

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 1909**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER, 1909.

The SPEAKER (Hon. J. T. Bell, *Dally*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

## ANSWER TO ADDRESS IN REPLY.

The SPEAKER: I have to report to the House that I have this day presented to the Lieutenant-Governor the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech, and that His Excellency was pleased to make thereto the following answer:—

“MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“I receive with great pleasure the assurance of your continued loyalty and devotion towards the Throne and Person of His Most Gracious Majesty the King.

“I feel assured that you will give the most careful consideration to all matters that may be brought before you, and am satisfied that it will always be your earnest endeavour to promote the advancement and prosperity of this State.”

## PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table, was ordered to be printed:—Twenty-fourth annual report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Building Societies, and Trades Unions.

## QUESTIONS.

## IVERAGH LANDS.

Mr. BRESLIN (*Port Curtis*) asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

1. Why, after having been thrown open to public selection, were the Iveragh lands withdrawn?

2. Is it a fact that a group from Southern Queensland, after refusing to pay 15s., were allowed to select any portions they wished at 10s. under special terms, the balance being then offered to local people at 15s.?

3. If so, why?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. D. F. Denham, *Oxley*) replied—

1. It was considered preferable to have the land surveyed before selection.

2. No.

3. See answer to No. 2.

## GERMAN SETTLERS AT BAFFLE CREEK.

Mr. BRESLIN asked the Chief Secretary—

1. Under what conditions or arrangement were the German settlers, now at Baffle Creek, introduced into State?

2. Was any commission or bonus paid in connection with the introduction of the said settlers?

3. If so, what amount was paid, and to whom?

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Kidston, *Rockhampton*) replied—

1. In accordance with the provisions of the Queensland Immigration Acts—that is, on the same terms as anyone else.

2. No.

3. See answer to No. 2.

## THE ESTIMATES.

Mr. MAUGHAN (*Ipswich*): I would like to ask the Premier, without notice, if he will inform the House when the Estimates will be considered?

The PREMIER: I think it would have been better to have asked the Treasurer when he will make his Financial Statement. It will probably be some time next week.

Mr. MAUGHAN: I will ask the Treasurer that question.

The TREASURER (Hon. A. G. C. Hawthorn, *Enoggera*): I think I may promise the House that the Financial Statement will be laid before the House next week.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Hear, hear!

## PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION BILL.

## INITIATION.

On the motion of the TREASURER, it was formally resolved—

That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide a superannuation fund for the benefit of officers of the public service and their dependents, and for other purposes.

## METROPOLITAN WATER AND SEWERAGE BILL.

## INITIATION.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Bulimba*), it was formally resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make better provision for the water supply and sewerage of the city of Brisbane and its suburbs.

## LAND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

## INITIATION.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS, it was formally resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to further amend the Land Acts.

## PITTSWORTH TO MILLMERRAN RAILWAY.

## APPROVAL OF PLANS.

## COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. W. D. Armstrong in the chair.*)

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. W. T. Paget, *Mackay*), in moving—

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway extension from Pittsworth to Millmerran, in length 26 miles 60 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Wednesday, 3rd November, 1909.

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

said: I think, before I proceed to place before the Committee the details of the railways tabled last week, it might be advisable if I let the committee know in a few words how the present railways are going on with respect to their construction. (Hear, hear!) We have at the present moment thirteen railways being built in the State. One of these which is being built by the Chillagoe Company—the Almaden to Charleston line—was practically finished last week. It is finished so far as the heavy earthworks are concerned. The Caboolture to Woodford line

we expect to have finished next month—that is, December. The New Zealand Gully to Yeppoon line will be finished next month—December. The Goondiwindi to Tallwood line we also expect to be finished next month. That is, that three of the lines at present under construction are to be finished during this year. Then, in February next, we expect to finish the Clermont to Blair Athol line, and in March the Boyne Valley line will be finished. We are very anxious to get the Boyne Valley line finished as soon as possible, as there is a great deal of work waiting at Many Peaks, and men are waiting for the completion of this line. From June until October of next year we expect to finish the whole of the lines that we now have under construction—(hear, hear!)—that is, with the exception of the Warwick to Maryvale line. The start in the construction of that line was kept waiting owing to the validating Bill not having passed this House. We expect to finish that line by December of next year, assuming, of course, that the validating Bill is passed, and I do not think there will be any trouble about the passage of that Bill. Probably hon. members would like to know the approximate number of men engaged on the railway construction works. The approximate number of men engaged is 3,100. That is not counting any men who are working on contract. I did not wish to weary the House with a long list of figures.

Mr. LENNON: They are labourers?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. LESINA: Are you going to apply the contract system to the construction of any of these lines?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: These lines are being constructed by day labour. I just mention these facts so that hon. members might know exactly where we stand with respect to the construction of the lines that have been authorised by Parliament. These are men on wages working on the construction. There are many more men than that engaged in contract work—sleeper-getting and men working with teams—but I do not wish to give all these particulars, as it would probably take an hour. I want to give the Committee a general idea as to how the construction work is proceeding at the present moment, and I will say that we have at the present time room for a thousand more men on these construction works.

Mr. MANN: Then there is a shortage of labour on the lines?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is a shortage of labour in so far that it is the policy of the Government not to push the construction of the railways on during the last six months of the year very rapidly, because there is plenty of other work in the canefields and in harvesting on the Downs, and also in other industries, for a great number of men who have nothing to do in the beginning of the year, say to June, when there is not so much work in those industries. The complaint of the Chief Engineer, that he cannot get on quickly enough with those lines, will be removed in a very short period, when the men will be leaving the canefields from now onwards, as the mills will be cutting out. Therefore, from this time onwards we may be able to push the construction works on much more quickly than we have been able to do during the past four or five months. I think the largest number of men working on any one line in the State is on the Atherton-Evelyn Railway.

Mr. MANN: How many men are engaged on that line?

Mr. MULCAHY: Give decent wages and you can get plenty of men.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are 575 men engaged on the Atherton-Evelyn railway. In moving the resolution before the Committee, I have to say that in January this year I received an invitation from the settlers in the Pittsworth district, the valley of the Condamine, and Millmerran, to visit that district with a view to inspect the best of the routes that had been suggested for some twenty years, for the construction of a line westward from Pittsworth. I visited that district with the Commissioner, Mr. Thallon, and Mr. Letham, who is the officer in charge of surveys. We travelled from Pittsworth *via* St. Ronans to Turallan. That is what I call the northern route, and we then went southerly by the Domville cheese factory down to Millmerran. We then made the return journey *via* Yandilla and Tummaville back to Pittsworth. The route that has been decided is the best, in the interests of all those concerned, of the routes that had been suggested and reported on by the Railway Department. We gave this matter very serious and earnest consideration, and it was decided to recommend the route from Pittsworth *via* Brookstead to Tummaville and thence to Millmerran. I might say here that it is not possible, in my opinion, for one line of railway to serve the whole of the fertile valley of the Condamine. (Hear, hear!) This, I think, is a step in the right direction. Practically the whole of the three routes suggested are settled upon, and thickly. At one time the "lion in the path" of building this railway was the big Yandilla station, but some 50,000 acres of that station have been cut up and sold, and people are now settling on the land; and even if there is still an area in the hands of the original owners, I was given to understand that they were cutting up the whole of it into farms, and they were only waiting a favourable opportunity to remove the whole of the sheep and so close the station. But under the 1906 Act they, of course, have to bear their share of the responsibility, exactly in the same way as the man who owns 160 acres.

Mr. COYNE: The railway will give them a good opportunity of selling the land.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say 50,000 acres have been cut up and sold.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They still have 40,000 acres.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know how many acres are left; but I saw plans for the cutting up of the whole of it. That is some ten months ago. Probably the hon. member for Cambooya will be able to give some information in regard to it. I would like to say that the proposal is to extend the Pittsworth line 26½ miles. The present terminus is 36 miles from Toowoomba, the present extension is 27 miles, and from the railway point of view, when this line is extended this further 27 miles, the whole of that line can be worked much more economically than it is at present—it will be worked with the same service, and will require no more men or rolling-stock.

Mr. COYNE: The maintenance will be greater.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will cost more for maintenance, of course. The line is paying its way now, and it is hoped it will more than pay its way when this short line is extended a further 27 miles. Last year the line to Pittsworth earned £2,925 above working expenses, and it provided £3 12s. 6d. per cent. on the capital cost, and in the previous year the return was £3 19s. 5d. per cent. When I was

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in the district I made particular inquiries, as I always do, as to how the settlers were getting on, and what carriage they had to pay on their wheat and other produce they desired taken into Pittsworth. I found that the carriage on wheat to Pittsworth Railway Station was 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. per bag.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: That is from Millmerran,

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In the locality. I did not make inquiries in one place only, but I inquired generally in the district. I was told the great difficulty in coming from Millmerran was in crossing the black-soil plains, and if they got any rain at all it was an absolute impossibility for them even to cart their wheat or other produce. Around Millmerran the areas that are held are larger than what are held at Yandilla.

Mr. COYNE: It is a lighter soil.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The areas were selected as Crown lands, and is of much lighter soil, and is suitable for sheep rearing. Some cultivation is carried on, but not the amount of cultivation that is desired on such a class of country. It is a very excellent class of country, and I would rather work that myself than the heavy black soil. Whilst I was there I was very pleased to see that the settlers were endeavouring to cope with the prickly pear. They were clearing the paddocks that were not heavily infested, and where the paddocks were heavily infested they were poisoning it. In other places, where the land was very lightly infested, they were felling the timber, and not only were they clearing the prickly pear country, but were keeping it clean. Further west we have the Captain Mountain and Peak Mountain, but probably one or two hon. members know the country better than I do. I did not go beyond the foot of the mountains, but there are large areas, I am given to understand, of Crown scrub lands there.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: It is infested with prickly pear.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, these rich scrub lands, I regret to say, are becoming infested with pear, so that if this railway is built—as I think it will be—these scrub lands will be available for settlers, and instead of being a source of danger to the whole surrounding country, we will be able to allow the people to take up areas of that rich land, and they will at once start to cope with the pear. (Hear, hear!) If hon. members will turn to the Commissioner's report, they will see that the proposal is to extend the line 26 miles 59½ chains, and the route, as I said, shortly will run *via* Brookstead from Pittsworth to Millmerran. It crosses the Condamine River at 34½ miles, and the terminus is reached at 43 miles 14 chains. As regards the character of the country, Mr. Thallon reports—

The district immediately beyond Pittsworth is undulating, with black soil. From 23 to 38 miles the survey traverses the valley of the Condamine—a wide expanse of very fine black soil country, some of it lightly timbered, but the greater portion being open plains; a good deal of this country is subject to floods, but the water is not deep, and there is no strong current. The plain on either side of the Condamine is favoured with a plentiful supply of underground water, which can be tapped at from 35 to 40 feet.

That, of course, was the information gathered whilst we were on that trip. The report goes on—

The district is one of the richest on the Downs; but, on account of black-soil roads and the distance from railway, there is at present not much agriculture. Beyond Grass-tree Creek lighter soil is met with, but the land is still good for a considerable distance beyond

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Millmerran. All the forest land that is available has been selected, and the soil upon it is easily worked and very suitable for agriculture.

Although I was speaking as though I had not been beyond the terminus of the line, as a matter of fact we travelled a number of miles beyond the terminus—we took a trip all round the district.

Mr. LESINA: Large areas of land there are unselected.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; I have just said in the south-west, at Captain Mountain and Peak Mountain, there are large areas of Crown lands—very rich scrub soil—available. Then, about 12 miles to the south-west there is the settlement of Cooloongatta, where there are large areas of Crown lands unselected.

Mr. MAUGHAN: The district is thickly settled.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, the district is very thickly settled indeed.

Mr. Thallon reports that the bridges [4 p.m.] must be low-level bridges, owing to the prohibitive cost of high-level bridges in such country.

Mr. LESINA: Won't you have to resume a good deal of private land?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am just coming to that. There is a paragraph in the report which states that it is quite possible that a considerable resumption will be necessary, aggregating about 300 acres, but that, of course, is inevitable if we build railways to succeed settlement and not to precede settlement. If we resume the land from the people who purchased it from the Crown, it is necessary that we should pay compensation for it, but that is done under a system—

Mr. MANN: And charge them for any betterment.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They take up the responsibility, at any rate, under the 1906 Act. That practically is a betterment.

Mr. LESINA: They might be like the Wienholt Estates Company—give the whole lot away.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will probably be able to make an announcement that on one of these proposed lines some of the owners have offered to give the land for nothing. (Hear, hear!) Where the railway department have a very large number of owners to deal with, it is extremely difficult to get all those owners in a mind to say, "If you will build us a railway we will give you the necessary land." The estimated cost of the railway is £75,871, equal to £2,836 per mile, and to this must be added £8,110 for telegraph line, rolling-stock, and survey, making a total of £83,981, or £3,146 per mile. With regard to the working expenses—I won't refer to the first part of the paragraph—the Commissioner says—

Meantime, I expect a revenue of £5,325, with an expenditure of £2,963, leaving a net revenue of say, £2,362 per annum, or £2 16s. per cent. on the capita expenditure of £84,000.

Now, interest at 3 per cent. is the rate stated in the 1906 Act, so if the revenue is £2,500 per annum I do not anticipate that there will be any necessity for the levying of a railway rate to make up any deficiency. We may say there is no danger at all of those who live within the benefited area—or the railway district, as it is termed—having to bear any responsibility for a shortage of interest; more especially when it is found, as I said before, that the much shorter length of line from Pittsworth to Wyreema and Toowoomba has been paying £3 12s. 7d. per

cent. I do not know that I need detain the Committee at any greater length, except to say that the railway district is set forth in the Commissioner's report, and if the Committee in its wisdom chooses to approve of this line, then it will remain for those who are interested within three months to say whether they desire to have the line or not under the provisions of the Act. I formally move the resolution.

\* Mr. LENNON (*Herbert*): This railway seems to me to traverse some very excellent country, and no doubt it will bring about the results anticipated. Apart from the fact that it is likely to cement the allegiance of the hon. member for Cambooya to the Government, I think the line is one which is desirable in the interests of the country. It will touch very good land, which unfortunately is private land, and this calls the attention of the House to the clause dealing with the resumption—

As private property will be traversed for nearly the whole distance, considerable resumptions will be necessary, aggregating about 300 acres.

Now, hon. members opposite are very fond of extolling the system prevailing in Canada in regard to immigration and other matters, but they neglect to refer to the fact that the Canadians adopt a very much wiser course than we do in regard to our railways. They make the railways precede settlement, and if we adopted the method of making railways, as far as possible, precede settlement, we would not have to pay these large sums for resumption. In the Northern districts, a great deal of country that is practically unknown to the great majority of the people in this State is languishing for want of railways. I saw an announcement in a daily paper that 180,000 acres of land on the Tully River will shortly be available for selection. I think the Government should not open up that land for selection without providing means of communication. It is impossible for anyone to settle on that land and work it successfully without means of communication, and the Government should deal with the matter in a vigorous statesmanlike way, and give that district, which has not an inch of Government railway in its whole area, a railway line before opening up the land for selection. I would like to say also in regard to railway construction generally, that this party has been malignantly attacked by the prejudiced Press of Queensland over and over again as being opposed to railway construction. I venture to challenge any member on the opposite side of the House to point to a single railway measure—either Government lines or lines guaranteed by local authorities—that has ever been opposed by this party. This party has loyally supported and given evidence of its desire to encourage railway extension in every possible manner, but when syndicate railways are brought forward then this party is up against them every time.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. LENNON: And it may possibly be that this party may take leave to express its objection to the railway line which is proposed to be constructed by the contract system—not to the measure itself, but to the method of construction. It has been amply proved—the Chairman is about to rise to correct me; he thinks I am travelling too far afield. However, on his intimation I will confine myself.

The PREMIER: You were not, were you?

Mr. LENNON: I have not said whether I was so or not; I accept the Chairman's intimation. (Laughter.) However, I do not wish to say one word against the construction of this line; but I do think that, although we have had this report of the Commissioner in our hands for

a week, railway measures, unfortunately, appear to be rushed somewhat too hurriedly through. Members do not have sufficient opportunities for making themselves familiar with the district. However, we are to a large extent prepared to rely upon the opinions of the officials, and of members on the other side of the House.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They told me I was the seventh Minister who had been over the route.

Mr. LENNON: It seems this route has been travelled over many times by railway experts, including the Minister, and no doubt each party is prepared to accept the opinion of various gentlemen and the officials who have gone over the line, and who report upon the practicability of the proposal. Reading the report of the Commissioner, it certainly seems that it will open up a very desirable adjunct to the Pittsworth line. The few remarks I have made will put the House in possession of the fact that this party has no objection to railways of this character.

\* Mr. MANN (*Cairns*): I went over the route of this railway, and I do not rise this afternoon for the purpose of blocking it, but rather to express the opinion that this line should have been built some years ago, and is one which it is highly necessary should be built. Of course, I may reserve my opposition for other lines, the routes of which I have not seen, but in this case I can bear out the remarks of the Secretary for Railways and the Commissioner's report that the land is good and the railway should be built. I just wish to emphasise the remarks of the leader of the Opposition that during the election the Press took occasion to say that the Opposition were responsible for blocking the construction of 400 miles of railway, and the Premier said so, too, I believe. We now have the confession of the Minister for Railways that on the lines now being built there is a scarcity of labour. I tried to get information from him the other day, and I went to the Minister and asked the question. I notice that *Hansard* states that I said, "Silence gives consent." What I asked the Minister point blank is, "Was there a scarcity of labour or not?" and as I got no reply, I said, "Silence gives consent." Now they allege that with the finish of the sugar season a lot of good labour will be available for these lines.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! In courtesy to the House, the Secretary for Railways made a statement with regard to the lines under construction, and I cannot allow that question to be debated. The question is the passing of the resolution before the Chamber.

Mr. MANN: I pointed out that the resolution is that the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway extension from Pittsworth to Millmerran. Now, what is the necessity of the House approving of the line if we have not got the men to have the railway constructed? Our labour in passing the Bill would be wasted, and I am pointing out a good reason, inasmuch as the Secretary for Railways admits that there is now a scarcity of labour for the lines already under construction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I made a statement as to my information.

Mr. MANN: I am going on the information that we have a shortage of labour, and if the House does approve of this line of railway, I may be justified in asking the Minister where he is going to get the men to have the railway constructed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The five railways I mentioned will be constructed within three months.

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Mr. MANN: There will be five railways finished, which may give a full complement of workmen on the other lines under construction. If, as the Minister alleges, the Government are looking to the sugar-fields to get workmen for the construction of this and other lines, and it is necessary and desirable that work should be provided for sugar-workers during the slack season, why not start a railway in the North? These men are in the North at present, and we do not wish to bring them from, say, Cairns to Pittsworth.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Aren't there four railways being built in the North?

Mr. MANN: That may be so, but we are told that they will be finished soon. The Premier has stated that his desire is to construct a certain number of railways in each division of the State.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MANN: I do not wish to digress from the question before the Committee, but I would point out that we should be very careful in approving of these lines. When I was on the Downs I was told that the Dalby-Tara railway ran through very useless country, and if I had not been over the country which this proposed railway will traverse, and knew that it was good country, I should have opposed the resolution. I do not believe in expressing approval of every line brought in by the Government. We know that we cannot keep up the present rate of railway construction, and we ought to endeavour to settle on the land as many as possible of the workmen employed on railway construction. If the Committee approve of this line, I hope the Minister will take care to see that as many of the navvies as possible are settled on the scrub land in that district which is being overrun by prickly pear. I trust that the Minister will give a guarantee that a certain area of that land will be set aside for the men who will be employed on the construction works, and that when the line is under construction he will give instructions to the engineer in charge to give those men who are prepared to take up blocks of country the first chance of employment. When the Bill is before the Committee I intend to move an amendment to the effect that the line shall be built by day labour, and that the rate of wages shall be 8s. per day. The Minister claims that from January to June next the construction of railways will be pushed on with greater speed than is the case at present. The hot weather is approaching, and hon. members know that men cannot do as much work during the hot weather as they can during the colder months of the year. Then in the North we are nearing the wet season, which will interfere with railway construction. The Government should, therefore, be very careful about submitting many more railways, because there are lines under construction which should be pushed on and finished as soon as possible. If the Government do not push on with the Tolga-Johnston Railway they will find that in a couple of months, when the wet season is on, the work will be interfered with to a considerable extent. I hope that the Minister will not be so anxious to start a lot of new lines as to push on those already under construction. The time to push on with railways is in the dry season and the cool weather. If the Government were wise they would push on the Tolga-Johnston Railway in the months of June and July, instead of attempting to do so during the wet season.

Mr. NEVITT (*Carpentaria*): I do not rise to object to this line, because, with other members, I had an opportunity of visiting the country last year, and I think the railway is one which we are perfectly justified in building. It goes

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through as fine a country as there is on the Darling Downs. There is one feature in connection with this line that should be an object lesson to hon. member, and lead them to oppose the alienation of land in large areas, and that is that in this case we have one man owning 40,000 acres of land, though he has sold during the past five or six years some 40,000 or 50,000 acres in order to get this railway.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Probably the land was taken up forty years ago.

Mr. NEVITT: It does not matter how long ago the land was taken up. The fact remains that a very large area fell into the hands of one individual. The Minister stated that the people of the district take upon themselves the responsibility of guaranteeing this railway.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I said they would have to take their share of the responsibility.

Mr. NEVITT: Quite so; but in the same breath the hon. gentleman said that there was no likelihood of the people being called upon to pay under that guarantee.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No, nor the farmers along the line.

Mr. NEVITT: I consider that the time has arrived when the Government should introduce a Betterment Bill. If a Betterment Bill was passed on up-to-date lines that gentleman who owns such a large area of land in this particular district would not be able to retain for himself the enhanced value given to his land by the expenditure of public money in the construction of this railway. The members of this party consider that it is the duty of the Government to protect the residents of other parts of the State by calling upon people whose land is enhanced in value by public works to return a portion of that enhanced value to the consolidated revenue. There is another matter that I should like to bring under the notice of the Committee, and that is that the present railway policy of the Government includes about 150 miles of railway, and that all those railways, with the exception of about 8 miles in the Mackay district, are in the Southern part of the State. I bow to your suggestion, Mr. Armstrong, that I am out of order, but I wish briefly to state that at the tail end of last session I presented a petition from residents in my district asking for a railway, and before this session closes I shall take an opportunity of laying before the House the needs of that particular district in regard to railway construction. The district I have the honour to represent contains something like 70,000 square miles, and it is entitled to the expenditure of some loan money in building railways.

\* Mr. MACKINTOSH (*Cambooya*): I have much pleasure in supporting this resolution, not merely because the railway is in my electorate, but because it will be a great benefit to the community at large. This line has been promised by different Governments for many years, but has not been constructed because it was alleged that one man who owned a large area of land in the district would be chiefly benefited, inasmuch as he would get an enhanced price for his land at the expense of the general taxpayer. When the present member for Townsville was Premier, I approached him with a view to getting him to construct the extension of the railway from Pittsworth to Millmerran, and I pointed out that the people holding land beyond the large property alluded to should not be penalised simply because one person owned a large area of country. There is no doubt that under the guarantee system the interest on the cost of construction would be assured. When Sir Arthur Morgan was Pre-

mier, he was willing to build the railway if the proprietors of that large area of land would cut it up into suitable blocks, and dispose of it, so that people could settle on the land and cultivate it, and raise produce which would bring traffic to the railway. Since that time a large portion of the land has been cut up and sold, though the proprietor still retains about 20,000 acres. The railway will not go to the land which is unsold, but it will run within 6 or 7 miles of the sold portion. I brought the question of construction of this Pittsworth extension under the notice of no less than seven Ministerial parties, and have induced them to visit the district, and they have all declared that the land was the finest they had set eyes on since they had been in Australia. The fertility of the soil is unquestioned. It would be impossible for me to exaggerate its fertility, and it is so well situated that no land is better suited for settlement purposes. It will produce cereals and fodder for dairy cattle, and on it sheep and pigs will thrive. There is a good rainfall, and water can be obtained almost anywhere by sinking from 20 to 40 feet. The strip of country between what is called North Branch and the Condamine cannot be excelled as lucerne-growing land in any part of Australia. Two of the members opposite went up to that district, and I had the pleasure of their company on the excursions they had there, and they were enjoying themselves at the expense of the settlers. I am sure that the hon. member for Cairns has not quite forgotten the entertainment he received from the settlers when he was down in that district.

Mr. MANN : I am supporting the line.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : There are people in that district who have been carrying on farming for years in the hopes that this railway would be built, as it would be a great convenience to them to bring their produce by rail in [4.30 p.m.]

stead of having to cart it by teams. It means, at present, that they have to use their teams, and it is not only expensive, but it wastes a lot of their time. The farmers cart their wheat from Millmerran, Back Creek, and other places to Pittsworth, at the rate of 1s. 6d. per bag, and I believe it has cost as much as 2s. per bag. The more railways we construct it enables more settlement to take place, more produce to be grown, and the country gets the benefit of it. Lately we have had to pay a heavy subsidy to get suitable steamers to take our perishable products away from here to the tune of £30,000 a year, but if we were able to grow ten times the quantity of produce that we now grow, we would have these boats competing with each other, and, instead of our having to pay them, they would probably give a bonus to come here for the cargo they would get. These railways built in these agricultural districts are more benefit to the merchants of the cities and the miners of Charters Towers than they are to the struggling farmers. These farmers have to put in long hours on their farms in order to get a living out of them. It is not a case of working from 9 to 5 with them, as they really have to work from 5 to 9. Those are the hours which we have to work on our farms, in order to produce these products that are keeping the workers of Queensland going. No one knows that better than the hon. member for Maranoa and the hon. member for Warrego. There is one thing I cannot understand, and that is why this line should cost £3,140 per mile.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : The rails are much dearer.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : The railway from Dalby to Bell coast only £1,250 per mile.

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The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : But there was no ballasting there.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : It has given satisfaction ; and if that is so, why have not all the railways been built without ballasting ?

Mr. MAUGHAN : This section is cheaper by £500 than the first section.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : I think that we have had a fair trial of this day labour, and I would be glad to see some of these lines come under the contract system.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS : No, no !

Mr. MACKINTOSH : Let us have a turn at the contract system and make a comparison, and I am sure it will be found that the country will gain a benefit by it. I know the men who are working on some of the railway lines, and while some of them are good men some of them are not. No Government gang will give as good a result with day labour as a contractor's gang.

Mr. MAUGHAN : Read the Engineer's report, and you will alter your opinion.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : If I were Minister for Railways, I would have the contract system.

Mr. MURPHY : But you are not.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : I might be before very long. You cannot open up the whole of that wide country with one railway. Two more railways could easily be built in that country, and not one of them would be within 30 miles of the other in a parallel direction. That is one from Oakey Creek to Mount Russell, and another from Cambooya to Ellangowau, through Felton. I do not wish to occupy the time of the Committee, as I see that the feeling of the Committee is in favour of this line, because it is for the benefit of all and not for the benefit of a few. It is not for the benefit of that electorate alone, and I do not say that because I have the honour to represent it. I was advocating the construction of this railway for years before I came into this House at all, because I could see how necessary it was in the interests of the settlement of that part of the country. Building a line of this description will be the means of bringing people up into Queensland to settle there when they would not otherwise do so.

Mr. COYNE : Don't stonewall it. You will get it.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : I just rose to show what sort of country it was.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : We have four other lines to put through.

Mr. MACKINTOSH : As hon. members have expressed their desire to see this line passed, I will conclude by saying that I will support the construction of the railway.

Mr. RYLAND (*Gympie*) : I regret very much that the Government have not furnished more information with regard to this line, and I am sorry that we have not got a map to indicate the part of the country through which this line traverses. When we were discussing railway proposals previously, we always had a map on the wall to guide us, and we could see at a glance what extension was proposed. I regret very much that that has not been provided to-day. I notice from the Commissioner's report that it is anticipated there will be a deficiency in the income. There is an injustice in connection with the Railways Act of 1906, which we are now working under, which the Government ought to amend. The people who live 18 or 20 miles from the railway, if they are in the benefited area, have to pay on the enhanced value at the same rate as those who are closer. A man whose enhanced value is £50 pays at the same rate for any deficiency as the man whose

*Mr. Ryland.]*

enhanced value is £7,000 or £8,000. That is a great injustice to the men in the benefited area, and the sooner it is altered the better. There is another thing in connection with the construction of railways, and I regret that the labourers employed by the Government in constructing our railways are not paid a fair wage.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. RYLAND: I was just going to point out under what conditions I think this line should be built. Before I sit down this afternoon it is my intention to move that a minimum wage of at least 8s. per day be paid to the workers on this line. I think it is quite competent for this House to say under what conditions this line shall be built. We are going to vote £83,000 of Government money to build this line, and it is only fair that we should know that the men who are engaged in that work are working under comfortable conditions and are getting a decent wage.

Mr. MAUGHAN: It might be built by contract.

Mr. RYLAND: We have no guarantee from the Minister that this line will not be built by contract.

Mr. MURPHY: Fight the line until you get that guarantee.

Mr. RYLAND: Look at the conditions on the Caboolture to Woodford line. There are a lot of good men working there, and they are only getting 6s. 6d. a day.

A LABOUR MEMBER: Shame!

Mr. RYLAND: It is only right, now that the Government are bringing men out here to work in this State, that we should see that they get something better than 6s. 6d. a day for working in the broiling sun. That is what they are getting at Caboolture. Then there is the Boyne Valley line, which is at present under construction, and the men there had to ask for a fair wage, and, as they did not get it, they had to go on strike.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have followed the hon. member as closely as I can, but I cannot allow a general discussion on what is being done in connection with the construction of other railway lines. If the hon. member confines his remarks to the wages paid and the conditions of labour in connection with the building of the line before the House I can follow him, but I cannot allow members of the Committee to discuss the whole railway policy of the country.

Mr. RYLAND: I will move that the resolution before the House be amended by the insertion of a new paragraph after paragraph 1, to read as follows:—

2. That the House approves that a minimum wage of eight shillings a day be paid to the adult workers thereon.

If this paragraph is inserted, it will be an instruction to the Railway Department that fair wages will be paid for the construction of this line.

Mr. MURPHY: The Minister will accept it.

Mr. RYLAND: The Minister will accept it as an instruction from this Committee. I hope that members opposite will fall in with the idea, as it will make the men more contented with their surroundings. The work will be done better, and it will really be cheaper, as it will be done in the best manner possible. I move that amendment.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I have very much pleasure in supporting the amendment. I would like to ask the Minister if it is the intention of the Government to construct this railway by day labour. Perhaps the Minister will give us that information?

Mr. MURPHY: Perhaps there will have to be a meeting of the Cabinet about it.

[Mr. Ryland.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I hope this amendment has not been moved for the purpose of blocking railway construction in this State.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. LENNON: You know that is not so.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In reply to the hon. member for Maranoa, I will say that it is not the intention of the Government to depart from the system of building railways by day labour.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: But the department, so as to check their estimates—and I think it is a very good thing myself—desire that a tender should be called for the construction of one line by contract.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: Which one?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No line has been fixed upon.

Mr. LENNON: We will ask you this question on every line brought forward, so that it would save time to give the information now.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is quite impossible for me to say which one, but I may tell the Committee that I desired—the Department desired—to call tenders for a contract for the Maryvale line—

Mr. MANN: I asked you if that was so, and you said no.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: But owing to the delay in starting the construction of the Maryvale line, it is not the intention of the Department to call for tenders for the construction of that line by contract. But I certainly do think it would be a wise thing—we have been constructing lines now by day labour for some seven years—I think it would be a wise thing, in the interests of the people generally, that we should be able to check the department's estimates by calling for tenders for the construction of one line by contract.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Surely we can trust our engineers.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In reply to the hon. member for Ipswich, I might say that it is the engineers themselves who desire this done.

Mr. THORN: And the labouring men also.

Mr. MAUGHAN: It is most astonishing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am giving a statement of fact. I am speaking quite to the point, I think, when I say it is the engineers themselves who desire that this should be done. I am giving you the information that is in my possession.

Mr. MAUGHAN: It is very interesting information, but it is very astonishing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not see that it is astonishing.

Mr. MAUGHAN: What do we pay our engineers for?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When we consider that for seven years past there has been a departure from the system of railway construction that obtained in this State for over thirty years, and the cost, practically of everything, has been rising for some long time past, I think it is only within the province of those who are controlling the construction of railways to say whether it is not advisable that they should have some check upon their estimates.

Mr. MULLAN: Why not another engineer?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Really, I do not seem to be able to make myself

plain to the hon. member. I say that it is the officers of the department who are in favour of having tenders called for the construction of one railway.

Mr. COYNE: They are reflecting on themselves.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not at all.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Will you mention the name of the officer?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The engineer in charge.

Mr. MULLAN: What line? The Chief Engineer?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; and also the Commissioner. With respect to the amendment, I would like to point out that the Railway Department is paying the current rate of wages in the districts where railways are being constructed.

Mr. MANN: No; they are not.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is quite easy for hon. members to interject and say, "No, they are not," but the fullest inquiries are always made, and the wages that are being paid, I understand, for ordinary work, are from 7s. to 10s. per day. I do not think it is advisable that the Committee should pass the resolution with this amendment added, for the reason that, when all is said and done, if hon. members will think awhile, they will see that it will not act in the interests of those who desire to get work.

Mr. RYLAND: Why not?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think the hon. member has had much to do with the employment of men.

Mr. LENNON: He has had a good deal to do with being employed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are men who are physically incapable of doing the amount of work that other men are capable of doing, and if the Committee chooses to say the minimum wage of 8s. shall be paid on the construction of this line, or any other line that may be brought forward, I would just like hon. members to think whether they desire those men who are unfitted physically to do the amount of work done by those who are stronger and more able to do the work to be without that work.

Mr. RYLAND: With regard to the amendment. Many years ago the recognised standard for railway work was 8s. per day, and the men were never offered anything less.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That was by contractors, whom, you say, sweated their men.

Mr. RYLAND: I do not see why the Government should not pay a fair wage. The working men themselves would sooner see the railways built by contract than that they should receive the practically low rate of wage paid by the Government. One thing in connection with this matter that the Minister should give attention to is the competition between the different resident engineers. One resident engineer wants to do the job cheaper than another resident engineer, and they are competing against themselves, and the working man has to suffer for the whole thing right along the line. There should be a fair wage paid for railway construction in Queensland, and I think in the Southern division 8s. a day is as little as the Government can fairly offer the men working on railway construc-

tion. It is the hardest work that is possible for any man to do. If the Committee accept the amendment, the men will be contented, and everything will go on all right.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER (*Maranoa*): I hope the Committee will accept the amendment, because I would not like to see this railway delayed by the amendment. The railway has been delayed long enough. For that reason I should like to see not only the amendment passed, but the railway passed. I know the district from one end to the other, and the only regret I have is that this railway is passing through a lot of freehold land. In fact, a large number of the settlers, apart from the station owners, have large areas of land, but as this line must be built, the sooner we build it the better for the country at large. I would like to see all the railways on the table passed, and let us try and get even with railway construction. The principle that should be adopted in connection with railway construction is that railways should precede settlement. (Hear, hear!) A number of these railways is a long way behind settlement. Twenty-five years ago there was settlement at the proposed terminus of this line, and if the line had been built then, it would have added very considerably to the wealth of this State. I just wish briefly to say, like the deputy leader of the Opposition, who referred to his district, that in my own district there are several very fine areas of country to which railways should be built, and built before very long, because there is an agitation for settlement, and if settlement took place now, it would be in large areas. Later on, when a railway is built, men will be wondering why those large areas are held. Under the present system we are compelled to construct railways to places where the land is held in large areas, instead of to places where every acre is being put to its full use. Another 20 or 30 miles beyond the proposed terminus of this line there are about a quarter million acres of Crown lands, and the people are asking that that land be made available now, and a lot of the settlement will be in large areas, and the same trouble will be found there as we find in the construction of this line. I hope the Government will hurry this line along, and look round for other districts where there is good agricultural land to which they can build railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are doing that all the time.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: These lines are not opening up Crown lands.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, they are.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I believe there is a small area there all covered with pear, which men have hesitated to take up even under an occupation license. I know all about that country, and I know that the land is good, but there is pear on it. Closer settlement is what we want, and we can only get it by railway construction. Closer settlement is wanted to put a barrier in the way of the advance of prickly pear, and I believe it is the only effective method, at any rate in sight at present. You may have various schemes for the destruction of the pear, but as far as I have seen, the cost will be very much too high to justify them becoming general. I want to see the railways passed, and then to see the Government decide on a system of railway construction different to what we have had in the past. Do not let us be dragging behind settlement, but let us get ahead of it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We must not neglect those already on the land.

*Mr. J. M. Hunter.]*

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I have very much pleasure in supporting the amendment, and I hope it will be accepted by the Government. There is no question that the Government are not distinguished by the fair wages they pay. Even the lengthsmen on the hon. member for Cambooya's line are only getting 6s. 6d. a day, and men are offered 10s. a day and their keep on some of the farms.

Mr. MACKINTOSH: Where?

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I was up there last week, and I know they were. I know there is no contractor putting down tanks, or wells, or fencing, who has the effrontery to offer any workmen 6s. 6d. a day for the time that these men put in on the maintenance of our railways. Not only are the Government paying their maintenance men too little, but they are trying to pay their workmen right through less than a fair wage.

\* Mr. MANN: I am very pleased that the junior member for Gympie moved the amendment he did, because I overlooked the fact that we should have had an amendment in when I spoke. In the past, as long as the Government gave a promise to pay the ruling rate of wages in the district, we thought things would be all right. I had a bitter experience in regard to that, and that is the reason why I should have tried to move the amendment this afternoon. On the construction of the Tolga-Johnstone railway the Government put on men to clear out scrub at 8s. a day and at 7s. 6d. a day, and the men employed by the shire council were getting 9s. a day. I understood that the Government would pay as the ruling rate of wages in the district the wages paid by the local bodies. They have not done that, and in consequence we have had various strikes on the railways.

Mr. RYLAND: We had one on the Boyne Valley.

Mr. MANN: We had one on the Boyne Valley, and another on the Etheridge railway, and these strikes were brought about simply because the men thought they were not getting a fair deal. When the men went on strike in the Boyne Valley an ultimatum was presented by the Government saying that if the men did not go back to work in a certain time, tenders would be called to build the line by contract. Anyone who has ever worked on a railway for a contractor knows very well that the work is not properly done. For instance, on the third section of the Cairns railway, the contractor was supposed to put in so many yards of ballast, while I know from experience that the ballast which went out was big stones, and these stones were taken and thrown away by the men instead of being used as ballast. A man who was working on the line had a quarrel with the contractor, and he came down and told the Government not to pay the full price to the contractor for the railway, because the stones which should have been used for ballast were buried in the sand, and the Government were not getting value for their money. An inspector was sent up with the man, who was doing lifting, and he verified his words by taking a pick round, and showing these big boulders in between the sleepers, and instead of the contractor being called over the coals, the man called over the coals was the Government inspector, in spite of the fact that the inspector had to oversee the platelaying gang as well as the lifting gang, and while he was away the other men were throwing these stones away in the bushes. On the railway from Gladstone to Rockhampton, I was told by residents there that it took twelve months after the line was taken over from the contractor

to get it in good running order. The contractor does all the work in the most slipshod fashion. He is out to make money, and if he can in any shape or form dodge the Government inspector he does it. I remember working in a ballast pit, where the ballast going out was supposed to be clean, but we threw in a lot of muck along with the sand, and the last day, when the Government inspector was to come round, the contractor came and said, "Now, boys, just for to-day I want you to be very careful and not put in any muck, or dirt, or leaves, or branches, because the Government has been very good to me, and I want the inspector, when he comes into the ballast pit, to see a lot of good clean ballast." The men simply turned round, and told the contractor to "never mind whether the ballast was full of dirt, or not, but sprinkle a little champagne over it, and it would be all right." That is what has happened in the past, under the system of contract, and I, for one, do not wish to see the Government do that. I am just reminded by the hon. member for Croydon, as to how badly the Etheridge line has been constructed. As a matter of fact, the Chillagoe line was constructed so badly in the first place that when they ran over it with the engine to try it, the engineer found the gauging of the line so bad that he would not take the engine along it, and they had to go over the line again and regauge it before the engineer would allow the engine to go over and test it. In every case the contractor makes the banks too low and too narrow, he does not take sufficient depth for the cuttings; and even if a line was built by contract, and it was shown that the line had cost £500 or £600 a mile less than the same work would do if performed by day labour, I would say the State was losing, because it would take months of hard work to get the line in a fit state. I remember when the third section of the Cairns line was finished, that for weeks and months after the line was taken over by the Government, lengthsmen had to go out every night and work as long as they could see, making up the ballast. The train would run over the bank, and you would see the sleepers hanging loose, and you could crawl through the sleepers, and every night men had to go and make up the bank after the train had gone over. That happened for weeks after the line was taken over by the Government. I would urge the Chamber to insist not only on the minimum wage, but that every line passed by this House shall be built by day labour, because you have fewer inspectors and more honest work done, and the work is done cheaper, because you can safely reckon that it has been well done. There is not the inducement on the part of the day labourer to cheat the Government that there is on the part of the contractor. I have seen cement and concrete work that you could break in with a blow of the pick it was so thin. The stuff put in was bad; it was not proper cement, but practically mud.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not five to one concrete.

Mr. MANN: I remember a man was engaged doing a job for the Government on contract, and he put in some studs that were rotten at the top. Instead of starting to put on the weatherboards at the bottom, they started to put them on at the top to hide the rotten studs. The inspector came along, and asked what they were doing, and the carpenter in charge of the job said, "Oh, that fellow is a bit silly. He started at the top instead of at the bottom." I have seen a hollow pile put in a bridge, and they got a plug and drove it in as hard as they could, and then sawed a piece off the end of the log to make it appear solid. If the Minister will go over the reports that ought to be made in regard to the

[Mr. J. M. Hunter.]

Cairns Railway, he will find that a lot of sleepers and bridge timbers were rotten. At the end of five or six years a lot of sleepers could be dug out with a shovel. Instead of being bloodwood, they were what is called "maiden's blush," and it just shows that a maiden's blush is very fleeting, for the life of those sleepers was very short. Of course a contractor naturally takes the timber he gets close handy, and the Government inspectors apparently do not know sufficient to check him. In the bridge crossing the Barron at Biboohra they were supposed to put in a certain class of timber, and the inspector did not know one kind from another, and the timber that was put in did not last. We shall always have that sort of thing while contractors are out to make money. I would seriously advise the Minister to give the Committee a promise that this line will be built by day labour, and that he will accept the amendment. I do not know how it works out in the South, but in North Queensland, taking a job right through and allowing for broken time, 8s. a day will only work out at about £1 a week and tucker.

Mr. D. HUNTER: What would you say is the minimum wage in North Queensland?

Mr. MANN: It should be 9s. a day for anybody who is a capable navy.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are paying that.

Mr. MANN: No; You are paying 8s. 6d. I am speaking from experience, because I worked at the occupation for years. I have always voted hitherto in favour of paying the rate ruling in the district, but that has been proved to be a delusion and a snare, and I wish the amount to be clearly and specifically set forth in connection with every railway. I look to the members for the various districts to say what is a fair thing in connection with a railway, and I hope the hon. member for Cambooya will say that 8s. a day is not too much.

Mr. THEODORE (*Woothakata*): I think it is necessary to have a minimum wage clause inserted in every railway agreement, whether the railway is to be constructed by the Government, by a local authority, or by a syndicate. Experience in the North goes to show that unless we regulate these things by statute we shall always find men being employed for less than the rate ruling in the district. The Government had to be forced to pay a fair wage on the Atherton-Evelyn railway. They started at 7s. 6d. a day for men working in the muck gangs. Late last year they raised the minimum rate to 8s. a day, and this year, after a good deal of agitation, they increased it to 8s. 6d. a day, and only four or five months ago a deputation waited on the Premier when he was at Herberton and asked the hon. gentleman to increase the rate to the minimum rate ruling in the district—that was to increase the rate for men working in a tunnel to 10s. a day. They had only been paid 9s. 6d. a day previously, 8s. 6d. in the cuttings, and 9s. for hammer and drill work.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It was 10s. a day in the tunnels on 20th April last.

Mr. THEODORE: Yes; after the deputation waited on the Premier. I was on the deputation. The lowest wage that is paid to miners in any part of North Queensland is 10s. per day for a week of forty-eight hours. It is necessary to regulate the wages even on railways constructed by the Government. I think that the cost of living in North Queensland is not much more than it is in the district where this railway is to be built; and, if 8s. 6d. is recognised as a fair minimum wage in the North, 8s. should be a fair minimum in this

district. I would rather favour an amendment to make it 8s. 6d. a day. The Secretary for Railways, when giving his reason for objecting to the amendment, stated that, if it were carried, it would exclude from employment all the men who were unable to do ordinary work.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; I said who were not physically capable of doing such work.

Mr. THEODORE: Well, the Government do not extend any privileges towards those men in any case. The Government officials will always look out for the best men, just the same as do private employers. They do not extend any privileges to the slow worker or to the physically incapable man, so that a fair minimum wage should be fixed without giving consideration to any of these things. The Secretary for Railways also stated that the Government were going to let one of these railways by contract.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No. I said "a" railway.

Mr. THEODORE: The hon. gentleman said that he was going to let a railway on contract in order to compare the cost of construction with the cost of lines constructed by Government enterprise. I think that is unnecessary. They can easily arrive at whether the work is being well done and whether their engineers are capable of getting good work out of the men without having a line built by contract. I am entirely opposed to the principle of contract work, whether applied to railway construction or to any other kind of work; and I hope hon. members will vote against letting any railway on contract, and that they will also vote for the inclusion of a minimum wage clause in all these agreements.

Mr. COLLINS (*Burke*): I also quite agree with the amendment. Having had a little experience in helping to build railways, I am in accord with fixing a minimum wage in connection with all Government railways. I rose to speak on behalf of the women and children, because unless you raise the standard of comfort of railway employees you are doing an injustice to the women and children. At the commencement of a railway the employee does not take his wife and family with him; and when you take into consideration that a man may have one day a week lost time, he has a very small amount at the end of the month to send home to support his wife and family. There is a minimum wage for members of Parliament, especially Ministers.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There are about nine conversations going on in different parts of the Chamber, and I think it is only due to a young member to observe a certain amount of decorum.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. COLLINS: My contention is that if the Government are wise they will raise the standard of comfort by paying the proposed minimum wage to those who have to do the dirty work in connection with railway building under hardships which very few people realise.

\* Mr. D. HUNTER (*Woolloongabba*): I am very glad to see that the Labour party have at last taken my advice. (Opposition laughter.) Their attitude is very different now from their tactics eighteen months ago, when it was only in connection with certain measures that they moved a minimum wage clause. It was only on two occasions out of thirteen that they made any attempt to bring in a minimum wage clause. Why has this alteration come about? Let the

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hon. member for Cairns answer. In volume ci., 1908, page 938, it will be found that he then said—

This line would be built by the Commissioner, like all the other railways they had passed this session. Yet hon. members in the corner—

He was then supporting the Government—

Yet hon. members in the corner had allowed all these railways to pass without saying one word about the rate of wages to be paid.

Mr. MURPHY (*Croydon*): I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in quoting from an old *Hansard*?

Mr. D. HUNTER: The hon. member then stated that they would not have heard a word about the minimum wage in that case, only that members in the corner were trying to put other members in a hole by asking them to vote for 10s. a day. I believe their object now is to put members in a hole by asking them to vote for 8s. a day. If it is true that contractors and other private employers are paying better wages than the Government, as the hon. member for Cairns says—

Mr. MANN: I did not say that. I said the local bodies were.

Mr. D. HUNTER: He said they were not paying the current rate of wages. If the Government are not paying the current rate of wages, is not that an argument in favour of the contract system? I have never supported any Government that pays 6s. 6d. a day. I always advocate high wages, and I always say that 6s. 6d. is too little for any man working on a railway. Some time ago we passed a Wages Boards Act. That Act contains no provision for a minimum wage of 8s. a day, yet members opposite have proclaimed it to be a glorious Act passed by them. We only advocate that the 8s. a day should be paid to competent men. Members of Parliament have men coming to them—I have had them myself—and saying they are hard up. They have never done a bit of navvying, but they have families to keep, and they want a job. The only work we can think of is on the railways, and we try to get them work. Are you going to give them all 8s. a day?

Mr. COYNE: Yes.

Mr. D. HUNTER: Would you do it yourself?

Mr. RYLAND: He could do other work.

Mr. D. HUNTER: But there is no other work. If you apply the principle of the Wages Boards Acts to the railways, you will find me voting with you; but if you say that every man who comes along is to get 8s. a day on the railways, the result will be that the railways will be over-capitalised. The hon. member for Cairns made the statement that the Government are not paying the current rate of wages to the men they employ in railway work. If that is so, is it not one of the strongest arguments in favour of having the work done by contract?

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. D. HUNTER: Let me again quote the hon. member for Cairns. This is what he said less than two years ago, when he was supporting the Government—

There were numbers of boys of sixteen or seventeen engaged in carrying water on the railways. Were they to get 10s. a 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?

Let the hon. member for Cairns answer. The danger of a minimum wage is that unless it is safeguarded by a clause like we have in the Wages

Boards Act it benefits those who are [5.30 p.m.] able to take care of themselves, and throws out of work many men who would otherwise be able to find employment. That is the real danger we are suffering from at the present time. Apply the principle of the Wages Boards Act to this work, and I will vote for such an amendment. If you declare that no man working on this line shall receive less than 8s. a day, you will defeat the very object you have in view, and the working man will suffer.

Mr. HAMILTON (*Gregory*): To anyone who has read the election speeches of members in the metropolitan areas with regard to the Wages Boards Act, the argument of the hon. member for Woollongabba is rather amusing. The hon. member says that we should apply the principle of the Wages Boards Act to this railway. It was owing to the action of the Labour party in getting that measure introduced that the hon. member for Woollongabba has a seat in the House to-day. The hon. member knows perfectly well that a lot of employers in Brisbane and in his own electorate discharged a number of their hands just before the election, and that people then went about saying that the discharge of those employees was due to the Wages Boards, and that they had to thank the Labour party for that. Now, the hon. member says "Apply the principle of the Wages Boards Act to this work, and I will support you," which is nothing else but bosh. Then the hon. member said the Labour party introduced the minimum wage on two railways only. Why was that? Because only two of the railways passed that session were syndicate railways, and we trusted that the Government would pay the rates ruling in the Centre and North where railways were being constructed. We took that for granted.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It has been paid.

Mr. HAMILTON: I do not know whether it has been paid or not, but, as I have said, we took it for granted that that rate would be paid by the Government, on the railways which they were going to construct by day labour, and we wanted to insure that the minimum rate would be paid on the two syndicate railways. We have been put here by the workers, and we have a right to protect their interests in this matter, and I do not think the minimum wage asked for by the hon. member for Gympie is too much to pay, not only on this railway, but down here in Brisbane, where it is supposed that the cost of living is cheaper.

\* Mr. MANN: I rise for the purpose of showing how unfair it is for a member to quote from *Hansard* without giving the context of the speech quoted. If the hon. member for Woollongabba had read my speech carefully he would have found that I was arguing in favour of amending a motion submitted by the hon. member for Clermont, to the effect that everyone employed on that particular railway should be paid a certain rate. I was arguing that only adults should be paid that amount, and that is what is proposed in the amendment now before the Committee. The hon. member also purposely put words into my mouth that I never used. He said I stated that contractors in the Cairns district paid higher wages than the Government. What I said was that the local bodies were paying more, and I showed clearly that the Tinaroo Shire Council were paying men

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at the rate of 9s. a day, while the Government staff of men who cleared the Tolga-Johnstone line received only 8s. a day, and that is the reason I am supporting this amendment. Previously I trusted that the Government would be model employers and pay the rate of wages ruling in the district.

**THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS:** We are paying 9s. a day on the Atherton railway.

**MR. MANN:** The ruling rate is what is paid in the district for the same class of work, and I claim that the work done on the roads by the shire council—that is, felling scrub and making cuttings—is the same class of work as was done by the navvies on the railway in that district. If the shire council paid 9s. a day for that work, then the Government, in order to get the best class of labour, should pay the same rate. It has been said that those who are physically unfit will not get work at that wage, but I would remind hon. members that on every line there are jobs that infirm men can do by piecework, such as breaking stone, making side drains, and little jobs of that character. When, in the speech which the hon. member for Woolloomgabby has quoted from, I spoke of boys carrying water and holding up sleepers, I was arguing that they should not get the same wages as the men. I have always had the idea that a boy of fourteen or fifteen should not expect the minimum wage paid to an able-bodied adult, and I still hold that opinion. Twenty years ago when I went to the Cairns district and worked on the railway the pay was 1s. an hour, and I remember that for a whole nine months during the best time of the years—that is, from May until the wet season starts—I only got one full month's work, and I was not sick at the time. A little thing happened to delay work; possibly a dray broke down, or some gangs were not finished their particular part of the work, or a bridge was not finished, so that men were knocked off for a time. On one occasion men were knocked off for three weeks until a bridge was finished. I maintain that not less than 8s. a day should be paid to men working on railway construction, even in the South of Queensland.

**MR. GRANT (Rockhampton):** I shall vote for the amendment, because I think that 8s. a day and eight hours a day are a fair thing.

**OPPOSITION MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANT:** New South Wales is getting the pick of our men because we do not pay the same rate of wages as they pay. I was at the Railway Department yesterday, and I was told that they could give employment to 1,000 men. I asked, "Why don't you get the men?" They replied, "Because they are paying better wages in New South Wales than we are paying here." Our day labour system is being brought into disrepute. I do not know who is responsible for it, but that is a fact. Take, for instance, the Yeppoon Railway, which is only 20 miles in length, and presents no great engineering difficulty, and yet they have been over two years building that line, and it is not finished yet. Again, the Blair-Athol Railway is only 11 miles long, and presents no engineering difficulties whatever. It runs over perfectly flat country, and there is only one creek to cross. Yet they have practically been over a year building that line, and it is not nearing completion yet. Some radical change will have to take place, in order to push on construction work more rapidly. I think 8s. a day is a fair thing for a man working on a railway, and I believe the Government will get better men if they pay good wages. High wages are cheap wages in the long run if those high wages

are paid to men who are worth the money. (Hear, hear!) When Captain Richards came back to Rockhampton after an extended trip over the great mining centres in America, I asked him what he had learnt from his trip, and he replied that the main thing he had learnt was that high wages were economy in the long run.

**OPPOSITION MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. GRANT:** I have pointed out the delays that have occurred on the only two lines that are being built in the Central division. Whether it is due to the fact that the Railway Department are not paying high wages, and not attracting good men to the work, I do not know, but the delay that has taken place on both of these lines is simply scandalous. I think that eight hours a day and 1s. an hour is a fair amount for men working on the railway line.

\* **MR. MULCAHY (Gympie):** I do not wish to prolong the discussion, but I just rose to say that I think a minimum wage of 8s. a day is only a reasonable thing to ask. A number of men from my electorate go to work on these lines, and I think it is only right that they should get 1s. an hour. I know a number of men who have been working on the Blackbutt line, and, what with the broken time and only being paid at the rate of 6s. 6d. or 7s. a day, it is not worth their while to remain there, and they go off. The engineer told them that there was nothing wrong with the men, and they could come back at any time they wished; but the wages paid is so low that, when the broken time is taken into consideration as well, these men could not keep their homes going. I could name twenty men who told me that. It is not because they cannot do the work, or because they are not wanted, but, with the broken time and the low wages, they cannot get any good out of it.

**MR. WHITE (Musgrave):** Members of the Opposition strongly object to the contract system, but I think that by introducing a minimum wage of 8s. a day they are working into the hands of the contractor to a large extent.

**MR. CORNE:** Why?

**MR. WHITE:** Because the Government will find that they will be able to build railways more economically and speedily by contract than by day labour. That was shown by the remarks of the senior member for Rockhampton.

**MR. MULCAHY:** No.

**MR. WHITE:** The senior member for Rockhampton pointed out that railways which presented no engineering difficulties were taking a long time to construct. I believe myself that if those railways had been in the hands of contractors they would have been finished long ago. But if you introduce a minimum wage, and insist on every man being paid 8s. a day, whether he is worth it or not, it will be putting the railways into the contractors' hands. Men should only be paid what they are worth.

**MR. RYLAND:** If a man is not worth 8s. a day, give him the sack.

**MR. WHITE:** I consider that the constructing branch of the Railway Department will look after this matter and see that the men are paid a fair wage. In Government contracts at the present time the contractors have to sign a contract that they will pay the minimum wage. I have contracts myself, and I have to agree to pay the minimum wage. At the present time we are paying a higher wage than we are asked to under the minimum wage clause, so there is no difficulty with us so far as the minimum wage is concerned. If you insist on inserting a minimum wage of 8s. a day in this resolution, and compel the Government to pay it whether a man is

*Mr. White.]*

worth it or not, then you are forcing the Government to adopt a contract system instead of a day labour system. I do not want to see contractors making £10,000 or £12,000 out of the construction of our railways. I would rather see the Government get that amount. If the Opposition members insist on inserting 8s. a day to be paid to men, whether they are worth it or not, then they are not doing what is best for the country, but they are doing it for political purposes.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. WHITE: It is not proposed for the sake of the country, but for the sake of a useless obstruction to railway building at all.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. WHITE: Members opposite say that they do not object to railway construction, but they object to borrowing money.

Mr. RYLAND: No; we do not.

Mr. WHITE: How can you build railways if you do not borrow the money? If we cannot trust the Railway Department to pay the best wages ruling in the district, we should drive them out of office altogether.

Mr. MULGAHY: Well, they are not doing it.

Mr. WHITE: I am quite confident that Mr. Pagan and his officers will pay the best wages ruling in the district, and if they get good men they will pay them more than 8s. a day. I find myself that it is better to pay high wages than to pay low wages.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WHITE: I know that the higher wages you pay the better men you get.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WHITE: But it is no use forcing a minimum wage on to the Government, because many men are not worth 4s. a day, and they do not even want to earn 4s. a day, as they want to do as little as they can. The sooner those sort of men are got rid of from any department the better.

\* Mr. MAUGHAN (*Ipswich*): I wish to support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Gympie, because I am of opinion that if any State department can afford to pay first-class wages to its workers, the Railway Department can. (Hear, hear!) Just consider for a moment this mighty Railway Department with its enormous revenue.

Mr. WHITE: There is no revenue from constructing works.

Mr. MAUGHAN: The railways last year paid £3 19s. per cent. over and above working expenses in the Southern Division, £3 16s. 4d. in the Central Division, and £3 1s. 2d. in the Northern Division.

Mr. D. HUNTER: How are those figures made up?

Mr. MAUGHAN: There is no occasion to go into figures to show that this department can afford to pay better wages than any other of our State departments. Surely the Railway Department ought to pay as good wages as any private contractor! The hon. member for Musgrave implied that the Labour party are against borrowing for building reproductive works. No member of the Labour party, so far as I know during the last ten or twelve years, has ever opposed borrowing money so long as the money borrowed is spent on reproductive works.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAUGHAN: That is the position the Labour party take up.

Mr. RYLAND: The Premier knows that is correct.

[*Mr. White.*

Mr. MAUGHAN: I have heard the hon. gentleman who leads the Government advocate the same thing when he was over here. I am of opinion that unless the Railway Department rises to the occasion and shows itself to be a model employer then it will be a very difficult thing to get men to enter our railway service.

Mr. COTTELL: I thought there were hundreds of unemployed?

Mr. MAUGHAN: This is what the Commissioner reports on page 4 of his report, and I will take the liberty to quote it—

The policy of constructing railways by day labour was introduced in 1901, the first railway to be commenced under this system being the line from Nerang to Tweed Heads. Since then some 619 miles of railway have been so constructed, the estimated cost of which was £1,763,244, and the actual expenditure to 30th June last was £1,573,867. This latter amount will be slightly increased before all the accounts are closed. In addition to the 617 miles of railway already constructed under the day labour system, there are at the present time 376 miles under construction.

Now we have a proposal that certain lines should be built by contract. I would point out that if all the lines which have been constructed by day labour had been built by contract, basing the profit of the contractors at, say, 10 per cent., it would have meant that no less a sum than £157,000 would have entered the private contractors' pockets.

The TREASURER: Where do you get the 10 per cent. from?

Mr. MAUGHAN: No railway contractor will construct any railway line under 10 per cent.

The PREMIER: How do you know that?

Mr. MAUGHAN: The hon. gentleman knows that quite well. He does not need to be a railway expert to know that. No railway contractor of any standing can go into this business unless he is going to make his 10 per cent. I am glad to know that the hon. member for Rockhampton and the hon. the senior member for Rockhampton are going to support this amendment. With regard to what the hon. member for Woolloongabba says about the application of the wages boards to a matter like this, I would just like to tell him this: If it would take as long to bring about a determination in connection with the wages on railway construction works as it does to bring about a determination in connection with the wages being considered by wages boards now—well, I say, the less the Railway Department has to do with wages boards the better.

Mr. COYNE (*Warrego*): I just rise to say a few words in reply to the statements made by the hon. member for Musgrave. He seems to be afraid that if we insist upon carrying this amendment that it would force the Government to carry on railway construction by private contract. The inference from that is that the hon. member is opposed to railways being built by contract. In fact, he admitted that he would rather see the profits made by the contractors put into the pockets of the people of the State. There is nothing in the world to prevent the Government at any time, if they have a railway built by contract—nothing to prevent the Government inserting a minimum clause in the Bill, so that you see we would not be playing into the hands of the contractors at all. We have heard a lot during the last twelve or eighteen months about bringing out immigrants to fill up our vacant places. This party has always said we should make this country attractive for immigrants, and that they would then come here without the necessity of

the unfortunate taxpayers of Queensland putting their hands in their pockets to pay to bring them here.

Mr. WHITE: The distance has a lot to do with that.

Mr. COYNE: But if they find we are not prepared to give an able-bodied adult £1 a week and tucker, what must they think of this grand country?

Mr. WHITE: We pay the best wages in the world.

Mr. COYNE: Who pays the best wages?

Mr. WHITE: Queensland.

Mr. COYNE: That is not true. The senior member for Rockhampton stated what is correct when he said a while ago the men are getting better wages at railway construction in New South Wales than they are in Queensland.

Mr. WHITE: He gave no proof of that.

Mr. COYNE: The proof the hon. member had of this was that it was told to him by the officers of the department here.

Mr. RYLAND: It is general knowledge.

Mr. COYNE: Yes; it is general knowledge. I have been employed at this class of work, and I know what the hon. member for Cairns said is absolutely correct: That a man who can manage to get £1 a week and tucker out of ordinary railway construction work is very lucky indeed. When we consider that 8s. a day only allows for that—I was getting 8s. a day at all the places I worked in both Victoria and New South Wales at railway construction, and that was about as much as I could earn.

Mr. McLACHLAN: Eight shillings a day was not too much.

Mr. COYNE: Eight shillings a day was certainly not too much. How on earth is a man who has to live 500 or 600 miles away from his family—how is he to maintain that family at £1 a week, because that is all he has left after keeping himself? He cannot take his family all round the State on railway construction works, and if the Government acted wisely in this matter, as it has a direct bearing on their immigration policy, they should accept the amendment. It is a very reasonable one, and is in the best interests of the State. As for the suggestion of the hon. member for Woollongabba to apply the principle of wages boards, I hope the suggestion was made in jest, because I do not think any man in the possession of his right senses would make such a suggestion. The case was quite correctly stated by the hon. member for Ipswich—if they desire to have the principle of wages boards applied to railway construction works, then before they got an award, unless they were very slow in the construction of it, the blessed thing would be finished before the award was given.

Mr. D. HUNTER: You could apply it to-night.

Mr. COYNE: You cannot apply it to-night. That is all the hon. member knows about the matter. You must take a vote in the first place, and see that you have a majority of the workers who desire a wages board. However, I do not want to labour the question any further. I trust the amendment will be carried, as it is a just and reasonable one. It is a humane one, and it is one that I believe will be in the best interests of the State, and will be an inducement to people over-sea to come here. Surely, if a man only earns £1 a week and his food, that cannot be called a very high wage? I hope, when it comes to a division, there will be hon. members on the opposite side who are free to act in the same way

as the hon. member for Rockhampton is in this matter, and that they will adopt a democratic attitude on this matter.

The PREMIER: We are quite convinced there is no independent attitude on that side.

Mr. COYNE: The hon. gentleman is quite wrong. Hon. members on this side realise that they were sent here by the workers of the State, to act in their interests, and there is not a solitary member on the other side who is here for the same reason.

\* Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): One would naturally think, judging by the speeches from the Opposition, that they were the only members in this Chamber who wished to see the working man receive a fair living wage, but I can assure hon. members that there are men on this side of the House who are equally anxious to see that the working man is treated fair and square, and that it is their intention to do so. (Hear, hear!) I think hon. members on the Opposition side, by including a minimum wage clause in this Railway Bill, are making a mistake from the working man's point of view. There is nothing whatever in this railway proposal to say that the wages paid on the construction of this line shall not be 9s. a day, so that by including a minimum wage clause in this Bill you are practically binding the hands of the Government to pay 8s. a day, and 8s. alone.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. MORGAN: It is a recognised fact, and in Victoria when the minimum wage was first introduced, it was a recognised fact that the employers, and the Government as well, who were paying 9s. or 10s. a day to their workmen, reduced the wage down to the minimum the moment the Act was passed, and the workmen who received 9s. a day had to work for 8s.

Mr. COYNE: Are you willing to support 9s. as a minimum?

Mr. MORGAN: I do not intend to support a minimum on this occasion at all. If the Government fixed in the Railway Bill a rate of 6s. or 7s. a day, I would vote against it. I do not think a man should work on railway construction for 6s. or 7s. a day, but the Government have not done that. They have not fixed any wage whatever; they simply say that they wish this Bill to go through the House, and that they will pay the current rate of wages in the North, Central, and other parts of Queensland, as they do now.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. MORGAN: Wages, I always contend, are regulated by the law of supply and demand. At the time of constructing this line men may be able to receive 9s. or 10s. a day for [7 p.m.] other work, and if this is so the Government, in order to get men to construct the railway, will most likely have to pay 9s. or 10s. a day as well. It was not my intention to address the House, or to make my maiden speech on this occasion, but seeing how things were progressing, and thinking it was practically a political dodge on the part of the Opposition in moving an amendment of this description—

Mr. MURPHY: The senior member for Rockhampton does not say so.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

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

The CHAIRMAN: I recognise that the hon. member for Murilla is a new member, but I would point out to him that his reference to the action of the other side as a political dodge is not quite parliamentary.

Mr. MORGAN: I am very sorry if I have offended, especially on my first speech, but I am

*Mr. Morgan.]*

sure it would take much stronger language than that to offend the hon. member who complains of my remark. It is my intention to justify the stand I have taken. If this comes to a division I am not going to be caught napping by the Opposition. I am equally anxious to see that the working men receive a good wage as any of the so-called friends of the working men's party on the other side.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MORGAN: In using the words "so called" I have some justification when past actions are taken into consideration. It is purely and simply an attempt on the part of the Opposition to make this 8s. a day on railway construction in Southern Queensland, not a minimum wage but a maximum wage. That has been the effect in other States, and it will be the same here in Queensland. And not only is it making a maximum wage of 8s. a day for the strong working man who is able to earn more than that, but it will prevent the weaker and less able men from getting work. (Opposition dissent.) I say that railway construction has not only in this State, but in the other States, been to a certain extent what may be termed relief works—works to give employment not only to the strong and the able, but also to the weak and the old and young men who want to earn a living, and cannot do it in many other classes of work. It is by adopting the Government principle that these men will receive employment. On the other hand, were we to accept this amendment moved by a member of the Labour party—I am sorry it was not moved by the deputy leader of the Labour party, so that he could have taken the full responsibility—

Mr. MULCAHY: We will take it.

Mr. MORGAN: I am sorry that the hon. member for Cairns was deprived of the honour of what may be termed standing up for the rights of the working man. Why he was deprived of that honour I cannot understand, but the Labour party, on this occasion, at any rate, prevented the hon. member for Cairns, and will claim the credit—if there is any credit—for the carrying of this amendment, if they succeed. But I feel certain that it is not going to be carried by the Opposition. I am sorry, as a new member, to see the stand taken by the senior member for Rockhampton. (Opposition laughter.) I was returned to support this Government in anything I thought would be fair and just, and until the Government shows that it is not fair and just, or that it is going to "sweat" the working man, I intend to stand by them and vote for the way in which they intend to have matters carried out. The Government have not been proved to have sweated the working man in the past, and I feel sure that they are going to pay a good living wage to these men—most likely more than 8s. to the man who is capable of earning more than that, while the Opposition want to place everyone on an equal footing.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no! Not at all.

Mr. MORGAN: The system adopted in Victoria, in many instances, in regard to the men who are capable of earning more than an average wage of 6s., 7s., or 8s. a day, is to let sections of the line by contract, or perhaps on what the hon. member for Cairns calls the butty gang system. This system may have been adopted in Queensland—I cannot speak for certain—but it is a very good system, and enables a man who is strong and willing to work, to earn more than those physically weak or old. It enables him to get the full benefit of his labour, while it also enables a man who is not able to earn as much to be paid according to the work he does. As I said before, I feel sure that it is the intention of the

Government to see that the working man receives fair pay for a fair day's work. I am certain it is their intention to see that the working man receives full compensation for the labour he gives to the State, and it is on these grounds, and these grounds alone, that I intend to support the resolution as introduced by the Minister. If, on the other hand, the Government deceive me in this direction—if I find they are not doing justice to the working man—then there will be no one more willing to cross the floor and vote against them than I will be. The reason I mentioned the senior member for Rockhampton was because I was surprised at the action he has taken, but no doubt he has had more political experience than I have.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear! and laughter.

Mr. MORGAN: It may be justified. But, on the other hand, he certainly sets a very bad example to new members of the party—(Opposition laughter)—especially upon an occasion of this description, and, perhaps on that account, I may be pardoned for making the remarks I have done.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: You will be over here directly.

Mr. MANN: I can prove that they are paying 7s. a day at Cairns to able-bodied labourers.

Mr. MORGAN: I quite admit that they may be doing that, but that does not prove that the Government are not going to pay more than 7s. a day for the construction of this railway, and while 7s. a day may be a living wage in Cairns—I am surprised to hear it. I thought people were deserving of more than that in a place of that description. (Opposition laughter.) I honestly believe that labourers up in Cairns get more than 7s. a day. As I said before, it was not my intention to address the House on this occasion, but I wish to place my position clearly before the House and the electors. When I stood as a candidate at the general election, I stood as a democrat, equal to any democrat in Queensland or on the other side of the Chamber, and I claim that I am supporting the most democratic Government we have ever had in Queensland. (Opposition laughter.)

\* Mr. BRESLIN (*Port Curtis*): I am considerably surprised at the attitude taken up by the Government on this question of a minimum wage both now and in the past. When the proposal was first made to construct railways by day labour, there was a twofold object in view. One was to save the profit of the contractor, and the other was to enable the men to better their position and protect them from sweating and imposition. Possibly the money proposal has worked out all right, although, as the Secretary for Railways intends to try the contract system again on one line at least, there seems to be a doubt in the minds of the Government about it. I am very sorry, as it shows that there is something funny about it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It only exists in your mind—that there is something funny about it.

Mr. BRESLIN: As regards the men, the day labour system has proved an absolute failure.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. BRESLIN: If the hon. members who interject, likewise the hon. member for Murilla, had had railway lines running through their electorates, they would know the dissatisfaction that has existed among the men.

The PREMIER: They might never have been here, like your predecessor, if there had been railways building in their districts. (Laughter.)

[*Mr. Morgan.*]

Mr. BRESLIN: We might have had just as good men. It is rather peculiar that the Government took over the construction of railways by day labour with the idea of bettering the position of the men, and yet you find men who have worked at railway construction for years who are dissatisfied with the result. I met a strong, able-bodied man lately—a man one might say who was well educated—a man who is first class at his work, and he said to me, “I have been bar-racking for Government control for years, but after the Boyne Valley line I have had enough of it as long as this Government is in power. I am going to leave it and try something else.” I said, “Why?” He said, “Because a man cannot make a living on it. There is no minimum wage. Sometimes you are shifted about, and the storekeepers are charging such big prices that 7s. a day is not equal to 7s. a day in town.” He told me the prices that were being charged by the storekeepers, and I could not see how a man with 7s. a day could keep himself in “tucker.” I asked one of the storekeepers about it afterwards, and he admitted that it might look as if he was charging exorbitant prices, but he said there were so many men slipping him up and going away without paying him, that he had practically to make the men who stopped pay the bills of those who left. The senior member for Rockhampton expressed his surprise at the delay there was in finishing these Government lines. The delay simply arises from the fact that the men are not sufficiently well paid. They are not able to make tucker. Sober, industrious men are unable to save any money. As hon. members remember, there was a strike on the Boyne Valley Railway some time ago—ill-advised, perhaps—I am not prepared to discuss it—but, as a consequence of that strike the completion of the line was delayed, and, worse still, the best men left. They would not stay under existing conditions. Some of them went to other occupations, and a good many went to the railway works in New South Wales. We are starting new lines; if these lines are intended to be a success, if the men are to be treated fairly, I fail to see anything wrong whatever in introducing a minimum wage provision. The hon. member for Murilla said that we would be making it a maximum wage as well as a minimum. We all know that bridge carpenters and other skilled workers must get better pay—they are a separate branch; but we are talking of the actual navvies. We want to see that they get a minimum wage. Hon. members opposite should remember that on all railway lines men have to pay very much higher rates for everything they consume than men in cities. I would not be surprised to hear that the Brisbane City Council pay their labourers 8s. a day, and I dare say 6s. a day in Brisbane is far better pay than 10s. a day on the Boyne Valley Railway. I cannot see why this railway should be any better than the Boyne Valley Railway. We have always been told that a railway is a non-party measure, therefore I hope that hon. members on the other side who have a sense of right and justice, who have a little regard for their election promises, who promised to do the best they could for all classes of the community, will now remember that a very big class is asking them for assistance, and I hope that those hon. members will vote strongly in favour of the amendment.

The PREMIER: I suppose that the opinion is quite general in this Chamber that the Government ought to pay good wages.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYLAND: Fair wages.

The PREMIER: That, if there is any difference in any district, the Government should rather lead in the matter of wages than the

other thing. They are of opinion that the Government should be the best employer. There is a very strong tendency that way, for the reason that the Commissioner and the engineers who manage the work and arrange the wages have no personal financial interest in keeping their men's wages down, while almost all private employers, if they keep their men's wages down have the money in their own pockets—that makes a very big difference; and the presumption is always—as it should be—that the Government should at least pay the highest wages paid in the district for similar work. It may be said of every railway work that there is nobody else in the district building railways, and that the Government have therefore no competitor. But that is not true, as everyone knows. The general labourers who constitute, perhaps, the larger bulk of the men employed on railways can easily get work at other occupations if the Government propose to pay them less than what is called the current rate of wages. I would like to point out that this Committee have not placed any limit on the Commissioner in this respect, and that the Government have not placed any limit on the Commissioner in this respect; and that the Commissioner and his engineers have a perfectly free hand in paying the men what they think they are worth.

Mr. MAUGHAN: What about cutting down the Estimates?

The PREMIER: It has nothing to do with cutting down the Estimates. A lump sum of money is voted for a particular railway, and the Government have nothing to do with what wages the engineer pays to the men. I have no doubt that if the Government represented to the Commissioner that he was paying too high wages he would try to correct it, and that if we represented to him that he was paying too low wages, he would try to correct that also. I have had no difficulty in such matters with the Commissioner, nor have I found that the Commissioner, or the engineer, has any desire to unfairly press down the wages. Why should they?

Mr. HARDACRE: To give the Engineer-in-Chief credit.

The PREMIER: There will always be a difference of opinion between employers and employed as to what is a fair amount to pay. I am only pointing out that in the case of the engineer he has no personal financial interest in the wages paid. That is a safeguard for the men. I also wish to say this: This House is not a good body to attempt to fix wages. If it is a proper thing for this House to put wages up, it is also a proper thing to fix wages down; and it would be a bad doctrine to establish, as some members opposite might find out. I claim that any man who will try to think about the matter will see that as between the men and the producers, who have to ultimately pay for the railway, the fair thing is likely to be reached by making the engineer in charge fix the wages. He is not only much better acquainted with the details of the work than we can possibly hope to be, and much better acquainted with the wages paid in the district than members can possibly hope to be, but he has no interest—

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: He has a professional interest.

The PREMIER: He has no financial interest in pressing the wages down; and he is also free from something else—he is not wanting those men's votes. It is about the last degradation of representative government when men come into this House and try to bribe the electors with public money.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Oh, oh! and dissent.

[Hon. W. Kidston.]

The PREMIER: It is the cheapest, if not the nastiest, way of attempting to make oneself politically popular.

Mr. RYLAND: Give them a living wage.

The PREMIER: Hon. members are smarting from their own blunder which they made three or four months ago when they blocked a number of railways—

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: We never blocked them.

The PREMIER: They blocked a number of railways for party reasons, and they had to go to the country.

Mr. MURPHY: We sent you to the country.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Oh, no!

The PREMIER: They had to go to the country under the conviction that they had hindered the progress of business in this House, and had stopped the work of thousands of men who might be idle in two months' time. Now, they are wanting to show that, after all—

Codlin's their friend, not Short—

that they are the persons who would give the men 8s. a day.

Mr. COYNE: What about your colleague?

The PREMIER: It is a cheap kind of generosity that gets the money out of somebody else's pocket. (Government laughter.) It is a most generous thing. They have only to dip their hands into the Treasury and give the men the wages they would like. I say it is the last degradation of representative government, and every man in this House who has any conception as to where this kind of thing may lead us will take care that in Government work some responsible person, not responsible to the electors—

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Ah! Oh, oh!

The PREMIER: Not responsible to the electors, not responsible to this House, for the proper discharge of his duties—has charge of the work and power to fix proper wages. It would be a misfortune, but our method of procedure will ultimately break down with its own weight if this House attempts to fix the wages on all the public works they authorise. Though I have no desire to initiate a discussion on the merits of a minimum wage, I may say I have never believed that a minimum wage was a good thing. Not that I do not believe that the payment of good wages is a good thing. I entirely believe what my colleague said when he quoted Captain Richards, who said on his return from America that he found good wages were the cheapest wages. I believe that now. But I do not believe the fixing of a minimum wage is the way to get good wages. I believe it will produce far more injury to the wage-earners than the present method.

Mr. RYLAND: That is what the old Tories always say in the old country.

The PREMIER: I would like to remind the hon. member for Gympie that this is one of those pretty things that look very nice before you try them, but, like annual Parliaments, when you come to try them they are found to be not all they are cracked up to be. It is all very well to talk about no one getting less than 8s. a day, but it is not going to bring about the millennium; and I say it will produce more injury to the mass of the workers than the present system. That is why I have always been opposed to it. If men were cows you could make them happy by turning them into a field with plenty of clover; but they are not cows, and they cannot be made happy by giving them a minimum wage.

[Hon. W. Kidston.

Mr. HAMILTON: You used to believe in a minimum wage.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. LENNON: With a mental reservation.

The PREMIER: Perhaps I was like a good many other hon. members—I have a mental reservation of my own. Another point which deserves serious consideration is this: It is said, I don't know with what amount of truth, that better wages are being paid by railway contractors in Northern New South Wales than by the Government in Southern Queensland. I do not hesitate to say that if that is true—if it is reasonably probable that it is true—two things will have to be done—that is, the Commissioner will have to give instructions to pay higher wages in Southern Queensland for this kind of work, and the Government will have to immediately cast about for having one or two railways built by contract.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

The PREMIER: The hon. member for Port Curtis said a thing that ought to get the attention of hon. members on his own side. He quoted a man who had been working on the line in his district who said he had formerly been in favour of constructing railways by day labour, but he had found it was not the best way for the workmen.

Mr. BRESLIN: As long as the present Government are in power. (Government laughter.)

The PREMIER: I admit that that might be a qualification. I have no doubt that the hon. member for Port Curtis thinks that [7.30 p.m.] if he could turn the present Government out, that would remedy the whole evil. If the majority of members of this House agree with the hon. member for Port Curtis that that would remedy the whole evil, then it is within the power of members to do it now. But there is much more in this matter than the quip about the present Government being in power. We adopted the day-labour system on railway construction eight years ago, believing two things: that it would be better for the men employed, and that it would be better for the State, which was employing them. Doubts are now expressed as to whether it is better for the men employed.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No!

The PREMIER: There is practically no difference between the conditions in Northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland, and if I am told that railway contractors in Northern New South Wales are paying higher wages to their men than are paid by the Government in Southern Queensland, then it is well that we should inquire into the whole matter, because it is quite clear that under such circumstances the natural tendency will be for the best men to go over into New South Wales. While I do not want men's wages increased for political reasons, or in order to make political capital out of it—

Mr. MULCAHY: Oh, no; you wouldn't do it!

The PREMIER: As the hon. member for Warrego told us, members are all independent on that side of the House! They all vote—

Mr. COYNE: As they pledged themselves to the electors. (Government laughter.)

The PREMIER: I venture to say that when this vote is taken it will be discovered that every man jack on that side of the House will pledge himself to the electors in the same way. There is not a man on that side of the House who is game to stop outside the bar when the vote is

taken. The hon. member for Warrego highly complimented my colleague for his independence.

Mr. COYNE: Quite right.

The PREMIER: What does the hon. member for Warrego call men on his own side when they are independent in that way?

Mr. COYNE: I admire them also.

The PREMIER: No; the hon. member calls them "rats." And if my colleague has not enough sense to know that, he has much less sense than I take him to have.

Mr. COYNE: You do think he is a "rat," then.

The PREMIER: He is a very new member of this House, or a very foolish member of this House, who does not know that this motion is moved, not because it is believed it will do all that is claimed for it, but simply for the purpose of earning a little cheap popularity.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

The PREMIER: That is the real thing the motion has to do with. I want the House distinctly to understand that I am not here to advocate the getting of railways constructed for the least wages we can get them constructed for. I do not think there have been many Governments in Queensland who have done more for the railway men than this Government have done.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: And we are just as willing to do as much for the men on construction works as we have done for those in the railway workshops at Ipswich.

Mr. COYNE: Aren't you referring to the last Government?

The PREMIER: No, to this Government. They have done something that the hon. member did not want them to do. I think it is rather a serious statement that contractors in Northern New South Wales are paying higher wages for railway construction than we are paying in Southern Queensland.

Mr. RYLAND: It is true, all the same.

The PREMIER: It is the first time I have heard it. For every reason, not only because I want to see men in Queensland getting a fair wage, but also because I do not want to see the best men attracted to New South Wales, the matter is one which should be inquired into.

Mr. HARDACRE: The Government are paying higher wages in New South Wales.

The PREMIER: If these things are true, then—

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Accept the amendment.

The PREMIER: No; I will not accept the amendment, and I will not, so far as I am able, permit this House to start the practice of determining wages, which would be a very wrong, and a very hurtful and a very ruinous precedent to set. We will at once have inquiry made into the allegation which has been made. I do not know whether it is true or not, but any mere repeating of it over and over again to-night will not prove it to be true. We can easily find out whether the thing is true or not; and, if it is true, the engineer in charge of railways in the Southern district will have to pay higher wages. That is the beginning and the end of it. But I say the wages to be paid should be arranged by the man in charge of the work. There is no other sensible way of carrying out large undertakings, and any attempt by Parliament to fix the rate of wages would degenerate into a most corrupt kind of

electioneering, and I am utterly opposed to that. This proposed amendment is nothing else. It has nothing at all to do with wages.

Mr. HAMILTON: Elect your engineers. \*

The PREMIER: Hon. members opposite may be very good at election engineering, but they are not railway engineers. We pay men high salaries because they are acquainted with the work of railway construction, and have the capacity to manage such works. If those men are not competent for the work they should be dismissed. They ought to understand that Parliament wishes these employees to get adequate wages—to get, if anything, the best wages paid for such work in the district in which they are employed, but Parliament should not attempt to go beyond that, or to fix the rate of wages in a hard-and-fast way, as is proposed in this amendment. I sincerely hope that the Committee will reject the amendment.

\* Mr. CORSER (*Maryborough*): I intend to support the amendment.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: I do it on conscientious grounds. I believe this evening, as I have believed for many years, that for railway men who have to work in Queensland in a climate like ours, the bad water they often have to drink, and the inconveniences they have to put up with, a minimum wage of 8s. a day is not too much.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: And in Queensland we ought not to expect them to accept anything less. I do not agree with the statements made by other members of this House that because you fix a minimum wage of 8s. a day you are bound to employ all the riffraff at that rate. We have engineers in charge of our works who are competent men; they know the best men to obtain, and they will only employ those men at 8s. a day who are worthy to receive it.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: And if in his judgment there are men who are not worthy of 8s. a day, he will give them piecework. Let me say here that these railways will not be constructed in my electorate, consequently I am not speaking to the men who will be thus employed, and I shall not receive one vote in my electorate from that class of man.

Mr. COYNE: The same remark applies to every member of this House.

Mr. CORSER: I have a conscientious conviction that a man is worthy of his hire. (Hear, hear!) I agree with the senior member for Rockhampton. I have heard the same statements made that our men are leaving Queensland, and going to Southern places for railway construction work. (Hear, hear!) If that is the case, then it is our own fault if we have the refuse left. If a man is worth 8s. a day, and is only paid 7s., and a man only worth 6s. is also paid 7s., I do not consider it will raise the man only worth 6s. to the standard of the other; but, on the other hand, if the 8s. man is only paid 7s., it will tend to discourage him, and he will do no more work than the man who is only worth 6s. a day.

Mr. WHITE: That is a very poor argument.

Mr. CORSER: It is an argument I have seen applied in all walks of life. If you put a man worth 8s. a day on work at 7s. a day, he will not work with the same degree of enthusiasm, as he will feel that there is less reason for him to do his best. I notice that in the Works Department of Queensland there is a minimum wage of 8s.

*Mr. Corser.]*

If it is not found to be wrong in that department, why should it be found wrong with these men who have to work under much more disadvantageous conditions on railway construction?

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: I regret very much to disagree with the leader of this party. I thoroughly believe in his democratic principles and his programme, and I regret that I cannot agree with him on this subject. Although I am a democrat, and have been returned to support the democratic policy, I am not bound to forfeit my independence.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CORSER: I will not detain the House any longer, but just express my intention of supporting the amendment.

Mr. BLAIR (*Ipswich*): I am sure the Committee will forgive me for inflicting one or two words on them, and prolonging this discussion. I had not intended to make any comments at all until I heard the extraordinary speech from the Chief Secretary.

Mr. HAMILTON: From the throne.

Mr. BLAIR: If he makes many more speeches like that it might dethrone him.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BLAIR: I was sorry to notice the Chief Secretary indulge in a somewhat heated argument, and resort to recrimination. I do not intend to follow that example at all. I think that this matter can be discussed temperately and courteously, and from the discussion I think that a good deal of good might ensue.

Mr. MAUGHAN: It is a non-party motion.

Mr. BLAIR: With regard to a matter of this kind, we are all aware that it is largely a non-party matter in the sense that an adverse vote does not involve the fate of the Government at all. I was sorry to hear such insinuations hurled across the Chamber, seeing that this is a new Parliament and this just at the opening of a new session, to the effect that the motion of the hon. member for Gympie savoured of political jobbery.

A LABOUR MEMBER: Shocking!

Mr. BLAIR: In a sense it is shocking, because the amendment only deals with a principle which was recognised by the previous Government in ordinary works contracts. I understand that it is the practice of the Works Department of Queensland to stipulate in their specifications, in calling for tenders, that a minimum wage of 8s. per day must be paid.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: The wages ruling in the district.

Mr. BLAIR: I am obliged to hon. members for the correction—that the practice they follow is that the ruling rate in the district must be paid. If it is not a fact that the minimum wage is fixed by the rate ruling in the district in which the contract is taking place, then I am surprised. I have been handed by the hon. member for Leichhardt the notice issued by the Queensland Government with reference to the special conditions and the rate of wages to be paid and the number of hours to be worked weekly in connection with Government contracts. It reads as follows:—

Not less than the union rate of wages, or where there is no union rate, the rate ruling in the district, shall be paid by the contractor or sub-contractors for the various services to be performed under this contract, and in case of dispute the decision of the Government Architect will be final. The rates stipulated do not, however, apply to improvers, apprentices, or boys.

[*Mr. Corser.*

With respect to overtime, the recognised rules of the particular trade then prevailing in the district where the work is situated shall be observed.

The HOME SECRETARY: Well, is not that satisfactory?

Mr. COYNE: Very satisfactory.

Mr. BLAIR: Eminently satisfactory. I would be the last one in the world to quarrel with that. I am using it in order to develop my argument.

Mr. MAUGHAN: It does not work out all right.

Mr. BLAIR: The Chief Secretary has laid it down as a principle that it would be unwise for this House to attempt to fix wages. He said that if they had the power to fix the minimum in the sense of raising wages they had the power also to decrease wages. They have had the power, I take it, in fixing the wages wherever the Estimates obtain. Year after year that has been done. It has been said, in reply to some argument adduced here, that there is no power to increase salaries. But when they are fixed, that is the minimum. In the Commonwealth the principle of the minimum wage is recognised—a living minimum wage must be paid. I hope the day is not far distant when we will have something similar applicable to the Queensland Public Service as well. (Hear, hear!) In the instructions issued to contractors by the Government it is provided that not less than the union rate shall be paid. What does this amendment of the junior member for Gympie amount to? It simply says that a minimum wage of 8s. per day shall be paid to the railway workers employed thereunder. It is not a question whether this is a political dodge to catch votes. It is not a question whether anyone voting for it is false to the party to which he belongs and is endeavouring to obtain political kudos. None of these questions arise in my mind at all. The question that arises in my mind is whether 1s. per hour for every day these men work is a fair wage or not.

Mr. COYNE: Is it too much?

Mr. BLAIR: Is it too much? That is the question.

Mr. WHITE: That is not the question.

Mr. BLAIR: Other members may give their own views, but I am giving mine, and I am discussing the thing temperately and apart altogether from heat. It appears to me that the question is this: Is 1s. per hour for eight hours a day too much to ask for people engaged in navvy-ing work?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No; they are getting it now.

Mr. BLAIR: If they are getting it now, what objection is there to the amendment?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Good men are getting it.

Mr. BLAIR: If, as the Secretary for Lands says, they are getting it now, what on earth is their objection to the amendment? It has been said that it will be a pernicious principle for this House to dictate to the Railway Commissioner. If I thought there was any attempt to do that I certainly would not vote for this amendment, but the Premier absolutely gave the whole question away, because he says it is a most serious thing if men in New South Wales are getting more wages than the people of Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: From the contractors.

Mr. BLAIR: I care not from whom. Surely the Government should be the model employer! Surely the Government should set a good

example, instead of the contractors! The point I wish to make is this: It would be necessary then for the Government to inquire into that, because they are not against the principle of giving good wages, and there will be something in the nature of an instruction to the Commissioner to pay these wages. Surely it is much better for the people of Queensland, if there is to be an instruction to the Commissioner, that it should come from members here rather than from the Cabinet! What the amendment purposes to do is to see that there shall be a declaration embodied in the Bill which authorises that in the construction of the line no able-bodied adult navy shall be paid less than 8s. a day. I heard from the hon. member for Murilla one or two statements that I think, on reflection, he will regret having uttered, because I think what he considers are objections to this amendment are really not objections at all, and the position he has taken up on this matter is entirely misconceived. He stated that this was a mere political dodge, and he went on to speak in this fashion: that possibly it would deprive a lot of aged people—the lame, the halt, and the blind, I suppose he meant—from work. I do not look at it in that light at all. I look upon it in this way: that that class of men are not the men who will be found at that kind of work. What on earth chance—and I defy any reasonable answer to this question—what on earth chance has a man, who is infirm or physically unfit, of being employed in navvying work?

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: None.

Mr. WHITE: What about the men at Ipswich?

Mr. BLAIR: As far as the men at Ipswich are concerned, and the hon. member can see them from the train, they are all healthy, stalwart, fine physical types of men.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are maintenance men.

Mr. BLAIR: Yes, they are maintenance men, and they have to pass an examination before they are put on. They have to be passed by a doctor, and those men are a splendid type of manhood. I say it is idle to endeavour to bring in the question of old, infirm, or men physically unfit, when the work is navvying, which requires men of the best physical stamina to be able to do the work at all. I could quite understand the argument of the hon. member for Murilla were he speaking on a Bill such as the Workers' Compensation Act, where the question arises of special consideration for men growing old in the service, and becoming physically unfit. I am glad to see some hon. members on the other side take a stand on this matter. It is not a matter that affects the fate of the Government a bit. There is no question of political engineering in the slightest degree. There is nothing to prevent an hon. member getting up and stating what his conscientious belief on a matter of that kind is. I am glad some of those hon. members have taken upon themselves to express themselves in no uncertain way. I look upon the amendment as a most legitimate one—an amendment that should be considered on its merits, and if it is considered on its merits—if there is not a return to the sandbagging and bludgeon tactics of last session—I have not the slightest doubt it will be successful, and to this House then will belong the credit of having secured to those men doing the hardest work any man can possibly be asked to do 1s. for every hour of the eight hours' work.

\* Mr. TOLMIE (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): I am one of those who believe in the payment of a fair wage, and I can claim to have had a good deal of practical experience. Yet I am opposed

to this amendment. I would not incur the censure of hon. members by saying it is a political job; nor do I say that it is a clever piece of engineering, but still I think it is an endeavour to harass the Government.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Ah! Oh! Oh!

Mr. TOLMIE: I am not going to be a party to harassing the Government. Nothing of the kind. If the hon. member who has just sat down will cast his memory back to a not very distant period, he will remember that he opposed a similar amendment being introduced in Railway Bills in this House.

Mr. MAUGHAN: He sees the error of his ways.

Mr. HAMILTON: He took the Minister's word for it.

Mr. HARDACRE: He was taken down once, and he is not to be taken down twice.

Mr. TOLMIE: When hon. members have finished the little discussion I shall resume what I have to say. We have the assurance of the Premier that it is not the intention of the Government to pay a lower standard of wages than is paid in the district.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It has never been done.

Mr. TOLMIE: From our own experience, those who have taken any interest at all in work carried out by the Government in any part of the State, we find there is every endeavour on their part to keep up to the standard by paying the fair rate of wages paid in the district. In all works that have been let in the Works Department that provision is placed in the contract.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: At the instance of the Labour party.

Mr. TOLMIE: I do not care whether at the instance of the Labour party or of the party led by the hon. member for Ipswich, or any other party. The fact remains that that provision is put in the contract, and it is a good one. And the Government are going to act upon that principle in any work they are carrying on, whether it be railway construction or anything else. But, as has been pointed out by speakers on this side of the House, and clearly demonstrated by the Premier, this is an endeavour on the part of some hon. members to secure a certain amount of cheap popularity at the expense of the Government. I think it would be unfair on our part to allow those hon. members to achieve their object without pointing out clearly and distinctly to the people what their object is.

Mr. HAMILTON: That is an insinuation.

Mr. TOLMIE: There is no insinuation whatever, but it is so plain that he who runs may read, and the hon. member who interjected must not think that we cannot understand what the object of those

[8 p.m.] who are supporting the amendment is, when it has been stated so clearly and distinctly by hon. members on the other side. This is the position: There is no disposition on the part of the Government to reduce wages, but every desire to maintain as high a standard of wages as is paid in the district for that particular class of work.

Mr. HAMILTON: They have never done it.

Mr. TOLMIE: And when the Government are endeavouring to act up to that standard, I think it is the duty of this House to stand by them and give them their support, rather than to harass and put them into an awkward position. If the amendment is carried, I do not think that men who deserve 8s. a day now will get any more through the carrying of the amendment. The Government will

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pay a man for the full amount of labour that he is giving, and I do not think we have any right to ask them to pay more than the just remuneration for work being done. We know very well that on railway construction works the conditions are altogether different from those which have been so nicely set forth by the junior member for Ipswich when he speaks of the stalwart men that we find along the railway line doing an honest day's work. They are healthy men, and have passed the doctor; but the position is entirely different on construction work. The construction work is being carried on by men who do not pass the doctor, by men who are very desirous of obtaining work.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Who come and go.

Mr. TOLMIE: By men who come and go, as the Minister says. We know that while the majority of these men are thoroughly capable of doing the work required of them, there is a certain proportion of them who know just as well as the ganger does, or anybody else, that they are not able to earn 8s. a day. But those men desire to earn as much as they are capable of earning, and it is only right that they should have an opportunity of doing so. Put a man such as this in the Railway Department, and the natural result will be that the engineer in charge of the department must see that he is going to get the 8s. worth of work for the 8s. paid, and in consequence many men will be deprived of an opportunity of living.

Mr. THORN: Hear, hear!

Mr. MULCAHY: The old gag.

Mr. TOLMIE: It is a true gag. There are men who are not capable of earning 8s. a day, but still require employment, and if they cannot find employment in the construction work going on, where are they to get it? They cannot go to private employers and ask for work at the standard rate of wages fixed by the wages board, because the employer is just the same as the ganger who is working for the Government—he must get the full value of work for the money he is paying. Then are we, after having legislated in the direction of withdrawing employment from a great many men by the operation of the wages boards, to still further place embargoes on those men to prevent them from getting work by this Chamber defining what is to be the minimum rate of wages on Government contracts? If we do that, then I say there is a large class of workmen in Queensland who are going to go without the opportunity of obtaining employment, and it is not right for us to take away from them that opportunity, but we shall do so if we pass the amendment of the junior member for Gympie. On the contrary, if we leave the position as it is, then those men who are capable of earning the 8s. a day know how to set about getting it if it is not given to them by the Government. The experience of the Government in their construction work has been such that they are only too ready to pay men the full value for services rendered. Then let us leave the position as it is, so that men may get the highest remuneration for their labour if it is possible to give them, whether that amount is 8s., or something lower. I shall certainly vote against the amendment.

Mr. HAMILTON: I have listened to the remarks of some of the members on the other side, and there is no doubt that they have failed to justify their position in voting

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against the provision being inserted in this measure—that men who are working with pick and shovel eight hours a day in the broiling sun shall receive 8s. a day. The Premier said that he never believed in the minimum wage, and yet he was a member of this party for some years, and he signed the Labour platform. I would like to read one of the planks which is contained in the platform which he signed. It is—

A minimum wage, and abolition of the contract system in Government work.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HAMILTON: The Premier, when he wanted to get into the House as a member of the Labour party, signed that pledge, and yet he stands up to-day and says he never believed in it. Was he a hypocrite then, or is he a hypocrite now?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question before the House is the amendment moved by the member for Gympie, Mr. Ryland. I cannot allow the discussion of any hon. member's conduct.

Mr. HAMILTON: I was just pointing out the opinion of the hon. gentleman at the time when he was a strong advocate of the principle contained in the amendment of the junior member for Gympie, and his declaration on the floor of the House at the present time. I say that not only are railway men in the public service of Queensland getting a lower wage than is paid in the other States, but almost every other class of public servants. Ask the Commissioner of Police the difficulty he has in getting men to join the police force of the State. It is simply because he cannot get good men for the money. They can get higher wages in the other States, and they go there. He gets fine stalwart men in to-day, and they leave the force in a few months, because they get better wages down South. I am quite in harmony with the senior member for Rockhampton when he says that in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales a higher wage is being paid than on the Government lines in Queensland, and people go away to work there. I do not say that the Government should pay a great deal higher rate of wage than is paid by private individuals, but when the contracts let by the Public Works Department contain a stipulation that a trade union rate of wages shall be paid, I think it is only right when they take on the work themselves that they should also pay a minimum rate of wage. As to whether the rate of wage paid in Queensland has been a satisfactory rate of wage, I need only point out the strikes which have taken place during the last two or three years on railway construction work. Take the Cloncurry line—there was a strike up there in order to get 10s. a day. Hon members know that men working in the mines there get £4 a week, not 10s. a day. We know that strikes have taken place on the Etheridge Railway. In fact, there have been strikes for higher wages on nearly every railway. All that this amendment seeks to do is to ensure that there shall be a fair rate of pay for a fair day's work. It does not say, as the hon. member for Murilla tries to make out, that they shall take the lame, the maimed, the halt, and the blind—that they shall go to Dunwich for their men. All that it proposes is that 8s. a day shall be paid to competent workmen. There is nothing to stop good men receiving more. It is always

understood that railways are non-party questions, and it will be a bad day for Queensland when they cease to be treated as non-party questions. When a question like this arises, every hon. member should be at liberty to vote as his conscience dictates; but we see the Premier trying to browbeat his followers when he finds some of them are going to vote according to the dictates of their consciences.

Mr. WHITE: You don't need to do that.

Mr. HAMILTON: I am like the hon. member, who has a brand-new conscience that he has never used. (Laughter.)

Mr. WHITE: That is better than none.

Mr. HAMILTON: It is contemptible to stand up, as the Premier and others have done, and insinuate that because members propose to vote for an amendment of this sort they are only catering for votes, and that it is a piece of political fireworks, when, as a matter of fact, we are only fighting for a plank in our platform which we were returned to this House pledged to advocate.

Mr. D. HUNTER: Why didn't you do it before?

Mr. HAMILTON: The hon. member believed in it when he was a member of the Labour party—before he ratted from the party. I hope hon. members opposite will vote as their consciences dictate. If they think that 8s. a day is too much for eight hours' work in a broiling sun, let them vote against the amendment. But the man who thinks that 8s. a day is only a fair thing ought to be found voting in support of the amendment.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN. (*Burrum*): I should not have risen but for the fact that hon. members opposite have invited those who do not intend to vote for the amendment to give their reasons for opposing it. Their object in proposing the amendment is merely to gain a little cheap kudos by trying to make it appear that they are the only friends of the working men in this House. I dare say I have had as much experience in employing men as any man on the other side of the Chamber. I believe just as much as anybody in giving a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. Every member sitting on this side believes in the same thing, but we do not see that that is going to be brought about through this amendment. Listening to the remarks of the senior member for Ipswich regarding the railway service generally, one would think that the Government were the greatest sweaters among employers. That being so, why do we find such a rush of applicants for employment under the Government? For every vacancy in the railway service, there are numerous applicants. In my own electorate we have had twelve, fourteen, fifteen, and twenty on the list waiting for an opportunity to get into this service. Can the Government then be such bad employers? The people know what the Government service is, and yet, in spite of that fact, we find all these men anxious to get into that service. The hon. member pointed to the railway earnings and asks why should not the wages of the men employed by the department be increased on account of those earnings? But what about the primary producers who pay the freights that enable the railways to make those earnings? Are they to receive no consideration?

Mr. LENNON: They had £100,000 consideration paid to them last year.

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LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: Why not consider the farmer and the pastoralist—the men who are sending their goods over the railways—and give them greater facilities and cheaper freights, and give them the assistance they are entitled to?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And why not consider the people who find the balance of the interest?

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: It is very easy to be generous at somebody else's expense; but we must remember that this money that we are expending has to be made good by somebody. I dare say there are very few members in this Chamber who have been associated with a district where the people have had to make good the money expended on a railway. In my electorate I have been associated with such a railway. I know what it is for the people to be called upon year after year to foot the bill, to make up the interest charge and the loss in working the railway. Under the present Railways Act the people in the benefited area will have to make good any loss in working expenses and interest, and is it not our duty, in our relationship with those people, to see that the cost of construction is not any greater than it should be? It is a very simple thing for people outside to say that 8s. or 9s., or any other amount, should be paid, provided they have not to find any of the money. We have in operation in this State a system of minimum wage, and I can assure hon. members opposite that it is the greatest failure imaginable. As most hon. members who have any knowledge of the sugar industry know, there is a minimum wage provided for in the agreement between the sugar-growers and the Commonwealth Government which the growers must pay before they can claim the bounty payable in respect of white-grown cane.

Mr. FERRICKS: 3s. 9d. a day.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: It is the principle I am dealing with. Instead of that having the effect it was intended to have, we find that during the off-season, when, perhaps, labour is more plentiful than at other times, the employer is compelled to take the best labour. He is not going to pay the minimum rate of wages to a man who is physically incapable, or in other respects is not a first-class workman. And, if you insist upon this minimum rate of wages being inserted in this proposal, you will undoubtedly find the same thing apply. If the people in charge of railway works are compelled to pay a certain rate of wages, they will take all sorts of care that they only employ the best class of labour. After all, it is only a matter of plain business dealing. I have no objection whatever to the clause in the agreement between the Works Department and a contractor, to which the hon. member for Ipswich referred. There they have a clause that the wages paid shall be the ruling rate of wages payable in the district. I would be quite agreeable to the insertion of such a clause in this proposal—it is fair and reasonable. That is one of those things that right themselves. If you want to employ labour you must pay the rate of wages ruling for that class of labour. I differ from the statement that the difficulty here is caused by the higher rate paid in New South Wales. I do not know the rate paid in New South Wales, but I know that it is within our own border that we have to look for the reason. It is owing to the number of people required during the harvest on the

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canefields and wheat fields and in other places. In my own district during the last few weeks men have been offering as much as 10s. and 12s. a day for canecutters in order to get their crops off the ground. It is not because of the high rate paid in New South Wales that men cannot be got. Perhaps another reason is that we have not enough people here. We want more immigration to this vast country; and perhaps the hon. member who brought forward this proposal gave one of the strongest arguments in favour of the immigration proposals of the Government. It may be a good thing to pay high wages, but it is possible to overdo it. Nor do I think that a high rate of wages always means a better state of affairs for the working man. (Opposition laughter.) I know there have been instances in other countries where a high rate of wages has obtained, and the cost of living has gone up out of all proportion to the increase in wages. We have the same thing in connection with our wages boards, for which the Labour party clamoured so many years. I know places where the wages have perhaps gone up 5 per cent. and the cost of living has gone up 10 per cent. It is like putting 1s. into one pocket and taking 2s. out of the other—it does not benefit the working man a bit. I believe in a fair wage, but I do not believe in stipulating that a minimum of 8s. shall be paid. There is another thing that should be considered in this connection. The Premier said he thought the Government should be model employers, and I dare say he is quite right; but I would not be in favour of the Government paying a fictitious price for labour. After all, the country is not made up merely of workmen. There are the people who employ the workmen to be considered.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: The drones!

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: They are not drones. If you were to take the employers out of a country you might find the drones left very often. The Government are the largest employers of labour in the State, and if they put a fictitious value on labour the private employer may not be able to pay that rate. The Government has a banking account in the shape of the people and the revenues of the State; but the other man, who is struggling with some private enterprise and trying to make it pay, is perhaps forced to pay a rate that cripples him. I say it is unreasonable. I hold no brief either for the employer or for the employee, but I say that one deserves as much consideration as the other. I certainly think that if by any accident this amendment of the junior member for Gympie is carried it will fail in the object he has in view, and prove a curse rather than a blessing to the workmen of this State.

\* Mr. MACARTNEY (*Brisbane North*): It appears to me that this amendment is being treated too seriously by this Chamber. I do not think this is the time or place to introduce an amendment of this kind, and I am not going to enter upon the merits of the amendment itself. I will only say that I think it is out of place. The principal motion is in connection with the construction of a railway. That is the matter for the consideration of the Committee, and the hon. the junior member for Gympie has, in accordance with a practice which has not been altogether absent during the last few years, moved an amend-

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ment which has turned the discussion of the resolution before the Committee into a side track having relation to an electoral appeal to the people.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Oh, oh! No, no!

Mr. MACARTNEY: It is not as if the question was put forward as to whether a proper wage is being paid. If that question was put substantively before the Committee I would be prepared to express my opinion, and I do not think it would be found to be out of sympathy with the proper treatment of the working classes. But what is the position? The wage we have heard stated from the Treasury bench this afternoon as being paid is a wage of 8s. a day to men with such wages, so that, after all, the motion practically seeks to establish that the wages shall not be less than the wages paid now. Because we think that amendment is not a proper one to insert in the motion under consideration, we are to be posted up to the country as people who are opposed to the payment of wages at the rate of 8s. a day. I object to be put into that position. And I am rather astonished that the hon. member for Maryborough has been caught by the sophistry we have heard preached on the other side. I think the hon. member's idea was that only 8s. a day men should be employed on that railway. The effect of this motion is that no man who is not worth 8s. a day is to be employed on this particular railway, and the man who is worth only 7s. a day or 6s. a day will have no chance on this particular railway. That is the legitimate and natural result of this amendment. I would like to remind the hon. member for Gympie that two or three years ago, when he was sitting on the Government side and I was on the Opposition side, on many occasions the hon. gentleman had the opportunity of supporting planks of his own platform; but the hon. member, being under the discipline of party Government, did not respond to appeals, and the consequence was that over and over again he voted against planks of his platform. The hon. member for Ipswich has also appealed to hon. members sitting on this side to exercise their conscience and vote according to the merits of the proposition. The appeal, of course, sounds likely to catch new members, but not those members who understand what I may term "the tricks of the trade." I can assure the hon. member for Ipswich that he is not going to get my vote by an appeal of that sort. That hon. member, although he has had experience for some years as a [8.30 p.m.] member of the Cabinet, told us that the amendment is a very proper one. But he did not tell new members on this side of the House and new members on that side of the House, that when the hon. member for Clermont moved an amendment in connection with the Etheridge Railway Bill, to the effect that there should be a minimum wage of 9s. a day inserted in that Bill, the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Blair, voted against that amendment.

Mr. BLAIR: Quite so; an assurance had been given by the Government.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member for Ipswich was then a member of the Government, which opposed the amendment of the hon. member for Clermont. The amendment was carried. The appeal to the consciences of members was so strong that the Govern-

ment were on that occasion beaten. I may tell you that on reference to *Hansard* it will be found that the Minister for Railways of that day, Mr. Denham, proposed at the report stage a motion to the effect that the Bill be amended by the elimination of those words, and they were eliminated accordingly, the hon. member for Ipswich voting for their elimination.

Mr. BLAIR: The rate of wages ruling in the district was inserted.

Mr. MACARTNEY: So much for the sophistry which has been dealt out by the hon. member for Ipswich and the hon. member for Gympie. I hope the business of this session is not going to be delayed by drawing these red herrings across the track, as if we were going to have a general election next year. I hope we shall not have a general election before three and a-half years have elapsed; I think hon. members opposite devoutly hope so too, and I trust they will permit business to be done with reasonable despatch. I can assure them that they are not going to get votes from this side of the House by appeals of the sort they have made this evening. Those hon. members who have been here for a year or two have had experience of such amendments, and will treat this one as it deserves to be treated.

Mr. FERRICKS (*Bowen*): I wish to substantiate the statement made by the senior member for Rockhampton, when he said that people are leaving Queensland to work on railways in New South Wales. During the past twelve months I have lived on the coast in Northern Queensland, and I know that a number of men with whom I have worked have gone down South. They were able-bodied men, and when asked why they were leaving Queensland they replied that they were bound for New South Wales simply because railway work in Northern Queensland was what they called "no good." A good deal of crocodile sympathy has been extended to the workers by hon. members opposite. The poor worker has been placed on almost the same level as the poor farmer or the poor widow. I contend that any person who says by his vote that 1s. per hour is too much for railway work in Queensland has no democracy in him, and has no consideration for the worker. That is my opinion, and I think that opinion will be shared by people throughout the country. I must congratulate the hon. member for Burrum on the way in which he dealt with this amendment, because he is the only speaker on that side who dealt with it in a candid and outspoken way. The hon. member said outspokenly that it was overdoing it to give workmen 8s. a day for railway construction work in Queensland. Other hon. members opposite have not been so candid, although I think many of them hold the same view. Some of them have not said so, and perhaps dare not say so.

Mr. RANKIN: I never said so, either.

Mr. FERRICKS: Some reference has been made to men of sixty-five years of age having to receive 8s. a day for railway work. I ask hon. members to imagine the spectacle of a man of sixty-five years of age looking for work on railway construction. Any man who knows anything about railway construction work in Queensland knows that the man who does such work must not be an effeminate or dandy man, but a man who is "all there." The applicants for work on railway construc-

tion are so many right throughout the North, the Centre, and the South—notwithstanding what the hon. member for Burrum said about employers in the sugar districts offering men 12s. a day—that the man who is not up to the mark, and beyond the average mark, is quickly passed over. I have been in the sugar districts, and I do not believe that such wages have been offered, because I know that every crushing season and every slack season there are hundreds of men humping their swags from one place to another looking for work. It is, therefore, idle for the hon. member for Burrum to tell the House that sort of thing.

Mr. RANKIN: I will give you any proof you like.

Mr. FERRICKS: If hon. members who hold that 1s. per hour is too much to pay for railway construction work in Queensland were to give that work a trial they would very soon alter their opinion.

\* HON. R. PHILP (*Townsville*): I think this discussion is altogether out of place. When we removed the control of the railways from the Minister, and placed it in the hands of the Commissioner, the management of the railways went out of the hands of this House: and when we started to build railways by day labour it was distinctly laid down that this House would not interfere in any way with the wages paid to the workers on those railways. Had we done otherwise, the whole system would have broken down, and have proved a failure, as it has done in New South Wales. I believe that the construction of our railways is costing much more at the present time than they did when built by contract.

Mr. NEVITT: The Chief Engineer says the contrary.

HON. R. PHILP: The Chief Engineer can say what he likes. He estimates the cost of a railway, and he is not likely to estimate the cost lower than he would have to pay by day labour. I believe that several works would have been done much better, and that better wages would have been paid on them, if those works had been carried out by contract.

Mr. LAND: That speaks well for the management.

HON. R. PHILP: I do not care what management you get, you can never get the same management on a Government constructed railway as you will on a privately constructed railway. What is the reason that so many railway men are leaving Queensland for New South Wales? It is simply because a Queensland contractor, Mr. Willcocks, has a big contract in New South Wales, and you will find that railway men flock from all parts of the State to work for Mr. Willcocks, who pays good wages, and gets the best men procurable in Australia. The best man you can put in charge of a State-built railway will not get the same work out of the men as a contractor will do. They have nothing to lose whether the railway pays or not, but with the private contractor he has to make something out of the railway, or he cannot pay his way. You will find that the private firm is always better than the Government firm, and always will be. That is not the fault of the workmen, but the fault of the system. They have not to make the line pay; and, with the best of them, no matter how good they are, if they are in the Government service, there is no control of them when they are constructing railways. I remember when I went to Cloncurry I was speaking to one of the men in charge of the line, and he said to me, "Mr. Philp, there are three men out of four being employed

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here who would not be employed by any private contractor." Why is it that all the best men go to the private contractor for work?

Mr. RYLAND: Because he pays better wages.

HON. R. PHILP: No, in order to make more money. If the men are working on a Government railway they only work eight hours, and all men are on the same level; but with the private contractor, if the men like they can work overtime on piecework, and a good many of them do so, and I myself have known men to earn £1 a day with a private contractor. If the Government started a few of these railways on the contract system, instead of by day labour, it would be the best thing for the country. The private contractor would get through the work much quicker. We heard to-day about the slow progress that has been made with several lines built by day labour. The Clermont to Blair Athol line has taken over a year already, and it is not finished yet. The Government cannot get the men in Queensland.

Mr. RYLAND: Because they will not pay the good wages.

HON. R. PHILP: You cannot get the same supervision. You cannot get men with experience enough. The Government men are good men, but they have been engineers. The engineer has only to look after the contractor; but the contractor has to look after the men, and the contractor will only employ the men he can get the value out of. The Government, however, employ everybody. I believe in paying men good wages, and have always paid them myself, but it is not for this House to determine what wages should be paid. We have placed the management of our railways in the hands of Mr. Thallon, and, if he is not doing his duty in managing those railways, we should remove him. But, I say he is doing it. Mr. Thallon is a good man, as good a man as you can get anywhere in Australia. (Hear, hear!) If we are going to say what wages shall be paid for this job and for that job, then we will make a thorough mess of it. It is for Mr. Thallon to say what wages shall be paid. No good men will work under the current rate of wages. Men are scarce everywhere, and they will not work unless they get the current rate of wages.

Mr. LENNON: Then there is no harm in fixing a minimum wage.

HON. R. PHILP: If we start fixing the minimum wage in this House, then we will go on and make a mess of these things. We are not competent to fix wages, and we have no right to say whether a man should get 10s., 11s., or 12s. a day. I voted against the amendment for the minimum wage in the Etheridge Railway Bill, because 9s. was not the current rate of wage. The wages there were 10s. a day. It is astonishing that the very men now sitting in opposition who voted against that minimum wage being inserted are now supporting Mr. Ryland in his amendment to get it inserted here. I point out to the Labour party that they would not support an amendment moved by my party when we were in opposition, that all Government workers should be under the Wages Boards Bill. If that amendment had been supported by the Labour party, then this would not have occurred to-night.

Mr. D. HUNTER: Hear, hear!

[Hon. R. Philp.]

HON. R. PHILP: Instead of that the Labour party voted solidly against that amendment of the Opposition when we were over there.

Mr. HARDACRE: What motion was that?

HON. R. PHILP: A motion was proposed when I was in Opposition that all Government servants should be brought under the Wages Boards Bill, and the Labour party voted against it.

Mr. HARDACRE: I do not think so. I think they supported it.

HON. R. PHILP: No. You can look through *Hansard* and you will find that on the Committee stage of the Wages Boards Bill the Labour party voted against us.

Mr. MULLAN: Didn't you move it to wreck the Bill? (Government laughter.)

The PREMIER: That is what you are doing now.

HON. R. PHILP: It seems as if most members of this House change their opinions as soon as they go over there. I am quite satisfied that a motion was proposed on that side of the House when we were in Opposition, and the Labour party voted against it.

Mr. HARDACRE: No; I think we supported it.

HON. R. PHILP: If your party had supported the amendment it would have been carried.

Mr. HARDACRE: It was opposed by the Government, but the Labour party supported it.

HON. R. PHILP: At that time the Labour party had the balance of power and carried anything they liked. Both the Government and the Labour party opposed it. The Labour party supported Mr. Kidston when he was Premier for five years. Were wages lower or higher at that time? They were evidently satisfied that the men in the Government employ were getting good wages then. As a matter of fact, the men in the Government employ are getting better wages to-day than they received when the Labour party was over here supporting the Government. I deprecate any motion of this sort in connection with these railway proposals. If we are going to have a motion of this sort brought in in connection with every Railway Bill, then there is no chance of finishing the business of the session before next year.

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has shown that he is the most inconsistent member in the House. He said that when he was over here he moved an amendment on the lines of the amendment now before the Committee.

HON. R. PHILP: No; not on these lines at all.

Mr. HARDACRE: It was fixing the minimum wage.

HON. R. PHILP: Not at all. Our amendment meant to bring Government servants under the Wages Boards Act.

Mr. HARDACRE: The hon. gentleman moved an amendment that there should be a minimum wage.

HON. R. PHILP: No. Wages Boards Bill. To come under the wages boards.

Mr. HARDACRE: The hon. member declaimed against our party for our inconsistency in opposing this motion, when we opposed a motion of a similar kind proposed by him.

HON. R. PHILP: It was not similar at all.

Mr. HARDACRE: But the hon. gentleman is doing the reverse to-day of what he did himself then.

Hon. R. PHILP: Not at all.

Mr. HARDACRE: I will only take a minute or two in dealing with some of the abstract arguments which we heard to-night on the question of a minimum wage. I am surprised at the arguments of some hon. members in the light of what we have done as a party. If we followed the arguments of hon. members, then we ought to wipe out all the wages mentioned in the scheduled lists in the Estimates, and we ought to cancel all the regulations in our Government departments. We do the very same thing in connection with our Police Force. The Commissioner fixes the rate of wages, and it has to be endorsed by members of this House. Take the Railway Department, which we are dealing with at the present time. There we have wages fixed by the Commissioner for all kinds of employment. The regulations have to be placed on the table of this House, and do not become law until passed by members of this House, and approved of by the Governor in Council. So, actually, we do fix the rate of wages. It is the recognised practice that it is the right thing for us to do. To come down to a concrete case I will give one case in point. In my district three or four years ago the Alpha Railway deviation works were in progress. There was a lot of heavy cutting to be done, and it was being carried out by day labour by the Government. For this heavy work the engineer in charge actually paid the small sum of 6s. per day. Just fancy getting strong energetic men to do this heavy cutting, in the broiling sun, at a place 300 miles from the coast, for 6s. per day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You were supporting the Government.

Mr. HARDACRE: Exactly so. They were paying 6s. a day—actually less than the ruling wage in that district.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not being done now.

Mr. HARDACRE: That does not affect the argument. The Premier, in speaking, said there was no financial inducement on the part of those in charge to pay less than the ordinary rate of wage. That might be quite true, but there was, as one hon. member intimated, a professional inducement. The inducement, as was found out afterwards, was that the officer in charge was desirous of getting kudos from his superior officers by getting that work done cheaply—at a low estimate, and because of the rivalry between the engineers in the different districts, he was induced to pay that extremely low rate of wage. The result was that men were leaving every week, and before many weeks had passed he could not get men to do the work continuously. He got the worst kind of men, and it was bad for the men and bad for the Government work. There is a concrete justification for an amendment of this kind. We know that we had trouble on the Cloncurry Railway for the same reason, and some years ago as low as 4s. 6d. a day was paid on earthworks. If the Railway Department have regulations fixing the rate for ordinary work, surely there ought to be some minimum rate fixed also on construction works?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The minimum rate of wages is the ordinary rate of wages paid in the district.

Mr. HARDACRE: That is indefinite. I have pointed out, by a concrete example, the necessity of a minimum of that kind. If the Commissioner was empowered to make regulations as to the rate of wages on construction works, the same as for ordinary work, I would be quite willing to leave it in the hands of the Government.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He does it now without regulations.

Mr. HARDACRE: He does not do it without regulations. It is left to the engineer in charge; and while this man was paying 6s. a day in Alpha, 300 miles from the coast, down in Brisbane they were paying 6s. 6d. and 7s. a day for the same kind of work. So we have altogether different wages in different districts, according to the will of the engineer in charge, for the purpose of giving the engineer kudos of getting the work done cheaper than some other rival engineer in another part of the State. That kind of thing ought to be abolished. By fixing in the Act a statutory limitation—a statutory minimum—I think we shall have done good work for the workmen who do that class of work. I do not think it is a fair thing for the Premier, when we try to do something for our constituents—the working men—conscientiously try to benefit them—to accuse us of trying some political engineering. When the Government brings in a railway to a certain district, it is because they are desirous of developing the country—they do not wish to confer a benefit on the farmers of that district, because that would appear to be bribery; but, when we desire to benefit the worker by raising his wages to 1s. per hour, we are accused of doing all sorts of things that will lead to disaster. I intend to support the amendment.

HON. R. PHILP: I just want to remind the hon. member for Herbert that, when the Wages Boards Bill went into Committee, I moved this provision—I moved nothing about a minimum wage at all. I moved that the Government employees come under the provisions of the Bill. The amendment of the Wages Boards Act which I moved was as follows:—

The provisions of this section shall extend and apply to persons employed in the public service of the State and to persons employed by any local authority, water authority, or any public body.

He was very glad to see that the member for Leichhardt was the only solitary instance in the Labour party who voted for that amendment. He was thoroughly consistent. I say it is far better that the rate of wages should be left in the hands of a wages board.

Mr. MANN: This is a quicker way to settle it.

HON. R. PHILP: It is only for one class of men—you do not fix the rate of wages for any other Government employee.

Mr. LENNON: We do that on the Estimates.

HON. R. PHILP: When the Estimates are under consideration, you can either reduce them or pass them—you cannot raise them. The rate of wage is fixed by the Government with the aid of the Public Service Board. If that amendment had been put in the Bill, all this discussion would have been saved, because all wages would have been fixed by an impartial board.

Mr. FORSYTH (*Moreton*): It is quite evident from the discussion that has taken place, if we are to believe the statements made by different members who have spoken on this

*Mr. Forsyth.]*

matter, that there is a very great demand for men in connection with railway building at the present time. We know that the New South Wales Government employ a certain number of men. We likewise know they have let some very large contracts in connection with railway building, and we also know that in Queensland at the present time there are some thousands of men employed in connection with the building of railways. Now, there is one law which is above all minimum wages or anything else, and that is the law of supply and demand. Whenever you find an enormous demand, whether it is for labour, flour, tea, sugar, or anything else, up goes the price. When you have a surplus of labour, as a rule, down comes the price.

Mr. LENNON: Then you treat a human being as mere goods and chattels.

Mr. FORSYTH: I do not think so. If the hon. member will take his mind back to the time of the great flood that took place in Queensland in 1893, he must know that in spite of the fact, although you had a fixed rate of wage in certain employment, the whole thing broke to pieces, for the simple reason there was no demand for that labour. I believe the man who gives the best wage, as a rule, gets the best labour. It is a good principle to go on. But I do say this: In the time of that great calamity, I know first-class tradesmen who are now earning 11s. or 12s. a day, who, at that time, were very glad to take 6s. a day.

Mr. HARDACRE: That is quite true.

Mr. FORSYTH: If it is the case that there is a huge demand for men to build railways, and a lot of men are likely to be induced away from here to go down to New South Wales, there is not the slightest doubt there will be one or two things happen. We will either have to stop building the railways, or we will have to increase the wages. I think it would be a great mistake to allow the men to go away. We have a great many railways to build here, and I think it is the duty of the Government in a fair way to endeavour to keep those men here.

Mr. LENNON: This amendment will do that.

Mr. FORSYTH: This amendment will not do that. You can go into any gang, and you will find some men infinitely

[9 p.m.] abler and more entitled to get an increase of salary than other men, because some men are much quicker. The hon. member for Townsville mentioned Mr. Willcocks. I know that Mr. Willcocks gives some of his men 2s. a day over the usual rate, because those men are able to do so much more than the average that he thought it was a wise thing to pay them a good wage. He paid those men more because they did more work, and now the thing comes in about a minimum wage. The question has been raised about the average workman. We all know that all workmen are not alike. There are some who can do more work than others, and if you fix a minimum wage for the man who cannot do as much as the other fellow, then the man who is doing more work, when he sees that the man who is getting the same wages as he is is not doing as much work as he is, will simply say, "Why should I do so much when a man who does so much less gets the same wage."

Mr. HARDACRE: No, that is not so.

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Mr. FORSYTH: That is so, and I do not condemn the man for doing it. If a man does 20 per cent. more work than another man, and gets paid the same rate as the man who does less, it stands to reason that the man will not continue to do that extra work for which he gets no extra pay. I believe in the principle of paying a man for the work he does. If a man does an exceptional day's work, let him get an exceptional day's pay. There are men who, from exceptional causes it may be, who cannot do an average day's work, and it will be a great pity when, on account of the minimum wage, those men cannot get work at all. That is one reason why I am against this amendment. It is a remarkable thing that some of the men who have made earnest speeches, and have tried to introduce this principle, were the very men who in 1908 went dead against this very same thing. Why is it that the men who were deadly opposed to this very same amendment are now in favour of the opposite direction? What has happened to make them change their minds?

Mr. MANN: Because of the strikes.

Mr. FORSYTH: In connection with the Hampden-Mount Elliott Railway, only last year Mr. Woods, the then member for Woothakata, moved the following amendment:—

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.

If I remember rightly, in a great many of the syndicate railways passed some years ago this particular clause was inserted.

Mr. WHITE: In all the syndicate railways.

Mr. FORSYTH: In this particular railway the hon. member for Gregory thought the amendment did not go far enough, and introduced another amendment. He said—

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."

That was the amendment moved by the hon. member for Gregory. The hon. member for Cairns, who had taken a rather prominent part in connection with the debate, was entirely against both amendments.

Mr. MANN: No; I voted for the ruling rate of wages—you look down the list.

Mr. FORSYTH: You are quite right. Now, the very arguments that have been raised to-night in connection with this matter were raised—I am speaking now about 10s. a day—I wish the hon. member for Cairns to notice this, because some of the very arguments which he used during the debate last year have been brought forward to-night. He mentioned distinctly that he did not believe in the principle as laid down, because you could not have a hard-and-fast rule in regard to the payment of wages. On such work as this it would exclude 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. MANN: Quite true.

Mr. FORSYTH: That is the statement of the hon. member for Cairns. You would exclude the other men who might not be considered, as he states, able-bodied men in the strictest sense of the word, but men who could earn 6s. or 7s. a day, and it would be a mistake to fix a minimum wage and thereby exclude these men.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have been following the hon. member at some considerable length, and I do not think, at this stage, that the Committee is very much exercised by the opinions held by individual members in days gone by. I would ask the hon. member to confine himself strictly to the question before the Committee.

Mr. FORSYTH: I am endeavouring to show by argument that the amendment of the junior member for Gympie is not required. I am quoting speeches made by hon. members on a Bill practically the same as this, and I think as far as one can judge that what I am saying is really to the point.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have ruled the hon. member distinctly out of order, and, if my ruling does not meet with his approval, he has his remedy.

Mr. FORSYTH: I have no desire to go against your ruling. The hon. member for Ipswich, who also spoke on this matter tonight, voted against both the amendments I have referred to. I think myself, with a good many who have spoken on this question, that it would be a mistake on the part of the House to fix wages. How is any man in this House to know why 8s. a day should be a fair rate for any certain class of work? It is not a question of whether an able-bodied man is worth 8s. a day, because I quite agree with hon. members on the other side that any able-bodied man who does a real solid day's work in connection with navvying deserves every shilling he can get out of it; but to fix a minimum wage places the man who is prepared to do a good day's work on the same footing with a man who is only worth 6s. a day is a mistake. I think it is better to leave this matter in the hands of the officers, who will judge what should be paid. I am certain that the Government do not desire the wages to be lowered, and if the demand is so great, it is almost certain that the wages of lengthmen and men who are navvying on the railways will be raised. It is quite evident that one of two things may happen. If we are going to lose men because other people are willing to pay them higher wages, we have either to increase their wages or else stop the work. I am sure hon. members would not like to see the work stopped. If, therefore, the other alternative is necessary, I have not the slightest doubt that the engineers in charge will be forced to pay higher wages, whether they like it or not, to keep the men. Believing in the principle that every man should get a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, I contend that it is not for this Committee to say what particular wages shall be paid. The man who has charge of the men knows exactly what each is worth, and he is an infinitely better judge in fixing the wages than any member of this House can possibly be, therefore I intend to vote against the amendment.

\* The TREASURER: It seems to me that members on the other side are endeavouring to cloud the issue. They assert that those on this side who vote against the amendment are voting against 8s. a day—that they are

declaring by their votes that 8s. a day is too much for men to get for this work. That is not so. Members on this side are not against 8s. a day. No Government has ever been in power in Queensland that has done so much in the interests of the working classes. Last year they passed the Wages Boards Act, and the year before they issued a minute giving the men in the Railway Department an eight hours day. That was for the benefit of the working men, and it cost this State £46,000 per annum.

Mr. HARDACRE: You did that when you had us behind you.

The TREASURER: In every contract between a Government department and a contractor, we have a clause providing that the contractor shall pay the rate of wages ruling in the district. Is that not for the benefit of the wage-earners? I say without hesitation that this Government have done more for the wage-earners than any other Government that has ever been in power in Queensland. It would be a piece of interference if we attempted to instruct the Railway Commissioner to pay any amount. We have put him there with full power to manage and construct our railways, and to keep them free from political influence. If we bring political influence to bear, and tell him to pay the men engaged in railway construction 8s. a day, we are interfering in a way we have no right to do. The Commissioner is as good a man as we could get in Queensland. He runs the railways on sound business principles. If he wants men, he has to pay them the ruling rate of wages, and he has been in the habit of paying the ruling rate of wages.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No, no!

The TREASURER: Would he get men, or would men stop with him, if he did not pay them the ruling rate of wages? Would they not go elsewhere, where they could get higher wages?

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: They are going.

The TREASURER: The principle of a minimum wage will never be carried out. It broke down as far back as the time of the French Revolution. (Opposition laughter.) It has always been a failure, and always will be. The Committee would be doing a wrong thing if it attempted to dictate to the Commissioner in this matter. I hope, now that members on the other side have blown off steam, that they will allow the motion to go through.

Mr. WINSTANLEY (*Charters Towers*): So far as members on this side of the Chamber are concerned, we were prepared to go to a division immediately after tea, and the debate has been kept going for the last two hours by members on the other side. As far as I can understand, the question really before the Committee is whether 8s. a day is too much to pay men for railway work.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: No! Not at all.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: That is what we have to decide. I am satisfied that any man who has ever tried this work or who knows anything about it will say that 8s. a day is not too much. Some reference has been made to the men employed on the Cloncurry Railway. I was over that railway once or twice while it was being built, and I am satisfied that there were as good a class of workers as were ever assembled on any railway in Queensland. They were well worth the money they were getting. Many of them are now back on the Charters Towers and other mining fields

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working in the mines and earning their 10s. a day. Let me here just say a word or two in reference to contract work *versus* day labour. Anybody who knows anything about building railways, or building anything else, knows quite well that the man who has a contract rushes the work along and that he does not put the same quality into his work as when he is working by day labour. While it is possible that some railways may cost more money in £ s. d. to the Queensland Government when built by day labour, in reality they are cheaper in the long run, because there is no incentive to scamp the work. The work is solid and substantial, and the people of the country get better value for their money. It has been said over and over again that a minimum rate of 8s. a day means a maximum of 8s. a day, but I submit that it means nothing of the kind. The average man who is employed on a railway is a navvy, who is worth 8s. per day. If men are not earning their wages, the engineer will soon get rid of them. The payment of a minimum wage does not prevent him paying a higher wage to men who earn it. At the present time the ruling rate of wages is what men can be got to work for. It has been said that the Government are paying the rate of wages ruling in the districts in which railways are being built, whereas they are doing nothing of the kind. They are in some cases paying 1s. and 1s. 6d. less than the ruling rate, and that is proved by the fact that on various occasions during the past twelve months the men have asked for more and have got it. That goes to show that, in the first instance, they were getting less than the ruling rate. It has also been asserted that, while the engineers have no financial interest in the railways under their charge, they have a professional interest. Some engineers can get more work out of men than others, because they treat their men as men, whilst others treat them like dogs. I am confident that there are engineers who do not treat their men as they should be treated, and, consequently, the men are not satisfied, and the engineers do not get the same amount of work out of them that others do who treat their men differently. There are engineers and engineers, and the question is whether these men are being overpaid or not. The fact that members have voted against a similar proposal in years gone by is beside the question. Two wrongs do not make a right, and I maintain that we are justified in the stand we are taking to-night. Something has been said about this being an electioneering dodge. Nobody is looking for an election at the present time that I know of, but some of those that made that statement are past masters in the art of electioneering and have done far worse things than trying to get a fair wage for a day's work.

Mr. RYAN (*Barcoo*): From the trend the debate has taken and the number of members on the other side who have addressed themselves to the question it would appear that the amendment is considered by members opposite to be of some importance. It seems strange, if they regard the matter as of so little importance, that so many of them should have spoken and that the debate should have been so protracted. Members on this side were prepared to go to a division at 6 o'clock, but members on the other side were not prepared. I did not intend to speak but for certain statements that were made during the debate, principally by the Premier. The hon. gentleman accuses members on this side, and

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two of those who support the Government, of being guilty of an act of degradation in supporting this amendment. I have yet to learn that members are guilty of an act of degradation by coming here and advocating the principles and the platform they have signed, and supporting the pledges they gave to the electors. In my humble opinion, our action is the most honourable under the circumstances; and I leave it to hon. members and to the country to judge between the nature of the degradation of which we are guilty and the nature of the degradation of the leader of this House, when, after having signed the Labour platform, he comes forward and says he never believed in it. I think the relative merits of the two need only to be stated to be judged correctly. Personally, I support the amendment as an act of justice to the men likely to be employed on this proposed line. I feel that 8s. a day is the lowest sum that can reasonably be paid for that class of work, so that the men can keep themselves and their families in any state of comfort and respectability. It is on that ground alone that I am supporting this amendment. We do not propose to fix the rate of wages, but we claim the right to say what is a living wage, and what shall be the minimum. The hon. member for Musgrave put forward the proposition that we are supporting the payment of 8s. a day to men working on that line whether their work is worth it or not. I must deny emphatically that I or any other member of this party is taking up that attitude. But experience has shown us that there is a tendency, even in the case of work done by day labour, to reduce the standard rate of wages; and this amendment has been proposed with a view of preventing that. The Premier has told us that the Government should lead the way, and he says that the engineers have no financial interest in the matter, and, therefore, they should pay as high or higher wages than rule in the district. Theoretically that may be correct; but the great body of the supporters of the Government are those who employ labour, and it is not in their interest to raise the rate of wages, because it would be raising the rate to be paid to their employees. The hon. member for Woolloomgabby says that the mover of the amendment is actuated by a desire to put him and other members into a hole. I do not know what the hon. member means, but I take it that he means he is placed in the position of having to declare to the people of Queensland what his true colours are; and, in my opinion, it is very fortunate that by this amendment we have the opportunity of placing the hon. member and other hon. members on that side in a hole.

Mr. LENNON: Their natural habitat.

Mr. RYAN: The strongest proof of the strength of the case put forward by this side is shown by the number of members opposite who deemed it necessary to speak. If they thought that our case was weak, they could have said nothing. They know it is strong, so they have to make some sort of defence. The arguments used by the Premier and other members have been chiefly two; and the gist of them has been that members on this side are endeavouring to make political capital at the expense of somebody else. The mere fact of them saying it is at the expense of somebody else shows that they think a higher wage will be paid if this amendment is carried. But they pretend to believe it will not affect the amount to be paid in wages—that the worker

will be in even a worse position; and in the next breath they tell us that our object is to get popularity at the expense of somebody else. The Premier tells us that we are attempting to bribe the electors with public money. If the Government are only going to pay the same amount under this amendment as before, how can he speak of bribing the electors with public money? I only state the argument; the conclusion is clear. The hon. member for Woolloongabba used a very interesting argument, an argu-

[9.30 p.m.] ment which I feel certain will not be received as a compliment by hon. members sitting on the Treasury bench. The hon. member said that if under the present system the Government were paying wages which were too low, that was a reason why we should go back to the contract system, because under that system the men would get higher wages. That is what is generally known as arguing in a circle. If a contractor can pay higher wages than are paid by the Government, and make a profit out of his contract, that proves that the Government are in the wrong. What we are endeavouring to do is to whip the Government into line with contractors, and not to let work by contract. I do not desire it to be thought that I am supporting this amendment, or that any member on this side of the House is supporting it, as a piece of class legislation. I do not think the amendment is in the interest of the working classes only. It is in the interest of every class in the community. By supporting a living wage for workers on this proposed line we are striving to place those men in a position to discharge their liabilities and responsibilities to other members of the community, so that the payment of this wage would assist the community generally. The amendment is proposed in the interest of the whole community. I fail to see that the Government by their arguments—which have been many and varied—they have differed among themselves—have justified their opposition to the amendment.

Mr. NEVITT (*Carpentaria*): Surprise has been expressed by members on the other side of the House that so much time has been taken up in discussing this very reasonable amendment. I am also surprised that so much time has been taken up over it, when the Secretary for Railways might readily have accepted such a reasonable amendment. I should not have trespassed on the time of the House had it not been for some remarks made by the Premier. The hon. gentleman said he had never been in favour of a minimum wage, and that this House should not fix the wages to be paid to men employed on railway construction. Later on, when the hon. member for Townsville was speaking, the hon. gentleman said this House was not competent to fix wages. The Premier has not always held that view, because I find from *Hansard* for 1900, page 1432, that he supported an amendment moved by the then leader of the Labour party, Mr. Browne, to this effect—

All labour employed on construction of railway shall be paid for at the current rates ruling in the district at the time of construction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is what we are doing.

Mr. NEVITT: Excuse me; you have not done that in many instances in the past. On the occasion to which I refer the Premier said—

It seemed to him rather remarkable that hon. gentlemen should point to the generous nature of the Chil-

lagoe Company, and then object to an innocent little amendment like that, which only enjoined upon the company to do what they were assured they would do in any case. If hon. members believed that, why did they object to the amendment.

Mr. COWLEY: Because it will reduce wages.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not know whether the hon. member heard me call the hon. member for Moreton to order for quoting from previous debates. If quotations of that kind are allowed the debate will be interminable, and I must ask the hon. member for Carpentaria not to continue to quote at length from previous debates.

Mr. NEVITT: Do you rule that if I have evidence quite contrary to a statement made by the Premier I cannot give that evidence?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will be perfectly in order in referring to the argument of the Premier and replying to it, and may read a quotation in support of his contention, but he will not be in order in quoting at length from speeches made on previous occasions.

Mr. NEVITT: I am obliged to you for giving me the opportunity to read a short extract from the speech of the Premier on the occasion to which I refer. The hon. gentleman said—

Were hon. members really afraid of that? They could easily find a remedy by amending the clause so as to provide that the company should pay double the current rate of wages. He quite understood the Secretary for Railways objecting to the clause. It was altogether against his principles. The hon. gentleman believed that men who worked for wages should be taken advantage of whenever there was a chance, and that if a man could be got for 2s. 6d. a day it was a mistake to pay him 3s.

That is the attitude we take up in this instance. We say that when men can be got for 5s. or 6s. a day the different engineers in charge of railway construction works take advantage of that fact and pay those wages—they do not pay a living wage. The Premier said we are trying to cloud the issue. But it is the hon. gentleman himself who is trying to cloud the issue. The question is whether 8s. per day is a reasonable rate to pay the men who will be employed on this particular railway? In other parts of the State 8s. a day would not be a reasonable rate. Speaking on the question to which I have already referred, the Premier said he did not consider the Chillagoe Company should be allowed to sweat the men they were going to employ on railway construction. We take up that attitude now, and say that it is not right for the Government to sweat navvies on this or any railway. Last year I visited Sydney, and at a social function there I heard the then Premier of South Australia, Mr. Tom Price, announce that there was no adult working on the South Australian railways for less than 7s. a day. I should like our Minister for Railways to be able to say the same thing with regard to the men employed on the railways in Queensland. If 7s. a day is a fair and reasonable wage for men employed at constant work on the railways, surely it is a reasonable proposition that men employed on construction works shall be paid a minimum wage of 8s. a day. The hon. member for Burrum said we should try to keep down the cost of railway construction, in order to protect the people who have to use the railways, and so that the guarantors should not be called upon to make up too much shortage in revenue. I quite admit that it is the duty

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of members of this House to see that public money is properly expended, but, at the same time, I claim that it is more their duty to see that every man employed on the railways gets a living wage. The hon. member for Townsville said that the reason why he objected to the insertion of a similar provision in a Bill dealing with another railway was because the rate proposed was less than the current rate of wages paid in the district. Well, only last year the men employed on that railway went on strike in order to get 9s. a day. The hon. member for Townsville said that 10s. a day was the rate ruling in the district, and, as I am reminded, the company promised to pay that rate, but they did not keep their promise. Unless a clause is inserted in a Bill or a resolution where a railway is to be constructed by the Government or a private contractor, the men will have no protection. I claim that it is the bounden duty of every member who has a spark of humanitarian feeling in him to vote for the amendment.

Mr. LAND (*Balonne*): Just a word before this question is put.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I thought we were taking up all the time.

Mr. LAND: I will take my own time. I believe in a minimum wage. I do not believe in it only for railway construction, but I will go further than that. I believe that it is the duty of the State to see that every man, woman, girl, and boy in the State is paid a living wage. (Hear, hear!) It has been said that the ruling rate of wages in the district should be paid. There have been no railway works in this particular district at all, but it happens to be in the Darling Downs. Just recently some of our lads tried their luck on the Darling Downs, and they found that there were fine able-bodied men being employed there for 15s. a week. If that is the ruling rate in the district, then what rate are they going to pay the men on the railway construction works?

Mr. COYNE: They offer to work for 7s. 6d. a week in some places.

Mr. LAND: I am reminded that one of our chaps looking for work on the Darling Downs came across an agent making arrangements to set men to work on the Darling Downs at 15s. a week. Let the hon. member for Toowoomba deny that.

Mr. TOLMIE: I would.

Mr. LAND: There are any quantity of men working on the Downs for 15s. a week and glad to get it. The prosperity of Queensland is not shared by the working classes. If that statement is correct that the men working on the Darling Downs are not getting more than 15s. a week, then let it go out throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. Let the men who are going there to work hear it. I have been handed *Hansard*, and it says here that an hon. member said—

Men have come to me and offered to work for 7s. 6d. a week.

Can the hon. gentleman deny that? Is there anybody here who will say that 1s. an hour is too much to pay a man? Is there anyone who has worked on railway construction work who can say that 1s. per hour is too much for that class of work? I would remind the Secretary for Railways that on many of these railway construction works if there is a wet day, or it happens to be the wet season, there is broken time, and these men do not average 4s. a day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Shearers do not work in the wet time either.

[*Mr. Nevitt.*

Mr. LAND: But, with shearers, when the fine weather comes along they can go on with their shearing again, but the men on the railway construction works have no chance of making it up at all.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is just the same with them, as the work stops altogether in the wet and does not start until it is fine again. The work is there just the same.

Mr. LAND: It seems to me that someone here is anxious to get in the thin edge of the wedge in favour of railway construction under the contract system. I noticed a short time ago that some reference was made to it in the *Courier*, and the Premier and the hon. member for Townsville made reference to it. It is only a dodge to get in the small end of the wedge, but I hope the contract system will never be reintroduced here. Speaking in favour of this amendment, I believe myself that 8s. a day is little enough, and if members on the other side do not think it is too much, then why oppose the amendment? We ought to let the matter come to a vote and decide it.

\* Mr. CRAWFORD (*Fitzroy*): At this late hour of the evening, I have no wish to prolong any further discussion of this amendment, but I would not be doing my duty to those who sent me here if I did not express my opinion concerning it. I am distinctly in favour of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Gympie, and I think it not only right that it should be moved, but that it should be carried by the Committee, and carried into effect, in the payment we give to those who are employed in the construction of our railways. Although I may sometimes deplore the time taken up by this Committee in discussing this matter, and in some way having a delaying and retarding effect in the construction of railways, still I would much more deplore a delay, caused by a strike, on the part of railway men, owing to the non-payment of proper wages. (Hear, hear!) That is the sort of delay which I wish to avoid, and that is the sort of delay I foresee might very easily take place unless this Chamber emphatically declares that a better rate of wages will be paid in the construction of our railways. We can afford to do it, and there is no reason whatever why we should not pay it. In all the reasons, or so-called reasons, that have emanated from the Ministerial benches, not one has any weight with me. Not one is of sufficient importance to call for any reply from me. But one or two occurrences on that side of the House must be mentioned, as they have given me a great deal of pleasure. I was very pleased to hear the senior member for Rockhampton declare his independence and his attitude in favour of a higher rate of wages. And I was in a greater measure gratified when I heard the senior member for Maryborough declare himself in favour of a better standard of wages. I came to this city on the same train and in the same sleeping-car as the hon. member for Maryborough, and when I looked upon him reposing himself complacently in that sleeping-car, I could not but view him with feelings of pleasure. I began at once to place myself in some degree in the position of a prophet. I foresaw from the complacent manner in which he entrusted himself to that sleeping-car that it was not altogether bad, not altogether vicious, and not altogether hostile to making use of socialistic railways. I find that my prediction in regard to his disposition has been amply verified by the sentiments that he has had the courage, in spite of the Premier's warning and admonitions, to express in this Chamber to-night. I hope he has established a precedent on that

side of the House which will be followed by many other hon. members who will not allow themselves to be dictated to in the matter of the opinions which they wish to express, and the statements which they wish to give utterance to in this Chamber. I was in some degree astonished when I heard the Premier endeavour to place the blame for the low wages which now prevail upon the Commissioner for Railways and various engineers. If the Premier wished a better rate of wages to be paid in the Railway Construction Department, and in other departments, he could obtain that better rate of wages for the employees by simply making known his wish in that direction. But he has not done so, and now, when he is given an opportunity of showing his regard for the legitimate demands of the workers in the way of giving them better wages, he hedges round the question, and instead of facing it manfully he endeavours to throw the blame upon those who are in the position of being subordinates to him for the time being—I hope a very short time. I was also astonished to hear from the Premier that he charges this side of the House with being inspired in this matter simply for notoriety—a desire for popularity. I do not think there is an hon. member in this House who has endeavoured more than the Premier himself to arrive, by any sort of means, at popularity, and surely he cannot begrudge us a little popularity. We are only a party of humble individuals endeavouring to advance the condition of those with whom we are so closely identified, and if we are like the hon. gentleman himself—ready to turn our backs upon those who sent us here—we would prove ourselves unworthy of the confidence of any class of individuals. In regard to the matter of the payment of 8s. a day, I consider it only right, considering the work which has to be undertaken by the men engaged in railway construction, that they should receive 8s. a day. It is the very least we can conscientiously offer them, and I hope we shall know it to be a fact that all the men engaged in the construction of railways are receiving that 8s. a day. We want them to receive it because we know that the work is honestly worth it. We are here for the purpose of protecting their interests and endeavouring to advance their welfare, and in this move which we have made to-night we are perfectly consistent in all the promises we have made to our electors. It may be that the Premier, and some of those with him, have little regard for the promises and pledges made to their constituents from time to time, but we on this side of the House feel it incumbent upon us to be more honest and more conscientious in all our actions, and I certainly feel proud that the party to which I belong has brought in this amendment in favour of an increase in wages. I was rather astonished to hear the assertion made by the hon. member for Moreton that this matter of wages was simply a matter of supply and demand. I really thought that that old idea had been long abolished—abolished especially from the debates in this Chamber, where we have access to the very latest information in all matters pertaining to the rates of wages and to labour movements. I really thought men were not regarded as chattels—merely as articles of grocery to be had at a fixed price according to the demand. I really thought human beings were to be treated as human beings and that the wages they received were such as would enable them to live in accordance with their nature as human beings. When I found a member of this House resorting to that old theory of supply and demand I was extremely astonished, and I feel almost humiliated to be compelled, for a time, to associate with an hon. member who is so far behind in his knowledge of what is

required by the feelings of to-day. I hope I shall not be called upon to listen to such obsolete arguments in the future. I believe that the hon. member for Brisbane North—at least I heard him when I was sitting at the table make the assertion that this amendment was one of the usual tricks of this side of the House, and he was, in a very paternal fashion, endeavouring to admonish the senior member for Maryborough on the way he should go, and how he should weigh and consider all the movements of the Labour party—that he should always regard this side of the House with suspicion, and should not allow himself to be beguiled at any moment into voting for anything that may be brought forward by members on this side of the House. I feel quite certain that the senior member for Maryborough is of that texture of mind which will not permit him to be patronised by any member, and I am glad to have him with us on this very important and vital question. It is a vital question, as it affects the manner in which people may live. Those who are compelled to go into the most distant parts of the country and work at the most laborious of all occupations, such as the construction of railways, should receive the very best wages, and certain it is that the State should set an example to all private employers by providing a proper standard of wages. If, as I infer from the utterances of members on the other side, the State is to emulate the example of private employers, then I say we are very unregenerate—we are retrogressing in every way, and I believe that is not the feeling that should possess the minds of members of this Chamber. It is all very well for the Premier to say we are being generous to those people who will be employed in the construction of the railways at the expense of the public. Well, who are the public? Are they not the people of the State, and will anyone dare to say—will the Premier himself, with all the effrontery we know him to possess—will he dare to say that the people will begrudge the railway workers 8s. a day? I dare him to say so. If a referendum were taken in regard to this question of paying 8s. a day, it would be emphasised in such a manner as would never leave any mistake in the minds of any hon. member. It is quite idle for the Premier—the junior member for Rockhampton—to assert that we are being generous at the expense of other people. We represent the people.

Mr. KEOGH interjected.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I do not know who the hon. member represents, or whether he represents anyone. We advocate a higher standard of living, which is adverted to in the

[10 p.m.] objective of our party—the maintenance of a higher standard of living all through the State. In supporting this amendment, I am not anxious to delay the construction of railways, but I am anxious to bring about such a state of things as will not cause a strike or labour troubles in this country, and the best way to prevent that is to remove the cause, and of all the causes low wages is the most prolific. A railway is coming on for consideration which will affect my electorate, it will bring into that electorate men from other parts of the State, men who have been members of unions, and know what it is to be concerned in labour troubles, men who might be inclined, if any pretext is offered, to perhaps bring about labour troubles, and I do not want any such cause of trouble to be brought into that electorate. Hitherto it has been free from labour troubles, and I want it to enjoy that reputation for industrial peace, but I tremble to think of what will happen if the railway which is projected from Rockhampton down to the Dawson

*Mr. Crawford.]*

Valley is commenced without some regard for a better rate of wages, and, therefore, I am all the more anxious to see this amendment carried.

Mr. KEOGH (*Rosewood*): The hon. gentleman who has just sat down knows who I represent. I have to tender my sincere thanks to many members on this side of the House for the many concessions which have been made to me during the many years I have occupied a seat in this House. I would vote for the Government in every instance.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: When they are wrong? (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. KEOGH: No; not when they are wrong. I do not think it is possible for the Government to bring in anything that is wrong. (Loud Opposition laughter.) In my opinion, the Government as constituted to-day represent the great body of electors in the State.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member for Rosewood to address himself to the question before the Committee.

Mr. KEOGH: I am prepared to vote against the amendment. I wish to state that I do not think that the administration as constituted here has assisted me in occupying my position here to-day.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KEOGH: I thank the Labour party for the position that they have placed me in. (Loud Opposition laughter.)

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

AYES, 32.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Lennon
" Barber	" Lestna
" Blair	" Mann
" Breslin	" Maughan
" Collins	" May
" Corser	" McLachlan
" Coyne	" Mulcahy
" Crawford	" Mullan
" Douglas	" Murphy
" Ferricks	" Nevtit
" Foley	" O'Sullivan
" Grant	" Payne
" Hamilton	" Ryan
" Hardacre	" Ryland
" Hunter, J. M.	" Theodore
" Land	" Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. Grant and Mr. Ryan.

NOES, 33.

Mr. Allan	Mr. Kidston
" Appel	" Macartney
" Barnes, W. H.	" Mackintosh
" Bouchard	" Morgan
" Brennan	" Paget
" Bridges	" Petrie
" Cottell	" Philp
" Denham	" Rankin
" Forrest	" Somerset
" Forsyth	" Stodart
" Fox	" Swayne
" Grayson	" Thorn
" Gunn	" Tolmie
" Hawthorn	" Walker
" Hodge	" White
" Hunter, D.	" Wienholt
" Keogh	

Tellers: Mr. Tolmie and Mr. Walker.

PAIR.

Aye—Mr. Bowman. No—Mr. Roberts.  
Resolved in the negative.

Mr. RYLAND: I would like to ask the Minister whether the terminus of the proposed line is to be in some friend's paddock or whether it is to be on Crown lands? In the case of the

[*Mr. Crawford.*

Kingaroy Railway, although there was a splendid site for a terminus on Crown lands, it was placed in the paddock of a friend of the Government.

The PREMIER: Why don't you look at the plan?

Mr. RYLAND: I have looked at the plan, but I cannot locate it with any certainty.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If the hon. member had looked at the plan, he would have been able to gratify his curiosity probably better than I am able to satisfy him. When I was at Millmerran we were looking at sites that might be available for the terminus, but at that time it had hardly been determined what the route was to be from Pittsworth to Millmerran. All I can say is that certainly the terminus is not to be in some friend's paddock, but at the township of Millmerran there are no Crown lands available.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution, and the resolution was agreed to by the House.

#### JOINT COMMITTEES.

##### MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Council intimating that the President, Mr. Norton, and Mr. Smith had been appointed members of the Joint Library Committee; the President, Mr. Callan, and Mr. Murphy members of the Joint Committee for the Management of the Parliamentary Refreshment rooms; and the President, Mr. Annear, and Mr. Cowlishaw members of the Joint Committee for the Management and Superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings; and requesting the Assembly to appoint a like number of members in order to give effect to the 8th Joint Standing Order.

Message ordered to be taken into consideration at the next sitting of the House.

The House adjourned at twenty-three minutes past 10 o'clock.