

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 1910

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER, 1910.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir Arthur Morgan) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table, was ordered to be printed:—Regulations relating to the Thursday Island Jetty.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON GAYNDAH TO MUNDUBBERA RAILWAY.

ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

HON. A. H. BARLOW: I beg leave to move, without notice, that the following message be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly:—

Mr. Deputy Speaker,—

The Legislative Council having appointed a Select Committee on the proposed railway extension from Gayndah to Mundubbera, and that committee being desirous to examine Edward Bernard Cresset Corser, Esquire, member of the Legislative Assembly, in reference thereto, request that the Legislative Assembly will give leave to its said member to attend and be examined by the said committee, on such day and days as shall be arranged between him and the said committee.

ARTHUR MORGAN, President.

Legislative Council Chamber, Brisbane, 14th December, 1910.

The PRESIDENT: Is it the pleasure of the Council that the motion be submitted without notice?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

At a later stage of the sitting a reply was received from the Legislative Assembly, intimating that leave had been given to Mr. Corser to attend the Select Committee.

A message was also sent to the Legislative Assembly asking permission for Mr. C. J. Booker, the junior member for Maryborough, to attend and give evidence.

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

* HON. F. T. BRENTNALL said: Further consideration of this Bill and further consideration also of the speeches that were made in favour of and against it yesterday have led me to ask myself the question whether this is not more or less a leap in the dark. I suppose that to say anything adverse to a great project like this would seem something like disloyalty to the interests of the State; but there are aspects of the question which deserve very grave consideration. I think it has been rightly complained that within a few days, comparatively speaking—at any rate within less than ten days of the probable termination of the session—we should have introduced to us a measure of such vast magnitude, with so little information, and with such a small amount of detail about the project itself, that not one of us can come to anything more than a broad and general conclusion. We might not be able, had we the plans and specifications before us, to study them very closely; but it is contrary to the traditions and the

usages of this House to pass railways of any kind without that precaution. We have our Standing Orders, which, I presume, were drawn up deliberately by those responsible for them, and they have been the rule of guidance for this Council for many years; and, in connection with one of the largest projects ever brought before the Council, to ignore those Standing Orders seems to me an imprudent proceeding. I think the Standing Orders are entitled to a little more respect than that. We have no plans. We shall not see any plans. We are asked by this Bill to hand over the complete authority and responsibility of the plans and specifications to the Commissioner for Railways. By clause 2, "The Commissioner is hereby authorised and directed to prepare the plans and thereupon forthwith proceed with the construction of the said railway." I like a man who knows his own mind. I like a man who has public spirit, and a man who is expeditious in his methods of carrying out big projects which are manifestly for the good of the country; but to hand over the functions of Parliament in this summary way, and in connection with a project of this kind, to any official of the Railway Department or of any other department is injudicious. We are simply handing over our own duties and our own responsibilities in connection with this subject to the Commissioner for Railways to do as he pleases, when he pleases, and according to his own judgment. I need not add anything to the eulogies passed yesterday upon the Commissioner for Railways. I yield to none in my respect for that gentleman; and I have had him under my very close observation, because I have been brought into rather close contact with him on two or three occasions since he came to Queensland. When he left this State and went to New South Wales, I did my best to induce the Secretary for Railways at the time to get him back, and I regard it as one of the best things I did in connection with public affairs that at last the Minister yielded—I do not say to my entreaties, but to a large extent on his own judgment. It may be possible that I had some little influence in the matter, but at any rate that was my advocacy, and I was very pleased that at last Mr. Thallon was invited to return to Queensland to take up a position in connection with our railways. He has justified everything that was done for him and for this State in connection with his re-appointment down to the present time. I yield to no man in my admiration for Mr. Thallon. I believe him to be not only a capable but a thoroughly conscientious Commissioner. But I do object—I am not going to protest very much, but I do object to Parliament being asked in the last fortnight of the session entirely to hand over such an important matter as this to any official whatever. That is really what we are asked to do. It was observed by the Hon. Mr. Brown yesterday that the plans, however objectionable they may prove to be, will be entirely unalterable so far as Parliament is concerned. Absolute authority is to be given to the Commissioner to prepare the plans and to proceed forthwith with the construction of the railway.

HON. A. A. DAVEY: Parliament has got to provide the money.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: I think we all know that, and I think we also know what that is worth, after the experience of a good many years. You bring before Parliament at the end of the sessions your Loan Estimates, at a time when you are all tired and want to

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get away for your holidays, and of course they go through. That has been done, and in all probability it will be done again.

Hon. B. B. MORETON: They are always doing it.

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: I have had occasion before to complain about very important matters being brought here to be considered at the tail-end of the session. We not only have this railway and the North Coast Railway to consider, but the plans of four other railways have been laid on the table, and the plans of three more are coming; so that, if we had nothing else to do during the remainder of the session than to deal with those railways, they would occupy every moment of our time. I have not yet been able to find, from any authoritative source, a justification for the project itself so far as its immediate urgency is concerned. I agree with hon. members, as a whole, that the project is a large one, a very important one, and one filled with a potency for the future welfare of this State; but it is one of those projects that, as we were reminded yesterday by the President—whom I think we were all pleased to hear on the subject—I am quite sure I was very pleased to hear him, as I like to hear a man speak on a subject upon which he is competent to speak, even though I may not on every point concur with him—we were told by the President that this was a matter which should be entered upon deliberately. With that I am in perfect accord, and it is impossible to enter upon it deliberately now. If it goes through at all, it must go through with somewhat of a rush. It must go through without the consideration which it ought to have, and, as I say, I do not know where the justification for it comes from. If there be justification for it, it should have been presented to us when the Bill was presented for its second reading. Possibly, had there been no special means of interrupting information and speeches in another place, we should have known a little more than we do at the present time, but that method of suppressing speech does exist, and so, when the Premier of the State seemed to be in the full swing of giving information, he was stopped, and we have not that information. Such information might, I think, have been fairly and justly given to this Council, and through this Council to the country, when this Bill was introduced for its second reading. I think the Minister should have discharged that duty to the country in introducing a project of this nature and of this magnitude, by giving all the information that the country requires. In the report of Mr. Amos I fail to find any justification for the haste which there is over this project. I fail to find any justification for the project itself, so far as he is concerned. His report may be an official and technical report, such as he was authorised to make and supply, but what about an opinion as to the immediate probability of this Western Railway paying? With regard to that point, Mr. Amos says—

Will the line pay?—Not by revenue received by the Railway Department from freights and passengers—at any rate, for many years to come; but indirectly it should pay the State handsomely, probably on one item alone—viz., shifting stock from one district to another in dry seasons—without taking into consideration any extra traffic should the line become a transcontinental one.

I hope the apprehension about a dry season

is a remote apprehension, as the traffic by the transcontinental railway is also probably a remote anticipation. That is nearly all I can find in that report to justify the passage of this measure at this particular time. A good many people in this State have been wanting for a long time some manifestation of a large, comprehensive, and intelligent statesmanship, and they believe they have got it now, and I am not disinclined to agree with them on that point. This is undoubtedly one of the most public spirited and one of the boldest enterprises that we have had under consideration for a long time past. References were made yesterday by three or four speakers to a previous project for a line across the back country to connect the South with the North of Queensland—the project of the late Sir Thomas McLlwraith. There can be no comparison between the two. A great many people have expressed, in my hearing, their regret that Sir Thomas McLlwraith's scheme was not carried out. I opposed that project, and I am not sorry that I did oppose it. I do not think it would have been any benefit to this country to have now an alternate 10,000 acres section of the valuable land through which that railway would have passed for many miles, owned by private individuals, and the State, perhaps, responsible all the time for manifold expenses in connection with the railway. If we make such a railway we should have the land. If the anticipation of the Hon. Mr. Gray is realised, that our Western lands will increase in value year by year through the construction of this proposed railway until they become an asset of almost incalculable value, then we shall have gained by the construction of this so-called transcontinental railway. But I do not think there is any certain basis of judging the ratio of future prosperity. If somebody would only guarantee to us that for the next ten years we shall have such seasons as we have had during the last five or six years, the ratio of prosperity might be forecast with some certainty. But we have no such guarantee. The cycle of magnificent seasons may terminate any day. We have had lessons in the past which should not be forgotten—not only in the deprivation of work and the arrest of industry, but in positive losses, and in the country going backward and backward; a great many people going backward to inevitable ruin. We have had that experience within the last fifteen years, and nobody can say that we shall not have it again, so that we cannot calculate on a continuance of such seasons as we have been enjoying lately. The Hon. Mr. Gray is sanguine enough to hope that the interest on our loans, and the repayment of those loans, will be guaranteed by the increasing value of the land brought about by the construction of this railway. But I would remind that hon. gentleman and others that, if the land does slowly but steadily increase in value, we have entered on a cycle of another kind—that is, a cycle of increasing expenditure and increasing obligations. Increasing obligations are being put on the people by the State Government, and increasing burdens are being imposed and will be enforced by the Federal Parliament upon the occupants of our country lands, which will, perhaps, make some of them hesitate a little bit about paying increased prices for those lands. That is a matter for experience to decide. None of us can say how the imposition of those increasing burdens will eventuate, but

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we may assume that wherever there is land which is subject to the Federal land tax, that land tax will be enforced, and that where the Federal land tax is not in force, if we continue under the same method of legislation as we are now pursuing, a land tax on lower valuations will be enforced by the State Government, or by the local authorities. If the Federal land tax is going to apply to the land in the four sections which are defined as benefited areas in connection with this railway, that will be a matter for the serious consideration by occupiers of land in those districts. There may not be in some of those districts a very large amount of freehold land upon which a tax can be levied, but where there is land upon which it can be levied we may be sure that the tax will be enforced. Why have we not had some information about this matter given to the House? Why has not the country had these facts laid fully and clearly before it? It may be a question whether, with the accumulation of financial burdens on the owners or occupiers of those lands, it may not be by and by hardly worth while owning or holding the lands. We can indulge in as much optimistic feeling as we think fit with regard to the future development of this Western country, but it is no use taking a leap in the dark in the construction of a railway like this, and attempting to disguise from ourselves the inevitable financial responsibility in connection with such a project. It is only about sixteen years since the Hon. Mr. Kidston uttered that weird prophetic wail which we had read to us yesterday afternoon about the impending bankruptcy of all Australia, and about the certain—not probable—repudiation of some of our public debts. Now we have the same gentleman filling the rôle of the daring speculator, with the country's credit behind him. I give all honour to any man who changes his opinions about things when circumstances convince him that he ought to change his opinions, and I give all honour to any man who, when he has turned round from one set of opinions or political views or political principle—if he really is convinced that he was wrong in his previous opinions, views, or principles. I do not think meanly of any man who changes his opinion under conviction. There has been a great deal of change in the circumstances of this State during the last sixteen years, or such a project as this would never have been brought forward.

Hon. G. W. GRAY: Those changes are sufficient justification for this project.

Hon. F. T. BRENTNALL: If they are a sufficient justification for the Hon. Mr. Kidston changing his attitude and conviction with regard to this matter, I say all honour to him for doing so. The Hon. Mr. Kidston is a man of strong common sense and of clear sagacity, and the incalculable changes which have taken place in the condition of Australia during the last sixteen years may have convinced him that things are not going back again to what they were sixteen years ago. A wise man, however, will, as far as possible, avoid extremes. I believe the present Premier of Queensland was at one extreme—the extreme of pessimism—when he uttered those words which were read to us yesterday afternoon, and I am really a little bit doubtful whether he has not now got to the other extreme of optimism—whether he has not gone from the low extreme to the

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high extreme. He may have been injudicious when he uttered those remarks of sixteen years ago; he certainly was not a prophet. He is a living example of the fact that a wise man who prophesies will make sure of his facts when he makes a prophecy. The project before us will involve the expenditure of a large amount of money, and I think it is only proper that we should recognise the financial position it will place us in before we commit ourselves to an enlargement of the public debt. The debts falling due during the next few years are as follows:—On 1st July, 1913, £1,465,500; and on the 1st July, 1915, seven loans, totalling £11,728,800. The total of our loan liabilities falling due in the two years 1913 and 1915 is £13,194,300. I am not quite sure whether I have not myself listened to the present Premier talking about those liabilities—if I have not listened to him, I have certainly read his remarks in *Hansard* and elsewhere—and he has time after time denounced any proposal to incur further liability of that sort, because he thought the country was overwhelmed with debt and difficulty. I believe he was perfectly honest when he said that he thought that by and by the country would be bankrupt, and we should

[4 p.m.] have to repudiate our liabilities.

Evidently he thinks differently now, because, in addition to the £13,194,000 which will have to be met in five years, he proposes an expenditure which will increase that indebtedness to over £21,000,000. It is no use anybody thinking for a moment that the debt will not be increased. It will be increased because these liabilities will not be paid off until they mature, and most of them will not mature until 1915. Then, as we were told yesterday, the interest on the cost of these railways will amount to £230,000 a year. I confess very candidly that I should like to have been told whether there is a reasonable prospect, if not an actual understanding come to, with regard to the renewal of the loans that will be falling due in 1913 and 1915. Before the country is asked to commit itself to this expenditure, it should be informed if there is such an understanding, and before we are asked to vote upon a measure of this kind we should be told whether the Premier has reasonable and satisfactory information—positive enough to convince him that he can depend upon it—that these loans will be renewed when they fall due. If not, then I ask hon. members to look the whole financial position squarely in the face. If he has not such an understanding and no such prospect, why is he taking this high-flying aeronautic flight into the air with a project like this with no certain prospect of paying the debts of the country? Is it fame that he seeks, as it is with some of these aeronauts? Is it fame, or is he running the risk of a political death? I think we should have something certain on these points. The public debt at the end of last year was £44,264,467, and the interest charge was £1,634,331. If £3,000,000 are added, we shall be under a debt of £52,000,000, and we shall be under an annual interest charge of nearly £2,000,000. I have referred to these points mainly to show that in my judgment it is an unfair thing to ask Parliament at this late stage of the session to sit down and deliberate for a few short hours upon a magnificent project like this. Why, some hon. members wanted to go to a vote yesterday. I admire the man who has the brain to conceive such a project, and the moral courage to bring it forward, and I believe that, if it be carried out with proper care and proper de-

liberation, it will be for the benefit of the country; but what I plead is that there shall be no undue haste. There ought to be no such expedition as to imperil a project of this kind. I do not oppose it. I am not here to oppose it, or to express disapproval of the project itself, but to say that I am not fully convinced that it is the proper time to bring it forward, and that we should not be expected, with the small amount of information we have in our possession, to pass it at the dictation of the Government.

* HON. A. NORTON: I begin my remarks by saying that, in spite of all that has been said by way of disparagement, I believe this is the most masterful railway policy that has been submitted in this House for many years. I believe it is the most masterful railway policy that has ever been submitted in this State, and, because I believe that, I intend to do my utmost in support of it. In saying that, I admit that there is a very great deal in the arguments which have been used from what I think is rather a pessimistic view—perhaps I am wrong in saying so—but, at any rate, from a point of view which does not encourage immediate action being taken. In what I have to say—although I shall have to refer to the financial question in an indirect way—I do not intend to deal with masses of figures, as is usual in cases of this kind. In connection with financial arguments there is something which always reminds me of that expression of Dickens's, "Dry-as-dust." They always remind me of what I think I read in Macaulay's "History of England" in reference to the Bank of England. When that bank was still young there was a sort of pessimistic view propounded about it. It was going to ruin the country. It was going to lead to disaster of all kinds. Well, what has happened? It has been the very bolster of the financial affairs of England. It has helped them in every possible way, and I believe it will always continue to do so. I hope hon. members will forgive me if I refer as briefly as I can to some of my past experiences in this State and in New South Wales. It is a long while since I began my experiences in that State. Before I came to Queensland I was a number of years "on my own" in New South Wales, and the time I spent there gives me a good deal of experience not only of the droughts—of which we have heard so much, and of which we shall always hear a great deal—but I also gained a good deal of experience of the results which follow from droughts. After living in the New England district for several years, after I left school, I went to Sydney with the view of learning a little more of what Australia was like, and of the conditions in connection with pastoral pursuits. To do that I left the place where many of my friends were settled, and where they have done very well. They have not learned very much of Australia as a whole, but they have made money; that was their object, and they were quite right in sticking to it. I did not care so much for that. I wanted to know something of the country in which I was born, and of the bush life that I loved. When I was in Sydney I met a friend who said to me, "I am just going to take 2,000 head of cattle from the Clarence River over to Victoria. Will you come with me?" After talking it over, I decided to go with him. I went up to Grafton, and waited on the station from which the cattle were to be taken until he came. During the first part of the trip the country was good. When we got to Liverpool Plains it began to get rather dry. When we got to Dubbo it

had got very much drier. When we got to the Lachlan River the grass was just springing up, and there was a beautiful green sward, but it was far too short. Horses could get a nibble at it, but an old cow could scarcely touch it. The reason for that was that a drought had passed over that portion of the country, and every blade of grass had perished. All along the river banks the swamp oaks had been cut for feed for the horses by the drovers going down the river. These drovers lost thousands of cattle and sheep. I benefited by not coming until after the rain. Although the river banks may belong to the Crown, I was allowed to travel at my leisure. I could shift my camp a mile and a half or two miles and let the half-starved animals regain their strength. In that way I travelled quietly down the river for 200 miles, and by the time I left it the grass on the river banks and back from the river resembled a field of oats; but, owing to the drought, instead of taking four months for the trip, from the day we started until the day we delivered the cattle was exactly eight months. We lost about one-third of our cattle, but others lost more than one-half. One lot of 3,000 cattle that started from Franklyn Vale, in this State, when they reached Hay, on the Murrumbidgee, numbered only 1,240, and all of their working bullocks and horses had died. At that time I passed through the country, it was not worth picking up, but when I visited it afterwards, I found the carrying capacity had increased more than fourfold, despite the depreciation due to the drought, and the value of the land had largely increased. I had a second trip down there, and I saw the result of the improvements which had been made in the interval. I afterwards arranged with a friend of mine to go from Sydney out to a station on the Darling River. I had to ride over 600 miles, and after passing Dubbo, the great portion of the country was drought-stricken and was still suffering from the results of the drought from which it was suffering when I made my first trip. On the Darling River itself there was very little grass. I followed it down for some distance, and lived in that country for a good while. While I was there there were thunderstorms, but they did no good to the country, because the ground was so porous. On the sandy ridges near the river the water sank in and left the surface quite dry; and further back the water sank into the porous soil, so that in the morning the surface was as dry as if there had been no rain at all. I wanted to take up country, and I had the opportunity of taking up that country, but I would not have taken it up if it had been given to me. A great portion of the Darling River country was at that time unoccupied, simply because it had the repute of being dry, broken country. The late Mr. Tyson and a few others had enough foresight to realise the value of the country, and they drove their cattle down to Swan Hill, where they sold them as fats. When it was recognised that they were making a success of their enterprise, other persons took up portions of the country. At that time only one man was settled on the Lower Warrego, about 30 or 40 miles from Burke; and I hope that he did well. Before I was there a firm named Capp and Loder took up a piece of country, on which they started with 600 head of cattle. Before the drought was over the whole of those cattle disappeared, and nobody knew where they had got to. After I had left there, and as I was coming to Queensland, I saw an

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old newspaper in which there appeared a report of an expedition into that part of the country where the cattle had been lost. From that report it appeared that the explorers, in going over some swampy country, which was absolutely unoccupied, came across tracks of cattle, which they followed for a few days, when they came up with the cattle and found that some of them bore the brands of Capp and Loder. You could ride across that country for 30 or 40 miles without seeing a tree, except on the horizon, and the ground was then so soft that if a native dog went over it you could follow his track for miles. The reason for that was that the surface of the soil was covered with decayed vegetation, so that it was quite unsuitable for stock. But by degrees, as the country became stocked, the soil hardened, and the result was that instead of carrying a few thousand cattle it carried ten times that number. The value of the country with stock was increased ten or twenty times and in many cases one hundredfold, and numbers of men have since taken up that country and made fortunes from its use. There were no railways there at the time, or the country would, I believe, have been taken up and occupied at an earlier period. When I came to Queensland I found that similar conditions existed here. I saw the effects of the drought on various portions of the country, and observed that much of the back country was unoccupied. I took up a piece of country which had no stock at all on it except some which had strayed there from another station. The back country was so dry that exactly the same thing happened there as happened in the districts of New South Wales of which I have spoken. Yet the value of those runs in both States has increased more than twentyfold since that time. Means have been found by which water can be brought to the surface on many of the runs which were previously considered dry country. The finding of artesian water was not an unmixed good in all cases. Before subterranean water was discovered there the persons who occupied the country were obliged to confine their stock chiefly to parts of the country where they could reach water without any difficulty, and when rain fell they removed them to other places where there was plenty of grass. But when they obtained water by means of artesian bores the whole of the country was fully occupied, with the result that when drought came their losses were very heavy, as they had no place to which they could remove their stock. Do hon. members think their losses would have been the same if a railway had been constructed out there? I say no. Had we had such a railway as that now proposed when the last drought visited the country, we should have saved thousands of stock, as they could have been brought into other districts where there was plenty of grass. I speak with a practical knowledge of this subject, as one who has had to suffer in this connection. I was almost ruined by the drought because I did not know how to provide against it. I did not, however, go under, and after the drought was over the losses suffered were, in a large measure, compensated for by the high prices paid for the stock which remained. If we are going to carry out this masterful project of railway construction, we shall not only provide means by which stock can be brought from the far Western districts of the State to the coastal lands, but we shall assist in settling people

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out in that part of the State, and we shall secure the occupation of country which has been considered of little value because of the losses suffered there during the drought. With railway communication and a good water supply much of that country will be occupied and stocked. We have still to learn how to provide fodder for stock when the grass perishes. If the pastoralists had learned that lesson in the past, many thousands of stock would have been saved. Hon. gentlemen who have been in the Western country will have noticed that in many places stock have been kept alive with mulga. I have noticed that in Queensland and in several places in New South Wales sheep can also subsist on pig's face—the botanical name of which is *Mesembryanthemum*—which grows freely in our own gardens. It also grows well in sandy country, and I have seen it growing near the Condamine River. It is a good feed in time of drought, as it supplies liquid as well as food. If stock got plenty of pig's face they can do without water for weeks at a time. It is well known that sheep can do without water for a considerable period in dry times. I remember one station-owner in New South Wales telling me that he had sent sheep into the back country away from water, and after they had been brought in after being out there from six to eight weeks they had not suffered any harm. We have yet to learn what sheep can endure and what we can do for them. I feel sure that we have amongst our native plants many which will sustain animal life and which will stand removal, and they may be cultivated in parts of the country where feed becomes scarce during a dry season. The bottle-tree will keep a number of beasts alive without water and without any other feed for a considerable time, and there are many other plants equally valuable. If we had a number of settlers in the Western district, and they proved that the feeding of sheep in a dry time was successful, then their success would be an incentive to other people to follow their example. If this proposed line is built through the back country, then settlers in that portion of the State will be able to remove their stock to any part of the country to which they may want to remove them when feed is scarce or the drought is threatening. Hon. gentlemen have talked a good deal about the insufficient details in connection with this scheme being supplied to the House. I wonder what details were supplied of the scheme proposed by Sir Thomas McIlwraith for building a railway out to the West or to the setting sun. Very few details were supplied in connection with that project. All we knew at that time was that the line was going into very fertile country. Yet it was recognised that the scheme was a sound one. There are many who opposed it strongly who have since told me [4.30 p.m.] that they had made a mistake, and that, if the scheme had been carried out, they believed Queensland would have been much more populous than she is at the present time. I believe that is so. But there were faults about that proposal to which I need hardly refer. Hon. members who have studied the question know what those faults were, and some of them were pointed out at the time by Sir Samuel Griffith. Notwithstanding that, there was a hope that before many years passed the scheme would be adopted; and, if it had been adopted, possibly the benefits would have been very marked.

But to build that line we should have had to give away large tracts of country. It is true that the condition was attached to the grants that the land should be occupied in a certain number of years. But, under this scheme, the country will be occupied without having to give away large tracts of country. When I think of all the drought-stricken country with which I have been associated and of the droughts of which I have heard and read—which have ruined some, while others have pulled through—the conclusion I arrive at is that, with the knowledge we have since acquired, not 10 per cent. of those who failed would fail at the present time. If that is so, why should we take a pessimistic view of the financial aspect of the question? If it can be shown, with anything like reason, that the country is going to be settled if this scheme is carried out; if it can be shown that the inducements that are held out will lead to a large number of men settling in that country with every probability of thriving there, is there any likelihood of danger in regard to finance? People know that in the Western country, which was considered bad, numbers of men have already settled. I hate all these references to finance, because they always bring us to the contention that drought is insurmountable. It is not insurmountable, if we follow the advice given by scientists who have studied the subject. We should endeavour to store water, as it may be stored even in that class of country; and, if that is done, there is very little risk of men who have any practical experience not being able to bring their settlement to a successful issue. I want to see that done. I want to see settlement taken away from the coast, where, as compared with the Western country, settlement is unprofitable, because in the Western country they can run sheep far better than they can run cattle, and far better than they can run sheep on the coast. They can grow the very best wool there, and in a fair season, if they manage their business with anything like prudence, they can obtain a very much larger profit than can be made in the coastal districts. That was proved when the country was taken up, and again at the close of the drought which began in 1883. It was then thought that the country had almost perished, but when the rain came there was such an improvement in the condition of the country that, instead of having a lambing of 80 per cent., in many instances they got over 100 per cent.

Hon. P. MURPHY: They got a rest.

Hon. A. NORTON: The country got the rest it needed. The country needs a rest, and ordinarily it gets that rest in the winter; and, when the country has had a rest, it benefits very largely. I was talking to a gentleman to-day who had some conversation with the Scottish Commissioners on the subject of the dry system of cultivation. That is the system we want in our dry country. We need deep-ploughing and deep cultivation. Three years ago I was up in your neighbourhood, Mr. President, and I saw some very good crops. You could tell by looking at them that the land was well cultivated. In other cases the land had only been ploughed to a depth of 4 inches, and they expected a crop of maize. You could tell from the appearance of the land that it had not been well cultivated. If people will persist in merely tickling the soil with a hoe in the expectation that it will laugh a harvest, they will find they will reap ruin. I will not say they will deserve it, because they do not know any better; but

many of them are now learning from men who have come from the Southern States, where you see really splendid farming. They have watched their neighbours, and they have benefited by their experience. As a result, land which was valued at £5, £6, or £7 per acre is now worth a great deal more than double those values. In this outside country, when settlers learn from those who have succeeded how to utilise the country to the best advantage, there is no question whatever that a large amount of settlement will take place, and that it will be very successful. That will result from running these railways out. There is another question which we ought not to pass over. That is the question of the danger that is likely to occur in time of war. It has been asked how we are to get the people of Australia to rally either at Melbourne or Sydney if war broke out, supposing we have a railway running from Adelaide to Port Darwin. That line may bring a lot of Chinamen here, or, if the Japanese took possession of the Northern Territory, that railway would help to bring them to the South very comfortably.

Hon. P. MURPHY: The Japanese are our allies, are they not?

Hon. A. NORTON: It does not follow that they will always be our allies, though I am inclined to think we have no particular reason to dread them. I believe we have more reason to dread others; and what is now taking place in the United Kingdom is almost an invitation for other people who desire to grab part of Australia to take advantage of the situation. If we have this line completed in the course of a few years, troops can be taken into the Western country. If there is any enemy in the South, they can also be taken from Queensland and New South Wales to the seat of danger in a short space of time. That is a consideration that should not be overlooked in dealing with a question of this kind. I support the Bill with the greatest possible pleasure. There is nothing which has been adduced in this Chamber yet which I have felt so gratified at having put before us. Of course everybody has to admit that the details with which we have been supplied are not sufficient, but we know we have a railway policy projected which will govern the railway policy of the State in after years. There is no need to huckster about a bit of a line here, or a bit of a line there, or a bit of a line somewhere else. Railways in the West and along the coast will be constructed in accordance with a definite policy, and that is an inducement to anybody who has studied the question closely, as I have studied it for years, to do his utmost to support the project which is now before us.

Hon. A. A. DAVEY: I am quite sure that hon. members are indebted to the hon. member for the optimistic tone which he has given to the debate. He has given us the benefit of his very wide experience and observation in the State, and the whole thing boiled down amounts to this. "Be of good cheer; don't be afraid; go right ahead." The hon. member has adduced a lot of arguments which I think are unanswerable in regard to the increased values of pastoral products, and he has also adduced other arguments which are equally valuable. The Hon. Mr. Brentnall pointed out that this is a big question, and one which should be dealt with deliberately. I think we all agree that it is a great pity that a scheme of such magnitude should be brought in at the latter end of the session;

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but the circumstances are such that I do not see how it could possibly be avoided. I must honestly confess that I do not think that the principal objection that has been raised—that we want more light upon the scheme—is a valid objection, because this is not a new scheme. It has been before the country for the last twenty-seven years. It is a scheme that has been talked of on steamers, in hotels, in railway trains, in homes, in clubs, in Parliament House, and all over the country for a number of years, and it would be difficult to strike anyone in Queensland who has not some definite idea as to what is necessary for the development of this vast country. I was very pleased to hear that the Hon. Mr. Brentnall did not agree with Sir Thomas Mellwraith's scheme. Great as that scheme was, I think, with the hon. member, that it is a good thing that the railway was not constructed on those lines. It is fortunate that it remains for us in these improved times—these times of increased population and increased intensified progress, and of a more fervid and determined desire to push the interests of the country ahead—to consider a scheme so vast as this, because it can be carried to a far more legitimate and far more profitable conclusion now than it was likely to be under the old conditions. The Hon. Mr. Brentnall raised an objection to this proposal on the ground that we are undertaking a responsibility which is likely to bring about disaster to the State, and said we have no basis on which we can form an estimate of the future prosperity of the State. Neither have we any basis on which we can form an estimate of the adversity we may suffer. We have certainly had unfortunate droughts in the past, but it does not follow that we shall have such droughts in the future. At any rate, it is not our business to assume that we shall have them in the future. They may come, but I am hoping that they will not come. But, even if we were certain that they will come, I do not think that is any argument against building this railway. On the contrary, I hold that it is one of the strongest arguments that could be advanced in its favour, as this line will enable people in that part of the country to mitigate or avoid the losses in stock caused by drought. Another argument used against the proposal is that we do not know what burdens the Federal Parliament are going to put on the people, and that we should wait to find out what money the Federal Parliament are going to take out of the pockets of the taxpayers. The Federal Parliament will take just as much money out of the pockets of the people as is necessary for governmental purposes, unless the people determine that the amount of taxation they impose shall be reduced. When the people object to the Federal Parliament levying taxation, then the Federal Parliament will have to cease imposing that taxation. It has been said that in agreeing to this scheme we shall be taking a leap in the dark. All big movements are more or less a leap in the dark. This is a scheme of great magnitude, and of course it will be a leap in the dark to a certain extent, just as nearly every action in business life is a leap in the dark to a certain degree. The money invested in our railways comprises two-thirds of our national debt, and our railways are absolutely the best asset the State has to-day, and I believe, as time goes on, the value of that asset will be increased. There does not seem to be any real objection to the proposal itself, though some members apparently fear that, in adopt-

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ing this scheme, we are undertaking a great task. I consider it is the grandest scheme that has ever been submitted to this Parliament or to any other Parliament in Australia. The railway which it is proposed to construct is highly necessary, and we have in this project a definite and comprehensive railway policy for the State. In a well-conducted business the managing director has before him a clear and definite idea of what it is intended to do, and the value of the assets with which he has to deal. We have had railway policies in the past, but they have been indefinite. Therefore I hail this scheme with satisfaction, because of its definiteness. I was glad to hear the Hon. Mr. Norton refer to it from the defence standpoint. I believe this railway will be of great strategical importance in the future. It is possible that the Federal Parliament may build their railway from Adelaide through the Northern Territory to Port Darwin, but I do not think that will conflict in the slightest degree with the line which it is proposed to construct under this Bill. The scheme of Sir Thomas Mellwraith was to carry a railway to Point Parker, in the Gulf, and I think it would be a good thing for Queensland if the Gulf ports were opened. Supposing the Federal Parliament build their railway through South Australia and do not touch Queensland, then I say that from a military point of view the Queensland railway will be a valuable one, because, in case of any peculiar difficulties arising, it will be a very simple matter to connect Camooweal with the Federal railway. With a few thousand men that could be done in a very few weeks. I think that posterity will thank Queenslanders of to-day for having had the foresight to build a railway inland and connect our Eastern seaboard with the Western portion of the State. Though I regard the line as an important one from a military standpoint, I do not mention that as the only justification of the scheme. Still, I do not think that point should be lost sight of. I consider the scheme itself a sound business proposition, as the railway is likely to be an important factor in the development of the West, and that development will no doubt lead to an enormous increase in our population. I confess that at one time I held the idea that it was no part of our business to develop that vast country in the West, and that we should not worry ourselves about it, but leave something for future generations to do; but I have changed my opinion in regard to that matter, and have come to the conclusion that it is our duty to develop to the utmost of our ability the country God has given to us. We have a country the resources of which we can scarcely estimate. I look upon it as the finest country in the world. I have had the privilege of going through Canada, and I saw nothing in Canada which will bear comparison with what we have in Australia, particularly in Queensland. We are afforded the greatest possible opportunities for benefiting humanity, and we should endeavour to make the best use of those opportunities. This scheme is a statesman-like one, because it has for its object the development of our Western country, and because it shows confidence in the ability and willingness of the people to develop the fine resources which are at our disposal. When politicians and legislators in the past proposed to build railways, they submitted schemes which appeared sufficient at that particular time, but in a few years we have come to regard the policy then adopted as a short-sighted policy. The glory of this scheme is that it recognises that this

is a grand country, and that we have people here who are capable of developing its resources. I remember that not very many years ago some persons who were in responsible positions were very anxious to sell our railways. They said, "Let us sell our railways; we can get for them as much as their construction has cost, and it will be a good thing to sell them right out." I have no doubt they could have sold the railways right out at that time, and have got for them as much as they cost, but that was a time of severe drought, and a feeling of pessimism prevailed. It is a very fortunate thing for the State that the policy of selling our railways was not adopted. It is unlikely that any of the persons who advocated the selling of our railways at that time would be foolish enough to make such a suggestion to-day. Mr. Amos says that this railway may not pay directly. I do not think it is reasonable to expect that the railway should pay directly, but this line will certainly largely enhance the value of our Western country, so that it will be a great benefit to the State indirectly. It will open up the West in the most effectual manner, and will provide means for the shifting of starving stock during times of drought. I think it is our duty as a professedly Christian community to do something, even at some expense to ourselves, to relieve the enormous and awful suffering endured by cattle and sheep in this country in times of drought. I will go further, and say that no man has a moral right to breed and keep dumb animals unless he can see a reasonable prospect of their being able to get sufficient feed and drink.

Hon. W. H. CAMPBELL: What about Providence?

Hon. A. A. DAVEY: Never mind about Providence. We are dealing with things as they exist. We owe a duty even to cattle and sheep. My heart has ached when I have been out in the West and seen bullocks and sheep perishing for want of water, or starving for want of food; and I say that, apart from the profit which would result from the removal of stock in times when there is a scarcity of food, it is our duty to see that we do not inflict suffering on these innocent animals. It is bad enough to kill and eat them, but to starve them slowly is too awful to contemplate. Apart from that, it will save enormous losses. There seems to be no objection to the extension of our trunk lines to the West, but the difficulty seems to be about the looping up. As a business proposition, it seems to me absolutely necessary that this looping up should take place, if we are to open up the country and benefit the whole of the Western district. The President yesterday seemed to think very lightly of the suggestion that the building of this railway would lead to an increase of 20,000,000 sheep. I am rather inclined to think that time will show, especially if we have good seasons, that the estimate of the Commissioner for Railways is not very far out. During the last drought we lost 14,000,000 sheep. Supposing this railway had been constructed and it had been the means of saving 5,000,000 of these sheep, in all probability, judging by the rate of increase during the last seven years, those 5,000,000 would have increased to at least 15,000,000. The building of the railway will also lead to closer settlement in the West. It will lead to settlement on areas of 40,000 and 60,000 acres—much smaller areas than the present holdings. There seems to be no doubt that Western Queensland is specially

adapted to the production of merino wool, and he would be a bold man who would anticipate any reduction in the price of wool. Everything seems to point to a continued rise in price. The vast Eastern countries of China and Japan are adopting Western methods and Western civilisation. They are beginning to wear boots and woollen clothing, and there is not the slightest reason to suppose that wool will not appreciate rather than decrease in price. We have practically a monopoly of fine merino wool, and anything we can do to develop the great wool industry will not only make a success of the industry but will be a peace-assisting agency. There is no doubt that, as the years go on, we shall occupy a more important position than we do to-day as a wool-producing country. Reference has been made to the disaster that followed the £10,000,000 loan. Some of that money may not have been wasted, but it certainly was ill-spent. We have been told that the average cost of railway construction in this State is about £7,000 per mile, while the cost of the broader gauge railways of New South Wales and Victoria has been much larger. I would like to remind hon. members that about £1,250,000 of the £10,000,000 was spent in building a short line out of Cairns. That line is about 21 miles in length, and the average cost was £59,500 per mile. But, when you consider that the first 7 miles from Cairns to Redlynch are over country where a railway can be cheaply constructed, and that the 2 miles of railway between Barron Falls and Kuranda are also fairly easy country, it means that some 12 miles cost about £100,000 per mile. But for the construction of that railway the cost of construction generally would have been considerably less than £7,000 per mile. I am not saying anything against the construction of that railway, because it has been the means of opening up a vast extent of very rich metalliferous country, but, so far as the Parliament which was responsible for the expenditure of that money was concerned, it was absolutely the maddest and most unbusiness-like thing that was ever done in this State. The line cost so much that when the tableland was reached, Parliament refused to spend any more money on it, and they handed over to the Chillagoe Company the whole of the back country. We have got over the £10,000,000 loan. Since then we have got over bank crises, and we are getting over federation.

Hon. A. H. BARLOW: No; we are not. (Laughter.)

Hon. A. A. DAVEY: We are getting over federation, and we shall get over any other difficulties with which we are confronted. I am afraid that we may restrict our development by not taking a sufficiently large view of the possibilities of the country. I am optimistic, and I have no hesitation in saying that, if the country were mine, if it cost £10,000,000 to build these railways, I should think it a very good investment. It certainly will add something like £280,000 per annum to the interest bill, but that amount is not to be paid for something that will be of no value. We shall get something for it. Our railways are fast becoming an increasingly profitable investment. They are absolutely the best asset we have. There are a lot of people who are against borrowing, and, as a general principle, borrowing is not much good. At the same time, if you can borrow money and invest it in works that will return something equal to the amount of interest you pay for the money you borrow, there is nothing very

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criminal about borrowing. We all want money, and we want to get it in some spontaneous way. Now, you cannot get money in that way.

Hon. P. MURPHY: The easiest way is to borrow it.

Hon. A. A. DAVEY: Very often it is not the easiest way. If the borrower is an honest person, and he borrows for schemes that are not wise, he will suffer; but, if he borrows for productive works, and those works are likely to develop the country in the way that this railway scheme will develop the Western country, I cannot see any objection to borrowing. The Premier must be fully alive to the fact that there are loans falling due within the next few years, and he is level-headed enough for me to be perfectly willing to leave the financial arrangements to him.

Hon. P. MURPHY: He may not be in power then.

Hon. A. A. DAVEY: If the country is wise, it will keep him in power. I give this scheme my heartiest support; I feel proud to have lived to see a Government and a Premier with the business stamina, the courage, and the foresight to propose a scheme of this sort. It must be a success. The attitude of some hon. members reminds me of a boy standing on the edge of a river afraid to jump in. If you threw him in he would swim all right. It is the same with a lot of these schemes. We have been cursed in the past with small ideas, and what we want is something big. I don't know of a solitary instance in connection with the public works of this State where we have made a mistake from working on too large a scale. Take the Roma Street Railway Station and the Central Railway Station as examples. In connection with the Central Station, Sir Thomas McIlwraith practically lost his position as Premier because he was prepared to spend the money required for building the present station; but both are inadequate for even present requirements. The Central Station ought to be six times as big, and the Roma Street Station ten times as big. We want railways all through the country. It does not matter how much money we borrow. If we borrowed £40,000,000 it would not matter if we borrowed it for works which would develop the country. Our national debt is not like the British national debt. We have solid assets to represent our debt. Let us take courage and have faith in the future of this country. It is not correct to speak of deliberating over this scheme for a few hours. We have been deliberating over it for years. I agree that it would be better if we had more time, but it would be a mistake to stand on our dignity. We should put these small considerations to one side, and have faith in the future of the country. As one who has travelled considerably over Queensland, I say that it would not matter if the amount of money involved were twice as large. We have got vast resources, and we have got the finest—and will be the most prosperous—country in the whole civilised world.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

* Hon. F. I. POWER: I do not rise with the intention of going so extensively into the details as the hon. member who has just sat down, because that has been done so often that it has become nauseating. It is a pleasant duty to stand up and congratulate the Government upon having the courage to bring

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forward a gigantic scheme of this sort. A great deal has been said with reference to the way in which this measure is being hurried through the House. I think that is a matter of regret with every reasonable person, but it must be remembered that the Government have been placed in a very awkward position with regard to their measures, through no fault of their own. There is no use mincing matters. We know that there have been undoubted obstructions in another place. It has not been what you can call genuine criticism of measures, but a deliberate delaying and blocking of measures. Therefore, the Government are placed in the position that they have to force their measures through Parliament. As the Hon. Mr. Davcy has said, there are very few men in this Chamber who have not considered this matter for the last twenty-seven years. I know I spoke on the subject myself twenty-seven years ago, and I have heard it discussed in this House, so that there seems to be some justification for dispensing with the preliminaries which are usual in dealing with railways. If hon. members had taken the trouble to read the evidence before the Select Committee appointed by this House in 1902 to consider the question of building a railway in this Western country, they would have discovered that very valuable evidence was then submitted on this question. Indeed, it is scarcely possible for another fact in connection with the subject to be placed before the Chamber beyond what was given at that particular time. On that occasion evidence was given to the effect that a considerably enhanced value would be given to land in the Western country by the construction of a railway in that portion of the State. Mr. Phillips, who, I am sure, is held in great esteem by all hon. gentlemen, drew a plan of the line which he suggested should be constructed. I suppose there is no man in Queensland to-day who knows more about the conditions of our lands and their possibilities in the future than Mr. Phillips. He stated, and other witnesses corroborated the statement, that the building of the railway in that district would increase the value of the land to a value of 2s. 6d. an acre. Therefore, taking the figures which have been given—120,000 acres—the value of that area would be something like £3,000,000. The whole of the railway is going to cost only about £4,500,000, so that the cost of construction will be almost recouped in the enhanced value given to the land, and we shall have, in addition, the benefit which the country will derive from the saving of starving stock in times of drought. If the evidence which was taken by that committee were repeated now, it would mean that this project would be shelved for a long time. Mr. W. W. Hood, another witness, expressed the opinion that the construction of such a railway would mean the saving of thousands and thousands of pounds to the meat industry. If anyone looks at the plans which were before the Select Committee he will find that they show certain dry belts in that part of the country. In consequence of the existence of those dry belts, although there is any amount of feed for stock in certain localities, you cannot remove the stock to places where pasture is plentiful. It was stated by one of the witnesses before the committee that, with the existence of a railway, the whole of the fat stock in that part of the country could

be brought down to the meatworks on the coast without any difficulty, and that would mean an enormous saving to the industry. I merely mention these two or three facts to show that if members will take the trouble to read the evidence obtained by the Select Committee they will get a considerable amount of information bearing on the proposal now before the House. I listened yesterday with the greatest pleasure and interest to the very excellent speech delivered by our President. I understood him to say that practically the bulk of the country which will be served by this line is without artesian water. That statement is not borne out by the evidence given before the Select Committee.

HON. B. FAHEY: I do not think the President said that.

HON. F. I. POWER: I understood the President to intimate that there was some difficulty in regard to that matter. I hope that I am under no misapprehension in regard to the opinion he expressed. In any case, I wish to point out that the Barklay Tablelands are pretty well to the east of the proposed line. The Hon. Mr. Brown has just corrected me, and informed me that what the President intimated was that the Barklay Tablelands are outside the artesian water area. The evidence given before the Select Committee was to the effect that it was not outside the artesian water area. Mr. Phillips stated that artesian water is available on the Barklay Tableland, but that it must be pumped.

HON. W. V. BROWN: That may be sub-artesian water.

HON. F. I. POWER: I have not sufficient knowledge to say whether it is artesian water or sub-artesian water. But Mr. George Phillips calls it artesian water, and he says that it can be got at a depth of 200 feet, but it will not rise to the surface, as it is drawn off into the Gregory River, which is one of the finest rivers he has ever seen in Australia. The Barklay Tableland was described by every witness as having no equal in the whole of Australia as sheep country. Members have all this information, and a great deal more, before them in the evidence given to that Select Committee. I have had the value of Mr. Steer's assistance in comparing the distances given by Mr. Phillips with the distances shown on the map attached to this Bill, and I find there is very little difference between them, but the line Mr. Phillips proposed was somewhat more westward. Under all the circumstances, I do not see that there is any reason for rejecting this Bill on the ground that there is not sufficient information regarding the proposal before the Council. Mr. Phillips further said that the construction of such a railway as that now proposed will enhance the value of all the Western country of Queensland. There is also some very interesting evidence given with regard to the country further west, and I believe it is because of such information that the route of this proposed railway has been brought more east, the reason being that it will traverse a better class of country. There is also information as to the development of stock routes. Some hon. gentlemen in this Chamber probably know more about that matter than I do, but I may point out that the evidence was to the effect that losses of stock will be inevitable unless some such railway scheme as that now before us is carried out,

owing to the difficulty of travelling them across the dry belt in seasons of drought. The witnesses were unanimous on that point.

HON. P. MURPHY: Did Mr. Phillips propose a railway?

HON. F. I. POWER: No; but he drew a route on the map. I have only referred to the evidence obtained by the Select Committee in 1902 to show that we do not suffer in any way through not referring this proposed railway to a Select Committee. No one likes to hurry a measure like this through Parliament, but circumstances may arise when it may be necessary to do so, and I admire the men who have the courage and pluck to do it in a case of necessity. The financial aspect of the question we have, of course, a perfect right to criticise; but as it is the prerogative of the other House to find the money for the construction of the line, we may safely trust them to deal with the matter, as they are responsible to the people. It is a fair assumption that for the £4,500,000 spent in building the railway we shall have £4,500,000 of value in the line when it is constructed, unless we believe that Queensland will be the poorer in the future. If, on the other hand, we believe that the future of Queensland is going to be as bright as most people think it will be, then we shall have a most valuable asset, apart altogether from the enhanced value of the lands which are in the hands of the Crown. The railway will also be the means of saving thousands of stock in times of drought, and it will afford employment to a large number of people. The scheme is one which, if carried out, the State may well be proud of.

I believe it will do more to open [5.30 p.m.] up Queensland than any other proposition that could be brought forward. I do not intend to enter into the question of finance. That question has been thrashed out. I only spoke to point out that there is justification for bringing forward this scheme, and, even without the preliminaries that might otherwise have been expected, it has my hearty support, and I do not think we need fear that any danger will accrue from the fact that it has not been discussed at greater length.

HON. W. H. CAMPBELL: I have only a few words to say. The President, in his excellent speech, expressed rather a pessimistic view of the future settlement of the country beyond the Western line; but I can assure hon. members that once the railway is constructed the country will be available for sheep for some considerable distance beyond the railway. Some of the finest country in Queensland is west of the line. The Hon. Mr. Power has spoken about what the President said with regard to artesian wells. Now, one of the first artesian wells sunk in Queensland was at Thargomindah, and the assumption in certain quarters is that the artesian area extends very much further than we have any knowledge of at the present time. It extends, at all events, to Thargomindah and Windorah. But in that country a far more valuable asset than even artesian water is the sub-artesian supply. Under the Bill that we have been discussing recently the Government intend to place restrictions upon private individuals putting down artesian wells; but, if the Government eliminate the clauses relating to sub-artesian wells, that source of supply will form a very valuable asset to settlers in the West, because a man can put down such wells for very

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much less than the cost of an artesian well. In some places, especially in the deep country about Windorah and Bimerah you have to go down a tremendous depth for artesian water, which makes it a very costly undertaking. A great many years ago pastoralists would not look at anything but Mitchell grass country and rolling downs. That was all taken up, and the whole of the forest country and what we call desert country was neglected. People accustomed to sheep said that the desert country might possibly be used in time of drought as relief country. The desert country is badly supplied with surface water. There are no watercourses or running streams. The soil is sandy, and it is almost impossible to conserve water by means of tanks and dams; but the pioneers of that country prospected for water, and they put down subartesian wells, and got water at depths ranging from 12 feet to 250 feet. As the Hon. Mr. Clewett knows, all that desert country was neglected twenty years ago, but it is now all under sheep from the range right out to the Flinders. In the same way the whole of the country beyond this trans-Queensland railway will be occupied by sheep as soon as the railway is constructed. In fact, it will be occupied as soon as people are assured that the railway will be built in the near future. Taking the country for the whole 810 miles between Tobermory and Camooweal for 40 miles to the westward of the railway, at a very moderate estimate it will carry 300 sheep to the square mile, and that will mean a total of 9,720,000 sheep. It has taken a long time to breed up to the numbers we have in Queensland, but both runs and grazing farms are now pretty well stocked up. They have a very large number of ewes that are breeding annually, and it is only twelve months since the pastoralists were beginning to cry out asking what they were to do with their surplus stock. Once this railway is assured, and people begin to take up country, there will be a very great demand for young and old sheep to stock up the country. The ewes which are now being fattened and sent to the boiling-down establishments or to the meatworks will be in great demand for breeding purposes; and I see no reason why in a very short time the whole of the country should not be carrying a very large number of sheep. In addition to the sheep in our own territory, when the railway goes to Camooweal it will tap a large extent of good country in the Northern Territory, as people are settling there already in anticipation of the railway, and there is no doubt that all the country beyond Camooweal that has been neglected for many years will be taken up for sheep breeding, and all the wool and other produce from the Northern Territory will come into Queensland and go to Queensland ports. That is why I think the railway will prove such a paying concern. Several of us have had communications from people out West who do not approve of the scheme. Local interests are not altogether satisfied by the route by which it is proposed to take the railway. The people of Longreach had a meeting last Saturday, and they were unanimous in trying to get an alteration made. Instead of the line going from Blackall to Windorah, they would like to see it go from Longreach, *via* Jundah, to Windorah. It would be a very good thing for the country, for the Railway Department, and for the public generally that the various lines should be linked up, and I am

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in favour of that myself. But, in view of the scheme submitted by the Government, it is impossible for local interests to be attended to. We must go for the scheme as it is put before us. Provision is made for deviation to the extent of 25 miles on either side and possibly that may be increased by and by. The Government may determine to link up the railways in some other way, but, as it is, I think the project before us is endorsed by the whole of the country. I am sure, from what has been said in this Chamber, that there is not the least fear that the money will not be well expended, and I am equally certain that the railway will be a good thing for the country.

* HON. W. F. TAYLOR: There is not the slightest doubt that this scheme must eventuate sooner or later. I can remember thirty-five years ago talking to Mr. Robert Ballard, who was then Chief Engineer for the Northern Railway, about the construction of railways in Queensland, and he said, "The scheme is to construct three main lines towards the setting sun, and link up those lines when you get far enough out West." That has always been the idea that is very paramount in my mind, and it is very pleasant to know that this scheme is about to eventuate at last. I shall not go over all the arguments which have been adduced by previous speakers in favour of the Bill, because that would simply be a waste of time; but I would point out that the proposed linking up between Barcardine and Hughenden, and so on, will not meet the case at all. Furthermore, I do not see what benefit would accrue to the country, or even the stations in the immediate neighbourhood, from such a linking up of lines. There is not an acre between those two places that is more than 90 miles from a railway, so that practically no benefit would accrue to any of the stations from the construction of a line from Barcardine through Aramac and up to Hughenden. It would simply mean that the stations in the immediate vicinity of the line would be a little closer to the railway, but no benefit would result to the country generally. Such a proposal is not in the same category as the present scheme. This scheme is one worthy of a statesman, and I am proud to think we have a statesman in Queensland who is capable of propounding such a scheme. I have no fear as to the results. I have no fear that it will not prove beneficial to the country from a financial point of view. It was pointed out yesterday by the President that this State had been in existence for fifty years, and that we have only got 20,000,000 sheep. But seven years ago we had over 20,000,000 sheep. We then lost 14,000,000, and we started afresh with 7,000,000, and in the intervening seven years the numbers have increased to 20,000,000. With a continuance of good seasons that rate of increase will continue. Queensland is now the leading State in the production of fine merino wool, and we shall not only maintain that position, but we shall double our output before very long. I see a great future before the people of Queensland as the result of this scheme. The monetary aspect of the question does not seem to present any insuperable difficulty. I do not profess to be a financial expert, but it appears to me that, if the people who have money to lend can be shown that there is a profitable investment for their money, and that there is no risk attached to it, there is very little doubt that they will lend their money. There is plenty of

money in the world awaiting investment. The matter of £4,500,000 is a mere nothing. Even if New Zealand had some difficulty in floating a loan recently, I have no doubt that, if we knew the circumstances, it would be seen that there were good and sufficient reasons.

HON. A. H. BARLOW: They wanted the money to build a "Dreadnought"—that was the trouble. It was not for a reproductive work like this.

HON. W. F. TAYLOR: There may not be the same objection to a work like this, which will be reproductive. The Bill has my hearty approval, and I hope it will be passed as soon as possible. With regard to the Longreach people desiring a line to go from Longreach to Jundah instead of going to Windorah, I am rather astonished at the proposed line starting from Blackall for Windorah, as the country is low-lying, and a great number of creeks have to be crossed; so in anything like heavy rains the line will be under water for a great part of its length, whereas a line from Ilfracombe to Jundah would go through dry country not intersected by creeks, and therefore requiring few bridges. I brought evidence before this Chamber two sessions ago to prove the superiority of the country from Ilfracombe to Jundah for a line of railway to that from Blackall to Windorah.

HON. W. H. CAMPBELL: This House threw out that line.

HON. W. F. TAYLOR: I am sorry it did, because the country from Ilfracombe is dry and does not contain many creeks. No doubt the Government had good reasons for deciding that the line should go from Blackall to Windorah, but it would be well, I think, if those reasons were given to the House. However, the main portion of the scheme has my hearty approval, and I shall support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. P. MURPHY: I intended to make a long speech on this subject, but the Hon. Mr. Davcy has said two-thirds of what I proposed to say, and the Hon. Mr. Power has appropriated the other third and abused me into the bargain, so that there is very little left for me to say. I have considerable sympathy with the remark of the Hon. Mr. Brentnall, that there is undue haste shown in passing this Bill. If the Government had brought this matter forward at an earlier stage of the session, and had not taken up time with a number of less important measures, such as the Bible in State Schools Bill, the consideration of which occupied this Council for five or six weeks, and which will not be of much benefit to the country, we should have had more time to discuss an important proposal like that now submitted to the House. I have much pleasure in supporting this proposal, and I congratulate the Government on having brought it forward. I think the present generation and the coming generation of Queenslanders will have reason to feel grateful to the Government for having the wisdom and courage to revive the great statesmanlike scheme of Sir Thomas McIlwraith. When Sir Thomas McIlwraith proposed that scheme, I, as a member of the commercial community in Brisbane, was in favour of it. Not many persons were in favour of it at that time, but since then they have seen the error of their way, and now the great bulk of the mercantile community are in favour of this scheme. If the splendid, statesmanlike scheme of Sir Thomas McIlwraith had been adopted by Parliament

and the transcontinental railway had been constructed, I am certain that Queensland would have been three times as populous, three times as productive, and three times as wealthy as she is to-day; and it is my belief that if this scheme is adopted it will be found twenty-seven years hence that Queensland will be three times as populous, three times as wealthy, and three times as productive as it would have been if these railways had not been constructed. In a new country like this, where we have so much good pastoral, agricultural, and dairying land, and where there are no great inland waterways, we have no other means of opening up the country than by constructing railways. The more railways we make in every direction where there are good lands, and where it is possible to settle people on those lands, the better it will be for the State. But in conjunction with railway construction we must have a better system of settling people on the land than we have at the present time. At present we attach too much importance to the price we are going to get for the land. That should be a secondary consideration compared with the promotion of settlement. As the Government increase the liabilities of the State they should endeavour to increase the population by means of land settlement. In reckoning the advantages to be gained from the building of this line we are apt to be too much influenced by the fact that it will increase the number of our sheep to 30,000,000 or 40,000,000, and not to give sufficient attention to the question of increasing the number of human beings in the State. Human beings are, after all, the best asset a country can have. When we apply to the great financiers of the world for a loan, they will not ask what number of sheep or cattle we have, but what population we have, and how much have we borrowed already. We now owe more per head than most countries of the world. Therefore I desire to sound a note of warning in connection with this aspect of the question. More important than the increase in the number of our sheep and cattle is an increase in the number of people settled on the land. I believe that last year we increased our population by something like 20,000. If we continue to increase the population at that rate only, it will take twenty-five to twenty-six years to double our present population. While, therefore, I am in favour of the construction of this railway, I think we should pay great attention to the matter of increasing the number of people in Queensland, so that we may have human beings here who will help us to pay the interest on our loans. It will no doubt be necessary to bring out a lot of men to construct the railways comprised in this scheme, but, if we bring those people here and do not settle them on the land, directly the railways are finished they will leave the country. I am not afraid of the Government borrowing the amount of money that will be required for the construction of these railways, or even twice that amount of money, provided the country is properly handled. We have already borrowed £27,000,000 for railway purposes, and the revenue from the railways constructed is now about paying interest on the cost of construction. Meanwhile the country has enjoyed the indirect benefit resulting from the opening up of country by those railways. A great deal of the money spent in times past, as, for instance, that spent on the Cairns Railway, was not wisely spent, but notwithstanding that fact those railways are now paying interest on the cost of construction. We have not only

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our own experience to guide us in regard to the value of railways, but we have the experience of New South Wales and other States. I remember reading only last year a letter in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The letter was written by a Sydney actuary, a very able man, I understand, in answer to some very severe criticisms which appeared in the *Sydney Bulletin* on the borrowing propensities of the Wade Administration. In that letter it was stated that in five years from that time if the railway freights and fares were not decreased—and in comparison with the rates in other countries of the world they were fairly low in New South Wales—if the railway rates were not decreased and the population continued to increase in the same ratio for the next five years as it had done in the previous five years, then the receipts from the railways would pay the interest on the whole of the national debt of New South Wales. I believe that only one-third of the national debt of that State is invested in railways. I watched very carefully if there was any contradiction of the statements made in that letter, and the figures adduced in support of it, but no contradiction appeared. The railways of most of the States of Australia are now paying interest on the cost of construction. The United States of America have a population of about 100,000,000, and they have gone in largely for railway construction, notwithstanding the fact that they have great inland rivers which serve as national highways. The same kind of thing has taken place in Canada. During recent years there has been an enormous expenditure on railway construction in the Dominion of Canada, with the result that the population and trade of the Dominion have rapidly increased. I noticed a report in the *Brisbane Courier* the other day to the effect that during the first ten months of the current financial year in Canada the revenue receipts had increased by £1,600,000. That is the result of railway construction and land settlement in Canada. My contention is that railway construction in Queensland will be of comparatively little value, unless it is accompanied by a policy of settling people on the land. It is impossible for us to progress without railway construction, but we must also devote our attention to the equally important matter of settling people on the land. If we bring people here in times like the present to build these railways and carry out other works, and do not fasten them on the land, we shall find that as soon as a bad season comes they will go away. I do not think there is much I can add to what I have already stated. I understand that the leases of a great number of the large pastoral properties in the Western country will be falling in immediately, and from time to time large portions of those leases can be resumed by the Government, and grazing farms can take the place of the large pastoral leases in the West, and in that way the population will be very largely increased. As I mentioned before, it is more important to have an increased number of human beings than it is to have a large increase in cattle. Desirable and all as it is to increase our flocks and herds, the flocks and herds themselves will not pay the interest on the large amount of money to be borrowed for the construction of this railway. Smaller grazing areas, of course, will bring about an increase in the population of the West; but, for the most part, I must say that I am more favourable to the construction of railways in the inner districts

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—to large areas of agricultural lands where large numbers of people can be settled—than I am to the construction of railways in the Western country, where it will be never profitable to settle a large number of human beings. It is about two years ago since the present Secretary for Lands paid a visit to a place inland from Gladstone—Rawbelle Station, and when he came back from visiting that country he said there was a magnificent area of splendid land there, equal to the Darling Downs, and about one-third the size of the Darling Downs. He also made the statement that railway communication could be given to that district by the construction of 70 miles of railway, connecting with the Mount Perry line. That is two years ago, and nothing has yet been done in regard to the construction of that line. It appears to me, much as I believe in this railway construction in the West—and I am not at all afraid of borrowing money for that purpose; I believe in the great possibilities of Queensland—but it appears to me that it would be a wiser policy for the Government to try and settle people in the agricultural districts near the coast, by constructing railways in those districts first. The most important thing in connection with railway construction in the interests of the people of Queensland is, in my opinion, to construct railways to large areas of agricultural lands in the coastal districts and settle people upon them.

Hon. A. H. BARLOW: We are doing that in the next Bill.

Hon. P. MURPHY: I was going to say that that is a Bill I like even better than this. I do not think we will make anything like decent progress in the way of increasing our population until we commence to give away the land to the people for nothing, with the condition that they reside on it and cultivate a certain portion of it each year. That question was mentioned by the Hon. Mr. Nielson a few nights ago in this House, and I think the idea is a splendid one. The condition of simply compelling the people to live on the land and just merely fence it is not sufficient, in my opinion. They should be compelled also to cultivate a certain portion every year when it is good agricultural land. Although we had no increase in population for many years, to my mind we are becoming a little too elated over the increase of population we have had during the last few years. The increase is too small in a new country like this, where we have such a large area of unused land; an increase of 20,000 or 30,000 to the population is in my opinion infinitesimal, and it will take an enormous time to make any progress in the State if a larger increase than that cannot be secured. I think with the large quantity of agricultural land that we still have unused—there is the large area I mentioned at the back of Gladstone, and along the new line to be constructed from Mount Morgan along the Dawson River there are million of acres of good land—and it appears to me that the Government are not acting wisely in not advertising this land, and giving it away for nothing. Free land is taking 300,000 people a year into Canada, and I do not think we will have any proper inrush of a good class of immigrants into Queensland until we announce to the world that we are prepared to give land away in 160-acre blocks. We can afford to do it. There is too much of an inclination to get as

high a price as possible for the land. Take, for instance, the Atherton Scrub, where there is an enormous area of some of the finest land in the world, and which was discovered and opened over twenty years ago. How many people are there now? The reason why there are so few people there is because we do not give the land away. It has been bought up by speculators and held by them. The law should be altered, and that country given away—perhaps in smaller areas of 100 acres—given away for nothing, under the condition that the selector shall cultivate 5 or 10 acres a year. The Atherton Scrub alone, properly used, will some day or other carry more people than there is in Queensland altogether now; and yet there is scarcely any progress at all there so far as settling human beings is concerned. Surveys are being made and the land is being bought up, but there are very few settlers there. The land itself is splendid, and something is wrong. I cannot put my finger on what it is, but when you consider such a large area of splendid land having a magnificent rainfall, and which was discovered over twenty years ago, has so few people on it, we must come to the conclusion that we are not making the best use of our land. I would just like to say I was very much impressed with the very able and carefully-delivered speech of the President the other afternoon. It is very necessary before borrowing a large amount of money to make a proper calculation as to how you are going to find the interest for that money, as it sometimes seriously inconveniences the Government of a country to be overloaded with indebtedness. We have at the present time—I think that is a proper basis on which to calculate—at the present time we have as much debt per capita as any country in the world, and we should be very careful indeed before we borrow further large amounts of money, no matter for what purpose they are required, until we largely increase our population. I have the greatest confidence in the capacity of this country to carry a good number of people. I think the railways proposed by the Government, and more particularly the coastal railway, will be of great advantage to the State. With these few remarks I will close. I wish to say that I will give this railway proposal my support.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

* HON. F. CLEWETT: I would like to make a few remarks in connection with this subject before we pass the second reading of the Bill, and the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Murphy have reminded me of a subject which has been before this Chamber at various times previously. That is the matter of giving away the land to induce population. That is a policy which, whenever an opportunity has occurred, I have always advocated, and I am very glad indeed to see that others are coming to take the same view which I have had, and that is that the land is no use unless it is occupied and made reproductive. Every settler and every individual who acquires an interest in the land is a valuable asset to the country, and the more of them there are the more prosperous the country will be. That being so, it pleases me to see that others are now taking that view—there may have been others before, but I do not remember having heard them advocate it. In connection with the railway proposal, I have very much pleasure in adding my congratulations to those which have

been expressed previously in connection with the scheme which the Government has introduced, and I hope it will get the support necessary to give it effect. I am very pleased indeed that it has at last been found necessary to have a policy of advancement in connection with the opening up of the country by means of railways. The scheme no doubt is a very large one, and will require to be very carefully handed; but, if financial arrangements can be made in such a manner as to show there is a reasonable prospect of success in dealing with the matter, I think it is one that should get the most favourable consideration which the Council can give it.

The labour question is entitled to [7.30 p.m.] careful consideration. We are given to understand—and I believe it is quite correct—that the labour available in the country is not sufficient for present requirements. It is therefore highly essential that a large scheme of immigration should be initiated and carried on continuously. A great deal has been said about a vigorous immigration scheme, but for certain reasons, into which it is not necessary for me to enter, it has not been carried into effect. I hope that state of things will now be altered, and that there will be sufficient people brought here to enable this work to be carried through and also to settle the country. I am very pleased to see such a large scheme brought forward for providing the back country with communication. Until something of this sort is undertaken, there is hardly sufficient inducement for men with capital and experience to bring the Western country into profitable occupation. No doubt it will require a great deal of consideration, but, if the financial arrangements can be placed on a satisfactory footing, the construction of this railway must undoubtedly conduce to the profitable occupation of the Western country. The Hon. Mr. Murphy has indicated that he would prefer railways nearer the coast with a view to settling an agricultural population. It is very necessary that a scheme of that character should be carried out, and an attempt is being made to carry out such a scheme in conjunction with this proposal to open pastoral country. A great deal has been said from time to time about our indebtedness in connection with existing railways. I have often put this question to people, "What would this country have been if our present railways had not been built?" Those railways are a valuable asset, and the capital invested in them is a very small matter compared with the expenditure in a similar direction in other countries. It is not a burden on the State. On the contrary, at the present moment it is producing an amount of surplus revenue which is being used for other purposes. In this connection I have long thought that all surplus railway revenue and all revenue derived from Crown lands should be invested in railways and other works which are calculated to open up the country. Queensland is more dependent upon communication by rail than almost any other country I know, in consequence of the absence of navigable rivers inland. The pastoral and the agricultural industries require wet weather for their successful prosecution, but over a large extent of country, when the surface is wet, the settlers might just as well sit down and wait for sunshine, as they can do comparatively nothing. Railway communication is absolutely essential for the conduct of their operations. In the light of this circumstance, it is almost

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unnecessary to dwell upon the necessity for such a railway as this. The Hon. Mr. Thyne pointed out yesterday the position which the merino wool industry occupies in our Western country, and that view of the matter is entitled to consideration. The improvement which has taken place in the condition of the sheep and wool industry of late years is deserving of commendation. I remember the time when quality was not so much the object of the pastoralists as numbers. Values were always estimated at so much per head. I am pleased to note that more attention is now being paid to quality, and that a larger return is being obtained from a considerably smaller number of stock. That is a development which is deserving of every encouragement. The Hon. Mr. Campbell made some reference to country with which he said I was familiar. The country to which he more specially referred was the spinifex country between the Nogoa and Thomson Rivers. I travelled over that country, and had some material influence in bringing it into occupation by marking roads and otherwise about forty-five years ago. I have had opportunities of becoming conversant with what was being done in that country, and in the country further west. I am safe in saying that it is owing to the fact that means of communication were established that it was possible to bring that country under profitable occupation. With regard to the profitable use of railways in connection with the removal of stock in times of drought and adversity, I may say that if it had not been for our experience under those conditions the value of this railway would not have been so well understood. But not only will this railway afford the means for removing stock in times of necessity, it will also afford facilities for bringing the produce of that part of the country to market. In times of flood it has been impossible to move in remote parts of the country, and everything has been at a standstill until, with the advent of dry weather and the drying up of the roads, people were able to resume their operations; and that state of things can only be altered by giving the country railway communication. Then, in connection with the occupation of that country, we have the question of immigration. Without a large and continuous stream of immigration everything will be at a standstill, our markets will be limited, and development restricted. It is therefore necessary that we should introduce suitable immigrants in numbers sufficient to meet our requirements. With regard to the financial aspect of the question, I have confidence in the ability of the country to carry out this scheme, and I presume the Government would not have brought down this proposal if they had not fully considered that matter. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill, and I trust the scheme will prove a success.

HON. A. GIBSON: I think that almost the last word has been said on this Bill. Nevertheless, I should like to record my reasons for the vote I shall give on the question. It goes without saying that I am in favour of the Bill. We have been reminded to-night about the wonderful scheme of Sir Thomas McIlwraith, by which he was going to connect Brisbane with Point Parker, on the Gulf of Carpentaria. When that scheme was submitted to the country I thought that it was a great statesmanlike proposal, and I have not changed my opinion since then. The electors did not approve of the scheme at that time, but many

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of them have come to the conclusion since then that, while Sir Thomas McIlwraith might have been a little before his time in propounding his scheme, they were considerably behind the time in preventing him carrying it through Parliament. I was one of the members of the Select Committee appointed in 1902 to consider how we could tap the Western country, and connect the Southern with the Northern Railway. I felt then that the day was not far distant when a sound capable man or Ministry would come forward with a proposal to tap that country, with the view of saving sheep and cattle in times of drought. Many things have transpired in this State since that time, and I am not at all surprised that we have in power to-day a Ministry at whose head there is a man with ambition and determination enough to carry out a great "gang-forward" policy which will meet the needs of our great Western country. I have not been there, but I have read much about the country, and I think the scheme propounded in this Bill is a very reasonable one, and one that I am justified in supporting. At the same time, I am in sympathy with those who advise that there should be no haste in a matter of this kind. This would be an extraordinary House if all members thought alike on a great question like this, and I think it is well that we should hear both sides of the question. I have a feeling that, unless we can work out a scheme which will enable us to settle people on the Western country which it is proposed to make available by this railway, we shall not arrive at the desirable result that we should have in view. Many years ago squatters were the only people, and the question was always cropping up whether we should legislate for sheep and cattle only or for people. I want to know if there is any land out West where these railways are going on which men can take up small selections, where they can grow a certain number of sheep and take the wool off them and bring it to market. I also want to know if there are portions of that land where agriculture can be carried on. I think I heard some hon. member say in an early stage of this discussion that much of that country is capable of growing wheat. I should be delighted if the Minister can tell us that there is a possibility of settling thousands of people on those lands as agriculturists. I understand that the rainfall in some portions is very favourable, and this afternoon an hon. member read a quotation from evidence given by Mr. George Phillips to the effect that the country possesses a supply of artesian water which might be useful for irrigation purposes. It should be good fruit-growing country as well as suitable for growing wheat and barley. I have always had a feeling that in that part of our great State we should have cities, towns, villages, and agricultural communities, just as we have on the Darling Downs. Surely there are possibilities of settlement in that direction. Surely there are places where men with families may settle, and establish thriving communities. If we are to carry out the great scheme foreshadowed by Lord Kitchener, we must have a yeomanry class, and not simply squatters with their sheep and a few men with dogs to attend to them. There is not much to be gained by this railway if it will promote only pastoral settlement of that kind; and I do not know that I would vote for it if I thought that the only result of its construction would be that it would carry wool, sheep, cattle, and possibly a few horses. I want to see hundreds and thousands of people settled on that

portion of the country—people who will assist to protect the Eastern portion of the State. General Feilding came to Queensland and joined with Sir Thomas McLlwraith, or was about to join with him, to run that great

railway through Western Queensland [9 p.m.] land to Point Parker; but as that failed he settled down in

Canada, and he gave them the great trans-continental railway that is running through that dominion. Without that railway, Canada would not be bringing in her hundreds of thousands of people a year. She has dry country as well as we have, and this dry cultivation which is coming to the front now is being tried in Queensland. When the people come from yonder countries, we should be prepared to give them a piece of country that will grow wheat or other products, and these railways of ours will carry them out and carry them in, and carry their products backwards and forwards and enable them to make a living. Surely the squatters out there, who lease 400 and 500 and probably 1,000 miles of country, would be glad to let some of the creek-sides as long as their leases, and get people to settle down there and start as agricultural farmers! We have been told that this is good land, and I think the Minister told us that that railway would be a complement to the Bill that we have just passed through this House; and, unless we make use of our lands by building this railway, I hold that we shall have failed in the great scheme which ought to be a credit to this State, and ought to bring into it hundreds and thousands of immigrants who will get a living in it and will enrich our railways, enrich our cities, and enrich the people who are coming to us, and will be a defence in time of need, when defence is required. I have a great respect for the present Government. I think that while they are working out these great railway schemes which they have put before the country—the greatest railway scheme the country has ever had placed before it—and I say all credit to them for doing it—but while they are doing that, and are prepared to spend £7,000,000 or £8,000,000 in laying down these lines, to make the scheme a success they should dovetail on to them some policy by which we can clear some of the land for our immigrants, and give them a homestead, and tell them there is a beginning and they will be indebted to the State for so much. I am not saying something like that is not being done, because I know sugar planters who clear their land, build houses, and put down railways, and encourage people to settle there and make homes for themselves; and I do not see why the Government should not also do what the individual proprietors of land in this State are prepared to do, and are doing. In Canada they do the same thing. In many places they give little blocks of land. When one of the greatest Victorian writers was coming from the old land and passing through Manitoba, he was on board a large train that contained some 300 or 400 immigrants who were going to settle down in the wilds. On that train, and on trains that preceded it, the Canadian Government sent out buildings. They sent out school-houses, churches, and all the conveniences for settling down the people contentedly. Am I asking too much when I say the Government of Queensland should apply this in a small way at least, and say to the immigrants, "We have a home for you." It might not

be a large house, and they could add to it as required. One of the Scottish Commissioners when in this State said, "We do not care to advise our people to come out to this country. If we put them into one of these scrubs you have here and say to them, 'Those 100 acres are yours,' they would look at the trees and the very sight of them would frighten them." They are not woodmen, and are not capable of tackling the forests. Our older colonists can do that. If we invite these people out, some little attraction will have to be made to get them here. That is my view of it, and I should be very sorry indeed to think that this railway was only put down for sheep and cattle. I think we ought to see that we make provision for men with their families, and if a man has four or five sons and three or four daughters, and they are all willing to come out, then we should see to it that they have land when they come here. I have thought on the optimistic side. I have thought of the 20,000,000 sheep growing up—of the 100 per cent. increase on our present flocks. That is a beautiful thought. If there will be 20,000 people growing those 20,000,000 sheep, then I shall welcome them. We want to get the people to go out there and settle down and be the backbone of that great Western country to protect us down here. Then I thought I could see 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 cattle there. The other day the Minister told us there was more country out there than there is in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Surely there is some good land there too, and there are only 36,000 or 40,000 people in that large amount of country out there. This is the thought that was running through my mind: We have not got the 36,000,000 there are in the old country, but we are doing right in asking for them; and if we do that we will very soon have a town, and very soon have the dairying industry established, and we would have to find a seaport for them, and the seaport might not be very far away. It is true that Normanton is not a very good place to get in and out of, but no doubt a dredge would be able to make a fine port of that town. Then Point Parker is not very far away. Possibly in the Gulf we shall be able to find a place suitable for a port. It is our duty, knowing that we will have to spend something like £8,000,000 in the construction of railways, to see to it that the people are brought into this great State. If we do not do that, we have failed in our great mission here. As regards water conservation, they have not to go very far down to get water, and they get rain occasionally, and there is no reason why they should not put down bores to secure the artesian water; and no doubt the Government will have to do that to help the people. I think in the days to come some of the young men will have to take a leaf out of the book of the Canadians. It is only four or five years ago since the Canadian people said, "Come, and we will give you this land at 2s. per acre." While some say that Canada is a fine country, it is only fit for a white man to live out of doors during some five or six months in the year. They can live out of doors in this State every day in the year; and why should we be afraid to encourage people to come to this State? After they are once here, they will think what fools they were they did not come sooner. Let us see to it that these big schemes are not going to be somewhat of a burden on the State,

although I am pleased that those who are going to get the benefit of the railways will have to bear the burden if the income is not sufficient to meet interest on the cost of construction. They won't be a heavy burden if the building of these railways will save those heavy losses of millions of sheep and cattle, and they are well able to pay whatever tax you put on them for the carrying out of these great schemes. I am a thorough Queenslander in my views of these schemes, and I think there is a possibility of making these great railway schemes dovetail in with the land laws we are now passing; and if we tack on to that a great immigration policy for the filling up of our empty spaces, we will have done something, and those coming after us will be proud of the men who legislated for the State at the present time.

HON. B. FAHEY: This Bill is the biggest railway project that has ever been submitted for the approval of this House by any Government in the history of Queensland. The McIlwraith transcontinental scheme, which was first promulgated in 1874, scarcely compared with this proposal in the magnitude of its national utility and progressive possibilities. Nothing in the way of railway construction ever propounded by an Australian State compares with it—not even the South Australian transcontinental scheme. In attempting that scheme that State exhibited more ambition than wisdom, although from a national point of view it is a very inspiring and fascinating proposition, and was perhaps deserving of a great deal more success than has attended it so far. But in the opinion of some of the foremost men in Australia—even including some belonging to South Australia itself—it was held that from its inception the scheme was too gigantic an undertaking for a country with such limitations in population, natural resources, and revenue. And so it has proved. I see that hon. members in this Chamber also consider the scheme now before us somewhat ambitious and costly. Some very strong speeches adversely criticising the scheme have been made in this Chamber, notably that of the President. His speech was a very trenchant criticism. He questions the accuracy of the information which has been placed before us by the Minister in charge of the Bill, and he questions its wisdom. In fact, his speech was a very eloquent condemnation of the whole scheme. But surely those who know Queensland should realise that this scheme is not beyond her financial capacity. The immensity of the national resources, and the undeveloped wealth of this State; its rapid progress and its industrial development even during the last seven years, and becoming more profitable and promising as each succeeding year opens up fresh channels for the investment of capital and the employment of its increasing population—these are guarantees which warrant our proceeding with such a scheme. There are very few members in this House who will not realise that these are national guarantees that amply justify this undertaking, and afford more than an adequate assurance of its success. There are probably only a few hon. members who, from travel and personal observation, have full knowledge of the many evidences this State affords of her practically inexhaustible natural resources.

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Those resources are not confined to any one corner or to any one district of her huge territory. They are pretty evenly spread by nature throughout every one of her three great divisions; and consequently, if a liberal expenditure of public money is devoted to a judiciously supervised immigration policy—which should be the logical complement of this great railway scheme—the population and revenue of this State will have more than doubled in twenty years. For obvious reasons, due to navigable facilities on her coast line, the cities of Queensland are not likely to vie in size and population with Sydney and Melbourne; but in rural population—that is, in the population employed in the primary industries—in twenty years—at least in twenty-five years—with this railway scheme in existence, it will be far ahead of any State in the Commonwealth. If those who are charged with the responsibility of the government of this country will so shape their policy as to introduce a proper immigration system, nothing can possibly prevent Queensland from being far ahead of any State in Australia in thirty years in the development of her rich natural resources. At the time the United States of America declared their independence the population of the country was 3,500,000. I could not get the information to-day, but I believe her population at the beginning of the last century was about 5,000,000. During the whole of last century the most remarkable flow of immigration known to history was directed from practically every part of the earth to the United States of America. It is recorded that in one year 1,250,000 found their way into the country; and, according to the recent census, her population at the present moment is 101,000,000. Such an instance of national development is not known in the history of nations. Some of the reviews have recently been reminding the authorities in that great country that the population has now more than overtaken the development of the country—that is, that the development of the country is not sufficient to employ profitably the various units of its population. They are gradually realising that the natural increase of their own population is likely in the future to be adequate to meet the industrial requirements of the country; and for that reason they have recently adopted measures to restrict the ingress of foreigners. Every year they are making those restrictions stricter and stricter. In fact, only this year no less than 50,000 of their own people have crossed the border and gone to Canada. When the rigour of the Canadian winter becomes more widely known and more practically experienced by those who have to undergo the ordeal, it must necessarily benefit Queensland, by necessarily directing attention to the boundless resources of this State and making them more widely known; and the restrictions that are now being placed upon immigration into the United States must turn the attention of the people of other countries to the attractions which are offered by this State. In no age in the world's history has there been so much movement and unrest as in the present amongst the people of the earth. The modern discoveries of science have completely revolutionised the conditions of human life, and the more adventurous of the peoples of the overcrowded nations are constantly taking ad-

vantage of the opportunities offered by countries less populous than their own to improve their position and acquire wealth—which really seems to be the dominating factor of the human mind at the present day, as religion seems to be losing fast its restraining influence upon mankind. Queensland, to those who know her, has no limitations to her great resources. She has bountifully bestowed upon her by Nature resources that constitute the basis of national greatness, national wealth, and national growth. Unless we avail ourselves of the means that economic science has placed at our service and make national use of them, other nations, possibly some of our neighbours who are suffering from earth hunger, may prove to us within the next ten or twenty years that they are more worthy of them than we are. We have a country unsurpassed in wealth and natural resources by any country on the face of the earth—a country, not flowing but literally overflowing with milk and honey in the strictest sense—a country with an area of 670,000 square miles, and only half a million of people, who are settled along the fringe of a portion of its extended coast. There is not one man to 20 square miles in the balance of this huge rich country, and were it not for the worldwide influence of the British Navy not only Queensland, but the whole of this vast continent, would be a most tempting bait to other nations whose teeming people are a menace to their own Governments, and are becoming insurrectionary and declining to accept the established order of their own country. If the railway now proposed is completed within the next six or seven years, it will bring about what the country needs more urgently than anything else, and that is the power to protect itself. It is essential that a sparsely populated country like this should encourage immigration in every way possible, even at considerable expense. The ultimate object of this proposal is to develop the great resources of the country, and to induce people to come into the State and settle on our rich lands, and make them a great deal more profitable to the lessee and to the State than they are at present. Every man and woman who is induced to come to this country, whether from abroad or from the neighbouring States, is a unit to reduce its cost indirectly and bring in a direct revenue to the State of £1 5s. This is one of the best projects that we have had before us for increasing our population, and inducing people from neighbouring States to settle on the country and create a more progressive system of development. I have very much pleasure in saying that I shall support the Bill, as the proposal embodied in it is one of the greatest national undertakings that has ever been suggested by any Government in Queensland.

HON. A. H. BARLOW: I have often pondered over the problem of immigration. I believe that Canada gets the number of immigrants she does because it is so near to the old country, and because in the early days—I do not know whether it is so now—the great Canadian Railway Company had large grants of land and gave away that land in alternate blocks in order to make the other blocks more saleable. When I was Minister for Lands I tried an experiment in communal settlements, with the sanction of Sir Thomas McLlwraith, who was then Premier. We fed and clothed

the people in those settlements, and found them in tobacco and matches, and hon. gentlemen know what a fiasco they were. With one exception, I believe, the whole experiment was a rank failure. My own opinion is that if any attempt were made at immigration on a large scale, the Federal Government would find a way to block it, as there is an undercurrent of objection against any real, *bonâ fide* scheme of immigration.

Hon. G. W. GRAY: Petty jealousy between the States.

HON. A. H. BARLOW: No; it is not that. It is a desire to keep people out of the country for reasons which are too obvious to require mention. With regard to the financial aspect of this question, the Loan Bill which is to be proposed will include the total amount required—that is, something under £7,000,000. The actual estimate of the Commissioner is £6,747,000. The borrowings will extend over seven years, and the burden for those seven years will be about £245,000. That will be met by increased railway receipts, and increased pastoral rents. The Water Conservation and Utilization Bill, which is a corollary to this measure, will provide means that will enable country to be worked in time of drought. There must be an increase of settlement and an increase of traffic. But there is one thing which has been overlooked altogether in the debate, and that is that these railways will be guaranteed to the extent of 3 per cent. Every one of the railways built out of the £10,000,000 loan had to stand on its own bottom, but these railways will be guaranteed to the extent of 3 per cent. The only contribution that will fall on the Government will be the contribution made by the Treasurer in respect of unsettled lands, which are in the hands of the Government and are not subject to pastoral rents. Of course, this is a bold scheme, and we have to go boldly to the money market. I have not much fear about the conversion of the loans that are becoming due; the Treasurer has no fear about it, and he has instructed me to say so. The whole of these things are in the hands of one or two financial men in London, to whom a loan of £10,000,000 is a mere fleabite, nothing more than a loan of £10,000 would be in Brisbane. It has been said that Mr. Amos is a surveyor and nothing else. I have it on the authority of the Railway Commissioner that Mr. Amos "has had a very large experience not only in surveying for railway routes but in examining and reporting on different classes of country in widely separated districts, taking into consideration the commercial and financial probabilities. He has done this kind of work for very many years." So that Mr. Amos is not merely a railway surveyor. Mr. Thallon also gives a remarkable fact about New South Wales, and the number of sheep it carries as compared with Queensland. He says—

I wish to point out further that New South Wales, with an area of 310,000 square miles, has 46,000,000 sheep, an average of 148 per square mile, while Queensland, with an area of 670,000 square miles has now only 20,000,000 sheep, an average of 30 per square mile. In other words, Queensland has more than double the area of New South Wales, and less than half the sheep.

It may be said that New South Wales country is better than ours. Possibly some of it may be, but I say that in the Broken Hill district there is some awful country. We have some awful country in Cape York Peninsula, but they have quite as much bad country in New

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South Wales. I think this scheme is a reasonable one. Like everything else in life, it is a leap in the dark. When we selected our partners for life, it was a leap in the dark.

Hon. F. I. POWER: You did not think so at the time.

Hon. A. H. BARLOW: No; but I think the fact is very palpable that every undertaking of human beings is to a certain extent a leap in the dark. I am convinced that this scheme will work out satisfactorily. I am moreover convinced that it is an absolute necessity in the matter of defence.

Hon. A. NORTON: But you want to settle people on the land.

Hon. A. H. BARLOW: We want to settle people on the land, and if we are going to defend ourselves we must have this scheme. Let anyone look at the map of New South Wales. Of course everything is centred in Sydney, which is like a huge spider. There is no use taking up further time, as hon. members have received a great deal of information from other hon. members. I trust the Bill will now be read a second time.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

Clause 1 put and passed.

On clause 2—"Construction of Great Western Railway approved"—

Hon. F. CLEWETT: Before the clause was passed, he would like to make a few remarks in connection with Section C. In regard to that scheme, he thought there should be some alteration in connection with the linking-up proposals. He did not think the scheme would be complete unless there was a connection between Longreach and Winton, and he would like to have it put on record that he had pointed out the necessity for that connection.

* Hon. W. H. CAMPBELL: With regard to Section B, he would like it put on record that he thought it would be a far better plan if the Government commenced at Longreach instead of at Blackall, because there was a lot of very inferior country between Blackall and Windorah. At the present terminus of the railway survey at Welford, after heavy rains, the country was in a swampy condition for several weeks, and there was plenty of flooded country between that point and Windorah.

Question put and passed.

The remaining clauses of the Bill and Schedules I. and II. were put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment; and the report was adopted.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the Hon. A. H. BARLOW, the Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly, by message in the usual form.

POSTPONEMENT OF ORDERS OF THE DAY.

Hon. A. H. BARLOW: I beg to move that Orders of the Day Nos. 2 and 3 be postponed till after the consideration of Orders of the Day Nos. 4 and 5.

[*Hon. A. H. Barlow.*]

The PRESIDENT: Is it the wish of the Council that the motion be put without notice?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCE ENCOURAGEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

[9 p.m.]

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 3, both inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 4—"Payment in full to all certificate-holders"—

Hon. A. NORTON said that a number of certificate holders claimed interest on the money they had paid. Had the Government consented to pay interest?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that there was no claim for interest. The Government proposed to repay, at the rate of 20s. in the £1, all claims that came in before 1st July next, and to devote the balance to certain specified pastoral purposes.

Question put and passed.

On clause 5—"Application of surplus moneys"—

Hon. W. H. CAMPBELL understood from the Attorney-General that the total amount of the assessments during the three years they had been levied was £120,000, and £108,000 had been already paid back to those who had presented certificates. He was advised that there was a large number of pastoralists, perhaps not on very large stations, who never took the trouble to obtain certificates, and, now that they knew they could get certificates, they were going to apply for them within the next six months. There was only a small amount left in the fund, and it was hardly worth bothering about. If all those who were entitled to certificates applied for them, the whole of the balance in hand would be absorbed, as there was only about £12,000 left.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that the balance in hand was £21,276, as the fund had earned interest. One of the main purposes in proposing to wind up the fund was to devote the balance to wiping out the deficit in the diseases in stock fund, which amounted to £31,000.

Hon. W. H. CAMPBELL asked if it would not be better to omit paragraph (a), which proposed that the money should be devoted to aiding the chilled meat industry, and paragraph (b), which provided that it might be used to aid "any industry that would help to get rid of surplus stock," and retain only paragraph (c), which proposed to aid the diseases in stock fund. That fund was for the benefit of all pastoralists, and by devoting the balance to that purpose, it might save the necessity for a further assessment.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Paragraph (b) was not in the clause as introduced in another place. It had been moved there and accepted by the Secretary for Agriculture. The clause only gave the Minister discretionary power to spend the balance, and the

amendment had probably been accepted by the Minister to save trouble. There was a special reason for inserting the paragraph referring to the chilled meat industry, as the Minister wanted to give assistance to a shipment of chilled meat. That would not absorb much money. The main object, as he had said, was to reduce the deficit in the diseases in stock fund.

Clause put and passed.

The Council resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment; and the report was adopted. The third reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

OFFICIAL INQUIRIES EVIDENCE BILL. SECOND READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said: This is a very short measure, and its object is to supply a defect in the existing law. As the legal members of the Council know, a judge or other person having power to hear and determine matters either by law or by consent of parties has power to administer an oath. Commissions and boards of inquiry are often appointed to obtain information, perhaps for Parliament or for the Executive, and to report the result of their inquiries. They have not power to hear and determine, therefore they have no power to administer an oath, and the result is that sometimes their labours are abortive, because they cannot administer an oath, and compel the production of papers or the attendance of witnesses, and they have to send in incomplete reports, or reports that are not worth anything. The latest occasion on which this difficulty arose was in connection with some charges of theft of tin that were preferred by certain persons against the manager of the Great Northern Mine at Herberton. A board of inquiry was appointed, consisting of Mr. Lee Bryce, Warden and Police Magistrate at Herberton, and Mr. Horsley, the inspector of mines at that place; and it was discovered after the board was appointed that it had no power to compel the attendance of witnesses or the production of documents, or to administer an oath. It was therefore considered that the inquiry would be abortive, and it was determined to amend the law in this direction. Similar difficulties have arisen in the other States, and New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania have passed measures similar to this Bill. The Commonwealth Parliament has also passed a similar measure. Hon. members will see that it is proposed that the chairman or president of a commission or board of inquiry is to have the power to send for witnesses and documents, and to administer an oath. A penalty is to be inflicted on any person who refuses to attend or to produce documents, or who refuses to be sworn and give evidence. Hon. members will also see that clause 7 is incomplete. The intention is to give the Governor in Council power to make regulations prescribing the scale of allowances to witnesses. That is a matter involving an appropriation, and therefore the clause has to be left in this incomplete form, as has been done on previous occasions, leaving the blank to be filled in in another place. I beg to move—That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. F. I. POWER: Is there any statutory provision for holding an official inquiry?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No; it is a departmental matter.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

On clause 3—"Power to send for witnesses and documents"—

HON. F. I. POWER: It might be advisable to make provision for the appointment of a chairman.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The chairman is always appointed by Executive minute.

HON. F. I. POWER: Would it not be better to make provision for the chairman to be appointed by the members of the commission or board of inquiry?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It might happen that there were only two members, as in the case to which I referred.

HON. F. I. POWER thought it would be better to deal with the appointment of the chairman in the Bill, as he was to have sole authority under that clause.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that after the word "commission" on the first line there be inserted the words "whether appointed by the instrument creating the commission, or otherwise."

Amendment agreed to.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 7, both inclusive, put and passed.

The Council resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with an amendment.

The report was adopted; and the third reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

HON. A. H. BARLOW: I move that the Council do now adjourn. To-morrow I propose to go on with the second reading of the North Coast Railway Bill, after which my colleague will take the Rights in Water and Water Conservation and Utilization Bill in Committee. We shall probably have also the Assembly's amendments in the Mines Regulation Bill.

Question put and passed.

The Council adjourned at twenty-six minutes past 9 o'clock.