

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 9 DECEMBER 1909

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

THURSDAY, 9 DECEMBER, 1909.

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

MINING ON PRIVATE LAND BILL.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. J. G. Appel, *Albert*) this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council, by message in the usual form.

PORT ALMA RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. W. T. Paget, *Mackay*): With regard to this Bill, which I have to move the second reading of this afternoon, I understand there is likely to be some slight diversity of opinion amongst members of the House as to the desirableness of the Bill being passed or not; but I would like to point out to hon. members that this is a Bill to validate an agreement entered into between the Rockhampton Harbour Board and the Commissioner for Railways for the building of a railway from a point on the North Coast Line about Bajool Junction to connect up the wharf that is at present, and has been, in existence at Port Alma, I believe, for something like twenty-five years. The object of this Bill—and the object of the Rockhampton Harbour Board—is to give Rockhampton, and especially the producers of the Central district, access to deep water. At the present time, we know that the whole of the cargo inwards and outwards, which amounts to quite a considerable number of thousands of tons a year, as I will point out later, has to be transhipped in Keppel Bay into lighters, and then taken some 40 miles up the Fitzroy River, and landed and rehandled again at the wharves in Rockhampton. Any of us who know what it is to suffer under the disabilities of having cargo and passengers transhipped into lighters—

The PREMIER: The Mackay people know something about it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As the Premier interjects, the Mackay people know something about those disabilities. It must be patent to every hon. member that this is not the best method by which the trade of practically a province should be handled. Of course, it may be contended that there has been a railway down to what is said to be deep water at Broadmount for quite a number of years past, but that port has not been availed of.

Mr. BRESLIN: Does the harbour board let it be?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member for Port Curtis says, "Does the harbour board let it be?" I will let the hon. member know, as doubtless he does know, that that line was built some time before the harbour board came into existence.

Mr. BRESLIN: What sum was spent on maintenance during the last twelve months?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will tell you that by and by. At that port there is a depth at low-water springs, I believe,

of 17 feet, and the reports which are available show that the channel leading to the wharf at Broadmount is anything but straight; it has been dredged to something like a depth of 17 feet, but, in order to make it available for vessels to enter in at any state of the tide—as it is reasonable to expect that a deep-water port should be in such a state as to allow vessels to enter at any state of the tide and to go out—it will cost, as I shall show hon. members from the report directly, a very considerable sum of money. There is another objection. I am given to understand, with regard to vessels using the port of Broadmount, there are very often fogs in the vicinity of that port, and pilots object to taking vessels in there except in the daytime. At Port Alma, on the other hand, the reports will show that there is a constant depth of 26 feet at low-water springs; that there is a straight run in from the deep-water channel in Keppel Bay; and there is a mud bottom, so there is no necessity for dredging. The report also shows that at the wharf there is ample room for the swinging of the largest vessels that are likely to use that port. There has been a very great deal of contention. I understand, in Rockhampton and Gladstone as to whether this line should be built or not. Probably members representing those electorates will be able to give their views, and the views of the various parties, a great deal more plainly than I can, so that it is not my intention to enter into any of the warfare that has been going on for some years past respecting either the facilities that Broadmount offers or the very much better facilities that Port Alma will offer. This, I would like to say, is not altogether a Railway Department matter. This railway, or branch railway, is being introduced by myself, as Minister for Railways, and is to be built by the Railway Department at the instance of, not the people in a benefited area in a railway district, but at the instance of the Rockhampton Harbour Board, who desire to do away with the expensive and uneconomical system of lighterage up the river, and who desire to give their clients—those who pay the harbour dues—increased facilities for the import and export of their goods. I would like to ask hon. members to turn to a report which was handed to them yesterday—the report of a board of inquiry "to consider the making and maintaining of a deep-water port at Broadmount or Port Alma." Hon. members, if they will cast their minds back, will remember that during the second session of 1908 this Bill was tabled in this House, and for certain reasons it was not gone on with.

Mr. COYNE: At whose instigation was this report submitted?

The PREMIER: The late Mr. J. D. Campbell suggested the report.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The late hon. member for Moreton suggested that it might be advisable to get the report of a board of experts in these matters, with the result that a board was formed, consisting of Messrs. A. B. Moncrieff, who is the Harbour Engineer for South Australia; Mr. Lagan, Chief Engineer for Railways in Queensland; and Mr. Cullen, our Chief Engineer for Harbours and Rivers; and they presented a report in January last, which hon. members have in their hands, and which was published in the Press about April this year.

Mr. BRENNAN: The 1st of April.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Although the hon. member for Rockhampton North suggests that it was published on the

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1st of April, it does not by any means suggest that it was a foolish report. (Laughter.) I would ask hon. members to turn to page 2 of the report—I do not intend to refer to the whole of the report—under the heading “Financial.” In the 3rd paragraph, the gentlemen who formed this board say—

A railway line to Port Alma wharf, *via* Broadmount, would cost £100,000. Accommodation for traffic working in a second approach would ultimately be necessary, allowing for run-round sidings and lighting, and would cost, as in the previous case, £7,000. An efficient water supply would cost £12,000. In this case there would be no danger of traffic being stopped by floods. The annual maintenance would cost (say) £1,000, and the annual additional outlay for working the swing bridge over the Fitzroy River would be (say) £250.

These gentlemen put the cost of connecting the wharf at Port Alma with the wharf at Broadmount by a railway across the Fitzroy River at £149,000. I think this would prove exceedingly inconvenient, and it is a scheme that the Rockhampton Harbour Board does not favour. The scheme they desire is the original scheme of a branch line from Bajool Junction to Port Alma. I will now read the “Conclusion” of the board—

The marine and nautical advantages, due to the situations of these two ports, remain most unquestionably in favour of Port Alma, while the shore conveniences are in favour of Broadmount, but most of these can be utilised if the approach across Casuarina Island is made. By the selection of Port Alma, and the adoption of this route, permanent deep-water approaches to the wharf would be secured, which would be capable of improvement if required, risk of delay by flood would be obviated, the possible abandonment of the Broadmount railway line would be avoided, and, if the annual cost of maintenance is capitalised at 4 per cent., the scheme would be found the most economical.

Reading the report, and trying to read between the lines, it seems to me that the three members of the board found themselves to be between the horns of a dilemma, and tried to bridge across the horns by recommending the building of a railway across a tidal river and a mud island—which I believe Casuarina to be—from Broadmount to Port Alma; and I think if this question is looked at disinterestedly one must come to the conclusion that it is not a good thing to bridge across a tidal river which has a very big traffic on it, for even after this railway is built from Bajool to Port Alma the smaller coastal boats will always use the river to take their cargo to and from the wharves at Rockhampton. Now, I will ask the consideration of hon. members to the rival schemes of Broadmount as against Port Alma, and their cost. The members of the board on page 2, after giving their reasons for one port or for the other, say the capital outlay necessary to make Broadmount such a port as is required—dredging to 24 feet at low-water springs, 2 feet less than Port Alma is naturally—would be £290,500, and the annual maintenance would be £3,000. Their estimate for everything in connection with the Port Alma scheme from Bajool Junction is £135,000. Now, I will ask hon. members to consider what this means. Let us consider the cost of deepening the Broadmount approaches and the cost of plant at £275,000 and the extension of the wharf at £15,500, or a total cost of £290,500. The annual interest and redemption of a forty-year loan of that amount at 5s. 1d. per cent. would mean £14,682 7s. 1d., and there will be an estimated outlay of £3,000 to keep the channel clear. For this expenditure, and an annual cost to the board of £17,682, the board will have no actual cash return, for the reason that this money is to be spent in the deepening of the

approach to the Broadmount wharf and the extension of the wharf, while the wharf belongs to the Railway Department, so that the board will have no right to collect any of the wharfages for the goods that may come over the Broadmount line. On the other hand, the cost of the railway from Bajool Junction to Port Alma is put down at £72,000—the estimate of the Commissioner is £70,000; the extension of the Port Alma wharf, £30,000; water supply at Port Alma, £26,000; and the run-round siding, £7,000; making a total of £135,000. At 5s. 1d. per cent. interest and redemption there will be an annual charge of £6,823 2s. 6d., but the £72,000 of that money will be earning wages all the time. It is to be expended in building a railway, and the rates and fares collected over that railway will go towards paying the interest on that amount of money; so we may, for purposes of comparison, put that on one side and say that the extra cost of £63,000 on the improvement of the Port Alma wharf itself is that which the Rockhampton Harbour Board would have to find interest and redemption on—a charge of £3,284 1s. 6d. annually.

Mr. HARDACRE: Would not the Broadmount Railway be earning that money if the Port Alma Railway were not built?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; because the Broadmount line does not belong to the Rockhampton Harbour Board, but to the Government. The Rockhampton Harbour Board does not guarantee 3 per cent. on the £185,000 the Broadmount line cost to build from Nankin Junction, but it does guarantee 3 per cent. on the £70,000, or £72,000, on the line from Bajool Junction to Port Alma. Although I am trying to put the case perfectly fairly from the report of these gentlemen, I would point out that the Rockhampton Harbour Board has a cheaper scheme for extending the wharf at Port Alma, and providing a water supply. There is £56,000 put down as the cost of this; and they propose in this cheaper scheme to convey the water by means of barges.

Mr. HARDACRE: Absolutely ridiculous!

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is all very well for the hon. member for Leichhardt to laugh; but I say the Rockhampton Harbour Board must know their business when they bring forward a scheme such as this. (Hear, hear!) I am often told by members of this House, and by other gentlemen who come to see me on railway deputations to build a railway, that it is easy to put a railway in such and such a place, where they even admit the country is slightly ridgy, if not mountainous. The only reply I have is that I prefer that the railway engineers and surveyors should say whether the scheme is practicable or not. And, in this instance, I very much more rely on the knowledge of the Rockhampton Harbour Board engineer than on what a good many hon. members say on this question. It is his business; and it is his business to report to his board. Summarising these figures, the cost of opening up Broadmount wharf to a depth of 24 feet is such a sum that the annual cost will be £17,682, a direct charge on the revenue of the Rockhampton Harbour Board, and with no direct receipts from that expenditure. On the other hand, the net annual cost, excluding the railway, of the Port Alma scheme is £3,184, and the cost of working the wharf, with a direct revenue from the wharfages collected. I do not wish to refer to any remarks that have

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been passed at any previous time in the session on this question, but I would point out that it has been stated here that the Rockhampton Harbour Board, if the passengers and goods are not transported up and down the Fitzroy River by tender, will lose the greater part of their revenue. I think that is a statement which is not quite correct, for the reason that the board has nothing whatever to do with the carriage of goods and passengers by tender to and from the boats. Their revenue is derived from the harbour dues and from the wharfages collected on the Rockhampton wharves, and those harbour dues will be collected whether goods are landed on or exported from the Rockhampton wharves or from Port Alma.

Mr. GRANT: It was only the hon. member for Leichhardt raised that question.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am only desirous of trying to put the case as plainly as I possibly can, and in as few words as possible. The revenue of the

[4 p.m.] Rockhampton Harbour Board cannot decrease, but if increased deep-sea facilities are given to shipping, then the harbour dues and revenue generally must increase. I think that every hon. member will agree with me when I say that when a vastly wealthy district such as Central Queensland has better shipping facilities direct to deep water that its prosperity must be greater than it is at the present time. There can be no question about it at all after a comparison of the economic value of the Port Alma scheme as against that of the Broadmount scheme. The Rockhampton Harbour Board are acting for their clients, the payers of harbour dues. They are their constituents practically, and they must, I think, favour a scheme that will make for lesser expenditure with direct revenue as against the scheme with a very much greater expenditure—two and a-half times the expenditure, in fact—which will bring them in no greater revenue. I ask hon. members to consider that if this House does not approve of the Bill which they desire shall be approved of—that is, the linking of the railway at Port Alma with the Bajool junction—will the Rockhampton Harbour Board go to the expense—this enormous expense—of dredging the channel into the Broadmount wharf? I do not desire to quote all the tables relating to Broadmount, although there are many that I could quote. But I have figures showing that the coastal boats that travel from Melbourne to Cooktown draw 23 feet and 24 feet of water, so that it is quite necessary, if these boats are to go alongside the wharf at Broadmount at any time—as they go into Keppel Bay at any time of the day or night—it is quite necessary that there should be 24 feet of water there.

Mr. HARDACRE: You are referring to fully loaded boats and the biggest of them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Surely we may hope that the prosperity of the Central district and of Northern Queensland is going to continue to be such that the boats will continue to be fully loaded up and down. That has been the complaint for the last five or six years. We consume so much Southern goods, and so much has been taken up North that the steamers have not always been able to take away what is offering at those ports.

Mr. HARDACRE: There is only one steamer that draws 22 feet.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not wish to quote all the figures I have got, but if hon. members wish I will quote them. I am quoting from figures which have been supplied by the shipping companies with regard to their boats, and I must take their word for it as they know more about it than I do. I have already heard that the Rockhampton Harbour Board is insolvent. I have heard quite a number of times that the Rockhampton Harbour Board is insolvent, and that, therefore, they should not take the responsibility on their shoulders of guaranteeing 3 per cent. interest and any loss in the working expenses. I will quote the figures relating to the harbour board for the year ended on the 31st of December, 1908. The harbour board's indebtedness to the Government was £230,029 15s. 8d., and their other liabilities amounted to £1,102 0s. 1d., making a total indebtedness of £231,131 15s. 9d. The board's revenue from wharfage and harbour dues for the year was £22,197 17s. 8d., and from other sources £1,413 6s. 9d., making a total revenue of £23,611 4s. 5d. The board's expenditure on river improvements—they paid their office expenses out of revenue—was £16,220 17s. 9d., and their interest and redemption amounted to £11,017 10s. 3d., making a total expenditure of £27,238 8s.

Mr. LENNON: Against a revenue of what?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will quote that again. The amount due to the Government each year is £11,017 10s. 3d., and the board is not in arrears. I point this out: That although the board spent something like £4,000 last year—the actual figures were £3,600—more than they received in the twelve months, that was after paying their interest and redemption as well, a large amount of that money was spent in river improvements. Instead of spending their loan money on the river improvements, they spent some of their revenue as capital expenditure.

Mr. GRANT: They put it into loan account from revenue.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The board's revenue exceeded their liability to the Treasurer for interest and redemption by £12,594.

Mr. HARDACRE: Net revenue?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, net revenue.

Mr. LENNON: It exceeded their interest and redemption by that amount?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. LENNON: What about their office expenses?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The office expenses can amount to but a tithe of that £12,000. The balance of that money was spent on river improvements.

Mr. HARDACRE: You are very vague indeed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is quite impossible, I fear, to convince the hon. member for Leichhardt. I give the plainest figures, and he says that they are vague.

Mr. HARDACRE: They are indefinite.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I say that my figures are particularly definite and my statement is particularly clear.

Mr. MULCAHY: Are they accurate?

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The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, absolutely accurate. These figures were got for me from the Treasury.

Mr. GRANT: He can see the annual report of the board.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When the Rockhampton Harbour Board took over the charge of the Fitzroy River there was only 6 feet 6 inches at low-water springs. The present depth in the Fitzroy River is 16 feet at low-water springs. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. RYAN: The Treasurer, in answer to my question the other day, said the depth was 12 feet.

The PREMIER: It has improved since then. (Laughter.)

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The figures which have been supplied to me show that the depth is 16 feet at low-water springs. I am given to understand that the depth of the Fitzroy River is now, or will be in the very near future, 16 feet at low-water springs.

Mr. RYAN: Will be?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I ask the members who represent the constituencies in this locality to fight it out amongst themselves.

Mr. BARBER: That is the depth in certain places.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: To show what the trade has reached from the Central district, I might quote from the *Rockhampton Bulletin* of Saturday, 6th November. In a leading article headed "The Trade of the Harbour," it says—

The figures are most satisfactory. Here are the dues actually charged for the first ten months of 1908 and 1909—

	£	s.	d.
1909	20,539	14	9
1908	18,644	15	5
Increase in 1909	1,890	19	4

This is an increase of 10 per cent. and will make the increase for the year somewhere about £2,300 or £2,300.

That is the increase for the present year over last year. Now, about the trade of the port, further down in this leading article it says this—

It has just been said that the tonnage of the trade is not made up till the end of the year. But here are the figures for the port of Rockhampton for the last eighteen years—that is, from 1891 till 1908, inclusive.

Then all the figures are given in tabular form, and I will quote a few of them. It shows that in 1901 the bay trade amounted to 25,272 tons and the river trade to 82,029 tons, making a total trade of 107,301 tons. The percentage of the bay trade on the total trade for that year was 28. These were goods that were transhipped in the bay, I presume, and taken up the river. In 1908, the bay trade totalled 39,509 tons and the river trade 209,853 tons, making a total trade of 249,361 tons, or two and a-half times as much. That speaks volumes for the way the trade in this district has increased, and it also speaks volumes in favour of the harbour board having the means, if they desire, of placing the Central district trade in direct communication with deep water. Now, taking the Bill, this is a Bill to validate an agreement giving the harbour board special powers to enter an agreement: it also authorises the construction of the line, and transfers the wharves from the Government to the Rockhampton Harbour board—that is, the wharves at Port Alma. It is not to be a private line. It is to be a public line, not only built by the Commissioner, but the

traffic will also be run by the Commissioner, and will be worked by his officers. The board has to make good any deficiency of earnings, and under the 1906 Act they must pay 3 per cent. interest on the capital. If there is any deficiency, that deficiency is to be the first charge on the revenue of the board after providing for the interest and redemption on prior loans. If the board refuses or neglects to pay this deficiency, then there are certain clauses in the Bill by which the board may be sued, and a receiver appointed. When the earnings have been sufficient to pay 3 per cent. on the capital for three consecutive years, then the board is released of its responsibilities. The Railways Act of 1906 is not to apply in the usual manner, for the reason that the board is guaranteeing the interest under the 1906 Act, and there is to be no benefited area. The schedule consists of the agreement, and as hon. members have the Bill, they will see that the railway is to be constructed by the Government, and is to be manned and worked by the Commissioner's staff. The Government agree to hand over the Port Alma wharf to the harbour board, and all approaches to the wharf will be constructed at the cost of the Government. The board is to repair the wharf and control the wharf, and there is also a provision about the freights and fares. Provision is made that the rate shall not exceed 10s. per ton from Lake's Creek, and an agreement may be entered into by the Commissioner as to rates and fares with any shipping firm or company, and there are other provisions for the proper working of the line. Clause 14 of the agreement says the board is to influence shippers to use the line and the wharf. The reason of that, of course, is—as a matter of fact, the shippers desire to do away with the present system of lightening cargo.

Mr. RYAN: The clause is unnecessary.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Probably it is unnecessary, but it is in the agreement, and I suppose it is not superfluous.

Mr. MULCAHY: What are they going to do with Broadmount?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not suppose for a moment that Broadmount wharf will be abandoned. Ships that take away frozen meat, I dare say, will go to Broadmount wharf, as they have done in the past, but only one steamer in twelve has gone to Broadmount wharf.

Hon. R. PHILIP: For frozen meat?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No, not for frozen meat, but of the total number that go to the port. In conclusion, I wish to say that I trust hon. members will very favourably consider this Bill. The Rockhampton Harbour Board desires to give better facilities for goods and passengers either leaving the Central district or entering the Central district, by oversea ships and by the coastal boats. I have very much pleasure in moving the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. LENNON (*Herbert*): The very first idea that occurs to one's mind, on a proposal of this sort that is before the House, is its audacity, when we consider that Rockhampton is already amply provided in the way of accommodation—(hear, hear!)—and the hon. gentleman, in introducing the Bill this afternoon, has informed us a very considerable sum of money was expended last year by the harbour board in improving the river. When we had the shipping agreement before us some time ago, it was noticed that Port Alma was

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mentioned as a port of call for some occult reason. At that time it was allowed to pass without very much comment, but now the reason is self manifest. It is for the purpose of benefiting the British-India Company, McLlwraith, McEachern, and Co., and Walter Reid and Co.—all this large expenditure of money is to be entered upon for that purpose, and for the purpose of giving Rockhampton no less than three strings to its bow. Port Alma wharf, erected some twenty-five years ago, is standing there in its lonely grandeur surrounded by acres of mud and miles of water. It is well known that Sir Thomas McLlwraith was a very strong man—a man who carried things with a very high hand—and he spent £40,000 in erecting a wharf at Port Alma, and it has remained there ever since, and probably by this time has depreciated in value 75 per cent.

Mr. GRANT: No, no!

Mr. LENNON: The present Government proposes to go to the trouble of relieving the Rockhampton Harbour Board of a good deal of its responsibilities for the purpose of doing away with the lightering system. Instead of the lightering system they want to assist the harbour board to get this railway constructed, which they propose to guarantee under clause 7 as referred to by the Minister. I will just read that clause. It says—

If in any year the board neglects or refuses to pay the amount of any deficiency, the Commissioner may recover the amount of such deficiency from the board by action in any court of competent jurisdiction, or, if such neglect or refusal continues for thirty days after demand made by the Commissioner, the Commissioner may, at his option, by writing under his hand, appoint a receiver of the funds and revenues of the board.

They will go on receiving that so long as the board remains a board; but another clause follows that which is also of vital importance. It states—

8. Whenever the earnings of the railway, as estimated in accordance with the agreement, have for each year during a period of three consecutive years been of such amount that no such deficiency as aforesaid has arisen, the Commissioner shall by his certificate declare accordingly, and thereupon the board shall be released from all liability to make good to the Commissioner the amount of any deficiency which may thereafter occur.

It is quite an easy thing for the Rockhampton Harbour Board to so regulate its business that they can take precious good care there would be no deficiency during the first three years; and, after getting over that critical period of three years, by and by they might allow the whole thing to drift, as they had done in regard to the Broadmount scheme. I would like to remind hon. members opposite, who are very fond of insinuating by interjection and otherwise, that this Bill was made a party measure by this side of the House—I would like to say here that when the Bill was last introduced, it was quite an open secret that no less than three hon. members now sitting on the Treasury bench were opposed to this railway; and had it been tabled in that House, I am satisfied those three gentlemen would have opposed it. I would like to ask whether, after careful inquiry and due consideration, they have decided that Port Alma Railway is the proper thing, or are they swallowing their convictions and voting as the party instruct? Or are they supporting this railway out of deep conviction? I leave that for the hon. members themselves to tax their own consciences with. The board appointed to make a report on this scheme was a very efficient board, and I would not for one moment suggest that they had any sinister object in bringing in such a report

as this. I would like to point out that, judging by the wording of the report, they were evidently informed that it was absolutely necessary to provide a port with at least 24 feet of water at dead low-water spring tides. I maintain there is no necessity for such a condition as that, and that very condition was hampering those men, and was unconsciously driving them to favour the Port Alma harbour, where there is a minimum depth of 26 feet. There are few harbours in the world that provide a continuous depth of 24 feet of water at dead low spring tides, and there are very few harbours in the world where steamers of a deep draught do not have to wait for the tide. Why, even on the famous Clyde they have to wait for the tide; and at the port of Townsville, which is also becoming a very splendid port, they have only 17 feet of water in their channel at low water, and all the large steamers that trade to Australia, or, at any rate, to Queensland, can find entrance to that harbour, and lie there in safety. If the Townsville harbour were only deepened to 20 feet, I am satisfied the harbour board there would be content to go on for the next forty or fifty years. But here it is proposed to provide a continuous depth of water of 24 feet. I say it was unnecessary to have that impressed upon that board as was done. The Secretary for Railways quoted a lot of figures to show that the Port Alma scheme will be very much cheaper and much more effective than the Broadmount scheme can possibly be. But he should have added the cost of the Broadmount Railway, because that will practically be abandoned, and the value of that railway reduced 80 per cent. or 90 per cent., and that cost should be added to the cost of the Port Alma scheme to have a fair comparison. He has ignored that, and he has quoted a whole lot of figures that appear to have very little bearing on the question at all. The Broadmount Railway scheme must have cost originally something like £200,000, and there has been expended in the river on improvements something like £300,000. We know there must have been a considerable sum expended, because already the harbour board is indebted to the Government for a sum of £230,000, on which they have to pay interest, and no doubt they expended money out of their own earnings, which will not figure in the amount at present due to the Government. Here is a board so fully indebted to the Government simply going on from hand to mouth—I would not for a moment suggest they are insolvent; I do not think they are—but they have considerable difficulty evidently in meeting their liabilities.

Mr. GRANT: No, no!

Mr. LENNON: I do not say they are insolvent—I would not suggest such a thing—but they have a very heavy burden to carry, and here they propose to give a guarantee of 3 per cent. on the cost of this railway, and the question very naturally arises: Who is going to guarantee the harbour board? Because, if they are not guaranteed, there is no guarantee that it will be able to continue its payments with the increased taxation that will be necessary. While the harbour board is elected on its present absurd constitution, I think it is a very unfair thing to ask the taxpayers of the country to saddle themselves with the expense of constructing this railway for the benefit of the coterie of Rockhampton merchants who practically constitute that Rockhampton Harbour Board. Before this Bill was introduced, it would have been very

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much wiser if they had reorganised the Rockhampton Harbour Board entirely—improved it, and broadened its constitution, and given it a very much wider franchise, and allowed the whole of the people in Rockhampton and the Central district to have a voice in this scheme, because the inland people will have to contribute to the taxation just as much as the people in the port itself. It is understood at Broadmount, at the present time, there is maintained there 17 feet of water at dead low-water spring tides, and when you take into account the fact that they have such an enormous rise and fall in the tide at Broadmount—there are countries where they must of necessity have a continuous depth—but when you consider that Broadmount has a rise and fall in the tide of 16 or 18 feet, I maintain that a depth of 20 feet would be ample for all requirements for the next fifty years.

Mr. GRANT: What would that cost?

Mr. LENNON: If that be admitted, the cost would be very much lessened. The Broadmount Harbour would be suitable for the trade of that port for the next fifty years, and it would cost very much less than the estimate of the commission of experts. When you consider that there are other ports in the world which are content to let the ships wait for the tide. I do not think it is too much to argue that the Rockhampton and Central district people should suffer a like disability. I would like to quote a list of steamers that have entered the harbour of Broadmount during the year 1908. There is no return for 1909. I say these figures are supplied by a Rockhampton paper, which seems at variance with the Premier at times, nevertheless these are the figures and no aspersion is cast in any way in regard to them. These are the steamers that have entered Broadmount during 1908—that is, the large vessels—

Waipara, Changsha, Carpentaria, Taiyuan, Glenlyon, Jessie Burns, Timaru, Changsha, Timaru, Gulf of Venice, Canara, Nairnshire, Taiyuan, Vine Branch, Drayton Grange, Banffshire, Changsha, Hornby Grange, Buninyong, Taiyuan, Zeyhyrus, Gulf of Venice, Changsha, Carpentaria, Cintra, Taiyuan, Gulf of Venice, Changsha, Ayrshire, Chyebassa, and Orange Branch.

Then there is a footnote which says—

The Taiyuan and Changsha came in on one tide and left next tide on the same date. The Ayrshire (11,000 tons gross) is the largest steamer trading to Queensland waters.

When a boat of that size can come in on one tide and go out on the next, I think it is excellent testimony in favour of the Broadmount Harbour. When we also consider that the Lake's Creek Company, the largest meat company probably in Australia, ships very large quantities of tallow, hides, preserved

meats, wool, and all its by-products [4.30 p.m.] from Broadmount without any difficulty whatever, you could not have better testimony than that Rockhampton is already very well served with Broadmount, and with a very moderate expenditure Broadmount could be made the harbour for Rockhampton for all time.

Mr. GRANT: What do you call "moderate expenditure"?

Mr. LENNON: About a fourth of what is recommended here to get a depth of 24 feet. Take the Townsville Harbour administration, where a very considerable sum, running over £300,000, has been expended in making that harbour. If anyone proposed that they should practically abandon that harbour, throw away that expenditure, and run a railway down to another place for the purpose of making a new port, there would be such a howl through-

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out Queensland that any Government which proposed such a thing would not be tolerated an instant. But the Chief Secretary seems to have made up his mind that he will have this harbour at any cost. He had a very clear indication when he last tabled the Bill that the House was opposed to it. The House is not very different now, except that certain gentlemen have been promoted to the Treasury bench, and if these three gentlemen are now going back on their principles to support this line, it will become any one on the other side of the House to charge this side with taking up a party attitude on the matter. I have to say that the Bill is not opposed from a party standpoint at all: members can vote as they please, but probably some of them will vote with the majority.

The PREMIER: You know how the majority will go. (Laughter.)

Mr. LENNON: The hon. gentleman perhaps knows better than I do. I would like to say that considerable indignation is expressed in Rockhampton regarding this measure. Of course, the little coterie, better known as the Rockhampton Harbour Board, have their own particular axe to grind, and they disregard the opinion of the people absolutely. I will read a telegram sent to me by the mayor of Rockhampton, dated the 7th of this month—

The following resolutions were carried at a public meeting held last evening in school of arts First that in the opinion of this meeting of citizens of Rockhampton the construction of the proposed Port Alma Railway is absolutely unnecessary and would be an unjustifiable waste of public money and calculated to divert the trade from and seriously injure the future prosperity of Rockhampton without conferring any benefit upon the community at large second that the Government be asked to arrange through the Commissioner for Railways to quote proportionately the same rates per mile for the carriage of goods from Broadmount to Rockhampton as those quoted from Port Alma to Rockhampton third that this meeting requests the Government to immediately amend the Rockhampton Harbour Board Act by abolishing the electoral power of the so-called payers of dues, and placing the whole of the electoral power in the hands of the ratepayers.

Mr. CORSER: How many were there at the meeting?

Mr. LENNON: Four hundred. You surely would not ask anyone to believe the *Brisbane Courier's* account. (Laughter.) I have got a telegram also from the mayor of North Rockhampton, dated to-day. He says—

An instructed by my council convey following resolutions passed by eight votes to one their meeting last night that in view of the fact of the large amount of public money that has been spent on the Alexandra bridge Broadmount Railway and Broadmount wharf this council is of opinion that the construction of the proposed Port Alma Railway is absolutely unnecessary and would be an unjustifiable waste of public money as well as being against the best interests of this municipality and district generally.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. LENNON: I do not think any better evidence could be afforded to members of this House. Many of them are, perhaps, not familiar with the surroundings at Rockhampton, with all the inner schemes at work there. Beyond the broad knowledge they have of Broadmount and the river, upon which, in the aggregate, I suppose something exceeding £200,000 of public money has been expended. They know nothing more than that, but here we have the assurance of the mayor of Rockhampton and the mayor of North Rockhampton.

Mr. GRANT: No, you have not the mayor of Rockhampton; he is simply sending the resolutions on behalf of the public meeting.

Mr. LENNON: This is a public meeting over which his worship the mayor presided, but the citizens of Rockhampton, who are above the mayor, are opposed to this railway, and criticise it in very strong terms indeed. From the neighbouring council of North Rockhampton a similar testimony is sent by telegram, and I think members who have not made up their minds how to vote for this railway should be guided more by what these men, who are particularly interested, who have local knowledge, and who have lived there for many years, say, than the opinion expressed in an off-hand manner by the Minister for Railways, who perhaps himself twelve months ago was not an ardent supporter of this line. I would like to say that when we consider the way in which measures have been rushed through this House without sufficient consideration, how the session is to be brought to a close at a very early period, it would have been much wiser on the part of the Chief Secretary if he had withheld this Bill until a more opportune season. Even now I would like to offer him the advice, and ask him whether, after further consideration, he would not consider it wiser to act in the same way as he did when the Bill was previously submitted to the House—withdraw it, think over it awhile, and give the people up there a chance of reconsidering it. And if in the meantime he could arrange to transform the Rockhampton Harbour Board and make it a little more liberal, I think we can get a fairer and more reliable expression of opinion from that body than under present conditions. But the Port Alma Railway scheme is his one darling. It does not matter about the other Bills tabled this session; they are of no value. This is the one precious item on the Kidstonian ship of State, and the others may be thrown over so that he can push on with Port Alma this session, and then by and by he will get his reward.

Mr. RYLAND: Even in England he was talking about Port Alma.

Mr. LENNON: It is only since his trip to England that he has taken the thing up. Other hon. members will be able to give more information on this than I can. Within very recent years—not more than five years ago—the hon. gentleman was strongly opposed to the Port Alma scheme.

Mr. MULCAHY: He said it was very bad.

Mr. LENNON: No doubt he will be able to give us some explanation as to the reasons which have led him to alter his mind, but I think it can be shown to-day that he was not always so strongly in favour of this line as he is now. I could give more figures, but I do not wish to tire the House. I do not want to be branded later on as one who can be deemed unnecessarily contentious. I desire to say that this is a project which need not have come before the House, particularly in this hurried session. We are proposing, I understand, to devote eight weeks to this session, and the Premier's Rockhampton programme, of which we have heard so much, contains measures of very great interest to the people of Queensland, and on the inclusion of these measures in the Governor's Speech no doubt a great deal of support was obtained by the Government. But they are dropping these Bills overboard one by one, such important Bills as the Trades Disputes Bill, State Insurance Bill, Public Service Superannuation Bill,

and the Licensing Bill. All these were promises, but it appears the Port Alma Railway Bill transcends all these Bills put together in the opinion of the Hon. the Chief Secretary, and he pushes them aside in order that he may foist this measure upon the country. I enter my emphatic protest against doing for the port of Rockhampton what no other port will expect to have done—to give them practically three ports. They will have the Broadmount port, the river port, and now Port Alma. I think it is an unfair advantage to give to Rockhampton over all the other ports of the State, and I must enter my emphatic protest against the Bill.

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Kidston, *Rockhampton*): The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has said something that I think quite unworthy of him, and unlike him. For instance, he said that this was the one precious Bill of the session for which everything else had to be sacrificed. I think hon. members know that that is not true without my dilating on it. He said that this was being brought up for the financial benefit of McIlwraith, McEachern, and Co. at Rockhampton, or some other company which he named.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: You said nasty things yesterday.

The PREMIER: Statements of that kind are absolutely unworthy of the hon. member. It is not necessary to refute such statements; they should be supported by evidence.

Mr. HARDACRE: Anybody knows it.

The PREMIER: Nobody does not know it, but anybody can say it.

Mr. HARDACRE: They can prove it, too.

The PREMIER: And anybody can say it over and over and over again, but their saying it over and over again will not prove it.

Mr. HARDACRE: We can prove it.

Mr. GRANT: Why don't you do it.

Mr. MURPHY: That is how you came to speak of the Bank of Australasia yesterday.

The PREMIER: He also told us that it was introduced for the purpose of relieving the Rockhampton Harbour Board. Now, there are three purposes that it is being introduced for. If there is one thing that this agreement does, it is to tie down that harbour board to pay interest on that railway.

Mr. LENNON: For three years—during three years.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Three consecutive years.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: All railways under the 1906 Act are under the same provision.

The PREMIER: That is why three years are named there. The number of years is immaterial. It was simply considered, when we passed that Railways Act of 1906, that if a railway paid continuously for three years there was not much further risk to the Commissioner, taking it by and large. There is another aspect of this thing which the hon. gentleman mentioned, which I will deal with later on. As the Minister pointed out, this Bill is not for the purpose of passing the railway, but for the purpose of ratifying an agreement, making the railway possible on those terms; but it has been deemed desirable to put the plans of the proposal on the table of the House, so that members will have the whole thing before them when discussing the second reading of the Bill, because it is to be assumed that if the House passed the second reading of the Bill it is likely to pass the proposal for the railway. I hope that the matter will be quite fully and frankly discussed now on its

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business merits, leaving party or personal questions out of account altogether—that the real interests of the districts concerned and the producers of Central Queensland will be the consideration which will actuate members on both sides of the House.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: No railway that we can introduce in this House could be so handicapped with party quarrels and party misrepresentations as the Port Alma Railway is.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why is this?

The PREMIER: For twenty years there has been strife raised in Rockhampton about the question of a deep-water port. Party and personal animosities have been engendered to such an extent that there is danger of the real merits of the question being put out of sight. The personal recriminations and party differences over this question may be compared to the strife between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines in Europe. We have a little crowd of monomaniacs in our district in connection with this matter, I regret to say—I am not saying they are all on one side of the question—and they are forgetting what the original quarrel was about. It is too much to hope that none of that party animus has found its way into this House—that there will be no party feeling shown; but I propose simply to deal with the business merits of the question. I propose, when railway projects come before us, to judge them as impartially as I can on the merits of the question, irrespective of whether the member for the district supports me or not.

Mr. BRENNAN: It is a real good confession of faith.

The PREMIER: I wish I could get this question treated in this House on absolutely non-party lines.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I wish I could get every member to go into the facts for himself, and give his vote absolutely on non-party lines and simply on the merits of the case.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I may be right or wrong but I am convinced that if that was done practically all the members of the House would support the proposal. (Opposition laughter.) At the same time I cannot disguise the fact that my colleague and myself are pledged to our constituents to bring forward this measure before the House. I do not disguise the fact that our opponents at the election made it a kind of test question, and worked it for all it was worth against us because we promised to do this.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Did you also treat it as a test question?

The PREMIER: I do not think at any election I ever attempted to get votes on local questions. I did not bring up this question at all, but our opponents put up Mr. Willis to ask a question, and this is what he said—

Mr. Willis: The questions I wish to ask Mr. Kidston are two that I put to him on two occasions two years ago in the Theatre Royal. The first is: Is it the intention of the Government to still proceed with the Port Alma Railway Bill? (Laughter and applause.)

Mr. Kidston: Mr. Willis asked me if it is the intention of the Government to proceed with the Port Alma Railway Bill.

Mr. Bluett: Yes or no.

Mr. Kidston: Yes. (Loud applause.)

Mr. Willis: I like a straight-out answer.

Mr. Bluett: That means 200 votes to us.

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Here is what one of our opponents, Mr. Allen, said, speaking at Depôt Hill on the 22nd September—

If Messrs. Kidston and Grant were returned, they would do their utmost to have the Port Alma line built. If he (Mr. Allen) were elected, he proposed—and the party with which he was associated proposed—that Broadmount should be made the port of Central Queensland.

There is nothing doubtful about that. Mr. Purnell, the Labour candidate, was even plainer. Speaking the same night at Allentown, he said—

What did it mean if they returned Messrs. Kidston and Grant as their representatives? It would mean that, by their votes, they would be giving sanction to the Port Alma Railway.

So there is no doubt as to how my colleague and myself stand in regard to this matter with our constituents. They elected us, knowing that, if elected, we would try to get the Port Alma Railway introduced and passed.

Mr. RYAN: They did not think you could get the railway through.

The PREMIER: These same people who did their best to get the electors to vote against us got 200 people to protest against the railway in a hall where we had 1,200 or 1,400 people. Do they imagine that is likely to influence our opinions, or our actions, or the opinion of any impartial man in this House? Any member who has had any trouble in his district about rival routes knows how a little crowd can work up a thing; and I am surprised that the leader of the Opposition should get up and seriously make the statement he did about that meeting. I am sure he knows it has nothing to do with the opinion of my constituents. The hon. member talked about there being no party feeling on that side of the House. Does he not know that if the hon. member for Leichhardt succeeds in getting the Bill defeated, he will go to Rockhampton and boast about having defeated the Premier. (Opposition laughter.) And would not the hon. member for Port Curtis do the same thing?

Mr. BRESLIN: No.

The PREMIER: I merely refer to that matter to show how I stand in regard to my constituents; but I really want the matter considered, not in relation to that, but in relation to the merits of the question. Most members know that Sir T. McIlwraith built the Port Alma wharf, and proposed to connect it with Rockhampton, and Sir Samuel Griffith's party opposed it.

Mr. LENNON: The two members threatened to resign if he went on with it.

The PREMIER: Quite true. At the election of 1888, when Messrs. Pattison and Archer stood, the Port Alma party was strong. Unfortunately, those two candidates were afraid they would not be returned as supporters of the Port Alma Railway, but the result showed that they would have been returned with an overwhelming majority. They were both in favour of the Port Alma line, and both supported Sir T. McIlwraith, but they both promised that they would not support a railway to Port Alma if returned. When they came to Brisbane and told Sir T. McIlwraith what the position was—they were both honourable men in that respect—Sir T. McIlwraith said, "If that district does not want a railway, I know a number of districts that do want railways." I have no hesitation in saying that the people of the Central district have been excessively foolish over this question, and they have paid for it with the constant handicap there has been on the shipping trade of the district. In spite of all that, the question

before us this afternoon is a simple question. Central Queensland has the choice of two deep-water ports, and much can be said and has been said in favour of both, and much can be said and has been said against both. Speaking generally, the advantages of Broadmount are on the landward side, while those of Port Alma are on the sea side.

Mr. LENNON: You could not get a drink of fresh water there to save your life.

The PREMIER: If you want a drink of fresh water in this House you have to bring it into the House, but this Parliament House is no worse on that account. The first thing you want at a deep-water port is not a drink of fresh water but deep sea water. If hon. members look at the lithograph that has been supplied with the report of the commission, they will see that from the anchorage at Sea Hill there is a straight course into Port Alma wharf, and if they look at the crooked red line leading to the wharves at Broadmount they will see how difficult that tortuous channel must be for large ships to navigate. Both ports can be improved; either of them can be made to fit the requirements of the Central district. Both of them have advantages as well as disadvantages; either can be made available for the trade of the Central district; the only question is as to the relative cost. I am going to disregard the reams of party literature that have been circulated on the question, and just deal with that aspect of the matter; and I ask hon. members not to allow their minds to be distracted from that aspect of the question.

Mr. RYAN: What depth of water do you require? It does not require 24 feet.

The PREMIER: I think we do, and I will tell the hon. member why.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What about Gladstone?

The PREMIER: Here I may state that Gladstone does not come into this question at all. I do not particularly blame the hon. member for Port Curtis for showing his zeal in this matter, because a member has to pay some regard even to the prejudices of his constituents. Gladstone has been connected with the Central Railway for ten or twelve years, and yet people have not sent their trade there. Gladstone has all the railway facilities this House could give, and yet she has not got the trade. If I may say so without offending the people of Gladstone, they would be much better employed in trying to develop their back country in the Boyne Valley.

Mr. BRESLIN: What chance did you give us?

The PREMIER: I am only saying what the policy of that town ought to be. At present they are simply playing the dog in the manger. They cannot eat the hay themselves and won't let anybody else get it. And I would like to add this: Some one interjected—I think

[5 p.m.] it was the hon. member for Gympie—that I formerly opposed Port Alma and advocated Broadmount. I would therefore like to put clearly before the House the attitude I have taken up in this matter since I have been in a responsible position as Minister. I told the people of my district, when they came to me first on the matter, that they must distinctly understand that whatever was done—whichever of these ports was approved—the local revenue of the district would have to bear the cost—that I would only help to get the scheme which was likely to cost least, and which they would be best able to finance. I was given figures at one time to show me that the cost of opening up Broadmount would be very small as compared with Port

Alma, and I therefore advised them to take the lesser cost and open up Broadmount. And I further promised to spend the money if it was necessary to do it. But I made it quite clear that the Treasury would not finance the scheme, and that the local revenues must finance it. Now, when I was shown that a mistake had been made in claiming that it would be cheaper to open up Broadmount than Port Alma, I acted upon the very same principle and advised them to take Port Alma as the cheaper of the two. My attitude on this matter is simply this: The local revenues—that is, the local harbour revenues of that district—ought to pay for whatever scheme is adopted, and my advice to them was to take the scheme which was going to saddle them with the least cost.

Mr. HARDACRE: What made you change your opinion?

The PREMIER: It was suggested last year by the hon. member for Moreton that as there were a number of members on this side of the House who were very unwilling, owing to not being well informed on the matter, to deal with the question, we should get an independent commission, who would give us an impartial report. I got that independent commission appointed, and hon. members have the report of that commission and have seen the lithograph attached to it. In appointing that commission, I asked them to do this: To disregard entirely all the party statements they might hear in Rockhampton—to disregard them entirely whatever side they were on. I put the Government steamer "Fitzroy" at their service, and asked them to make a thorough investigation into all aspects of the question, and to tell me not this policy or that policy—what this one or that one said—but to give me the facts in relation to the engineering difficulties in both cases, the financial burdens either scheme would impose on the district, and the facts of the case from a navigation point of view. I asked them to secure the opinion of the old harbour-master, Mr. Sykes, who had been working in these waters for over thirty years, and the opinion of the new harbour-master, so that the matter might be considered from a sailor's point of view.

Mr. LENNON: Would you define the depth of water you consider necessary?

The PREMIER: Twenty-four feet at all states of the tides, so that a ship could go in at any time during night or day. As for the facts, they are related in this report by these three competent engineers, and hon. members can form their own judgment about them. But let me say why I asked for 24 feet of water at low tide. It is the general policy of the Government on this matter to try and get for all our ports along the coast a minimum depth of 24 feet of water at low tide. The three main aspects of our development policy are: To extend our railways to open up new country; to improve our ports so that we will be able to give to our producers the advantages of the largest class of ships trading to Australia; and to bring out immigrants as this development proceeds. Hon. members know just as well as I do that this policy has been pursued with every port along the coast from Brisbane to Thursday Island. There is not a port, with the exception of Maryborough and Bundaberg, that has not benefited from that policy. Of course a port with only 12 feet of water cannot be given 24 feet to-morrow. You can only work up to an ideal, but every port has been improved, and the facilities for the produce of the country being disposed of bettered. I had a deputation the other day with regard to a deep-water port at Urangan Point. This was from the Wide Bay members, and I may say that I am just as

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much in sympathy with their project as I am with the project now before the House. It is just as necessary that the producers in the Wide Bay district should have deep-water facilities for their trade as the producers in the Central district.

Mr. LENNON: They all have our sympathy. We join with you in that.

The PREMIER: It is no use subsidising large steamers to come to Queensland if you do not make your harbours available for them. You must not suppose that because a ship can wait in Brisbane or in Glasgow, she can do the same on the coast of Queensland. The ships on the coast of Queensland are passing down the coast as a railway train passes through a number of wayside stations. When they come to the final port it is quite another matter. And you will find that the ports of the old country—Glasgow, Liverpool, London—have spent millions of pounds in making docks into which ships can sail and lie at all states of the tide. I think it is an essential thing for the development of this country that we should steadily pursue a policy of giving all our main ports from here to Cairns 24 feet of water at low tide. (Hear, hear!) Let me take the case of Broadmount. Only one ship in every twelve that have come to the bay have gone into Broadmount. Around the wharf at Broadmount there is abundance of water, but the difficulties of a narrow, tortuous channel and the small depth of water—17 feet—are such that as a general result eleven out of every twelve ships that go there lighter in the bay. I distinguish between the big sea ships that go there and the ships that go up the river to Rockhampton. Let me mention one thing here. It is said that to make a port at Port Alma will relieve the Rockhampton Harbour Board from work in the river. That is not correct. It will only relieve them from the work in the estuary of the river.

Mr. RYAN: But they don't spend anything there.

The PREMIER: I refer to the entrance to Broadmount, and the average cost of maintaining that entrance is £800 a year. I think that Broadmount has been dredged out six or seven times since it was first opened. It means continual work to keep it even at a minimum depth of 17 feet.

Mr. RYAN: They only spent £21 15s. in two years—not £800, as you say.

Mr. GRANT: That is ridiculous. The average is £800 a year.

Mr. RYAN: No, £21 15s.

The PREMIER: The average cost of maintaining it for the last five years has been £800 a year.

Mr. RYAN: Into Broadmount?

The PREMIER: Yes, the channel between the bay and Broadmount.

Mr. GRANT: The Middle Channel.

The PREMIER: The point I wish to make here is this: That the thing I am trying to get done for Central Queensland I am also trying to get done, and have been trying to get done, for other ports in the State equally. Let me call attention to several things that occurred here the other day. The Minister for Mines, in answering a question asked by someone on the other side of the House about 100 tons of Dawson coal that was sent away as a sample somewhere, gave the particulars of the cost, and I noticed, when he was reading, that one of the items of cost in sending away that coal was £41 some odd shillings for lighterage in the bay. Just imagine what that means to that particular centre—the Central district! Think of that. Why should that great district—one-third of Queensland—be

saddled for all time with that handicap on its trade? Do not members of this House think that it is a fair thing for the members of that district to ask this House to consent to some better method of handling their shipping there?

Mr. LENNON: Why was that coal not shipped from Broadmount?

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman reminds me of an incident that took place the other day, and probably you all saw it in the papers. A ship was going into Broadmount for some horses, and the flood tide happened to be early in the morning. That morning also happened to be foggy, and the pilot refused to take the responsibility of taking the ship in there.

Mr. HARDACRE: He said there was no reason why he should not go in.

The PREMIER: I know that a gentleman like the hon. member for Leichhardt would take it in at once, but, unfortunately for the owners of that vessel, the hon. member for Leichhardt is not the pilot. And the pilot, who knows the channel there and knows the situation quite well, did not care to risk it.

Mr. HARDACRE: The pilot said there was no reason why he should not go in.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

The PREMIER: The pilot said that he would have to wait till next morning as it would be ebb tide later on in the day, even if the fog cleared. But it did not suit the captain of the vessel to wait until next day. If hon. members will look at the plan, they will see that across the North Channel, at the entrance into Broadmount, there is a cross current which makes it difficult for large ships on the ebb tide.

Mr. GRANT: There are seven leads going in there.

The PREMIER: As a matter of fact, that ship went to Gladstone. They went ashore and sent a wire up to the owner of the horses, asking him to ship the horses at Gladstone, and the ship went down to Gladstone and got the horses there. And that very morning, when that ship was waiting outside Broadmount and could not get in owing to the fog, the "Wodonga" sailed in and out of Port Alma.

Hon. R. PHILP: And the captain of the "Wodonga" could have gone into Broadmount, too.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I am telling hon. members what the facts are. I am not explaining it at all. (Opposition laughter.) I am giving the facts, and hon. gentlemen can explain it for themselves.

Mr. BARBER: Read the statement of the pilot himself. He is the man to explain it.

The PREMIER: The action of the pilot himself is quite enough for me.

Mr. BARBER: You are not quoting his statement.

The PREMIER: As I have said, of the 2,000 ships which have come to the bay during these years, only one in twelve has been taken into Broadmount. As a matter of fact, it is only one particular kind of trade that ships come there for—a meat ship, for instance, that does not mind whether she has to wait a day or two longer or not, or a ship of that kind. Those are the only ships that have gone in, except on rare occasions.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I suppose that sometimes they do not want to lose time.

Mr. BARBER: Over 200 vessels have called at Broadmount in the last seven years, including vessels up to 11,000 tons and drawing 24 feet 2 inches of water.

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The PREMIER: That is quite true—230, I think, is the exact number. There is no trouble about the water at Broadmount if you only wait for the tide. There is a big rise there, if a ship will only wait for the tide. It will take in a ship drawing 24 feet of water if she will only wait for the flood tide.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I think that hon. gentleman will understand that I have no reason to misrepresent the facts of this case on either side.

Mr. LENNON: You would not do it. (Opposition laughter.)

The PREMIER: I have no reason to do it.

Mr. MULLAN: You want the railway?

The PREMIER: Certainly.

Mr. MULLAN: Would not that justify you in exaggerating it a bit? (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: No. I do not care a snap of the fingers whether the deep-water port is made at Broadmount or at Port Alma—not a snap of the fingers. But I do not want to see that district saddled with a larger expenditure to get that deep-water port than is necessary to saddle it with. I think that it should be saddled with the full cost, but I do not want it to be more than is necessary. I have done my best to give members of the House the very fullest and most accurate information on the subject. I disregard myself, and I ask hon. members to disregard many partisan statements on both sides, and to consider simply this one question: Are they wanting to get a deep-water port for that district?

Mr. LENNON: Certainly.

The PREMIER: And if they want to do that, are they wanting to get it at the least possible cost?

Mr. HARDACRE: Yes, 20 feet at Broadmount.

The PREMIER: The interjection of the hon. member is the most complete condemnation of the Broadmount scheme that can be made—20 feet on Broadmount. Is the Central district never to have more than 20 feet for their deep-water port?

Mr. HARDACRE: In time to come.

The PREMIER: In time to come they will have to spend £290,000 to get it. I think that even such a friend of Broadmount as the hon. member for Leichhardt does not consider that the Central district should do with 20 feet in its deep-water port.

Mr. HARDACRE: It is ample for all requirements for some time.

The PREMIER: Another argument in this direction. The deputy leader of the Opposition said so much money had been spent on Broadmount, and were we to lose all that money? I ask hon. members just to think for themselves, is that the question?

Mr. LENNON: Part of the question.

The PREMIER: Is that the question hon. members ought to be impressed with? Is not the question this: Not what has already been spent on Broadmount, not what has already been spent on Port Alma, but what will be required to be spent to make either of them available as a proper deep-water port? Is that not the question? Are we going to spend £100,000 extra because we have already spent money somewhere else? Do not imagine that I am adopting a particular policy for my own district other than I have adopted elsewhere. Let me give one instance. When we were negotiating with the Orient Company that when the subsidy ceased next month that they

should continue their service for the next ten years, they wanted us, because of the increased size of their ships, to give a better entrance to the Brisbane River. They wanted a channel 400 feet wide instead of 300 feet wide, and they complained of the turns in the channel. Hon. members can readily imagine, if they just think for a moment, that a ship 400 feet or 500 feet long, coming up a narrow channel 300 feet wide—a channel whose edges are submerged—they cannot see the edges of it—a long ship coming up a narrow channel 300 feet wide is in a very difficult situation. She cannot turn, and she knows she cannot turn. She cannot even stop; if she stops and loses way and will not answer the helm, there are a hundred chances to one she will be on the bank at once. They, therefore, asked us to widen the channel, and the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers, Mr. Cullen, brought before the notice of the Treasurer and myself, and showed us that from the West Beacon at the mouth of the river the present channel went off at a slant towards the Pile Light—almost at right angles—and he pointed out that the wisest thing to do was not to deepen that channel, on which something like £100,000 had been spent, but to go straight across to deep water, so that we would have practically a straight channel from deep water up to Pinkenba 400 feet wide. Although the channel, that had cost over £100,000, was disregarded, I venture to challenge any person who knows anything at all about it whether we did not do a wise thing in providing the straight channel.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I appeal to the hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Forrest, who knows something about that locality, whether the Government did not act wisely in that matter.

Mr. RYAN: It was Mr. Cullen's recommendation.

The PREMIER: It was Mr. Cullen's recommendation. You do not imagine that the Minister took on the work of an engineer.

Mr. RYAN: Mr. Cullen recommended Broadmount.

The PREMIER: If I had brought that proposal before this House, the very same thing would have been said then as is being said now: Why did you give up this channel, which cost £100,000?

Mr. RYAN: Oh, no!

The PREMIER: In any case it is best.

Mr. HAMILTON: You took Cullen's advice then, but you refuse to take Cullen's advice now.

The PREMIER: I submit that hon. members, if they are wise, will disregard all question as to what has been spent on Broadmount, but will simply consider what must now be spent to give the Central district an adequate deep-water port. While I admit that Brisbane has preferential claims in the matter of time, considering the importance of the shipping which comes here, I do not admit that Brisbane should have a deep-water port 400 feet wide and 24 feet deep, and that the Central and Northern districts have to set their minds that for all time they will only have a 20-foot channel.

Mr. HARDACRE: They should be left to please themselves.

The PREMIER: It is not necessary. Why should they be content with a 20-foot channel when we can get a 24-foot channel at Port Alma—when there is a 24-foot channel there ready, and has been lying there untouched by a dredge for twenty-seven years, and there is 26 feet of water in it, coming from the open sea as straight as a string, day or night, at any state of the tide.

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All that it wants is a railway costing £70,000 to connect with the main line, and there is all the port Central Queensland requires. I ask hon. members to look at the report of the commission—I think I may say a perfectly impartial report—and they will find—the Secretary for Railways has already given them the figures—that it will cost £290,000 to make Broadmount, and it will cost, in connection with Port Alma, only £135,000. I think in both cases—although the expenditure would not take place at once—in both cases, until the place is developed, you could do with less, but if you are setting about now to give the Central district a port suitable to her present and future requirements, then I say you ought to set your policy to give her a port 24 feet deep at the least.

Mr. NEVITT: Why did you not take advantage of that before?

The PREMIER: I recommend this House to adopt the scheme that will give a perfectly adequate port at the least cost. A very important matter in this connection is whether the harbour board is undertaking a responsibility which is beyond them. The hon. member for Leichhardt has denounced the harbour board, and he has denounced the franchise of the harbour board.

Mr. LENNON: We all do.

The PREMIER: But if they had been elected on the electoral roll, would there have been any difference? It is a very peculiar thing that Mr. Grant and I were elected on the electoral roll, and we quite agree with the harbour board.

Mr. LENNON: It is one of those strange things we meet with.

The PREMIER: In regard to an engineering and financial question of this sort, it is quite absurd to talk about the franchise of the harbour board. The best way is to judge the harbour board by the work it has done, whether they have made a good harbour there or not. Now, there is no better financially managed local body in Queensland than the Rockhampton Harbour Board, and very few local bodies

[5.30 p.m.] have done better work than that board. The Government of Queensland messed about with the Fitzroy River for many years, and at the end of their time, when the harbour board took it over, the minimum depth of water in the Fitzroy River was 6½ feet. To-day, or at any rate within three or four months of to-day, there will be 16 feet of water from the bay right up to the wharves at Rockhampton.

Mr. BARBER: There are several spots with less than 16 feet.

The PREMIER: I have not measured it for several weeks back, but that is the position. I am surprised that the hon. member for Bundaberg has got such an accurate knowledge of this subject; but let me tell him that there are not several spots with less than 16 feet; there is only one spot at the Upper Flats, where the dredge is now making it 16 feet. The work will be done, as I say, in three or four months. Somebody said something about the average depth in the river. The average depth is a great deal more than 16 feet, but the average depth does not matter anything to a ship when her bottom touches at 16 feet. It is the shallowest part of the river that determines the depth of the whole river, so far as the ship going in or out is concerned. I know something about the work they have done, and the difficulties they have had to encounter, and I consider that the Rockhampton Harbour Board have done excellent work for the Fitzroy River and for the producers of the Central district. But the real question is not how the board were elected; it is not even whether it is a good or a bad board; the question for this House to consider when they are asked to vali-

date this agreement is: Is the board financially able to stand at the back of that agreement?

Mr. LENNON: That is doubtful.

The PREMIER: The Minister in moving the second reading of the Bill showed clearly that the board was in a sound financial position. They had a revenue of some £23,600 last year, and I would like hon. members to notice that the harbour board had proposed a scheme for a deep-water port which they are able to finance. The harbour board recognises that they are not able to finance Broadmount. £17,600 a year, without a penny of revenue resulting from that expenditure, would cripple the resources of the board.

Mr. CORSER: They would lose the wharfage, too.

The PREMIER: Out of the £23,000 of revenue which they have at the present time they have to pay £11,000 for interest and redemption on existing loans. Now, if you saddle them with another £17,600 they will not have money to meet it. They know they will not have money to meet it, and they do not propose that. They propose a scheme that they know they have money to meet, a scheme giving a deep-water port that will cost them anything from £3,000 to £6,000 a year—indeed, anything from £2,000 to £6,000 a year. That is a scheme which the board is in a perfectly sound position to stand at the back of. There is no question about the financial position of the board or their ability to finance the scheme which they put forward. I claim that the credit of the board for what they have asked is unimpeachable, and, as the Minister pointed out, if the board either neglect or fail in any way to meet their liability to the Commissioner, the Commissioner has ample power to take over their revenue until his claims are satisfied. I do not think that that is a thing that is likely to happen. Now, I would like to put this question to hon. members: Do they not consider that the person who pays the piper ought to have some voice in determining what the tune is to be?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HARDACRE: There should be a more liberal franchise—alter the franchise.

The PREMIER: Whatever the opinions of this House may be about certain engineering or financial difficulties, I submit that if they expect the board to finance the scheme, then they ought to let the board say what scheme they are to finance. (Hear, hear!) If this House will find £290,000 for Broadmount—first deepening it to 20 feet, and afterwards to 24 feet—that will be all right if they do not ask the board to stand at the back of it; although I should vote against such a proposal myself, because I should prefer to see whoever the money belonged to that it was not wasted on one port when one-half of the amount would give you an equal if not a better port. But the board comes forward with a proposal which it is prepared to stand at the back of, which it is prepared to finance. I put it to hon. members that it is a fair thing that the opinion of the board on this matter should be given some weight. Surely the taxing authority—the board that not only has to pay the money, but has to raise the money—should have some weight, and their opinion as to where the deep-water port should be, and what it is to cost, should, I think, weigh very considerably with hon. members. Now, when I said that those who paid the piper ought to call the tune, it was inferred that the people of Central Queensland paid the piper.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: The consumer.

The PREMIER: If any one class in Central Queensland pays the port fees in this matter, it is

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the payer of dues. Anyone who knows anything about the matter at all knows that on many classes of goods the merchant pays himself; wherever possible he puts it on to the consumer, and quite properly; but in many classes of goods the price he gets does not make the slightest difference, and if anyone should have a voice in the matter it is the payer of dues. I do not want to detain the House, and I have avoided all partisan statements on this matter. I have tried to deal only with the essential part of the question, and although I know that members will doubtless be provided with a good deal of partisan literature and long extracts on this subject, I thought it was much better to leave it alone, and I ask members to try to keep to the essentials of the question. The essentials of the question, I think, are these. Is it desirable that the producers of the Central district should be relieved of the burden of the lighterage by providing them with a deep-water port open at all states of the tide, and which can be entered day or night? As the harbour board, who have managed so well the improvement of the river, are not prepared to face the expense of making Broadmount such a port as is required, and as they are prepared, and are financially able, to make Port Alma available, I think this House should come in and help them. I have tried to show that the policy the Government is pursuing in the estuary of the Fitzroy is the same policy we have been pursuing where we have done any work in Queensland, and I claim again that the board which is to pay the piper ought to have a large voice in determining the tune. So far as I know this is really the position. It is really a question of permitting the producers of Central Queensland to remain handicapped and saddled with the expensive charges and the attendant inconveniences of lighterage in the bay, or helping the board to make this deep-water port at Port Alma, and connect it with Rockhampton. There is not a man who knows anything about the matter, whatever he may say about Broadmount, but knows quite well that if this railway is not passed matters will remain *in statu quo*. I took some trouble to get the British-India steamers on the coast of Queensland. I am trying now to make additional ports available for these ships going straight into them, and I think it would be hard if any consideration, apart from the merits of the case, prevented the people of the district I represent from getting the advantage of this service. They cannot get it if they have to lighter goods; they can get it as soon as a railway is made to Port Alma. As I said before, there are disabilities connected with both ports, but when the men who know the matter best, the men who are responsible, the men who are prepared to pay—when they say they prefer Port Alma—I appeal to hon. members to have some regard for the opinion of those men, who are managing the business of the people of Central Queensland, and pass the second reading of this Bill. It will end a trouble that has been a running sore in the district for twenty years. It will remove a considerable disability from the producers in our district, and I am convinced that it will be an unmistakably good thing for Central Queensland.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BRESLIN (*Port Curtis*): I listened with considerable amusement and interest to the Minister for Railways in introducing this Bill. He is like the young gentleman in a debating society who is allotted to defend a proposition to which he is opposed. The Premier has rather belittled the Minister for Railways. The hon. gentleman referred to me personally as being

anxious to go back to my district and boast that I was able to down the Premier. What has the Premier to do with this Bill? The Minister for Railways is introducing it, consequently the Premier would lead us to infer that the Minister for Railways is only a doll worked on strings as the Premier chooses to pull the strings. I consider that is a great reflection on the Minister for Railways and on the district of Mackay, which he has the honour to represent. Moreover, the Hon. the Premier in referring to my district tried to be sarcastic. It is one of his characteristics to endeavour to be sarcastic. He spoke of the wonderful things he had done for the Gladstone people—how he had built the Boyne Valley Railway for them—but he did not speak of the $4\frac{1}{2}$ -mile peg. If he had been genuinely anxious to benefit Port Curtis, he would not have insisted on the Boyne Valley Railway junctioning with the Gladstone Railway at the $4\frac{1}{2}$ -mile peg. Everything seems to centre in Rockhampton, and the Premier insisted that the Boyne Valley Railway should junction at the $4\frac{1}{2}$ -mile peg. If he were acting fairly for the benefit of Port Curtis, why did he not let that railway come into Gladstone? It would have cost £28,000 more, and the Premier said, "I am a Scotchman, and I must never waste a shilling or a sixpence." He started on that principle, but it only lasted as long as it suited him. We now have a proposition that is going to involve an expenditure of perhaps £500,000, but he is not saving shillings and sixpences now. He would like to pose as the best friend of Port Curtis—as its God and Saviour—and he did it by trying to cut its throat. Port Curtis has advantages which were given to it by Nature. Port Curtis will in the future come to the front in spite of Port Alma or Broadmount, but at present, unfortunately, it has not the power or authority of members who sit on the front Treasury bench. The Premier would try to insinuate that I was actuated by personal objection to himself, but that is not so. I have no personal objection to the Premier, and no personal desire to down the Premier, and no personal objection to Broadmount or Port Alma. But I fail to see how this question can be thrashed out when old members possibly, and new members certainly, have been afforded no chance of obtaining necessary information in connection with the matter. Since yesterday I have studied the report and plan submitted to us concerning Port Alma and Broadmount—the report of the commission. Having done so, I quite understand the objection of the Chief Secretary to submitting this report and this diagram to the House at the earliest date, as it should have been. It should have been one of the first papers laid before the House, but it was not, because when members had time to understand the plan they realised that they were practically asked to support a programme of mud, mud, nothing but mud. The plans give you nothing. You are simply given a prospect. You are shown a plan, and wherever you look on this plan it is mangrove swamp or mud. Where it is not mud flat it is mangrove swamp, and where not a mangrove swamp it is mud. The Minister for Railways adduced a theory in support of this railway that you would get a mud bottom. You could not escape a mud bottom when you have nothing but mud for miles around. At Port Alma you have no protection whatever against the wind or against the heavy sea which the ocean creates under the wind to which the port is very liable. If a vessel is moored broadside against the wharf at Port Alma, and there is a north-east wind, then that vessel is unsafe and must be removed. You have the open sea, the broad Pacific, rolling in against you, and no vessel is built strong enough

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to resist the impact of that ocean on one side and the wharf on the other. There is no protection whatever. When this board of experts were appointed, they were appointed not to consider the suitability of either port, but solely and simply to recommend Port Alma. They were given two men whose advice they were to take, two men who we might say were protégés of their Premier, who had already given their opinion and who had stated what they thought. They thought what the Premier wanted them to think, and they were given as the authority by which the board of experts were to be guided. And what did the board of experts do? They got, as the Minister for Railways has said, on the horns of a dilemma. They were told to report favourably on the port, and when they got there they found their professional feelings would not allow them to do so; and then to save themselves they recommended a railway to be built from Broadmount across the Fitzroy to Port Alma. They actually condemned the line of railway which it is now intended to foist on this House. This board of experts reported on this matter, and the Premier has tried to show what a wonderful saving it is going to be to build this Port Alma Railway. You are going to lose the £300,000 sunk in Broadmount, but it is going to be a wonderful saving. There is no expense required. All you have to do is to build the railway, and there you are. This board of experts recommended that if you have to build this railway, build it *via* Broadmount, because there is land at Broadmount—solid land! At Port Alma there is a story—although I do not vouch for its correctness—that when the board of experts was there they wanted to find the depth, and sank a weight at the end of a rope. They could find no depth, for the weight went right through the mud, and is still sinking. (Laughter.) The board say, by the selection of Port Alma and the adoption of the route they recommend, permanent deep-water approaches to the wharf would be secured, which would be capable of improvement if required, risk of delay by flood would be obviated, and the possible abandonment of the Broadmount Railway line would be avoided. That is a supposition. This board of experts was sent up with the sole intention of reporting favourably on Port Alma from Bajool Junction. They came back to say they could not possibly report favourably on that. All they can say is, "Build a line across Casuarina Island, and, if it is a failure, you still have Broadmount." We will come back to see what a wonderful saving this Port Alma is going to be. They have a wharf there. Twenty-five years ago it cost £20,000, and when we deal with the report of this board of experts we will leave out the question of what has happened to that wharf during the last twenty-five years. It is a wooden wharf with wooden piles, but we will not discuss whether the crabs in that locality have enormous appetites or not. We will consider that that wharf is as good as it was twenty-five years ago. The board say—

The Port Alma wharf should be increased in length by 500 feet and widened. This would cost £30,000. A railway line to junction with the main line near Bajool across the flooded flats would necessitate an outlay of £72,000. Accommodation for traffic working in a second approach to the wharf, allowing for run-round siding and lighting, would ultimately be necessary, and cost £7,000 more. An efficient water supply would cost £26,000. There would still be danger of traffic being stopped on this branch line by abnormal floods in the neighbourhood of Bajool, but how often this might occur cannot be foretold. The annual cost of maintenance of this line would be (say) £1,500, and the annual additional outlay at the interlocked junction would be £500.

That is in connection with the port which was

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going to cost nothing whatever after you built the Port Alma Railway. That report does not deal with the breakwater that would be necessary, and which would probably cost as much again as the figures I have quoted. Another point is the question of fogs. The hon. senior member for Rockhampton referred to the fogs at Broadmount. We were given to understand that nowhere on earth were there such fogs as there are at Broadmount. The hon. senior member for Rockhampton has never seen a fog at Port Alma because he has never been there, because he is content to take the words of those men who want Port Alma. If there are fogs on one side of the river, surely there are fogs on the other side! With reference to the fuss made some days back about the "Santhia" and "Wodonga," I am not

[7 p.m.] going into the reasons why the "Santhia" did not berth at Broadmount. Reasons have been given for and against. I am not going into that, but I point out that there is a wide difference between the "Santhia" and the "Wodonga." The "Wodonga" was in the port, and the "Santhia" wanted to come in. There is a wide difference between entering a port and leaving it. The "Wodonga" was at Port Alma, and had only to leave the port. That was very simple—it was too simple—because Port Alma at high tides is just plain ocean; it is no harbour at all. The mud banks are covered, and it is plain ocean with the ocean swell coming in, whereas Broadmount is a real harbour. There is another matter which no one on the Government side cares to recognise, and that is that while the "Wodonga" is a coastal steamer the "Santhia" is an oversea steamer. They had totally different drafts and totally different cargoes, and there is no comparison whatever between the two vessels. Yet the Premier, the senior member for Rockhampton, the Rockhampton *Bulletin*, and all this little ring who are trying to foist Port Alma on us, quote the "Santhia" and "Wodonga" incidents as a strong and valid reason, and as a great point why the Port Alma Railway should be built. When I took up the Bill with reference to the Port Alma Railway, I was struck with one point in the Commissioner's report, which says—

Much of the route is over flooded country, owing to the overflow from 6-mile and 8-mile Creeks, which extends from about 2 miles to 6 miles, and practically nothing is known as to the height and direction of the water, nor how long the floods last.

I ask hon. members was ever a railway introduced into any House of Parliament and the members asked to support the proposal when the Minister in charge of the Bill could not tell them how long the line was likely to be flooded, how often the line was likely to be flooded, and how long the floods would last?

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It has not been flooded for twelve years.

MR. BRESLIN: The Minister says that there is no knowledge practically, and nothing is known as to the height and direction of the water nor how long the floods will last. Now, can it be called anything but a waste of public money to propose to build a railway over a portion of country in which it is said that nothing is known as to the height and direction of the water nor how long the floods last. Surely it is the first business of the surveyor and the first business of the engineer to know if this country is likely to be flooded, and what steps can be taken to prevent the traffic being interrupted by flood, or is it worth our while to build a railway over that part of the country when we do not know the height and direction of the water, and when we do not know how long the floods last. I consider it is an insult to the intelligence of the

House to ask members to pass a railway under such circumstances when the Minister in charge, the Commissioner, and the Chief Engineer cannot tell us how long that line is likely to be flooded in the wet season, the height to which the water is likely to rise, or how much damage is likely to be done. That is the situation at present. We are asked simply to pass this Bill, and yet that is what the Minister for Railways tells us. He does not know how long it is likely to be flooded in the wet season.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The same argument was used in connection with the building of the railway to Rockhampton in 1902.

Mr. BRESLIN: When the railway was built into Rockhampton in 1902 it was a crime against Western Queensland, and the present Premier was one of the Labour men that supported it, because then, as now, he had only one interest, and that was to make a little stir in the town he represented. I spoke in Committee yesterday about waiting until we got the Rockhampton *Record* with the account of the meeting held at Rockhampton. I asked that the proceedings in connection with this Bill in this House should be delayed until we had an opportunity of getting the *Record* and seeing the account of the meeting held on Monday night; but the Ministers were not in favour of that. Possibly the Premier had a premonition of what was going to appear in the *Record*. Possibly he had a premonition that the *Record* was going to publish the remarks made by the Premier in 1903, when he was not in favour of Port Alma. Possibly the Premier knew, and possibly it was also known by the Minister for Railways, whom the Premier led us to infer is only a dancing doll to dance when the Premier pulls the string—possibly they knew the *Record* was going to expose the Premier in connection with Port Alma. Possibly they remembered that the Premier said in 1903 that he could see no reason why Port Alma should be built while they had Broadmount.

THE PREMIER: That is not what the Premier said.

Mr. BRESLIN: Possibly they could remember that the Premier said that, until there was unanimity in the harbour board, and until the members were unanimous, he would not take any steps towards opening up Port Alma. Are they unanimous now on the Rockhampton Harbour Board? I ask the members of this House if they are unanimous? Everybody knows that the harbour board have only a majority of one in favour of Port Alma, and that majority was obtained only by underground engineering some months ago. Some time back—practically twelve months ago—one of the Rockhampton sailing clubs decided to hold a big regatta to show that the people of Rockhampton had more to depend on for its shipping than the paltry river. They wanted to have a big regatta and make a big showing. Did they go to Port Alma? Not much! They wanted to impress the people, and they went to Broadmount. There was a big regatta held either on Boxing Day or New Year's Day at Broadmount, and it was an immense success. An excursion train was run from Rockhampton, special steamers went down from Rockhampton to Broadmount, and everybody was highly impressed with the possibilities of Broadmount.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Those boats did not draw 20 feet of water.

Mr. BRESLIN: The gentlemen managing the regatta did not take the people to Port Alma so that they could get a good broad sheet of water with safety to themselves. No, they took them to Broadmount. Some time ago the Premier had a trip down the coast in the "Lucinda." When

he got to Rockhampton—he was there about a week, and the "Lucinda" was offered for various purposes, picnics, etc., every day. In view of this present development, we should have expected to read in the Rockhampton *Bulletin* every morning that the Premier had entertained a party of his supporters yesterday at a river picnic, and the party landed at Cheronesse Point, and enjoyed the view immensely, and were immensely struck with the possibilities of Port Alma. Did that happen? Not much. The Premier was too wise to take anybody to Port Alma. Again, we have the senior member for Rockhampton. He impressed upon us the wonderful possibilities of Port Alma—what a wonderful spot it is, what a beautiful spot it is, and what wonderful things can happen there! I have read both the Rockhampton papers for some time—the *Bulletin* and *Record*—and I have never seen in the social columns where the hon. member for Rockhampton entertained his friends at a motor launch picnic to Port Alma, giving them afternoon tea on Balaclava Island, and that they were immensely struck with the propensities of the mosquitoes. I never read anything about that. But when the hon. member went down the river he took very good care to go to Broadmount. Again, we have the hon. member for Clermont. He has declared himself as in support of the Port Alma scheme, because, he says, that, while the Clermont Town Council declared against it, the local divisional board—I did not know we had a divisional board in Queensland now—he applied to the local divisional board, and though they had not a meeting, one member of the board took it on himself to say that he did not think they objected to it. That is one of the reasons why the hon. member for Clermont is supporting the scheme. Again, he quotes the Black Ridge Workers' Political Organisation. I have had considerable dealings with workers' political organisations, and I never knew them to interfere with any railway scheme. I think it takes the Black Ridge Workers' Political Organisation all its time to watch the hon. member for Clermont. He then refers to the Clermont Town Council. I happen to have a paper giving that discussion—he says it was by three to two. He does not refer to the fact that the two did not declare themselves in favour of Port Alma. What they did was to declare themselves in favour of giving the member a free hand to do what he thought fit. This is a report of the discussion—

Alderman Behr and Griffin thought the feeling locally was against the line, in the interests of the people they represented they should vote against it. Alderman Griffin said other lines were wanted more urgently than Port Alma. Alderman Madge said they should not tie the hands of their member. There was too much of that sort of thing done.

That is the instruction the hon. member for Clermont has. He quotes the local divisional board which did not have a meeting, and he quoted the Blackridge Workers' Political Organisation. But I do not think they had any right to give any opinion on the matter, and he refused to recognise the Clermont Town Council. He said the decision was practically unanimous, while three of them said he should vote against it and two gave him the option. Rockhampton has been granted Broadmount. Years ago this proposition was carried. There was an immense sum of money spent on the wall, and an immense sum of money spent on the railway and on the Alexandra Bridge across the Fitzroy. The land was cut up, a township created there, and everything was done to give Rockhampton a good deep-water port for all their requirements. At that time the people of Rockhampton unanimously approved of Broadmount. The *Bulletin* published no sensational articles against Broadmount.

Mr. Breslin.]

When the Broadmount Railway was opened the *Bulletin* published very laudatory articles about it. Everyone was in favour of Broadmount. The Premier, who represented Rockhampton at that time, was in favour of Broadmount. The hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Oxley were also in favour of Broadmount. What more can the Minister want? Those hon. members were not boys at the time—they had formed their opinions; they knew what they were doing, and surely there is no reason why they should be forced to change their opinions now. When the Port Alma Bill was introduced previously, surely the hon. member for Bulimba and the hon. member for Mackay knew what they were doing when they opposed a Bill of that kind.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They did not do anything of the sort.

MR. BRESLIN: I cannot speak of the hon. member for Mackay.

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not a word was said about it.

MR. MANN: There was a word said about it.

MR. BRESLIN: The money had been spent in Broadmount and a railway built down one side of the river. The Lake's Creek Meatworks is the principal firm exporting from Rockhampton, and they are quite prepared to use the line to Broadmount, and the directors say that if the line was built to Port Alma they would not use it. They are quite prepared to use the line to Broadmount, and they do use it. They are quite prepared to send their products over the Broadmount line, and if the exports are there the ships will come to take them away. The harbour board say: "We want more money spent. It does not matter how much you have spent on Broadmount, we are tired of that, and we want a new port. Give us Port Alma and let us see how much money we can sink in that." Now, practically £300,000 has been spent on the river, on which amount the harbour board had to pay interest and redemption. We are told that the harbour board is a solvent body. When a body is solvent its assets should be at least equal to its liabilities. And what assets had the Government for the £300,000 sunk in the Fitzroy River? If the river improvements are to be allowed to go, what is to become of this £300,000? The Premier this afternoon boasted of the income of the harbour board. They have a big income, but it must be remembered that £8,000 of that income comes from Mount Morgan, which has been drawing a tremendous amount of ironstone from Iron Island. On the 31st of next month, that will be totally unnecessary, as Mount Morgan will then be drawing all its fluxing ore direct from Many Peaks, by train. It will not pass over the wharves at all. The port can certainly expect a much less amount of revenue than it at present derives from iron ore which is brought in by steamers, and then taken by train to Rockhampton. With reference to this Port Alma line, we are only told what the railway is going to cost. The proposed railway is 16½ miles in length, and will run over mud flats.

MR. HARDACRE: No benefited area.

MR. BRESLIN: No benefited area, coming right along over the mud flats, so that the Minister does not find it necessary even to put a fence up. We are told this is going to cost £72,000. There is no question of the enlargement of the wharf or of a water supply. What is the use of bringing boats alongside a wharf when you have to bring water 30 miles away down to the boats? So, perhaps, there will be

[*Mr. Breslin.*

an expensive water system. At Broadmount you are on land, not on a mud flat; you have water, and there is no expense for carriage of water. Everything points to Broadmount. At Port Alma we have nothing ahead of us but unlimited expense. We want a water supply, we want a jetty, we want breakwaters after that, because the north-east winds would come in and smash up any boats that berthed against the jetty; and then, finally, when it is proved to be an unmitigated failure, we will be requested to allow the Government to take it over, because it was a mistake to build it. That is the ultimate result, and I do not see why members should be asked to countenance it. We are told that the Rockhampton Harbour Board is a solvent body, and that it only owes £300,000, and pays the interest. There is a certain amount of imports to Rockhampton. It is proposed to incur another tremendous increase, and practically double the liability, and you are going to split the imports up between the two schemes. The Port Alma advocates at present will not admit that they are going to abandon the river, but at the same time they are going to take all the cargo from the Port Alma wharf. They are going to maintain the river, which is costing them £15,000 and interest at the present time, and they are going to keep on paying that, but they are not going to do anything for it; the river is not going to earn anything, it is only going to spend. If the harbour board is solvent at present when it owes £300,000, which is doubtful, when it owes £600,000, and has only the same income, it is pretty hard to see how it is going to be solvent. That is what we are told. Possibly the Premier, as a financier, may resign his position and go up to manage the railway at Port Alma. Some years ago, on the Financial Statement, he explained that while he borrowed £3,000,000 he was only paying interest on £2,000,000. Possibly he means to do the same with Port Alma and make the income, which at present can pay the interest on £300,000, fulfil the same duty when the liability will be £600,000. Again, we are told that this is not drawing on Government funds at all. It is only going to be a loan to the harbour board. At present, when we are really pressed for money in many ways, and want different things done, if we want a railway station fixed up we are told the Treasury cannot afford the money. I had the pleasure of going on a deputation with the hon. member for Mitchell some weeks ago to ask that Longreach Station should be improved and made respectable. We were told there was no money for that purpose, that there were requests from all over the country; and yet the Government is expected to find £200,000 to sink in this scheme. It is all very well to say that this money is going to be lent; the Government has to find it, even if it is only lent a day, with no prospect of ever getting it back. Now, the Minister for Railways referred to the two ports and said that he would have only one set of dues. As I just said, we are really going to make the dues, which are sufficient to pay the interest on a certain amount, pay the interest on twice that amount. There are financiers on the other side, and possibly the Treasurer should be able to work it out to the satisfaction of the Minister, but to an ordinary person it seems impossible to carry out. We are told a lot about Broadmount. I have a list here of the vessels which went into Broadmount. The Premier spoke this afternoon about the Torres Strait service, and why a port had to be provided at Rockhampton where these vessels could enter. I was considerably surprised, on looking at this list of vessels which had been into Broadmount during the last two years, to find that the Torres Strait steamers have been

going into Broadmount regularly, and yet we are told that we must provide a place for them to go in.

Mr. HARDACRE: At all hours.

Mr. BRESLIN: Three of the vessels, the "Carpentaria," the "Banffshire," and the "Drayton Grange"—every vessel that is really connected with the Torres Strait service—have been going in regularly to Broadmount, yet the Premier holds out as an inducement that we must spend hundreds and thousands of pounds, that we must provide a place where these boats can go in. Why is it necessary to provide another place? They do not want to go into two places. If they are going into Broadmount they certainly have no intention of going out and putting into Port Alma to oblige the Premier. If they could not go into Broadmount there would be something in it. I find that on the 20th October, at 6:30 p.m., the "Ayrshire" went into Broadmount and loaded 6,000 bales of wool. The "Ayrshire" is a vessel of 11,000 tons gross, and is the largest steamer trading to Queensland. On the 23rd she went out at 7.30 p.m. Again, there is the "Orange Branch." If I remember rightly, about two years ago I was in Rockhampton and I saw the "Orange Branch" up against the Lake's Creek wharf, and if there is an argument for the river it should be that. We are told by the Minister that the object of this is to do away with lightering. I think the object of the Rockhampton Harbour Board should be to improve Broadmount first for big steamers like the "Ayrshire," and then to improve the river, so that, instead of the "Orange Branch" going up once, she could go up every time, and every vessel like her also. There is no mud at Lake's Creek wharf. In 1908 we had conflicting opinions about this railway. Are they any different in 1909? Why should these opinions have altered? It is the same railway, to the same place, and the same junction, with the same opportunities, and the same advantages or disadvantages. Why should this be forced on the House again? We were told all these things before, and the Bill was withdrawn, and I hope the Bill is going to be withdrawn again before we have a forced division. In conclusion, I wish again to remark that I repudiate the idea that I am actuated by personal animosity to the Premier. As I said before, I regard this dispute between Port Alma and Broadmount as quite immaterial to the port in my electorate, because they are both harbours which have to be improved by the ideas of men, whilst the port in my electorate has been created by Nature. We would be distant 30 miles further than Port Alma, and within a few years I do not see why that difference should not be overcome. Meanwhile, I intend to speak and do my best in this matter to defeat the Port Alma Railway. I consider it is totally unfair to Rockhampton. There was a big meeting in Rockhampton last Monday night, presided over by the mayor. It certainly had not the illuminating presence of the senior member for Rockhampton, but there was a number of representative citizens, and a prominent member of the harbour board spoke. These citizens were dead against Port Alma; they asked for Broadmount. To bring the thing into concrete shape, I would not ask the Premier to resign—that would be too much to ask—because he would probably lose his seat, but if the senior member for Rockhampton is really in earnest, suppose he resigns his seat—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Will you pay his expenses?

Mr. BRESLIN: Oh, no! I am not supporting the Port Alma Railway. Let the Bill be postponed; let the senior member for Rock-

hampton resign his seat, and contest the election solely on one issue—the Port Alma Railway. Let an opponent be brought out—not a Labour man, not a supporter of the Independent Opposition, not a Government man, but simply an opponent of the Port Alma line.

[7.30 p.m.] Then we would have some idea of the feeling of the people of Rockhampton on the question. I sincerely hope the Bill will be withdrawn. It has been brought forward at this late stage of the session, when we are asked to sit five afternoons and five nights, and sometimes five mornings, a week to put the Estimates through and pass necessary measures. It is at a time like this that we have the Port Alma Railway sprung on us. If the Government were so keen on it, why was it not in the first bunch of proposals? We had eight railways introduced earlier in the session. Why was not this one brought forward at that time? And when I asked the Minister for Railways, without notice, whether he intended to introduce this railway, why could he not say it was to be introduced the next day? No, in that case he would have given members another day to consider it, whereas now it is all hurry and bustle to get the thing through. I enter my emphatic protest against the Bill, and will vote against it. In all fairness and justice it should be withdrawn and held over till next session, so that members may have an opportunity of knowing what they are doing. There are new members on both sides who have not seen Port Curtis, or Port Alma, or Broadmount, and they are asked to vote blindly on this question. Why not hold the Bill over till next session, so that they may have an opportunity of seeing these ports?

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Let us go in the "Lucinda."

Mr. BRESLIN: Let the Premier take us in the "Lucinda" to see these ports.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BRESLIN: It is dinned into our ears over and over again that this is not a party question, and why does not the Premier give members on that side an opportunity of knowing what they are doing instead of expecting them to vote like party machines? I appeal to the Minister for Railways as a Northern member, and to his colleague, Mr. Swayne, who are the only Northern members who have not so far signified their disapproval of the line, whether the Bill should not be withdrawn. In the meantime, members might go and see what there is to see, and come back prepared to vote according to the information they have obtained, and not in a certain way just because the Premier wants a railway built in his pocket borough. After seeing the different places with their own eyes, let them exercise their own intelligence and vote as they think fit without fear or favour.

Mr. BRENNAN (*Rockhampton North*): I have received some wires asking me to vote against the Port Alma Railway. The deputy leader of the Opposition read a telegram from the mayor of North Rockhampton, from whom I received a similar telegram. I also received one from the clerk of the Livingstone Shire Council, who says—

Livingstone Shire Council passed following resolution to-day:—"That it strongly objects to the building of the Port Alma Railway as it is detrimental to the best interests of this shire and the public generally and further as existing railway to the port of Broadmount is sufficient for all purposes providing a few thousand pounds are expended in opening up channel into that port also that the Government be asked to grant same freight concessions for the Broadmount Railway as already promised to the Port Alma Railway."

These two bodies—the North Rockhampton

Mr. Brennan.]

Council and the Livingstone Shire Council—take in all Rockhampton North electorate, and as the feeling there is against this railway, I consider it my duty to respect that feeling; and, even if I did not see exactly in that way myself, I would feel bound to vote against this railway. With respect to the agreement, I have a cutting here from a paper dated 21st March, 1908, giving an account of a meeting held by Mr. Thallon, Commissioner of Railways, and the harbour board at Rockhampton on the previous day. Mr. Thallon said he estimated the cost of the line would be £47,000 from Bajool, but there would be an additional expenditure of between £5,000 and £8,000 to build a wharf, and this, he expected, would be done by the harbour board. The guarantee required by the Commissioner would be to cover working expenses and 3 per cent. on the capital outlay. What concerned him was whether the line would pay, and the material point was whether the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company, the Howard Smith Company, and the Adelaide Steamship Company would undertake to use the Port Alma Railway instead of using tenders. The Commissioner went into the matter with the harbour board some week or so afterwards, and found that a mistake had been made; and he reported that instead of £47,000 he should have given the cost as £70,000. The Commissioner's report does not say that it will pay. He merely recommends it because the State will not lose by it. This railway to Port Alma is not recommended by the commission of experts, and, as the Minister for Railways put it, they were on the horns of a dilemma. There is plenty of water at Port Alma—in fact, too much of it—but no land. But at Broadmount there is at present too little water but plenty of land. The greatest trouble with taking the Port Alma line *vis à* Bajool is that the trains could not be relied on to run with any degree of regularity. It would be possible for a number of passengers to be landed at Port Alma, and if there were a flood, they might have to remain there a day or two. Mr. Thallon put down his estimate at £70,000 for the branch line to Bajool; but Messrs. Moncrieff, Pagan, and Cullen put it down at £72,000, with an additional £7,000 for accommodation for traffic working in a second approach to the wharf, allowing for run-round siding and lighting, which would mean £79,000. According to this special report of the three last named gentlemen, the wharf at Port Alma is 500 feet long while the Broadmount wharf is 600 feet long, and the Port Alma wharf would require extension. It is isolated, there being no land approaches of any kind in existence. It is 200 feet from land, and the wharf is really out in the ocean. The commission say that it would be necessary in this case to construct a new line to connect with the railway system, but any attempt to do so across the flat and flooded country between the Casuarina and Inkerman Creeks would be fraught with great difficulties in construction. Such a line would be 16½ miles long and be liable to interruptions in working in some seasons. This the Commissioner looks on as a serious disadvantage if harbour accommodation is provided for the express purpose of giving quick despatch to vessels at all times. For what purpose is a deep-sea port wanted if it is not for giving quick despatch to vessels at all times? This is damning the place without any praise at all. The only thing they recommend is a line across the Fitzroy River to Port Alma, so as to utilise both the present railway and Port Alma. But they do not say one word about the Bajool line, and the Government, without a single word, throws over this report. The only use the Government makes of it is to use the enormous figures for dredging given against Broadmount. The rest of these men's opinions is not taken for

[Mr. Brennan.

anything, and although they say nothing in favour of the Bajool route, we in this House are asked to pass it. Nothing has been said by the supporters of Port Alma in favour of Broadmount, but Mr. Cullen has shown that from 17 to 20 feet could be provided for steamers at a cost of £19,300.

Mr. GRANT: No, it will cost £60,000 to dredge it to 20 feet.

Mr. BRENNAN: I have here a report made by Mr. Cullen on the 11th December, 1903, and in that report he says that to increase the depth of cuttings 300 feet wide from 17 to 20 feet at low-water springs would cost £19,300.

Mr. MURPHY: There is a lot of difference between that and £60,000.

Mr. BRENNAN: Mr. Cullen also says in that report—

Turning to the question of navigation, the Middle Channel is a very easy entrance to navigate. At the North Channel fork care is demanded, but only difficulty—which can only occur on an ebb tide—is probably not so great as is experienced under similar conditions at Rocky Point, in the South Channel; in this respect I believe that the harbour-master and pilots at Rockhampton agree with me. The proposed depth of 17 feet at low-water springs will practically admit all coasting steamers without appreciable delay. On the unusual conditions, when a coasting steamer drawing over 17 feet would arrive at the moment of low water at spring tides, any delay would be short, owing to the large range of tide here, and consequent rapid rise. A desire to provide such depth as would preclude possible delay is natural, but the great majority of ports have not the advantages that a low-water depth of 17 feet with a tidal rise up to 16 feet gives, and any depth over 17 feet at low water would probably not be required half a dozen times per annum. I would mention that it is only about four and a-half years since the depth in the Brisbane River reached 18 feet below low water, with a tidal rise of but 4 to 7 feet, and at present the minimum is only 20 feet. The Clyde, even at the present time, has only 19 feet at low water, with a rise of 6 to 10 feet.

It seems to me utterly preposterous to build the Port Alma Railway, which the Commissioner says will cost £100,000, while Mr. Cullen, the marine engineer, who has made a number of reports in connection with the harbour at Rockhampton, says that the depth at the entrance to Broadmount can be increased from 17 feet to 20 feet at a cost of £19,300. We ought to turn our minds away from Port Alma altogether and see what has been said about Broadmount. I think that the best thing that the Government can do is to withdraw this Bill altogether and go in for Broadmount baldheaded. With regard to the advantages of Broadmount, I have here a cutting from a newspaper dated 25th April, 1908.

Mr. MURPHY: What is it, the Rockhampton *Bulletin*? (Laughter.)

Mr. BRENNAN: No; it is the *Record*. It says here—

The Branch liner "Vine Branch" berthed at the Broadmount wharf from the North on Thursday, and resumed her voyage South yesterday morning. Captain Ritson, who is well known in this port, is in command. . . .

In the course of conversation on Thursday night, Captain Ritson was asked if he would give expression to his opinion of Broadmount. Captain Ritson said he was perfectly satisfied with Broadmount; he did not wish for a better port. "I have found it very easy to get into and just as easy to go out," said the captain. "As for the facilities for loading and unloading here, they compare very favourably with those of any port I have been in. You have plenty of water at the wharf and an excellent swinging basin. The wharfage accommodation is splendid, and I note that you are connected by rail with the town. Just let me say, in conclusion, that I have been up your river with my vessel. Well, I never want to do so again, and I shall always advocate berthing my vessel at Broadmount in preference to going up the river."

"Port Alma?—Well, I have never been to that anchorage, and never want to go. I have heard of it." Then we will take the opinion of Captain

Peebles, one of the oldest pilots on the coast. This is what he said about Broadmount, according to this newspaper cutting—

Just then, Captain Peebles, the well-known coast pilot, happened to visit the captain's room, and, renewing an acquaintance with the visiting Pressman, also spoke of Broadmount and Port Alma—

“Broadmount? Well, I should say that in Broadmount you have a port that should be good enough for Rockhampton for many years to come,” said Captain Peebles. “You have, first of all, two channels, one (pointing to Middle Channel) by which you can come straight into the wharf, and a second (pointing to the Southern Channel) which you can use by a little dredging. (Captain Peebles here pointed out how the vessels would be brought to the Broadmount wharf by the use of either channel.) I think it is a fine port, and you have an excellent wharf, with plenty of depth to suit the largest vessel that will ever come here.”

“Port Alma? Have I been there? Yes, many times. And I cannot for the life of me see why the people of Rockhampton are advocating the construction of the Port Alma line, when here, at your river mouth, you already have a deepwater port connected by rail with the town. It seems to me that it will be purely a waste of public money, and I do not think the people will sit down and see it spent. You have all the facilities here for a splendid port, equal to the best.”

The *Record* also said—

In connection with Broadmount, it has been argued that the bay vessels could not get in and out on the one tide. On Easter Monday the China Navigation Company's steamer “*Taiyuan*,” drawing 20 feet, berthed at the Broadmount Wharf, loaded a cargo of frozen meat, which occupied two hours, and then had half an hour to spare to enable her to go out. The “*Taiyuan*” came in and went out without the least difficulty on the one tide.

It is also a well-known fact that although many vessels have entered the port of Broadmount, yet there has not been one single accident in connection with any of the vessels entering or leaving that port. I have shown from the report of Mr. Cullen that a sum of £19,300 will dredge the middle channel from 17 feet to 20 feet. I would just like to say a word or two about the Rockhampton Harbour Board and their guarantee in connection with this railway. When the Railways Act of 1906 was introduced, it was never intended that a harbour board should be able to guarantee the building of a railway. It was a function that belonged to shire councils, divisional boards, and such local authorities. I see nothing in the Bill before the

[8 p.m.] House about any person having any right to object to the construction of this railway. That is one of the most important sections of the Railways Act of 1906, because the ratepayers are given three months' time wherein to call a meeting, and it is open to the ratepayers to oppose the construction of the railway. This is what the Act says—

At any time within two months from the first publication of such notice any owner or occupier of land within the said district, and any local authority having jurisdiction therein, may, by notice in writing to the Minister, make objections to the boundaries of the said district, and state the grounds for such objections.

That is the benefited area. There is no benefited area under this Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is guaranteed by the board.

Mr. BRENNAN: The Act goes on—

The Minister may, if he thinks necessary, authorise an officer of the Commissioner, or some other person, to hold an inquiry with respect to such objections or any of them, and report to him thereon.

The Commissioner may amend the boundaries of the said district in such manner as he thinks right and just, and in such case the map and description aforesaid shall also be amended accordingly.

At any time within three months from the first publication of such notice, any thirty ratepayers within the said district may, by application to the Commis-

sioner, require that the question whether such district shall be constituted shall be submitted to the vote of the ratepayers in such district.

It is well known that in this district, served by this railway, there are thousands of people who are opposed to this railway, and yet this House is asked to sanction an agreement whereby the harbour board shall guarantee interest on the cost of construction. Who is to bear that loss? The money does not come out of the pocket of the harbour board—it comes out of the pockets of the people in the district. This Government are supposed to be all democrats. We have gone in for home rule, we have gone in for referendums, and we have agreed to a referendum to settle the financial agreement. And now we are asked to build this railway although thousands of people object to it. I presented a petition to this House last year, signed by 2,500 persons, against this railway, and these people have had no opportunity at all of saying whether they are willing to bear any loss that may occur. We are asked to sanction this agreement made with a harbour board elected on a constitution which might have been considered liberal 100 years ago, but it is not considered a liberal constitution at the present time. Under payers of dues, there are 333 voters; these 333 voters have 406 votes, and they have the privilege of returning five members out of the nine.

Mr. MURPHY: Disgraceful!

Mr. BRENNAN: The payers of rates are as follows: Livingstone Shire Council, which has 729 voters, and 913 votes; the Fitzroy Shire Council, 626 voters, and 792 votes; Rockhampton Town Council, 2,772 voters, and 3,223 votes; while North Rockhampton has 438 voters, and 466 votes; or a total of 4,565 voters who have 5,394 votes, and they return four members.

The TREASURER: They do not object to it.

Mr. BRENNAN: They consume all the goods on which harbour dues are paid.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What about the whole of the Central district?

Mr. BRENNAN: Under the constitution of the board 333 men return five members, and 4,365 men, on the same basis, ought to return sixty-eight members. I think it is preposterous for this House to be asked to pass an agreement made by the Commissioner for Railways with the harbour board when there is such a large number of people opposed to this railway, and if we, who are democrats, have any regard for our principles, we ought rather, as I have heard the Premier say—the majority of the people ought to rule—we ought to allow the people an opportunity of saying whether they are agreeable to the proposal or not. We are asked to agree to the building of this railway and wharf, while thousands of people in my own district are opposed to it, and we are not giving them the right to say whether they are agreeable to it or not. There are thousands of people opposed to it, and I say it would be most undemocratic on our part to sanction this agreement, and pass the Bill without referring it to the people. I shall vote against this agreement.

* Mr. CORSER (*Maryborough*): Having taken rather a deep interest in harbour matters during the last fourteen years, I think I may be pardoned for making a few remarks in connection with this Bill. I cannot understand the people of Rockhampton, and at the back of Rockhampton—the people in the Western districts—opposing a measure of this kind. I only wish that we in our district had a similar opportunity, and we would grasp it with both hands. When we look back to some past history, and see the enormous sum of

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money that has been spent on the Fitzroy River and the little that has been obtained as a return for that expenditure—and that which has been attained has been attained since the harbour board has been brought into existence—I think members should look at this straight in the face, and see who are the right people with whom an arrangement of this kind should be entered into. I, from past experience, should say the men who are chosen to manage any concern are the people who should speak with the greatest force, and should be listened to by the people who have appointed them to that position. Some hon. members would say that the scheme has only been passed by a majority of the board, and yet on that side of the House we always hear them say the majority should rule, and if the majority is to rule in one instance, why should it not in another? You cannot, in matters of this kind, decide it upon a franchise, as you would in other matters; those who pay the most dues are the people who should have the biggest say, and it is the payers of harbour dues who appoint the board to a very large extent. They have the control and distribution of the produce that is going out of the port and also of the imports. They have to deal with these matters, and it is for them to say whether they can deal with them better at one port, or at one portion of a port, than another. Just review shortly the position of affairs. After they had failed, to a very large extent, in making a river of the Fitzroy that would be capable at all times to bring up deep vessels, it was thought—and I think wisely—that they should have a port established where there was permanent deep water, and that was Port Alma. A wharf was constructed there at an expense of £37,000, and it was made a good permanent wharf, because the piles were iron and not subject to cobra as at Broadmount. Through political influences the connection between this wharf and Rockhampton was never completed.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: It never will be.

Mr. CORSER: It should be. In course of time, influence was brought to bear to make a port at Broadmount, and what has that proved to be?

Mr. BRESLIN: A success.

Mr. CORSER: It has been an absolute failure in comparison to what the other would have been.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: It has been boycotted.

Mr. CORSER: It was such a failure that the Railway Commissioner, who has the wharf and running of the railway to it, gave instructions that no more expenditure was to be made in improvements. They wanted the harbour board to take it over, and the harbour board, I think very wisely, refused to take it over, and I will tell you the reason why: When you know that there are so many sharp turns and cross currents to get to that wharf, it means a serious detriment to shipping. It means a considerable difficulty in steering vessels. We have it stated on the best information that we can possibly find that the fifth and sixth leads are most dangerous, and we have still further information here that no less than three large vessels went ashore—the "Duke of Buckingham," the "Langton Grange," and the "Kent." That means that a vessel has to pay a larger insurance, and the cargo has to pay a larger rate of freight. If that is nothing to the people of Rockhampton and the people growing wool to the west of Rockhampton, I cannot understand their arguments.

[Mr. Corser.

Mr. BARBER: The "Kent" went ashore, but it was the steering gear which was carried away.

Mr. CORSER: You can always find excuses. It appears to me that there are three things to consider: first, to continue the improvements to the river so that these large vessels can come to Rockhampton proper. I know a little about river improvements, and I know the risk that you take in trying to make these rivers navigable to vessels of that kind. You have not only to find the water by dredging to a depth, but you have to take off the corners so as to enable these large vessels to get round with safety. That may be remedied by expenditure, but the great risk in all rivers is that when you get high floods no one can tell what is going to be the condition of the river after the floods subside. It is quite possible in the Brisbane River, and the Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Rockhampton rivers, that after a severe flood the condition of these channels would be vastly different to what it is to-day. It may mean the stoppage of the trade of the port, and of the districts at the back of it, by reason of these floods having interfered with the access to and egress from Rockhampton, and prudent men would naturally ask, "Is it within their means to get communication with the markets of the world without running the risk of being interfered with by floods?" I think they had two schemes then to consider. One was Broadmount, and we have it on the best authority we can possibly get—

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Who are they?

Mr. CORSER: These three gentlemen who were sent out to make the report, and I presume it is the best that can be secured. Some hon. members mentioned the fact that they could get sufficient water at Broadmount for all purposes for some years to come. I do not intend for a moment to dispute that they could get it, and at perhaps less cost than set down here. I say that when a large and important district, like the Central district of Queensland, goes in for harbour improvements, the least they can do is to go in for them on a permanent basis.

Mr. MANN: And to guarantee the railway.

Mr. CORSER: If they do that, there can be no doubt that they would have to consider the cost of getting 24 feet, at least, at Broadmount or at Port Alma. If you get 24 feet at low water springs, that is going to cost £290,000 odd, with £3,000 a year maintenance, and further than that there is a constant source of expense in connection with the wharf. With my knowledge of the cobra, I should not be surprised if within a reasonable time the wharf will have to be replaced. Those disabilities, so far as Broadmount is concerned, have to be taken into consideration, when there is an alternative scheme to construct a line of 16½ miles to Port Alma on the guarantee principle. The harbour board are prepared to guarantee this, because they see that they can afford relief at the least possible cost and a permanent deep-water port with the cost of maintenance estimated at £1,250 as against £3,000. What would naturally exercise members is this: Is the burden the board has taken on its shoulders too great a one for its income? I venture to say it is nothing of the kind. With an income in harbour dues and wharfage of at least £20,000 a year, and being relieved to a large extent of the annual increasing expenditure in the

Fitzroy, they can easily meet their engagements without risk. If the vessels went to Broadmount the harbour board would receive no wharfage at all; but in the case of Port Alma they get all the wharfage. If you look at the returns, you will find there is only about £1,000 less per annum in wharfage than in harbour dues. That is an important matter, and that amount will considerably more than meet the interest on the guarantee of the £70,000. I think the delay in taking up work of this kind may be fatal. There is no time like the present if you want to study the maintenance of business relations with the markets of the world. You do not want your trade to be disorganised by floods or anything of that kind.

Mr. MANN: This line goes through flooded country.

Mr. CORSER: It goes through flat country, but there will be no rise in the water of sufficient magnitude to more than temporarily interfere with the traffic. It is not like a case where you may get a river silted up and it may take twelve months to bring it to its original depth. Another matter is the saving of lighterage, which may become a very serious tax on the community. You may have strikes and other disturbances, and may not be able to get your goods lightered; but if a vessel comes alongside a pier or wharf, and the goods are brought up by train, there is no trouble of that kind. The steamers coming to our ports at the present time are much larger than those which came here in the past, and as things go ahead we may expect a larger tonnage and deeper boats, and it would be foolish to legislate for the present, or for the immediate future, when you have an opportunity of legislating for a future some considerable distance ahead. It may be considered by some that the Government are handing over a wharf that cost £37,000 to the harbour board in Rockhampton for nil. At first sight it looks as if the Government are giving a good deal away, but taking into consideration the length of time the wharf has been constructed and the return the Government receive from it—if the money invested is lying unproductive, and you can get a board to make use of the wharf, I do not see why we should oppose their scheme, more particularly when the construction of the line from Port Alma to the North Coast line will give on every ton of goods from Port Alma 19 miles of rail charge, which goes into the Treasury. That may be taken as a *quid pro quo* for having given up the wharf. I may also mention that there have already been expended on the Fitzroy River £170,000 by the Rockhampton Harbour Board. They have borrowed more than that, but they have already expended that amount. It is a big amount, and if these amounts have to be repeated periodically, of which there is a danger through floods, it must tax the people of Rockhampton and the people in the district at the back of Rockhampton to meet the interest and redemption. So I feel quite sure that if hon. gentlemen will disassociate from the Bill, as I have done, any personal feeling, and simply analyse it from a State or national point of view, they will not oppose the measure. To me there seem to be no grounds whatever, unless it is some little friction between various parties, who want to occupy a position such as harbour board representatives, why the Bill should be opposed. When these men are appointed to these positions, and the majority of them have stated that this is the best scheme to adopt,

this House should be guided to a very great extent by their views, and not by the views of people outside who have no practical experience in the matter.

HON. R. PHILP (*Townsville*): The Port Alma line is no new thing to this Chamber. It was first brought up in Sir Thomas McLlwraith's time, and the two gentlemen then representing Rockhampton [8.30 p.m.] told him that if he brought such a Bill into the House they would have to resign, and like a wise leader he did not bring in the Bill. For many years it was a fruitful subject of discussion, until in 1895 the Government of the day brought in a Bill to build a line to Broadmount and to erect a wharf there. At that time we took evidence, and had the opinion of the Railway Commissioner, the Chief Engineer, and Captain Almond, the Portmaster. You will see their reports in the proceedings of 1895, and there is not the slightest doubt in the minds of those gentlemen that the port for the Central district was Broadmount. (Hear, hear!) The line was put to the House and was passed. There was no division in the House whether that line should be built or not. All the then members of the House accepted that solution of a difficulty which had been worrying the Central district for many years. The line and wharf were built. The Government dredged the wharf to 17 feet at low water, and why the Rockhampton people have not used that wharf more extensively than they have is a mystery to me. I say, without hesitation, that at the present time Broadmount is the best harbour we have on the coast of Queensland to-day. (Hear, hear!) You will find that at the time before Broadmount was built the most important cargo that was being shipped from the Central district was frozen beef. The whole of that beef was lightered from Lake's Creek in a steamer called the "Leichhardt," and they paid £1 a ton for the lighterage of that beef. But as soon as the wharf was built I think that on every occasion—with the exception of that occasionally carried by one or two small steamers—all the frozen beef from the Central district has been loaded at Broadmount. What more proof should we want that Broadmount is a suitable port when the most difficult cargo that you can have is shipped from there? The Premier talked about the Torres Strait steamers. The Torres Strait steamers get into the wharf at Townsville, where there is nothing like the water you have at Broadmount, and only 10 feet rise at spring tides, while at Broadmount you have at least 16 feet and a 16 feet rise of the tide. And you must remember that when a steamer comes to Townsville it is much deeper in the water than it is when it comes to Broadmount, for it discharges cargo at Townsville, Bowen, and Mackay. The steamers which come from the North could now run alongside Broadmount and discharge their cargo just as expeditiously as at Port Alma. What they do now is to go to Port Alma and lighter their cargo, come on to Brisbane, then they go back to Broadmount, and take in frozen meat. I know if such a thing happened in Townsville there would be a revolution—the people would not stand it. I cannot understand how they stand it now in Rockhampton, and if it was insisted on that the steamers go to Broadmount they would go there now. I think the Premier made a mistake, in an otherwise very good contract, in not including Broadmount. We have the testimony of men of the greatest experience

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before us, and what is that testimony? Messrs. Moncrieff, Pagan, and Cullen simply corroborate what Mr. Stanley said in 1895. They say—

At Port Alma the wharf is only 500 feet long, and would require extension. It is isolated, there being no land approaches of any kind in existence. It would be necessary in this case to construct a new line to connect with the railway system. Any attempt to do so across the flat and flooded country between the Casuarina and Inkerman Creeks would be fraught with difficulties in construction. Such a line would be 16½ miles long, and be liable to interruptions in working in some seasons. This we look on as a serious disadvantage if harbour accommodation is provided for the express purpose of giving quick despatch to vessels at all times. Residential accommodation at Port Alma would also involve a large expense to obviate light running to Bajool Junction. An approach can, however, be made by extending the Broadmount existing line across the river over Casuarina Island and Creek, so reaching the wharf at Port Alma in a distance of (say) 6½ miles. This line would be generally on sounder ground, and not liable to interruption by floods, but would involve a swing bridge, with two 100-feet openings, over the Fitzroy River for the passage of vessels to Rockhampton. The construction of the rail approach by this route would utilise the existing railway and appliances in connection with Broadmount, which would otherwise be rendered useless, and residential accommodation could readily be found there as at present. The cost of the necessary running between Port Alma and Broadmount for traffic purposes would be counterbalanced by the shorter running of all trains to Rockhampton, *via* Broadmount, instead of *via* Bajool.

That bears out what Messrs. Mathieson, Stanley, and Almond said in 1905. These gentlemen were in no way personally interested in the matter, and they chose Broadmount, giving reasons for their choice which convinced all the members of the House in 1895, when not so much as a single vote was given against their recommendation. And now, on the evidence of the three gentlemen whose report we have before us, we would not be justified in supporting the Port Alma Railway. The Premier asks why Rockhampton should not have 24 feet at low water. I say the trade of the Central district at the present time does not justify 24 feet at low water. In Townsville, where there is more business, there is only 17 feet. When they get 20 feet they will be quite happy, and they have not the rise and fall of tide there as at Broadmount. Without a doubt the harbour at Broadmount is the best harbour we have on the coast of Queensland, with its present depth, its present wharf, and its present railway. At Townsville, you will see the trucks come down to the jetty, and take away the cargo from steamers into Townsville and out to Charters Towers and Winton. The same could be done to-morrow at Broadmount. The trucks could go to the wharf and goods might be taken to Rockhampton and Longreach without one shilling being paid. As for the difficulties of the channel, there are difficulties in all channels, and when the first large steamers used to come up the Brisbane River—when the largest steamers that came up were vessels of 250 feet long—there were complaints of the difficulties of the channel. I remember when the "Wonga Wonga" and "City of Melbourne" were trading, the captain of the latter refused to come up the river. When the old Q.S.S. Company were ordering the "Barcoo," which was to be 300 feet long, the captain of the "Maranoa" went home and said it was impossible for a steamer more than 250 feet long to pass Kangaroo Point. Now, we have coasters of 400 feet and we have ocean steamers 600 feet long coming up the Brisbane River. And I say the channel at Broadmount is not more difficult than the channel from the Brisbane bar to the Brisbane wharf. It is the same in Townsville, where I remember that

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at first some of the companies said they would never go in. The largest steamers now coming to Queensland can now go into the wharf at Townsville and discharge their cargo. All the steamers of the last contract, with two exceptions, now go into the Townsville wharf. They discharge their cargo there and sometimes take in frozen meat, and the conveniences at Townsville are not so good, so far as depth of water is concerned, as those at Broadmount. I say if it is possible to do that at Townsville, why is it not possible to do the same at Broadmount? I have no hesitation in saying that if the Premier were to tell that company that they would have to go into Broadmount on their way down the coast and land their cargo at Broadmount, it would be done. At the present time the bulk of the trade at Rockhampton is done up the river altogether, and I dare say that when the Port Alma Railway is finished the trade of Rockhampton will be done up the river just the same. At one time all the wool went to Europe, but now the bulk of it comes to Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne, and is sold here instead of being sent to Europe for sale. Any oversea trade that is to be done in connection with Rockhampton can be done easily at the town wharves or at Broadmount. What trade is there that cannot be done at those places?

Mr. GRANT: There were 39,000 tons of bay trade last year.

HON. R. PHILP: I have no hesitation in saying that the bulk of that, or even the whole of it, could have gone to Broadmount. Why, look at the "Ayrshire."

Mr. LENNON: 11,000 tons.

HON. R. PHILP: She is a very large steamer, because I saw her at Townsville, and I saw her in Brisbane. She went to Broadmount, and after loading a cargo of frozen meat there she loaded 6,000 bales of wool.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. R. PHILP: The cargo might have been lightered on the "Ayrshire" at Broadmount for all I know; but if the Government are prepared to carry the stuff as cheap to Broadmount as to Lake's Creek, there is no reason why a great deal of that business should not go over the Broadmount line. (Hear, hear!) It is to be deprecated that a place with one big seaport should get a railway constructed to another seaport. (Hear, hear!) There are plenty of places in Queensland now which are languishing for railways.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. R. PHILP: It is no reason because the Premier promised his constituents on the hustings that he would bring in this railway proposal that we should pass it. I promised my constituents I would vote against it. (Opposition laughter.) I was asked that question during the election, and I said, "I am opposed to the building of the Port Alma railway." I am not opposed to this railway because I want to hinder the Premier or the Government party. Quite the reverse. If I could conscientiously vote for the construction of this line I would do so. (Hear, hear!) But I cannot see how members, after reading the reports, can vote for two railways to two seaports for the one town. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. LENNON: And to have the river as well.

HON. R. PHILP: We have the condemnation of Mr. Stanley, the late Chief Engineer, and we know that the present Chief Engineer, Mr. Pagan, also condemns the Port Alma line. Our present Marine Engineer, Mr.

Cullen, also condemns Port Alma, and Mr. Pagan condemns it just as strongly as Mr. Stanley did. On these two reports alone we are not justified in going on with the construction of this railway. Certainly, we have a guarantee from the Rockhampton Harbour Board; but if the Rockhampton Harbour Board are going to pay this guarantee, it will mean increased dues for the people of Rockhampton and the people of the Central district.

Mr. GRANT: No.

HON. R. PHILP: It is bound to increase the dues.

Mr. GRANT: No, the line will pay.

HON. R. PHILP: If this line to Port Alma is built the trade of the Central district is not going to double. The sheep are growing, the cattle are growing, the gold is being won and the copper is being won, all despite Broadmount, despite Port Alma, and despite the town wharves. So the construction of this line will not double the trade of Rockhampton at all, but it will double the indebtedness of the harbour board, who have as much as they can do now to keep the river clear and pay their interest and redemption. It will certainly mean that they will have to increase their dues. If they are wise the harbour board will make their dues so heavy during the first three years that it will make the line pay, and then they will get rid of the liability altogether. The construction of this line to Port Alma, instead of relieving the Central district, will be imposing an additional burden on the district. If the trade is justified in time to come, let us dredge Broadmount more. It can be dredged. I remember seeing a report from Mr. Elliott, engineer, saying that he could get 20 feet at Broadmount at a cost of £19,000. If we can get 20 feet at Broadmount for £19,000, I do not see why we should spend £240,000 to get four feet more. (Hear, hear!) I know something about shipping. I may not know much about politics. (Laughter.) I have been engaged in shipping all my life, and I know something about it. I have been up and down the coast of Queensland every year since 1874. Since that time not one year has passed that I have not gone up and down the coast. During my travels on the coast I have talked with all the men in charge of the steamers, and they have told me that there is not the slightest trouble about getting into Broadmount.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. R. PHILP: With regard to what happened the other day about the "Santhia" and the "Wodonga," I am quite satisfied that the captain of the "Wodonga" could have taken his vessel into Broadmount at that time in the face of wind, weather, and everything else.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. R. PHILP: I am satisfied that the Premier would do well to leave this line alone at the present time. (Hear, hear!) The construction of this line has been a contentious matter even in his own electorate. We know that last year five members of the Rockhampton Harbour Board voted against it and four for it, and this year there are five members for it and four against it.

Mr. MANN: That will be reversed next year.

Mr. RYAN: It will be reversed after June.

HON. R. PHILP: The vessels of the Torres Strait service will go into Broadmount and discharge their cargo if the Government compel them to do so. If the vessels coming down the coast are compelled to go into Broadmount, then anyone might own the lighters so far as their trade is concerned. At Townsville they can discharge 1,000 to 1,500 tons of cargo, and then they will not be drawing so much water by the time they get to Broadmount on their way down. Only last week the "Banffshire" went up to Broadmount to load frozen meat: the "Buteshire" is loading frozen meat at Broadmount now, and next week the "Changsha" will go there. Well, if you can load frozen meat successfully you can load any other cargo you like for export. I remember when frozen meat was paying £1 a ton for lighterage before the Broadmount wharves were built, and it is paying much less now. If the lighterage on the 100 tons of Dawson coal that the Premier referred to cost 8s. a ton, more shame to the man who made the arrangement. He ought to have got the coal at Broadmount and shipped it from there. The Railway Department would not want 8s. a ton freight for the 26 miles from Rockhampton to Broadmount. The distance from Rockhampton to Broadmount is 9 miles shorter than the distance from Rockhampton to Port Alma. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. HARDACRE: Nine and a-half miles shorter.

HON. R. PHILP: I hope that the Premier will also be mindful of the taxpayers' money. We have a large sum invested in Broadmount which we want to get some return for. I am satisfied that there is a feeling against Broadmount in Rockhampton. Ever since that line was built there was a feeling against it in Rockhampton, and the people there said, "We will not use it." There is a certain section there that will not use the line, but those who are compelled to use it go in there and load their frozen meat and do it satisfactorily. Mr. Hopper, of Lake's Creek, is quite satisfied with this line and this port.

Mr. KEOGH: You mean the line you have now.

HON. R. PHILP: Yes, the line to Broadmount. Mr. Hopper strongly objects to taking his frozen meat over the river and carrying it so much further to Port Alma. If you can ship frozen meat from Broadmount, you can ship wool, coal, or anything else, because frozen meat is the most delicate stuff we export from Queensland to-day. Although vessels have been going into Broadmount for a long time, I have never heard one single complaint about people being delayed there for a long time.

Mr. HARDACRE: And there has never been an accident.

HON. R. PHILP: And so far as I have heard there has never been a single accident. Pilot Haynes, in giving evidence about the ports, said that Broadmount was the best port. Our late Portmaster, Captain Almond, was a strong believer in Broadmount. We have had his report here before us. Our late Engineer of Railways and our present Engineer of Railways are both totally against Port Alma, and every member of this House knows that at the present time Broadmount can take any vessel that comes to Queensland. They can berth alongside the wharf there and discharge their cargo without any trouble.

Mr. GRANT: The proof of the pudding is that they do not go there.

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HON. R. PHILP: We know that they do go there. The vessels engaged in the Torres Strait service go to Port Alma according to their contract, and lighter their cargo there. They come on to Brisbane, and then go back and load frozen meat at Broadmount. (Hear, hear! and Opposition laughter.) All the vessels coming down the coast go into Cleveland Bay alongside the wharves and discharge their cargo so that they draw less water when they get to Broadmount, and Broadmount has got more water alongside the wharves than we have got at Cleveland Bay. (Hear, hear!) If the trade of the port in time increases, then we can dredge deeper. I am satisfied that dredging will not cost anything like the amount of money estimated. We have dredged in Brisbane to a depth of 24 feet, and the additional 4 feet did not cost anything like £200,000. We blasted rocks away at the same time, and we dredged a distance of 20 miles, whereas there are only 6 miles to dredge at Broadmount. I think the Premier would be well advised to withdraw this line, and get on with business, which, I am sure, will be much more profitable to the country than this railway.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MANN (*Cairns*): When this Bill was first brought before the House, the Premier tried to give the people outside the idea that all the hostility towards this line was because members on this side of the House had an animus against the Premier. Anyone who has listened this evening to the speech delivered by the senior member for Townsville—a speech which showed quite clearly that Broadmount should be the port—can quite see that the opposition to this line is not because of any animosity towards the Premier, but because the proposition itself is a bad one. When listening to the Premier's speech this evening, he reminded me of an old carpenter who lived in Falkirk. One day he got a job from a simpleton to build him a box to hold his clothes: this carpenter was rather short of wood, and one of the pieces used had a flaw in it, but he covered the flaw up with putty, and painted over it. When this poor simpleton came along and saw the putty, he asked why it was put in, and this carpenter, who had the genius of a Kidston, explained that the putty was even better than the wood, and he dwelt on the matter so long and so fully, that at last the simpleton said, "It is a pity you did not build it all of putty." (Laughter.) It seemed to me that the simpleton this evening is the hon. senior member for Maryborough, because the Premier has convinced him that a mud port at Port Alma is better than Broadmount. I am going to prove that there is a very good port at Broadmount, and the man I am going to put in the witness-box is the senior member for Rockhampton. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. RYLAND: We will find him guilty.

Mr. MANN: Hon. members will remember that in 1906 the Premier brought down a Bill to increase the borrowing power of the Rockhampton Harbour Board, in order, as he said, to give them, right up to the town of Rockhampton, a uniform depth of 20 feet of water, and it was claimed on the floor of this House, by members who opposed that proposal, that the Rockhampton Harbour Board was not a business concern, inasmuch as they were deepening the river up at Rockhampton, and leaving the water at the mouth of the river at the same low depth. The member for Rockhampton—

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ton—Mr. Grant—got up, and these are words he used—you will find them on page 1956 of *Hansard* for 1906—

The entrance to Broadmount has been deepened to 17 feet for the last four years. There is fully that depth at all tides from Broadmount to Sea Hill.

Mr. BARBER: How much is there on the bar?

Mr. GRANT: There is no bar there at all. There is a rise of 18 feet in the tide as well. That means that ordinary vessels going into Broadmount, which perhaps might trade there once a week, would not be delayed perhaps more than three times in the whole year, even if they were drawing 22 feet or 23 feet. At other times their detention would only be about an hour. I am pointing this out in answer to the member for Carpenteria, and the other members, to show that the board is not neglecting Broadmount.

Mr. BARBER: Another ghost.

Mr. MANN: When we passed that Bill enabling the Premier—he was then Treasurer—to give more money to his electorate to deepen the Fitzroy River, what member of the House ever thought that two years later he would come down with a proposition to spend a further £140,000 to give them another deep-water port?

Mr. HARDACRE: Practically abandon the river.

Mr. MANN: Yes; abandon the river. All the money that has been sunk in the river will now be wasted; because, in order to make this line pay, it seems to me that the harbour board must induce all the traffic possible to pass over the wharf at Port Alma.

Mr. CORSER: Not at all.

Mr. MANN: I think you will find if you read the agreement that they are going to use all the means they possibly can to bring about that result. The member for Maryborough advocated this Bill warmly before he had even read it, because if he had read clause 14 of the schedule he would have seen that—

The board will at all times by all proper means at its disposal endeavour to influence all persons firms or companies importing or exporting goods of any kind into or from the port of Rockhampton to make use of the facilities for the carriage of such goods afforded by the railway in preference to those afforded by any system of lighterage or other system of water-borne carriage.

That is, after they have spent £175,000.

Mr. CORSER: What influence can they use? Shippers will do as they like.

Mr. MANN: If you just wait till I read the speech of the hon. member for Clermont you will see what influence they can use. I just read that to show that the hon. member for Maryborough, while advocating this Bill, has never read the agreement.

Mr. CORSER: I read it all right.

Mr. MANN: It has been claimed that the Opposition, consisting of the Philp party, were not opposed to the Bill, but hon. members will remember that when the session of 1908 closed—that is, the session before the Premier went home—the Hon. Mr. Philp was then absent and the member for Oxley was acting as deputy leader, and he got up and said—you will find this on page 1037 of *Hansard* for 1908—he said—

The hon. gentleman knows quite well that the Opposition was not in favour of the Port Alma line. Because in June next there will be an opportunity given for the payers of dues to express their views, and if the payers of dues are in favour of the construction of this line, then the Opposition have no justifiable reason to oppose the carrying out of that work.

The PREMIER: The Opposition does not seem to be in favour of it yet.

Mr. MANN: Some of them are not in favour of it. That is the reason given—that if the payers of dues expressed an opinion against it, the line would not be gone on with. In June, the payers of dues did express an opinion against it.

Mr. GRANT: What did they do a month ago?

Mr. MANN: That is a very different thing. The hon. member for Rockhampton will admit that the people who are forcing this upon the Premier do not represent the majority of the people of Rockhampton at all. The payers of dues, we are told by the Premier, are the people who should be consulted in this matter, and are the people who are really responsible for all the money that will be required to meet the loss on this line. I said, while speaking the other day, that I thought if the harbour board was saddled with this further expenditure on the railway, they would become insolvent, but before this proposal was ever thought of or brought forward, the member for Clermont, who is an advocate of this railway, and who says he has been told by his electors to vote

[9 p.m.] for it—I won't inflict this on the House—he read a letter from the *Rockhampton Record* saying that the board was practically insolvent. He summarised the position thus—

That is precisely the position. Here is a hopelessly insolvent institution in the shape of the Rockhampton Harbour Board, so deeply involved as to have absolutely no hope at all of any kind of financial assistance, and it comes to the Premier, who represents that town and says: "We want money," and he replies: "You shall have it." Why does he say that? Because he, for the time being, is occupying a seat on the Treasury benches, and with the assistance of his supporters he is able to pass a measure of this description, and take out of the public funds £215,000 for this board—a hopelessly insolvent institution, which has absolutely no chance whatever of repaying the money.

Mr. CORSER: Townsville got more.

Mr. MANN: You must recognise that Townsville has twice the revenue of Rockhampton to pay it.

Mr. GRANT: Oh, no!

Mr. MANN: I have it on the figures of the hon. member for Moreton, then the hon. member for Carpentaria. The figures are all here.

Mr. GRANT: You must take the report—I will give you the annual statement.

Mr. MANN: The hon. member for Clermont asked who were the 128 persons who paid dues. He said—

That roll of payers of dues consists of 128 persons, including several Chinamen. The junior member for Rockhampton will not deny that soft allegation. Those Chinamen enjoy privileges, and exercise them in connection with this board. He dare not deny it. Neither will the Premier, his leader and colleague and conscience-keeper.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. LESINA: 128 persons, and a number of them Chinamen. These persons have a right to return a majority of five, and some of the Chinamen actually exercise more power than 95 per cent. of the white men who vote. That is why the amendment was moved—in order to give the white man a chance. Will the members for Rockhampton vote against an amendment to give a white man a chance against a Chinaman? If not, then we shall have a clear-cut platform on which to fight the question at the next election for Rockhampton, and when the election comes on we shall fight it on those lines—the Premier and the Chows *versus* the white Europeans of Rockhampton. We shall have some of his political supporters taking Chinese pictures round Rockhampton. We may have Chinamen on horseback, and Chinamen in motor-cars—

He must have been prophetic!—

with a placard containing the inscription, "Vote for the Premier and John Chinaman; vote for Ken. Grant and Chows." What a lovely spectacle! The payers of dues number 128 persons, and they are directly controlled by one firm in Rockhampton, Walter Reid & Co.

Mr. GRANT: That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. LESINA: I will prove it. In fact, it may be said that Walter Reid and Co. return five men out of the nine who constitute the board, and this £250,000 is to be handed over to Walter Reid and Co.

Mr. J. LEAHY: Who will support the Premier at the election?

Mr. LESINA: Yes, they are spending money to support the Premier. Walter Reid and Co. have the Premier in their pocket.

I could quote yards of this stuff—(laughter)—from the hon. member for Clermont, yet we find that hon. member rising in his place and telling the members of this House that he is going to vote for this railway, and here, in 1906, he tells us that practically five of the men of this harbour board are nominees of Walter Reid and Co.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: And you were ready to support the railway.

Mr. MANN: There was no word about the railway at all. I supported the loan to deepen the river, because the Premier assured us that if this loan was given to the harbour board, and judiciously expended, they could get 20 feet of water right up from Keppel Bay to Rockhampton. Here we find them a couple of years later coming down with a proposition to build a railway from Bajool to Port Alma—a railway which even the two Government servants whom he sent up there—men who may reasonably be supposed to be a little under the influence of the Hon. the Premier—absolutely refuse to say a word in favour of. They say something in favour of another scheme which is not before the House—that is, the bridging of the Fitzroy River from Broadmount—but not a single word in favour of the proposition to build a railway from Bajool to Port Alma. The reason is not far to seek, inasmuch as every report on that projected railway has been unfavourable. Some embankments were erected there years ago, to see how they could stand up against the flood and tide waters, and I have the assurance of the railway officials that these banks are not standing well, they have been honeycombed by the crabs and other marine animals—(laughter)—and they are practically not fit to carry the weight of a railway train over those banks. I understand that it is a serious thing, that the embankments are bored out, and the tide is lapping through, and it is only a question of time when the whole embankment will be washed away. I am quite in accord with the hon. member for Port Curtis, when he said that if the Secretary for Railways had a free hand he would not be supporting this railway. I have been told that I ought to support this railway because it was introduced by the late member for Barcoo, and an attempt was made to pass it at that time. The late member for Barcoo, when speaking on the proposal at that time, said—

Mr. KERR: He went into this matter when he was at the Railway Department, and an estimate was provided. When the new agreement was drawn up it was found that a large item had been left out of the estimate of cost—namely, the taking of water to the wharves. The least amount this would cost was set down at £14,000.

Mr. GRANT: No.

Mr. KERR: The junior member for Rockhampton perhaps knew more about it than the experts in the Railway Department.

Mr. GRANT: I know that is not so.

To-night the senior member for Rockhampton

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contradicted the report of Mr. Stanley, as set forth by the senior member for Townsville, and we find when he is advocating a case—I won't say he deliberately misrepresents things, but he handles the truth very carelessly. Then Mr. Kerr later on said—

If the hon. member had listened carefully to the Minister, he would have remembered that he had said that no agreement had been entered into between the harbour board and the shipping company, but only an arrangement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is so—I said an arrangement.

I just glanced casually through the Bill this afternoon; because, owing to the way in which the Premier is rushing business through, members do not get time to fully study bills, and go into all the reports; but I find a condition that if the railway pays for three years then the obligations of the Rockhampton Harbour Board cease. The Premier may take good care to see that the railway does pay for three years, because he may make traffic over that railway. There may be other railway extensions made in the Central district. The Premier may hinder the construction of other railways, and push on with the construction of this one as quickly as possible, and land a lot of railway material on the Port Alma wharf, in order to make this line pay. If it pays sufficient in the first year to make up any loss in the next two years, then no matter how bad the traffic may be, the Rockhampton Harbour Board is freed from all its obligations with regard to this line. It is just what the Premier may do; we know him to our sorrow. I honestly believe that the Premier would do that to relieve the people of Rockhampton from what would be a very heavy charge. There is not only being incurred the expense of the Broadmount line and the wharf, but there is the expense of deepening the river at a cost of something like £250,000. There would be £150,000 to spend on this line if it is built, and there would be the approaches to the wharf. The wharves will have to be extended. The hon. member for Maryborough said the wharf had cost £97,000; it had been built for twenty-five years, and while the piles are iron there is no guarantee that the salt water has not corroded the iron, and that it is practically valueless. Apparently under this Bill we may be compelled to build a new wharf, but even if it has stood the ravages of time—twenty-five years—we have to make approaches from the end of the railway to the wharf, 200 yards, and possibly more, and that will be a very costly item. I believe there are 6 or 7 miles liable to be covered by water at high tides, and I am sure that we are saddling the people of Rockhampton and the Central district with a load greater than they can carry if they meet interest and redemption on the money expended in deepening the river and building this railway and wharves. I would not have so much to say against that if we had not the assurance of the senior member for Townsville that there is already a good port at Broadmount. Is it likely, when there were 22 or 23 feet of water at Broadmount two years ago, that it has silted up so much that it cannot be deepened again? And supposing there was not a port at all at Rockhampton, when we have a port 30 miles further on than Port Alma—one of the best ports in Australia—why should we build this railway? We are told that we need not bother, because the Rockhampton Harbour Board is going to foot the bill. If there is such a violent desire on the part of the Central district to have another port, how is it we do

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not find in this Bill, as we found in the Maryvale Railway Bill, that the neighbouring shires have joined in guaranteeing interest on the railway? If the people in the Clermont district want this railway, why does not the hon. member for Clermont get up and say that the people in his district are willing to come into the benefited area? If the people of Mount Morgan desire the railway, I hope the hon. member for Fitzroy will assure the House that the people of Mount Morgan wish to be included, and that he will support their inclusion in the Bill. That is only a fair proposition, because we have no guarantee that the Rockhampton Harbour Board is going to be a permanent body. If they see that this railway is going to be a failure, they may not come forward for re-election.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Then the Government will appoint members.

Mr. MANN: The Government may appoint men who may refuse to act; and, in any case, what guarantee is there that all the goods will not go to Broadmount unless the rails of the Broadmount line are torn up, and even then they may be taken by lighters. We have been told by the hon. member for Townsville that vessels over 600 feet long are coming up the Brisbane River, which has sharper curves than are found in the Fitzroy. I repeat that even if they tear up the rails on the Broadmount line and dismantle the wharf at Broadmount, there is no guarantee that goods will be passed over the Port Alma Railway, because the people of Rockhampton may have them brought up the river. The Premier and the senior member for Maryborough dilated on the fact that the channel to Broadmount is tortuous, but if the senior member for Maryborough gets the same facilities for Maryborough as exist at Broadmount he will be a very happy man. I claim that on a measure of this kind no pressure should be applied by the Government to compel their followers to vote. We have other districts languishing for want of railways and lack of deep-water facilities, and something should be done for them. I ask the senior member for Maryborough what assurance he has, if he votes for this, that he will get a deep-water port for Maryborough. Has he got it in writing? He is silent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You got your loan for waterworks in Cairns.

Mr. CORSER: We do not practise logrolling in Maryborough.

Mr. MANN: They used to. Jack Annear was a champion logroller for many years. The senior member for Maryborough is intelligent enough to understand that the higher we pile up our national debt and the more interest we have to pay the less there will be for development work in other districts. If we spend £140,000 on this Port Alma job there will be less to spend in Maryborough, which requires a deep-water port much more than Rockhampton.

Mr. CORSER: We do not want to do an injustice to Rockhampton because we want a deep-water port at Maryborough.

Mr. MANN: There is no question of injustice, because the hon. member for Townsville, who has as intimate a knowledge of shipping and harbours as any man, pointed out that there was nothing to prevent vessels calling at Broadmount and discharging or taking in all the cargo of the Central district.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is the first good word you ever had to say for him.

Mr. MANN: That is a mistake. I said last year I believed he was the best Minister for Mines we ever had in Queensland. I have no objection to saying what I think of a man. I may have some little personal animus or grudge, but one must recognise good qualities where they exist, and whatever faults the hon. member for Townsville has, he has a more intimate knowledge of Queensland resources than any other man in this House. I say that advisedly. The Secretary for Railways told me just now, by interjection, that Cairns had a loan for waterworks. Here we are handing over to the people of Rockhampton a wharf which cost £37,000 to build. We have to lengthen the wharf, to build approaches, and we are going to hand it over to the Rockhampton Harbour Board as a free gift.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. MANN: Yes, the wharf will be and the approaches. That will be a present of £50,000 or £60,000 to Rockhampton. When the Cairns Harbour Board was appointed all they had handed over to them was an old dredge. But the Premier, when it comes to his own electorate, hands over £50,000 or £60,000 of State property.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Did you not get a wharf?

Mr. MANN: No.

Mr. BARBER: A superannuated dredge.

Mr. MANN: Yes, a superannuated dredge. I do not think that any member of this House, after listening to the senior member for Townsville, can conscientiously give a vote in favour of this Bill. Although the Premier made a very good case for Port Alma, he made just as good a case when he was asking for another quarter of a million for deepening the river. The Premier is a pastmaster in french polishing. He can get a very bad piece of timber and by his art as a french polisher he can put a skin on it that would deceive an expert. And any gentleman who did not know him would believe, after hearing him, that Rockhampton was languishing for want of a port. The senior member for Townsville has shown, however, that in the matter of port facilities Rockhampton is as well off as any other port in Queensland. She is better off than Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Normanston.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not as well off as Cairns.

Mr. MANN: The only places which have an advantage over her are perhaps Townsville and Gladstone. But Townsville has more revenue than Rockhampton—almost double.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: £12,000 more.

Mr. MANN: The average for Rockhampton for the last five years is £17,000.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: £23,000 last year.

Mr. GRANT: Last year's balance-sheet is £23,000.

Mr. MANN: I am taking the average. One year it came down to £11,000. It dropped from £22,000 in 1899 to £11,000 in 1904, and I was taking the average of the last five or six years, which is about £17,000. Until other places in Queensland have got the same facilities as Rockhampton, I think I am justified in voting against giving Rockhampton another port.

Mr. CRAWFORD (*Vitzroy*): I can quite imagine the reasons why the hon. member who has just resumed his seat bears a good deal of antipathy towards Port Alma. I recollect a few nights ago some remarks he made concerning it and the pitiful tale he told the House concerning his bootless and pantsless peregrinations on the flats at Port Alma. (Laughter.) I cannot be surprised that the hon. gentleman has such a keen and distinct memory of his painful experience, and I can appreciate his action in opposing this measure which the Minister for Railways has introduced to this House. A large number of hon. gentlemen have keen and perhaps strong recollections of their investigations into the nature of mud pies, and it is for that reason that they have dealt at such learned length upon the mud which nature has placed around Port Alma. I leave them to the enjoyment (whatever enjoyment they can derive from the matter) of dilating on this subject, but personally I would like to try and elevate myself to a more sublime atmosphere, if possible, and view this proposal from the point of view more akin to that which should be taken by any member of this House when such an important proposal is placed before it. I certainly did not expect that this proposal would be placed before us this session, and for that reason when I came in at first I had taken very little pains to acquaint myself in detail with the rights of the matter bearing upon the rivalry between Port Alma and Broadmount. But when I found that the proposal was certain to assume concrete shape in the form of a Bill I found it incumbent upon me to look into the whole question from as many points as time would permit me. Some of us are aware that a number of councils and other local authorities have wired to members with regard to the attitude they should take concerning this Bill. Now I myself have received certain communications requesting me to give my support to this Bill. But I will say this to the House, that I am not in any way influenced by the communications I have received. For I take this attitude, and it is an attitude which was taken up by one of the greatest statesmen who has ever lived. It was taken by Edmund Burke a hundred years ago when he said a member of Parliament should not surrender his right of private judgment to any instruction he might receive from his constituents. While I was quite willing to pay every respect to the requests that came to me from my constituents, and some of which embodied resolutions passed by local authorities in my electorate, yet it was still incumbent upon me to exercise my private judgment in this matter; because, although it is a matter that vitally affects my electorate, it also vitally affects the whole of Central Queensland. Moreover, it vitally affects the whole of Queensland, and I am here not merely as a representative of one part of the State but in a general capacity as a representative of the whole of the State. I am, therefore, called upon to consider any proposal of this kind from the standpoint of how it affects the whole of the State. And I have, to the best of my ability and after making use of the very little time that has been allowed us, endeavoured to acquaint myself with some of the details of this measure, the more especially so that in giving my vote I may be able at the same time to give my reasons for so voting. Now, I was astonished to hear when this matter was introduced to us yesterday afternoon some very peculiar judgments expressed by the hon. member for Leichhardt.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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Mr. CRAWFORD: I must say I was extremely astonished that a man of [9.30 p.m.] his lengthened experience—a man of his great representative experience in this Chamber—should give utterance to such very superficial judgment.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CRAWFORD: There is nothing so easy in the whole realm of criticism as to give utterance to superficial statements and to superficialities generally. (Hear, hear!) And I say I regret very much to hear from the hon. gentleman, whom I respect very highly, sentiments such as those which I am sure do not do anything to elevate the character of our debates—

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CRAWFORD: Nor do they contribute largely to the dignity which ought to surround all our deliberations. (Hear, hear!) I am, perfectly well aware, from the reading I have done from time to time, that scarcely any proposal is ever brought before any deliberative assembly of an enlarged nature towards which some hon. members do not feel disposed to throw insinuations of jobbery—insinuations that there are some sinister and untoward circumstances in connection with it.

Mr. HARDACRE: I do not make insinuations. I asserted that as the truth.

Mr. CRAWFORD: Assertions that are made as the truth without any possible chance of proving them simply amount to insinuations.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. HARDACRE: There is any amount of jobbery in connection with this line.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I believe I am endeavouring to give expression to my sentiments. (Hear, hear!) The hon. member for Leichhardt says that he made assertions. These assertions, which to my mind are without the possibility of being proved, are simply insinuations and innuendoes, which indicate the paucity of substantial argument.

Mr. GRANT: Hear, hear!

Mr. CRAWFORD: I would rather have heard something of a more material nature in regard to the manner in which a proposal of this sort ought to be proposed, and certainly, after all the arguments which I have heard to-night—and there has been a good deal of oratory here—I have not heard one argument that would convince me that I am doing wrong in supporting this measure. (Hear, hear!) It will be within the recollection of some hon. gentlemen in this House that when the proposal to construct the railway to Broadmount was before the House, the very identical insinuations were used then. The hon. gentleman who then had the honour to represent Port Curtis, insinuated that Broadmount was being constructed solely in the interests of McEacharn and Co. We have practically the identical assertions made in this Chamber now with regard to an opposite proposal—a proposal to build the line to Port Alma.

Mr. HARDACRE: Yes, it was made in the *Record* last week.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am not here to pay any attention to what the *Record* is saying just now. I am here to pay attention to what hon. members are saying, and I am here to give utterance to what I think in regard to a proposal so important as this. This parochialism, which unfortunately distinguishes the attitude which a number of gentlemen have

taken up with regard to this question, is not one which conduces to legislative progress. We ought in this Chamber to endeavour to look on all proposals from the point of view of the State. Then we have had a good deal of talk to-night in regard to the fact that the people of Rockhampton are not perfectly unanimous on this measure. Now, I would like to be referred to an instance in which a city of the size of Rockhampton was perfectly unanimous in regard to any proposal. You are not likely to have unanimity on this or any other proposal. Therefore, I attach no importance whatever to the fact that the people of Rockhampton are not altogether agreed on the construction of the line to Port Alma. Then we heard from the deputy leader of the party to which I have the honour to belong a long series of telegrams which he received from the mayor of Rockhampton, telegrams purporting to set out the results arrived at in a large meeting of indignant citizens of Rockhampton. Now, what do they all amount to when we analyse them? We find that there were between 200 and 300 people at that meeting, where there was a possibility of having over 2,000. If the indignation which some hon. gentlemen would have us believe did really exist among the people of Rockhampton towards this proposal, then I am sure that meeting of protest called by the mayor would have been much more largely attended. Further, there was scarcely one of those who took a part in that meeting of indignation who had not at one time or another advocated the line to Port Alma, so that we can discount their utterances very largely from the inconsistencies of their former conduct. I attach no importance whatever to the fact that an indignation meeting was held. Now, this proposal has been spoken of as if it were merely a Rockhampton proposal. It is not merely a Rockhampton proposal. It is a proposal which affects the whole of Central Queensland, and it is from that point of view that we should look at it, and not from the point of view of a few people who attend an indignation meeting, and wire their assurances down to the leader of any party in this House, but we should look at it as it affects a great and growing and flourishing part of this State of Queensland. (Hear, hear!) We know perfectly well that there is an ever-swelling volume of traffic in Central Queensland, and that traffic requires a great deal of attention, and it is worthy of the serious attention of Parliament. It is worthy of being facilitated, helped forward, and encouraged in every possible manner, and I contend that in bringing forward a proposal of this sort before Parliament we are doing something to expand the industry just now being felt and which prevails in Central Queensland. We have only to try to realise the potentialities of Central Queensland in order to arrive at a justification of this proposal to construct the line to Port Alma. Let us look at it as it affects the pastoral industry. We see that it is growing. As it affects the agricultural industry, we see that that, too, is expanding, and that settlers are going into that part of the country all the year round. As it affects the mineral industry, we see that that, too, is expanding, and we know perfectly well that it will expand still further, and that every year will see a greater increase in that industry and in the number of those who are engaged in it. (Hear, hear!) There is another consideration, which follows on what I said in regard to the industrial and com-

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mercial possibilities of Central Queensland. It is this: That we must not forget that the tendency in building vessels to-day is largely to increase their size, and especially in the vessels which trade between Australia and the older countries, where the distance is so great. There is a distinctly economic arrangement to have the vessels larger and larger. Recognising that tendency in ship-building, we must provide for it. I contend that we are providing for it very substantially by extending our railways to a point on the sea—by extending the Central Railway right up to where it will meet the ships on the ocean and pour into their holds the produce which is raised by the industry of our people. We are not an isolated community. We must have our association with the rest of the world. We must have our commerce, and we are entering, I am glad to say, in a larger degree every year into the trade of the world. Therefore, it is only right that we should do whatever we can to make it easier for us to engage in that trade, and to engage in it with some degree of advantage, because once we go from our own shores we have to compete with the rest of a very great, flourishing, and competitive universe. We owe it to the people who are coming here and settling among us that we should afford them facilities to send their produce to the markets of the world in the cheapest, the best, and the most expeditious manner possible; and I say we are doing that in building this line to connect our railway system with the sea at Port Alma. We know, too, that there is nothing in the world of commerce so valuable as time. All the great vessels must run to time, and the great shipping companies cannot afford to run any risk which will involve loss of time in carrying out their engagements. By providing for Central Queensland a port which will not cause any delay in the loading or unloading of vessels we are doing something which will appeal to the owners of vessels, and will have a very great effect in inducing a great and still greater volume of trade to go in the direction of Central Queensland. There has been a great deal of talk in regard to what is called the waste of money involved in abandoning the 15 miles of railway which connect the Central Railway with Broadmount. I believe there is a great deal of platitude in that talk about waste of money, and—I say it with all deference—a great deal of ignorance which I shall endeavour to correct. But before doing so, let me refer to those who were responsible for building the railway to Broadmount. Who were responsible for laying down that line? I speak, subject to correction, when I say that the gentleman who was largely responsible for constructing that line was a gentleman who to-night is the most bitter opponent of the Port Alma Railway. I refer to the senior member for Townsville. Yet in the little reading which I have had time to do of the sacred pages of *Hansard*, as they were called the other night, I could not but see that the prophetic instinct of the hon. member for Townsville evinced itself very clearly when he opposed a proposal to remove the wharf at Port Alma. At the time when the Broadmount Railway was under consideration it was proposed to remove the wharf at Port Alma, and that hon. gentleman warned those who made the proposition that it would not be advisable to do that because the time would very likely arrive when it would be of great use. That was a prophetic utterance. With all the support he was giving to the Broadmount Railway, he was not convinced that it would not for any length of time be

adequate to the growing requirements of Central Queensland. Yet to-night the hon. gentleman propounded an idea which, if persisted in, would involve the sinking of thousands of pounds in the Fitzroy River, and in continuing that expenditure without ever receiving any adequate return for it. From what I know of that river I am perfectly certain that however much money we may expend in dredging it we shall never derive from it that satisfaction which will enable us to say to the shipping companies of the world, "Here is a port into which your ships can come at any time of the day or night despite wind or tide." With the increasing size of vessels, and with the increasing value of time, it is impossible for us to give to shipowners the guarantee they require in order to provide us with that continuity of transport which is desirable, if we confine ourselves to the port at Broadmount, but we can do so if we construct this line to Port Alma. We can then give them the assurance that they need have no anxiety about bringing their vessels alongside the wharf at any time, and no fear that their vessels will be delayed waiting for the tide. We can assure them that they will not have their vessels sinking in the mud of the Fitzroy River. When I went up the Fitzroy River I saw a large vessel of considerable dimensions, I think it was the "Langton Grange," wallowing like a great hog in the mud of that river. That is a risk which shipping companies will not contemplate with equanimity.

Mr. HARDACRE: Whereabouts was that?

Mr. CRAWFORD: In the Fitzroy River, in the part which is supposed to be open to traffic. There is also some dangerous mud about Broadmount. We prove the interest we have in the progress of the country by stopping the expenditure on the Fitzroy River at once—by stopping this throwing of thousands of golden sovereigns into the Fitzroy, and by concentrating our efforts upon a proper harbour at Port Alma. It has been said that the building of the Broadmount line was a mistake, and that the construction of the wharf at Broadmount was also a mistake. Let those works be so considered. Has it come to this, that the State should be infallible? Has it come to this, that we cannot by any possibility commit mistakes in our private or public conduct? Can it be said that there is any party which does not make mistakes in the building of railways or the location of wharves? It has been proved now that the whole affair in connection with Broadmount was a great mistake, and the sooner we get out of that mistake the better it will be for ourselves and for the whole of Queensland. There is, as I say, a great deal of talk about the money that is involved—the money that would have to be obtained in the shifting of railway material. Let us take a larger view. If a mistake was committed in the construction of the railway to Broadmount—if a mistake was committed in the construction of the wharf—is Queensland the only State that has made a mistake? What has New South Wales been doing during the last fifteen years? They have been spending millions of money, and are now spending millions of money, in rectifying mistakes, and we will find as our population increases—as we progress in traffic, as we progress in commerce, as we progress in trade requirements generally—that a considerable number of mistakes have been committed. Some years ago when I was passing over the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, in the humble capacity of an uncommercial traveller,

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I myself saw the enormous mistakes that had been made in the early days in railway construction. I saw deviations going out miles in order to overcome the mistakes of past engineers. It is only a few years ago that there was a zigzag on the Sydney side of the Blue Mountains which trains had to negotiate in their passage towards Bourke. That zigzag was cut out, and it cost no end of money. On the other side of the Blue Mountains they are now constructing eleven tunnels in order to do away with the great and costly blunders in construction which occurred many years ago. So I say we should view the mistake in the construction of the line to Broadmount in the light of mistakes that are inevitable. Mistakes of that sort occur in almost every State. I say it is not possible for any State to carry on a constructive policy without at times making mistakes.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: People who never make mistakes never make anything.

Mr. CRAWFORD: In regard to Broadmount. I say we need not worry ourselves greatly about it. We will gain more by the immediate construction of Port Alma line than we are likely to gain by continuing this blunder at Broadmount. Let us at once stop the throwing of money into the Fitzroy River. It may be that hon. members in this House may change their views in regard to the construction of harbours. I attach no importance to them changing their views. Members of this House are not necessarily experts in harbour construction. They may be—some of them presume to be—experts in legislation and in the making of laws, but in the construction of harbours, as in the construction of railways, they must rely upon those who are experts in those occupations.

Mr. MANN: Mr. Stanley condemned this proposal.

Mr. CRAWFORD: And experts themselves, like the hon. member for Cairns, very often commit fearful blunders. (Laughter.) Considering further the idea which has changed the minds of several hon. members in regard to the tremendous waste of money involved in continuing Broadmount as the port, what is the Commonwealth doing just now? They are engaged upon the perpetration of a national and gigantic blunder in the selection of a site for the Federal capital—a blunder which we will in future bitterly regret and dearly pay for. There are even mistakes all along our coasts. It might be alleged—I do not know whether it has been done—that those who came to Brisbane first should have selected a site nearer the coast. A great blunder may have been created in building it here. One of the greatest mistakes, I consider, is the mistake which the senior member for Townsville is responsible for—that is, the spending of large sums of money in building a harbour at Townsville, because the harbour should have been built at Bowen. That is the natural port for that part of Queensland, and I challenge the hon. member to deny it. Anyone who looks at it in his mind's eye can see that a tremendous blunder was there created.

Hon. R. PHILP: What a wonderful man you are!

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am a most wonderful man, and I am becoming increasingly so. (Laughter.)

Hon. E. B. FORREST: What do you think of the central port of Gladstone?

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am going to deal with Gladstone before I am finished. I simply say

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this, in passing, that the old residents of Gladstone, like the public men of the day, were not free from mistakes—they were not free from the error of regarding the land as being very valuable and creating a monopoly in it. I am going to deal at some length with Gladstone when I come to that part of my speech. Reviewing the mistakes that have been made, we ought to profit by our experience. We ought to stop the expenditure in regard to Broadmount at once. At the very best, what does the Fitzroy River amount to? No matter how much money you put into it dredging, it is simply a tidal river, and subject to floods. You might spend no end of money in dredging it, and down comes a flood and undoes the work of years by silting it up. It has been done before.

Hon. R. PHILP: What is the Thames?

Mr. CRAWFORD: The Thames is not to be compared with the Fitzroy, nor is the capital served by the Thames to be compared with the capital served by the Fitzroy.

The PREMIER: More mud comes down the Fitzroy in one flood than comes down the Thames in ten years.

Mr. CRAWFORD: In the old country there are docks on the Thames, but I do not suppose the hon. member for Townsville, in his generosity, will propose to build docks alongside the Fitzroy. However, that is a matter for consideration by another generation. This matter of the Fitzroy River simply amounts to trouble all the time. We have it in the annual reports of the harbour board. We have it in the reports which appear from day to day in the Rockhampton papers and in the papers in that district. It simply means no end of expense and anxiety on the part of those who have to attend to the dredging of the river, the bringing of ships up the river, on the part of those who expect goods to be brought up the river, and, as I have already stated, shipping companies, no more than commercial men, can afford to risk delay. I do not think we can ever maintain the Fitzroy River at a depth requisite to meet the great and growing volume of trade. Then we find that Port Alma is accessible at all times. The depth of water in front of Port Alma is sufficient to meet all requirements and all vessels that are likely to come there for many years. That is precisely what we want. That depth of water is a reliable depth. It is not 6 feet

to-day and 30 feet to-morrow; [10 p.m.] but, by the knowledge of thirty

years, we know it remains at a reliable depth, sufficient to provide the accommodation necessary for the largest ships that are likely to come to that part of the world. We want Port Alma in order to induce large vessels to go there. We want to give to the vessels that are likely to engage in Australian trade a guarantee that they can come into our harbours and have the accommodation that is necessary. I am quite certain from the study I have given this matter—from the attention I have given to the conditions and circumstances surrounding Port Alma—that those requirements will be met by the connection of the Central Railway system with the wharfage which already exists there. We want to obviate the necessity for handling produce two or three times. Those who are engaged in raising produce in Central Queensland should know, when they put their produce into a railway truck, that it will go straight to the side of the large vessel that is to carry it to any port in the world. They

have not that assurance now; and we know that there are many descriptions of produce which suffer greatly by being handled too frequently. We want to minimise the handling of our traffic, and thereby minimise the cost of placing it upon the market. Port Alma has been approved of by a considerable number of those who are in positions of authority to speak in regard to harbours. I do not regard myself as an authority on harbour construction and wharf accommodation; but I do say, comparing the size of vessels with the accommodation now existing at Port Alma, that shipping companies have nothing to fear from the facilities which will be afforded them there. Now let me for a moment refer to the proposal which emanated from those to whom was entrusted the task of examining the rival possibilities of Broadmount and Port Alma. The report, which came out early this year, contained a proposal for building a bridge across the Fitzroy River from Broadmount. Now, in all my reading in regard to the attitudes which politicians may take up from time to time, I think there could not have been any more "yes-noistic" attitude than that which was adopted by those who reported in favour of that bridge.

Mr. RYAN: They condemned Port Alma.

Mr. CRAWFORD: They would not report against Port Alma, and they would not report against Broadmount. They endeavoured to combine the virtues of both. I simply pass on from that. I know with what ridicule that idea was received in Central Queensland. Nobody received it without the greatest amount of derision. Nobody took it seriously. People regarded it simply in the light of a report emanating from those who had not sufficient courage to express themselves on one side or the other, but wished to straddle the fence. I have looked over some reports and heard some assertions made about this proposal meaning the great enhancement of some property belonging to the Archer family. Now, I do not regard that as an argument against the proposal at all. In the present deplorably backward state of our knowledge of the laws of aviation, we must build our railways on land, and the land belongs to somebody. It may be Crown land, or it may belong to the Archer family, but on that land we must build our railways.

Mr. HARDACRE: It belongs to the family of the chairman of the body which has given the guarantee.

Mr. CRAWFORD: If the hon. member, who is such an encyclopædic genius with regard to everything that appertains to railway construction and everything else, will tell us how we can construct this line without using land, I am sure I shall be very glad to listen to him, and I am sure the Ministry will be very glad to adopt his scheme, as it will mean a great saving to them.

Mr. HARDACRE: The relatives of the chairman of the body that gives that guarantee own the land.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am not taking any paltry parochial view of this matter. It does not matter who owns the land. If the railway is necessary, across that land it must go. I do not consider the Archer family for one moment. I simply consider the fact that the railway must be constructed across land. The irrepressible member who represents Cairns wanted to know how the Mount Morgan people regard this proposal.

Mr. MANN: I did not. I said they should guarantee it.

Mr. CRAWFORD: Well, that is a way of regarding it. The hon. member need not endeavour to split straws about nothing. I am glad to be in the position to say that the Mount Morgan people are unanimously in favour of the line.

Mr. MANN: Did they have a meeting?

Mr. CRAWFORD: They have had meetings for years. They have from time to time expressed their approval of Port Alma, and they have good reason for thinking that the construction of a railway to Port Alma would be a good thing for the whole of Central Queensland. This is not a Rockhampton proposal, though it emanated from Rockhampton, and Rockhampton is the name which is most frequently heard in connection with it. This is a proposal which affects the whole of Central Queensland.

The PREMIER: Much more than it affects Rockhampton.

Mr. MANN: Well, why don't you guarantee it?

Mr. CRAWFORD: Mount Morgan is one of the most important places in Central Queensland, and the voice of Mount Morgan upon a proposal such as this is a voice of respectable authority, because I cannot be contradicted when I say that the Mount Morgan Company is not in the habit of bestowing its blessing upon proposals which are not business-like.

Mr. MANN: It did not bestow it upon you.

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am not small-minded enough to take that into consideration when I am considering a national proposal. I rise above that. I am considering it from the point of view of how it affects the people I represent, because it is well known that the Mount Morgan Company has carried out very good work very successfully, and is now engaged in most stupendous undertakings which, I am sure, will turn out very successfully and very profitably for the whole of Central Queensland. It will also benefit the part of the State represented by the hon. member for Leichhardt.

Mr. HARDACRE: It will not.

The PREMIER: If they pay about one-fourth of the harbour dues, they are very much interested in it.

Mr. CRAWFORD: Hon. members who make a pretence to infallibility say it will not benefit their particular districts. Well, I make just as good a pretence to infallibility in the matter, and I say it will be a benefit to the whole of Central Queensland.

Mr. MANN: "I am Sir Oracle."

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am Sir Oracle, and when I open my mouth, don't you contradict me. (Laughter.) I am legitimately referring to the criticism which has been directed against this proposal.

Mr. MANN: Incidentally abusing members.

Mr. CRAWFORD: Incidentally adopting the tactics used by the hon. member for Cairns.

Mr. MANN: Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The assertions which I am endeavouring to repeat are these: that this is simply a piece of jobbery, the beginning of a line which will connect the Dawson Valley with the sea. I never was successful in the cultivation of my imagination, and since there is no proposal beyond this before the House, I simply put such assertions aside until they assume a concrete form in the shape of a proposal to build branch

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lines, and even if there were such a proposal before the House it would have to stand on its merits as a business proposal just as this has to stand on its merits. Mount Morgan is the centre of a very great industry. An enormous amount of ore is handled there from year to year, and as that ore is transformed into metal which must go upon the market, it is only business-like that the company, actuated by business principles, would support a proposal which would enable it to reach those markets more expeditiously and cheaply than has hitherto been the case. The cost of handling ores is a very important item in the working of great companies, and the Mount Morgan Company is now engaged in searching all round that part of Central Queensland for mines which may be developed by the capital which has grown out of their successful operations at Mount Morgan.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CRAWFORD: That aspect of the case ought to impress itself on hon. members. What has the Mount Morgan Company done at Many Peaks? It is there engaged in opening up a great mine which otherwise might have remained closed for many years.

Mr. GRANT: Without Mount Morgan there would not be the mine.

Mr. CRAWFORD: The mine that is opened there is a practical guarantee that the Hoyme Valley line will be a successful one.

Mr. HARDACRE: Who objects to that?

Mr. CRAWFORD: I am endeavouring to extend my own line of argument, and I think I am doing it successfully. I am going to look at this in a way which I think the people of Mount Morgan would look at it. The Mount Morgan company in its production of copper enters into competition with America. America leads the way in regard to copper, and we are certainly encouraging the production of copper in this country if we facilitate the means by which that copper may be placed upon European markets, and we are doing so in building this line, and connecting the Central line with Port Alma. The Mount Morgan Company, extending its capital, as I have indicated, is constantly bringing in machinery from other parts of the world—endeavouring to get the best of machinery in order to treat ores as quickly as possible—and it should not be handicapped from bringing that machinery by having it double-handled, from larger vessels to smaller vessels, from smaller vessels to wharves, and from wharves into trucks.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: And the risk.

Mr. CRAWFORD: And the risk, which becomes intensified as the number of times of handling is increased. This is only a business proposal, and Mount Morgan or any other company would prefer to have its machinery placed direct from the hold of the vessel into the railway truck which is to convey it to its destination. In connection with Many Peaks, it is well known that the company is going to carry a great quantity of ore from that locality to Mount Morgan to be treated. That itself means a great thing to the Railway Department, but if the company is to be handicapped after it has treated its ore by having to send it to be double-handled before it gets into the holds of vessels which are to carry it to the markets of the world, then I think such a handicap should be removed, and this Bill will certainly remove that handicap. The hon. member for Port Curtis would tell me that this ore should go back to Port Curtis and then meet the larger vessels, but look at the enormous handicap that would be placed upon the company in first taking its ore

from Many Peaks round to Mount Morgan, 150 miles, and then bringing it back to Gladstone, another 100 miles. Then, again, the capital which is being expended by the Mount Morgan Company means an enormously increased volume of employment in a remunerative industry in Central Queensland, and that means a largely increased settlement in that part of the State, and, therefore, the railways are not likely to be financial failures. To-day I received quite a number of communications from men who wish to settle along the line to the Dawson Valley. They are seeking for land in that direction, and the construction of that line will mean an immensely increased traffic all through right down to Rockhampton, a traffic which will require the facilitating of embarkation into vessels, and that is precisely what will be provided for by this line to Port Alma. There is a necessity for a direct outlet. We are not to be contented with any little siding or wharf, we want to get to the open sea, and here is an opportunity to do so. We want to provide for Central Queensland an outlet to the ocean, and thereby a direct connection with the rest of the world, and I am for those reasons pleased to support a proposal of this sort. It is supported by the best business acumen in Central Queensland. The hon. member for Cairns asked about the guarantee. I am not here going to enter into that troublesome topic, but I will simply say that as good a guarantee as you can get for a railway is a large traffic, and that guarantee is practically provided by the readiness with which capital will be expended in Central Queensland in the development of our mineral industry, so far as Mount Morgan is concerned. The Mount Morgan line is the best-paying line in the country, and any connection with it is likely to continue that praiseworthy characteristic, and that is a substantial guarantee. Gladstone has been frequently mentioned, and it was mentioned at some length by the hon. member for Port Curtis, who shows commendable zeal in the advocacy of its welfare. I say there is room and necessity for many harbours along the coast of Queensland, and Gladstone is not lost. Gladstone has a bright future before it, but I never could come to any proof that the people of Central Queensland ever put up a vigorous agitation in favour of Port Curtis as the harbour for Central Queensland. And I say, in all kindness, that the people of Gladstone, as far as their harbour is concerned, are reaping the results of a policy of energetic procrastination. They will, however, recover; and Gladstone, having created a district which is necessary for the support of a good harbour, will see before it the pleasing panorama of many ships destined for many parts of the world. I wish Gladstone may flourish; but it depends largely on the virility of the people as to the extent and rapidity with which it will flourish, and I express it as a friendly hint to the people of Gladstone to be up and doing with regard to the necessities of their harbour. Now I want to inquire where all the opposition to this railway is coming from. Who are the people who are opposing this proposal? We find that a great deal of the opposition is coming from across the river—from those who have been living a considerable time, and have interests round them, on the north side of the river. Naturally they are opposed to a proposal which seems ruinous to them—which may have the effect for a time of depreciating the value of their property. I say it is only for a time, because when the railway is extended further north they will reap the reward of their patience. Some opposition is proceeding from the wharf labourers in Rockhampton. It is rather audacious for me to speak in seeming opposition to a large body of unionists, but I must not

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forget that I speak here as a representative of the people. A member must consider not merely the people who now live in Rockhampton, but the people who are likely to come there and the interests that are likely to grow up round Rockhampton and right through Central Queensland. Naturally, the wharf labourers are opposed to a proposal which seems to conflict with their interests. In the history of mechanical development we have seen labour displaced from time to time in various parts of the world; but labour has the happy faculty of being able to adapt itself to all conditions and circumstances; and the wharf labourers at Rockhampton will be able to adapt themselves to the altered conditions that will prevail when this proposal is carried into effect. And they will not be the losers, because there will be a greater volume of traffic at Port Alma, and they will be kept more constantly at work. A good deal has been made of the assumption that the line will not pay. I am not going largely into the financial aspect of the question, but I would hesitate to think that the gentlemen connected with this proposal—the members of the Rockhampton Harbour Board—would be so wanting in regard for their reputations as commercial men and business men as to embark in an undertaking in which failure was inevitable. They are not candidates for financial disgrace or financial ridicule; and I take it that they carefully weighed everything before entering into the engagement into which they have entered. For these reasons, and for reasons that have been advanced by other members, I am satisfied that there is no likelihood of this line being a financial failure. I shall not deal extensively with the reports, but I will refer to that part which deals with the possibility of floods in connection with the line to Port Alma. I say that a flood which will obstruct traffic on the Port Alma Railway will not make Broadmount a very safe port at that particular time. If the hon. member for Cairns has any apprehension of being drowned while travelling on the railway, I can assure him that these floods are of very infrequent occurrence—floods which cover so great an area of land. In conclusion, I think I have dealt with this question on lines that are practical. I am convinced from the study I have made of this matter that I am acting wisely and in the interests not merely of my constituents, but of the people of the State, in giving my support to this proposal to construct a railway to Port Alma. (Hear, hear!)

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): When we went into Committee yesterday to [10.30 p.m.] consider the desirableness of introducing this Bill, I gave expression to my opposition to it at considerable length, and I do not—especially after the full discussion that has taken place this afternoon—intend to speak at any great length in giving further expression to my opposition to it, but will endeavour to put my reasons against it as briefly as possible. I will first briefly reply to a remark made by the Premier in regard to a certain gentleman in Rockhampton. He said that I was the agent of that gentleman. The Premier is exceedingly fond of stating that anyone who opposes anything he proposes is actuated by personal animus against him. I do not know any member in this House who carries with him and continues longer his personal animus towards anyone who dares to oppose anything put forward by his dictatorial Majesty the Premier of Queensland for the time being than the hon. gentleman himself. (Hear, hear! and Opposition laughter.) The Premier's remarks yesterday referred to a gentleman in Rockhampton, and it is merely the outcome of the personal animosity that he has shown again and again to that gentleman in

his employment in the company he is engaged in, without the slightest justification or foundation. He did it gratuitously at the election, and he did it again yesterday without the slightest reason for it. I am not an agent of that gentleman, and I do not pay any attention to his opinions on the matter. I know what his opinions are, of course, but that does not influence me in the slightest degree. I am actuated in my own judgment in this matter by what I know has gone on in Rockhampton itself, not yesterday, but for years past, in opposition to this proposal, and because of the wire-pulling, the lies, the trickery, and the deceit that have gone on to try to get this particular proposal passed. I would like to say a word about the hon. member for Fitzroy. He went out of his way to sneer at myself, a member of his own party, without a single reflection being cast on him in any way by myself.

Mr. PAYNE: It was a reflection on the whole of Central Queensland.

Mr. MURPHY: He is putting up a battle for the company.

The PREMIER: There was no sneer about that.

Mr. HARDACRE: He spoke about the infallibilities of the hon. member for Leichhardt, and all that sort of thing. I say that the Mount Morgan Company does not care what kind of representative is returned for Fitzroy—whether he is a Labour man or a man on the conservative side, because they will hold him all the same. Why, we know when we put out some years ago a member who was a representative of the company, and put in a so-called Labour member for the time being, that particular Labour member was one of the greatest barrackers for the company, as great as the one who came from the conservative ranks and who was one of the directors of the company. And the present member for Fitzroy, who was returned as a Labour member and put out the late member, Mr. Cowap, is very soon becoming a barracker for the company in one of the biggest political jobs that I know of that was ever brought before this House, and which will benefit that particular company; and in doing so he gratuitously went out of his way to sneer at other members of his party who did not say anything whatever about him.

Mr. MURPHY: Let brotherly love prevail.

Mr. HARDACRE: He might very well have left members of his own party alone. My first objection to this Bill is that it proposes to accept a guarantee of a board that is riding roughshod over the people of Rockhampton, who will have to pay for the losses incurred in the working of that railway. It is riding roughshod over the ratepayers of Rockhampton.

Mr. PAYNE: And of Central Queensland.

Mr. HARDACRE: And of Central Queensland. With regard to the jobbery, this board is practically dominated by a financial ring. (Hear, hear!) This ring has seized hold of this particular harbour board of Rockhampton on the basis of what I was going to say was a corrupt, but one of the most colluded concerns that could be found in Australia. That board is elected on a franchise which is reminiscent of the dark ages in England before the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832, when a few men controlled the destinies of England.

At 10.35 p.m.,

The SPEAKER was relieved in the chair by the Deputy Speaker, Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. HARDACRE: Altogether there are nine members on the Rockhampton Harbour Board; five of them—that is, a majority of them—are

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elected on a restricted franchise solely by the votes of the payers of dues. The payers of dues altogether are only 333 persons, and little more than half of them elect these five members, as against 4,000 or 5,000 ratepayers of Rockhampton altogether, who can only send to that board a minority of representatives. And this majority of five against four carried the agreement that we are asked to ratify here to-night against the whole of the ratepayers of Rockhampton and adjacent districts. I will say a word about the way in which it has been done. The payers of dues recently managed, by a bare majority of one at the election, to put in a representative who was against Port Alma, and immediately after the election one of these institutions—altogether there are about seven financial institutions controlling 100 proxy votes—they immediately compelled one of the board's representatives who was against Port Alma to retire from his position on the board in order to have another election, and so have a majority of representatives on that board. There is this remarkable circumstance about this board: that the chairman of the board—it does not matter what his name is. I have nothing against the Archer family at all. They are an exceedingly kind family in many ways, and respected everywhere throughout the district, and I have nothing whatever to say against them. But it is a peculiar circumstance that the chairman of the board who signed this agreement is also the chairman of the Mount Morgan Company, and it is also a fact that his family own some 40 square miles of the country around the very spot where this very railway is going to junction with the Gladstone line. If this railway proposal is carried, then it is more than likely that a great city, or at any rate a very large population, will settle on the land near there, and it will greatly enhance the value of that land, for the benefit of the Archer family, and against the interests of the Rockhampton people.

Mr. GRANT: And yet you say it is all mud flats.

Mr. HARDACRE: Not at that point. I did not say that that was mud flat. The land where this railway will junction with the Gladstone Railway is good land, and the railway will greatly enhance the value of it. The chairman of the harbour board is a member of the family that owns that land, and it was by his casting vote that the board decided to enter into this agreement with the Railway Commissioner to guarantee this railway, and we are asked to ratify it to-night. With regard to jobbery, again and again the electors at election after election have every time cast their votes against the proposal to construct a railway to Port Alma. If this is not jobbery, I do not know what is. I have never heard, even in America, anything to excel it in its evil character and aggrandisement of a few persons, particularly a few financial persons, who hold the Rockhampton Harbour Board. Just as a band of robbers capture cities in the old country, they have captured the harbour board in Rockhampton, and they run it against the interests of Rockhampton to enrich one person, the chairman of the board, to enrich also the company, another financial institution, that are backing them up.

Hon. R. PHILP: Not an ounce of that is true.

Mr. HARDACRE: It is perfectly accurate. This is not a Rockhampton deep-water port at all. What is this railway? It is the first link of a line direct from Port Alma *via* Bajool and Mount Morgan to the Dawson coalfield. We have already passed a proposal to construct a railway from Mount Morgan to the Dawson River Coalfield, and now we propose to build a railway from Bajool to Port Alma. When these two lines are constructed, the construction of the

link between Bajool and Mount Morgan will be inevitable, so as to avoid the necessity of traffic going round by the Razor Back. The second objection I have to this proposition is that the railway is not necessary, because there is already an efficient harbour at Broadmount. The evidence of the senior member for Rockhampton has been quoted, but I wish to draw attention to another statement in his speech on that occasion. The hon. member then said—

Within the last two years I do not know of any steamers that have been detained between Sea Hill and Broadmount.

That is an important admission. Then we have the evidence given in that petition of the ratepayers which was presented to this House in December in 1908. In that petition they make the following statement:—

What is needed is a channel with a depth of not less than 20 feet, and this, according to Engineer Cullen's estimate, can be permanently provided at a cost of £30,000.

They further say—

With a 20-foot channel, not only would the railway carry the traffic that now comes to Keppel Bay, but the conveyance of landing at Broadmount, instead of the passengers being dumped into tenders in Keppel Bay, would induce a large share of the tourist traffic, which in late years has been in such evidence along the Queensland coast to pay the Central district a visit, and thus enhance railway receipts and generally benefit the Central community.

Really, after all, what the Rockhampton people are asking for is a harbour at Broadmount deepened to 20 feet at low water, and that will give them as good a harbour as will be necessary for many years to come. A list, showing the number of vessels which were constantly going into Broadmount at that time, has been read to the House. That list shows that a number of vessels of great tonnage, one of them 11,000 tons burthen, went into Broadmount at all hours of the day and night. And if a ship of the largest dimensions, drawing, say, 30 feet, went there, it would only suffer inconvenience at intervals and at times when it arrived at low tide, and it would only have to wait a few hours for the tide to rise. So that everything goes to show that they already have as efficient a harbour as is necessary, and a harbour as efficient as the Rockhampton people are asking for. If that is the case, why should Parliament force upon them at public expense a harbour which is not necessary?

Mr. GRANT: Not at public expense.

Mr. HARDACRE: It will be at public expense, because this railway is to be built with public money, and it is to be built at the dictatorship of a financial ring which has seized the power of the harbour board. I do not wish to say much more, but it may be as well to compare briefly the advantages and disadvantages of the two ports. Broadmount has not, it is true, the same depth of water as there is at Port Alma, but it has many other advantages. Broadmount has ample land facilities, excellent land in an elevated situation, suitable for a township. Besides that, it has a magnificent water supply. Not far from Broadmount there has been constructed at considerable expense a splendid reservoir, which will supply water for a township of 10,000 inhabitants. Broadmount is also connected with the Central Railway by a branch line, and is 10 miles nearer Rockhampton and the pastoral country of the central district than Port Alma. Port Alma has the one single advantage of deep water, 24 feet, I think, at low tide, but it has many disadvantages. It is a mangrove swamp which is flooded at high tide. The country for some 10 or 11 miles from Port Alma consists of mud flats and mangrove swamps, which are flooded at high

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tide and after heavy rains. Besides that, the wharf is too short, and it will cost a great deal of money to lengthen it. Moreover, the wharf is placed at the wrong angle in Raglan Creek, with the result that ships approaching it meet the current from the creek. It is also exposed to the ocean on the north-east, and for that reason a ship refused to berth at the wharf. Take the expense—just one item in regard to that. The report undoubtedly makes the expense of deepening the harbour at Broadmount to 24 feet a greater expense than the construction of a railway to Port Alma, but the fact remains that it is not necessary to deepen Broadmount to 24 feet. It is not desired; it is not required, and won't be required for probably twenty or thirty years to come. The report gives the total expense of deepening Broadmount to 24 feet as £290,000. But it must be remembered that in that £290,000 there is included a large initial capital outlay for the purpose of a plant to dredge that extra depth, which afterwards, it points out, could be sold on the completion of the work, so that it would not really cost that large sum of £290,000, even if Broadmount was deepened to 24 feet. There is one other objection to Port Alma. Not a single report at any time has ever advocated Port Alma as a deep-water port for Rockhampton. The Chief Engineer, Mr. Cullen, some years ago reported against Port Alma. The Commissioner's report as placed before us—it does not say a single word for its acceptance, except that the Government will not lose thereby, because they are going to call upon the Rockhampton Harbour Board to pay expenses, and the special report before us is the most damaging report that could possibly be obtained. The board was appointed, as I said before, for the purpose of blessing the proposal, and it has actually turned round and cursed the proposal. It went so far as to speak in the most damaging terms of the floods that would go over the railway, the difficulty of constructing it, the expense that would have to be incurred, the difficulty of obtaining a water supply, and finally, rather than recommend a railway to Port Alma, it actually went out of its way to recommend something that was never before suggested by anyone—that the member for Fitzroy himself said was received with ridicule throughout the Central districts when it was made public—a bridge railway practically over the mouth of the Fitzroy River and Casuarina Island. I say when it has to resort to recommend, as an alternative in preference to the Port Alma Railway, an absurdity of that kind, that ought to be quite sufficient for every member to condemn the railway from Bajool to Port Alma. I do not intend to detain the House at any length, but to briefly express my objections to it, and I think, at any rate, enough has been said, not merely by members on this side, but members on both sides of the House, to warrant every member of the House objecting to the incurring of a large expenditure for the purpose of providing a new deep-water port which the people of Rockhampton do not want. There is the further consideration that it will inevitably divert the traffic from the Fitzroy River, and the trade and traffic generally from the city of Rockhampton itself. The agreement itself makes the board undertake to influence as much traffic as it can, not *via* the Fitzroy River, but *via* Port Alma and over this railway that we are asked to accept an agreement to have constructed. In that case it will injure Rockhampton, and it is because of that that the people of Rockhampton are opposed to it. It is against their interests, and it is not a fair thing to accept the guarantee of a board for a proposal to construct a railway to Port Alma against its own interests, and to the injury of the city of Rockhampton,

which will have to bear the expense, or, at any rate, a considerable portion of it, if this thing turns out a failure, or if it does not pay working expenses. The Premier said that the evidence that the people of Rockhampton were in favour of this proposal was that it had been placed before the people of Rockhampton at the last general election as a distinct and clear issue, and they returned himself and the senior member for Rockhampton on that issue. As a matter of fact, it had a considerable effect in reducing the number of votes in their favour, but they got in, in spite of that objection. It was not the only issue. There were a large number of other issues before the electors of Rockhampton at that time, and I venture to say, if that had been the only issue before the electors at the last election, the present two members would not have been returned to represent Rockhampton. It has been shown again and again by the harbour board elections that, whenever the ratepayers have a chance of expressing themselves, they have always voted against the proposal. I intend to give my vote against the acceptance of this particular agreement.

Mr. BOOKER (*Maryborough*): I desire not to cast a silent vote on this question, but I do not desire to make any lengthy statement. I only say this: That if it was put to the vote in this full House whether the late Sir Thomas McIlwraith was a far-seeing man, I take it that the "Ayes" would have it, and if there were by chance a few "Noes" it would indicate that there were a few callow youths present. The development of the Central and Western districts back of Rockhampton is becoming so great that that district should have a permanent port, and I take it that the most permanent port, where there is no recurring large annual expenditure, is Port Alma. I know Port Alma, and I know Broadmount, and I feel quite confident in casting my vote for Port Alma. The reports that I have been able to gather point to the fact that Port Alma, with the expenditure laid down, will be made a permanent port for the largest ships that will come to Queensland waters, and it is a question of low freights to enable the produce of our country to be placed in foreign markets, and you can only have low freights in big ships, and you have got to make provision for the large ships that are coming into Australian waters now to carry on our commerce. The fact of Port Alma having had so much mud thrown at it to-night is a clear indication that there is a dead set against it. I say, in all sincerity, there must be something behind the determination of so many hon. members on the other side to down the question.

Mr. MURPHY: What about the hon. member for Townsville?

Mr. BOOKER: I respect the senior member for Townsville, perhaps, as much as my hon. friend. I respect his opinion, but I do feel that I am competent to cast a vote against the senior member for Townsville in favour of the determination of the Government, and I trust this House is going to support the Government. I am quite satisfied that the Government are doing the right thing in submitting this proposal, more

particularly as there is a determination to carry out the three lines of policy—land settlement, railway extension, and port facilities. You have got the railways from Rockhampton. The connecting up of all the Western country is going to increase the production of all the country from Peak Downs westward; and the next thing to do is to find the very best facilities to carry away that increased produce, and which will provide at the same time the best facilities for handling of the produce. In coming to a decision, I weigh the

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recurring expenditure at Broadmount with the first and last expenditure in connection with opening up Port Alma.

Mr. KEOGH (*Rosewood*): This is a matter which has been before this House for some considerable time. A great amount of money has been expended from Rockhampton down to the sea, and I do not see why the country should be called upon to spend more money in making a railway to Port Alma. Some time ago I expressed the opinion to the late member for Port Curtis, Mr. Herbertson, that I was opposed to this line, seeing that other ports were decidedly better than the one now put forward by the Government. Seeing that my old and respected leader, the senior member for Townsville, has put the matter in a concrete form, I see no reason why I should recede from the position the hon. gentleman takes up. However the hon. gentleman votes on this or on any other occasion, I am prepared to vote with him. I have always been a faithful follower of the hon. gentleman, and shall be to the end. He put the matter as concisely as it could be put, and it would be wise of the leader of the Government to withdraw the Bill, seeing that there are some members of the party on this side—and especially the senior member for Townsville—who are opposed to it. It would be far better if the Government took the course I suggest and went into the matter next session. If they press the matter to a division, I shall certainly vote with my honourable friend and leader, the senior member for Townsville. (Opposition laughter.) I do not think the railway will be of any use whatever. A large meeting was held in Rockhampton a few days ago, where a number of parties were called together for the purpose of seeing whether it was advisable that the railway should be carried out, and they decided against it. Then we have the hon. member for Rockhampton North decidedly opposed to the proposal. Then why should we ram the railway down the throats of these people when they do not want it? It would be far better for the Government to withdraw the Bill, because if they press it to a vote they will be beaten. It is advisable that they should put the matter before the country, because it is not required, seeing that they have already got a line down to the seashore. What more do they require? Do they require another £100,000, as put forward by the hon. member for Rockhampton North? It is wrong to do so, and I hope the Premier will withdraw the Bill. I hope he will do so for his own sake.

* Mr. RYAN (*Barcoo*): This is a matter that should receive the serious consideration of all hon. members, in the interests of the whole of Queensland, and particularly in the interests of the people on whom this guarantee is sought to be saddled by a board which is in no way representative of the people. I refer to the Rockhampton Harbour Board, and particularly to the franchise on which that board is elected. This is a question that should be dealt with in a non-party spirit. No hon. member on this side has dealt with it in a party spirit, and it seemed strange to hear the Premier refer to this matter of dealing with it in a party spirit in order to solidify hon. members sitting behind him, and get them to vote for it as if it were a party question. I have not the slightest personal animus against the Premier, nor against any hon. member of this Chamber. My opposition to the measure is a conscientious one, based upon conviction. I also regretted hearing the Premier refer to a certain gentleman in Rockhampton, the manager of the Bank of Australasia, in the way he did. It was quite unworthy of the hon.

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gentleman to take advantage of the privilege attaching to his position in this House to say what he did in connection with that gentleman.

Mr. GRANT: He said it in Rockhampton.

Mr. RYAN: In Rockhampton he did not name the gentleman, as he did here. He was particular to refer to him as "the political banker," so that there would be no evidence as to whom he meant; but on the floor of this House he referred to him as "the manager of the Bank of Australasia." I think that gentleman has sufficient competency in managing the Bank of Australasia, and has the confidence of his directors, so that in spite of anything the hon. gentleman can say on the floor of this House, or that those behind him can say in Rockhampton, he will be safe against them. This attitude is one which has been taken up by the Premier and those in favour of the Port Alma scheme, and the success that has attended them in the past and is attending them now leads them to continue the kind of attack which he made on Mr. Hall in this Chamber the other night. I felt that I could not allow the occasion to pass without referring to it, and condemning his action in that matter. Now, this question of a deep-water port for Central Queensland is one that has been debated in Rockhampton for the last thirty years. I am thoroughly in favour of a deep-water port for Central Queensland, and I think every other hon. member is in favour of it; but the objection I have is to allowing them two deep-water ports for Central Queensland, and saddling the expense of one of them upon people who have no voice in saying whether they shall be saddled with that liability or not. We have £250,000 or more spent on making Broadmount a deep-water port. The relative merits of the two places were considered at the time the Nelson Government passed the Broadmount Railway, and, as the senior member Townsville said, in that frank, convincing speech he made to-night, that railway was passed without a dissentient vote in this House. And now, at this late stage, we are told that it should never have been built, that it is utterly useless, and we are to turn round and build a railway on the other side of the river—a railway that is to be guaranteed by the consumers of the imports at Rockhampton, and also by those who export products there. There are districts in Queensland that are languishing for railways, and have not the opportunity of getting them. I feel that railways are required in my own electorate of Barcoo more than is the railway at Port Alma.

Mr. GRANT: Do you believe in the extension of the Blackall line?

Mr. RYAN: I believe railways are required in the Barcoo electorate much more than this railway to Port Alma. I represent a constituency on which the burden of this guarantee will probably fall. Although there are some of my constituents who are apparently in favour of this railway, I have to apply my own intelligence to the facts in order to come to a conclusion. I think that was the feeling of the electors of Barcoo when they sent me here, and I am endeavouring to exercise that judgment. In addition to spending £250,000 on the Broadmount Railway, there have been hundreds of thousands spent on the Fitzroy River. Now we are asked to sanction the construction of a railway which will be against the interests of the river on which that amount of money has been spent, and which, according to the reports of the experts we have in our hands, will render the Broadmount Railway useless. There is not one scintilla of evidence in the reports to justify us

in passing this railway. The only recommendation is this in the report of the Commissioner for Railways—

I recommend the construction of the line because the State will not lose thereby.

He practically suggests that someone will lose thereby, and who are they? They are the consumers and the exporters at the port of Rockhampton. For thirty years this question has been very much debated in Rockhampton, and I go back that distance because the senior member for Rockhampton, speaking on the introduction of the measure the other night, stated that a commission some years ago had reported in favour of Port Alma. The commission did not report in favour of the railway that is proposed to be constructed now, but in favour of a line which would be a section of the North Coast Railway; that the railway should run from Gladstone and up the bank of the Fitzroy. This is an entirely different railway which is proposed now. There were four witnesses examined before that commission; two of them were in favour of Broadmount, and two in favour of Port Alma. To show the reliability of the evidence of the two who were in favour of Port Alma, one was asked, "Was there any other channel into Broadmount besides the South Channel?" and he said "No." The other witness in favour of Port Alma said that there was, but it could not be made available except at an enormous outlay. Time has gone by since then, and to-day we have all the shipping that passes into Rockhampton, and all the coastal shipping that calls at Broadmount, passing through that other channel which they said could not be made available without enormous cost—I refer to the middle channel.

Mr. GRANT: And it has cost a lot of money, and will continue to cost money.

Mr. RYAN: I dispute that, and will deal with it later. Hon. members seem to think that if the Port Alma Railway is passed the expense of dredging in the Fitzroy River will cease. The harbour board are constantly agitating to have the depth of the Fitzroy River from the town wharves to Keppel Bay a minimum depth of 20 feet at low water. They borrowed £150,000 from the Government in 1901 in order to do it, and they have spent of that amount £139,000, and the Rockhampton Harbour Board and the Premier, and those who support him in Rockhampton, are proclaiming to the people of Rockhampton that they are going to have 20 feet of water at low spring tides in the Fitzroy River. Broadmount is in the Fitzroy River, and if the Harbour Board are going to deepen that river to a depth of 20 feet the whole distance, you have Broadmount with 20 feet of water at low spring tides without one penny of expense but what will be spent on the Fitzroy River. Hon. members must not be gulled with the idea that there is any proposal not to continue spending money on the Fitzroy. The other day I asked the Treasurer what it would cost to deepen the river to a depth of 20 feet at low water from the town of Rockhampton to Keppel Bay, and he said £39,000 right from the town wharves, and Broadmount is only a few miles in the estuary of the river. So that from that standpoint, in order to give 20 feet at low water spring tides into Broadmount, it requires no expenditure beyond what is intended to be spent on the river, whether Port Alma is sanctioned or not, and that is a scheme which had the approval of this House when they advanced the money. Unfortunately, the Rockhampton people, when they got that loan of £150,000, instead of starting to deepen the river from

Keppel Bay upwards, started up and worked down. That was done in order to boycott Broadmount.

At twenty-five minutes past 11 o'clock, The SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. RYAN: I say sincerely and conscientiously that I believe what the senior member for Townsville said—that there is not a better port in Queensland than Broadmount at the present time. It is available for all shipping, and the fact that it is not used is due to the boycott in the interests of those who own the lighters on the Fitzroy River. They have the majority on the board, and it was through them that the dredging was started at the town end instead of opening up the estuary of the river so as to let ships come up to Broadmount. In short, my contention is this: You have already at Broadmount a splendid deep-water port; at all events, when you make it 20 feet deep you will have as good a deep-water port as Central Queensland requires and as good as they are asking for, and I have the testimony of the senior member for Rockhampton to that effect. It was referred to to-night by the hon. member for Cairns, when he quoted from page 1956 of 1906 *Hansard*, but he did not finish the quotation. I propose to finish it. He said—

Ordinary vessels going into Broadmount, which perhaps might trade there once a week, would not be delayed perhaps more than three times in the whole year, even if they were drawing 22 feet or 23 feet. At other times their detention would only be about an hour. I am pointing this out in answer to the member for Carpentaria, and the other members, to show that the board is not neglecting Broadmount. The board has not neglected that end of the river, and it is available now for practically any steamer trading along the Queensland coast.

That is the testimony the hon. member gave. He can give any explanation he likes, but those are his words, and I fail to see how they can be contradicted. We have the Premier's testimony, too. In November, 1903, the Premier went to Rockhampton and told them that if they could agree on a deep-water port he would see that they got a railway. They agreed on Port Alma, and the Premier came to Brisbane and suddenly found—to use his own language—that he was simply paralysed when he came and saw the officers of the department who had full knowledge of the relative merits of the two ports. He went back to Rockhampton in December and was simply paralysed to find that Broadmount was in every way superior to Port Alma and infinitely cheaper. On the 12th December he wrote to the harbour board and chamber of commerce to say that they must approve of Broadmount, and I will give an extract from his letter. He says the 17-foot channel to Broadmount has silted up in only one spot, Mackenzie Island, and the rest of the channel has maintained itself, that the cost of redredging this is merely nominal, while the training wall will cost £10,000 to construct, and then the channel will maintain itself. I call particular attention to those words. There is the Premier's own handwriting. He says the channel will then maintain itself if there is a training wall constructed across a little channel—a training wall recommended by Mr. Cullen—and afterwards the depth of the water can be increased to 20 feet at low-water springs for a further £8,300, or £20,000 in all. He said, further, that there would be no great danger of much expense being afterwards required for maintenance. Then he pointed out that apart from the question of a deep-water port, Mr. Cullen claimed that the middle channel affords a better entrance for ships coming to Rockhampton than the south channel, and could be made available for large vessels at much

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less cost. It was exactly the same channel on which the harbour board has expended the magnificent sum of £21 15s. during the last two years. There you have the testimony of the Premier himself, in which he states that for the building of this wall recommended by Mr. Cullen we can have 20 feet of water at Broadmount at a cost of £20,000, and the channel will maintain itself. I hope hon. members will seriously consider aspects of the case like that. I consider that is the strongest recommendation from the best authority that Broadmount is the proper deep-water port for Central Queensland. Moreover, by having Broadmount the deep-water port, you are at one and the same time completing the river scheme which they say they are going to complete whether they have Port Alma or not. In other words, the advocates of the Port Alma Railway in Rockhampton say they must have the river and Port Alma, too. The matters I have been speaking of refer to the sea advantages of Broadmount, and I submit to this Chamber, in all seriousness and honesty, that the strongest evidence that could have been adduced in favour of Broadmount came from the lips of the Premier himself. He candidly admitted that there was a splendid depth of water at Broadmount after seeing the official reports, and no one seeing the reports could come to any other conclusion. When the Premier wrote that letter in December, 1903, he said he found he had made a mistake about Port Alma, and was in favour of Broadmount. When he came down to Brisbane he was paralysed with the information he got. But what does he tell us to-night? That he was mistaken about Broadmount when he wrote that letter. He is paralysed again. I asked him how did the mistake happen, but he did not deign to reply—he found it impossible. So he made a mistake first in favour of Port Alma; then he makes a mistake about Broadmount. The fact is that certain strings are pulled for the benefit of certain interests in Rockhampton and in the interests of absentees, and that is at the bottom of the whole affair. This boycott of the port of Broadmount in the interests of the owners of lighters in the Fitzroy River has been assisted by the unfortunate franchise which exists for the election of members of the Rockhampton Harbour Board. We have five members elected by the payers of dues, and four elected by the ratepayers. I say that, taking it by and large—and I [11.30 p.m.] challenge contradiction—the real payers of dues are the consumers of the imports, and those who produce the exports. When the Premier was introducing the Cairns Harbour Board Bill, on the 7th November, 1905, Mr. Paget interjected—

The payers of dues are cut out altogether.

The Premier, who was then Treasurer, said—

Yes, there will be no fancy franchises under this Bill—no payers of dues and no Government nominees.

And a little lower down he says—

It is putting it into the hands of the ratepayers of the district, and taking it by and large they may be said to be the real payers of dues, the persons who produce the exports and who consume the imports.

And yet we have him on the floor of this House telling us that it is the merchants who are the payers of dues, and not the consumers, and he was supported in that by an interjection from the senior member for Maryborough. That boycott has been assisted by the shipping companies, by a certain section of the Rockhampton Press, and it is now being assisted by its most powerful assistant—the Premier and leader of the Government. The Premier comes here and endeavours to induce us to believe that the construction of

this railway has been recommended by experts. He appointed a board of experts some time ago to report on the relative merits of these two places, Broadmount and Port Alma. They have not recommended it, but, as a matter of fact, they condemned it, although the Premier says that they recommended it. Let us consider the kind of board of experts that he appointed. Resolutions were carried by the shire council at Longreach and the Chamber of Commerce in Rockhampton to the effect that it should be an impartial inquiry, and it should be conducted in public—two very reasonable requests. Instead of that the Premier appointed these experts and restricted their judgment in the matter altogether. He confines the scope of their inquiry, and he makes an impossible condition with regard to Broadmount. He said to them: "Give us a report on the relative cost of the two places giving 24 feet of water at low tide into each." Hon. members can see that it was a wrong condition for the Premier to attach to that board of experts. He did not stop there. He did not even say that the inquiry should be conducted in public. And the experts were to get their information from two gentlemen in Rockhampton who were well-known supporters of Port Alma and who were known to be against Broadmount. No one else was asked to give any information at all. I have no doubt their professional integrity and honesty in the matter even then compelled them to bring in the recommendations that they have brought in. They could not be persuaded, with all that inducement, to bring in recommendations in favour of building a railway from Bajool to Port Alma, and yet we are asked to sanction it. When they were restricted to 24 feet at low water they were not able to conduct their inquiries properly. It is amply evident that this board could not see their way to recommend the railway to Port Alma. Instead of that, they recommend to construct a bridge across Casuarina Island and into Broadmount, a distance of some 6½ miles, and say it would give land advantages and economically would be the least expensive. Every member in this Chamber will agree that that proposition is ridiculous. It is regarded as ridiculous in Central Queensland all round, but it is not so ridiculous as the proposal to build the Port Alma Railway. I have lived in Rockhampton for nine years, and I had an opportunity of judging what public opinion is there, and I can assure hon. members that it is not necessary for them to come here and listen to the senior member for Maryborough as to what Rockhampton public opinion is. I have heard speeches in this House to-night that have astounded me because of their impudence. They were telling us more about our electorates than we knew ourselves. They were telling us what the public opinion was in places we have lived in for years, which they only passed through and probably never saw. I am quite satisfied that if the last election in Rockhampton had been on the sole issue of whether Broadmount or Port Alma was to be the port of Rockhampton, then neither the Premier nor the senior member for Rockhampton would be members in this House to-night.

The HOME SECRETARY: What about the hon. member for Fitzroy?

Mr. HARDACRE: Mount Morgan is one of the places that will benefit.

Mr. RYAN: I am not here to deal with the hon. member for Fitzroy. During my nine years' residence in Rockhampton I was studying this question, and I was in a better position to know what was for the benefit of Rockhampton than the hon. member for Fitzroy, who is only a recent arrival there. Hon. members will admit that I am moderate when I describe his

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expressions in this House as extravagant, and some of them in very bad taste for hon. members. Broadmount, to my mind, is a magnificent land-locked harbour, with quite as many advantages from the sea as Port Alma. Port Alma is a place which, when the tide is up, will be 7 miles out to sea. The water runs in for 7 miles, and it is doubtful if the railway can be constructed there. It is proposed to bring water there. When the experts recommended the bridge over the river they had an idea that water could be conveyed from Broadmount to Port Alma by means of pipes, but we are told now that the proposal is to convey water to Port Alma in barges. This proposal has evoked a lot of amusement in Rockhampton, and in the whole of Central Queensland, and the reply given by the supporters of Port Alma is that they will be able to bring the water in barges for a considerable time to come. If we established a deep-water port at Broadmount, we would have a port sufficient for the requirements of Central Queensland for a long time indeed, and for a longer time than the barges will be able to supply Port Alma with water. Port Alma is an open roadstead exposed to the winds from the north-east, and many vessels have refused to moor at that wharf. The steamer "Taroba" went to Port Alma to take 1,100 bales of wool from the wharf there, but after loading 200 bales the captain thought it was not safe, and he took his ship out into deep water, and they had to lighten the wool on to his ship. What stronger evidence can you have than that as to the unsuitability of Port Alma as a harbour? I have referred to the remarks of the senior member for Rockhampton when he spoke on this subject in 1906 and said there would be very few delays in getting into Rockhampton. What he said then was perfectly true. But we have in this report the statement that this proposed line will be interrupted by floods. How often will that interruption take place?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Not often enough.

Mr. RYAN: I agree with the Minister for Lands that we do not get rain enough in Queensland, but we do not therefore want to build lines like this over such an extent of flooded country while there is plenty of high land to build them on. I have travelled along the coast and up and down the Fitzroy River a good deal, and as this deep-water port question has provoked a great deal of discussion in Rockhampton and Central Queensland, I have never failed to consult the captains of those vessels as to what they thought about Port Alma and Broadmount. And I have never found one in favour of Port Alma as against Broadmount. They were unanimously in favour of Broadmount.

The PREMIER: How many of them have been at Port Alma? How many of them have never seen it?

Mr. RYAN: Port Alma is too unsafe to go into. Fogs had been spoken of by the Premier and some other hon. members on that side of the House; but, as the hon. member for Port Curtis said, we have intelligence to know that there may be a fog on one side of the river and not on the other. This fog question was brought up some time ago as an objection against Port Alma, and the advocates of Port Alma did not think that it was expedient to say that there were no fogs there. They can tell this House that there are no fogs there, but they take care not to tell the people of Rockhampton that, because they know there are fogs at Port Alma. What they told the people of Rockhampton was that, if there was a fog coming up they would wire down to Sea Hill, and send down the "Ethelbert." I mentioned that to a captain,

and he said they seemed to think that a pilot could tell them when a fog was coming up, and that was something new to him.

The PREMIER: You seem to have had quite a number of talks with captains.

Mr. RYAN: Certainly I have; and I think that when a proposition of this kind is under consideration it is the duty of any one interested in it to get information of a reliable nature from any person who is able to give it. There is another aspect of this question, apart from the particular advantages of the two ports, and that is the financial aspect. We are told that the estimated cost of this railway to Port Alma is £72,000. I believe that the railway from Bajool to Port Alma is more likely to cost £150,000 than £72,000. I should like hon. members to give attention to the facts I am about to mention. Some time ago the Port Alma Railway was estimated to cost £37,000, later on the estimate was raised to £49,000, then it was increased to £70,000, and now it is put at £72,000. What are the reasons for those increases in the estimates of cost of this railway? The reasons given are that there is an increase in wages, and that materials are dearer. Only one railway engineer competent to form an estimate of the cost of the railway has been over the proposed route. I refer to Mr. Stanley.

The PREMIER: That is not correct. I do not think he was ever over this route.

Mr. GRANT: Mr. Pagan has been over it.

Mr. RYAN: Mr. Stanley was over 11 miles of the Port Alma Railway as then suggested.

The PREMIER: I do not think he was ever over this route. Bajool was not there when he was over it.

Mr. RYAN: Perhaps Bajool was not there, but the land was there, and Mr. Stanley was over the route. He was Chief Engineer of Railways at the time, and he made a careful examination of the route, and he estimated that 11 miles of this railway would cost £105,490. Now we are going to build 16½ miles. I presume the reason given for the increase of the estimates I previously quoted will apply to his estimate, and that it also should be considerably increased. The Port Alma Railway will certainly cost more than £72,000. There is the cost of water supply, which is put down at £39,000, and there are various other expenses, which will run the amount up to £135,000. My opinion is that the financial position of the Rockhampton Harbour Board should be carefully investigated before we are asked to sanction this agreement, and before their guarantee is accepted. On whom will this guarantee fall? In the words of the Premier, it will fall on the consumers and upon those who grow our exports. Therefore, it behoves members representing constituencies on which that guarantee will fall to go slow before they sanction this railway.

The PREMIER: 25 per cent. of it falls on the Mount Morgan Company.

Mr. GRANT: And they advocate the line.

Mr. RYAN: Yes, and the hon. member for Fitzroy made a great speech with regard to the amount of good it would do to the Mount Morgan Company. I quite agree that the Mount Morgan Company want this railway. But if they want it, let them guarantee it.

Mr. LENNON: As they have done the Dawson River line.

Mr. RYAN: Yes, as they have guaranteed the Dawson River Railway. The payment of so much in dues by the Mount Morgan Company was attributable to the fact that they were importing a large quantity of ironstone from Iron

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Island, and the necessity of their bringing that stone up the river will be done away with by the opening of Many Peaks. I know they brought a lot of iron ore, and they paid a good deal of harbour dues on it.

Mr. GRANT: The charge was very small.

Mr. RYAN: Before this proposal was brought forward, I contend that the people on whom the liability will fall should have an opportunity of saying whether that guarantee should be given or not, and on the present franchise that elects the Rockhampton Harbour Board they have not that opportunity. As I have said, we have five members elected by the payers of dues. You have at present on the Rockhampton Harbour Board a majority of one in favour of this particular scheme—one of the ratepayers' representatives is in favour of it—but next June there will be a majority against it.

The PREMIER: You are prophesying.

Mr. RYAN: I do not prophesy like the hon. member.

The PREMIER: In June the line will be built.

Mr. RYAN: We do not need to look far for the reason the Port Alma Bill is introduced this short session. It is to be found in the fact that they know that at the election in June that ratepayers' representative will no longer have a seat on the Rockhampton Harbour Board. Since this proposal to build a railway to Port Alma has been mooted there have been three elections to the Rockhampton Harbour Board, and every single one of those three has been against Port Alma. The Port Alma advocate has been thrown out every time, and the Port Alma advocate will be thrown out in June; and if this Bill were postponed until after that election, there would be a majority on the Rockhampton Harbour Board against it. The Premier poses as a kind of swaggering democrat who trusts the people. Now, if he trusts the people, why does not he see that the people on whom that guarantee will fall will have an opportunity of voting to say who shall be the members of the Rockhampton Harbour Board before he saddles them with that liability?

The PREMIER: You know it would not make a pennyworth of difference.

Mr. RYAN: It would make every difference, and the Premier is well aware of it. It is for the reasons which I have given—for the reason I think there are other railways much more important than this waiting to be constructed, for the reason that I think Broadmount is a port that is at present available for all the shipping on the coast, that it is merely being boycotted and can be made available to a depth of 20 feet at a nominal expense, and which may be made to that depth as part of the river scheme, and in the interests of democracy, too—I think that this measure should be opposed, at all events at this particular time. The Premier professes that he is anxious to bring in a lot of useful legislation. We know there is a lot of useful legislation that requires to be brought in, but instead of doing that he occupies the time of the House on a railway of this kind. He gets the support of other hon. members who are really supporting it because they are going to get a *quid pro quo*, and he is thereby blocking necessary discussion on the Estimates. Therefore I think, in order to get an opportunity to have the Rockhampton Harbour Board elected on a proper franchise, we ought to wait till that is done, and allow them to voice their opinion as to whether they desire to guarantee this railway or not. In the interests of my constituents, in the interests of the payers of dues and the ratepayers in Central Queensland, before

[Mr. Ryan.

I sit down I am going to move as an amendment that the word "now" be omitted with the view of adding at the end of the question "on this day six months." I think that is an amendment that no reasonable member of this Chamber can object to. If the Government oppose it, it is conclusive evidence that they are afraid to trust the people—afraid to allow this harbour board to receive the opinion of those who must bear the cost of this guarantee.

The PREMIER: It only means we object to stonewalling.

Mr. RYAN: Although I am satisfied in my own mind beyond any doubt that it is not desirable to construct this line to Port Alma—and I have looked up all the facts I can—still there are a few who are in favour of it—a minority, I believe—and I am quite prepared, therefore, to give that minority an opportunity of saying whether or not they desire to have that guarantee given. I wish to give every payer of dues and every ratepayer in my constituency an opportunity of saying individually whether they are in favour of the guarantee or not.

The PREMIER: It is mere language.

Mr. RYAN: It is not mere language.

Mr. PAYNE: It is common sense.

Mr. RYAN: In the interests of all parties concerned, I move that the word "now" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "on this day six months."

Mr. PAYNE (*Mitchell*): Just a few words in favour of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Barcoo. I think it is only a reasonable thing and fair thing, as pointed out by more than one hon. member, that the people in the Central district, who, after all, are the real payers of dues, should have an opportunity of saying whether they are in favour of this line or not. As a matter of fact, in the Mitchell electorate I think they have taken very little interest one way or another in the proposal. I have been trying to get an expression of opinion from that electorate during the last few days, and from what I can gather they are undecided whether this Port Alma Railway is necessary in the interests of that particular district. It is all very well for the Premier to wave his hand and say it is mere words. That is the simplest thing in the world for any man to do.

The PREMIER: It is very annoying.

Mr. PAYNE: That kind of thing does not annoy me. It is an easy thing for the Premier to say a fair thing is nonsense. What does the amendment mean? If the electors

[12 p.m.] of Mitchell instruct me to support this railway, I will come into this House and support it by all means. Certain people try to cloud the issue by saying that this proposal has nothing to do with the electors in Central Queensland. In the Mitchell district alone the outward tonnage for the year 1908-9 was 11,488 tons, and the inward tonnage was 11,595 tons, making a total of 23,083 tons. Now, 90 per cent. of that tonnage must have come up the Fitzroy River, or would have passed over this railway if it had been constructed. The question should be submitted during the recess to the people of Central Queensland, who will have to bear any loss there may be on the railway. The senior member for Rockhampton has stated that the harbour board are the only people who are responsible, but the consumers and producers will be responsible for any loss in working the line. Whatever force there may be in the statement about the dues paid by the Mount Morgan Company, I am satisfied that the people throughout Central Queensland will be pretty hard hit if there is any loss on the

line. It has been said that the people of Central Queensland are in favour of the line. Well, if the people in the Mitchell electorate are in favour of it, is it not wonderful that they have not communicated with their representative on the subject? I am going to support the amendment, because in the interval the people of Central Queensland can determine whether they want the railway, and if my constituents want it I shall support it.

Mr. ALLEN (*Bulloo*): I desire to support the amendment, because I consider it a very reasonable one. I take it the object of the hon. member for Barcoo in moving it is to give the people of Central Queensland time to consider the position. Although the Bill has been before the House on previous occasions, there appears to be an attempt to rush it through on the present occasion with undue haste. I am not at all convinced that there is any desire on the part of the people of Central Queensland, or even of Rockhampton, for the line. Judging by the speeches of hon. members, a majority of the representatives of Central Queensland constituencies are opposed to it. On all railway proposals I consider we do not get enough information, and, judging by some of the reports which have come before this House at various times, they are often made to order. If the amendment is carried the people in Central Queensland will have time to hold meetings and discuss the proposal, and hon. members will have time to visit the district and get information at first hand as to the wishes of the people, and that is the best sort of information to get. Judging by the last Rockhampton election, it appears to me that the question of the Port Alma Railway was kept well in the background. It has been asserted on the other side that the defeated candidates made the most of it, and that is the opinion I have come to after reading the files of the Rockhampton *Bulletin* during the campaign. The Premier's organ regarded the Port Alma line, during the contest, as a pettifogging question, when his opponents were trying to make the most out of it. I have looked up the cards which were issued to voters in Rockhampton. The electors were asked to vote for Kidston and Grant, to secure, amongst other things, the North Coast Railway. Although the North Coast Railway was placed first on the list, so far we have heard nothing about it, but the Port Alma Railway, which the Government is attempting to force through to-night, was not mentioned. It was conspicuous by its absence. It is possible that there is something in the assertion made, that in all probability there is a majority against this proposal. I agree with the Premier when he says that railways should be non-party questions, no matter what electorate they are in, and so long as I am convinced that a line will pay, I shall vote for it, irrespective of how my party vote.

Mr. MULLAN: Your party do not make railways party questions.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Except syndicate railways—so called.

Mr. ALLEN: For the reasons I have given, I shall support the amendment, and trust that it will be carried.

Question—That the word “now” proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Ryan's amendment*) stand part of the question—put; and the House divided:—

In division—

Mr. KEOGH: I have paired with an hon. member. I do not know whether he is here or not.

The SPEAKER: Order! Close the bar. The question is put.

Mr. KEOGH stood near the bar.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must take his seat on one side or the other.

Mr. PETRIE: He has paired.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: You cannot open the bar now.

Mr. KEOGH took his seat with the “Noes.”

Mr. PETRIE: He has paired with Mr. Roberts, the hon. member for Toowoomba.

The SPEAKER: I can only repeat to the hon. member that the question was put. He was within the bar, and he must consequently sit on one side or the other.

AYES, 28.

Mr. Allan	Mr. Gunn
„ Appel	„ Hawthorn
„ Armstrong	„ Hodge
„ Barnes, G. P.	„ Hunter, D.
„ Barnes, W. H.	„ Kidston
„ Booker	„ Lesina
„ Bouchard	„ Morgan
„ Bridges	„ Paget
„ Corser	„ Petrie
„ Crawford	„ Rankin
„ Cribb	„ Swayne
„ Denham	„ Thorn
„ Grant	„ Walker
„ Grayson	„ White
Tellers: Mr. Grant and Mr. Morgan.	

NOES, 25.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Mann
„ Barber	„ May
„ Brennan	„ Mulcahy
„ Breslin	„ Mullan
„ Collins	„ Murphy
„ Coyne	„ McLachlan
„ Ferricks	„ O'Sullivan
„ Foley	„ Payne
„ Hamilton	„ Ryan
„ Hardacre	„ Ryland
„ Keogh	„ Theodore
„ Land	„ Winstanley
„ Lennon	
Tellers: Mr. Allen and Mr. Ferricks.	

PAIRS.

Ayes—Mr. Somerset, Mr. Macartney, Mr. Cottell, Mr. Stodart, Mr. Wienholt, and Mr. Tolmie.

Noes—Mr. Blair, Mr. Maughan, Mr. Nevitt, Mr. J. M. Hunter, Mr. Douglas, and Mr. Philp.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Original question stated.

Mr. MURPHY (*Croydon*): The hon. member for Fitzroy referred to the fact that the hon. member for Cairns had a good deal to say about the mud flats in the neighbourhood of this railway.

Mr. GRANT: I rise to make an explanation. In counting the numbers we find that we missed Mr. Thorn, the member for Aubigny, so that the division really was 28 to 25.

Mr. MURPHY: One can hardly take exception to the hon. member for Cairns talking about the mud flats. Anyone looking at the plan can see it is all mud, and this is a very muddy proposal. I was always opposed to giving Rockhampton two deep-water ports and two railways. There are other parts of the State languishing for railways, and money might very well be spent on railway construction in those places. The hon. member for Townsville showed conclusively that the Central district has one of the best ports in Queensland—namely, Broadmount.

Several HONOURABLE MEMBERS conversing in loud tones,

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. Murphy.]

Mr. MURPHY: There has been a caucus over this railway and the Premier has promised that certain other ports are to be attended to if he gets this Port Alma Railway through.

The PREMIER: Not the port of Croydon. (Laughter.)

Mr. MURPHY: When the Premier did spend a few thousand pounds in dredging at Normanton he made the people pay an extra couple of bob for their goods. He has done nothing for any port but Rockhampton of late years, and has been very good to Dalby. Until we get a Northern Minister on the front Treasury bench we are not going to get any consideration from this Government.

Several HONOURABLE MEMBERS continuing to converse in loud tones.

The SPEAKER: Order, order! I ask hon. members to remember that when I call "Order" they are expected to cease any conversation in which they are indulging.

Mr. MURPHY: The reports furnished to this House are all against the construction of this railway. The senior member for Townsville says that Broadmount is the best [12.30 a.m.] port in Queensland. The hon. member for Barcoo says that the agitation for this railway is in order that vested interests may keep their lighterage plant going. The hon. member for Fitzroy said that we should discuss this railway from a national standpoint, but his whole speech pointed out that it was necessary so that the Mount Morgan Company could get their goods at a cheaper rate than now. The fact of this railway not being built has not prevented the progress of Mount Morgan, and has not prevented the company from paying big dividends. Instead of giving Broadmount a show, the Premier inserted in the agreement in connection with the Torres Strait service that the vessels must call at Port Alma, hoping thereby to be able to compel the House to pass the railway. In face of the fact that the oldest member of the House, Mr. Philp, condemned the proposal, that the board of experts appointed by the Premier absolutely condemned it, that Captain Almond condemned it, that the board of special engineers appointed by Parliament some years ago condemned it, I propose to vote against the second reading. The money could be better spent in opening up the mineral districts of the North and other portions of the State.

Mr. MULCAHY (*Gympie*): I do not wish to give a silent vote. There is something behind this proposal that we cannot fathom. It is evidently being rushed through in the interests of a little coterie, or clique, at Rockhampton. The people of Rockhampton are opposed to it; the hon. member for Rockhampton North and other Central members have taken up a hostile attitude towards it; and the local authorities there have sent down their protests against it; the balance of expert evidence is also against it. It is £200,000 of public money being wasted which could be better spent in building lines in the agricultural districts. I do not know that any good will be gained by prolonging this debate, but I feel bound to say that it is the duty of every member to see that public money is not expended on a line of this character when Rockhampton has already a port which, with a comparatively small outlay, can be made sufficient for all its requirements. The two members for Maryborough are apparently influenced by the fact that the Premier has partly promised them that he will have a port made at Urangan Point; but if they think that promise will be fulfilled they are very soft. I regret that the hon. member for Fitzroy should thus early in his career fight for the Mount

[*Mr. Murphy.*]

Morgan Company which opposed him so strongly at the recent election, and I hope he is not getting off the track. The Premier and the senior member for Rockhampton have tried to make out that the last election at Rockhampton hinged on this question of building a railway to Port Alma. But that is not a fact. The fight on that occasion was against the Labour party and against socialism, and they kept the Port Alma Railway in the background as much as possible. The people of the Central district do not want it; the country generally is against it. I shall oppose it as strongly as I can at every stage.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN (*Kennedy*): I am very sorry the amendment was defeated, as it would have been better had the people of the Central districts had an opportunity to consider the matter, and give a rational judgment on this line. It is very sad to see hon. members on the other side take up a position contrary to what they have taken up from time to time when the question of a railway to Port Alma was before the House previously. To my mind there seems to have been some very hard pressure, or some Government patronage promised if they gave their support to the proposed line. This money could be well spent in developing the latent resources of the North. The Premier said he was practically returned to Parliament on this question of the Port Alma Railway. Just fancy! all the great interests of this State subservient to this Port Alma Railway, which I must term a railway job. I was a resident in Central Queensland a number of years, and I know the Broadmount line will not always serve the residents of that great and prosperous district, still at the present time I maintain that the urgent needs of the State should have been looked after before pledging the State to the expenditure of such an enormous amount of money that is required to construct the Port Alma Railway. There is a great need for railway communication from Ravenswood to the Clermont district. There are latent resources in that district that could be worked at a profit and which provide a good source of revenue to the State; and if there is any money to be devoted to the development of the State, these places should be looked after before providing a double railway and a double port for the city of Rockhampton. I intend to vote against the Bill.

Mr. GRANT (*Rockhampton*): I think it is necessary, as a member for Rockhampton, to speak. I am thoroughly in accord with the Bill. A number of people seem to think that this is going to be a non-paying railway. When the matter was discussed with the Commissioner for Railways, the Commissioner thought that with 18,000 tons the line would pay, but instead of 18,000 tons we have 39,000 tons of the bay trade. The shipping companies have entered into an agreement with the harbour board that a percentage of all goods will be carried over the railway. The hon. member for Barcoo and the hon. member for Leichhardt have [1 a.m.] seen the letter from the shipping companies, and they know that there is no thought of diverting any of the trade which now goes over the wharves at Rockhampton. Eighty-four per cent. of the trade from Rockhampton goes over the wharves, and will continue to do so. The other 16 per cent. goes from the bay, and the shipping companies have guaranteed that that trade will go over this railway, and that the punts will be done away with. We are not diverting any of the Broadmount trade. The hon. member for Leichhardt and the hon. member for Cairns know that the harbour board is not insolvent, as they said.

Mr. HARIDACRE: I did not say it was.

Mr. GRANT : The balance to the credit of the revenue fund at the beginning of 1908 was £7,108, after paying interest and redemption, and the harbour board transferred that balance to the loan account for the purpose of making river improvements. This year the position will be even better, because the revenue is increasing by leaps and bounds, and it will continue to increase. At one time Rockhampton depended almost entirely on the West. If there was a drought in the West, Rockhampton was crippled. Things are now entirely changed. Mount Morgan has gone ahead, and, whether there is a drought or not, it will continue to go ahead. One hon. member said, the other night, that they could not tell how long Mount Morgan would continue. Well, it has at least twenty years ahead of it.

Mr. FERRICKS (*Bowen*) : While I have no objection to hon. members on this side voting on the other side on this question, like the hon. member for Clermont and the hon. member for Fitzroy, I contend that other hon. members are entitled to vote as they think right. If we do not attempt to prevent the hon. member for Fitzroy forming his own opinion, that hon. member should not endeavour to prevent those who oppose the Bill exercising the same privilege, and that the hon. member did in the case of the hon. member for Leichhardt. When I spoke about a dozen words on the introductory stage of the Bill, I was told that I did not know what I was talking about ; but to-night the three points that I then raised have been urged by several hon. members who have spoken. The Premier and his colleague have made out that the Port Alma Railway was the test question at the last election, but we know it was not. But, assuming that they are right in their contention, have the 1,800 people who voted against them no claim for consideration, especially as the hon. members only got some 2,600 votes? The question has not been decided on its merits to-night. There are fully a dozen members out of the twenty-seven who voted with the Government who, if they had voted according to their own opinions, would have voted with us. Time after time we have heard of the evil effects of the dominance of the Labour caucus, but a hundred Labour caucuses are nothing to the dominance we have seen exercised on the other side to-night. It was very noticeable that the senior member for Rockhampton did not speak till after 12 o'clock. Was it because of the fact that he had been confronted by some of his former ghosts, and it was safer to say nothing till the reporting had practically ceased? The consummation of this proposal would mean the duplication of a national work, and, as an Australian, I am opposed to the duplication of a railway while we have a vast territory in the North starved through want of railways. In my electorate we have a railway terminating in a wilderness for want of a short gap to connect it with one of the most reproductive spots in Queensland. I protest against this duplication of a work in Rockhampton when there is no need for it and when the mining industry is being starved.

Mr. ALLEN (*Bulloo*) : I do not desire to detain the House very long, but I wish to give my reasons for recording my vote against this railway. As a rule, I do not like to oppose any railway, but I consider that the districts most in need should be first served. During the election I warned my constituents that the railways most necessary were likely to be passed over for political purposes, because members supporting the Government would need to be placated, as they would have to have some excuse when seeking re-election, and my warning has been justified. I refused to bind my-

self to any route for a railway in my electorate, but promised to support any line which justified its existence, leaving the route to be decided by experts. If there had been no necessity for railways in other parts of the State, I would be prepared to consider the question of giving Rockhampton an additional railway, but any hon. member representing a district like mine, where there is no railway at all, is justified in opposing this measure. There was no special mention made of Port Alma during the whole contest. To-night the Premier read an answer to a question put to him during the campaign, in which he stated that he would support the Port Alma Railway, but at the same meeting he stated that the Port Alma Railway was not a plank in the Government programme, and that all railways must be dealt with on their merits as business proposals. That is the principle on which I am considering this railway, and I can see no reason for supporting it. There are pastoral districts in the West languishing for railway construction, but the question of constructing railways in those parts of the State is only talked of at election time. The money for railway construction is being used to build railways in agricultural districts, and there is none for the pastoral districts. I look upon this as a political railway, and every political railway shall have my strongest opposition.

Mr. RYLAND (*Gympie*) : I regret that the hon. member for Wide Bay should support this railway, seeing that his own district is starving for want of railway construction. After the last division, I think the consciences of some hon. members must prick them. I [1.30 a.m.] am not going to delay the House, because I know that members wish to get home; but I cannot let the opportunity pass without making my protest against wasting money in Rockhampton while the Wide Bay district is neglected.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put ; and the House divided :—

AYES, 29.

Mr. Allan	Mr. Gunn
" Appel	" Hawthorn
" Armstrong	" Hodge
" Barnes, G. P.	" Hunter, D.
" Barnes, W. H.	" Kidston
" Booker	" Lesina
" Bouchard	" Morgan
" Bridges	" Paget
" Corser	" Petrie
" Crawford	" Rankin
" Crabb	" Swayne
" Denham	" Thorn
" Grant	" Walker
" Grayson	" White

Tellers: Mr. Allan and Mr. Bridges.

NOES, 24.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Mann
" Barber	" May
" Brennan	" Mulcahy
" Breslin	" Mullan
" Collins	" Murphy
" Coyne	" McLachlan
" Ferricks	" O'Sullivan
" Foley	" Payne
" Hamilton	" Ryan
" Hardacre	" Ryland
" Land	" Theodore
" Lennon	" Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. Mullan and Mr. Winstanley.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Mr. Somerset, Mr. Macartney, Mr. Cottell, Mr. Stodart, Mr. Wiennholt, Mr. Roberts, and Mr. Tolmie.

Noes—Mr. Blair, Mr. Maughan, Mr. Nevitt, Mr. J. M. Hunter, Mr. Douglas, Mr. Keogh, and Mr. Philp.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Monday next.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Monday next.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that the House do now adjourn. We shall take the Bills in this order on Monday next: Rabbit Boards Acts Revival and Continuation Bill, second reading; Justices Act Amendment Bill, second reading; Committee stage of the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill; Presbyterian Church Property Bill, Committee stage.

Mr. LENNON: Any more?

Mr. MAY: What about the Constitution Act Amendment Bill?

The PREMIER: Then we will take the Companies Acts Amendment Bill in Committee, and then the Committee stage of the Port Alma Railway Bill.

Mr. MULLAN: What about Supply?

The PREMIER: I may be just permitted to hope that I may see all hon. members on the next Jubilee Day in Queensland. (Laughter.)

Mr. LENNON: I would suggest that we might sit to-morrow night. There are a lot of Bills being brought forward for discussion, and we have had no word about the Estimates. There are a number of departments to go through yet, and I see that they will be guillotined at the finish, the same as usual. I ask the hon. member to let us sit to-morrow night.

The PREMIER: I should have been very pleased to come back to-morrow night, as there is a good deal of business to get through, but I understood that hon. members wanted me to do what I have done, and as the House has agreed to the motion that we should adjourn till Monday, it is rather late now to discuss the matter.

Mr. MULCAHY: The Premier enumerated a number of Bills as the business for Monday's sitting, but said nothing about the Estimates. For some time past the Estimates have been delayed until the very end of the session, and have then been put through after midnight, and sometimes with the aid of the closure. I protest against that kind of thing, and would suggest that the Premier drop all Bills now, and let us devote the remainder of the time to the discussion of the Estimates, and come back after Christmas to deal with the Bills.

Mr. RYLAND: As we are not to sit to-morrow, I think we might very well go on with the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill and one or two other Bills in Committee.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at fourteen minutes to 2 o'clock.

[*Hon. W. Kidston.*