

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL 1908

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 15 APRIL, 1908.

The SPEAKER (HON. JOHN LEAHY, *Bulloo*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor intimating that he had assented in the name of His Majesty to the following Bills:—

- Land Surveyors Bill ;
- Factories and Shops Act Amendment Bill ;
- Elections Acts Amendment Bill ;
- Old Age Pensions Bill ;
- Technical Instruction Bill ;
- Wages Boards Bill ;
- Inspection of Machinery and Scaffolding Bill ;
- Sugar Works Guarantee Acts Amendment Bill.

PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table, was order to be printed—Annual return of intestate estates from the Local Deputy Curator, Townsville.

QUESTIONS.

DRY DOCK WORKSHOPS.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*) asked the Treasurer—

Is it not a fact that the workshops, and the plant laid down therein, at the dock are quite up to the standard of requirements for the execution of all necessary repairs, etc., in connection with the Government dredges and barges?

The TREASURER (Hon. P. Airey, *Brisbane South*) replied—
No.

PAY AND ALLOWANCES TO POLICE.

Mr. BOWMAN (*Fortitude Valley*) asked the Home Secretary, without notice—

When we are likely to have the report called for by me in reference to the police regulations of Queensland as compared with those of New South Wales laid on the table? I asked for the return, and I believe it has been completed by the Police Department.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. A. G. C. Hawthorn, *Enoggera*) replied—

I am not aware that the return has been completed by the Commissioner. It has not come to the head office at present.

Mr. BOWMAN : I heard it had.

The HOME SECRETARY : I shall inquire about it, and, if possible, lay it on the table before the session closes.

Mr. BOWMAN : You are a long time laying it on the table.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Kidston, *Rockhampton*) : I would like to ask, without notice, whether the hon. member for Fortitude Valley is in communication with the Commissioner of Police in this matter?

Mr. BOWMAN : In answer to the Premier, I made inquiries whether the return was ready, and I was told that it was. I think there has been an unreasonable delay on the part of the Government in laying it on the table, and that is why I asked.

BUREAU OF CENTRAL SUGAR MILLS.

On general business—notice of motion No. 1, standing in the name of Mr. WHITE (*Musgrave*), as follows, being called :—

That, in view of the opinions expressed by members of this House on the occasion of the passing of the vote for the Bureau of Central Sugar Mills, it be an instruction from this House to the Government that the agreement now existing between the Comptroller of the Bureau of Central Sugar Mills and the Government shall not be renewed; and, further, that this House is of opinion that it is not desirable that any new agreement be entered into by the Government with that official—

The SPEAKER said: I would like to call the attention of the hon. member for Musgrave to the phraseology of this motion. It is not within the province of this House to give an instruction to the Government, which means the Governor in Council. The motion is certainly out of order.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The SPEAKER said: I have to announce that I have received the following letter from the hon. member for Fassifern:—

That he intended to move the adjournment of the House to-day to call attention to a definite matter of urgent public importance—namely, the granting of an Order in Council to the City Electric Light Company, Limited, on 4th April, 1908.

Mr. JENKINSON (*Fassifern*) : I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The SPEAKER : Do five members rise in their places to support the motion?

More than five members having risen,

Mr. JENKINSON said : I gave this notice for the adjournment of the House, owing to a notice which appeared in the *Government Gazette* of Friday, 3rd April, whereby a corporation in Brisbane, entitled "The City Electric Light Company, Limited," have been granted an order to supply electric power and light to a portion of the metropolitan area, generally known as the Valley Ward.

Mr. BOWMAN : Another injustice to the Valley.

Mr. JENKINSON : Although it purports to be under the provisions of the Electric Lighting and Power Act of 1896, yet it appears to me that the powers granted in this Order in Council are altogether too large to give to any corporation.

Mr. LESINA : Hear, hear !

Mr. JENKINSON : Owing to the operation of Standing Order 136A, it will not be within my power to go into the matter as fully as I would have done, but I think it is imperative that a few facts in connection with this matter should be brought under the notice of the House, and, through the medium of the papers, under the notice of the ratepayers as well as the residents of Brisbane, because I am perfectly satisfied that it is as great an injustice as has ever been perpetrated in connection with any matter that Parliament or Ministers have had in their power to grant. The Order in Council states—

This order shall come into force and have effect upon the 4th April, 1908, which date is in this order referred to "as the commencement of the order," and shall cease to have effect at the expiration of thirty-two years from such date of commencement.

I would like to call the attention of members to the fact that that is practically tying the hands of eleven Parliaments; or, in other words, a generation and a-half will have to elapse before there can be any revocation of this order.

Mr. RYLAND : More than ten Parliaments.

Mr. Jenkinson.

Mr. JENKINSON: Under the circumstances it would be eleven Parliaments, as we have started one.

Mr. LESINA: It is a set-back to municipal socialism for thirty years.

Mr. JENKINSON: Exactly. That is a set-back for a lengthy time. No matter what our opinions may be with regard to the advisableness of the municipalisation of these sources of supply, yet the powers given for this length of time are altogether too large to be recognised by this House. Not only is there the question of the length of time—I have no objection to the power being granted to a company as long as it were for a limited time, and the council had power to come in under circumstances which do limit them to purchase the undertaking. I will deal with that phase of the question before I resume my seat. Five or seven years to a company already in existence is, to my mind, amply sufficient to be given any company. When we had the Electric Lighting and Power Bill before us in 1896 there was a Select Committee appointed, and testimony was given that in Great Britain the length of time for which these powers were given to municipalities and companies first started at seven years. This was found to be not long enough, and it was extended to fourteen years, and subsequently to a longer term. I would like to point out that that is for the plant to be put down and to build up a business, but this Order in Council is granting power to a company already established, which has practically nothing to do except the extension of their mains. It cannot be pleaded that it is for the purpose of erecting works sufficient to supply themselves as a new company altogether. That is not so. So that the length of time—whatever the argument may be in connection with a company about to be formed—does not apply to a company that has already got its plant here, already has got its business established, and is already fleecing the people of the metropolis. It may be stated that in the original Order in Council the present City Electric Light Company have it for an indefinite period—which is correct—but I am sure no one will contend that because a wrong has been done in the first instance that that wrong should be perpetuated, and particularly when I point out that it is proposed under this Bill—and here is where the hardship will come in to the business people of the Valley as well as the residents—under the Order in Council granted to this particular company they are permitted to charge 6d. per unit. Anyone who knows anything about the business must know that that is a very large price as compared with what is charged elsewhere. I understand that the rate per unit in the metropolitan area is 3d. Why should Fortitude Valley be penalised to the extent of 100 per cent. more?

Mr. SUMNER: What is the Sydney price?

Mr. JENKINSON: The Sydney price is 1½d. per unit.

Mr. BARTON: It is 5d.

Mr. JENKINSON: This company is charging 100 per cent. more in the metropolitan area than is charged in Sydney. The hon. member for Brisbane North is absolutely at fault, because I got information from New South Wales this morning. The charge there used to be 2d. per unit, and last year it was reduced to 1½d. That will be found in the report of the Sydney City Council, whilst I also know it from my own knowledge.

Mr. GRANT: In the first Order in Council, what price were they allowed to charge?

Mr. JENKINSON: I am trying to get through as quickly as I can because the time is limited. The Electric Supply Company in

Sydney is obtaining 1½d. per unit; in the city of Brisbane the price is 3d., and it is proposed to give the company the right to charge 6d. in the Valley for thirty-two years. And the Order in Council is absolutely irrevocable without the consent of the company; and you may be sure that, if the company are making a good thing out of it, they are not going to consent to the revocation of the order,

Mr. BARTON: You have had the power for less than 1d. for two years. (Laughter.)

Mr. JENKINSON: I know nothing about that. But, if that is so, why does this gentleman—the representative of this company—wish to make the people of the Valley pay 6d. per unit?

LABOUR MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JENKINSON: If the company can make a profit by supplying the power at 1d. per unit, where is the justice in charging other people in the city 3d.? In Sydney the gas company supply their consumers at 4s. per 1,000 cubic feet, and in Brisbane the price is 5s. The Brisbane price is only 20 per cent. more than that charged in Sydney; but the people in the Valley are asked to pay 400 per cent. more than they are getting electric power for in Sydney.

Mr. BOWMAN: Another evil of private monopolies.

Mr. JENKINSON: Of course it is an evil of private monopolies. These matters should be entirely in the hands of the municipal council; and I am satisfied that the members of the Brisbane City Council have not been doing their duty in not attending to this matter before. They have allowed this company a monopoly for forty-two years. Section 71 of the Order in Council reads—

In addition to any other powers which the Governor in Council may have in that behalf, he may revoke this order at any time with the consent and concurrence of the electric authority and local authority upon such terms as the Governor in Council may think just.

So that it will be necessary to get the consent of the company before the order can be revoked. I find that, under the Electric Light and Power Act, before these powers can be conferred on any company or corporation, the Council of the City of Brisbane have to be consulted, and their consent obtained. We find that the council have practically entered into an agreement with the company for the length of the option under the original order, which is dated 10th July, 1903. I am not blaming the company for this. They have entered into a contract with the council, and the latter have agreed not to oppose any order that may be applied for by this company. They have practically tied the hands of the City Council for over a generation, unless they like to step in and secure the control of the company. The agreement is peculiarly worded, and I cannot conceive what the members of the City Council were doing, practically to hand themselves over body and soul to this corporation, and prevent themselves from becoming the suppliers of light to the metropolitan area. I wish the ratepayers in the city to take notice of this section in the agreement, which has been signed by their representatives on the one side and by Mr. Barton, as representing the City Electric Light Company, on the other—

Until the council finally exercises its option to purchase.

Mr. JENKINSON: I may state that the option given in the first place on 10th July, 1903, was for two years only. If the City Council within two years like to exercise their right, they could take over from the company their plant and business—not at a valuation, but as a going concern, which, of course, adds con-

[Mr. Jenkinson.

siderably to the value. It practically got outside the Electric Light and Power Act of 1896. Why the council agreed to it, I cannot imagine.

Mr. LESINA: Can they override an Order in Council like that?

Mr. JENKINSON: That is a question to be decided in the law courts. It is for the rate-payers to test it.

Mr. BARTON: That option still holds. They can do it to-day upon giving six months' notice.

Mr. JENKINSON: That is not so. Under the Act the option is not exercisable until the expiration of the term of agreement, and then it must be exercised within six months. The same thing is provided in the present Order in Council. We know how slowly municipal councils move, and that would not give them time to do anything. Then, forsooth! this company goes on for another ten years before the council can exercise its right to step in and purchase; and in the meantime the company can be building itself up, so as to add to the sum the council will have to pay before they can resume the works. But, to come back to the agreement—

Until the council finally exercises its option to purchase, and while this agreement remains in force the council will not make or proceed with any application for or in respect of any Order in Council or any amendment thereof under the Electric Light and Power Act of 1896, or any Act amending or in substitution for the same, or undertake or carry on business of the supply of electricity within the city of Brisbane, and moreover will withhold its consent to and oppose the granting of any Order in Council to any persons or body or bodies, corporate or incorporate, other than the company under the said Act or any Act amending or in substitution for the same, any such person or persons, body or bodies, to undertake the supply of electricity within the city. From and after the expiration of the said period of two years from the date of this agreement and during the currency of the Order in Council aforesaid, and until the council finally exercises its option to purchase, the council will, so far as relates to the area comprised within its jurisdiction, consent to any application of the company for any amendment or extension of its said Order in Council or for any additional Order in Council under the said Act or any Act amending or in substitution for the same.

The council have practically tied themselves up. They have pledged themselves not to oppose any extension of the Order in Council, and to object to any other company having power to enter into competition with the City Electric Light Company. I find, on looking over the balance-sheet of the company, as published in the *Government Gazette*, that this company—which first started its works illegally, and then got an Act of Parliament passed to legalise its position—I have nothing to say against their having placed matters upon such a satisfactory footing for their shareholders.

Mr. MANN: Which Government passed that Act?

Mr. JENKINSON: I will tell how the thing was manipulated. A member of the firm of solicitors which acts for the company happened to be Postmaster-General at that time, and he introduced the measure in the Legislative Council.

Mr. BARTON: That is absolutely untrue.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BARTON: Mr. Foxton was the solicitor for the company at that time.

Mr. LESINA: As you are interested, you should have the decency to keep quiet.

LABOUR MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BARTON: The statement is untrue.

Mr. LESINA: You have got the public by the "lug" all right.

Mr. JENKINSON: We know how obstacles are got round. The term of years which appears in the Act—42—was strenuously fought in this Chamber by the Labour party and other members, who succeeded in getting it reduced to twenty-five years. The Bill went back to the Council, who stood to the original terms. Then the Bill came back to this House, and at a late hour of the night, when there were only a few members present, the Council's term was agreed to by 21 votes to 20—a very narrow majority—and the term fixed at forty-two years. The company had already secured an Order in Council, dated 12th May, 1897. They got other Orders on 1st April, 1903, 30th December, 1903, 23rd April, 1904, and this one is dated 4th April, 1908. Apparently the company have 60,000 shares, with a paid-up capital of £60,000. They have already obtained their building and plant, which are now worth £40,000. Last year they placed £5,000 to the credit of the renewal, replacement, and contingencies account, and this year they have placed a further sum of £7,500 to the credit of that account. Altogether they have a balance under that heading of over £18,000. It must be a fairly prosperous business to enable them to do that after allowing 7 per cent. on their building accounts, even at 3d. per unit, which they are charging within the metropolitan area. The hon. member for Brisbane North states that I was getting it at 1d. Why this discrimination I cannot tell.

Mr. BARTON: You are not getting it at that now.

Mr. JENKINSON: I do not suppose I will get it at that rate now. If hon. members look at page 875 of the *Gazette*, they will be astonished at the amount of money this company are putting on one side. Now, what are the terms upon which they get this Order in Council? They deposit a paltry £100, which is returned to them when they prove—to the Works Department, I presume—that they have done £100 worth of work. We know that they have to do very little work before the money is handed back to them. This concern is practically on the lines of the syndicate railways which were opposed so hard the other night by members of the Labour party. It grants a concession for a generation and a-half.

Mr. BOWMAN: That is as big an evil, or greater.

At 4 p.m.,

The SPEAKER said: Order! The Clerk will now read the first Order of the Day.

Mr. BOWMAN: Good old gag and guillotine.

Mr. LESINA: Giving away valuable concessions and then putting the gag on. What a democratic Government! What a lovely, model, democratic Government. A lot of "boodlers"!

HAMPDEN-MOUNT ELLIOTT RAILWAY BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On clause 1—"Short title"—

Question put—That the words proposed to be inserted on line 21—namely, "co-operative government and syndicate railway"—be so inserted.

Mr. LESINA: The hon. member for Leichhardt moved an amendment so that the title of the Bill would read, "The Hampden-Mount Elliott Co-operative Government and Syndicate Railway Act of 1908." That would enable the measure to carry on its face a simple statement

Mr. Lesina.]

as to its character. It would be the bar sinister, so that the public might realise its dangerous nature. He hoped such a proposal would commend itself to the good sense of the House. It certainly should secure the endorsement of the Secretary for Railways, who had such a hatred of syndicates, and was such a believer in co-operation. The Government found part of the money, and the syndicate another part, and therefore there was co-operation. He felt justified in supporting the amendment, which would be an improvement on the Bill.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted (*Mr. Hardacre's amendment*) be so inserted—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 21.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lennon
„ Barber	„ Lesina
„ Bowman	„ May
„ Coyne	„ McLachlan
„ Hamilton	„ Mitchell
„ Hardacre	„ Mulcahy
„ Hunter, J. M.	„ Mullan
„ Iluxham	„ Payne
„ Jenkinson	„ Ryland
„ Jones	„ Winstanley
„ Laud	

Tellers: Mr. Jones and Mr. Ryland.

NOES, 41.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kenna
„ Appel	„ Kerr
„ Armstrong	„ Kidston
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Mann
„ Barnes, W. H.	„ Maxwell
„ Barton	„ Moore
„ Bell	„ Murphy
„ Blair	„ Paget
„ Brennan	„ Petrie
„ Campbell	„ Philp
„ Cottell	„ Rankin
„ Cowap	„ Redwood
„ Denham	„ Roberts
„ Douglas	„ Stodart
„ Forrest	„ Sumner
„ Grant	„ Swayne
„ Grayson	„ Thorn
„ Gunn	„ Walker
„ Hawthorn	„ White
„ Herbertson	„ Woods
„ Hunter, D.	

Tellers: Mr. Cowap and Mr. Sumner.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. LESINA: Was sorry that members were ashamed to put the real title on the Bill. Were they ashamed of the term “syndicate”? It appeared to him as if they were. He hoped they would divide again on the clause.

Mr. MANN: As it seemed the wish of the Labour party to discuss the Bill in detail, and waste time until 10 o'clock, he had very much pleasure in helping them put up a stonewall.

Mr. LESINA: Have you got permission from the Premier to speak.

Mr. MANN: No man in the House, either the Premier or the member for Clermont, could prevent him from speaking.

Mr. LESINA: They have had the gag on you all the week.

Mr. MANN: He would point out that some of the staunchest and most stalwart Labour men had voted for syndicate railways. If the Premier had only allowed the company to build a tramway, they would not have heard a word of protest from the Labour party, but, because the Premier insisted upon Government control, all that fuss had been made over the Bill.

[*Mr. Lesina.*

Mr. LESINA asked if the hon. member was in order in making a general statement on the title of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member, so far, is in order.

Mr. MANN: He would point out that the labour people in Cairns protested strongly against the passing of the Chillagoe Railway Bill because the railway was to be owned and controlled by the company for fifty years.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will not be in order in referring to that matter on this clause of the Bill. If he departs from a discussion of the title of the Bill, he will be out of order.

Mr. MANN: This Bill was entirely different to the Chillagoe Railway Bill, which he opposed, because the Government controlled the proposed railway and the Commissioner worked it. Their aim in the past had been to secure State control of railways. All the railways built in the past had been built with borrowed money, and, until such time as that money was paid off, he claimed that the railways did not belong to the State, but were simply in pledge to bondholders.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but it seems that he is making a general statement. The question before the Committee is whether this shall be the title of the Bill, and the hon. member must confine himself to that.

Mr. MANN: If he was out of order he would resume his seat. Every member should be treated alike, and if they did not follow the clause closely they should be called to order. He hoped the Committee would assist the Chairman in his endeavours to make members stick to the point.

Question—That clause 1 stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 39.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
„ Appel	„ Kidston
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Mann
„ Barton	„ Maxwell
„ Bell	„ Moore
„ Blair	„ Murphy
„ Brennan	„ Paget
„ Campbell	„ Petrie
„ Cottell	„ Philp
„ Cowap	„ Rankin
„ Denham	„ Redwood
„ Douglas	„ Roberts
„ Forrest	„ Stodart
„ Grant	„ Sumner
„ Grayson	„ Swayne
„ Gunn	„ Thorn
„ Hawthorn	„ Walker
„ Herbertson	„ White
„ Hunter, D.	„ Woods
„ Kenna	

Tellers: Mr. Moore and Mr. Murphy.

NOES, 22.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Land
„ Barber	„ Lennon
„ Bowman	„ Lesina
„ Coyne	„ May
„ Hamilton	„ McLachlan
„ Hardacre	„ Mitchell
„ Hunter, J. M.	„ Mulcahy
„ Iluxham	„ Mullan
„ Jenkinson	„ Payne
„ Jones	„ Ryland
„ Keogh	„ Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. May and Mr. Mullan.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 2—"Validation of agreement"—put ;
and the Committee divided :—

AYES, 38.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
" Appel	" Kidston
" Barnes, G. P.	" Manu
" Barton	" Maxwell
" Bell	" Moore
" Blair	" Murphy
" Brennan	" Paget
" Campbell	" Petrie
" Cottell	" Philp
" Cowap	" Rankin
" Douglas	" Redwood
" Forrest	" Roberts
" Grant	" Stodart
" Grayson	" Sumner
" Gunn	" Swayne
" Hawthorn	" Thorn
" Herbertson	" Walker
" Hunter, D.	" White
" Kenna	" Woods

Tellers: Mr. Sumner and Mr. Swayne.

NOES, 22.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Land
" Barber	" Lennon
" Bowman	" Lesina
" Coyne	" May
" Humilton	" McLachlan
" Hardeacre	" Mitchell
" Hunter, J. M.	" Mulcahy
" Huxham	" Mullan
" Jenkinson	" Payne
" Jones	" Ryland
" Keogh	" Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. Barber and Mr. McLachlan.

Resolved in the affirmative.

On the schedule—

Mr. BOWMAN said he should like to have some information as to the length and route of this railway. So far they had been given no information on those points, and he thought the Committee should know the length and route of the line before they passed the schedule.

Mr. MANN: While the Minister was looking for his papers, he might as well say a few words. He heartily endorsed the suggestion of the leader of the Labour party that we should [4.30 p.m.] get all possible information as to the route, the class of country the line passed through, and what had been done in connection with the mines, and the number of men who were working there.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In answer to the leader of the Labour party, the length of the line was a little over 70 miles, and there was a map prepared by the Lands Department, and one prepared by the Mines Department, showing the route.

Mr. LESINA: We never got a copy of these things before. You had them locked up in your box all the time.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I was never asked.

Mr. BOWMAN: But it was your duty to give it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There was the fullest information there as to the route. It started at Cloncurry and went from Hampden to Mount Elliott.

A LABOUR MEMBER: How does it get to Mount Hampden.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He supposed it went along the ground. (Laughter.) The line ran by Slatey Creek, by Duck Creek, and on to the Florence River to the Hampden Group, and from thence to Mount Elliott. It went by the Labour Victory Group.

LABOUR MEMBERS: Oh, oh! and laughter.

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The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It crossed the Cloncurry River between Hampden and Mount Elliott.

* Mr. MAY asked the Minister to be a little more explicit. He was given to understand that a permanent survey had been made from Cloncurry to the Gorge—Duck Creek to Malbon River. From Malbon River there had been two trial surveys, one to Mount Betunga—Labour Victory to Mount Elliott; the other from Malbon River to Florence River—Hampden to Mount Elliott. He favoured the latter route, with slight alterations.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members were complaining, but the fullest information on the route was placed on the table of the House in the report of the Under Secretary for Mines, which said—

From Cloncurry the line passes through the Duck Creek Group, where a large number of leases are held, thence through, or within close proximity to, Hampden, a large mining centre; thence by the Labour Victory Group on to Mount Elliott. All of these mines receive direct assistance, while others, such as the Horse Creek Group, which includes Mount Merlin, and is about 12 miles from the proposed route, and the Corolla River mines, including the Wee MacGregor and Lady Fanny groups, about 24 miles from the line, will also greatly benefit, as in a less degree will the Wills River and the Burke River Mines, which include the Mount Hope, Lady Fanny, Ivanhoe, and Duchess, all of which may eventually be connected with the railway by means of light tramways.

The Commissioner in his report stated that the length of the line was 74 miles.

Mr. JONES: It was a pity the Under Secretary did not give information not only with regard to the route, but with regard to the mining fields through which the line passed.

The PREMIER: There is full information lying on the table.

Mr. JONES: They should have a report from one of the geologists to guide them as to whether the field was likely to be permanent or otherwise. He did not believe in the system of building lines on a report of half a dozen lines by the Commissioner, and one by the Under Secretary of similar length.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Under Secretary's report is founded on the Government Geologist's report.

Mr. JONES: He quite agreed that it was difficult to say whether a field was likely to be permanent or not, but they should have some more information from the Mines Department.

The PREMIER: It is like all mining enterprises—more or less speculative.

Mr. JONES: The member for the district and the hon. member for Carpentaria told them that there was mineral wealth there.

The PREMIER: I think so.

Mr. JONES: The Premier agreed that there was mineral wealth there, and, in that case, the State could develop that mineral wealth by building a State line.

Mr. LESINA moved the insertion, after "railway," on line 6, clause 4 of the schedule, of—

The company shall, at the same time as such notice is given, deposit with the Commissioner the sum of £5,000 to cover preliminary expenses which may be incurred. Such deposit shall be returned to the company when the amount of one-half cost of the certified estimate of construction cost is deposited with the Commissioner as hereinafter provided.

They ought to have some guarantee that the company intended going on.

The PREMIER: Would you just read the few lines after the place where you want the amendment put in?

Mr. Lesina.]

Mr. LESINA :

Upon the receipt of such notice the Commissioner shall without delay furnish to the company an estimate of the cost of such survey and preparation of plans and other documents and the company shall thereupon pay one-half of such cost to the Commissioner who shall then without delay make such survey and shall prepare such other plans and documents as he may deem necessary and shall by writing under his hand certify what is the estimated cost of the construction of the railway.

The PREMIER : They pay one-half of the cost before entering into it.

Mr. LESINA : When dealing with these companies in previous years they had insisted on deposits being made, in order that the labour and time involved in passing these measures should not be entirely wasted. At present there was no guarantee that the company would go on after the measure was passed, and the company ought to make a substantial deposit, which they would forfeit if they failed to carry out their part of the agreement. In connection with the Albert River, Baraketown, and Lilydale Tramway they formerly insisted on £5,000 being put up by the company, and in due course that was forfeited and placed in the Savings Bank, and he did not see why a similar requirement should not be imposed on this company. They wanted some better guarantee than the signature of their agent, and the best guarantee would be a cash guarantee. The £5,000 would be returnable if they put their £100,000 into the business later on. If the company disagreed with the Commissioner's estimate, they were entitled to walk right out of the agreement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : They have to pay one-half of the cost of the survey before they can walk out.

Mr. LESINA : They had paid nothing so far except a share of the cost of printing the Bill.

The PREMIER : There are 30 miles of the 70 miles surveyed.

Mr. LESINA : It was a curious fact that, although the Premier told them the other day that this agreement was only signed two days before it was laid on the table of the House, he now said that 30 miles of the survey was already completed. They must have had the men out surveying before the thing was submitted to the House at all. What was the use of playing this farce of submitting an agreement to them for ratification when the Premier admitted that the survey party was already out to survey part of the route, and yet only two days had elapsed from the signing of the agreement before it was laid on the table of the House? Why could not the Government do as they had done in connection with the electric lighting job, which would have to be exposed? Why did they not fix the whole thing up at an Executive meeting, and be done with it, instead of consulting Parliament at all? It appeared to him that they had outlived their usefulness as an institution. All that was necessary was that five or six men, constituting the Executive of the State, should do as they liked, giving away monopolies and franchises of this description. They had given one valuable concession to the junior member for Brisbane North. Now, they sent out surveyors to survey part of the route without getting any deposit, and they come down to the House two days after the signing of the agreement, and weeks after doing survey work, and then they imposed the guillotine on them. They would have to kiss the knife when it touched their throats.

The PREMIER : It would be difficult to kiss the knife that is cutting your throat. (Laughter.)

Mr. LESINA : The admission of the Premier was a very significant one, and shed new

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light on the matter. Although he was months and months fixing up this agreement, the Premier was thoroughly satisfied in his own mind, when the seal of the Railway Commissioner had been affixed to it, that it was not necessary to consult Parliament at all. What kind of speculation was it when the Minister sent out a survey party before the agreement was placed before Parliament? Seeing that there were only twenty-five members on the Government side, some arrangement must have been come to between the Government and the Opposition before the Bill was introduced; so that the Government must have been coquetting with the Opposition party at the same time that they were making love to the Labour party. In paragraph 5 it was provided that the Commissioner should make an estimate of the cost of construction, and that the company should then deposit an amount not exceeding £100,000. When that deposit was made, under his amendment the £5,000 would be returned to the company. It was simply a guarantee of good faith.

The PREMIER : The hon. member's amendment would not be a particularly bad provision if it had been in the Bill; but it would not make the agreement any better for practical purposes if it were now inserted. The reason it was not in the Bill was just because it would not have made any difference. He could not, without exceedingly good reasons, agree to alter the agreement to which the company had come with the Government.

Mr. COYNE : Must we swallow the whole thing holus-bolus?

The PREMIER : If the amendment were inserted, the company would be at perfect liberty to refuse to accept it. The Committee could either ratify or refuse to ratify the agreement, but altering it in any important particular was tantamount to refusing to ratify it. Perhaps the hon. member for Clermont did not know that, or he would have been afraid to move the amendment. He would not have moved it if he thought it would endanger the Bill. (Laughter.)

Mr. W. H. BARNES : Is he becoming a convert, too?

The PREMIER : Give him time. When the hon. member's colleague, the hon. member for Fassifern, helped the Labour party, everything was possible. With regard to what the hon. member said about the improper conduct of the Government in surveying a railway to that district, he would ask if the hon. member ever heard of a railway proposal being brought before Parliament where the route was not first surveyed?

Mr. LESINA : Here is a case in point; it is only partly surveyed.

The PREMIER : There have been two flying surveys made. He believed the Committee would validate the agreement, or he would not have made it. It would have been very improper for him to make such an agreement if he did not think Parliament would validate it.

Mr. LESINA : I think such an agreement should lie on the table of the House for some time before being signed.

The PREMIER : That was another matter. Their present system was that Ministers were supposed to take some responsibility on themselves.

Mr. COYNE : But not all the responsibility.

The PREMIER : Ministers must take a great deal more responsibility than some hon. members thought. A Minister could make a far better agreement with a company than that Committee.

Mr. BOWMAN : It depends on who the Minister is.

The PREMIER: This Committee could not make an agreement with any company.

Mr. PAGER: Too many men, too many minds.

The PREMIER: Just so.

Mr. BOWMAN: One mind, one autocrat. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: This was the only way of doing this kind of public business. At least, he did not know a better way. He remembered being at a caucus meeting of a political party. A delegation of two or three men were coming from another body—whether it was another political party or not he would not say—to discuss something with the political party of which he was a member. The chairman of the political party of which he was a member said, "We will admit them into the room and hear their proposals, but we will not begin to discuss them so long as they are in the room, because we may differ from one another, and they may get anything out of us that they like. We will hear what they propose, then they will retire, and we shall discuss it among ourselves." To attempt to discuss in detail an agreement with a company like this when they were meeting them would be a foolish way to attempt to do public business.

Mr. BOWMAN: That is different to the way you used to come into the caucus. You used to threaten us with the bludgeon of a dissolution. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: He was better to them than they knew. He was like a father to them. (Laughter.)

Mr. BOWMAN: A very bad step-father. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: When the hon. member for Clermont was moving his amendment, he asked him to read a few lines in the following paragraph, which showed that the Commissioner never incurred more than one-half of the cost. The Government went into the thing on the assumption that they would only take one-half the risk for the sake of getting one-half the profits; and, before the Commissioner did any survey work, the company must put down one-half the estimated cost of the survey. He would ask the Committee not to accept the amendment. Such a small security as £5,000 was quite unnecessary. The company had given a guarantee of their *bona fides* by spending £50,000 or £60,000, and they were not going to surrender their property for the sake of half the cost of the survey. At the present price of copper, the mine was not worth working without a railway, and would not be worked without a railway. The hon. member for the district and other hon. members ought to remember that. The mine that belonged to the company was not the only mine in the district. The railway would develop a group of mines. For the sake of one-half of the cost of the survey, should they run the risk of even delaying the building of the railway? He made no promise as to how the thing might turn out. It might turn out unprofitable, and both the Government and the company might be making a bad bargain.

Mr. LENNON: You do not know, when building a Government line, whether it will pay or not.

The PREMIER: It depended altogether on the country the railway was going into. If they were building an agricultural line, they knew quite well what they were doing.

Mr. PAGET: Provided the weather allows the farmers to grow crops.

The PREMIER: If they came down to as fine a point as that, there was no certainty in human affairs at all. In this case, while the Government thought it was their duty to take part of the risk, because the State would

get part of the profits, they did not think that it was their duty to take all the risk when, if the thing turned out a success, these people would have very large profits. They would have a very large loss if it turned out badly, which he hoped it would not, because he believed the line would open an

[5 p.m.] immensely rich district. The company had already given "hostages to fortune" in the development work they had carried out and the money they had spent on machinery. It was therefore quite unnecessary to ask them to make a deposit of £5,000 on account of the survey. He hoped the Committee would accept the agreement as it stood.

Mr. LESINA: It was evident that the company had laid down the law to the Premier, and would not permit him to make any alteration whatever in the agreement. The hon. gentleman had given no reason why the £5,000 should not be put up. He had not intimated that the company would object to it, but he had intimated that they would not depart one iota from the agreement as signed, sealed, and delivered. The survey was in progress, and, as far as the House was concerned, it was simply a farce to ask members to consider the agreement, because it was unalterable. The House was simply asked to ratify the agreement, and not to be a party to it, or a body which had the power of revising and amending it. The Premier told them that the Minister was in a much better position to make such an agreement than the House was. He had a proposition to make that any future agreement should be allowed to lie on the table of the House for a definite period before it was ratified. Members could then study it, and if there was a consensus of opinion in favour of any radical alteration, then, before the validation took place, it could be resubmitted to the company. At present they were simply asked to validate or reject, and members who were not pledged to oppose such proposals under any circumstances were placed in a very peculiar position, and had placed upon them the responsibility of refusing to validate the agreement, although a majority might wish to see the railway constructed. That was not a fair position to put members in. They could not alter the line without risking the rejection of the agreement.

The PREMIER: Without refusing to ratify.

Mr. LESINA: They must ratify the whole thing, from "A" to "Z." They were simply a House of registration, and not a House of deliberation or revision. The Government said, "There is the agreement; take it or leave it, but do not take out a line; don't cross a 't' or dot an 'i,' or take out a comma." Their powers of deliberation were practically taken away from them, and even their powers of ratification were curtailed by the operation of the "gag" and the "guillotine." The company, out of the fulness of their capital, would certainly not object to put up £5,000 if they had grounds for believing that that would remove a serious objection on the part of the Labour party. Why should they only pay half the cost of survey? It might not amount to a great deal, but when the Commissioner made up his estimate of the cost of the line, and, if it exceeded £200,000, the company might decline to put up their part of the deposit, and would have put the country to great expense for the purpose of surveying the line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You have not read the agreement.

Mr. LESINA: He had read it very closely. Put the matter in this way: At any time within three months after the validation of the agreement the Commissioner was to issue his certificate of cost of construction.

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The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; but before that they must pay half the cost of the survey.

Mr. LESINA: That was his point. They might pay half the cost of survey and then decline to go on with the work.

The PREMIER: Read the first two lines of the fifth paragraph of the agreement.

Mr. LESINA: That made the position worse, because the whole survey would have been completed, and not until the estimate of the cost of construction had been made would the company put up anything at all, and they could at that late stage withdraw from their part of the bargain.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The first step is to ascertain the cost of survey, and when that is given the company pay half.

Mr. LESINA: Under clause 4, when they came to make half of the deposit, would they be billed with half the cost of the survey?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No.

Mr. LESINA: Then they did not need to go to clause 5 for an interpretation. The latter part of that clause said that—

Provided that if the amount of such certified estimate shall exceed the sum of £200,000 the company shall have the option of either withdrawing from the agreement or of paying a deposit equal to one half the amount of such certified estimate.

If they did not care to enter into the agreement, they need not pay the £100,000, and, in that case, they only paid half the cost of survey. Was he right in that?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is right.

Mr. LESINA: The more he perused the Bill, the more mystified the Secretary for Railways seemed to become. Originally, he looked as if he knew something about the agreement, but there was now an air of doubt upon his face, which was growing. He intended to press the amendment to a division, because, altogether apart from the fact that the company would have no objection to making the deposit, the Committee could not be expected to accept the principle laid down by the Premier that all they had to do was to validate the agreement.

Mr. RYLAND was surprised that the Minister would not accept the amendment if it was only for the purpose of asserting the privileges of the House. They should show that they had a right to alter any part of the agreement which had been entered into. In regard to the amendment itself, the Premier had said that the company had abundance of money, and there would be no danger of any loss to them if they made the deposit asked for. It was simply asking the company to indemnify the Government against any loss incurred on behalf of the survey. The Premier had referred to a meeting which had taken place between a certain political party and a delegation which waited upon them, and had said that the political party had insisted, after the case had been stated, in considering by themselves the statements that had been made. Surely, if that principle was accepted, then, if there were any representatives of the syndicate within the precincts of the building, they should be compelled to go outside. He certainly thought that as an assertion of the rights of the House, some amendment should be made in the agreement before them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members would see that the Bill was one to validate an agreement, and if an amendment was carried in the agreement it would no longer be the agreement arrived at between the company and the Secretary for Railways.

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Mr. BOWMAN: Do you think that is a fair way of passing legislation?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It was absolutely necessary that the agreement should be passed in the form in which it appeared in the Bill. There was no Star Chamber business about the matter, because the House could either accept or reject the agreement; but they could not amend an agreement which had been entered into between the two parties. With regard to the amendment, he would point out that the agreement made provision with regard to the payment of preliminary expenses. The 2nd paragraph of clause 4 provided that—

Upon the receipt of such notice the Commissioner shall without delay furnish to the company an estimate of the cost of such survey and preparation of plans and other documents and the company shall thereupon pay one half of such cost to the Commissioner who shall then without delay make such survey and shall prepare such other plans and documents as he may deem necessary and shall by writing under his hand certify what is the estimated cost of the construction of the railway.

Every hon. member knew that the plans of railways laid upon the table of the House were prepared from what was called a "trial survey," and that after those plans had been approved a second or permanent survey had to be made before working plans were prepared. When the second survey was made curves were often altered, and sometimes the route was varied. The company were bound by the agreement to pay £1 for £1 in connection with the cost of survey and of the construction of the railway, and if hon. members wanted to get on with this business they would not accept the amendment.

HON. R. PHILP assured the Committee that this was a *bonâ fide* company, and that they had the money now to put up the £100,000. Three years ago they applied for permission to build the line under the Tramways Act, and had the money to build it, but the Government foolishly refused to grant their application. The company suffered a loss through the line not being built. They were very anxious to have the railway constructed, and were prepared to put down £100,000 to-morrow if the Government would proceed with the line. He was satisfied that if the Bill passed quickly the company were so anxious to build the line that they would provide their share of the cost and have it built in twelve months instead of two years. It was no use putting blocks in the agreement.

Mr. LESINA: Do you call a deposit of £5,000 a block?

HON. R. PHILP: The company were prepared to find, not simply £5,000, but the whole of the money necessary to construct the tramway. When the estimate of the cost of survey was made they would pay one-half the amount of that estimate, and when the estimate of the cost of construction was made they would pay one-half of the cost. He would like to see the Government build the line, but they would not build it—they wanted to build lines in their own electorates.

Mr. BOWMAN: Do you think it would be a good line for the Government to build?

HON. R. PHILP: Yes, he did; but the Government were not prepared to build it. They had too many rubbishy lines in their own electorates, like the Blackall extension and others, which every member of the Labour party voted for, and they did not want to construct this railway. He would ask hon. members to pass this measure if they wanted to see the mining industry and the country prosper, because he was certain that the construction of this railway would encourage mining in that part of the State. They had already passed thirteen lines

on the 3 per cent. guarantee principle, and by and by they would probably pass more lines on that principle, but they would find, when they had passed twenty or thirty of those 3 per cent. guarantee lines, that there would be an agitation in the country to do away with the guarantee, because people would say, Why should they give a 3 per cent. guarantee when other people got lines without giving any guarantee? Candidates at election time should be asked, "Are you prepared to vote for the withdrawal of the 3 per cent. guarantee?" And would answer "Yes," and there would be an end to the 3 per cent. guarantee.

Mr. MITCHELL: He had heard several members of the Opposition who were against the Bill admit that the amendment was a reasonable one. The Minister told them that the Bill was one for validating an agreement between the company and the Government. Was the agreement such that it could not be altered in little incidental details? If it was, then they were wasting time in discussing the measure. If the leader of the Opposition was correct in his statement that the company were prepared to put up £100,000 at once, surely there would be no difficulty in getting them to make a small deposit of £5,000 as a guarantee that they would pay their share of the expenditure incurred. With regard to the statement of the Premier that the company had given a good deal of guarantee in the work they had done in the mine, but that at the present price of copper the work they had done would be no use to them, he would like to know what was the value of such a guarantee? He thought the amendment should be assented to by the Minister, and that it should be submitted to the company for their acceptance. The company were not asked to pay anything more than was provided for in the agreement, but simply to advance £5,000 as a guarantee that they would pay their proportionate amount of the expenses incurred in connection with the preliminary work of surveying the railway.

Mr. COYNE thought they were reaching a pretty serious stage in the Government of this State when the Cabinet could enter into an agreement which might be detrimental to the interests of the community, bring that agreement down to the House, and tell hon. members that they could not amend it. If that was the case, there was no use in wasting the time of the Committee over the Bill. Surely the Committee were not bound to validate any agreement brought along by the Cabinet.

Mr. D. HUNTER: No; you can throw it out.

Mr. COYNE thought there should be something between the two alternatives of validating or rejecting the Bill. He contended that they would guard the interest of the people by adopting the amendment, and requiring that the company should make a deposit of £5,000, as a guarantee that they would pay their share of the preliminary expenses. They were told that the Premier could not accept the amendment, and that they must pass it as it stood. If that was the case, constitutional Government [5.30 p.m.] was abolished altogether in Queensland, and we had Executive Government instead. They were told that they could not alter an item; but, in his opinion, it was the duty of members to remedy any defect which they saw in the Bill, as they were sent here as the guardians of the interests of the people of the State. They were told by the Premier that he could make a better bargain for Queensland than the House could.

Mr. MURPHY: He did not say that; he said that negotiations could be carried on better by one man.

Mr. COYNE had taken the words down, and they were to the effect that any Minister could make a better bargain in a matter of this description than could the House. That was not correct. They had shown defects on the second reading, and were prepared to show more before the debate closed, unless they were gagged altogether, which would operate detrimentally to the people of Queensland. What harm could come to the company if they could prove their *bona fides* by putting down £5,000, which would cover the preparation of the plans and also other matters which would have to be gone into before the line could be commenced. They had only partly gone through the survey; they were told it was a flying survey. The Minister had not said it was going to be a permanent survey. If it was not, when were they going to get the permanent survey, and how did they know what more expense the State might be put to before the permanent survey took place? This was a big cost to the people of Queensland, and if the company were not going to get big profits, they would not go into this concern at all. We wanted them to take a fair share of the cost of preparing for the railway to be built. The amendment protected the taxpayers, inasmuch as the company must deposit the sum of £5,000 as a guarantee of their *bona fides*. On a former occasion there had been an agreement with this company which was far better than the present one, and how did we know that they would succeed in getting the money they wanted when they went to hawk the concession on the money market. We knew that they had not got the funds now to carry on this business.

Mr. PAGET: But they have been carrying on their mines for a long time past.

Mr. COYNE: Yes, carrying them on by getting exemptions from time to time.

Mr. PAGET: They are carrying them on with their own capital.

Mr. COYNE: They might be; but it was ridiculous to say that these persons who professed to own these mines had the cash to invest in the construction of this line.

Mr. PAGET: They had cash two years ago to build the railway.

Mr. COYNE: They had not got the cash; they were going to hawk the concession which this Bill gave them all round the world. If they had the cash, why did they demur at paying this small amount of £5,000 to prove their *bona fides*. The Government should accept the amendment, in order to show that there was some honesty behind the matter; and, if they did not accept it, the outside public would have good reasons to be very suspicious of the whole concern.

Mr. MURPHY thought the best guarantee that the agreement would be fulfilled was the fact that the company had already agreed to construct this line themselves.

Mr. COYNE: They will agree to anything.

Mr. MURPHY: They had asked permission to construct a tramway under the tramway provisions of the Mining Act, but the Government refused to issue them leases, because they did not consider it desirable that the carrying trade of that portion of the Cloncurry district should be handed over to a private company. If this end of the Cloncurry field was going to prosper, it was desirable that the railway should be controlled by the State. In 1900, at the time the big stonewall was being carried on by the Labour party against syndicate railways, the present Premier brought forward a motion, which read—

That this House, recognising that there is a demand for railways in several districts where the Government

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are not at present justified in building railways at the sole risk and charge of the State, is of opinion that the Government should introduce legislation, of general application, providing that the Government may receive from the persons interested in having such a railway built, a cash deposit of not less than one-half of the estimated cost of construction, and on receipt of such deposit proceed to construct such railway.

The present Premier then went on to use arguments similar to those he had used in connection with the line from Cloncurry to Mount Elliott. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that that motion was considered at the Labour caucus before it was moved, because the only members of the House who spoke on that occasion were the hon. junior member for Gympie and the late hon. senior member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dunsford.

Mr. RYLAND: It was a very good motion.

Mr. MURPHY: Mr. Ryland said this—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must address an hon. member by the name of his constituency.

Mr. MURPHY:

Mr. RYLAND did not look upon the proposal of the hon. member for Rockhampton as a new scheme of railway construction, because it was but an extension and improvement of the guarantee principle. Under the existing Act guarantees could be accepted from a local authority, from a number of local authorities combined, or from a local authority in conjunction with a company or private individual, and the scheme submitted by the hon. member for Rockhampton practically permitted the acceptance of a guarantee from a private individual or company, in the form of a cash deposit of an agreed proportion of the estimated cost of construction of the line. When the Government could not undertake the construction of a line they would be justified in adopting the hon. member's proposal, which was far better than the proposals at present before the House.

Mr. DUNSFORD approved of the proposal as providing a new system under which individuals or companies might lend to the State a certain portion of the capital necessary to construct railways. Under this scheme the State would be able to give assistance to secure railway communication to a district requiring it, and at the same time it would not involve any departure from the recognised policy of State ownership, control, and management of railways, which was so strongly contended for by hon. members on his side.

Mr. RYLAND: Quite correct.

Mr. MURPHY: The 1900 proposal was a somewhat similar one to that now before the House, and the Labour party, as evidenced by the speeches of Mr. Dunsford and the hon. member for Gympie—and at that time he thought Mr. Dunsford was a member of the Labour executive—showed that they were not prepared to stop the development of mining fields by refusing the assistance of private companies to construct railways or tramways to those centres.

Mr. JONES: That is an advance party.

Mr. MURPHY: Here the State built the line and maintained it, and every man who worked on the railway would be a State employee, under the control of the Commissioner for Railways. The fares and freights were fixed by the Bill, and at the end of fifteen years the Mount Elliott Company had to get their share of the money back. Their interest had to be purchased as a going concern on business principles. He did not intend to vote for the amendment, because the best guarantee that the line would be constructed was that the company were quite prepared to build it under the Tramways Act themselves.

Mr. RYLAND was in accord with the quotation made by the hon. member for Croydon. That was a sound proposal made by the present Premier on that occasion in opposition to the syndicate railways then before the House, and

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to which he (Mr. Ryland) gave his assent. It was on the same footing as the guaranteed lines, where the local authority placed in the hands of the Government the security of the land, so as to make up the deficiency on a line. A private company had no permanent security, because mines fluctuated in value, and the mine, which was worth something to-day, might not be worth anything in twelve months' time, and mining companies, under those circumstances, had no security to offer as regarded their property. It would, therefore, be necessary for a mining company to give a cash guarantee to the Government, after which the Government would be quite justified in going on with the work. It would be a Government line right from the start; there was no consulting the syndicate about survey fees or anything else. If it did not pay, the Government would simply draw on the deposit to make up the deficiency in the same way as they would collect a rate in a benefited area to make up a deficiency. There was nothing in connection with that proposal about the rates being 50 per cent. higher than on Government lines. There was no proposal to repurchase the railway on a basis of twentieth-eight four-seventh times the average annual earnings. The only proposal made by the hon. gentleman in 1900 was that the Government should obtain a monetary deposit from a company, to be drawn upon if the line did not pay. There was no need for the hon. member for Croydon to go back to 1900. If he read his (Mr. Ryland's) speech on the second reading of this Bill, he would find that he said that the present Government should get a monetary guarantee from the company. That was the proposal he was prepared to stand by now.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted (*Mr. Lesina's amendment*)—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 22.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Land
„ Barber	„ Lennon
„ Bowman	„ Lesina
„ Coyne	„ May
„ Hamilton	„ McLachlan
„ Hardacre	„ Mitchell
„ Hunter, J. M.	„ Mulcahy
„ Huxham	„ Mullan
„ Jenkinson	„ Payne
„ Jones	„ Ryland
„ Keogh	„ Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. Huxham and Mr. Ryland.

NOES, 38.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
„ Appel	„ Kidston
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Mackintosh
„ Barnes, W. H.	„ Mann
„ Bell	„ Maxwell
„ Blair	„ Murphy
„ Brennan	„ Paget
„ Campbell	„ Petrie
„ Cottell	„ Philp
„ Cowap	„ Rankin
„ Denham	„ Redwood
„ Douglas	„ Roberts
„ Forrest	„ Somerset
„ Grant	„ Stodart
„ Grayson	„ Sumner
„ Gunn	„ Thorn
„ Hawthorn	„ Walker
„ Herbertson	„ White
„ Hunter, D.	„ Woods

Tellers: Mr. Appel and Mr. Woods.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. HUXHAM moved the omission, in subsection (iii.) of paragraph 6, of the following words:—“at the cost of the Government and without any extra cost to the company,” after the word “completed,” in line 72, with the view of inserting the words—

and the total cost of the construction of the railway shall be borne in equal proportions by the Government and by the company.

In entering into a contract, the responsibility should rest upon the company as well as upon the State; and the amendment would provide an admirable means of apportioning the cost of the railway. They had it from the Minister that both parties would subscribe £1 for £1; and he could not see why any additional cost should have to be borne by the Government. The amendment was eminently fair, and should be accepted. The two parties would then be equal partners in the business.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Members would notice that a provision was made in the clause that the railway should be completed at the cost of the Government. The Commissioner was the officer who fixed the cost after surveys had been made by his own officers, and then he built the railway. It was not the company that was building the railway; and, after he had fixed the cost, was it not a reasonable thing that he should carry out the work at that cost? The Commissioner, as a responsible officer, was not likely to under-estimate the cost.

Mr. BOWMAN: Does he ever under-estimate the cost of a railway?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner would take good care to be very careful in not under-estimating the cost, and he was certain there would be no under-estimation. Therefore the amendment was unnecessary. It would be quite a different matter if the company were building the railway. It was needless to say that such an amendment could not be accepted.

Mr. BOWMAN: The Secretary for Railways would lead the Committee to believe that the Commissioner could not make a mistake in the cost of construction, and he (Mr. Bowman) had interjected, Had the Commissioner never made a mistake in his estimates?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: All the railways constructed under day labour have been completed under the estimate.

Mr. BOWMAN: The hon. gentleman would lead them to believe that the Commissioner was infallible—that he could do nothing wrong, like the hon. gentleman himself. He considered the amendment was fair, for this reason: If the estimate of the Commissioner was exceeded, it was unfair that the country should pay the extra cost and allow the company to go scot free. From what they had heard from the Secretary for Railways and the Premier, it was practically a waste of time to discuss any item in the agreement. They were told that if they altered it in any respect they would lose the chance of having the line constructed, because the agreement had been entered into between the Minister and the directors of the company. If, in future, they were going to carry on legislation in that manner, there was very little use in meeting at all. Why should the Cabinet enter into an agreement which the majority of members could not alter, whether they were opposed to any portion of it or not? How did the hon. gentleman know that the company would not accept the agreement with some amendments?

The PREMIER: I do not know.

Mr. BOWMAN: No; and the hon. gentleman did not seem to care. That was the trouble. He had simply put his back against the wall.

The PREMIER: Not at all.

Mr. BOWMAN: The hon. gentleman had been conspiring for the last twelve months with the company, and he told the House that about twenty different agreements were drawn up before one could be arrived at which was satisfactory to both parties, and he asked the House

to swallow it holus bolus. He did not suggest that the Secretary for Railways made the agreement. He questioned very much whether he had the ability to do so. But they knew that the Premier, who was Scotch and canny, was fairly good at making arrangements, whether they were for the benefit of the State or not.

Mr. W. H. BARNES: Have you had experience?

Mr. BOWMAN: He should think he had had during the last few days—an experience he was not likely to forget. The Government was simply flouting a majority of the representatives, if they did not back down and do what the Premier told them to do. He objected to the agreement principally because it had been cut and dried, and because they were asked to swallow it or leave it alone.

Hon. D. F. DENHAM: It is worth swallowing.

Mr. BOWMAN: The hon. gentleman knew something about swallowing. He had had a fair experience of swallowing principles, and ought to be an authority on the question.

Hon. D. F. DENHAM: Always on the same tack.

Mr. BOWMAN: At one period of the hon. gentleman's career they saw him sitting opposite, sometimes taking the acting leadership in the absence of the Premier, and the hon. gentleman had now nothing but kind words to say in regard to a proposal of this kind.

Hon. D. F. DENHAM: This is an occasion for kind words.

Mr. BOWMAN: On this occasion, because it was a question of syndicate lines, the hon. gentleman could see eye to eye with the Premier. The Premier has been able to play off one party against the other. He had been very glad to receive support from the Labour party for legislation that suited them and him; but when it came down to a question of assisting a syndicate, he knew the Labour party would not support him. If there was an amendment in which the hon. gentleman himself believed, apparently he could not accept it.

Hon. D. F. DENHAM: This is too good to risk.

Mr. BOWMAN: If the amendment was a good one, it should be acceptable to the company. His party desired to safeguard the interests of the State, and that was the purpose of the amendment. He hoped members of the Opposition would yet be able to see that the interests of the State should be safeguarded, and that they would be found voting with his party even at that eleventh hour.

Mr. MULLAN: The Premier, in speaking on the schedule the other day, asked members to show him in what respects the agreement was a bad business transaction. He would draw the hon. gentleman's attention to the section with which they were now dealing. Now, notwithstanding the opinion of the Secretary for Railways to the contrary, the line might cost a considerable sum more than the estimated cost, and it was not fair that the State should pay the whole extra cost. He would draw attention to clause 12 of the agreement, which said—

The amount of such net profits for each such period shall be appropriated as follows:—

FIRSTLY.—The Commissioner shall retain such portion of the amount of such profits as is equal to interest at the rate of three pounds ten shillings per centum per annum on one-half of the certified estimate of cost of construction of the railway (or such completed section as evidenced by a certificate of the Commissioner given as hereinbefore provided) and the amount of such interest shall for each half year ending the thirty-first day of December and thirtieth day of June respectively be a first charge upon such profits.

Mr. Mullan.]

That meant that they would get interest on one-half on the certified estimated cost of construction, but, if the cost of construction exceeded the estimate, they would get no interest on the excess. He would ask the Premier whether that was a fair proposal as far as the State was concerned? If the estimate were exceeded by £50,000, the State would receive no interest at all.

Question put.

Mr. MULLAN thought he was entitled to an answer to his question as to whether the Premier thought it was a fair thing that the country should receive no interest on any possible excess cost of construction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he would answer the hon. member. The agreement laid it down that the Commissioner was to make an estimate of the cost of construction, and he was not likely to under-estimate the cost.

Mr. MULLAN: That is not the point.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member wanted to make not only his own speech but his (Mr. Kerr's) also.

Mr. MULLAN: Well, somebody will want to make it for you. (Labour laughter.)

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner was not likely to estimate the cost at less than the railway could be built for. The late Minister for Railways, the hon. member for Oxley, showed, in 1906, that up to that time 222 miles of railway had been constructed by day labour at a saving of £60,818 on the estimated cost. That showed that the Commissioner and his officers were not in the habit of under-estimating the cost of railways they had to build. In any case, having regard to the fact that the Commissioner would construct the line, it was only fair that if the cost exceeded his estimate the extra amount should be paid by the State.

Mr. MULLAN: The Minister had failed to explain the point which he had raised. He was not taking exception just now to the fact that the State would have to pay the extra amount above the estimated cost of construction. The point he wished to make was that, in the event of the certified estimate of cost being exceeded, there was no provision in the agreement under which the country would receive interest on the amount of money expended in excess of the certified estimate of cost of construction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Will not that make the Commissioner careful?

Mr. MULLAN: He was making a speech now. (Laughter.) The Premier had told the Committee that this was a good sound business transaction, and he would be pleased to hear from the hon. gentleman how he could justify that statement in the face of the fact that the State might spend £15,000 or £20,000 on which it would receive no interest?

The PREMIER: The hon. member made a very good point from his standpoint, but hon. members should remember that in making a bargain of this kind it was neither very wise nor very fair to try to have it all their own way.

Mr. MULLAN: The company are getting it all their own way.

The PREMIER: No; he thought he could show that the company were not getting all their own way. Hon. members opposite were very desirous of retaining the building and working of this railway in the hands of the Commissioner. Were they prepared to pay anything for that privilege? The company were to put down £100,000 towards the cost of a railway

with the construction of which they would have nothing whatever to do. The Commissioner could make the railway any way he liked, and the people who were to find half the money would have nothing whatever to do with what the railway cost to construct. Was it not reasonable to suppose that if any hon. member were going into a business of that sort he would like to know where his liabilities stopped? And was it not equally reasonable for the company to want to know where their liabilities stopped? Would it be a fair proposition that the company should first put down £100,000, and then, after they had gone into the business to that extent, the Commissioner should come along and ask for another £20,000, and later on for another £20,000? Would any sane man go into a business like that? Suppose the Government and the company entered into this business on half-shares, and the Commissioner could spend any amount of money he liked on making a railway which in the opinion of the company might not be necessary for their business or their traffic—

Mr. BOWMAN: Is the Commissioner likely to do that?

The PREMIER: He did not think the Commissioner was likely to do it; but he was not the company who were putting their money into the business. He might tell the company that the Commissioner was not likely to do such a thing, and they would probably reply, "Well, if the Commissioner is not likely to do that, there is no danger in putting the risk on you." That would be a quite natural and quite fair reply. If the State spent a large sum over the agreed amount, he thought it was quite right that the State should pay that extra amount.

Mr. MULLAN: You will not get 3½ per cent. on that extra amount.

The PREMIER: He thought the State would get 3½ per cent. on the cost of construction. Besides being a safeguard to the company, this provision would also be a check on the Commissioner, because that officer, knowing that if he invested any money in the railway over £100,000 that extra money would earn no interest, would be doubly careful to see that he made an estimate which was likely to cover—and a little more than cover—the cost of construction. If the Commissioner made a mistake in his estimate, the country would have to pay for it, just as the country would have to pay for any mistake he might make in connection with any other railway. He did not think there was the slightest danger that the Commissioner would exceed appreciably the estimate he would make of the cost of construction.

HON. D. F. DENHAM pointed out that in the construction of the last section of the Cloncurry Railway the Commissioner's estimate had been very largely exceeded by reason of floods, which destroyed work that had been done.

Mr. BOWMAN: May not the same thing happen on this railway?

HON. D. F. DENHAM: This railway was to be constructed in the same belt of country, and some heavy flood might destroy the work there. Would it not be wise, then, to make provision in the agreement for such contingencies as floods?

Mr. BOWMAN: You cannot do that; it is signed and sealed.

HON. D. F. DENHAM thought they could make such a provision.

Mr. LESINA: The suggestion of the hon. member for Oxley was a valuable one, but he appeared to overlook the fact that the Committee had been tied up.

HON. D. F. DENHAM: The Commissioner has not given the information yet.

[Mr. Mullan.]

Mr. LESINA: What did it matter whether he gave the information or not? Information generally produced some change in [7.30 p.m.] a man's mind, but what good would it do? They had to swallow this like a child swallowed a dose of castor oil—take it whether they liked it or not. The deed had been done in Executive darkness, now it had been dragged into the light of day, but they had the "guillotine" and "gag" before them, and they could do nothing. If they rose *en masse* they might reject it, but a lot of members did not care to do that because they wished to see capital invested and the district go ahead, although the agreement was not so good as it would have been had they been permitted to improve it. They had to take it or leave it; therefore, what was the good of wasting time? The Premier had made up his mind. The Government simply turned to their followers and told them to get into line. They were docile, obedient followers, and knew on which side their bread was buttered. They would not risk an appeal to the electors over a small private line like this. What if there was £150,000 of public money invested in it? The money came out of the taxpayers' pockets, and their salaries were safe, and why should they worry about it? The Minister for Railways and the Premier simply looked over their shoulders and scowled, and there was no protest. The division bell rang, and they all got into line.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Huxham's amendment*) stand part of the schedule—put; and the Committee divided:—

Ayes, 36.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Hunter, D.
" Appel	" Kerr
" Barnes, G. P.	" Kidston
" Barnes, W. H.	" Mackintosh
" Barton	" Mann
" Bell	" Maxwell
" Blair	" Moore
" Brennan	" Murphy
" Campbell	" Paget
" Cottell	" Petrie
" Cowap	" Philp
" Denham	" Redwood
" Douglas	" Roberts
" Forrest	" Sumner
" Grant	" Swayne
" Grayson	" Thorn
" Hawthorn	" Walker
" Herbertson	" Woods

Tellers: Mr. Cottell and Mr. Grant.

Noes, 21.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lennon
" Barber	" Lesina
" Bowman	" May
" Coyne	" McLachlan
" Hamilton	" Mitchell
" Hardacre	" Mulcahy
" Hunter, J. M.	" Mullan
" Huxham	" Payne
" Jones	" Ryland
" Keogh	" Winstanley
" Laud	

Tellers: Mr. Adamson and Mr. Barber.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. WOODS intended to move the insertion, on line 25, after "agreement," of the words—

Provided that the rate of wages to be paid by the Commissioner to workmen employed upon the construction of the railway shall not be less than the rate of wages prevailing in the district for work of a similar nature.

Mr. LESINA: It is not specific enough. We want 10s. a day as a minimum wage. Are you game to make it 10s. a day?

Mr. WOODS: When the Etheridge Railway Bill was going through the Chamber, the hon.

member moved an amendment that the wages should be 9s. a day, which was 1s. a day less than the ruling rate of wages in that district.

Mr. LESINA: They were getting 7s. 6d.

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask hon. members to refrain from interjecting while another hon. gentleman has the floor.

Mr. LESINA rose to correct a misstatement made by the hon. member.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Order, order!

The CHAIRMAN: I would point out that the hon. gentleman will not be in order in doing that. The hon. member for Woothakata has the floor.

Mr. LESINA: He rose to make a personal explanation.

The PREMIER: You cannot rise to make a personal explanation.

Mr. LESINA: When the Etheridge Bill was going through the Chamber, the principle that the minimum rate of wage of the people engaged in the construction of that line should be 9s. a day was settled.

Mr. WOODS: That is not a point of order.

Mr. LESINA: It was a personal explanation. The principle laid down was that 9s. a day should be the minimum wage, and not the maximum. They must not pay less than 9s. Under this amendment they could pay 7s. 6d.

Mr. WOODS was rather sorry that it had become necessary, after what had taken place when the Etheridge Railway passed, for the hon. member for Clermont to have to make a personal explanation about moving a minimum wage for men in North Queensland, which was 1s. a day less than was paid to men in that district.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand the hon. member is going to move an amendment. I will be glad if he will move the amendment, and stick to the question.

Mr. WOODS formally moved the amendment.

Mr. McLACHLAN: There will be no work of a similar nature.

Mr. WOODS: If that was the case, what was the object of the deputation which waited on the Minister for Railways the other day in connection with the workmen on the Cloncurry Railway?

Mr. MULLAN: To get a minimum wage.

Mr. WOODS: Was not this a continuation of the Cloncurry Railway? He would like to point out to the hon. member for Charters Towers that he knew more about railway construction than the hon. member did.

Mr. BOWMAN: Seeing that you are a prospective commissioner.

Mr. WOODS: He was endeavouring, by the amendment, to prevent the necessity for any deputation waiting upon the Minister for Railways, or any other Minister, for the purpose of preventing men in the outside districts receiving less than a legitimate wage.

Mr. COYNE: Specify a minimum amount.

Mr. WOODS: As was the case when the hon. member for Clermont moved a minimum, the result would be that the minimum wage would be the maximum, particularly on railway construction.

Mr. COYNE: Not necessarily.

Mr. WOODS: He hoped the amendment would be carried, and confidently looked for support to the members of the Labour party.

Mr. Woods.]

The PREMIER: The Government could not accept the amendment, not because he thought it would do any harm—

Mr. COYNE: The company would not have it.

The PREMIER: The position would be that it would not be the agreement the company had signed.

Mr. LESINA: That is why you signed it behind the back of Parliament.

The PREMIER: He did not.

Mr. LESINA: You did.

Mr. LENNON: The company is the dominant partner.

The PREMIER: Further, he did not think the amendment was at all necessary. They had passed about a dozen railways this session, not one of which would be built under different conditions, so far as the Railway Commissioner and his wages were concerned, to this railway. The Commissioner had complete control in regard to the wages paid on those railways, the same as he would have over the wages paid on this railway. No one ever suggested that any provision of that kind was necessary in connection with State railways. There was a regulation that the wages paid must be the ruling rate of wages in the district.

Mr. LESINA: That is a very elastic regulation.

Mr. MANN: It is not.

Mr. LESINA: I am speaking to your master.

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask hon. members to refrain from interjecting while the Premier is speaking.

The PREMIER: It would not make one pennyworth of difference to anyone working on the railway whether they put in the amendment or not; but, as a matter of business, it would make a great difference, inasmuch as it would be an alteration in the agreement signed by the representatives of the Government, and would be equivalent to a refusal on the part of Parliament to ratify the agreement.

Mr. W. H. BARNES: Agreements have been altered in the past without jeopardising them.

The PREMIER: That was so; but the alterations were such as would not affect the position of the company. It was much better that the agreement should be passed as it was, unless some serious blemishes were discovered.

Mr. HAMILTON: The amendment was not definite enough, and he would endeavour to get in the amendment he had intended moving by making an amendment in the amendment of the hon. member for Woothakata. He moved that all the words after the words "Provided that" be omitted, with a view of inserting—

no workman shall be employed at any time upon the construction of the railway at a wage which is less than the rate of ten shillings for every working day of eight hours.

It was all very well for the Premier to say that men would get the ruling rate of wages; but what was the ruling rate of wages? A deputation had to wait on the Minister the other day on account of the differential rates of pay on the Cloncurry railway. The engineers in charge endeavoured to cut wages in order to do the work cheaply, and a reduction was made from 9s. to 7s. a day. The Minister told the deputation that the engineer either misunderstood or exceeded his instructions. Some time ago, when he (Mr. Hamilton) was in the district, men doing surface work at the mines were receiving 10s. per day, and men working below were getting more. It would not be fair to let it be possible for men to be paid less than 10s. a day in a district where everything was dear. Of course the amendment would not prevent men getting more than 10s.

[Hon. W. Kidston.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS did not think either amendment was necessary, because the rate of wages that had been paid on the Cloncurry Railway ranged from 10s. to 11s. 6d. per day. If they fixed the rate at 10s., that would be the amount that would be paid. He was not going to accept either amendment.

* Mr. MANN: It appeared as if the hon. member for Gregory wished it to be understood that the highest wages to be paid upon railways would be those upon what were known as syndicate railways. Supposing the men on the line from Toiga to Johnstone River were paid as they were paid in the Cairns district—8s. a day—when the wet weather came on, some chaps would get up in the camp and say, "What is the good of staying on a blessed Government line like this? We will go out to the Mount Elliott Tramway, where we will get 10s. or 11s. a day." The statement would be made all over the State that companies were paying better wages than the Government. He was pleased to see that hon. members in the corner now recognised that this was a Government line. This line would be built by the Commissioner, like all the other railways they had passed this session. Yet hon. members in the corner had allowed all those railways to pass without saying one word about the rate of wages to be paid.

Mr. COYNE: It is about time you established the principle of a minimum wage.

Mr. MANN: They would not have heard a word about it in this case only that hon. members were trying to put other members in a hole by asking them to vote for 10s. a day. During the late election campaign he heard of men working on the Chillagoe Railway for 7s. a day, and he was asked what kind of a Government he was supporting that paid such wages. He said that the men who were working for 7s. a day were not working men at all, but were simply "beer-swipers," for no man worthy the name of man would navvy in the Chillagoe district for 7s. a day. It would barely pay his board and lodging.

Mr. COYNE: Do you want to see the same thing obtain in the West?

Mr. MANN: He never said what he wished to see or what he did not wish to see. He would point out that there was not one word of protest about the wages paid on the other railways in the West, such as the Blackall line. If they sought to establish the principle of paying higher wages upon railways in which companies were concerned, they would have a demand from the working men of Queensland for more of those railways. They would say that, if they could get 1s. a day more on a railway like this, the Government should make agreements with other companies, so that they could get a decent wage.

Mr. COYNE: That will suit year side right down to the ground.

Mr. MANN: He had been navvying for twelve or thirteen years, and had always stuck out for the highest wages. Although he was not a member of a union at that time, he had always been the first man to lay down his tools and the last to pick them up again, while others who talked about unionism did nothing.

Mr. MULLAN: Why did you join a union afterwards?

Mr. MANN: For the benefit of his fellow workers. He was working on the Cairns Railway when Gilbert Casey came round and asked the men to join the union. He refused, because he said if there was a strike he would be the first to lay down his tools and the last to take them up again. When they wanted to strike for 9s. a day some of the unionists refused to go on strike.

Mr. MULLAN: Then you were as good as a union man?

Mr. MANN believed he was a good deal better than a union man.

Mr. BOWMAN: You want to join us, Jack. We are on strike.

Mr. MANN: If he thought that they were genuine, he would join them. (Laughter.) If he thought they were earnest in their opposition to the Bill, and really believed it would be a curse to Queensland, he would feel very much inclined to join them.

A LABOUR MEMBER: You would not be allowed to join us.

Mr. MANN: He was a free agent. If he went out of Parliament to-morrow, it would not affect him in the least. But hon. members in that corner were not free agents. They were bound by a platform, and they had largely to do what other people told them.

Mr. BOWMAN: Were you bound when you signed it?

Mr. MANN: When he came into that Chamber he came in on a perfectly sound basis. He came in to support a coalition Government. The official organ of the party agreed that for the time being the Labour platform should remain in abeyance.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would ask the hon. member to keep to the question before the Committee.

Mr. MANN did not wish to be drawn off the track; and, if the Chairman would keep those members in the corner quiet, he would try and stick close to his argument. If they agreed to the amendment of the hon. member for Gregory, it would be like telling the working men of Queensland that, if they wanted high wages, they should get as many syndicate railways as possible. Hon. members in the corner seemed to desire to establish that principle. It had been tried on the Etheridge railway; and, although the amendment was not carried, still an attempt was made to put into operation the principle that, wherever the Government and a company worked together to build a railway, higher wages should be paid than on a purely State railway. He would not object to the amendment if it were not so delightfully vague. The hon. member gave them no idea of what he meant by a "workman." There were numbers of boys of sixteen or seventeen engaged in carrying water on the railways. Were they to get 10s. a

[S p.m.] day? If they applied to the ganger for work he would say, "Well, my lads, I would like to give you a job, but I have to pay 10s. a day to adult, able-bodied men. If, when you are finished carrying water, you can go into the cutting and can take your share of the work, I will employ you." There were other young men engaged in carrying dog-spikes and bolts and laying them alongside the sleepers. There were others engaged sitting on the bars and holding up the sleepers for the men who did the spiking. Were they to get 10s. a day? Then he had seen men of over sixty-five years of age engaged in breaking the stones among the river ballast. Were they to get 10s., or would they be put on piecework?

Mr. MULLAN: None of them would get 10s. a day if you had your way.

Mr. MANN: The hon. gentleman judged him by what he would get himself. No ganger would give him 10s. a day. (Laughter.) If the amendment were agreed to, then only men in the prime of life would succeed in getting work. Take, for instance, the lifting gang—the men who carried the levers and lifted the road—were they only to

get the same wage as the men who did the packing under the sleepers? He contended that there would always be different rates of wages for different classes of work on the railway. But under the hon. gentleman's amendment there would be no room for youths or old men on any of the numerous works authorised by Parliament. He thought the whole thing should be left in the hands of the Commissioner. The House controlled the Commissioner through the Minister, and if a rate of wages was paid which the House did not think adequate, then the House would make it very clear to the Secretary for Railways that they thought that the wages were too low. As a matter of fact, every man in a district where railway construction was being carried on would protest against the payment of low wages. Hotel and storekeepers and other business men believed in the principle of paying good wages, because if the men were paid well they spent money freely, and if the wages were too low business men would be constantly protesting to the Secretary for Railways. If the House believed in good wages being paid, members would not insist on the amendment being carried, for a hard-and-fast rule in regard to the payment of wages on such works would lead to the exclusion of many men who were able to do good work, but who might not be regarded in the strict sense of the term as able-bodied men.

* Mr. ADAMSON supported the amendment because he believed in a minimum wage on railway construction work. Members would remember that the other day a deputation waited upon the Minister in regard to the Cloncurry Railway, on which men were working at 7s. a day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: None of them were working for that.

Mr. ADAMSON: Well, some refused to work for that, and went on strike, and the object of the amendment was to secure the payment of a minimum wage in such a district. The hon. member for Cairns twitted the members of the Labour party with not having proposed a minimum wage in connection with railways authorised this session. They pleaded guilty to that, not because they were not anxious for a minimum wage, but simply because they were foolish enough to allow the railways to be rushed through for the convenience of the Government, despite their better judgment. They allowed those lines to go through because railways had been delayed through the political crisis, and because the Premier wanted to go home. Then again, when those railways were under consideration they never thought for a moment that at the close of the session the Premier would have introduced syndicate railways. He might say what he liked about the transaction being a good business one.

Mr. MANN rose to a point of order. Was the hon. member in order in discussing syndicate railways? They were discussing the rate of wages to be paid.

Mr. BOWMAN: On syndicate railways.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to draw attention to the fact that the amendment before the Committee deals with the rate of wages to be paid. I would ask hon. members to confine themselves to that question.

Mr. ADAMSON: His party had always stood for a minimum wage. The hon. member for Cairns twitted them with not being free men. When he joined the Labour party and signed the platform, he did it voluntarily.

Mr. BOWMAN: So did the Premier at one time.

Mr. ADAMSON: He would not stop in the party for a moment longer than he saw fit, and,

Mr. Adamson.]

as soon as he came to the conclusion that they were opposed to what was right, he would leave them. As an intelligent man, he voluntarily signed the platform.

Mr. MANN asked if the hon. member was in order in discussing the Labour platform.

Mr. BOWMAN: The minimum wage is in the platform.

Mr. ADAMSON: When the hon. member got a "Roland for his Oliver" he tried to prevent others from speaking. Members of that party believed that they were as free as members of any other party, and had come to the conclusion that the men who were not free were those who were sitting opposite and on the Opposition benches. They were asked to swallow the agreement *holus-bolus*. The Premier talked about freedom of speech, but he had gagged members in every possible way, and had been recreant to his past in bringing in such a Bill. The hon. gentleman even told them the one amendment proposed was a good amendment, but as it was not in the Bill he could not accept it.

The CHAIRMAN: I would ask the hon. gentleman to confine himself to the question before the Committee.

Mr. ADAMSON: They were arguing for a minimum wage for the reason that the Bill safeguarded the interests of syndicates and boodlers. It said that they were to get everything that was fair, but his party wanted to safeguard the interests of the working men, and, as far as he could, he would always be found standing up for a living wage for the men who were doing the hard graft. Who were going to get the benefit of that railway? The men who were asking for concessions; the boodlers. And all they desired now was to prevent a repetition of what had taken place on the Cloncurry line. If the Premier and Secretary for Railways were only true to their part, and only as humane as they ought to be, they would accept the amendment, whether the company was pleased with it or not. He hoped it would be carried, but, of course, he knew it would not be. He knew that he and the other members of his party were simply beating the air; they were flogging a dead horse; they were leading a forlorn hope in throwing themselves into a breach as they had done. They were having a lot of contumely thrown upon them, simply because they were standing there in support of a principle. The hon. member for Cairns doubted their sincerity. If he (Mr. Adamson) did not believe in the principle they were standing for; if he was not opposed to that kind of railway on principle, he would leave the Labour party that night, and take his chance of making a living elsewhere. He had always believed in the nationalisation of railways, and that was why he supported the amendment. He held that it would be a wise thing on the part of the Premier to take the advice of the leader of the Opposition, and construct the railway as a State railway; and, as an inducement, he would remind the hon. gentleman that the leader of the Opposition had promised to help him. If the Premier insisted upon safeguarding the interests of concession-mongers, he (Mr. Adamson), at all events, would safeguard the interests of the workers as far as he possibly could.

Mr. McLACHLAN understood, with a number of other members, from what was said on the second reading, that when they got into Committee they might amend the schedule in a way that would improve the Bill. It was admitted by everybody that it would be a good thing to include in a measure of this kind a provision to secure to the men who would be engaged in the building of the railway a fair

rate of wages, and that was all that was proposed to be done by the amendment. The hon. member for Cairns made a great deal of capital from his point of view out of the fact that the word "adult" was not inserted in the amendment, and argued that by reason of that omission a boy carrying water on this railway would be entitled to a minimum wage of 10s. a day. That, of course, was absurd. The position of the hon. member, and of other hon. members in the House, was that they felt bound to support a proposal which would secure to working men a fair wage, but they were fearful that when the division bell rang they would be found voting against an amendment which would secure a fair wage to the men who would be employed in building this railway. The Premier stated, in an early stage of the debate, that if an amendment were moved which would have the effect of improving the Bill, he would be prepared to accept it. This amendment would improve the Bill, and if the Premier accepted it, he might be able to induce the company also to accept it. He trusted that the good sense of hon. members would lead them to vote for the amendment, and thereby secure a fair wage to the men who would be employed on this railway.

Mr. LESINA: The amendment of the hon. member for Gregory specifically stated that the workmen employed upon this railway should be paid 10s. per day for an eight hours' day. The conditions of labour, the high cost of living, and the tropical climate in the district where it was proposed to construct this line, were such that the workmen should be paid on the highest possible scale. The men who would be employed on the line were to clear the way for a civilisation that was coming later on, and they deserved the highest possible consideration, and the only way they could show them that consideration was by paying them a liberal wage. Ten shillings a day for men working under a hot, blistering, tropical sun, at a temperature of 100 degrees in the shade, at such work as railway cuttings, was altogether too small.

Mr. WOODS: You thought 9s. a day was enough on the Etheridge railway.

Mr. LESINA: He thought 9s. a day was the lowest amount that should be paid to men in the Etheridge district, which was a more settled district than the one in which this line would be constructed, and the hon. member for Woothakata voted for that proposal.

Mr. WOODS: That is so.

Mr. LESINA: He moved an amendment providing that that should be the lowest rate paid on the Etheridge Railway, and that amendment was carried on division by thirty-one votes to twenty-nine, though the Government had assured the Committee that if the amendment were inserted in the Bill the company would not accept the measure, and would not build the railway. At that time the Premier was away ill, but when he heard about the carrying of the amendment he came up pretty lively, got members under the whip, threatened them with the bludgeon of dissolution, and they then deliberately voted out the amendment. The members who voted for that amendment in the first instance were—

Messrs. Barber, Barton, Bowman, Butrows, Cowap, Dibley, Fudge, Grant, Hamilton, Hardacre, Jones, Kenna, Kerr, Land, Lesina, Mann, McDonnell, Mitchell, Mulcahy, Murphy, Nielson, Norman, O'Brien, Paul, Payne, Reinhold, Ryland, Scott, Smart, Turner, and Woods.

Five of those members—Messrs Cowap, Grant, Kenna, Mann, and Woods—were still in the House, and he wanted, if possible, to secure their support for this amendment. He would suggest to the hon. member for Gregory that he should

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amend the amendment by substituting the word "employee" for "workman." The Premier, who said that if such a provision had been inserted in the agreement before the agreement was signed, he would stand by it, and the Secretary for Railways had supported for years the principle embodied in the amendment. Both those hon. gentlemen had signed a platform in which a minimum wage appeared as an important plank, but now, apparently, they had come to the conclusion that such a principle was an evil one in connection with this Bill. The only reason urged against the amendment by the Minister for Railways was that the syndicate would not permit him—the free and independent Minister, the representative of the Barcoo, elected on the postal vote—to accept the amendment, and the hon. gentleman refused to accept it, though he had signed that principle in the Labour platform 10,000 times. The Government were protected, and the syndicates were protected, in this agreement, but the great mass of unemployed, who, it was said, would find work upon this railway, were not protected. There was a great, dumb body of workers who had nothing but their labour to sell. That dumb body of workers wanted some protection, and the Labour party was in that Chamber to protect them, as they proposed to do by inserting in the agreement an amendment which provided that men working on that line, under a hot, tropical sun, should be paid 10s. for a day of eight hours. Let the division take place, and let the country see how many friends the workers had in that House. Even in that Assembly they had a minimum wage, for every member, the fat and the lean, the long and the short, the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, received £300 a year. (Laughter.) Apparently the minimum wage was good enough for members of Parliament, but not good enough for navvies. Was that it? Why, even in the Cabinet they had a minimum wage, as every Minister, with the exception of the Premier—who got £300 a year more than any of his colleagues—was paid a minimum wage of £1,000 per annum. The Minister for Railways received £1,000 a year and the Attorney-General received £1,000 a year, and between those two Ministers there was an immense gap—an impassable gulf. (Labour laughter.) Judges were paid a minimum wage of £1,000 per annum.

Mr. MANN: Some of them get more than £1,000.

Mr. LESINA: Some of them did, but there was a minimum, and they did not get anything less.

Mr. MANN: Every man cannot be a judge, and every man cannot do the work.

Mr. LESINA: Every man could not be a navy. Some men were naturally fitted. (Laughter.) If they carefully analysed this proposition for the payment of a minimum wage,

[8.30 p.m.] he was satisfied that the weight of argument was in favour of it, and he would not care to be in the shoes of hon. members on that side, who practically drew their legislative existence from the great democracy outside, if, when a question like this came on, he was found with the "Noes" casting his vote against the principle of a minimum wage. The hon. member for Woothakata knew that on the Etheridge Railway, because of the absence of the principle of the minimum wage which he had tried to insert in that Bill, they had been paid as low as 7s. 6d. per day.

Mr. WOODS: That is not so. That is not the fault of a minimum wage; it is the fault of the men working there.

Mr. LESINA: In the absence of a minimum wage, men were paid as low wages as possible.

In the absence of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Gregory, he would support the one proposed by the hon. member for Woothakata, although he recognised its limitations and practical inefficiency. When they propose to pay as a minimum wage the rate of wages ruling in the district, they were not fixing a minimum wage at all; the wage was fixed by the number of men seeking employment. Hon. members were pretty well familiar with the old law aptly put by Cobden, when he said that the rate of wages depended upon a simple thing. When two masters ran after one man wages rose, and when two men ran after one master wages fell. The hon. member for Woothakata would fix wages by the rate ruling throughout the district, and wages would thus be settled by the number of men seeking employment. If 1,000 men were wanted, and 2,000 men applied, it would bring wages down to a mere living value. They should fix a minimum wage below which competition would not drag a labourer below a fair wage, and 10s. was a fair thing to start with. Only during the last few days—and here he thought he had got the Government supporters on the hip—the Government had fixed 10s. on the Cloncurry line. They had the information and correspondence from the department to that effect. This line had to go near where men were getting 10s. per day—to Mount Elliott; and why should the men at Cloncurry get 10s. a day and the men on this extension get less?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Why cannot you trust the Government?

Mr. LESINA: He trusted the Government no further than he could throw them, and that was not very far. (Laughter.) The only thing they could do was to persistently hammer at the Government to get them to do anything, and if there was one proposition they ought to hammer into the Government it was the minimum wage. He trusted that in division all those members who only twelve months ago cast their votes for this benevolent economic principle would once more record their votes for it. If they did not, he could imagine them on platforms scattered throughout Queensland explaining why they voted against the 10s. The Premier would not put the "gag" on to-night. (Laughter.) He would wait for the "guillotine." The point above all others on which they relied in justification of their case was that the Government were paying 10s. on the Cloncurry end of the line; and the leader of the Government had admitted that if he had thought about it it might have been inserted in the agreement, and there would be no objection; but because the Government overlooked it, that was no reason why the Committee should not insert it in the agreement. He was sorry that an ex-leader of the Labour party in charge of this Bill, and who in years gone by secured a little kudos as well as cash by the advocacy of these principles on many platforms, should be sitting in a position where he could not give effect to them. It moved him to the very heart. (Laughter.) He did not desire to become altogether melancholy by the contemplation of this dreadful prospect, but really a man was inclined to lose all faith in his fellow-man when he saw such a remarkable political somersault as had taken place in the hon. gentleman. He remembered the many glorious speeches the Minister had made in the wilds of the Barcoo, dealing with this principle. The hon. gentleman made long speeches in favour of the minimum wage which would have drawn tears from a Fiji idol. (Laughter.) He had had shearers and rousabouts on the Thompson River and the Barcoo River—whom he represented by the grace of the postal vote—at those

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meetings, and had addressed them on the minimum wage, and brought them to tears with his skill as an advocate for the principle. There were very few to rival the hon. gentleman in that way, and yet the first chance he had of putting the principle into operation he was not game to take it up. He believed if the Premier had not come in and hypnotised him he would have accepted the proposition cheerfully. But that awful eye! (Laughter.) The moment the Premier got his eye on the hon. member for Barcoo he simply sat back and crumpled up. (Laughter.) Their chance was gone the moment the Premier came in.

* Mr. MANN: The hon. member who had just resumed his seat had given the best argument why this amendment should not be included in the Bill, because he said that certain members of the House had gone to the Minister and asked him to provide in the regulations that 10s. a day would be paid on the Cloncurry line. Suppose we had times of financial stress, and the tariff was increased, and food went up and living was much dearer on this extension. If they went to the Minister and asked him to raise wages from 10s. to 11s. per day he would say, "I would be quite willing to comply with your request, but you have tied my hands fast in this Bill."

Mr. LESINA: But the Minister might not be there.

Mr. MANN: Some Minister would be there, and they could trust the House to see that a decent rate of wages would be paid on this line. He did not see why they should single out this railway more than any other on which to put the principle into operation. When a certain contract was let for locomotives in Maryborough, they did not hear a storm of indignation about 10s. a day not being paid in connection with the construction of engines. Why did they not insist, before they bought engines from Germany or America, that the workmen there should be paid 10s. a day? If the contractor who built this railway desired to pay less than 10s., he could do it quite easily, even if this was put in the Bill. When the second section of the Cairns Railway was finished, there was a union known as the "Sons of Toil," and they held a meeting and decided that the rate of wages should be 9s. a day on the third section. They laid the matter before the contractor, and he simply waited for two or three months. Then provisions began to get scarce, and the men murmured, and said it was time they were getting to work. The union men said, "If we will only hold out we will get 9s. a day." And the men retorted, "We cannot eat grass; we are hard up and cannot get rations from the storekeepers, and we must have work." The contractor turned round and said that tenders would be called for cuttings all along the railway line. When the tenders were opened, it was found that men had tendered as low as 7½d. a yard for shifting that material, and yet the lowest price that a man could make wages at was 1s. a yard. On some of the cuttings they required to get from 3s. 6d. to 4s. a yard to make wages. Experienced navvies in the prime of life, with their horses and drays working full time, could not earn much more than tucker and horse feed. Several men went into partnership and employed other men to work for them, and at the end had nothing except their own food and the price of the horse feed, and they were practical men who knew what they were doing. They first sunk holes to test what the ground was like. With one exception, none of the contractors made a decent thing out of it, or were able to earn wages. If hon. members in the Labour corner had any doubt as to the *bona fides* of the Commissioner, he could get round this 10s. provision in the way he had said. If the Govern-

ment desired to pay top wages they would do it, and if they did not desire it they would simply let it by contract.

Mr. COYNE: We will compel them to pay it.

Mr. MANN: They could not compel them to pay it if they let it by contract, unless they passed a Bill preventing the work being done by contract. There were many little jobs in connection with railways that were better done by contract, and if they had contract work they would have men working for less than standard wages. They were cutting earthworks at Greenhills, in his district, at 10d. a yard. It was fairly soft shifting, but there were men only earning 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. a day, while able-bodied navvies made 8s. or 9s. a day. He defied any Parliament to draft such regulations that would insure nothing less than 10s. a day being paid on this railway.

Mr. D. HUNTER: What did you pass a Wages Board Bill for?

Mr. MANN: So that they could make conditions better for the working people. Even the wages board would not guarantee that men would get the minimum wage. Supposing a man was grubbing in a paddock for a couple of days, and he was told he could either earn so much a day or get £2 or £3 for doing the work. They could not bring that man under the Wages Boards Act.

Mr. MCLACHLAN asked if the hon. member was in order in discussing the Wages Boards Act?

The CHAIRMAN: I understand the hon. member is replying to an interjection made by the hon. member for Wolloongabba.

Mr. MANN: He was pointing out that, even with wages boards or a minimum wage clause in connection with the construction of a railway, there was no guarantee that everyone would get 10s. a day.

Mr. MITCHELL was in favour of the amendment, and he was very much surprised at the attitude of the Government with regard to it. Even when hon. members proposed amendments which the Premier admitted were of some value, he told them that he could not accept those amendments, because they would practically render the agreement invalid. It would be a good thing if the hon. member for Cairns would ask somebody to explain to him the difference between a minimum wage and a fixed wage. A minimum wage was the lowest wage that would be allowed on the railway. Those who had experience in that part of the country were satisfied that 10s. a day was the lowest wage that ought to be paid for that class of work. An evidence of that was the fact that the Commissioner had agreed to pay 10s. per day on the work now being done by the Government in the district. He hoped that the members whose names were read out as having voted for a minimum wage of 9s. a day two years ago would not hide themselves behind the excuse that this was not a Bill of the same class as the Bill under discussion at that time. Hon. members should remember that they were not voting for any particular Bill, but for a minimum wage. The hon. member for Cairns said that, if he thought the members in that corner were sincere he would vote with them. They were perfectly sincere, and, if the hon. member were sincere, he would carry out his promise and vote for the amendment.

* Mr. MANN: Why did not the hon. member propose a minimum wage of 10s. a day in connection with the railway from Tolga to Johnstone River. He understood perfectly what a minimum wage was. When he was in Mary-

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borough some years ago he found that there was a minimum wage of 19s. a week in a sash and door factory there, and that the highest wage was 35s. a week. He did not believe the members of the Labour party were sincere, or they would have endeavoured to secure a minimum wage provision in connection with the other railways they had passed. He remembered when a certain railway in the Maryborough district was under discussion, the junior member for Gympie—who, he believed, was sincere—got an assurance from the then Premier, Mr. Morgan, that a minimum of 6s. 6d. would be paid on that line. Why did not the hon. member move to have a minimum of 8s. inserted in connection with railways on the coast, and more as they went further inland, and less in Southern Queensland, where living was cheaper? He was not going to vote for the amendment, because he did not believe members in the corner were sincere. There were members over there who had made most telling speeches against planks in their platform. He did not believe there was a single member who believed in every plank in the platform; but they were willing to go with the majority, believing it to be the best platform they could get.

Mr. ADAMSON rose to a point of order. Was the hon. member in order in discussing the Labour platform?

Mr. MANN was sorry to get under the skin of hon. members. They did not like him to discuss even their platform, or to tell them that the hon. member for Clermont made a strenuous speech against the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, or that other members did not believe in leaseholds, but believed that every man should have a freehold, although they all signed a platform which would not allow them to have a freehold. Hon. members were only beating the air, because the amendment would not make any difference in the rate of wages that would be paid. If men were scarce—as he believed they would be, owing to the number of railways that were to be built, and owing to the fact that in most districts there would be a fairly heavy sugar crop, while there would also be a big wool clip, so that labour would be at a premium—high rates of wages would have to be paid to capable men. No member of the Labour party who had a contract for a railway cutting would be foolish enough to pay a tailor who asked for a job, 10s. a day. He would say he wanted a navy. The State should be allowed to have the same rights as those hon. members would claim for themselves. He had often seen a ganger give an old man a job at piecework out of sympathy, but that was a different matter to paying a man 10s. a day, whether he was worth it or not.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS hoped the Committee would come to a vote. The discussion on the Labour platform was quite beside the question before the Committee. It was well known that the Government were paying 10s. a day on the Cloncurry Railway. All that hon. members desired was to get it into *Hansard* that they were in favour of 10s. a day. The Government were in favour of paying 10s. a day, and they were paying it at the present time. It was not likely that the Commissioner would estimate the cost of construction on any other basis than that of 10s. a day, and he had no doubt that rate would be paid by the Commissioner. The hon. member for Clermont had been very entertaining in his reminiscences. He could not say that he had the happy experience of the hon. member for Clermont that that hon. member appeared to have had of him. It must be remembered that the hon. member was given to romancing. It was not all gospel truth that he

gave them in that Chamber. If it would hasten a vote on the matter he would say that the Government were paying 10s. a day on the Cloncurry line, and the Commissioner's estimate would be based on a wage of 10s. a day, and he had no doubt that wage would be paid.

Mr. LESINA: That was an important admission to have got from the Minister, and, if the debate had done no other good, they could pride themselves upon their persistency in sticking to the Government on this matter. The hon. gentleman had now admitted that in making up the estimate of the cost of construction the Government would see that the Commissioner put in wages at a minimum of 10s. a day.

The HOME SECRETARY: Following the regulations.

Mr. LESINA: And who had control of the regulations except the Minister? Let hon. members turn up the Railways Act of 1902, clause 4 of which stated—

All moneys from time to time appropriated by Parliament for the construction of new railways, and for the construction or purchase of rolling stock, and for all purposes in connection with such construction of new railways or construction or purchase of rolling stock, shall be expended by the Commissioner under the direction and control of the Minister.

So that the Minister was really responsible for the rates of wages paid, and, if they were low, they would blame him and the Cabinet, who had control over all moneys voted

[9 p.m.] for the construction of railways.

And it would therefore be seen that in connection with the late difficulty on the Cloncurry, where the wages had been cut down to 7s. 6d., the trouble was directly traceable, not to the Commissioner, the Engineer (Mr. Pagan), or his officers, but to the Secretary for Railways. He was thankful they had got the admission from the Minister that the minimum would be paid, but only after an urgent whip had been sent round on the matter. The hon. gentleman now grudgingly exercised his power, and said that the wages would not be less than 10s. That was a triumph for his party. But the hon. gentleman had made the promise without consulting the Premier, and would probably be taken to task at the next Cabinet.

Mr. APPEL: Did he understand that the statement made by the Secretary for Railways was an assurance that the Engineer-in-Chief would be instructed to pay a minimum of 10s. a day?

The PREMIER: That was a very safe assurance to make. They paid men 10s. a day on the Cloncurry line, and the probability was that they would have to pay more than 10s. a day on a line going south from Cloncurry.

Mr. W. H. BARNES: What will be the position of men who are not physically fit?

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman ought to know that the details were left to the Commissioner and his officers. He hoped that nobody proposed that every person employed on the railway, and doing any kind of work, would get 10s. a day.

Mr. LESINA: We propose that no male adult shall get less than 10s. a day. You ought to be ashamed to employ a man at less. You get about £10 a day.

The PREMIER: Hon. members knew quite well that the phrase "rate shall be 10s. a day" meant the standard rate; but there might be boys or infirm men, or men incapable of earning 10s. a day. Would they give a boy of fourteen years a minimum rate of 10s. a day?

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Mr. LESINA: Who suggested it? A boy of fourteen is not a "workman." What is the use of quibbling like that?

The PREMIER: He was quite willing to explain the views of the Government if he was allowed to.

Mr. LESINA: It is like dragging blood out of a stone trying to get ten "bob" a day out of you for navvies.

The PREMIER: The navy who got 10s. a day out of the hon. member for Clermont would consider himself a very happy navy. Did anybody suppose that the Commissioner would pay a less rate of wages on the railway than he was paying at places much nearer the coast? The chances were that he would have to pay a somewhat higher rate. The ruling rate was 10s. a day now, and the Minister told him that there were men getting more than that, but that was looked upon as the standard minimum wage. Nobody supposed that a youth or infirm worker was not to get work unless he was able to do the work of an ordinary man.

Mr. BOWMAN: How is it you put men of sixty-five off the existing railways?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They get a retiring allowance.

The PREMIER: What had the regulation about men retiring at sixty-five to do with the question of wages? The regulations were approved by Parliament. All he wished to do was to assure the hon. member for Albert that the desire of the House would be clearly expressed by the Government to the Commissioner, and even if no such desire was expressed, all that talk about 10s. a day was so much waste of time. There was no chance of men getting less than 10s. a day. His own opinion was that they would not get them for that.

Mr. LESINA: Make it 12s.

The PREMIER: They knew quite well that if the rate was fixed at 12s. the hon. member would move for 15s., and if it was made 15s. he would move for 16s.

Mr. LESINA: Who else will do it if we do not? You are only looking after the interests of syndicates.

The PREMIER: The hon. member was only there for the purpose of defeating the Bill. He had assured the hon. member for Albert, and others who took an intelligent interest in the matter, that the rate of wages would be properly safeguarded when the line was being built.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted from Mr. Woods's amendment (*Mr. Hamilton's amendment*) stand part of the amendment—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 35.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
" Appel	" Kidston
" Barnes, G. P.	" Mackintosh
" Barnes, W. H.	" Mann
" Barton	" Maxwell
" Bell	" Moore
" Blair	" Paget
" Brennan	" Petrie
" Campbell	" Philp
" Cottell	" Redwood
" Cowap	" Roberts
" Denham	" Somerset
" Douglas	" Stodart
" Forrest	" Swayne
" Grant	" Thorn
" Hawthorn	" Walker
" Herbertson	" White
" Kenna	

Tellers: Mr. Douglas and Mr. Redwood.

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NOES, 24.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lesina
" Barber	" May
" Bowman	" McLachlan
" Coyne	" Mitchell
" Hamilton	" Mulcahy
" Hardacre	" Mullan
" Hunter, D.	" Murphy
" Hunter, J. M.	" Payne
" Huxham	" Ryland
" Jones	" Sumner
" Land	" Winstanley
" Lennon	" Woods

Tellers: Mr. Jones and Mr. Land.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted (*Mr. Woods's amendment*) be so inserted—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 27.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lesina
" Barber	" Mann
" Bowman	" May
" Cowap	" McLachlan
" Coyne	" Mitchell
" Hamilton	" Mulcahy
" Hardacre	" Mullan
" Hunter, D.	" Murphy
" Hunter, J. M.	" Payne
" Huxham	" Ryland
" Jones	" Sumner
" Kenna	" Winstanley
" Land	" Woods
" Lennon	

Tellers: Mr. Ryland and Mr. Woods.

NOES, 34.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
" Appel	" Kidston
" Barnes, G. P.	" Mackintosh
" Barnes, W. H.	" Maxwell
" Barton	" Moore
" Bell	" Paget
" Blair	" Petrie
" Brennan	" Philp
" Campbell	" Rankin
" Cottell	" Redwood
" Denham	" Roberts
" Douglas	" Somerset
" Forrest	" Stodart
" Grant	" Swayne
" Grayson	" Thorn
" Hawthorn	" Walker
" Herbertson	" White

Tellers: Mr. Grayson and Mr. Moore.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. BOWMAN moved the omission in clause 10 of the words "Chillagoe Railway under the schedule of rates, fares, and freights, dated 12th September, 1900, and authorised by the Governor in Council under the Mareeba to Chillagoe Railway Act of 1897," with the view of inserting the words "The nearest Government railway." The object of this amendment was to make the rates on the proposed railway uniform with the rates on all Government lines in the State, instead of making them the same as the rates charged on the Chillagoe Railway, which were 50 per cent. higher than the rates on Government railways. They fought this question when other private lines were being passed through the House, because they considered it unfair to make such a differentiation in the railway rates. It would be unfair to make the people in the Mount Elliott district pay 50 per cent. higher rates than were paid by people using the Cloncurry line, which was only a few miles distant from Mount Elliott. The Minister for Railways had taken some credit to himself for having reduced the rates on Government railways to the extent of about £100,000 since the present Government came into office. The Government and the Commissioner must have considered that the rates previously existing were too high or they would not have reduced them, and he held that

the people who would be served by this line should not be called upon to pay 50 per cent. higher rates than were paid by persons who were served by Government railways.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for the Valley had dilated upon the injustice which would be done to people residing in the Mount Elliott district if they had to pay higher rates than were charged on Government railways. But the hon. member must know that at one time on the Townsville Railway, the Cairns Railway, the Bowen Railway, the Cooktown Railway, and the Croydon Railway, higher rates were charged than were charged on Southern railways. He could remember the time when the Croydon Railway rates were 50 per cent. higher than the rates on other railways. They were subsequently reduced by 25 per cent., and it was only during the last financial year that the rates had been made the same as the rates on other Government railways. The people of the district in which this proposed railway would be constructed were at the present time paying for carriage more than four times the rates they would have to pay on the railway, and they would be only too pleased to have the railway constructed and get their ore and other material carried on the terms laid down in the agreement.

MR. BOWMAN: What was your idea in bringing all the railway rates into uniformity?

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The amount received from the extra rates charged on the Northern railways was inconsiderable. The Bowen Railway ran through a district where there was no traffic, and the traffic on the Cooktown, Croydon, and Georgetown Railways did not warrant making an extra charge of 25 per cent. for fares and freights on those lines. But this was a railway that was going into a rich mineral district, where the

people were paying, by team, more [9.30 p.m.] than four times the freight which they would be called upon to pay on this railway.

He was certain the people of the district would be very well pleased to pay the company the rates laid down in the Mareeba and Chillagoe Act. The object which the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had in view was that the Bill should not pass; he was not troubled about the amount they had to pay. What he was troubled about was that this railway was going to be constructed.

MR. HAMILTON: There was not a vestige of truth in the statement of the Minister for Railways that the members of this party were against the people having a railway built in this district.

LABOUR MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAMILTON: Their sole argument was that the Government should build the line and not a syndicate. Why should people in a Northern mining centre be penalised more than people in agricultural districts? They carried agricultural produce at a loss, and why should they pay higher rates on a railway such as this? It was a ridiculous argument on the part of the Minister to say that, because the people were paying a high rate now, they ought to pay 50 per cent. more than other railways. There was hardly a district in the State where railways were constructed that the people had not paid four or five times as much before. It was not that they got more than 50 per cent. on the rates and fares existing at the present time; but, from what he could make out, it was to be on the fares charged on the Chillagoe line in 1900, which was 50 per cent. higher than the rates ruling on the Government lines at that period, and not 50 per cent. above the rates ruling on

the Government lines at present. The rates were high at that period, and they had been lowered since. The chances were that they might be paying more than 75 per cent. over the rate charged on Government lines. He doubted if the Minister knew what the fares were which were charged on the Chillagoe line at that time. This railway affected the district he represented, because it ran within half a mile of the boundary, and he failed to see why the people there should pay the 50 per cent. more. The leader of the Opposition could verify what he said, as in a conversation with him some time ago he had stated there ought to be a Government line there.

MR. BOWMAN: He said the same thing himself.

MR. HAMILTON: The leader of the Opposition was in favour of building a line there. He did not know a better district for the Government to run a line in than the present extension from Cloncurry to Mount Elliott.

MR. MURPHY: It has taken you a good many years to find it out.

MR. HAMILTON: It was only in the last couple of years that the mines had been developed. The Labour party were quite willing to support the Government in building this line, if they came down with it as a Government line, and served the public on the same terms as they were served in other districts by Government lines.

MR. KENNA: The analogy between this line and the State lines mentioned was not a good one at all, because this was purely a mineral line.

MR. HAMILTON: It will serve a little pastoral country, too.

MR. KENNA: If it were a line likely to carry agricultural products or any large number of passengers, it would be in a different category, but it would principally serve the mining properties owned by this company. Most of the traffic on the line would be from the company's mines, so that the Government was simply charging the company an extra 50 per cent. for carrying its own produce—putting 50 per cent. additional upon the company which was advancing a share of the money. He was in favour of getting as much out of the company as they could. The fact that the company was willing to advance half of the cost of the line, and take the risk of getting it back, showed that the line would largely be to the advantage of this company's property.

THE PREMIER: The freight will be so much lower than the rates they are now paying that it will pay them to spend £100,000 to get the railway, and other people will have the advantage of the same lower rates without having to put up £100,000.

MR. KENNA: Mineral rates were very low as it was, so 50 per cent. would be very little addition to them. What he liked about the proposal was that they were taxing the company, and, if they were willing to pay that tax, let them do it. If the company were willing to pay 500 per cent. he should be in favour of it; but as they were willing to pay 50 per cent., and their traffic would be the largest on the line, he failed to see why they should not accept it.

MR. MULLAN: The arguments of the hon. member for Bowen were just as flimsy as those of the Minister in support of the clause. The hon. member said that one of the reasons why they should retain the clause was that they should tax the company. He forgot that the whole of the profits would go to the company, and how were they going to tax them?

THE PREMIER: How do you make out that all the profits will go to the company?

Mr. Mullan.]

Mr. MULLAN: The whole of the profits would go to the company over and above 1½ per cent. on the total cost of the railway, so the company could afford to charge excessive rates, knowing that the whole of the profits would be theirs. The Minister stated that the people ought to be pleased to get this line because they had been paying four or five times higher rates than they would under this; but, if he was logical, he should insist on charging a higher rate on the line from Hughenden to Cloncurry than was being paid by any other line in the State. The other day they adopted the system of uniform rates throughout Queensland, and, if it was good for the benefit of Queensland, why should they depart from it in deference to this syndicate? But that was not the ground on which he took exception to the clause. The strongest exception he took to the Bill was—

The PREMIER: That it is one of the clauses of the Bill—that is the real objection.

Mr. MULLAN: The Premier asked them to show him good reasons why this was not a good business transaction for the State, and it was on that ground solely that they were criticising the Bill. There was no factious opposition; they were giving legitimate reasons why it was not a good agreement. A strong reason against the adoption of the Chillagoe rates on this line was this: They would purchase this line on the basis of the average net profits from the five years immediately preceding the date of purchase. It therefore followed that if this company was allowed to charge 50 per cent. more than the average amount charged by other lines in Queensland, the profits would be 50 per cent. in excess of what it would otherwise be, and it was a logical conclusion that the price they would have to pay in purchasing the line would be 50 per cent. greater. Was that fair to the people of Queensland? He considered—and he thought the Premier recognised—that this was a very excellent transaction for the syndicate, with whom apparently the hon. gentleman was in great sympathy.

HON. R. PHILP: pointed out that the materials, such as coal, which would have to be brought to these works would add to the cost of running it after it was finished. The coal would have to come from the mining districts by railway, then by steamer to Townsville, and thence 500 miles by rail.

Mr. BOWMAN: We were told by the Minister for Mines last night that there was a coal prospect in the district.

HON. R. PHILP: Some enterprising men in Charters Towers had tried to get coal in the district, but they struck a sea of water.

Mr. MULLAN: They struck a seam of coal, too.

HON. R. PHILP: Every hon. member recognised that it would be ever so much more costly to work a railway in Cloncurry than in Brisbane, Maryborough, or Rockhampton. Besides that, those people found most of the traffic themselves. He had argued when the Chillagoe line was going through that the cost would be very much more than the estimate, and the same argument held good to-day. It had been pointed out by the Minister that the mineral freights were the lowest rates on Queensland railways. He thought at that time they were carrying ore from Richmond, a distance of 300 miles, for 16s. 8d. per ton. The same rate per ton for 70 miles would be 4s. or 5s. a ton. In that case this company would not find £100,000 at all. The Government would not build the line, and the people would be penalised. They could not work a lot of mines in Queensland profitably to-day unless they had a railway alongside.

[Mr. Mullan.]

* Mr. MANN: The hon. member for Charters Towers claimed that, if this high rate were charged, the State would pay much more to purchase the line in fifteen years; but it had often been argued in the House that the higher the rate charged the less freight a line was likely to get. They had a practical illustration of that in Cairns. At the time the rate was raised 50 per cent. there, the people would not patronise the railway more than they could help. He had heard the hon. member for Gympie, and many of his party, claim that the more they reduced the rates the better chance there was of the railways paying; and they had pointed out that in New Zealand, when they reduced the rates there, the railways paid better. If that were so, the argument of the hon. member for Charters Towers fell to the ground; because, if the high rate was to be charged, the company would have little traffic on the line, and the Government would have to pay less to purchase the railway. He had just had a memo. placed in his hands, pointing out what the rates would be. For 74 miles the rate, if the usual charge was made, would be 6s. 7d. per ton, and with the 50 per cent. added it would only cost 9s. 11d.

LABOUR MEMBERS: For what class of traffic?

Mr. MANN: General goods—as against 74s. per ton by team. Mention had been made of the Chillagoe line; and, if his memory served him correctly, the Chillagoe Company, in some instances, charged less than the Government. The Chillagoe Company was a commercial company, and they knew if they were to charge a high rate they would not get the traffic; and the reason that company was doing so much business was the fact that a lesser rate was charged for some classes of goods than on the Government lines. This line was largely an experimental line, and he supposed what Parliament had done they could undo; and if it was shown clearly to the House that owing to the high rate—

LABOUR MEMBERS: There is no drawing back after it is done.

Mr. MANN: If the company were willing, in order to encourage the traffic on the line to reduce the rates, he was sure the House would not object. (Laughter.) He was pleased hon. members were in such a good humour. The leader of the Labour party had a little experience in the West—a little experience in the city of Brisbane—but he knew absolutely nothing about the conditions in North Queensland. He ought to know that, if the company charged very high rates over that line of railway, the traffic must inevitably go to Normanton.

Mr. BOWMAN: You will get a shock when you read this speech to-morrow. (Labour laughter.)

Mr. MANN: Most hon. members had been simply filling up time, looking for when the guillotine was to descend on their necks, and he did not see why he should not waste time, too.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You are wasting time then?

Mr. MANN: Yes; the Labour party had a dozen divisions to-night to waste time, knowing that they could not carry them. They were simply delaying the business a few hours longer. The Bill was going to be law in spite of all the protests, and when the railway had been built, the Labour party would say it was a good thing for the country, and they were sorry they opposed it.

The PREMIER: He would just like to say a few words.

Mr. BOWMAN: The guillotine in ten minutes.

Mr. LESINA: The man with the big stick.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

The PREMIER: The hon. member for Cairns had shown that the hardship that would be done to the people in that district would be that, instead of paying 74s. a ton for getting stuff to Cloncurry, they would get it carried for something like 9s. per ton.

LABOUR MEMBERS: For what class of stuff?

Mr. LESINA: That does not necessarily follow.

The PREMIER: That was the hardship. The company had considered it would be so great an advantage to them to get that reduction in the rates they were now paying, that they were prepared to put down £100,000 that somebody else might spend it, and the other people in the district would get all the advantages which the company got in rates, without having to pay a cent for it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The company have to pay the same rates as the general public.

The PREMIER: There was no differentiation; the company would pay the same rate as the other mineowners in the district would pay.

Mr. HARDACRE: Is that the only benefit they get?

The PREMIER: Nothing seemed to be a fair thing that "does not get everything for us and gives nothing to anybody else."

Mr. HARDACRE: No, no!

The PREMIER: The Government should pay out everything, and should never ask anyone to pay. They should pay high rates of wages in that district, and they should charge low rates on the railways. That was the cheapest kind of claptrap in public business that any man could be guilty of.

Mr. BOWMAN: You lived on it for years.

The PREMIER: He would point out to the hon. member for Charters Towers that, if the railway turned out a profitable line to the company, it would be an equally profitable railway for the Government, for they had half-shares in the final value at the end of the fifteen years, and, if the company's half-share was worth a lot, the Government share would be worth a lot also.

Mr. MULCAHY: The guillotine was within measurable distance.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You have seven minutes yet.

Mr. MULCAHY: There was one thing that should be contradicted. He did not know whether the Premier was trying to fool the people all the time or not, but it appeared that in the matter of rates he was. The hon. gentleman said that they would have to pay only 9s. 11d. per ton. Then the hon. member for Cairns said it would be 6s. 7d. a ton. No one knew better than the Premier that, under the classification, it would cost as much as £4 a ton to take certain goods.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No, no!

Mr. MULCAHY: If the Minister looked up his own classification, he would see that the higher class of goods went up considerably.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You have only five minutes more.

The PREMIER: It will cost £4 a ton now.

Mr. MULCAHY: He did not think it was a fair thing for the Premier to say to the country, through *Hansard*, that it would only cost 9s. a ton when the hon. gentleman knew that was absolutely misleading. He looked on the system of the 50 per cent. extra as infinitely worse than the system of rebates in America, and the hon. Premier knew that.

Several Government members interrupting.

Mr. MULCAHY: Did not they think the last five minutes should be taken up by some one of his party, instead of by Government members? He did not want the guillotine to fall on him.

Mr. MAXWELL: You will make a fine corpse if it does come down on you. (Laughter.)

Mr. MULCAHY: The hon. member was "whip," and they knew the "whip" got £200 a year extra to mislead people.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MULCAHY: If any person went into business in that district, they would be entirely in the hands of the syndicate.

The PREMIER: Of the Government.

Mr. MULCAHY: The Government had nothing at all to do with it. The syndicate had full power to charge the 50 per cent. extra. He was surprised at the hon. member for Cairns stating that the Commissioner or the House could make any alteration. They knew perfectly well that once the agreement was entered into the House had no power to alter the agreement until its termination. Evidently it suited the Opposition. They were getting some of their legislation in now, and apparently a contract had been entered into to pass legislation, not in the interests of the people of Queensland, but in the interests of some syndicates, and there was no doubt the syndicate had a very good thing. He did not know if any hon. gentleman in the House was interested—he hoped not—but it was not in the interests of the people of Queensland that the line was being passed. The Labour party would be only too pleased to support the line as a Government line.

The PREMIER: You know that is mere bunkum.

Mr. HARDACRE wanted to point out that the company would not have to pay the high rates; it was the rest of the people in the district who would pay the high rates. The company would get cheap rates. It was provided in the agreement that the Commissioner, with the consent of the company, could reduce the rates on minerals, but only with the consent of the company.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will be the same rate for everybody.

Mr. HARDACRE: That was for another class of goods. The company could reduce the rate on the class of goods they sent over the railway, and increase it on other goods. He did not want his head to come under the guillotine, so he would sit down. (Laughter.)

Mr. MANN: When he had mentioned the rate would be 6s. 7d. a ton, he referred to that as the rate that would be charged if the usual Government rates were charged. The amount of 9s. 11d. would be the charge, with the 50 per cent. increase.

Mr. KENNA pointed out that the company took all the risks, and the liability in the case of a loss on the line. It had been stated that the high rates would increase the value of the line at the end of fifteen years, but it had to be remembered that the company would have to pay the 50 per cent. for fifteen years.

LABOUR MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. KENNA: Under those circumstances he thought the charge of 50 per cent. extra was a good one.

Mr. Kenna.]

At 10 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN: Order! In accordance with Standing Order 136A, I shall now proceed to put the question. The question is—That the words proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Bowman's amendment*) stand part of the subclause.

Question put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 41.	
Mr. Airey	Mr. Kidston
„ Appel	„ Mackintosh
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Mann
„ Barnes, W. H.	„ Maxwell
„ Barton	„ Moore
„ Bell	„ Murphy
„ Blair	„ Paget
„ Brennan	„ Petrie
„ Campbell	„ Philp
„ Cottell	„ Rankin
„ Cowap	„ Redwood
„ Denham	„ Roberts
„ Douglas	„ Somerset
„ Forrest	„ Stodart
„ Grant	„ Sumner
„ Grayson	„ Swayne
„ Hawthorn	„ Thorn
„ Herbertson	„ Walker
„ Hunter, D.	„ White
„ Kenna	„ Woods
„ Kerr	
Tellers: Mr. Cowap and Mr. Mann.	

NOES, 21.	
Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lennon
„ Barber	„ Lesina
„ Bowman	„ May
„ Coyne	„ McLachlan
„ Hamilton	„ Mitchell
„ Hardacre	„ Mulcahy
„ Hunter, J. M.	„ Mullan
„ Huxham	„ Payne
„ Jenkinson	„ Ryland
„ Jones	„ Winstanley
„ Land	
Tellers: Mr. Huxham and Mr. Winstanley.	

Resolved in the affirmative.

Question—That the schedule be the schedule of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 41.	
Mr. Airey	Mr. Kidston
„ Appel	„ Mackintosh
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Mann
„ Barnes, W. H.	„ Maxwell
„ Barton	„ Moore
„ Bell	„ Murphy
„ Blair	„ Paget
„ Brennan	„ Petrie
„ Campbell	„ Philp
„ Cottell	„ Rankin
„ Cowap	„ Redwood
„ Denham	„ Roberts
„ Douglas	„ Somerset
„ Forrest	„ Stodart
„ Grant	„ Sumner
„ Grayson	„ Swayne
„ Hawthorn	„ Thorn
„ Herbertson	„ Walker
„ Hunter, D.	„ White
„ Kenna	„ Woods
„ Kerr	
Tellers: Mr. Brennan and Mr. Murphy.	

NOES, 21.	
Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lennon
„ Barber	„ Lesina
„ Bowman	„ May
„ Coyne	„ McLachlan
„ Hamilton	„ Mitchell
„ Hardacre	„ Mulcahy
„ Hunter, J. M.	„ Mullan
„ Huxham	„ Payne
„ Jenkinson	„ Ryland
„ Jones	„ Winstanley
„ Land	
Tellers: Mr. J. M. Hunter and Mr. Payne.	

Resolved in the affirmative.

{*Mr. Maughan.*

Question—That the preamble, as read, be the preamble of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 41.	
Mr. Airey	Mr. Kidston
„ Appel	„ Mackintosh
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Mann
„ Barnes, W. H.	„ Maxwell
„ Barton	„ Moore
„ Bell	„ Murphy
„ Blair	„ Paget
„ Brennan	„ Petrie
„ Campbell	„ Philp
„ Cottell	„ Rankin
„ Cowap	„ Redwood
„ Denham	„ Roberts
„ Douglas	„ Somerset
„ Forrest	„ Stodart
„ Grant	„ Sumner
„ Grayson	„ Swayne
„ Hawthorn	„ Thorn
„ Herbertson	„ Walker
„ Hunter, D.	„ White
„ Kenna	„ Woods
„ Kerr	

Tellers: Mr. Barton and Mr. Petrie.

NOES, 21.	
Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lennon
„ Barber	„ Lesina
„ Bowman	„ May
„ Coyne	„ McLachlan
„ Hamilton	„ Mitchell
„ Hardacre	„ Mulcahy
„ Hunter, J. M.	„ Mullan
„ Huxham	„ Payne
„ Jenkinson	„ Ryland
„ Jones	„ Winstanley
„ Land	

Tellers: Mr. Hardacre and Mr. Ryland.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

Mr. LESINA: We had no chance to amend it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I beg to move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Mr. LESINA: Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: Does the hon. member rise to a point of order?

Mr. LESINA: No; I rise to move an amendment. I move that all the words after “That” be omitted, with a view of inserting—
the Bill be read a third time this day six months.

I want to give some reasons for that amendment. The reason I move the amendment, firstly, is that this Bill has not been properly considered. We have had no opportunity of carefully examining it. Under the influence of some barbaric invention of the hon. gentleman which has been applied to the passage of legislation in this Chamber, and which has been imported from Russia or some other despotic country, the Committee has put through eleven sections of this agreement without any discussion whatever. I protest against legislation of the sausage-machine type. The hon. gentleman brings in a Bill here, puts it into a machine, turns a crank, and out it comes an Act of Parliament. The members of the Government do not want an Assembly which will discuss legislation and carefully analyse it and amend it, revising and improving it by the exercise of intelligence. They want voting machines in this institution, and the Government, in passing this Bill through its various stages per medium of the gag and the guillotine, has brought us to this final stage of the proceedings. Now, some time ago—I think it was in 1900—we had a number of similar measures to this brought before this House, and one was the Burketown-Lilydale Tramway Bill. That Bill was discussed for some time, and eventually the guillotine was applied to it, and we put through about twenty-one or twenty-two clauses without

any discussion whatever. Then the Minister gave notice of its third reading for another day, and Mr. Fisher—the present straight, honest leader of the Federal Labour party—not like some Ministers who sit on the front Treasury benches—not a Labour rat like the Secretary for Railways, the Treasurer, and their leader at the head of the Government who have deserted their principles, but a man who occupies the proud position of being the leader of the straightest Labour party in all Australia—moved an amendment that the Bill be read a third time that day six months. At that time Mr. Stewart, the member for Rockhampton North, made some observations which are to be found on page 2553 of *Hansard* for 1900. He said—

I intend to support the amendment. The Secretary for Railways said one thing at an earlier period of the sitting, and now he appears to have forgotten altogether the words he then used. The hon. gentleman said distinctly that there were several amendments he wished to move, and he pleaded with hon. members on this side to permit the discussion of the clauses in which he wished to move those amendments. I have no doubt my statement will be borne out by *Hansard* to-morrow. It is not for me to criticise hon. gentlemen opposite. They are beyond criticism. In fact, they have placed themselves, so far as I can discover, entirely outside the pale of parliamentary government. We have no more parliamentary government in Queensland.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. STEWART: We have no more government by discussion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not addressing himself to the question before the House.

Mr. STEWART: I am advancing this as a reason why the Bill should be read six months hence. There has been no discussion or amendment possible on twenty-seven clauses, and all that hon. members have been able to do is to say "Yea" or "Nay." I do not know what hon. gentlemen opposite call it, but it is not government by Parliament. It is government by some extraordinary machine, which, so far as I have been able to discover, has been imported from Russia or Germany, or some despotically governed community.

Those remarks are peculiarly applicable to the position taken up by the members of this side against this Railway Bill. On that occasion the present leader of the Opposition sat on the front Treasury bench, and he used this very weapon, which the present leader of the Government has put in force to push through this agreement at 10 o'clock at night, in which proceeding the leader of the Opposition gives him assistance. I say the root principle of such machine-made legislation is not in British constitutional government. It is a foreign principle. It is a principle peculiarly applicable to the conditions and atmosphere of a country governed like despotic Russia and not to a British community, in which the right to freedom of speech, to free investigation, and the free exercise of judgment is regarded as a sacred right. It is up to us at this final stage of the mysterious agreement to make a last protest. I take the ground that it has been put through the House by a machine; it has been put through without proper investigation and information. Only this very afternoon when asking for information about the route, the Secretary for Railways dragged out of his box on which he has been reclining for a week a document which has never before seen the light of day in this House, and which shows the prospective route of these 74 miles of railway between Cloncurry and Mount Elliott. In the absence of information we are not able to judge of the merits or demerits of this proposal. But the Government have been able, in the absence of that information [10.30 p.m.] and in the absence of free discussion, to put this Bill through Committee unaltered. It was reported without amendment, though the leader of the Go-

vernment admitted that it needed amendment. He admitted that certain suggestions made by members of this party were reasonable ones, and that if they had been made earlier they would have been included in the agreement. You cannot have responsible Government without you have responsible administration, and free and independent criticism of that administration, but here we have a Government who arrogate to themselves the rights of administration, and deny to their opponents the right of free criticism. Such a proceeding is repellent to our notion of what a democratic Government should be. This Government pretend to be democratic; they pretend that they live and draw the breath of their existence from the free atmosphere of democracy. The Minister for Railways and his colleagues mounted 100 platforms during the recent elections, and appealed to the democracy of Queensland to send them back, because they advocated home rule for Queensland. They got back on that plea. The people believed them and trusted them, and the way they now treat the representatives of the people is to prevent them freely discussing an important measure like that before the House. That is the way the Minister for Railways, who was returned on the postal vote, rewards the electors for the confidence they reposed in him. The Government came back only twenty-five strong, and many of the members who support the Government are not to be trusted. The Premier knows that his life hangs on a thread, that the sword of Damocles hangs by a single thread over his head. The time will come, and it may not be far distant, when that sword will fall, and he will disappear from this mortal scene as a parliamentarian and a Minister of the Crown. This Bill has been "conceived in sin, and shaped in iniquity." (Laughter.) Who are the parents of the measure? Who are the gentlemen with whom the Minister for Railways and his colleagues have been colloquing and caucusing in connection with this measure? We do not know who they are. It is not found in the way of business that anybody is prepared to enter into an agreement with persons unknown. Has the hon. gentleman entered into an agreement with persons unknown in this matter? Who are the persons who constitute the Mount Elliott syndicate. Are there any members of this Assembly who are members of that syndicate? The Government should have obtained from the Supreme Court a list showing the members of this company, and should have laid that list on the table of the House for the information of hon. members. We do not know who they are, and I do not think we should validate this agreement. We should put off the third reading of this Bill for six months. At the end of six months we may be able to ascertain who these people are, and what is their standing financially and socially. We can only get that information if we are afforded time for the purpose. Only by the exercise of a wise and prudent delay, as the Treasurer would say—that is always the motto of a wise and prudent politician—is it possible for us to get this information and place it in the hands of hon. members and in the possession of people outside, who are as much interested as we are in finding out the identity of the persons who constitute the syndicate with whom the Government have made this agreement. Delay will enable us to investigate the character and standing of the persons who will, as alleged by the Premier and Minister for Railways, put up this £100,000. We have not had an opportunity so far of finding that out,

Mr. Lesina.]

and I hope the Minister will give us a chance to do so. That is the last hope we have got. If that hope is taken from us, we shall be hopeless and despairing; this Bill will go on the statute-book, in three months the railway may be surveyed, and in another three months the rails may be laid along that line. The Premier intends to take a long-promised and, I hope, enjoyable trip to Great Britain. It is a pity he cannot take the Minister for Railways with him, and lose him. (Laughter.)

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No hope.

Mr. LESINA: The Premier, I say, is going home, and during his absence, if we secure a wise delay, we may be able to thoroughly investigate all the circumstances connected with this proposal. Moreover, the Premier, during his absence in London, may be able to reach the head centre from which the funds have been drawn which constitute the capital of this syndicate, and he may come back armed with information which may induce him in the coming session to tear up this agreement as waste paper. But I do not think he should be accompanied by the Minister for Railways. Surely we can trust the Premier alone in London! (Laughter.) I would object to the Minister for Railways going with him. He has other parliamentarians whom he is taking with him, and it would not be too wise to burden the hon. gentleman with too many. The Minister for Railways, therefore, had better stay here. This Government could not possibly continue if the Minister for Railways went home. If the Premier goes, that will be one calamity, and if the Minister for Railways goes, that will be another calamity. I am patriotic, and I want to save this country one shock. (Laughter.) I cannot stand a double shock, and the absence of the Minister for Railways, along with the Premier, would be a double shock. (Renewed laughter.) But I have another reason besides that for suggesting that the Premier should not take the Minister for Railways with him, and that is that he is taking other parliamentarians in his entourage. He is taking the hon. member for Brisbane North with him.

Mr. BARTON: No, he is not; I am going "on my own."

Mr. LESINA: Well, we will put it the other way about, and say the hon. member for Brisbane North is taking the Premier with him. (Laughter.) I will not dispute over trifles; I will, therefore, take the other view, and say the hon. member for Brisbane North is taking the Premier with him to the old country. I have no desire that the Premier should burden himself with too large a parliamentary party. Let him leave some of the great men behind him, so that the wheels of the Administration may run smoothly. That would be absolutely impossible in the absence of the gentleman who sits in the chair of the Minister for Railways.

Mr. SUMNER: Cannot you persuade him to take you with him?

Mr. LESINA: I think the hon. gentleman gets quite enough of me during the session without taking me to London. That would not be a pleasure but a purgatorial and penitential peregrination. (Laughter.) I think I have advanced one or two cogent reasons why we should delay the third reading of this Bill. I do not know whether the House agrees with me—it does not often do so—I feel like a green apple, I disagree with everybody. (Laughter.) It is quite possible that many of the reasons he had advanced would not commend themselves to

hon. members, but I think they are cogent reasons. To summarise them: We have had no information in respect to the Bill; we know nothing about the persons who started the company; we only received at a late hour this evening certain maps which we should have had in our possession weeks ago; and we have had no proper opportunity of discussing in detail each clause in the Bill, as we were gagged when we got to clauses 10 and 11, and the other clauses were put through under the operation of the guillotine, thus preventing members, not only of this party but members of the Government party, from moving amendments in the Committee stage of the Bill. The hon. member for Nundah, who is a most devoted supporter of the Government, and has stuck to them through thick and thin, had an important amendment. Did he get an opportunity of moving it? You, Mr. Speaker, were not in Committee, and were not aware of the fact, but I am aware that the guillotine was applied to that hon. member—a supporter of the Government—and by that means he and his constituents were disfranchised on the discussion of this agreement. There is another reason which has occurred to me—it is one which ought to appeal to the Secretary for Railways more than anything I have advanced—that is, the money aspect of the case, because if there is anything the hon. gentleman loves it is money. Mention money to the hon. gentleman and he is silent; mention money and the Premier observes an attitude of rapt attention—he becomes absorbed in a feeling of admiration. Money is his god ever since he has been Premier. He worships it, and his sordid Ministers are equally devout in their worship of money—from the Treasurer, who, I believe, spends half of his spare time in the basement of the Treasury Buildings, running his fingers through the gold in the Treasury chest—(laughter)—and the Secretary for Railways, who always collects every three-penny bit that has a hole in it. (Laughter.) The £100,000 being put in this industry comes out of the public Treasury, and originally came out of the pockets of the taxpayers. The taxpayers, as a body, have no party; they are simply taxpayers, and know no party at all. They pay the taxes which go into the Treasury, and the Government of the day seeks authority from Parliament to expend the taxes in various forms. They will seek authority, during the next forty-eight hours, from this Parliament, to provide Supply for certain expenditure, and under our amended Railway Act that expenditure will be entirely in the hands of the Secretary for Railways, who will be able to control the expenditure of that money on those works. Is this matter not then of importance to the taxpayers who find this money, and who, as taxpayers, are superior to all party considerations? My amendment is, in a sense, a protest against the use of such a disgraceful weapon as the gag. It lowers Parliament in its representative capacity, and takes from it that steady and deliberate air of investigation of debate and discussion which should characterise all free institutions, and to that extent I consider it a degrading element in parliamentary life. If that kind of thing were to be applied to legislation without protest, the time must come when Parliament will become merely a registering machine. Members would drop in and out merely to register the decrees of a Government.

Mr. SUMNER: Is it not always so under this system of government?

Mr. LESINA: Not necessarily so, because members at times break away from the Go-

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vernment. I have seen the hon. gentleman vote against his own Government. Men do detach themselves from their party occasionally. I have voted against the party frequently, and I have seen the leader of this party do it. There are questions outside party lines, in the consideration of which members detach themselves from their respective leaders, and exercise their right of private judgment, but to substitute for that the mere brainless operation of a machine like the guillotine is to degrade parliamentary institutions, and the time is rapidly coming when, if we do not make protests like this, we shall be nothing better than recording machines. The constituencies will not need intelligent men then to send to this Chamber. All they need to do is to get a beautifully painted machine, which on certain occasions when you drop a penny in the slot will record a vote. It will have no conscience, no political platform, and no programme which is operated from outside. That is precisely what the Government are doing in this case. I hold very strongly to the belief that, under the circumstances under which we have fought the measure to this stage, we have not been fairly treated, that the application of this brutal machine to us does not make for the passage of useful legislation, and reduces Parliament to a process of bolting legislation. You know what a man does when he bolts his food. He has a violent fit of indigestion. If he masticates it properly it does him good, but if a man bolts his food he suffers indigestion. So with a Legislature. If a Legislature does not take its legislation piecemeal, and carefully mix with it the saliva of discussion, it will do it harm. Such a Legislature, or the people who support that Legislature, will get an attack of indigestion sooner or later, and when people get indigestion they get grumpy. If there is any more legislation of this description put through by machine at 10 o'clock at night, the result will be that the electors will get an attack of indigestion, and then the hon. gentleman had better look out for himself. This means the passage of ill-digested legislation. It has not been properly discussed. It might have been discussed in the caucus-room of the Cabinet, with one or two syndicators present with the Minister for Railways. The Minister for Railways may have sat cheek by jowl with the syndicators in the caucus-room of the Government. They may have gone over the details and put in things to suit themselves, and kept out things to suit themselves; but that is not legislation, it is jobbery. The Government might just as well have published this in the *Government Gazette*, like they did the Order in Council in connection with the electric lighting business brought forward by the hon. member for Fassifern.

—Mr. HARDACRE: They did that outside of Parliament.

Mr. LESINA: Under an Act of Parliament passed years ago they gave that franchise for thirty-two years, and advertised it in the *Government Gazette*. Members are regarded as so many marionettes, to dance when Ministers pull the strings; they are to say "Aye" when the Minister wants them, and "No" when they are wanted to say "No." I object to being turned into an automaton like a penny-in-the-slot voting machine. I have been sent here as a thinking human being to express my opinion of the politics of the day, and the bargains which the Government enters into for the expenditure of the ratepayers' money. When I try to discuss the matter in detail, I am guillotined. This is my last chance, and I am going to take it like Harry Lawson's

bushman. (Laughter.) This has been considered in the caucus-room of the Government. Information has leaked out in connection with this case. However secret these caucuses may be, there is always a little leakage, always a pinhole through which a ray of light will filter. The hon. gentleman is always, I believe, consorting with syndicates; he will become politically the paramour of syndicates, if I may put it that way. I believe there have been many of these caucuses in which syndicates have been concerned with the hon. gentleman. What transpired at these caucuses we do not know, but I hear there has been a run on champagne in the Parliamentary Refreshment-room. (Laughter.) I understand there has been a run on Pomery and Greno in the refreshment-room during the last few weeks. And who by? We know the Minister for Lands never spent a red cent on Pomery and Greno—that is, of his own money. We know that the Premier never spent anything on any one at any time, and that when the Treasurer spends anything there is a jubilee over it. (Laughter.) No man who has known the Treasurer for the last forty years ever recollects him spending anything, so that we may honestly conclude that, so far as the Cabinet is concerned, this Pomery and Greno did not come out of their funds. But it has been purchased and consumed. Who footed the bill? I look significantly to the Minister, and pin him to this point: Who consumed that Pomery and Greno? (Laughter.) I do not blame the Minister for Railways, because he is a shining light in the Rechabite band. (Laughter.) Hop beer is just as deep as he would go at any time. In connection with the Treasurer—

The SPEAKER: Will the hon. member be good enough to let me have his amendment? I have not seen it yet.

Mr. LESINA: I will give it to you, Sir, when I have concluded my speech. The hon. member for Leichhardt will write it out while I continue the even tenor of my way. If we get this six months to reconsider the matter before measures are passed, we may be able, by means of those devious methods known to newspaper men and others, to obtain a knowledge of some of the circumstances surrounding the negotiations that took place between the Minister for Railways and the agent of the syndicates. There is only one agent that we know in this matter, and that is William L. Baillieu, whose name appears here under the seal of the Mount Elliott Company, and his secretary, Frederic Godfrey Hughes. We understand from a remark made by the Premier the other night that for some nine months or more negotiations have been going on between the company and the Government. Members of the Cabinet have been carefully discussing this matter all the time, not in the broad light of day, not openly and above-board, in a manner that would justify members of the Chamber placing confidence in the negotiations, but secretly, in the dark. All these things have been taking place behind a curtain, and when things take place behind a curtain—whether on a conjurer's stage or in this place—people are apt to imagine worse things are taking place than is actually the case. There are so many mysterious tremblings, so many mysterious rumblings, and so much popping of champagne corks—(laughter)—that we want to know what took place during the time the negotiations were going on between the innocent Minister for Railways and the other gentlemen who represent the company in this matter, and we cannot find it

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out without time. Time is a special feature in the play. It is time we want. By delaying the passage of the Bill, I get time to make inquiries—not only myself, but other members are hungering for information. There are twenty-one other members who will go to great length to secure information as to these negotiations. They will make heroic efforts. There are members on the Government side of the House who, if the conditions might be modified, particularly the repurchase clause, would do their very utmost to acquire information and also spend their own money to get it. I suppose you, Mr. Speaker, are as much interested as anybody, and would like to see the correspondence which has passed between Baillieu and other members of the syndicate. I do not say that that correspondence would add to your knowledge of English, which is large and diverse, and classical, because the quality of that correspondence, as far as the Minister for Railways is concerned, would not be of a peculiarly edifying character. He has not so far shone in this Chamber as a master of classical English, and I do not suppose that we should get this time in order that we may peruse the correspondence with any ill-founded belief that the contemplation and study of that correspondence would improve our knowledge of English. I do not advance that as a claim on which we might get this correspondence. I merely desire, out of a spirit of curiosity, to read the correspondence between the hon. gentleman and William L. Baillieu, or any other person acting as agent for the company. If I can get it, I shall be able to sit down during the recess and read it, and perhaps come down when the session opens in October next—when the Premier comes back looking rosy and fresh after his trip to the little mud-bank in the North Sea—and discuss this matter more effectively than I am at present in a position to do. Any Government that wants to do a fair thing will fall in with that. In their saner moments they will say to themselves, “The hon. member for Clermont has not been fairly treated in this matter, and has not seen the correspondence. He knows nothing about the negotiations, and yet the taxpayers may ask him about it the next time he goes up there to address them.” It may be from a spirit of curiosity, but that is a very good thing, and should not be suppressed in a free country—that spirit may induce some people in Clermont to put the question to me on the platform, “What do you know about the correspondence that took place between the Minister for Railways and the Premier and the representatives of the company?” What position shall I be in? I will not allow the Government to place me in a false position like that. How can I let my constituents into my confidence if I am in the dark myself? My constituents may be incensed against me, and I may lose my seat—a calamity which Queensland will take long years to recover from. (Laughter.) My political career may be cut off in the very flower of my youth, because of the Government deliberately suppressing the publication of useful information. And what applies to me applies with equal force to other members.

The SPEAKER: It is necessary for the House and for me that I should know what the hon. member's amendment is, so that I may know, in the first place, if he is in order, and, in the next place, that hon. members may be able to follow the debate. I shall now formally put the amendment as handed to me by the hon. member for Leichhardt. The question was—

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That the Bill be now read a third time—since which it has been moved, by way of amendment, to omit the word “now” with a view of adding at the end of the question the words “this day six months.” The question now is that the word proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Mr. LESINA: The line of argument I was pursuing was intended to appeal to even the most simple intellect. The Secretary for Railways takes no notice of my appeals. He scorns my arguments and appeals. It is regrettable that, in a free country, a Minister in a democratic Government should take no notice of my eloquent appeals. My suspicion that the hon. gentleman has information in his possession is borne out by the fact that there are two maps on the table of the House, one of which was prepared by the Lands Department and the other by the Mines Department. Both were prepared some days ago, and should have been hung up in this Chamber, so that hon. members might carefully examine the route of the proposed railway; the mining leases held by the company, and acquire other information regarding the railway; but, instead of affording hon. members that opportunity of getting information, the hon. gentleman has kept them in his box all the time. I have no desire to stonewall this measure. All through I have done my best to facilitate its passage. I sincerely trust that the two members now present in the Chamber—the Secretary for Railways and the Premier—will consider my arguments. I ask them to cast their minds back to the session of 1900, when they made a like appeal to the then Premier, the present leader of the Opposition. At that time they fought like demons against syndicate railways. In the case of two or three of the Bills then before the Chamber, they asked for the third reading to be delayed. I do not say they convinced the House, but they made a gallant attempt to do so. They were refused by the then Premier, as I suppose I shall meet with a refusal from the present Premier. If the very arguments which those two Ministers used in 1900 to convince the Premier do not now convince them, then it is either because of their invincible ignorance—I do not use the term personally, but in a general kind of way—it is either that they are invincibly ignorant or stupid. They can choose whichever horn of the dilemma they like, or they can share the two horns between them.

At 11.10 p.m.,

The PREMIER said: I beg to move that the question be now put.

Question—That the question be now put—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 39.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
.. Appel	.. Kidston
.. Barnes, G. P.	.. Mackintosh
.. Barnes, W. II.	.. Mann
.. Barton	.. Maxwell
.. Bell	.. Moore
.. Blair	.. Murphy
.. Brennan	.. Paset
.. Campbell	.. Peerie
.. Cottell	.. Philp
.. Coway	.. Rankin
.. Denham	.. Redwood
.. Douglas	.. Roberts
.. Forrest	.. Somerset.
.. Grant	.. Stodart
.. Grayson	.. Sumner
.. Hawthorn	.. Swayne
.. Herbertson	.. White
.. Hunter, D.	.. Woods
.. Kenna	

Tellers: Mr. Grant and Mr. Rankin.

NOES, 19.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Lesina
" Barber	" May
" Bowman	" McLachlan
" Coyne	" Mitchell
" Hamilton	" Mulcahy
" Hardacre	" Mullan
" Hunter, J. M.	" Payne
" Huxham	" Ryland
" Land	" Winstanley
" Lennon	

Tellers : Mr. Hardacre and Mr. Ryland.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : I beg to move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put ; and the House divided :—

AYES, 39.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
" Appel	" Kidston
" Barnes, G. P.	" Mackintosh
" Barnes, W. H.	" Mann
" Barton	" Maxwell
" Bell	" Moore
" Blair	" Murphy
" Brennan	" Paget
" Campbell	" Petrie
" Cottell	" Philp
" Cowap	" Rankin
" Denham	" Redwood
" Douglas	" Roberts
" Forrest	" Somerset
" Grant	" Stodart
" Grayson	" Sumner
" Hawthorn	" Swayne
" Herbertson	" White
" Hunter, D.	" Woods
" Kenna	

Tellers : Mr. Petrie and Mr. Grayson.

NOES, 17.

Mr. Barber	Mr. May
" Bowman	" McLachlan
" Coyne	" Mitchell
" Hamilton	" Mulcahy
" Hardacre	" Mullan
" Huxham	" Payne
" Land	" Ryland
" Lennon	" Winstanley
" Lesina	

Tellers : Mr. Payne and Mr. Lennon.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : I move that the Bill do now pass.

Question put ; and the House divided :—

AYES, 36.

Mr. Airey	Mr. Kerr
" Appel	" Kidston
" Barnes, G. P.	" Mackintosh
" Barton	" Mann
" Bell	" Maxwell
" Blair	" Moore
" Brennan	" Murphy
" Campbell	" Paget
" Cottell	" Petrie
" Cowap	" Philp
" Douglas	" Redwood
" Forrest	" Roberts
" Grant	" Somerset
" Grayson	" Stodart
" Hawthorn	" Sumner
" Herbertson	" Swayne
" Hunter, D.	" White
" Kenna	" Woods

Tellers : Mr. Murphy and Mr. Brennan.

NOES, 16.

Mr. Barber	Mr. Lesina
" Bowman	" May
" Coyne	" McLachlan
" Hamilton	" Mitchell
" Hardacre	" Mullan
" Huxham	" Payne
" Land	" Ryland
" Lennon	" Winstanley

Tellers : Mr. Coyne and Mr. Mullan.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The title having been agreed to, the Bill was ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council, by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

Mr. BOWMAN : You have got the Council squared.

ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

The PREMIER : I beg to move—

That, unless otherwise ordered, the House will meet for the despatch of business at 3 o'clock p.m. on Saturday in this week, in addition to the days already provided by Sessional Orders, and that Government business do take precedence of all other business on that day.

I do not need to say much in support of this motion. As everyone is aware, hon. members are desirous of closing the session [11.30 p.m.] about Easter time, and this will permit us to get through the business in that time.

Mr. COYNE : Easter will be all over then.

The PREMIER : The leader of the Opposition suggested to-day that instead of sitting at 3 p.m. on Saturday we might meet at 10 o'clock in the forenoon.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : Hear, hear !

Mr. RYLAND : Meet at 7 o'clock.

The PREMIER : I am quite agreeable to meet at 10 o'clock if there is an understanding that we will close before 6 o'clock on Saturday evening.

GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION MEMBERS : Hear, hear !

The PREMIER : That will give us exactly the same time.

Mr. BOWMAN : Will you guillotine it at 6 o'clock ?

The PREMIER : Hon. members will see that it is all the same either way.

Mr. BOWMAN : You are sure to put the guillotine on in any case.

The PREMIER : It is merely a matter for the convenience of hon. members themselves. If hon. members prefer that, I will alter the motion to 10 o'clock. (Hear, hear !)

Mr. BOWMAN : What do you want to sit on Saturday for at all ?

Mr. LESINA : What is the hurry ? Why this panic hurry ?

Mr. BOWMAN : You know you said you did not mind sitting all next week ?

The PREMIER : I do not mind sitting all next week, as I told the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, if that would ensure a rational and fair discussion of the business before the House.

Mr. LESINA : What do you consider rational and fair discussion ? Two minutes for one of your favourite syndicate railway Bills ?

The SPEAKER : Order, order !

The PREMIER : But I was given to understand that there was no chance of that ; that whether we finished this week or sat next week, the result would just be the same.

Mr. COYNE : You only surmised that.

The PREMIER : If there is a desire to meet at 10 o'clock on Saturday morning, I am agreeable. (Hear, hear !)

Mr. BOWMAN : Make it 6 o'clock in the morning.

The PREMIER : If members wish it, I will alter the motion to 10 o'clock on Saturday morning. (Hear, hear !) I think that hon. members will see that, unless there is some understanding

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about closing as well as meeting, it is merely sitting six or eight hours longer. I will leave the motion as it stands unless there is a desire to alter it.

HON. R. PHILP: I made the suggestion to sit at 10 o'clock on Saturday because it would give us more time to discuss the Railway Estimates. The ordinary time is from half-past 3 o'clock till 10 o'clock, but this will give us from 10 o'clock in the morning till 10 o'clock at night. I understand that the operation of Standing Order 136A does not commence till 4 o'clock. That will give us three or four hours longer.

MR. MULLAN: The Premier wants us to close at 6 o'clock.

HON. R. PHILP: If the House wants to get away by 6 o'clock, it can do so, but I propose to sit until 10 o'clock. I think we should have as much time as we can get to discuss the Estimates. We arranged a few weeks ago to close to-morrow night, but we have not been able to do it. This will give us much longer time to discuss the Estimates.

MR. BOWMAN: I am opposed to sitting on Saturday at all. I do not think that the Railway Estimates can be put through by Saturday night, even if you start at half-past 10 o'clock in the morning, and continue till 10 o'clock at night. We used to have two ordinary days devoted to the discussion of the Railway Estimates in past years, and you propose to put them through in that short time. Hon. members in this House who have occupied the position of Minister for Railways know that well enough. You yourself know, Mr. Speaker, when you held that position, that we had two days to discuss the Railway Estimates.

MR. PAGET (to Mr. Bowman): You know you put the Home Secretary's Estimates through in one night.

MR. BOWMAN: The hon. gentleman said if there had been rational discussion he would not have minded sitting next week. I told him then, as I told him on the floor of this House, that so far as these syndicate railways were concerned we would offer the strongest opposition to them, and what we wanted was sufficient time to consider the Estimates. I do not consider that there is any undue haste at all in the matter. Why not come back on Monday and Tuesday, and finish the business? Some hon. members have objections to sitting on Saturday. My friend, Mr. Lesina, tells me that Easter Saturday is a day he has a great respect for, and there are probably other members who entertain a similar view with regard to that day. I am opposed to coming on Saturday at all, and I say it is unfair on the part of the Premier to ask us to discuss in one day Estimates which usually take three days to discuss. There are a great many grievances in connection with the Railway Department, and we should have an opportunity of bringing them under the notice of the Minister.

MR. LESINA: I object to sitting on Saturday. We have not discussed the Railway Estimates for two years, and it is really necessary that they should be discussed. Indeed, it is necessary that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the work of that department; and yet we are to be confined to a few hours in our discussion of the grievances in connection with that department. I strongly object to such a procedure. If we have to come here, the Premier will have to guillotine the Estimates, as far as I am concerned. It is a new business the hon. gentleman has taken up—the business of legislative butcher. The hon. gentleman is going to butcher the Estimates. The man who uses the guillotine is a plain,

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unornamental legislative butcher. He has the brand of Cain on his brow now, legislatively speaking.

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the hon. member is going beyond the bounds of parliamentary language.

MR. LESINA: I am using figurative language, and speaking of a machine which will come down at 10 o'clock to-morrow night on the Railway Estimates. The guillotine is an invention of the French Revolution, and the man who operated the machine in France was an executioner, or butcher, and the man who uses it in legislation is a legislative butcher.

The SPEAKER: Order! The matter the hon. member is discussing does not come within the scope of the question now before the House.

MR. LESINA: I object to coming here on Saturday. It is a day which is sacred to many Christians.

MR. RYLAND: This is Holy Week, anyway.

MR. LESINA: And we are doing most unholy work. The Government have passed unholy syndicate legislation, and used the monstrous instrument called the guillotine, and they have done that in the name of democracy. Oh! democracy, democracy, democracy! What crimes are committed in thy name! We are asked to come here on Saturday to pass Estimates. Those Estimates have not been discussed for two years, and it will be impossible to discuss them properly and get through by 10 o'clock, and yet, at that hour, the Chairman will get up and put each item through the machine, without any discussion, just as he put through the agreement in the Mount Elliott Railway Bill this evening. I protest against coming here on Saturday, but, at the same time, I will come if I am compelled to do so. Why is the Premier in such a mortal hurry to pass these Estimates? Why cannot he adjourn on Thursday night till the following Tuesday?

The PREMIER: We can take the Estimates on Thursday night.

MR. LESINA: Would not a better feeling prevail among members—would not it pay the taxpayers better—would not it pay the Railway Department better, if instead of members being asked to discuss these syndicate railways, of which the Premier has another in his pocket, we devoted our time to the discussion of the Estimates? Never, in any session, except in 1900, when the guillotine was applied, have Estimates been put through in anything like the time they have been put through this session. We have usually taken three or four days to discuss the Estimates for one department. The hon. gentleman, backed up by his most democratic majority, the friends of the people, the chaps who go round shaking the horny hands of the sons of toil from the Gulf right down to Point Danger, now asks the House to pass the Railway Estimates after a discussion of a few hours.

The PREMIER: I would like to call attention to the fact that I am not proposing to stop discussion. My motion is to give an extra day for discussion.

MR. LESINA: On Saturday! I object to coming here on Saturday. Why should I come back on Saturday to assist the hon. gentleman to get away to a wine party at Rockhampton? Why should I assist to rush business through in order that the hon. gentleman may get away to fraternise with the pot-bellied, frog-legged capitalists who found the money to fight his election? (Laughter.) Why should I help the hon. gentleman to finish the business of the House for the purpose of enabling him to join men of the

Walter Reid fraternity, and the capitalistic cronies he has made during recent years since he went back on the Labour party, in a festive party at Rockhampton? Before I will agree to come back here on Saturday I will see him hang. I know he does not want me here, but if I have to come back I will come back. At the same time I earnestly protest against the motion.

Question put and passed.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN STATE SCHOOLS REFERENDUM BILL.

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL.

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

LAND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Council, returning this Bill with amendments.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS, the Council's amendments were ordered to be taken into consideration to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the Committee stage of the Albert River, Burketown, and Lilydale Tramway Bill. I hope that those who are desirous of having a full discussion on the Railway Estimates will try—

Mr. BOWMAN: You are a hypocrite.

The PREMIER: We will try to get through this Bill in the afternoon, so that the evening may be devoted to the discussion of the Railway Estimates.

Mr. BOWMAN: We will give you another opportunity for your gag.

The PREMIER: I say that for this reason: The Bill that is coming up for consideration to-morrow is just on the same principle as the Bill we passed to-day.

Mr. LESINA: It is worse.

The PREMIER: In the essential details it is just the same.

Mr. LENNON: The details which we had not time to discuss.

The PREMIER: I am only expressing my opinion on the matter. Some hon. members seem to think that I was desirous of not having a full discussion on the Railway Estimates.

A LABOUR MEMBER: It is not possible to have a full discussion on the Railway Estimates.

The PREMIER: For that reason I suggest that we should devote a large part of to-morrow to the Railway Estimates.

Mr. BOWMAN: I want to tell the Premier that, so far as the Bill is concerned, it will receive the same fair treatment as the other Bill of the same kind has received. We are going to consider it in detail in Committee, as the opportunity was not given us to-night in connection with the latter clauses of the agreement in the other Bill. If the Premier says they are both on the same principle, we are going through the latter clauses and will mete out the same fair treatment we have given to-day.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at five minutes to 12 o'clock.