

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Council**

**THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER 1904**

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## DELAY IN DISTRIBUTING PAPERS.

HON. J. ARCHIBALD: Before we proceed with the business on the paper, I should like to ask the representative of the Government whether the evidence taken by the Select Committees appointed to inquire into the Degilbo to Wetheron railway and the Dalby to Cattle Creek railway has been printed and circulated? I have received no copy of it, nor has any other hon. gentleman on this side of the Chamber. These Select Committees were appointed on Tuesday afternoon; they sat and took evidence the same evening, and I understood the evidence would have been in print on Wednesday morning. It is now Thursday afternoon, and we are still without it; and it is impossible to discuss the railways without the evidence before us.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We are now waiting for copies of the evidence, and when they have been distributed to hon. members I will ask the Presiding Chairman to leave the chair for half an hour or an hour while it is being read and considered. It appears to be one of the pillars of the Constitution that these reports cannot be printed and circulated until they have been corrected by the witnesses, and the running all over the place after the witnesses the whole morning has caused this delay.

HON. J. ARCHIBALD: I am not blaming the Minister for the apparent delay that exists. I am pointing out how impossible it will be for the House to discuss those railways without the evidence before us.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. member that there is no question before the House.

HON. G. W. GRAY: I would suggest that the members of the Select Committee give us an account of the evidence. It will then not be necessary to adjourn.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN: Before that can be done, the question must be put. If it is the wish of hon. members that the motion be called on, Mr. Barlow will move it, and the members of the Select Committee will have an opportunity of saying whatever they like on the subject. It is for the Council to say what they wish to be done—adjourn for a short time or go on.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Shall we go on?

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN: Hear, hear!

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THURSDAY, 15 DECEMBER, 1904.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN (Hon. A. Norton) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

## QUESTION.

MINER'S HOMESTEAD LEASE, PARISH OF PARKER.

HON. B. B. MORETON asked the representative of the Government—

1. Has a miner's homestead lease been applied for in the parish of Parker, county of Stanley?
2. If so, has it been granted, and in what goldfield or mineral field is it situated?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. A. H. Barlow) replied—

1. No.

## EXTENSION OF GAYNDAH BRANCH RAILWAY.

ADOPTION OF SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, in moving—

That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed extension of the Gayndah Branch Railway from Degilbo to Wetheron be now adopted—

said: The whole of the five members of the Select Committee were present at the meeting. They examined Mr. Thallon, Mr. Pagan, Mr. Hornblow, Mr. Dunbar, and Mr. George Phillips, a civil engineer in private practice, and having also taken into consideration the report of the Commissioner for Railways, they unanimously recommended that the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension be approved. I will read the salient points of the evidence. I asked the Commissioner for Railways—

You have issued a report recommending the construction of this line? Yes, after going over the district and following up the surveyed route, and going on to

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Gayndah, and satisfying myself as to the quality of the land in the hands of the Government that would be advantaged by the construction of the railway.

Has anything occurred since then to make you alter your opinion? Nothing.

He was asked by Mr. Smith—

You say in your report that the railway will pay? I think it will pay working expenses—a little more, perhaps. But I understand that the Government intend to reduce the cost of the railway very much by crediting it with the increased value of the lands that it enhances, and in that case there will be no interest to pay.

Mr. Pagan was asked whether he had read the Commissioner's recommendations, and he replied that he had read them, and he endorsed them as far as his knowledge went, adding that he had not been over the line; not being able to get away at the time, he had to send the principal assistant engineer. He was asked by Mr. McGhie—

And will the ballast be similar to that on the existing line? No. I propose to ballast with selected soil—decomposed granite. You may call it ballast or not, according to your opinion.

That is, to do it in the most economical way? Yes.

Then Mr. Moreton, who is perfectly familiar with the district, asked him certain questions, the answers to which were all in favour of the construction of the line. Mr. Phillips supported his previous report. He was asked—

Do you think it would pay if carried on to Gayndah? Yes, I think it would, within ten years or less—interest and working expenses.

Did you gather in your travels that there would be a demand for this country? Yes. Some of the country, at Reid's Creek, for instance, is the best I have seen in Queensland.

Do you believe that if thrown open to selection—with the prospect of a railway—it would be taken up? Yes, readily; as long as it is not overloaded with price.

At what price would it be taken up? From 15s. to 41 10s. an acre, according to quality and position.

Do you think that there will be traffic enough to make it pay? Eventually, I have no doubt. It is a fine district. The best land, of course, is beyond Wetheron; and at Arambanga or Deep Creek there is beautiful country.

And there is sufficient good land further on to warrant the railway being made? Unquestionably; and if the railway is not made that good land might as well be in Kamschatka.

That is the gist of the evidence. It was wholly in favour of the line, and the Select Committee, as I said, were unanimous in recommending it. Under those circumstances, I have no hesitation in asking the House to adopt the report.

HON. G. W. GRAY: I would like to ask the Minister whether the land the railway will pass through will be suitable for farming? There are some 37,000 acres of Crown lands now available, and, including the areas that will fall in in 1908, the total area available will be about 80,000 acres. I would also like to know how it is proposed to deal with this land. Is it to be thrown open to selection, or in what other way is it to be thrown open to settlement? We should have this information when we are dealing with this proposal. Personally, I believe in these lines, and I am very glad that the Government are adopting this principle, and, better still, that they are going to construct railways through their own land if it is possible. If these lands are suitable for dairying as well as for agriculture, there is very little doubt, with the expansion that is taking place in dairying, that they will be taken up. The Hon. Mr. Moreton has an intimate knowledge of the country through which this railway will be constructed, and I think Sir Augustus Gregory intends to give us some information after he has examined the map. In the meantime, possibly the Minister will give us some information on the points I have raised.

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The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The proposal is that, if the plans are approved of, the land will be thrown open as soon as convenient, but upon the condition that the price shall be the prairie value of the land with the added value given by the construction of the railway. It is proposed that the proceeds of the sale of the land shall be allocated in this way: The prairie value shall be paid into the consolidated revenue and the added value into the loan fund, to be applied to the retirement of the capital cost of the railway. That is the system which is to be applied in the case of this and the other railway which is to be submitted for approval later on. The prairie value is to be considered as ordinary revenue, and the added value is to be regarded as a recoupment of the loan fund. The lands which are likely to be opened up by the railway are 17,500 acres of Degilbo, which are available; 20,000 acres of Wetheron, which have been resumed; and 41,000 acres of Wetheron, which will fall in on 30th June, 1908. Mr. Phillips says he has no hesitation in recommending the construction of the line for the purpose of rendering these lands available for settlement. I am sure that the Hon. Mr. Moreton and the Hon. Sir A. C. Gregory are familiar with every inch of the country and will be able to give the Council more personal information than I can. Mr. Phillips says—

There are several thousand acres of excellent land at the head of Didcot Creek, at present included in the Degilbo leasehold.

He also says—

I visited two extensive areas of fertile scrub land—namely, Murray's Plateau to the north of the Burnett River, which comprises some 29,000 acres; and a large scrub in the parish of Woodmillar, immediately to the south of Gayndah.

He says that there is also a large area of cultivable land on Wetheron, of which only about 5,400 acres are immediately available.

HON. A. J. THYNNE: I notice that Mr. Phillips's instructions were given to him on 3rd November last year, and his report is dated 15th March, 1904. This is the first opportunity I have had of seeing this report, but I would like to mention that the scheme which is now being put forward is really part of a scheme that I suggested to the late Ministry shortly before they went out of office. I recommended the late Premier to withdraw forthwith from sale or selection all the lands in the Burnett district which had not then been selected or sold, and that no time should be lost in sending a competent engineer as well as a competent valuator of Crown lands to make a thorough report on the whole of that country. Through the enterprise of one of our local papers, the Burnett district was very fully written about, and it was through reading the reports of the gentleman who visited the district that the idea occurred to me. I am sorry that the whole scheme has not been carried out, and that, instead of having a small section of a railway, a sufficient amount of railways is not to be built to give railway facilities to the whole of the Burnett district. I doubt whether sufficient provision is made to give access to it. But one part of my proposal has apparently dropped out of sight altogether—that is, to provide for the connection of all the different points in the Burnett district by the construction of substantial roads, so that settlers would have no difficulty in getting on to their farms, and of getting away their produce. The further part of my proposal was something like what has been proposed by the Government—that is, that the present value of the benefited lands should be carefully ascertained—the hon. gentleman

calls it the "prairie value"—and that the cost of the construction of the railway and of those roads should be added to the price of the land, and repaid over a period of years through which the debentures would be running. By the time that was done and the settlers had paid for their holdings—that is, in about twenty years—the settlers would have provided themselves with railways and roads costing the general taxpayer nothing in the way of interest. From all I can learn, the Burnett district as it stood then was one that offered an opportunity for making an experiment in land settlement such as is hardly likely to be offered again in Australia. I am

[4 p.m.] glad that the idea has been adopted to some extent, but I am sorry that it has not been followed to the fullest extent, and that not only railways but main roads are not to be provided to all the different parts of the district.

HON. SIR A. C. GREGORY: Some years ago I traversed the greater part of this country, and I am sorry to say that I cannot give such a glowing description as I have heard of the country that this railway will give access to. There is a very first-rate piece of country at Degilbo. There is an outcrop of basalt, which always means excellent agricultural land, and also first-class feed for stock, where it is not too rocky. Then you come to country that is only fit for grazing farms, although there are bits of very nice farming land. Still, it is not country that is likely to be closely settled. It is not until you come to Ideraway that there is a tract of very good land. It is somewhat beyond the terminus of this railway, but the proposed line will give access to that land. You then come to a range of very second-class country and enter a district which is more pastoral than anything else. The view that I took of the country when I was there was that the Mount Perry line gave the best access to the district, but there was no railway at that time to Degilbo, and, now that the railway has gone as far as Degilbo, the extension now proposed will take it through second-class country to the verge of better country about Iderway, but the area of first-class land there is comparatively small. There seems to be an unlimited area of magnificent country from the road, but, when you come to crosscut it, as my business required me to do when I was laying out the telegraph line through the district, it gives one a most unfavourable idea of the general probabilities of the country being more than first-class pastoral, with very good agricultural land here and there. Unfortunately, when I went there first, and for several years before and after, Gayndah was the central point of an area of deficient rainfall. It is to be hoped that these dry periods are not so frequent now as they were then. First-class country lies away to the south, but it does not connect with the Gayndah part of the country. There are areas of inferior country between that and what would be reached by a railway to Nanango. In order to get to the best country, the railway should not go to Nanango, but to the north of it, and then it would enter a very considerable tract of rich scrub land which would be adapted to agriculture and has a very good climate because of its elevation. This is a very short length of railway, and it will run through a piece of country that is not good for dray traffic, although it is not particularly bad. The railway will give access to the country beyond. Unfortunately, Gayndah is the centre of an inferior patch of country to the north and south. As to the hope of being able to sell land alongside this railway line in order to provide funds to pay for its construction, I should

be exceedingly sorry to depend very much upon that, because the area that will be sold will certainly never pay the whole cost of the railway, far less provide for its maintenance and working. The opening up of the country beyond may bring traffic to the line, but I do not think it will get much traffic from the country it passes through. The line lies on the wrong side of the Burnett River to get to the country which is likely to be most closely settled. It is to the north of the Burnett that the greater extent of first-class country lies. On the south side it certainly is not of first-class quality until you get south of the waters that flow from near Kilkivan northward, when you come to some very good country, and country which would be suitable for agriculture. I do not speak of country in the usual style that people do who pass through it and say, "This is very pretty and very nice." I have been a farmer for twenty years, and I know what sort of soil you have to look to if you want to raise crops. It is not always the country that looks nicest to the eye—fine open country—that is most suitable for cultivation. Some of it may be cultivated easily, but it may return nothing. Therefore, I form somewhat different opinions of country in passing through it to what most people do. We have in Queensland practically a very small proportion of farmers. Most of those who are farming do not move about the country. They are settled down in districts where there are small patches of good country, and on the Darling Downs. The Downs are a very fine tract of country, but there is no country of that class within reasonable scope of this line. Taking it on the whole, if they want to provide access to the good country, the Burnett River will always be a great obstacle. It is not an easy river to bridge, because floods come down with great violence from the Upper Burnett, and it will be very expensive to construct a bridge; and, unless it is bridged, the sudden rains that every now and then fall make it exceedingly difficult and dangerous to cross at the fords which exist. I have had to cross some of those places, and it is not particularly pleasant to have to do so. The difficulty of getting across this fine river seems to stand between this railway and the country which it is intended to give access to.

HON. C. S. MCGHIE: With respect to this proposed railway, my only regret is that it does not proceed far enough. In my opinion it should have been constructed as far as Gayndah. The proposed terminus will extend only a short distance into the really good land. The Chief Engineer's Department has an opportunity now to show what can be done in the construction of cheap light lines, and I have no doubt—knowing a little about the matter—that with judicious management in the department of the Chief Engineer, and the cutting up of the land in a judicious manner, the hopes of the Government will be fully realised. I do not pretend to be a land expert, but we have testimony from gentlemen thoroughly acquainted with this portion of the country which fully bears out what Mr. Phillips says in his report. I have heard it said that Mr. Phillips is a railway expert, and not an expert in land. But any man who has gone over the country as Mr. Phillips did must have had his eyes shut if he did not know something about the land; and he has told me and others, upon whose word I can rely, that with regard to some portions there is no land on the Darling Downs to equal it. This railway will cost very little additional expense in its working; there will be no extra rolling-stock required; and there is no doubt it will add materially to the revenue of the line already constructed. I

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only hope the Government will see their way, very early, to continue the line as far as Gayndah, because until that is done the full benefit of the railway will not be realised. With regard to the remark of the Hon. Mr. Thynne about the construction of roads, I would like to say that, in my opinion, the day of making roads has gone by. [Hon. A. J. THYNNE: It has hardly begun yet.] We want railways. Making roads is a very much more expensive work than making railways in some parts of the country. However, I hope this railway will be constructed, and I am satisfied that immense benefit will be derived, not only to the settlers on the land, but to those in the vicinity of the line.

HON. T. A. JOHNSON: I intend to support the adoption of both these reports, and the approval of both plans. The construction of these two branch lines of railway will be a new experiment for this State. Both are short lines, and the estimated cost appears very reasonable—£1,400 a mile in one instance, and about £2,000 in the other. Two leading professional gentlemen have approved of those lines before the Select Committee. One is the Commissioner for Railways, in whom we all have the greatest confidence, and the other the Chief Engineer. I notice that the Chief Engineer, in his examination, stated that these will be the cheapest lines that have ever been constructed. The object the Government have in view in their construction is, I understand, twofold—first, to increase settlement on the land and give greater facilities for getting farmers' produce to market; and, secondly, to find work for the unemployed. Both those objects are good, and deserving of our favourable consideration. The question of the unemployed is a very serious one for the Government to deal with at the present time. There has been fictitious prosperity through the lavish expenditure of borrowed money. Borrowing and spending have to be stopped, and this Government have taken the responsibility of stopping borrowing. The English money-lenders and financial institutions have also set up their backs and strongly objected to any more borrowing; consequently, our State has felt the financial crisis very keenly. The Government have stated that a certain amount of money is to be expended annually in the construction of branch lines without any further borrowing. This will come out of the balance of the loan fund and the annual payments to be made by the Queensland National Bank under the new arrangement. The construction of light lines of railway in this State will be an experiment, and cheap lines are not always the best investment. Our Queensland railways were started forty years ago on the narrow-gauge system, with a view to cheapness and economy. That was a serious mistake, and it has been unfortunately continued ever since. What a grand thing it would now be for the State if we had a uniform gauge similar to that in the other States! About three years ago, when the Philp Government made a suggestion of cheap lines of railway, I happened to be visiting Ireland, and I read the proposal in the Queensland papers sent out to me. I found that several of those cheap lines existed in the north and south of Ireland, and I tried to get what information I could about their working. I questioned several railway experts on the subject—one, the chief engineer of a large railway company which had a line running from Dublin to Cork; and another, the general traffic manager of a large company running from Belfast through the northern counties—and they informed me that the working of the light lines was both expensive and unsatisfactory. But the difficulty that occurs there will not occur here, as our light lines are

to be constructed on the same gauge as the existing lines, so that the rolling-stock will be interchangeable. Those gentlemen informed me that the light lines in Ireland were cheaply constructed and would not carry heavy engines and trucks, and that at the junctions with the main lines goods had to be loaded and unloaded, which meant extra cost and very considerable delay. Notwithstanding those drawbacks, I intend to support the construction of these two branch lines. I was hoping that, if any new lines were brought forward, another section of the Goondiwindi line would have been among the first. The extension of that line—

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman must confine himself to the motion before the House.

HON. T. A. JOHNSON: There is no doubt the present Secretary for Railways, Hon. A. Morgan, has displayed considerable impartiality and liberality in bringing forward lines in other districts in preference to the line starting from his own district, and for that he deserves credit. At the same time, I hope the extension of this line will not be lost sight of in the near future. I look upon it as a national work; it will be of immense advantage to the port of Brisbane, and will prevent the trade of one of the finest pastoral districts in Queensland being diverted to New South Wales.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman cannot discuss the Goondiwindi line on this motion.

HON. T. A. JOHNSON: I will not refer to it further. I hope these two lines before us will be favourably considered by the House. The labour market is at present a very serious difficulty, and if money can be expended profitably in finding work for our unemployed it will be a great benefit to the country generally.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: There are two or three aspects of this motion that might be dwelt upon if there was a disposition on the part of members of the Council to oppose the construction of this railway. I am not aware of any such disposition. I do not think any of us feel very much disposed to obstruct anything at the present time which will find labour for the unemployed. The question whether this will be profitable labour for anybody but the unemployed is another matter. But if we were disposed to oppose this proposal I think strong arguments could be brought forward to justify such a disposition. I am not aware that there is a branch railway in Queensland at the present time going into an agricultural district which is paying interest on cost of construction. I agree with the Hon. Mr. Thynne that if we want to settle the country we must give the settlers we wish to attract access to their selections by means of good roads, whether you call them railways or highways. That, however, is not now a subject for discussion. But it should be pointed out that, according to Mr. Thallon's evidence, there is not very much inducement to Parliament to pass the motion now before the Council; and, so far as hurrying this matter through just now is concerned, I would like to say I fail to see why the report of Mr. Phillips, dated last March, could not have been before Parliament at an earlier period than this. (Hear, hear!) I suppose it has taken the department some considerable time to prepare the plans, still it does seem anomalous that from the middle of March last this report of Mr. Phillips has been in the hands of the Government, and that it should not have reached the Legislative Council until two days before the close of the session, when we are urged to pass this through without adequate

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consideration. We ought to have had it in our possession for at least a few days before being asked to make up our minds about such a proposal as this. I wish it to be distinctly understood that I am not disposed, in the present state of the country and the present state of the labour market, to offer opposition to the expenditure of money in any reasonable way; but I am thoroughly convinced of this: that this line is not going to pay for many years to come. It will be like some of the other railways which we were told ten or fifteen years ago were going to pay from the start, and they have not payed yet. There are at present three branch railways in this particular district to which the motion refers; and what has been the financial result of the construction of those railways? The railway from Maryborough to Gympie is paying interest on its outlay. The railway from Isis Junction to Cordalba paid last year 13s. per cent. on the cost of its construction. That was the net balance over the expenditure on the line. The line from Kilkivan to Goomeri paid 9s. 4d. per cent. on the cost of construction.

[4.30 p.m.] The proposed line is to extend from Degilbo to Wetheron. Now what is the financial position of the line from Mungar Junction to Degilbo? Last year it paid 2s. 3d. per cent. interest on the cost of construction. Now can there be any hope of this line—which, according to the Commissioner's evidence, is going into country that offers very few inducements to settlement—paying? We are told, in answer to a question by the Hon. Mr. Smith—

How many miles of good country do you think this railway will pass through? It does not come to really good country until it is 14 miles from Degilbo.

About 6 miles from the terminus? Yes; and there is less than that of what you may call good country.

How can a line going through such country as that be expected to pay? [Hon. J. T. ANNEAR: Settle the people on the good land alongside it and it will pay right enough.] But there is no good land. The Commissioner says that for 14 miles the line will run through poor country and the other 6 miles through only moderate country. [Hon. J. T. ANNEAR: Thirteen miles further on will bring you to good land.] I am not going to object at all to the settlement of people on the land. Let us have as many as we can get. [Hon. J. T. ANNEAR: I think the Hon. Mr. Moreton will tell you there is plenty of good land on Wetheron.] I am only giving the evidence taken by the Select Committee. I have never been over the country and I am not competent to pass an opinion upon it, but I am competent to read the evidence given by the Commissioner for Railways, and that is what I am now quoting. Mr. Thallon was asked—

In your opinion it will pay expenses to Wetheron. Do you think, if it were continued to Gayndah, it would give a fair return? Yes. It would open up some very fine agricultural land all round Gayndah, to the south, the north, and the west.

He was also asked—

You say in your report that the railway will pay? I think it will pay working expenses—a little more, perhaps.

That is the expert evidence of the Commissioner for Railways, and his opinion is that it may pay a little more than working expenses. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: That is not the whole of the answer.] No; he spoke about the advantage that may ultimately be taken of the improved value of the land. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: No; he says that the Government intend to reduce the capital cost by crediting the line with the increased value of the land.] That is a separate branch of the subject—I was going to refer to that, but it is done with now. The Government

hope to recoup some portion of the cost by the enhanced value given to the land by the building of the line. The Hon. Mr. Johnson has been expressing his hope that the line will not only be constructed, but that it will be profitably constructed. Let us just look, for the sake of information, at what has occurred in some other districts. At the present time there are only five lines of railway in the State that are paying over 3 per cent. on the cost of their construction, and those mostly are trunk lines. In the farming districts there has not been hitherto any very happy experience of branch railways paying interest on the cost of construction. [Hon. P. MURPHY: They pay indirectly.] [Hon. T. A. JOHNSON: They are feeders for the main lines.] Indirectly, there is no doubt that they do benefit the main lines. But take the short line from Hendon to Allora. It is a guaranteed railway. The loss on the line last year was £187, which, under the guarantee, had to be paid by the local authority. If there is an agricultural branch line in Queensland that ought to be paying interest on the cost of construction, it is the line from Warwick to Killarney. [Hon. T. A. JOHNSON: You must consider the times.] [Hon. J. ARCHIBALD: The main line gets the benefit of the increased traffic on those branch lines.] I wish hon. members to understand that the motion before us does not refer to a trunk line but to a branch line. No sane man would attempt to deny that the trunk lines are helped in paying interest on the cost of their construction by these numerous feeders; but, when you come to discuss branch lines of the character of that now before us, it is just as well to look at all the facts of the case. Instead of the line from Warwick to Killarney paying interest on the cost of construction last year, it lost £1,100. [Hon. T. A. JOHNSON: But look at the increase of settlement on that line—it has more than trebled.] We might be in a better position to make up the losses on these branch railways if we had control of the Customs; but we have not got the Customs, and the question arises, where are we going to get the money from in the future to make up these losses? [Hon. P. MURPHY: We get back three-fourths of the Customs revenue.] I know that; but we have no control of the Customs, and if we find ourselves with a deficit—as we do year after year—we cannot put on additional Customs duties to help us to pay off those deficits. [The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: And, with Mr. Reid's freetrade motion, we will find ourselves worse off still.] [Hon. J. ARCHIBALD: Last year is not a fair one to take when making a comparison with regard to the Killarney line. The revenue was a long way below normal last year.] I presume hon. members will not call in question figures taken from the Commissioner's report; but if they have any doubts as to the fairness of the figures for last year, let them look up the reports for the last five or six years, and see how the line comes out. There was a loss of £255 last year on the Pialba Railway. There were losses on the Emerald, Mackay, and Bowen lines. The loss on the line from Emerald to Clermont, in the Central district, last year was £2,058. This State cannot go on year after year adding very largely to its railways, and losing money on them. If the betterment principle can be introduced in connection with the lands benefited by railway construction to a very much larger extent in the future than it has been in the past, there may be some hope that by selling land later on something will be gained from that source towards paying interest on the cost of construction; but I thoroughly endorse a remark that has been made—that I would not

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like to go into the speculation for very substantial reasons, and from the evidence of facts which are before the country at the present time. We had losses last year on seven lines in the Southern division, on five out of seven lines in the Central division, and on two out of six lines in the Northern division. The interest will have to be paid on the £40,000 which it is proposed to expend on this railway, and, if the line from Mungar Junction to Degilbo only gave a margin of 2s. 3d. last year, what is the prospect of making this extension of that line pay? I do not take it that a railway pays because it pays working expenses. Where is the interest to come from? We make branch lines, and all the taxpayers have to be taxed in order to make up the deficiencies of interest on those lines, and we shall sooner or later have to look at the subject in this light. I stated not long ago that I did not care very much just now in what direction railways were built—although I was then speaking of railways built by private enterprise; and, if these railways are not going to be built by private enterprise or under the guarantee system, they ought to be built in some way which would relieve the public Treasury. But I think we all want to see work provided, and work which will open up the country and offer some inducement to the best class of settlers to come and take up the lands reached by these railways, and in that way benefit the country.

HON. E. J. STEVENS: The Hon. Mr. Brentnall mentioned lines through agricultural districts which are not paying interest, and he asks, in the event of this line being proceeded with, where the interest is to come from. If I understand the scheme of the Government in connection with this line aright, there will be no interest to be met. The lines are to be paid for by the increased price of the lands sold alongside the railway. The railways which have been mentioned by the Hon. Mr. Brentnall have been constructed out of loan money, and the cases are not parallel. Another point is that the Railway Department—the same as others gifted with ordinary intelligence—is improving its methods, and these lines will be constructed on a more economical principle than those that have been mentioned. In this, as in connection with all lines in a new country like this, we have to consider—not what returns we are likely to get immediately the line is constructed, but what we are likely to get in the future. If a line was not justified unless it was expected to provide interest on the cost of construction from the time it was opened, how many lines would there be in Queensland at the present time? I do not contend that every line that has been constructed should have been built, but, at the same time, the bulk of them should have been. If not, Queensland would be a very sparsely populated country. [Hon. F. T. BRENTNALL: But they are responsible for the present financial position to a large extent.] They are partly responsible for it; but we must remember that we have passed through a large number of very bad seasons, which are also a very important factor. If the seasons had been good, there would have been hundreds of thousands more sheep and cattle to be carried on the railways, in addition to large additional quantities of wool and grain. The expenses have been running on all the time, while we have lost the revenue that would have been obtained from these sources if the seasons had been good. I welcome this scheme for railway construction. I have advocated for some years past that our railways should be built on the principle of making the unalienated Crown lands pay for the cost of

construction. The present offers a most favourable opportunity for doing this. Although it may be regarded by some as an experiment, I think it is more than an experiment, because we have the experience of the past to go upon. The Hon. Mr. Brentnall pointed out that for some miles the line will pass through country which will not give a very great return. That is absolutely correct; but that was the statement of the Commissioner, whose experience was confined to the surveyed route or its immediate neighbourhood, and does not deal with country lying a few miles either to the north or to the south of the route. We have evidence in the report of the Select Committee from those who have been over the country, that there are large areas of first-class country lying from 2 to 8 or 10 miles away to the north or the south. This country will be tapped by the railway just as much as the poor country through which the line runs. With regard to the inferior country, I asked one or two pointed questions to find out the nature of the inferiority. A person not acquainted with stock-carrying country would imagine from the word "inferior" that it might be absolutely useless for anything; but in every case the reply I got was that it was second-class pastoral country. That is to say, it will carry a fair amount of stock in ordinary seasons. This country will give some return. So far as I could ascertain from my own questions, and from those of other members of the Select Committee, there is no country along the line or within reasonable reach of it that can be classed as useless. Another aspect of the question, of course, is in reference to the unemployed. In the present state of the labour market, and having regard to the number of unemployed, it would be a fair thing even to take some little risk in the construction of railways at the present time. We bring men into the country, and they may reasonably expect that we should find something for them to do. They cannot all be settlers on the land. There must be some labourers, and we should not sit down and see them starve. The unemployed are numerous in all parts of the State. Men say they are just hanging about and that they will not work if they get it. Well, I can say of my own knowledge that there are numbers of men in the city who would take any work they could get, however hard it might be, and they would take almost any wage to get it. There are men looking for work who can be considered first-class workmen—bush workmen or labourers. These men are sober and honest, and of the best of characters, and yet they cannot get work. When we have an opportunity of giving them work, we might run some small risk of future loss to provide them with work. In my opinion, however, there will be no loss in this connection. It is possible that the extension, so far as it goes, may not pay in the immediate future, but the collateral benefits—that is, the traffic that will be brought to the other lines of the State and the settlement of the country—will more than make up for any loss on the railway itself. In addition to that, it is making another step towards Gayndah, which is the centre of a magnificent district. All the witnesses we examined had no hesitation in saying that once the line reaches Gayndah it will pay directly. The Commissioner for Railways can never be regarded as optimistic. I have studied his reports for many years, and he always endeavours to make himself absolutely safe—in which he is quite justified—and when he has no doubt that, when the line reaches a certain point, it will pay, we can fairly accept that as a very sound and reliable opinion. I shall have very much pleasure in voting for this motion.

[Hon. F. T. Brentnall.]

HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: I think it is a pity when we are dealing with a railway in a locality so close to us, and where personal investigation could so easily be made, the members of the Select Committee did not visit the locality themselves. They could ascertain a great deal more of the facts by taking evidence on the spot, and their recommendations would have carried even greater weight.

HON. B. B. MORETON: I lived in the district some thirty years, and I think I know every inch of this extension. Beginning from Degilbo and going to the Bin Bin Range, there is what may be termed second-class pastoral land, with here and there isolated plots of good agricultural land. From the Bin Bin Range to Gayndah it is all good land. I would not call the whole of it first-class agricultural, but it is good in areas interspersed with more moderate land. At Wetheron, where the terminus is to be, there is excellent land extending right up to Gayndah, and it is a question whether the line ought not to have been extended as far as Gayndah instead of Wetheron. There is no doubt the best land is on the other side of Wetheron going to Mundubbera, and towards Baramba. That, however, is served by the Kilkivan extension. I have never been on what is called the Murray Plateau, though I have been close to it; but I should believe it to be a dry spot. Some really first-class land lies on Reid's Creek, and I have no doubt that if the land is judiciously opened it will be selected fairly rapidly. [HON. J. LALOR: What about prickly pear?] There were only a few sticks of prickly pear on the river banks when I lived at Gayndah in 1884. It has all grown since then. They say you cannot get into Gayndah now except by the main roads. I have seen acres of Bathurst burr there, but it has all died out. [HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: Prickly pear will not die out.] I believe this railway will do a great deal to open up the land. It is a line that was promised very far back, and should have been made years and years ago. It was in the lurch of railways passed in 1884, out of the £10,000,000 loan; the first section of it was constructed to Degilbo, and there it stopped. As to Mr. Phillips's report, I do not agree with him altogether as to the quantity of cultivable land available; otherwise, it is fairly correct. I shall have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

Question put and passed.

#### JOINT COMMITTEES.

##### MESSAGE FROM ASSEMBLY.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly expressing their concurrence in the resolution contained in the Council's message of yesterday's date.

#### DAIRY PRODUCE BILL.

##### FURTHER MESSAGE FROM ASSEMBLY.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly intimating that they did not insist on their disagreement to the Council's amendments in lines 47, 48, and 49 of clause 19, and agreed to the proposed further amendment in line 47 of the same clause.

#### DALBY-CATTLE CREEK BRANCH RAILWAY.

##### ADOPTION OF SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, in moving—

That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed branch railway, Western line, from Dalby to Cattle Creek, be now adopted—

said: I should like to say I could have wished that Mr. Phillips's report had been in the hands of hon. members for a longer period; but I find by the "Minutes" of our proceedings that they were laid on the table by me this day week. It is true that it is not a very long time for hon. gentlemen who have other business to attend to, but it is some mitigation of the offence. The railway we are now dealing with stands on the same basis, as to construction, as the one just dealt with. The committee was equally unanimous in its recommendation that the plan, section, and book of reference be approved. They examined the same witnesses. Mr. Thallon was very emphatic. He was asked by me—

Have you anything to add to your report on this railway, Mr. Thallon? I have no doubt about the Dalby to Cattle Creek Railway. I have been over the country, and am satisfied that the Government lands beyond the extension of the railway will develop such a traffic as not only to make the railway pay working expenses, but also to increase the profit on the existing line. The survey was carried out in a very short time, and from what I have seen, going over it myself, I should say it will be possible to improve and cheapen the railway compared with the present estimate.

It was then mentioned that the line passed through the freeholds of Cumkillenbar and Dalby Downs, that the purchase of private land would amount to £196, and that the approximate cost per mile was £1,400, and that there were no engineering difficulties. Then Mr. Stevens asked—

Do you think the line would pay as soon as constructed? Not as soon as constructed. The country will have to be settled and cultivated before the railway can pay, but that will be in a very short time, I reckon.

You think it will pay within a short time? I do.

And that it will bring a great deal of traffic to the line already constructed? It will improve the position of the existing line, because all the produce of that district must eventually come to Brisbane.

I do not think anything can be stronger than that. This railway was contemplated twenty years ago, but from various causes it has hitherto been in the background, and it is only now that it has come before Parliament in a concrete form. The Committee's report is exceedingly favourable, and, as was remarked by the Hon. Mr. Stevens, Mr. Thallon is by no means an optimistic man. He does not commit himself to any statement which he does not think will be carried out. This seems to be one of the cheapest railways it is possible to construct, and it will open up a very considerable area of good country. There is no question that it passes through two large freeholds; but just as we have to bridge rivers so we have to bridge freeholds in our railway construction, and that is one of the evils of land alienation. Alienated land has to be bridged over when railway construction comes along.

HON. C. S. MCGHIE: I am very glad to see the construction of this branch line brought forward, not only because it will benefit a large agricultural district, but because it will give the department an opportunity of showing what can be done in the construction of cheap lines where there are no engineering difficulties. I am satisfied that this line will be constructed at much less than the estimated cost. I know the country over which this line passes very well indeed. It goes towards the range where the very best agricultural land in the district is, and it will not be subject to floods because it is near the watershed. The Crown lands it will benefit are of the very best description for settlement. With regard to a remark made by the Hon. Mr. Brentnall, I hold the opinion that all our lines pay, if not directly, yet indirectly. Ask yourselves the question how much it would cost to take a ton of goods by road from Brisbane to Toowoomba,

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or Dalby, or Charleville, or Cunnamulla, and then you will see the amount of benefit the existence of the railway has conferred. In no new countries have lines paid without subsidies. As an instance of that I need only mention the Trans-Pacific Railway now being constructed in Canada. These lines belong to the public, and, if they do not pay us directly, they certainly do indirectly. There may be some question of management, or the lowering of fares and freights, but that is for the department to decide. No such opportunity has ever been afforded to the department to show what can be done in the way of making a cheap light railway as this line from Dalby to Cattle Creek.

Question put and passed.

## EXTENSION OF GAYNDAH BRANCH RAILWAY.

### APPROVAL OF PLAN, ETC.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION moved—

1. That the Council approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Gayndah branch railway from Degilbo to Wetheron, in length 19 miles 73 chains, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 13th December.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

HON. J. T. ANNEAR: I took it that the Minister would follow the practice that I have seen followed by previous Ministers when bringing forward motions of this kind, and that this would be the time when he would explain the departure in the method of construction which is to be adopted in connection with this line. The departure in construction to which I refer was tried previously, but it was soon found that it did not meet the requirements of the traffic, and the system was altered. I know a little with regard to this section from Degilbo to Wetheron, and I have had a good deal to do with it during the last twenty years. I advocated it for the eighteen years that I was a member in another place. As hon. members will see by the Commissioner's report, the line has been constructed towards Gayndah 57 miles 54 chains from Maryborough. In the £10,000,000 loan, which was passed in the year 1884, a sum of £250,000 was voted for the construction of a line from Maryborough to Gayndah. The plans and sections were approved of, and the House voted a sum of £256,289 7s. 3d., of which amount £190,252 15s. 4d. was expended up to 30th June, 1896, leaving an unexpended balance of £66,036 11s. 11d. Hon. members will see that this is to be a low-level line, with steep grades of 1 in 30 and 1 in 33. We have previously constructed on this principle the line from Maryborough to Gympie and the Fassifern line. I believe the instructions of the Minister of the day to the Chief Engineer were to construct the line from Maryborough to Gympie as cheaply as possible, but the grades had afterwards to be reduced and deviations made in several places at a cost of fully £50,000. The grades on the Fassifern line have also had to be reduced, and more will have to be done. Now, if these lines had been constructed in accordance with the recommendations of the late Chief Engineer, Mr. Stanley—who always advocated high-level lines, with no grade steeper than 1 in 50—a large sum of money would have been saved. I agree with the Hon. Mr. Moreton, and others who have spoken, that the line now under discussion will have to be completed to Gayndah—where it was always intended to take it—and it will then command the whole of the cattle trade of the Burnett district. I know the country through which the line will

pass. I have travelled over it on several occasions. I have visited Gayndah three or four times, and, in my opinion, the completion of the line to that place will open up a large area of first-class agricultural land, which will support a large and thriving population, if we adopt the policy that has been so successfully adopted in other countries, and allow people to come here, instead of driving them away. The land about Gayndah is very well adapted to the growth of fruit. The finest oranges I have seen in Australia are grown in abundance about Gayndah. For years past agriculturists have been clamouring for the cancellation of the lease of a portion of the Degilbo run, and I believe a certain sum of money has been paid with the object of enabling that land to be thrown open to agricultural settlement. I was informed a few days ago in Maryborough that, when thrown open, it will be taken up immediately. I do not complain, as some have complained, that the Wide Bay and Burnett district has been badly treated in the matter of railway construction. The last time railways came before this House was when the late Government introduced a batch of four railways—the line to the Tweed, the line to connect Gladstone and Rockhampton, the line from Mirani to Cattle Creek, and the line from Kilkivan to Kingaroy. The amount voted for the four lines was something like £475,000; and whilst the other districts only obtained £184,000, the Wide Bay and Burnett district obtained for the construction of the line from Kilkivan to Kingaroy a vote of £291,000. The Hon. Mr. Brentnall referred to the line from Maryborough to Gympie not paying; but I do not think that is the proper way to look at that railway. The line forms part of our main line from Brisbane to Longreach. I think the Select Committee are to be complimented upon the expeditious manner in which they performed the work entrusted to them, taking evidence and reporting on two railways in two different parts of Queensland in a few hours, and I think their reports do not differ very much from the report of Mr. Phillips. I have always contended that it is a great mistake to look only at the direct sources of revenue when estimating the paying capacity of a railway. There are 101 indirect sources of revenue to be considered. A railway finds employment for people who would not otherwise be employed. Could the coal industry be carried on as profitably in the Bundamba, Ipswich, or Burrum districts if there were no railways constructed to those districts? Would the mining industry in Charters Towers and Gympie find employment for thousands of men but for the railways? Then, again, the timber industry finds employment for thousands of men and large quantities of machinery, and that is because of the construction of our railways. This line will give employment to numbers of unemployed, and I trust at a fair wage. According to the papers this week, and to a report which has been laid on the table, able-bodied married men have been employed in the eradication of prickly pear at the low wage of 2s. 8d. per day, and this from gentlemen who have always maintained—and especially some of my friends opposite—that every man in Queensland, whether married or single, should have a living wage. Two shillings and eightpence a day is not a living wage. Is this the result of the new policy that we have heard so much about? I wish now to draw attention to the report of the Commissioner for Railways with regard to this railway. Mr. Thallon says—

The proposed line commences at Degilbo (57 miles 54 chains from Maryborough), and runs 20 miles in a westerly direction, terminating at Wetheron Creek (77 miles 55 chains from Maryborough). The curves are easy, there being only one of 6 chains and one of

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3 chains radius, compared with 5 chains on other lines. In my opinion the department should aim chiefly at straight lines rather than level lines, and I will endeavour to have the 6-chain curve taken out or improved during construction. The grades are steep, there being several of 1 in 30 and 1 in 33.

The Hon. Mr. Johnson said that lighter engines would do on this line, but how would it be possible to draw a fair load on a grade of 1 in 30 with a lighter engine than we have in use at the present time? When we had grades of 1 in 30 and 1 in 33 before, we were unable, with the engines we now have, to carry on the traffic. The Commissioner continues—

But only for short distances; and they will not, therefore, affect the haulage power very materially. In respect of grades and curves, the design of this line resembles very much that of the Central and Northern Railways, over which an immense traffic was hauled for many years before they were regraded a few years ago. The bridges will all be low level. The rails will be 4½ lb. to the yard.

I ask hon. members to look up the records and see what this regrading has cost. If the line is completed to Gayndah, I am certain that before five years there would be a proposal to construct that portion of the railway on the same lines as the portion from Mungar Junction to Degilbo—that is, as a high-level line, with grades of not less than 1 in 50. The Commissioner says—

The line running through Crown lands will not be fenced until absolutely necessary.

Well, I would like to draw attention to the fact that on the Crown lands in the Burnett district, and particularly in the portion to which I refer, there are large numbers of cattle, and there will be an immediate necessity for fencing the line as soon as it is completed. Until I saw the report of the Select Committee, I was beginning to think that the Chief Engineer—who, I believe, retains the confidence of those who know him—had been superseded. Why was it necessary to appoint another engineer to go over this line when we have a Chief Engineer with a large staff, who are all paid very good salaries? I have no objection to Mr. Phillips being employed. We are told that this is to be a cheap railway, but it is too cheap. It will be a very dear railway in ten years' time when the traffic becomes so great that the railway will have to be reconstructed. We shall see what Mr. Phillips says about it. This is what he says on page 6 of his report—

On inquiry as to the departmental estimate of the cost of extending the branch from Degilbo to Gayndah, *via* the existing permanent survey, I have received the following reply, dated 20th ultimo:—"With further reference to your letter of the 9th instant relative to the departmental estimate of the cost of constructing the extension to Gayndah, I am desired to inform you that an approximate estimate made by the late Chief Engineer, in 1897, amounted to £127,000, or at the rate of about £4,000 per mile. This, however, was for a high-level line, with a ruling gradient of 1 in 50, and Mr. Pagan states he has no reason to doubt that he could build a light agricultural line with low-level bridges for half the amount mentioned."

I have carefully studied the plans and sections as prepared by the Railway Department, and find that the intention is to extend the branch on the same general principles of construction that were adopted in connection with the existing portion of the branch between Mungar and Degilbo—that is to say, the extension is designed to cross all watercourses at high level, the ruling gradient is 1 in 50, the minimum curve is 6 chains radius, of which, however, there is only one; there are 2 curves of 8 chains, 5 curves of 10 chains, and 3 curves of 12 chains radius; all other curves are 15 chains radius or over.

I quite agree with all he says with regard to the quality of the land through which the railway will pass and that is adjacent to it. I wish now to draw attention to this portion of the evidence he gave before the Select Committee. I have had something to do with the building trade in

my time. I have worked for builders when they have been putting up buildings for speculative purposes. They build them as cheaply as possible, their sole object being to sell them at a profit. Buildings of that kind are called "Tom and Jerry" buildings. Now I think this is to be a "Tom and Jerry" railway. We have had "Tom and Jerry" railways in Queensland before now. There has been a departure on several occasions from the recommendations and plans of the ablest constructing engineer in Australia to-day, Mr. H. C. Stanley, our late Chief Engineer. He does not need me to stand up and advocate his cause. His work throughout Queensland will fully substantiate my remarks concerning him. [Honourable members: Hear, hear!] In question 24, Mr. Phillips was asked—

I think Mr. Thallon remarked that the cost will be a little over £2,000 per mile? It is estimated to cost £2,026 per mile.

What rails and what quantity of sleepers does that allow for? It allows for 42-lb. rails and 2,640 sleepers per mile.

I think I am correct in saying that the number of sleepers used in constructing the first section of this line was 2,375 to the mile, so that an extra number of sleepers have to be provided under Mr. Phillips's proposal. The next question was—

And will the ballast be similar to that on the existing line? No. I propose to ballast with selected soil—decomposed granite. You may call it ballast or not, according to your opinion.

We were told with regard to certain other lines, they could carry traffic without [5.30 p.m.] ballast. What has been the result?

Thousands of pounds have been spent in ballasting those lines that were going to work without ballast. These particular lines are called cheap lines. My conviction is that they will prove very dear lines before they have been at work five years. I believe there is a great future before this district, and that this line will be the means of settling a great number of people, if we allow them to come here to settle, and do not drive them away to other countries where they can get greater advantages than in Queensland. I met some men the other day leaving Queensland for Western Australia. I asked them why they were doing so, and they replied that they could get 160 acres of land at a nominal price. I am addressing gentlemen who desire to see this country advance, and I do not think the Government would be ill-advised if our Government were to follow the example of Western Australia in that respect. I shall support the proposal before the House.

**THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION:** When I was Secretary for Lands I advocated the very thing the hon. gentleman has just referred to. The hon. gentleman made what I am sure was an unintentional mistake when he said that, according to an answer to a question I gave the other day, I said the Government were employing men to clear prickly pear at 2s. 8d. a day. There is only one reference in it to prickly pear, and it is stated there that the wage paid was 5s. a day; and it makes one feel as if one's heart was full of prickles to think that any human being should clear prickly pear for even 5s. a day. [Hon. T. A. JOHNSON: At Warwick they earned 6s. 8d. a day clearing prickly pear.]

**HON. C. S. MCGHIE:** With respect to regrading and deviation where sharp curves exist, I do not think that has been done on any of the branch lines except the Fassifern line, where the curves were very difficult to negotiate, and where the deviation was positively necessary. The Hon. Mr. Annear referred to the line

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between Gympie and Maryborough. I grant that several deviations have had to be made and the grades cut down, but since that line was made it has become a main trunk line. Had it remained a branch line, that would never have been required. The branch lines we are proposing now I do not expect will require regrading or heavier rails. I omitted to say, when I addressed the House last, that we have been increasing the weight of our rails and engines on the main lines in consequence of having very much larger loads to haul. Consequently a great number of the engines we were formerly using will be available for working on these branch lines. As to the increased number of sleepers, I am informed that that is owing to the fact that no ballast, or an indifferent kind of ballast, will be used. I agree with those who advocate that ballast should be used, but ballast is a very expensive thing, and if we can construct these light lines cheaply to carry the produce of the agriculturists we shall have done a good work.

HON. SIR A. C. GREGORY: There will be no necessity to regrade on branch lines so long as the speed of the trains is kept down. A line like the one towards Gayndah can never become a through line of great importance, and, if trains are run at a moderate speed, it will be sufficient for anything the country is likely to require for a long time.

Question put and passed.

#### DALBY-CATTLE CREEK BRANCH RAILWAY.

##### APPROVAL OF PLAN, ETC.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION moved—

1. That the Council approves of the plan, section and book of reference of the proposed branch railway, Western line, from Dalby to Cattle Creek, in length 23 miles 70 chains, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 13th December.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

##### ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: I move that the Council do now adjourn. I hope that to-morrow will close our labours for the session, and I would impress upon hon. members the necessity of forming a quorum when we meet at half-past 3 o'clock, so that the proceedings of the House may be started.

Question put and passed.

The Council adjourned at fifteen minutes to 6 o'clock.