussions and deliberations that have taken place by this official individual or that official individual, or the various bodies, whether royal or otherwise, that have been appointed to consider the question of a starting-point for this railway, the only references to the chief town in the electorate I represent have been of a very unimportant character. The great defect which marred the deliberations of the Railway Commission on this question is that they conducted their inquiries entirely on the basis that a border line was to be built, with the result that they practically ignored the claims of Dalby, of Yeulba, and of Roma. I would like the Committee to understand this—which I believe to be a fact—that this line, which comes before us in the innocent and unpretentious form of a line towards Thane's Creek, is a line not merely to Thane's Creek or to Goondiwindi, but a line to run along ultimately to St. George; and this line will be made an argument and a lever for the construction of a line to Goondiwindi, and thence to St. George; and that line will be made an argument and a lever for the construction of the *via recta*.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: Hear, hear!

Mr. BELL: The hon. member for Warwick dealt very gingerly with the *via recta*. There have been occasions when the hon. member has waxed eloquent, whether in this House or out of it, on the virtues of the *via recta*, but the hon. gentleman was strangely silent on that point to-night, and I think he strengthened his argument by refraining from touching upon it, for, undoubtedly, in the condition which Queensland is in to-day, whether financially or in regard to the heavy demands there are for the construction of railways, I say that a member or a Government that would come down and propose a line such as the *via recta*—which will cost £1,023,000 if the line is carried to St. George—I say that a Government which made a proposition such as that, in view of the fact that a line of railway could be built towards the same points for half that sum—I am speaking by the figures—I would find it difficult to believe that they would possess the confidence of this Chamber for any appreciable length of time. It may have been a desirable thing to talk about the merits and virtues of the *via recta* in past years, but to-day, as railway construction stands in this colony, I say that no Government would be prepared to come down to this Chamber with a proposal to build the *via recta* from Ipswich to Warwick, and carry that line to St. George at a cost of £1,023,000, when that line would not serve the colony one whit better than a line from Pittsworth, which would cost £500,000, or would be served by a line from Yeulba at a cost of infinitely less than half-a-million of money, and so the hon. gentleman showed a nice appreciation of the particular feeling of the moment, when he refrained from dwelling upon the *via recta*, which would cost the country £1,023,000.

Mr. KATES: I rise to a point of order.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! What is the point of order?

Mr. KATES: I should like to know if the question of the *via recta* is before the Committee? I understand that it is a branch line from

Warwick to Thane's Creek—a distance of 24 miles—that is before us, and not the *via recta* at all.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot say that the hon. member for Dalby is out of order. The *via recta* has certainly some bearing on this question, and I think the hon. member may fairly refer to it in discussion.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BELL: I regret that the hon. member for Cunningham should have made an extraordinary intervention which can only be described as an inexplicable interruption. (Laughter.) I can quite well understand the member for Warwick refraining from emphasising the merits of the *via recta* to-night, as he has done on former occasions, because we have got into this condition in Queensland now, that the approval that has been bestowed formerly upon the *via recta* argument would not be re-echoed to-day. Nevertheless, I am aware that if this House commits itself to this line towards Goondiwindi it is adding great strength to the claims of the supporters of the *via recta*.

Mr. KEOGH: And we will have it yet.

Mr. BELL: I therefore hope that that fact will be borne in mind by those who are going to vote this evening. I wish to call the attention of the Committee to another aspect of this question. This line towards Goondiwindi and this proposal ultimately to carry it towards St. George is called a border line by the hon. member for Warwick as well as by other members of this House, and probably other members who will follow me will dwell upon the importance to this colony of building this so-called border line, and they will dwell strongly upon the desirability of securing to Queensland the border trade. If this proposal to build a border line is assented to, we shall unquestionably be introducing a new principle into the influences that induce us to build railways in Queensland. Hitherto every railway that has been built in Queensland, and even the multitudinous railways that are now before this Parliament for consideration, are advocated on the grounds that they are going to help the settlers whom they reach; that they will aid the producers of the particular district, and that, through them, they will be a benefit to the colony at large. I say that nobody has attempted to put that argument forward for the border line. The argument that has been brought forward in favour of the construction of the border line is not that the settlers have got too few railways, but that they have got too many. We are told that if this line is not built at once New South Wales, in half-a-dozen places, will bring her lines up to the border and get the trade. Well, standing here as a member of this Parliament, I say I wish God-speed to New South Wales in her endeavour to carry her railways to the southern border of this colony to give the settlers along the southern border as much railway communication as they possibly can. I am not aware that this line is to be built in the interest of the selectors. It is said that if this railway is not built along the border, the trade will go to New South Wales and not come to Brisbane. I say that I have yet to learn that we build railways for the merchants of Brisbane. I have not heard that in the railways we build we have in our minds more the port of embarkation than the seat of production. I have yet to learn that when we build railways, we are thinking less of the producer and more of the middle men; and when we are asked to commit ourselves to a railway that means an expenditure of over a million of money, in order to carry railway communication to two places that may be admirably served by a railway that will cost only a third of that sum, I say we are being influenced, whether uncon-

sciously or not, by an impulse which finds its origin in mercantile circles and not in pure producing circles, and this Committee should understand that this border line is advocated, not in the interests of the producers, but of the merchants of Brisbane. I wish well to the merchants of Brisbane as much as any man—I do not wish to say a word against the intervention they make in this matter, an intervention which arises from the desire to get as much of the trade of those districts into their hands as they possibly can. While I wish them well in their businesses, I say it is not the duty of this House to vote large sums of money merely in order to benefit the merchants of Brisbane. It seems to me an extraordinary thing, when we recollect that there are districts in Queensland suffering for want of rail communication, when we recollect the communities that have been struggling for years in developing the land on which they have settled, and would develop them successfully if they had any communication—when we think of those communities scattered throughout the land, is it not extraordinary to find any body of persons coming down and saying, "We will neglect these people, we will put them off for a few years, and we will build a railway in a part of the colony which has an abundance of railway communication, because if that railway is not built the traffic will go somewhere else"? I cannot believe that if this Committee thoroughly realised that view of the case they would consent to any proposal to construct that which is a middleman's line, and not a producer's line. Now, I do not think this is the time to go at any length into the merits of the rival starting points of the St. George Railway. I could say a great deal about the starting point of Dalby, and a great deal about the starting point of Yeulba; and undoubtedly from the point of view of economy much can be said in favour of Yeulba. But what I want to emphasise is that we cannot with any consistency fly in the face of the report which the Railway Commissioner has made on this railway. The hon. member for Warwick attempted to controvert the arguments of the Railway Commissioner. He said that he had information in his possession that was not evident in the criticisms he made in his report, and he said also that the Commissioner was not a practical railway man. Now, in regard to the latter statement, I am very glad of the opportunity of stating—because my remarks in regard to Mr. Gray on a recent occasion have not been of an exceptionally laudatory character—that I have a much higher opinion of the report of the Railway Commissioner than is apparently entertained by the hon. member for Warwick. I venture to say that Mr. Gray has put his best work in that report, and that it represents his opinion upon the best information that he has at his disposal, and if it was not unworthy it was something very nearly approaching the unworthy when the hon. member for Warwick suggested that the Railway Commissioner had information in his possession which should have induced him to come to a conclusion other than he has done in regard to one or two points in his report. The member for Warwick stated that the Commissioner was not a practical railway man. I say, for all the purposes of the report that Mr. Gray has placed before us, practical railway ability was not wanted at all. What was wanted was common sense, and a general knowledge of the commercial development of that part of the country, and Mr. Gray probably possesses those qualifications as much as anybody—even as much as the hon. member for Warwick, although he is not able to say he has lived in the district as long as that hon. member. I say that no technical skill was necessary in preparing that report. All

that was necessary was intelligence and common sense, which nobody denies that Mr. Gray possesses. I am reminded also by an hon. member sitting near by me that Mr. Gray possesses a virtue which is of immense importance in such a controversy as this. He is absolutely disinterested, and the hon. member for Warwick will hardly lay claim to that distinction. Now, the hon. member for Warwick went on to say that although Mr. Gray, who he said was not a railway expert, was against this line to Thane's Creek, yet technical experts such as Mr. Thallon and Mr. Lethem were in favour of it. At all events, he laid stress upon Mr. Stanley and Mr. Lethem being in favour of it. Now, why should men like Mr. Stanley and Mr. Thallon be in favour of this line? Why should they want to see the line run along the border? Because they are speaking from the standpoint of technical railway men and managers, and it goes sore with Mr. Thallon especially to see Queensland traffic going over the border, and being diverted to the south. That is what is wrong with Mr. Thallon. He is thinking of the returns of his railways. He wants to get as much traffic on the lines as he can, but so far as the general policy of the country is concerned, and the general question of developing Queensland, and giving railway communication to other parts of the country, Mr. Thallon is only concerned in an inferior degree. He finds himself face to face with the New South Wales railway men. He is animated with the spirit of rivalry. He does not like to see Queensland produce running over New South Wales railways, and he therefore says that this railway must be built. But we in this House look at the matter from a very different standpoint. What we want to see is not so much particular goods running over Queensland railways. Our object is not traffic alone, as Mr. Thallon's is. Our concern is the men behind the railways, at the end of the railways, and along the railways, the settlers whom we want to see provided with railway communication; and if the mother colony likes to come along and offer railway facilities to our settlers, I say again, God speed her in her endeavour. Therefore I say there is nothing in the argument of the hon. member for Warwick that Mr. Thallon, a technical authority, is in favour of this border line, because Mr. Thallon looks at the matter from the narrow standpoint of the railway manager, and not from the broader standpoint that we in this House are bound to look at it from. I will refrain to-night—and the Committee will be grateful to me, no doubt—from singing the praises of the alternative routes. I think the cause would probably not be greatly forwarded if I were to say much on that question. I have said something of a negative value as to the merits of the border line, and it will be time enough to discuss the merits of particular localities when the proposal comes before us to make an extension of this line, if it is ever built. I must, however, say this, and I say it certainly believing it to be true: that, of all the alternative routes, the one which will open up the country along its whole length in the greatest degree for close settlement, is undoubtedly the line from Dalby. I can give ample proof of that when the time comes, because in my electorate of Dalby for a number of miles the railway would traverse country which is typical of the country which exists nearly all the way between Dalby and St. George. The whole of the land from Dalby to St. George is fit for close settlement, and I therefore have no hesitation in saying what I have done in regard to the Dalby route. I hardly think the advocates of other routes can say the same, not even the hon. member for Warwick, unless a

liability to be periodically flooded to an immeasurable depth, is an indication of a desirable route. In speaking the other night I expressed the opinion that I thought it was highly [9.30 p.m.] desirable that we should go in for a system of branch lines, and when giving evidence before the Railway Commission at Dalby I expressed the hope that Dalby, as well as Warwick and other places on the Darling Downs, should be centres from which branch lines should radiate. I can assure the hon. member for Warwick that I desire to see Warwick, as I desire to see Dalby, a centre from which these branch lines will radiate, for by that means the Downs will be greatly developed. Such branch lines will benefit Warwick as well as Dalby, and in order to give some impetus to my advocacy of the system of branch lines, I shall move a slight amendment in the motion now before the Committee.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Let us have the discussion on the main question first.

Mr. BELL: I intend to move, by way of amendment, that this line shall only be built for 15 miles, instead of going right on to Thane's Creek, and if the Committee agree to my amendment they will only be showing some respect to the opinion of the gentleman who occupies the position of Railway Commissioner. Now, I ask any hon. member who has read the report of the Commissioner, whether he can support the proposal of the Minister now before the Committee? The other night the Minister for Railways rose up and extolled the merits of Mr. Gray; but Mr. Gray has made a report as strongly condemnatory of this line as any man could, and in the teeth of that the Minister comes down and proposes that this line should be built. Mr. Gray says in his report—

I cannot conscientiously say that the prospects of this extension are encouraging, certainly not beyond the first 15 miles, and in this connection I think it my duty to point out that for the first 10 miles the surveyed route runs almost parallel with the line from Warwick to Brisbane, within an average distance of not more than 2 to 4 miles.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: That kills your amendment.

Mr. BELL: I admit that that is not in favour of my amendment; but I say that if that kills my amendment, it kills the whole line. I think the Committee should go slow in this matter, and we should agree to this line being built through good country, as the Commissioner recommends. I am not aware that anybody has admitted that Thane's Creek will be damaged if this line is not built to that district, or that the country will suffer if this line is built for only 15 miles instead of going further on. If my amendment is accepted it will be the means of saving a large sum of money to the country, and the town of Warwick will probably benefit to an equal degree. I am speaking not merely of Warwick, but of the whole country. In moving my amendment, I do not necessarily wish to imply that this or any other branch line will pay at once; but I say that if this line is built right to Thane's Creek, we will be going beyond a branch line; we shall be only committing ourselves to an extension to Goondiwindi. I also find that Mr. Gray says—

The Chief Engineer's estimate of the cost of the line from Warwick to Goondiwindi is £346,000, and from Pittsworth to the point north of Goondiwindi before referred to £220,000, or a difference of, say, £126,000 in favour of Pittsworth.

If my amendment is rejected it will mean that this Committee will be committing itself to an extension to Goondiwindi; but if it is accepted we shall be keeping within the limits of branch line construction. I move that after the words

"fourth day of December instant" the following words be added:—"So far only as concerns the first fifteen miles."

HON. W. H. GROOM (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): I presume that any remarks that hon. members make on this amendment will not preclude us speaking on the main question.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No.

HON. W. H. GROOM: For I would not like the rest of the debate to be confined to this amendment. In discussing this resolution to-night, I do not think what happened in 1884, 1885, and 1886, when the same matter was before the House, should be taken into consideration now. I very much regretted to hear the hon. member for Warwick speak as he did of the action of an Acting President of the Legislative Council fifteen years ago. He referred to his action as the action of a Toowoomba man in what I may call a derisive manner. That hon. gentleman is dead, and there is wisdom in the old Latin proverb, that we should say nothing of the dead but that which is good. We have to deal with this question as it is now submitted to this Committee, and I am going to deal with the matter in that light. I commend the speech of the hon. member for Warwick to hon. members, with the one exception that I have referred to, because he was only doing his duty to his constituents, and if I were in his place I would take the same course. I hope it will be recognised that whatever any hon. members have to say on this proposal, that they are only advocating what they believe to be for the benefit of the country. I claim to have as great an interest in the general prosperity of Queensland as any other member of this House, and I am prepared to take as broad a ground as the hon. member for Warwick has done. How does the matter stand now? As the hon. member for Warwick pointed out, after an interval of some years, different rival routes have presented themselves to reach the town of St. George, and each has its advocates more or less warm. Twelve months ago the Government came down to this House with a proposal to establish a public works committee consisting of members of both Houses of Parliament, to whom railways like this would have been referred in the first place, and their report would be brought before Parliament. That was not accepted, and they then, after the prorogation of Parliament, appointed a Royal Commission, consisting of five gentlemen in no way connected with politics, to report upon the rival routes and submit their report to the House. What was the object of appointing that Royal Commission if their recommendations are not to be carried out? This commission was appointed purely on the understanding that it was apart from the rivalries between one side of the House and the other, and between one member and another, to be a perfectly independent commission in no way connected with politics, and as such was to submit its report to the House and the country.

HON. E. B. FORREST: Do you think they succeeded?

HON. W. H. GROOM: It is not my province to say whether they succeeded or whether they did not, but I can only tell the hon. gentleman this: that within the last month or six weeks I have heard repeatedly that the majority must rule, and stringent measures have been taken here to see that the majority shall rule, and yet when the majority of this commission bring up a certain report see how they are treated.

MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. GROOM: Why, their report is thrown into the waste paper basket, and they are told almost in so many words that they are incompetent to deal with the question, and the

money spent upon the commission has been utterly wasted. That is how the matter stands, make what you like of it. I am not familiar with the Pittsworth route, as I have not been beyond the precincts of Pittsworth, and cannot speak of the country to the west of it; but, as I said on previous occasions to my own constituents, I am content to rely upon the evidence, report, and recommendations of the Royal Commission. If their report is not to be acted upon, the appointment of that commission has been an absolute farce, and nothing more.

HON. E. B. FORREST: So it was.

HON. W. H. GROOM: If the recommendations of the commission are not to be accepted it certainly was a farce. I was waiting for the Secretary for Railways to give the Committee some information as to the amount of extra traffic that is going to be secured by the construction of this railway. In 1865—and it is a long time ago—I voted for the extension of the railway from Toowoomba to Warwick, and I voted afterwards for a subsequent extension from Warwick to Wallangarra. I had great expectations, as we all had at the time, that the country would see some return for the large amount of money involved in the extension from Gowrie Junction to Wallangarra, but the sanguine expectations we formed upon that occasion have not been realised.

THE HOME SECRETARY: Question!

HON. W. H. GROOM: The hon. gentleman says "Question," but what are the facts? I now refer hon. members to the Commissioner's report for this year as laid before Parliament. He tells us that the line from Brisbane to Gowrie Junction has cost the country over £2,000,000. That is allowing for our extravagances and our errors.

THE HOME SECRETARY: Is not that the line to Toowoomba also?

HON. E. B. FORREST: It goes through Toowoomba, I think, doesn't it?

HON. W. H. GROOM: Yes, of course it does. I say I am taking the line from Brisbane to Gowrie Junction, and I say it has cost the country, according to the Railway Commissioner, £2,700,000, and yet what is the result? Notwithstanding all that expense, notwithstanding all our errors in calculation—and a Minister of the Crown sitting where the Premier is now sitting assured this House and the country that the railway from Ipswich to Toowoomba would be built for £3,000 a mile, whereas it has actually cost about £8,000 a mile as far as Murphy's Creek, and £20,000 a mile from there to the top of the Main Range. While a Minister of the Crown deliberately stated from his place on the floor of this House that that line would cost £3,000 a mile on the estimate of his engineer at the time, and notwithstanding all the errors that were made, Mr. Gray reports that the goods and passenger traffic on that line to Gowrie Junction has returned 4½ per cent., after paying for expenses of working.

THE PREMIER: It gets the benefit of the whole of the traffic from Wallangarra, too.

THE HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

HON. W. H. GROOM: On the other hand, the traffic from Gowrie Junction to Wallangarra returns only £1 4s. 6d.

THE PREMIER: You forget that the Toowoomba line gets the benefit of that traffic.

MR. BELL: Have you the figures from Gowrie Junction westward?

HON. W. H. GROOM: No.

MR. BELL: They are better than for the Wallangarra line, with an infinitely worse train service.

HON. W. H. GROOM: As to the objection that the Gowrie Junction line to Brisbane gets

the benefit of the Wallangarra traffic, I am not in a position to doubt the accuracy of the statement.

The PREMIER: Of course it does, and of the Western line, too.

HON. W. H. GROOM: I take it that Mr. Gray in making the calculations has given each line credit for what it was entitled to. That is how any reasonable person would take it, and you have only to look at the returns from the various stations along the line to justify the statement. Why, the amount of agricultural produce that went along the line from Ipswich to Toowoomba is something astonishing, particularly from Laidley, Grantham, Gatton, and Forest Hill. I am at a loss to understand where the traffic is to come from for this proposed line. At the present time we allow 15 miles each way between Toowoomba and Warwick. That is, we run 56,500 miles of railway every year at a train-mile cost of 4s. 6d. that we do not get 1d. of return for as between Toowoomba and Warwick. Yet, notwithstanding all these overtures, there is no increase in traffic. If hon. members examine the last census returns, they will find that the population in the country from Thane's Creek to Goondiwindi is so sparse that the passenger traffic along that line would not pay for the grease on the wheels, and I believe that the census returns next year will reveal the same state of affairs.

HON. A. MORGAN: The timber alone will pay.

MR. ANNEAR: The same statement was made about the line from Ipswich to Toowoomba—that the receipts would not pay for the grease on the axles.

HON. W. H. GROOM: I think the hon. member for Maryborough is wrong in that statement. I am quite familiar with the circumstances under which that line was built. The Secretary for Railways at that time—the Hon. Arthur Macalister—and the late Mr. Fitzgibbon, the engineer, stationed men on the Main Range, where there was a tollbar, and they took an accurate account of all the wool traffic, all the dray traffic, and all the passenger traffic, for nearly three weeks in order to ascertain what traffic was likely to pass over the line, and it was considered by Parliament that the returns were sufficiently satisfactory to justify the construction of the line. I never heard the statement of the hon. member for Maryborough before.

MR. ANNEAR: What did Mr. Watts say, and he was a Minister?

HON. W. H. GROOM: But that is beside the question altogether.

The HOME SECRETARY: Even then the line did not pay for many years.

HON. W. H. GROOM: On Monday next we shall have completed forty years of our history as a separate colony, and I think we can now accurately gauge where population is likely to be concentrated, and where trade is likely to go. I am one of those who do not believe in what is stated about the amount of border trade that we are losing, nor do I believe that by constructing this line we shall take the border trade away from New South Wales. When I was in Sydney two months ago, I spoke to some of the leading business men, and they ridiculed the idea of Queensland being able to take away their border trade from them, and they put their views in a very practical form. They said, 'Take, as an example, the Inverell district. It has been established now for nearly a hundred years. The people there are intermarried with the Sydney people; their business is conducted with Sydney firms; and their banking accounts and their station accounts and all their other business go to Sydney, and how do you think you are going to divert that trade into Queensland? It is an absurdity.'

HON. E. B. FORREST: We never dreamt of doing it, and there is no proposition that we should do it.

HON. W. H. GROOM: I have read the speeches of the hon. member and of other members of the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce, and the whole burden of their song is "Wool, wool, wool, for Queensland ships to take away!"

HON. E. B. FORREST: Yes—Queensland wool.

HON. W. H. GROOM: Queensland wool is coming here now. The hon. member for Balonne can speak from personal knowledge of what has happened since the construction of the Cunnamulla Railway.

MR. STORY: It has stopped the border trade absolutely.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: That is due to the border tax.

MR. STORY: There is no border tax on.

HON. W. H. GROOM: All the Queensland wool is now coming over the Cunnamulla railway. I feel perfectly satisfied of the accuracy of what I am now stating, and I say that this border line will not bring the trade which so many wish for, and which they say exists, because I do not think it does exist, and that all the trade that can come is coming now. I have seen eight or ten drays at a time coming to the railway station at Warwick from Goondiwindi, while in the unfortunate township of Cambooya, where people were induced to invest in allotments on the strength of the Goondiwindi trade, you can now get land almost for nothing, because of the 15 miles which were allowed to get the wool taken to Warwick. Yet, in spite of all this, the returns we have show that the line all along to the border is not paying, and that the country is taxed to the extent probably of £100,000 a year to pay interest on the construction of that line, and now it is proposed to increase that loss still further by this extension. I base my action to-night upon the report of the Royal Commission, with whose appointment my constituents were perfectly satisfied, and whose decision they were perfectly prepared to loyally abide by. But, at the present time, the Government, for reasons best known to themselves, have thrown the report of that commission on one side, and, more than that, they have also thrown the report of the Commissioner for Railways to one side.

MR. BELL: A most stultifying action.

HON. W. H. GROOM: I am going to speak my mind with regard to Mr. Gray. In him the Government have got a faithful and conscientious officer. What possible object could he have in making a report to this Committee to block any particular railway? He is a public officer, and I take it for granted that his report was written under the guidance of the experts of his department.

HON. E. B. FORREST: He went against them.

HON. W. H. GROOM: I do not rely altogether upon the evidence even of Mr. Stanley, because I have a recollection of his stating, with regard to the *via recta*, that such was the mountainous nature of the country, and its ruggedness, that it would cost £10,000 to form a roadway to enable the navvies to get under the bridges to construct them.

HON. A. MORGAN: Where did Mr. Stanley state that?

HON. W. H. GROOM: In one of the statements laid upon the table of the House.

The HOME SECRETARY: What year was that?

HON. A. MORGAN: I challenge you to produce any such statement.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear! So do I.

HON. E. B. FORREST: Then we shall have something interesting.

HON. W. H. GROOM: I cannot lay my hand upon it.

Hon. A. MORGAN: No, you cannot.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. H. GROOM: I have a distinct recollection of hearing the statement made in this House that Mr. Stanley stated that, owing to the mountainous and rugged character of the country along the *via recta*, it would cost something like £10,000 to make a road to let the navvies build the bridges.

Hon. A. MORGAN: I challenge that statement.

Hon. E. B. FORREST: So do I.

Hon. W. H. GROOM: However, that is beside the question, so far as this line is concerned. With regard to Mr. Gray's report, I say that, having recently valued his services so highly as to give him an increase of £500 a year, to flout his report and take not the slightest notice of it, except to say that it has been framed with the object of blocking a particular railway, is not the way in which to treat a deserving public officer. If the reports are to be thrown as waste paper into the basket, where is it to end? On every ground on

[10 p.m.] which we look at the question—taking the report of the Royal Commission, and taking also the report of Mr. Gray—I say that the position is not answerable that the recommendation of the Railway Commissioner was a correct one and ought to be carried out.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*): Like the hon. member for Warwick, I am inclined to feel that the memory of the hon. member who has just sat down has played him false in reference to the statements alleged by him to have been made by Mr. Stanley, and I should be glad if he could produce the document which he says exists in the records showing that he is correct. I shall then be prepared to admit that I have done him an injustice in this matter; but until then I, like the hon. member for Warwick, challenge the statement, because I have a fair recollection of most of the matters that have taken place in connection with the question of the *via recta*, and I certainly do not remember any such statement having emanated from the Chief Engineer. The hon. member laid considerable stress on the right of the majority to rule; and he asks, Why is majority rule not to obtain in regard to the proceedings of a Royal Commission appointed for the purpose of inquiring into the question of the proper route to be taken by the various lines submitted to them? I may tell the hon. member why. They were not appointed to rule or to decide anything. That Royal Commission was appointed to report, and it is for this House to decide whether the report is justified by the evidence and by the surrounding circumstances generally. I have yet to learn that any hon. member is prepared to stand up and argue, as the hon. member has done by implication, that this House is bound by the findings of a Royal Commission.

Hon. W. H. GROOM: What is the use of appointing a commission?

The HOME SECRETARY: Elucidation—more light. To say that this House is to be bound by the findings and recommendations of a Royal Commission is to state an absurdity which will not be supported; and I combat the idea entirely. I have had occasion, in connection with two Royal Commissions, to ignore a good many of the recommendations made. I found that other recommendations they made were entitled to very great respect, and I was able to act upon them. But to say that a Minister of the Crown or that the Government or this House must carry out the recommendations or behests of a Royal Commission is to say that we must abrogate the functions for the performance of which we are responsible to the House and to the

country. We are very glad to have the information collected and the recommendations made by this commission, but it is for this House to decide whether those recommendations should be carried out or not; otherwise there would be no necessity for submitting this motion.

Mr. BOWMAN: Why do you ignore the expert evidence?

The HOME SECRETARY: As to expert evidence, I can point to the evidence of Mr. Stanley and Mr. Cross, Mr. Curnow, and Mr. Thallon.

Mr. BOWMAN: What about your Railway Commissioner?

The HOME SECRETARY: I must protest against these interruptions.

Mr. REID: Don't be severe because of an interjection.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member in possession of the floor is entitled to speak without interruption, and I ask hon. members to refrain from interjecting.

Mr. BOWMAN: My interjection was pointed.

The HOME SECRETARY: I hope the hon. member will keep what he has to say until he gets up to speak. I don't think I have said anything offensive, and I ask hon. members to allow me to say what I have to say on a matter of great importance to my constituents without unnecessary interruption. I can congratulate the Committee on the high tone of the debate and the ability of the speeches so far; and though I fear that in point of ability what I have to say will fall very far short of the standard that has been maintained up to the present, I hope I shall not descend from the tone that has been maintained, at all events. I am in a peculiar position in regard to this railway. I think I may say that I am in a unique position. Almost all these railways are railways that are intended to supply my constituents with railway communication. Everybody is agreed as to where the railways should go within certain limits, but the difficulty is that the people most interested are unable to decide where those railways are to start from. In the meantime my constituents are very much like the patient who is attended by doctors unable to agree. The patient is there waiting for the remedy, and has been waiting a great many years, but the doctors are unable to agree as to what particular remedy ought to be applied. The only way this can be carried to a successful issue, if this motion is not carried, is to commence the railway at the other end, and, having commenced at Goondiwindi, let us say, work back to Inglewood, and then fight out the question as to where it ought to begin. That seems to be the only practical way, unless we are able to do it by means of the resolutions now before the Committee. I am in the somewhat peculiar position that whether this railway goes from Roma, or Yeulba, or Dalby—which I take it are now out of the reckoning—or from Pittsworth or from Warwick, it is bound to dissatisfy portion of my constituents.

Mr. BELL: Why is Dalby out of the reckoning?

The HOME SECRETARY: I thought the hon. member for Dalby supplied all those arguments; but perhaps I misunderstood the hon. member. It all depends upon which part of the country you look at Goondiwindi from. What I desire to point out is this: According to the Railway Commissioner, according to the experts who were examined, and according to the Royal Commission, whether the line started from Pittsworth or Warwick, or from what point it starts, the point to which it will have to go will be Goondiwindi. If you commence at Inglewood and construct the 70 miles between Inglewood and Goondiwindi, you still have it open to come in with an extension of the line from Inglewood to Warwick or Pittsworth, as the case may be. I

desire to make it perfectly clear that it has now resolved itself into a question as to whether it shall start towards Inglewood as the common point from Warwick or Pittsworth, and go from Inglewood to Goondiwindi. I say it is perfectly correct that it should go to Goondiwindi. New South Wales, as the hon. member for Warwick has pointed out, has brought her railway through the much dreaded flooded country to Moree, and that is about 60 miles from Goondiwindi. Hon. members will remember that Goondiwindi is at the most northerly part of that bight which the Macintyre River makes in Queensland—that is to say, the curve the Macintyre takes—and Moree is not probably more than 35 or 40 miles from the parallel of latitude which principally forms our southern boundary, although it is some 60 miles from Goondiwindi itself. The whole of the country lying in that bight, at the south of the Macintyre at Goondiwindi, so far as the Macintyre forms the boundary of the colony, is magnificent country. A great deal of the country around Goondiwindi is also splendid country. I venture to predict that as soon as railway communication goes to Goondiwindi the district on both sides of the river—that is to say, Queensland territory and New South Wales territory, right as far as Inverell, will be one of the greatest wheat-producing districts in the whole of Australia. I say that advisedly, because I have seen wheat growing there, and it is taken 60 miles to be gristed at Inverell. They go right away to Inverell, which will be another terminus for another New South Wales railway in a short time. They take their wheat from Texas, and instead of taking it to Warwick, where there are also mills, they take it to Inverell to be gristed. It is a very significant fact that this wheat is of such a character that it commands 3d. per bushel more than the best wheat grown on the Darling Downs.

Mr. BELL: After all, the great thing is that they get it gristed.

The HOME SECRETARY: They get it gristed, but they have to carry it 60 miles to a mill in New South Wales, and then bring it back for their own consumption. That is not a proper state of things. I say distinctly that the resources of that district are simply inexhaustible. It has already given proof of what its capabilities are, and it scarcely wants any advocacy or any argument on my part to prove that a district which can produce wheat of such a character as will stand carriage for 120 miles before it gets back to the farm on which it was grown to be consumed should be given railway communication. When the handicap of no railway communication is removed I venture to say where there are ten men in the district now there will be a thousand in a very few years. It is a most magnificent district, and if any hon. member will look at the map they will see where Inverell is situated. If we get our railway down to Inglewood we are within 80 or 90 miles of Inverell, but further west—that is, going nearer to the longitude of Moree. I ask hon. members to look at the map and see where this magnificent district of Inverell will have to draw its supplies from. Such produce as it sends away will have to travel something like 100 miles north-west until it reaches Moree, and then it goes down by way of Narrabri, and by that means into Newcastle and Sydney, going almost right round the compass, or describing three parts of a circle. By the construction of this line along our border we shall practically annex that magnificent district lying to the north of Inverell.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: We do not want any New South Wales trade at all.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not hold with that idea at all. I do not hold with the hon. member for Dalby, who wished New South

Wales God speed in taking Queensland traffic to Sydney. I was under the impression that what we were striving for was increased trade and increased prosperity. Let not hon. members, no matter how ardent federationists they may be, as I am, think that after federation there will be no trade rivalry. The trade rivalry will be keener than ever after federation, for the simple reason that the barriers which now exist will be largely removed, and there will be greater scope for individual enterprise.

Mr. JACKSON: Until the Federal Government take over the railways.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member for Dalby mentioned the fact that Mr. Thallon, as a railway man, probably felt a certain amount of jealousy or rivalry in seeing Queensland traffic going over New South Wales lines. When Mr. Thallon speaks like that, does he not echo the sentiment of every Queenslander? I can see the hon. member for Dalby going straight away for Federal Parliament. Queensland is nothing with him now—it is Australia, and especially New South Wales. Before this session is over I shall expect to see the hon. member declaring whether Orange or Bombala is the proper place for the federal capital. I think that Queensland settlers should bring their trade to Queensland; and if we can manage it by any legitimate means, let us get the trade of New South Wales settlers as well.

Mr. JACKSON: Let the trade go to its natural port.

The HOME SECRETARY: Quite so, but it is our duty not to allow them to continue to carry their produce by bullock dray, if we can upon any reasonable conditions substitute the very much better carriage afforded by railway communication. We have practically at our back door a large portion of the territory of New South Wales, which is absolutely of no benefit to us, or of very little benefit to us, and yet our capital goes right into the south-eastern corner of the colony. That is constantly thrown up as a reproach to us, and yet what do we find? That New South Wales is competing for our traffic in the most north-easterly portion of her territory. That ought not to continue.

A MEMBER of the Opposition: Is not this a waste of time?

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member must understand that this is a railway which is going to pass right through the centre of my constituency. I think I should be allowed to say something on the subject without being told that I am wasting time. If the hon. member does not care to listen to my remarks, he has a very excellent remedy—he can go outside and refresh himself.

Mr. HIGGS: Will you shout?

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes, I will willingly shout to get rid of the hon. member. I referred in a previous part of my speech to the question of the *via recta*. For some reason or other there appears to be an idea in the minds of some people that the *via recta*, or the direct route to Warwick, is one which is under a cloud, and ought not to be talked about, and that the men who advocate it advocate a mere chimera. I hold a very different view on the subject. I quite agree with the hon. member for Dalby when he said that in the condition of the colony to-day anybody who proposed the construction of the *via recta* would not be listened to. I grant that, and I do not advocate the construction of that line to-day. But we are not building railways for to-day only. When we build a railway we build it for many generations to come, and are we not to look forward into the future and see what will be the conditions ten, fifteen, or twenty years hence, in order that we may fill up a gap in a

complete scheme? We have had enough in this colony of patchwork, either in the matter of public buildings or railways. There should be a complete scheme, and any railway we build now should be built with a view to the state of affairs which will exist when that scheme is completed. For that reason I hold that this line should start from Warwick as against Pittsworth. I believe that an increase of prosperity will ensue in a few years after federation, and that our centres of population will grow very considerably. That Sydney is growing there can be no doubt, and that Brisbane is growing at a rapid pace, notwithstanding the bad times, is also palpable to those who live here. With the increase of population in those centres, and in the intervening centres which lie along the railway connecting those two capitals, anything which will facilitate the carriage of mails, passengers, perishable goods, and what for want of a better designation I may call high-class goods, between the two capitals is a matter which must force itself on attention. Whether they like it or not, and no matter what the responsibility may be, this matter must in the course of a few years force itself upon the attention of those who have the direction of affairs.

Mr. DAWSON: The question of mileage is very important to a man who is sending his goods to market.

The HOME SECRETARY: When the *via recta* is made the route from Goondiwindi to Brisbane by the *via recta* will be shorter than by any other route which can be mentioned.

Mr. JACKSON: How many miles shorter?

The HOME SECRETARY: We vary about that. There is the point 20 miles north of Goondiwindi, on the Weir River, [10.30 p.m.] and for comparative purposes the commission take that as the starting point for Brisbane, *via* Pittsworth. On the other hand, they take Goondiwindi, 20 miles south, as the point we have to get to; because that is the point where the New South Wales line from Moree will meet our line, and it is important that we should connect with their line at Goondiwindi. They cannot come across our border and build a line in our territory 20 miles to the north on the Weir River.

Mr. DAWSON: What about the distance if you construct the Drayton deviation?

The HOME SECRETARY: I am allowing for that, but I only want to point out that, allowing everything in favour of the Pittsworth route, it was only from this point of the Weir River that the starting point was. It is possible that I may have misunderstood, but that is the way I understood it, and I know the country pretty well. Now, the difficulty which my constituents feel in this matter is that at present the Texas traffic comes into Stanthorpe. Stanthorpe benefits to a very considerable extent in consequence of that Texas traffic, and Texas is a very thriving place. As hon. members know, it is where practically the whole of the tobacco crop of Queensland is grown, and where probably the best tobacco in Australia is produced. It is a very thriving and go-ahead place, and will be still more so when wheat is grown there to any large extent as the result of railway facilities being provided. In Stanthorpe the people do not view with very much favour the deprivation of that Texas traffic, but I want to point out that it is quite immaterial whether this line is adopted or whether the Pittsworth line is adopted. Both will go to Inglewood; it is there where the Texas traffic will be tapped. I take it that it is now pretty generally admitted that, in order to secure the rich district which lies to the west of Texas and south of Goondiwindi, to say nothing of those districts themselves, it is necessary that a border line should be built, and that

the starting point must be, in any case, Pittsworth or Warwick. So that it is no use anyone cavilling on that score, and it is useless to rebel against the inevitable. Now, the Pittsworth line is undoubtedly one which has much to recommend it. I am speaking now of the extension from Pittsworth, and it is perfectly true, as has been stated here, that there is no finer land probably in Australia than is to be found round Pittsworth and westward as far as Mount Domville, but beyond that and into Inglewood the country for the most part is of a poor character, and very largely overrun with prickly pear, which renders it almost worse than valueless. In that locality it grows to such a height as would astonish hon. members who have not seen it. I am sure I am not exaggerating when I say that it grows in some places 10, 12, and 14 feet high in an impenetrable scrub for miles and miles. Of course there are creeks, such as Canning Creek and its tributaries, where there is good land, but I believe the district can be excellently well served by an extension from Pittsworth to Millmeran and Domville, which would bring a railway within 10 miles of every settler along that route when it and the Warwick extension are completed, because going further along, you immediately get into the neighbourhood of Inglewood, where, if this line was constructed, there would be on that side also railway communication. I firmly believe that a line cheaply made, like the line from Narrabri to Moree in New South Wales, could be constructed from Pittsworth going south-west to Mount Domville, which would pay well and serve all the purposes of the people in the district.

Mr. KATES: Nearly the whole of that land belongs to one man—90,000 acres.

Mr. JACKSON: There are plenty of small farmers, too.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not deny that it has that disadvantage. There is certainly one very large estate through which such a line would pass.

Hon. W. H. GROOM: The same with the present Pittsworth line, which for 8 miles goes through Eton Vale.

The HOME SECRETARY: Quite so. You cannot avoid that, and until we get some sort of betterment system under which these estates will have to yield up some of the unearned increment created by the construction of railways, we shall have to pursue the present system. Of course we have a remedy now in the purchase of the estate, and the line would not then be constructed until the estate became the property of the Crown. That might be a good way of getting over the difficulty. The hon. member for Toowoomba has said that he voted for the extension of the line from Gowrie Junction to Warwick and from Warwick to Wallangarra, and he drew a marked distinction between the earnings of the line from Gowrie Junction to Brisbane and from Gowrie Junction to Wallangarra. He quoted the Commissioner's figures. As pointed out by the Premier and myself, the traffic which creates this £1 4s. 6d. per cent.—that traffic almost to a pound and to an individual—passes over the Gowrie to Brisbane line, and it helps to create the 4 per cent. which that line pays. Then there is another way of looking at the construction of a line of this sort. Does the hon. member mean to imply that that line should never have been built, because it does not pay more than £1 4s. 6d. per cent.?

Hon. W. H. GROOM: No. I do not say that.

The HOME SECRETARY: From his remarks, the hon. member seems to have regretted that he voted for that line, but I say that he never did a better day's work in his life than when he voted for the extensions to Warwick and Wallangarra. Compare, from a

business point of view, Queensland, and more particularly Brisbane now, when we have rapid mail communication, and so forth, with the southern colonies, with the position it was in before we had this railway communication. Even the indirect benefits to Queensland are so great that it cannot be contended that this main line would not have been of enormous benefit to this colony, if it never paid 1d. interest. I trust that this matter will be no longer delayed—I am speaking now of the line to Goondiwindi. In order to keep our border traffic, we have no time to lose; we have already lost too many years on this matter. A great deal of the border trade that should help to make Brisbane, and, by reflex action, make Queensland greater and more prosperous, is going away from us. The trade in districts that are really at our own back door is also going away from us, whereas it should come towards Brisbane. From our geographical position, we should annex the trade from the Richmond, the Tweed, and the Macintyre, and after federation there is no reason why the trade right from Glen Innes should not come this way. Therefore, I trust that hon. members will adopt this resolution, and allow these districts which are crying out for railway communication—districts which are exceedingly rich—to enjoy the same advantages which are enjoyed by settlers in other districts where there is railway communication.

HON. W. H. GROOM: I just rise to put myself right with regard to what I said concerning Mr. Stanley. I find I was wrong in saying that Mr. Stanley made the statement I mentioned. I see, on referring to *Hansard* of the 20th October, 1865, that a gentleman was charged with writing a certain letter the morning when the debate was going on, and it was stated that he was bribed to write that letter. But I am certain that the statements in that letter were analogous to what I have stated.

HON. E. B. FORREST: Who wrote the letter?

HON. W. H. GROOM: I won't mention the name of the writer. I simply take the earliest opportunity of saying that Mr. Stanley did not make the statement I have referred to.

MR. JACKSON (*Kennedy*): I would not have risen to make any remarks on this resolution, had it not been that I had heard it said outside—in the lobbies—that hon. members on this side are making this matter a party question. I think it is very proper that that statement should be contradicted.

THE HOME SECRETARY: You don't say that I said that?

MR. JACKSON: No, but an hon. member told me a little while ago that hon. members on this side were making this matter a party question. I think that the hon. members who have debated this question are more or less interested in this line—that is, the extension towards St. George or Goondiwindi, from some point on the main line, either from Warwick, Yeulba, or Pittsworth; but I can claim that I approach this question from a disinterested standpoint. I am not interested in this line; I form my own conclusions concerning the route from the reports of the Railway Commissioner and of the Royal Commission.

THE HOME SECRETARY: I am being torn in all directions. I am disinterested.

MR. JACKSON: I think the Home Secretary is interested in this way: That if the line goes from Warwick, it will suit his constituents better than if it were to start from Pittsworth.

THE HOME SECRETARY: I have said both those routes will do that. The Texas traffic will be tapped at Inglewood.

MR. JACKSON: I am not sufficiently well acquainted with those districts to say whether it will or not.

THE HOME SECRETARY: It is only 26 miles from Texas to Inglewood.

MR. JACKSON: I form my own conclusion on the evidence, and I say that this line should be built from Pittsworth, and not from Warwick. A great deal of capital has been made out of the fact that there is a feeling of opposition on the part of some hon. members, such as the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba, and the hon. member for Dalby, that we will not get the border traffic by this route; but I contend that we will get that traffic by the Pittsworth line just as well as by the Warwick route. There is no doubt that the line from Pittsworth will go through some of the finest land we have in the colony. I had the privilege of visiting that district with the late Mr. Byrnes shortly before he died.

THE HOME SECRETARY: I was there.

MR. JACKSON: Yes. And I saw that that district comprised some very magnificent country, which is very closely settled. I know there is a large estate owned by the Gores at Yandilla, which would be largely benefited by the construction of this line from Pittsworth, but private people generally derive benefits from railway construction, so I do not think that matter should be considered. I think the Home Secretary touched the crux of the whole question when he said that we are really dealing with the question of the *via recta*. The hon. member for Warwick said that Mr. Thallon, Mr. Stanley, and Mr. Lethem were strongly in favour of the line starting from Warwick; but that is because they expect that the *via recta* will be made some time, principally for military reasons, I believe. In order to be able to make up our minds we should be in a position to decide whether the *via recta* should be made. But we have no conclusive evidence as to whether it should be made, but Mr. Gray in his report speaks of it as an expensive luxury which we cannot afford to make. It is evidently a long way ahead before that line will be built. I would point out that although hon. members speak of the extension from Pittsworth as touching a point 20 miles north of Goondiwindi, the map supplied shows that it goes through Goondiwindi. There is evidently some discrepancy somewhere. The figures given by the Royal Commission only show a difference of some 4 miles, even supposing the *via recta* should be made, and allowing for the Drayton deviation on the Pittsworth line, and in the face of the figures I should certainly contend for the line *via* Pittsworth. If the Pittsworth line is adopted, I think there need be nothing inconsistent in the proposal to build the *via recta* at some future time, if it is found to be desirable to do so, for the traffic from Warwick to the border, and on to Sydney. Taking the Commissioner's report, and the report of the Royal Commission, with the evidence they have submitted, and which I have gone through, I cannot conscientiously vote for this extension from Warwick. It may be argued that this is a branch line, and not a line towards St. George, to tap the border traffic, and if that is the position it should be distinctly stated. I do not deny that it will tap the border traffic, but the Pittsworth line will also tap the border traffic, and will go through 20 or 30 miles of magnificent country, a great deal of which is closely settled. I think the preference should be given to that line, and the Government are making a mistake in introducing this proposal. During the visit I made to this country with the late Mr. Byrnes, I know that scores, if not hundreds, of selectors were most anxious for railway construction there, and from what I saw on that visit I am certain a railway through that district would pay and would lead to the settlement of a great deal of land now used for grazing. I

am sorry I cannot support the Government proposal. I suppose it will be carried, but at the same time I believe it is a mistake.

The PREMIER: We seem to have got into a tangle about this war of routes, and I think we are trying to settle too many districts with the one line.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear

The PREMIER: My own opinion is that this line should not go beyond Goondiwindi, and that St. George should be tapped either from Dalby or Yeulba.

Mr. BELL: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: To build those two lines would not, I think, cost any more than the line from Warwick, and it would certainly give the St. George people a railway, perhaps, five or six years earlier than they will otherwise get it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I at one time thought the Pittsworth route was the proper route for this line; but reading the evidence, Mr. Gray's report, and the Royal Commission's report I am inclined to think now that Warwick is the proper place to start from, and I will go further, and say that it might be even more desirable to go from Stanthorpe. You would then get a lot of traffic that neither the Pittsworth nor the Warwick line would get. There is a great deal of mineral country in that direction, and there is a very prosperous silver and lead mine at Texas called the Silver Spur. There is a large goldfield there, and these mineral fields would be developed by railway communication. Thane's Creek itself is a goldfield, and there are a great many shafts there though they are not deep shafts. Then along Macintyre, about Goondiwindi, Inglewood, and Texas there is a lot of excellent agricultural land and a lot of good wheat land. The line from Pittsworth would not tap that as well as the line from Warwick. Though it would tap the land at Inglewood it would not tap the land the Warwick line would tap.

Mr. JACKSON: It would not tap the Texas country.

The PREMIER: Not to the same extent. Another point is that most of that land is now in the hands of the Government, while you must remember that the Pittsworth line goes through a freehold of 90,000 acres; and I maintain that in bringing down plans for that line we should, at the same time, bring down a proposal to purchase the land.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: Because, if we build the line first, we add £2 or £3 an acre to the price of that land. One of the conditions for the construction of that line for 25 miles from Pittsworth should be an offer of that land at a reasonable price.

Mr. GLASSEY: Suppose they attach a prospective value to it.

The PREMIER: Then they should not have the line. If we cannot get the land at a fair value they should not have the line. I admit that there are a number of small settlers along the Pittsworth line, but there are a number along this line also, and at the present time I think there is more land under cultivation and more settlers on the line between Warwick and Thane's Creek, because it would go through the whole of the Toolburra country, which is all good land and all settled. We have now for fifteen years been considering the desirability of building a line to the border. If we do not pass this resolution it will be another year further away, and we

[11 p.m.] must remember that by then there will probably be an interstate commission established, and we may have some

trouble in building this border line. If we build a line to Goondiwindi the trade of that district is nearer Brisbane than Sydney. I do not think this line should be built in the interests of Pittsworth, Toowoomba, or Warwick. We should build it in the interests of the people there, and I believe that the people of Goondiwindi, Texas, Inglewood, and that portion of the colony would be better served by the southern line than by one coming from the north. Those are the main reasons which influenced the Government in bringing forward this motion. It is a serious thing to propose a line in the face of a Royal Commission and of the Railway Commissioner; and, notwithstanding what has been said about Mr. Gray, I maintain that that gentleman is a thoroughly good business man, and a man who understands his business well; but I do not think he has sufficiently thought out the business to be got from that portion of the colony. We want to make our railways pay, even if we get trade from New South Wales. That colony does not hesitate to tap our country further West, and if we can at the same time serve our own people, we should not hesitate to take trade from New South Wales. I intend to vote for the Drayton deviation when it comes on, but that line should be discussed quite apart from this proposal. I hope the Committee will soon come to a decision on this matter, because I should like to see the other lines passed to-night, as they are both important. We have had a good discussion on this line, and we have had excellent speeches. I think the House has gained as much by the speech of the hon. member for Warwick as if he had been in the chair, as it is not often we are able to get the benefit of his assistance in debate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I shall not detain the House for long; but, as some sixteen years ago I had the honour of framing the railway estimates for the construction of this line, or, at any rate, for its initiation, I hardly like to let the debate close without saying a few words. Looking back upon that time, I have always considered it a misfortune to the colony that the line, through some mischance, failed to be adopted in another place. I believe that it would have tended very largely to conserve not only the trade of Queensland within its own territory, but would have attracted the trade of the northern portion of the mother colony. Through the absence of this line, what do we see? Why, that the New South Wales railways have, in the shape of a fan, been gradually creeping up to our Southern border, and now, at six objective points, they flic to a very large extent the trade which belongs to Queensland, and take it down to the superior ports of New South Wales.

Mr. HARDACRE: I thought you were a federalist.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am a federalist, and I do not violate the principle of federation whatever by endeavouring to secure to each State the trade that belongs naturally to it. In that light, without any desire to injure the rights of New South Wales, I am very sorry to see that, through difficulties in arriving at some common conclusion amongst hon. members, there is a probability of this line being still further delayed. I am very glad to see the line now brought forward, and I am not at all afraid to express my opinion—which has remained unaltered during the past sixteen years—that we want a national border line or fence for the purpose of maintaining the trade of the colony within our own territory. When we discuss railways, we talk of them as if they were for all time to be the sole lines of communication or avenues of trade, but I think that with the development of this great country, and with its increased population, the few lines of railway which we now possess will be very largely

increased, and that the ambitions of hon. members, who desire to see the southern border tapped by lines from Dalby, from Yeulba, and even from Roma, may perhaps be gratified in the future. But in the meantime, what we should largely consider is how we can protect the trade of our colony from the fan-like construction of lines in New South Wales which are approaching our territory, and the true plan to protect our trade is by cutting those lines at right angles, so as to prevent the trade of this colony leaking out to the south through these different routes which are being constructed by New South Wales. I look upon this line by no means in the light of a line merely to provide for agricultural settlement. I believe that that section which is now submitted to the Committee, contains some remarkably good agricultural land, because I have read the reports of the railway surveyors, and from them I understand that as far as Goondiwindi there is a very large extent of really good land. The same undoubtedly may be said for the Pittsworth route as far as Mount Domville. There is excellent land there, but it is all contained in a large freehold belonging to one firm, and when you get south-west from Mount Domville, according to the reports of Mr. Surveyor Lethen and other surveyors, you enter upon an expanse of country that is completely ruined by prickly pear and other noxious weeds, while the land itself is much of the same character as a portion of the country beyond Goondiwindi, and is liable to inundation. Beyond Mount Domville the land is unfit for permanent settlement, although I have no hesitation in saying that there is a justification for opening up that large and valuable tract of country beyond Pittsworth by an extension of the line, and I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that my honourable colleague in due time will consider that matter. I know that when I was in the Railway Department I got surveys and information which justified me in believing that an extension of the line from Pittsworth, on its own merits, deserves the consideration of this House. Of course the objection is made that we are opening up private property. In connection with that project, the view expressed by the Premier is well worthy of consideration—to acquire a large extent of freehold and extra railway communication for the purpose of settlement. But that railway is in an entirely different category from the present one, the building of which I look upon as distinctly a matter of State policy—although between Inglewood and Goondiwindi there is as good land as any to be found in the colony, with the exception perhaps of picked portions of the Darling Downs. Its main object is to prevent our trade from being tapped by the extensions from New South Wales. I have always taken a very deep interest in this line. I have viewed it as occupying a position *per se* as one of national importance, and have always regretted that hon. gentlemen representing the Darling Downs, and others, considered it their duty to interfere with what I conceive to be the best interests of the colony in connection with this line. I do not deprecate extensions south from Yeulba, Roma, or Dalby, but I do say that a line going due south and tapping the border at one particular point, such as St. George, would not have the same protecting influence as a line running parallel with the border. At present we are merely talking about the extension to Goondiwindi. Its further extension westward is a matter for the future. With the exception of the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba, I have had the advantage of a larger interest in this line than perhaps any other member of the House; and since 1884, when the line was lost by a mere accident in the Upper

House—through the absence of one member—I have regretted that serious mischance and great loss to the country. I believe that if the line had been carried out at that time we should recognise the benefit of its construction to a fuller extent than we do at the present time. I sincerely hope hon. members will enable this portion of the line to be constructed. It will be for after sessions to decide how much further it shall be extended.

Mr. STORY: How far west would you suggest—Thargomindah?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have always considered that the proper route would be from Goondiwindi to a point midway between St. George and Dirranbandi, but that is a mere individual opinion. I am not so conceited as to say that a better objective point cannot be determined. But in the meantime there can be no objection to its being extended as far as Goondiwindi. Of course, Mr. Gray's reports are always deserving of very serious consideration, and if this line were merely for the purpose of encouraging settlement, his report would have great weight. But, as I said, this is a matter of State policy rather than one for developing fresh country or promoting settlement, and on that ground I unhesitatingly affirm that the construction of this line would conserve our trade and advance the best interests of the colony.

Mr. STORY (*Balonne*): When this discussion commenced, the idea was that a line should be built from Warwick to Thane's Creek, some 24 miles and 18 chains. I was under the impression that we should discuss the motion from that point of view, but since the hon. member for Warwick spoke the discussion has been lifted out of that plane, and we were given to understand that the border line was under discussion. The border line, as far as the Warwick people are concerned, is an argument for the *via recta*. As for protecting the trade of the border, or helping it in any way, it cannot possibly have the slightest effect. When I asked the Chief Secretary just now how far West he would run the border line to protect the border trade, he said to a point between St. George and Dirranbandi. I would like to know how a line between 40 and 50 miles from the border is going to protect our border trade? The position of the border fence has nothing to do with the question. It is the position of the woolsheds that produce the material that is sent on the railway. Local knowledge teaches me that the most valuable part of the trade to be protected would be south of the projected line and nearer the New South Wales terminus at Mungindi. I need only mention one illustration to prove that. There is a line of 120 miles from Charleville to Cunnamulla. Cunnamulla is 80 miles from the border. Bourke, the New South Wales terminus, is also 80 miles from the border. If the position was as those inexperienced gentlemen maintain it is, Bourke would have had exactly the same attraction to our south-western trade in the locality as Cunnamulla. But what has been the result? The woolsheds that supply the material for the carriage on the railway—the larger sheds at Thurulgoonia, Tinnenbura, and others—are 40 or 50 miles from Cunnamulla and about 120 miles from Bourke terminus, and so the extension from Charleville to Cunnamulla has absolutely stopped the border traffic in that district. Though the border itself, which only consists of a wire-netting fence, is half-way between Cunnamulla and Bourke, Cunnamulla has secured the whole of the trade by that extension from Charleville. In 1895 there was £146,000 worth of Queensland produce went across the border to Bourke, and was carried over the New South Wales railways; in 1898 there was not one single sixpence worth went across, so the whole of that immense amount of

trade was secured to Cunnamulla, was carried over our railways to Brisbane, was handled by Brisbane merchants, and the whole of the stores for the same district went from Brisbane, and the trade is now entirely Queensland and Brisbane trade. This line towards St. George is a border line only in the imagination of men who have no local experience. The line would not be a border line so far as the protection of our traffic is concerned, because it will be too far from the border. The hon. member for Warwick quoted Mr. Thallon as to the proper starting point for the Warwick-St. George railway—

Do you consider it would be in the interests of the colony to construct the border line from Warwick to St. George? Yes, in the best interests of the colony.

Mr. Thallon, a most experienced man, says that a border line going from Warwick to St. George is in the best interests of the colony, though St. George is nearly 90 miles from the border. What sort of a line is that to protect our border trade? On page 11, at question 160, it will be found that Mr. Curnow was asking the hon. member for Warwick his opinion. He had already quoted the opinion of Mr. Thallon—

Do I understand you to advocate that the line should terminate at Dirranbandi? Roughly, at Dirranbandi, as a centre.

And not St. George? No; St. George is too far north from the border.

He quotes in one breath the evidence of Mr. Thallon, and calls it a border line, and he immediately afterwards says it should not go to St. George, because St. George is too far from the border, and he suggests that it should go to Dirranbandi, which is about 50 miles from the border. There is the mistake which those gentlemen without local knowledge always make. They talk about a border railway which under no circumstances could protect the trade of the border. There has been an assertion which shows an equal want of knowledge of the conditions of the country, that the New South Wales people, in order to secure the trade of South-western Queensland, are going to extend their line north from Bourke, Moree, Byrock, and Brewarrina. If those hon. members only knew the settlement from Moree to Mungindi, they would know that the New South Wales people are amply justified in running their lines to the border even if there was no Queensland settlement; because the settlement from Mungindi to Moree absolutely reduces our settlement from St. George to Mungindi to an absurdity. The whole of the country there is settled closely, and it is very rich pastoral country all the way down. Is it to be supposed for a moment that because we build a border line they are going to stop building their lines to secure their own traffic? Does anyone suppose they are so simple that directly this line of 24 miles from Warwick is passed it will stagger them, and they will stop the construction of their lines north? Nothing of the kind. If they never got one bale of wool from Queensland, their settlement on their own country quite justifies them in extending their lines to the border; and when they build them to the border, unless we build a line along the border fence, a certain amount of our trade will leak to New South Wales, and nothing we can do will prevent it. The Minister for Railways has been in that country, and he recognises that no railway that could possibly be built will stop some of our trade leaking into New South Wales. Were we divided from New South Wales by immense rivers and chains of mountains it would be a reasonable thing to build such a railway as is suggested in order to get our border traffic; but seeing that the colonies are only divided by a wire-netting fence, is it possible that any line, unless it is a line right along the fence, will keep the whole of our trade?

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I am certain that it will not. Another thing we must make up our minds to, is the fact that as certain as the New South Wales lines come to the border, they will be certain to take a certain amount of our traffic. In one of the last papers published in Cunnamulla there is the account of a meeting, at which one of the leading merchants there, who has been there for a great many years, and who was speaking in sight of the Cunnamulla terminus, said that when the gap between Cunnamulla and Bourke was bridged with steel rails, which he expected would be within three years—which I don't believe, nevertheless—he said that the South-west trade would naturally go to Bourke; and although it may not actually go from Cunnamulla, it will go from the south of Cunnamulla. When federation is in operation, and there are no border taxes or obstructions put in the way of people getting to the market they wish to deal with, a certain amount of our trade will go to New South Wales; and, considering the enormous territory we have, it seems to me rather a pity that we should make such a great fight on account of the little amount of traffic that will be leaking over the border—because we shall control the larger portion, and New South Wales will get some. Where the conditions seem to be reversed, we shall get some of the traffic from New South Wales. We expect to get some from the Tweed River, for instance. The Home Secretary expects to get trade from Inverell—some part of it. It will be a matter of convenience to the people according as they live on one side or the other of the border fence. There is no arrangement that we can make that will force people to send their goods to, or get

[11.30 p.m.] these goods from anywhere, except where it suits them. If the border railway is built to Goondiwindi—although that is not suggested in the Bill that is before us now—and it stops there, the Queensland Government will have done as much as they should do towards protecting the border trade. In giving that protection, they will have gone almost to the extreme verge of their good country. A few miles beyond Goondiwindi it gets bad, and when you cross into Dirranbandi it gets into freehold land, where no settlement can eventuate for a number of years. The Premier hit the right nail on the head when he said we have been trying to do too much with one line. That is an assertion, I take it, that this line will not go beyond Goondiwindi—that there is no contemplation of it going beyond there; and the South-western part of Queensland—the St. George district—will be reached from a point on the Charleville line, either from Yeulba or Dalby. I will support this line, but it is only on that understanding that I will do so. I take that as an assertion from the Premier that at any rate this vexed question is settled.

Mr. HARDACRE: Will not this determine the future extension of it?

Mr. STORY: I trust not. The Premier said it was not contemplated taking the line beyond Goondiwindi, and he thought St. George should be reached by a feeder from Yeulba or Dalby. If I thought this line would be extended beyond Goondiwindi, to try and secure the border trade in that most absurd way, by extending it for 40 or 90 miles through poor country, leaving the whole of the best country south of the railway at the mercy of New South Wales, I would give my vote against this line.

Mr. HARDACRE: That is exactly what it means.

Mr. STORY: I cannot think for a moment that that is exactly what it means, but I do not think any sensible man would construct a line merely going through a quantity of poor and

barren country. The Chief Secretary said just now that even if we cross a lot of poor country, so long as we protected the border it would be worth while doing it. What is the use of running past where traffic exists, and running into country where it does not exist, when you can get into that country by a much shorter and more direct route. That can be done by running a feeder line from Yeulba or Dalby, and I am grateful to the hon. member for Dalby for mentioning Yeulba as perhaps the more suitable place. So long as we know that this line is not going beyond Goondiwindi, and that the St. George district will be reached by a feeder from the Charleville line, I have no difficulty in supporting it. The two lines might be started simultaneously, and in that way I think all the good land that can be utilised will be brought into connection with our railway. I have figures from the Collector of Customs that the line from Charleville to Cunnamulla has absolutely stopped the whole of the border trade. Not one sixpence worth went over last year, whereas £146,000 went there some five or six years ago. Whatever line you build and call a border line cannot do more than take the whole of the trade, and it has already been taken, so that there is nothing more to be done by a border line. I am positively certain that a line from Yeulba to St. George will not have entirely the same effect, because the position of the woolsheds in the district preclude it from having the effect of stopping the whole of the trade. The line to St. George will be closer to every station in South-western Queensland; but Bullamon, Gnoolooma, and Dareel, and the selectors about there will probably go to the New South Wales terminus at Mungindi, and if you build a line to point A you will save the Bullamon wool, but the wool from Gnoolooma and Dareel and the selections about there will still go to New South Wales. Is it worth while to extend the line beyond Goondiwindi, on purpose to get that one station's wool, especially where it will have to pass through poor country? I say it is not. Now, had the Premier not made the assertion that he has made, the result of the hon. member for Warwick's speech would have destroyed any chance of getting that border line to Goondiwindi, and he would have jeopardised any chance of getting the extension to Thane's Creek. If that is passed I enter my protest against it being taken beyond Goondiwindi, and I rely upon the statement of the Premier that that is not contemplated, but that it is intended to reach St. George from a point somewhere on the Brisbane-Charleville line.

Mr. FOGARTY (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): When the railway from Warwick towards St. George was carried by a majority of one in this House in 1886, the then Secretary for Public Works, the late Hon. W. Miles, in moving that the plan, section, and book of reference be adopted, described the country as inferior, flooded, and extremely poor. I have taken those words from *Hansard*, and I do not think they can be questioned. The hon. gentleman was scarcely correct in that statement, because there is fairly good country down the Condamine. But, as the Commissioner points out that those people are within from 2 to 4 miles of a railway for the first 10 miles of the proposed line, I think they are exceedingly well supplied with railway communication. When the late Hon. W. Miles succeeded in carrying a motion for the approval of the plan, section, and book of reference of a railway from Warwick towards St. George by a majority of one, possibly by party influences, Pittsworth was unknown, and was nothing more than a sheepwalk. The Premier stated that the country along the valley of the Condamine from

Warwick to Thane's Creek was more thickly settled than the Pittsworth district towards Milmerran. The hon. gentleman is entirely mistaken. I say without fear of contradiction that where there is one selector located in the valley of the Condamine there are twenty between Pittsworth and Milmerran. Mr. North, in submitting his report in connection with the Pittsworth extension, described the country as some of the most magnificent agricultural land in Queensland—that is, for a distance of 40 miles from Pittsworth. I do not think that the advocates of this first section of the so-called border line will deny that statement. I know it is the intention of a number of hon. members to leave at 12 o'clock, and I say it is grossly unfair that half-a-dozen members, some of whom are not interested in this question, should have occupied the whole of the time of the House up to the present. I approach this matter with an unbiased mind. I do not consider the interests of Toowoomba, or the interests of Pittsworth, but I consider the interests of the taxpayers of the colony, and I say that if their interests are considered by the House this line will not be accepted. The hon. member for Cunningham, in giving evidence before the Royal Commission on this question, spoke of the magnificent agricultural land which is to be found in the vicinity of the Chain of Ponds. I doubt very much whether the hon. member has ever seen the Chain of Ponds. I know them very well, and I can say that they are simply clay holes surrounded by barren, inferior soil. The hon. member also described the country between Coolmunda and Inglewood as being situated on the Macintyre River, whereas it is scores of miles away from the Macintyre. That is a fair sample of the evidence given by interested parties before the commission, with the view of influencing them in their decision. But, notwithstanding that, the commission have done their work fairly well; and any person reading the evidence they obtained must come to the conclusion that Pittsworth is a more suitable point than Warwick from which to start the border line. It is true that there is a certain amount of trade west of Inglewood, but either the Warwick route or the Pittsworth route would tap that trade. Even the advocates of the Warwick route admit that the area of land within the vicinity of the Condamine suitable for agricultural purposes is circumscribed. But that does not apply to the Pittsworth route. The land on both sides of that route for a distance of 40 miles is equal to any land in the colony for agricultural settlement. Objection has been raised, and I admit that there is something in it, that the Messrs. Gore Brothers own 90,000 acres of land on the Pittsworth route; but that line would pass through 10 miles only of the Yandilla Estate, and the Gore Brothers are quite prepared to give all the land necessary for the construction of the line and for station buildings. Mr. Gore, in giving evidence before the commission, said they were not wedded to the Yandilla Estate, but that they were quite willing to sell. I would suggest that the Government ask the Gore Brothers to submit an offer of the Yandilla property, for I am quite satisfied that they will sell, and if the land is purchased by the Government any objection on the ground that such a large area is held by one firm will disappear. The Hon. James Lalor, a gentleman who is well known in this Chamber, and who is respected by all classes of the community outside, gave evidence before the commission, in which he described the roads in the vicinity of Warwick, particularly in the neighbourhood of the route of the proposed line, as the best bush roads he had ever travelled over in his life, and said he had travelled over them by mail coach and by

buggy. I know that he has also travelled over them on foot, but he did not mention that fact in his evidence. If the roads are as good as Mr. Lalor represents them to be, I do not think the people there are so badly off. If the Government are anxious to assist the selectors beyond Warwick, who are a considerable distance from railway communication, they should run out a branch line from Allcra, which would tap that settlement and meet all requirements. I am quite positive that if this line is carried it is the intention of the powers that be to extend it until it reaches point A, on the Moonie. And immediately that is done we shall have an agitation for the *via recta*, which will cost a very large sum of money. Even if the *via recta* was built, there would only be a difference of 4 miles between point A and Brisbane by way of Pittsworth and between point A by the *via recta*. For the sake of saving 4 miles I do not think the country is justified in spending nearly £600,000, and I should not be surprised if that amount were exceeded. Is it a correct thing to construct a costly line which will not afford something like an adequate return for the expenditure? From point A by Pittsworth to Brisbane is 330 miles, but from point A by Warwick it is 385 miles. There is a saving of 55 miles. I think it has been admitted by the opponents of the Pittsworth route that the country is much superior, and there is a probability of a very large settlement if the so-called border line were to start from Pittsworth. According to the estimates submitted by the railway experts it would save the colony £543,000 to go by Pittsworth independent of the saving of 55 miles, and I think arguments of that sort are conclusive. Even the Hon. A. Morgan, in giving evidence before the commission, admitted that a few hundred acres of tobacco grown in the vicinity of Texas would be sufficient to meet the demands of the whole colony, so that there is no great force in the argument about the traffic that will be derived from Texas. The Premier has spoken of the Silver Spur mine and its great value. Well, of course it may become valuable, but up to the present time it has not panned out very well for the shareholders. When federation becomes an accomplished fact there will be no Warwick or Toowoomba flour consumed at Goondiwindi, because it is well known that the Inverell people, notwithstanding the £1 a ton duty, supply 18 out of every 20 tons consumed in that district. When the small duty we have now is removed, the whole of the market will be at the mercy of the Inverell people. Mr. Barlow, the land commissioner, in giving evidence before the commission, said that a good deal of the land on this proposed route was very inferior. Mr. Watson, the manager of a station, strongly advocated the Pittsworth route, while Mr. Gray, the present Commissioner, said he had no hesitation in saying that the proposed line from Warwick would be a grave mistake, and that if it was necessary to secure the border trade, and give the people down the Moonie railway communication, it should be done from Pittsworth. Mr. Gray also made similar statements at questions 2152, 2154, and 2166. You must bear in mind that Mr. Gray is as deeply interested in this line as any member of the Government, because he is anxious that our railways should pay if possible, and if in his opinion a certain line will not pay, it is his duty to warn the Government against proposing its construction. If, then, the Government choose to accept the Warwick route for this railway in the face of the Commissioner's report, the Commissioner is relieved of all responsibility. It was only last week that Mr. Gray visited the district, and within the

last fortnight Mr. Stanley has visited it, and, as the result of their investigations, we have the Commissioner's report before us very strongly condemning this railway. It is all very well to say that the line will only be extended to Goondiwindi. I take that to be a sop to the members for Dalby and Balonne. I believe that if it is extended to Goondiwindi, it will eventually terminate at point A, and if it does it will be of no earthly service as far as the St. George people are concerned. It will have the very undesirable effect of wiping out St. George, which will have to be removed to point A.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Could we not have a branch from point A to St. George.

Mr. FOGARTY: It is all very well to talk of branches, but where is the money to come from? The Treasurer is faced with a falling revenue and increased expenditure.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. FOGARTY: If I am not in order in discussing the financial aspect, I had better resume my seat.

The CHAIRMAN: There will be another opportunity afforded to the hon. member of discussing the financial aspect of the question.

Mr. FOGARTY: Well, I shall resume my seat as a protest against your ruling. I am quite prepared to take a division, though I had not fairly begun my speech.

Mr. BELL: I have been listening with great interest to the speech of the senior member for Toowoomba, and I trust that on a future occasion he will favour us with the balance of it, especially as he knows a great deal about the country. The Prime Minister earlier in the evening made an announcement

[12 p.m.] which, to my mind, seems a most important one, and it certainly did to the hon. member for Balonne. As I understood the hon. gentleman, he said that, so far as the Government were concerned, he was prepared to give a definite assurance that they had no intention of carrying this line beyond Goondiwindi; and also that in the next batch of railway proposals, the Government would submit a line from either Dalby or Yeulba to St. George.

Mr. GLASSEY: Or from Roma.

Mr. BELL: I do not want words put into the hon. gentleman's mouth.

Mr. GLASSEY: I certainly understood the Premier to say Roma as well.

Mr. BELL: I do not know whether I heard the hon. gentleman correctly or not; so I would be very glad if he will say whether I have quoted him correctly, as this is a matter of considerable importance.

The PREMIER: I can assure this Committee that the Government have no intention of going beyond Goondiwindi. As I have already explained, the whole trouble has arisen from attempting to cater for too many places by the one line. Personally, I would prefer this line to start from Stanthorpe—the further south the better—in order to get the border trade. And I also said that the line to St. George should start from either Dalby or Yeulba. I did not mention Roma. I can assure the Committee that the Government will make further inquiries in connection with the starting point of this St. George line, but I cannot promise that the Government will bring down a Bill for the construction of that line next year. St. George is deserving of some railway communication; but if the St. George people have to wait till they get railway communication through the line from Warwick to Goondiwindi, not many of those now living there will see it. A good deal has been said tonight about the *via recta*, and personally I am not in favour of the construction of the *via recta* at present. I say we can't afford this luxury.

It will cost £500,000 or £600,000, and I think such a sum of money could be better spent in affording facilities to farmers to get their produce to market. That would help the colony far more than building two lines to Warwick. There is already one line to Warwick, *via* Toowoomba, and I do not think there is any justification for constructing the *via recta* at present.

Mr. FISHER: Do you approve of the line that we are now discussing?

The PREMIER: I think I am going to vote for it.

Mr. BELL: The statement that the hon. gentleman has made is highly interesting, and is most important to the whole of the South-western districts of Queensland—at all events, to the representatives of those districts. The hon. gentleman was fairly precise in his remarks. He is the second Premier who has said that a line should be built from Dalby to St. George.

The PREMIER: I said from Dalby or Yeulba.

Mr. BELL: Yes; but I would like the hon. gentleman to say whether he will cause any independent inquiry to be held into the relative merits of Dalby and Yeulba as the starting point for the St. George line.

The PREMIER: Yes. I promise that I will cause inquiries to be made; but I do not promise that I will bring in a Bill next year for the construction of a line to St. George from either Dalby or Yeulba. As I have said, I do not think there is any chance of St. George getting a railway from Warwick or Pittsworth within a reasonable time.

Mr. BELL: In view of what the Premier has stated, I ask the leave of the Committee to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. KIDSTON: When we were discussing the private railway Bills in this House a short time ago, the Government assured us that they could not see their way to construct lines which were of a speculative nature—that they were only going to build lines that would be likely to pay, and that they would leave the construction of those lines which had little prospect of paying to private companies. There is no prospect of this line which has been introduced to-night paying, and yet the Premier and the Government support it. The corresponding line on the other side of Warwick does not pay working expenses, let alone the interest on the cost of its construction, and yet the Government propose to construct this line at a cost of £300,000. I am in favour of railway extension in the South-west portion of the colony; but it is the bringing forward of lines like this, which the Government are induced to bring forward through political influence, that causes so much objection to State railways. If the Government used ordinary discretion in the building of railways the State lines would pay much better than they do now. The argument of the Minister for Railways, in introducing his private syndicate railways, was that the Government lines were not paying, and that they could not afford to build lines which had little prospect of paying; and yet the same Minister now asks us to agree to the expenditure of nearly half-a-million of money for the construction of this line! No person has the remotest idea that this line will pay. No member of the Government, nor the experts employed by the Government, have the remotest idea that it will pay, and yet he proposes to spend all that money and load the taxpayers with further interest.

The PREMIER: This line will not cost £500,000.

Mr. KIDSTON: It will cost £300,000 odd, and by the time it is finished it will be nearly up to £500,000. I am entirely in favour of the people in that district getting railway communi-

cation, but I think we are bound to a very large extent by the Railway Commissioner's report, and he has unmistakably pronounced against the building of this line. I said something against the increase of the Railway Commissioner's salary by £500 a week or two ago, but I withdraw everything I said on that matter, because I think Mr. Gray has done his duty to the State in this matter in spite of the very powerful influence compelling him to give a recommendation in favour of this railway.

The PREMIER: He has never been asked to make any recommendation. There is no more independent person in the colony than Mr. Gray.

Mr. KIDSTON: The fact that the Government proposed to build the line, and asked Mr. Gray to report upon it, was evidence enough that the Government wanted the line, for they already had the report of the Railway Commissioner against this line. Manifestly the Railway Commissioner would have preferred to give a report that would be pleasing to the Government, but the facts of the case and his duty to the State compelled him to give a report inimical to the Government proposal, and he is deserving of the thanks of the House and the country for doing his duty in spite of the very strong influences that were being used.

The PREMIER: You have no right to say that.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am not hinting at anything dishonest in the influence used, but we know that when the people of a district want a railway they will do their best to get it, and in this instance no doubt the same thing has been done. The Government of the day, against all the evidence and against the report of the commission they appointed, and also against the report of the Railway Commissioner, now ask the House to give them authority to build this line. I do not know how the majority of the Committee will deal with this proposal, but I think that in the face of the report of the Railway Commissioner they will be doing wrong to pass it, and I shall vote against it.

At a quarter-past 12 o'clock,

The CHAIRMAN: Under Standing Order 171, I call upon the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Stephenson, to relieve me in the chair.

Mr. STEPHENSON thereupon took the chair.

HON. E. B. FORREST: I intended to speak upon this question earlier in the evening, but, with a view of facilitating business, I refrained in order that a vote might be taken. I need not say that I intend to vote for the line now before the House, but I do say that I am exceptionally disappointed with the statement the Premier has just made with reference to the *via recta*. I take it that these remarks lead directly to the abandonment of any attempt to construct the *via recta*. What does the speech of the hon. member for Warwick mean but that the people who are advocating the construction of this line are doing so in the expectation that, not next year perhaps or the year after, but at some early opportunity, an effort will be made to build the *via recta*. How are we ever going to preserve the trade of South-western Queensland to Queensland, and what steps are we going to take to prevent that trade going to Sydney unless we make an effort to bring that trade to Brisbane by the shortest cut? If we do not the trade of that district will go straight to Sydney. It is too late now to review the arguments of the Railway Commissioner and the Royal Commission on this line, though I have made some notes for the purpose, but I must express my disappointment that the idea should be entertained for a moment that the trade of South-western Queensland, which belongs essentially to Queensland, should be allowed to go to

Sydney? Where will we be under federation if this sort of thing is to be tolerated? We had the hon. member for Dalby thanking the Lord that New South Wales is there to supply us with railway communication. Under federation we will go down to New South Wales in one act. I am sorry to hear the statement from the Premier that he abandons—for that is the word he meant to use, though it is not the word he did use—the construction of the *via recta*. I say that line, in spite of any Minister who makes such a statement, will be built some day. What evidence have we got from Mr. Stanley, Mr. Thallon, and half-a-dozen other witnesses? Every one of them says that the *via recta* will be an absolute necessity in the near future in order to satisfactorily carry on the work of the overland line, and here we are told at the tail end of this session by the Premier that the line is to go by the board. I do not hesitate to express my extreme disappointment at the weakness—for I can call it nothing else—which has been displayed by the Premier.

The PREMIER: I always understood that railway construction should go on in the interests of the colony as a whole.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. B. FORREST: This is in the interests of the whole colony.

The PREMIER: I say that we are not justified in spending £600,000 in duplicating the present line to Warwick.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: This line has been proposed because there is a lot of good land to open up, and because we are given to understand that the line will bring the whole trade of the district to our own ports. We have no wish to filch trade from New South Wales at all; but I know of fifty places that should have railway communication before we duplicate the line to Warwick.

Mr. FISHER: I regret that the Government have brought down this line on such poor recommendations. It seems that we have now arrived at a period in our parliamentary history when no one is game to say what he really means regarding railways. This is a proposal which no body of men governing the interests of any company would dare to submit to their shareholders, and yet there are few hon. members who care to intimate that they are against it for fear that they might jeopardise lines in which they are interested themselves. The position at the present time is that a number of railways have been brought down, which the Treasurer knows he cannot find the money for for the next five or six years, and this sort of thing is frightfully demoralising to Parliament. I hope the time will soon come when we shall have an Executive in power which is prepared only to bring down proposals which it intends to carry out. Let the Treasurer say how much money he will have to spend during the next year or two, and say definitely what works he is prepared to carry out. According to the evidence of those who are most competent to express an opinion, this is not a line that can be built for a number of years. I intend to call for a division, as I am not going to be a party to any log-rolling.

Mr. KATES: The hon. member who has just sat down is altogether on the wrong track, as the railway under consideration is the branch line from Warwick to Thane's Creek. That branch line is 24 miles in length, and it has been stated that the traffic will not pay for the grease on the wheels. The hon. member who said that knows nothing about it, because not only is this a rich agricultural district, but it is also a mineral district, and there is plenty of valuable timber there. The district is thickly settled already,

and I am sure that the Commissioner for Railways, who was there last week, must admit that it is a rich agricultural district.

Mr. DAWSON: I thought you said it was a mineral district, and I would like to ask if there is a place on the face of the earth that is mineral and agricultural country combined?

Mr. KATES: There is a goldfield at Thane's Creek, at the end of the line. I need only refer hon. members to the evidence given by Mr. Longwill on page 20 of the report of the Royal Commission, by Mr. Kelleher on page 24, by Mr. Clarkeson on page 27 with regard to mining, and by Mr. Redmond on page 28, and they will agree with me that this line should be built in the interests of the rich agricultural district in this portion of the Darling Downs.

Mr. KIDSTON: I was very glad to hear the Premier state what he has done about the *via recta*. I agree with him that it is out of the question to think of spending £600,000 in shortening the distance slightly between Wallangarra and Brisbane, considering the number of districts which are utterly without railway communication. Such a proposal would be most unfair, and would be a waste of public money. I only wish that the Premier had been as successful with regard to the proposal now before us.

Question put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 25.

Messrs. Philp, Foxton, Rutledge, Dalrymple, Dickson, O'Connell, Murray, Keogh, Morgan, Glassey, [12:30 a.m.] T. B. Cribb, Bell, Story, Boles, J. Hamilton, Forsyth, Forrest, Tooth, Bridges, Kates, Bartholomew, Stodart, Newell, Campbell, and Grimes.

NOES, 14.

Messrs. Hardacre, Fisher, Kidston, Dawson, Bowman, Kerr, Jenkinson, Fogarty, Groom, Mackintosh, Dibley, Jackson, Turley, and Ryland.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Messrs. Leahy, Lord, G. Thorn, Moore, Hanran, and Annear.

Noes—Messrs. Dunsford, Cowley, Reid, Armstrong, Givens, and W. Hamilton.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The House resumed; and the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported the resolutions, which were adopted.

#### DRAYTON DEVIATION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I beg to move—

That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions:—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Drayton deviation, Southern line, in length 10 miles 60 chains, as laid on the table of the House on Tuesday, the 4th day of December instant.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council for their approval, by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

#### COMMITTEE.

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving the resolution, said: I need not say much on this question as it has been before hon. members for a long time, and they are no doubt perfectly familiar with it. The deviation will not only be a great saving in distance, but will be a very great convenience at the Toowoomba railway station for the despatch of business by the avoidance of the present necessary shunting of trains. The principal reasons in justification for this proposal are disclosed in the Commissioner's report, wherein he says—

The length of the deviation, as shown on the plans, is 10 miles 60 chains, and the estimated cost, exclusive of

land, rolling-stock, and surveys, is £53,953, or at the rate of £5,019 per mile. This length and estimate of cost is, of course, for the line as shown on the plan and section, but it will be observed that, in several places, certain proposed deviations are marked by a dotted line, which may probably be found to effect improvements in the present location. These proposed deviations may or may not be adopted; but it is well that they should be approved, as, in the event of further examination, on preparing the working plans, it may be considered advisable to adopt them.

This proposed line varies but little from that proposed in the plans submitted to Parliament with the Railway Commissioners' report on the 16th August, 1899.

I am not prepared to say that this line will actually be a payable one, but it will have the advantage of shortening the distance to Pittsworth and Warwick by 9 miles, and will enable me to get rid of the 15-mile rebate which has for years past been made upon all produce, goods, and live stock trucked from Brisbane and Ipswich to Warwick, and stations south thereof, and *vice versa*, so that in future the department will be paid for the 11 miles covered by the deviation, and the 15-mile rebate will cease. This upon all up-and-down traffic will be a substantial item. In addition to this advantage, it will no doubt have an important bearing in influencing the Government and Parliament in determining the merits of the rival routes to the Goodwindi and St. George districts.

The construction of the *via recta* is not yet within the range of practical politics, as the country will not for many years be in a position to admit of the payment of about £20,000 a year in making up the deficit, not only in the interest on the capital cost, but in making good the loss which must ensue on all goods and produce to and from Brisbane, which would be trucked from a point on the Southern line, say, Clifton, by way of the *via recta*. I say £20,000 a year, as the local traffic from the line if built will, I am satisfied, not be sufficient to pay working expenses. It must not be forgotten that, in addition to completing the gap between Munbilla and Warwick, the line between Ipswich and Munbilla would certainly have to be rebuilt, and on an entirely different route.

For the reasons I have given, I have very much pleasure in moving the resolutions.

HON. W. H. GROOM (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): When the proposal was made in 1865 for the approval of the plans, sections, and books of reference of the line from Toowoomba to Warwick, I commenced my address to the House in the following words:—

He felt very considerable hesitation as to the course he ought to pursue on this occasion, and he felt hesitation in this way—he had in a measure given a pledge that he would not vote for a line of railway from Toowoomba to Warwick which did not include the town of Drayton in its course. Since that pledge was given, he had made it his business to have an interview with the Chief Engineer of Railways, who had assured him that there were insurmountable engineering difficulties in the way of the construction of a line of railway from Toowoomba to Warwick which would include Drayton.

I voted for the line, although it did not include the town of Drayton in its course, in consequence of what the Chief Engineer had said. Both the House and the country were entirely misled by the engineer, and as there was no one in the colony at the time able to dispute his dictum, Parliament had to accept it; and in place of the line going through Drayton, it was taken by a circuitous route to Warwick. The Government made a contract with the engineer that he was to survey and engineer the line at the rate of £1,500 per mile, with the result that the more miles he made the more £1,500 he would receive. Those are the reasons for the jerry-mandering of the line between Toowoomba and Warwick. The resolutions now before the Committee are intended to remedy the evils of the past. The results will be the shortening of the route by 9 miles, the shortening of journey between Brisbane and Sydney by one hour each way, and a considerable saving by no longer carrying goods free for 15 miles of the distance between Toowoomba and Warwick. When this matter was before the

House on a previous occasion the late Hon. John Macrossan made the strongest argument in favour of the deviation. This is what he said—

The cost per train mile was 8s., there were twelve trains a day running, and multiplying twelve by nine, the number of miles saved by the deviation, they had 108 miles which would be saved by the deviation, and at the end of the year they would effect a saving of £4,957. The deviation would cost about £44,000, and the interest on that would be at 4 per cent., £1,760, a gain in revenue of £3,197.

According to the Commissioner, the cost has increased since then to 4s. 6d. per train mile. We are running twelve trains a day over this line, and nothing is charged on 15 miles of the distance, the amount of loss at the present rate being nearly £9,000 a year, so that the saving to the country by this deviation being constructed will amount to about £7,000 a year, in addition to the other advantages which have been mentioned. If there is any other information desired by members of the Committee, I and my colleague will have much pleasure in supplying that information, and I sincerely trust that the Committee will pass the resolutions.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the resolutions, which were agreed to.

#### CENTRAL RAILWAY EXTENSION— DARTMOUTH TO STONEHENGE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions:—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Central line from Dartmouth to Stonehenge, in length 109 miles 66 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the fourth day of December instant.
2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

#### COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving the resolutions, said: This is practically an extension of the Central Railway line, and it is one of those lines that the Commissioner has furnished a very favourable report upon. For some time past surveys have been made for an extension of the Central line in various directions down the valley of the Thomson River. It was found, owing to the low-lying flooded country, that it would be better to go at the back of the tableland, and run along the watershed of the Barcoo and the Thomson Rivers. This line will run along that watershed. It is very easy of construction, and it will traverse, perhaps, the finest pastoral land in Australia. I think the Committee may without hesitation approve of this extension, because the Central Railway, even in these bad years, has paid no less than £4 19s. 6d., or practically 5 per cent. over and above the working expenses. I do not think, under these circumstances, that the country is running any risk in extending this line. This is what the Commissioner says about it, and he has the very best information—

Throughout the whole distance the country is of first-class quality, and is entirely devoted to pastoral purposes. It is all more or less undulating, some of it being open downs, but the greater part lightly timbered with gidyea and borea, which really renders it more suitable for stock than the open unsheetered downs met with between Hughenden and Winton. Everywhere the soil is excellent, and the grasses of the richest quality, the only drawback being the absence of permanent water. This may appear unaccountable, in view of the number of creeks referred to as having been crossed by the survey, but those acquainted with the

country will readily understand that but few of these creeks hold water for more than three months in the year, and large amounts have, in consequence, been expended by pastoralists in conserving water by means of tanks and artesian bores; unfortunately the latter have not been too great a success, as few, if any, give what may be called a satisfactory flow, while others which are down about 4,000 feet have not yet struck water.

The proposal is to extend the line to Stonehenge, a distance of about 109 miles. Of course that is a very great distance to undertake at the present time, and it is the intention of the Government to authorise only the extension of this line for 60 miles, that is, to the Government bore, which I understand is a very suitable place for a terminus for the time being. I may remark, in passing,

that the deflection of the line in a [1 a.m.] south-westerly direction from Dartmouth is caused in a great measure by the Northern line going to Winton, but even when this railway is extended to Stonehenge, it cannot possibly interfere with the traffic which might go to Charleville. The Commissioner says—

The estimated cost of the line, exclusive of rolling-stock and surveys, is £321,787, or at the rate of £2,930 per mile. This estimate is considerably in excess of the mileage rate for the Hughenden-Winton line, which traverses very similar country. The excess in the cost is accounted for by the recent rise in the price of metal in England.

I do not think this line requires any further commendation from me, and I have great pleasure in recommending the resolution to the favourable consideration of the Committee.

Mr. KERR (*Barcoo*): I know there is a good deal of opposition to this line in the Longreach district, and that is one reason why I am sorry that the hon. member for Mitchell is not in the House, because I believe he intended to oppose the resolution, and I have no doubt he had very good and valid reasons for his opinions. Had he been present and given his reasons for objecting to the line, there would have been more need than there is now for those who favour its construction to state their views to the Committee. A large portion of the country which this line will traverse is freehold. There are some 67,000 acres of freehold land on Bimerah Station, and there is also freehold on Wellshot and Westlands. In 1897, when the resumed portion of Bimerah was thrown open for sale by auction, I introduced a deputation to the Secretary for Lands from the Central district, and the members of that deputation protested against the land being sold. Now, the Commissioner tells us that "the only freehold land to be resumed will be about 40 acres from the blocks sold by auction on the resumed part of Bimerah." At the time I refer to I pointed out to the Secretary for Lands that the blocks which were to be sold would be very close to the railway, if the line did not go through them; and now we find that such is the case, and I am sure that the Government will not get the land they require for the price paid by the purchasers—that is, 10s. an acre. The policy the Government adopted in selling that land will put thousands of pounds into the pockets of the lessees of Bimerah.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Nonsense!

Mr. KERR: I am certain that in a very few years after this railway is built, the lessees of Bimerah will be able to dispose of the land which they hold as freehold at a price greatly in advance of what they paid for it. As the Secretary for Railways, who knows the country, says, the land in that district is some of the finest land to be found in any part of Australia, and I maintain that the Government, in not listening to the deputation who waited on the Secretary for Lands to protest against the sale of that land, went against the interests of the country.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Bimerah has lost a great deal of stock.

Mr. KERR: That station has suffered less from the drought than a great many others. I was there during shearing last March, and I know that.

Hon. D. H. DALRYMPLE: Millions of sheep have died since then.

Mr. KERR: I know that Bimerah had a good quantity of grass compared with other places. There is one other matter I want to mention. The people of Windorah and down the Thomson had prepared a petition asking that the railway should be taken further down the Thomson and across by Jundah, instead of Stonehenge. The Minister led me to believe that only the first section of the railway would be introduced, and now he has come down with the plans from Dartmouth to Stonehenge. I hope that the reasons to be given by the people I have mentioned for adopting a different crossing will be listened to.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have said that this first extension will only be for 60 miles.

Mr. KERR: That is what I want thoroughly understood. It might be supposed by the opponents of the Stonehenge crossing that they were put out of court if that explanation had not been given. I have examined the whole of the route of this line, and I think it is a very moot point as to where the crossing should be; but I am in this happy position—that it makes no difference to me, because Stonehenge and Jundah are both in the Barcoo electorate.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The officers of the department think Stonehenge is the best.

Mr. KERR: I know at all events that Mr. Surveyor Drew has very strongly recommended the Jundah crossing.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am glad that the Government have at last introduced this line, for which we have waited a very long time. I am quite sure it will be an advantage to the district as well as to the colony generally, and that it will pay well. Like the hon. member for Barcoo, I regret that the Government have not decided to adopt the Jundah crossing, but I will not go into that matter now, because we have been told that only the first section of 60 miles will be tackled. That section will serve equally well to go either to Stonehenge or Jundah, and we can discuss the matter later. I mention it now because it is just as well that the Government should understand that an effort will in all probability be made to have the line carried to Jundah rather than Stonehenge. If anyone looks at the map he will see that while there is only a few miles difference between one route and the other, yet the Stonehenge people will be equally well served if the line goes down to Jundah, because it will pass close to Stonehenge, and the Windorah people would be much better served as well as the people down towards Hatton's Corner. I hope the Government will keep an open mind on the matter, and meanwhile I am glad that they have introduced the railway.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I am rather astonished that the members for Brisbane North and the surrounding districts have not seen their way to oppose this railway, because, as I understand it, it will interfere with the trade of this part of the colony. The proposal which has been so innocently supported by the hon. members for Barcoo and Rockhampton seems to have a good deal more in it than they will admit. The line is now forking to the south-west, and it is proposed to come still further south, which will have the effect of tapping a great deal of the trade which belongs to Brisbane. I maintain that if our line had gone out in a proper direction, and the Rockhampton line had been extended due west, it would have been fair all

round, and I am surprised that members representing this part of the colony are so apathetic over this proposal.

Mr. KERL: I do not think the hon. member for Moreton has been in the district, or he would have known the direction in which the line is going and the country that is going to be tapped. It certainly is not country that has any business with Brisbane. It does most of its business with the Central line and South Australia. I know that Mr. Collins, the late member for Albert, waited with me on one of the Secretaries for Railways on this matter, for he knows the country well and has properties out there. He pointed out that if the railway was extended to Jundah it would catch a good deal of the traffic that now goes to South Australia. The object of this proposal is not to take the south-western traffic away from Brisbane, but to conserve the traffic from these districts to Queensland, and not allow it to go into South Australia. This line will not interfere with the south-western traffic that now comes to Brisbane. I think the Central districts have been very poorly treated by the Government in connection with their policy of railway construction. After reading the evidence that has been brought before the Premier and the Minister for Railways with regard to the line from Jericho to Blackall being a good line that would pay expenses and ultimately prove remunerative, I am astonished that the Government have not long before this brought down a proposal to build that line.

Mr. KIDSTON: I agree with the hon. member for Moreton when he says he is surprised at the hon. member for Brisbane not opposing this extension of the Central Railway. So am I, or rather I would have been if the hon. member for Moreton, who is really a Brisbane member, did not get up and oppose it. He talks about the Central extension taking away the trade from Brisbane. If the hon. member will look at the map, he will see that this line will be for the best interests of the people in the south-western districts, and for the best interests of the people of the colony at large. He will also see that the Southern and Western line should not have gone to Charleville, but to either St. George or Hungerford. Also, that the railway from Rockhampton should not have gone to Longreach, but to Adavale or Charleville; and that the Townsville line should have gone to somewhere near Longreach. Then the whole of the people in the Western districts would have had the shortest routes to the seaboard for their produce. But, owing to political influence, the railway from Brisbane has been diverted in a north-west direction — to Charleville; so that the pastoralists in that district have about 100 miles more railway carriage to pay for than if this extension had gone in the direction I have mentioned. The same thing applies to the pastoralists and producers in the Longreach district. All the necessity for the construction of this line now being considered, in order to secure the border traffic, would have been avoided if the line from Brisbane had gone in a south-westerly direction, because then the producers in those districts would have had a shorter road to the seaboard than they now have, Brisbane being nearer to those districts than either Sydney or Newcastle.

The PREMIER: Don't stonewall your own railway.

Mr. KIDSTON: I am not stonewalling this proposal. I think this line should have been built years ago.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; and the CHAIRMAN reported the resolutions, which were adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I move that the House do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the resolutions I gave notice of this afternoon. After that, the Agricultural Bank Bill, the Census Bill, and the consideration of the Council's amendments in the Parliament of the Commonwealth Elections Bill.

Mr. DAWSON: I would like to know from the hon. gentleman whether he intends to allow full discussion upon the resolutions to be moved to-morrow?

The PREMIER: What do you call "full discussion"?

Mr. DAWSON: To allow members not on the hon. gentleman's own side of the House to have a voice on the new proposals he may bring forward without being clôtured by the hon. gentleman. I would like also to ask that there should be no change in the programme the hon. gentleman has stated for to-morrow. We have been slipped up twice that way already.

The PREMIER: I think there has been only one occasion on which a change has been made, and that was when these railways were postponed yesterday; and I gave a very good reason for it in the fact that the Railway Commissioner's reports were only placed in the hands of hon. members yesterday, and I was requested by a number of members to postpone the railways until to-day.

Mr. DAWSON: You never told our side of the House or our leader until the House met.

The PREMIER: I explained it to the House.

Mr. DAWSON: What time was that, when hon. members had come prepared for certain other business?

Mr. KIDSTON: The Premier has given notice of a resolution for to-morrow, which, of course, he will carry to-morrow, arranging that the whole of the Estimates-in-Chief shall be reported on Thursday, 20th. He has also given notice that the first four days of next week shall be taken up with the railway Bills. The Works Estimates are now under discussion, and the Police Estimates were postponed to allow the Works Estimates to be taken first. Are the Police Estimates and all the rest of the Estimates to be pushed through in a lump on Thursday week?

The PREMIER: In one day? Oh, no. I would have explained that to-morrow, but I may explain now that next week we will take the railways, and the following week the Estimates.

Mr. KIDSTON: The whole week to the Estimates?

The PREMIER: From Monday to Thursday. Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes to 2 o'clock.