

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 1911

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER, 1911.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. D. Armstrong, *Lockyer*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table, was ordered to be printed:—Regulations under the Land Act of 1910.

QUESTIONS.

WESTBROOK EXPERIMENTAL FARM
EMPLOYEES.

Mr. ALLEN (*Bulloo*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

"1. Have any of the farm hands on the experimental farm at Westbrook any special knowledge of agriculture?"

"2. What rates of pay do the employees receive?"

"3. If there is any differentiation, what is the reason for same?"

"4. What facilities have the men for providing their meals?"

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. J. Tolmie, *Drayton and Toowoomba*) replied—

"1. The farm hands have special knowledge of orchard work, but only a general knowledge of agriculture.

"2 and 3. Four at the rate of £86 a year and quarters; one at £55 a year and quarters—the latter being a youth.

"4. The men provide their own meals."

PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD.

Mr. MAY (*Finders*) asked the Chief Secretary—

"1. How is the Public Service Board constituted?"

"2. What are the functions of the Public Service Board?"

"3. What course has a public servant to adopt in asking for an inquiry into any alleged misrepresentation made by his superior officer regarding the responsibility of the position of the said public servant?"

"4. Is it a fact that during recent years several officers have been reprimanded because they have proved themselves more competent than their superiors in the Works Department?"

The PREMIER (Hon. D. F. Denham, *Oxley*) replied—

"1. By members of the Executive Council.

"2. To administer the Public Service Acts.

"3. By making a written request.

"4. No."

BRISBANE TRAMWAYS.

Mr. LAND (*Balonne*) asked the Home Secretary—

"1. Has his attention been drawn to a paragraph in the *Brisbane Courier* of Friday, 1st December, reporting the breaking down of three armatures of motors of the Brisbane tramways system, with a consequent disarrangement of the tramway service and great congestion of traffic?"

"2. Does he think that Mr. Badger's request for "the indulgence of the public" for two days to allow the normal condition to be regained was a reasonable one?"

"3. Has he considered what the consequences would be from burning out of an armature with a crowded car travelling at top speed along one of the busy thoroughfares of the city?"

"4. Will he make further inquiries into the question of brake-power on the Brisbane cars, in comparison with other tramway systems, in the interests of the safety of the people?"

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Appel, *Albert*) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. Yes; under the circumstances.

"3. Not having sufficient technical knowledge, I cannot express an opinion.

"4. Yes."

ABSENCE OF COMMISSIONER FOR RAILWAYS.

Mr. MAY asked the Secretary for Railways, without notice—

"Has he any knowledge of the present whereabouts of the Commissioner for Railways, or whether he is lost?"

We are all very anxious about him, and that is why I ask the question.

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

"I regret to say we have had no word from the Commissioner since last Friday week. We had a telegram from Boullia a fortnight ago to-morrow, and since that time the telegraph line to Boullia has been broken down. The Commissioner may still be at Boullia. We have taken every step we can to allay the anxiety. Mr. Ramsay, of Oondooroo, near Winton, has sent somebody out on horseback to look for the Commissioner, and the police have been making inquiries between Boullia and Winton, and doing all they possibly can to ascertain the Commissioner's whereabouts; but the Police Department, this morning, report to me that if they send out to Windorah and Palparara it will take at least four days to allay the anxiety."

Mr. LENNON: They have motor-cars at Oondooroo Station.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is not possible for motor-cars to travel. The Commissioner has three motor-cars, and they are probably stuck up, and I am afraid those rivers are in very high flood for the reason that 6 inches of rain fell in one hour on the railway construction works between Malbon and Springvale. We are doing all we possibly can to ascertain the whereabouts of the Commissioner, and to relieve the tension of anxiety.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1910-11,
AND SUPPLEMENTARY LOAN
ESTIMATES, 1911-12.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of messages from His Excellency the Governor, forwarding Supplementary Estimates, 1910-11, and Supplementary Loan Estimates, 1911-12.

Ordered to be printed and referred to Committee of Supply.

MUNBILLA TO MOUNT EDWARDS
RAILWAY.

APPROVAL OF PLAN—COMMITTEE.

(Mr. J. Stodart, Logan, in the chair.)

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

"1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed line from Munbilla to Mount Edwards, in length 16 miles 27 chains.

Hon. W. T. Paget.]

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

said: Before placing this proposal before the Committee I would like to say, in connection with the railway proposals of the Government, that two more railways will be tabled during the current week; that is, a plan of the proposed extension of the line from Tolga to Malanda, towards Milla Milla, a distance of about 8 miles, and plan of a proposed railway from Cloncurry to Mount Cuthbert, first section, a distance of about 40 miles. I think it advisable to give this information to the Committee, as owing to the unfortunate delay to the Commissioner, who was on this business in the North and in the West, we have been obliged to delay the tabling of those plans. The plan of the railway that I have the pleasure of proposing this afternoon is a line in an agricultural district, but it is also another section of what is called the *via recta*. One section of that railway was brought by myself before the House some few years ago—from Warwick to Maryvale—which has now been completed and is open for traffic. The question of the *via recta* has been before the country for many years, and now that settlement is so far advanced and the traffic on the railways is so enormously increased, I think it is rather a good thing for the Committee to approve of a railway being built from Munbilla to Mount Edwards.

Mr. HARDACRE: It is a link in that direction.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; this line of 16 miles 27 chains from Munbilla to Mount Edwards is another link in that direction. The estimated cost of the line laid with 42-lb. rails is £81,176, equal to a cost of £4,969 per mile. The Commissioner estimates the cost of the necessary rolling-stock at £2,480, making a total cost of £83,656. If hon. members will refer to the Commissioner's report, they will see that the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Pagan, reports—

"It is proposed to lay this line with 42-lb. rails, on a formation of 14 feet wide, with 2,640 sleepers and 1,100 cubic yards of ballast per mile, same as the Maryvale Railway; but if the Government propose to construct a direct line to Warwick, *via* Munbilla, in the near future, I would recommend that this section be laid as a first-class road with 61-lb. rails in the first instance."

If laid with 61-lb. rails the cost would be increased to £90,156—about £7,000 more. If the Government propose, in the near future, to ask Parliament to approve of the construction of a railway along the 28-mile gap between Mount Edwards and Maryvale, then it will be advisable to put down 61-lb. rails in the first instance.

Mr. ALLEN interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member says his question demands a straight answer. That remark is entirely uncalled for. The hon. member for Bulloo will be able to get that information after it has been decided by the ratepayers—the landowners in the district—whether they will have a railway or not. They may call for a poll and say they will not have the railway; and by that time it is probable that the Government will be able to say what their policy is with respect to linking up between Mount Edwards and Sandy Creek and Maryvale. There is plenty of time to say whether the road shall be laid with 42-lb. rails or 61-lb. rails. The interest on the capital cost will be £2,550, equal to £1 7s. 6d. per cent. on

the estimated capital cost. This leaves an estimated deficit of £1,358, which is equal to £1 12s. 6d. per cent., or a railway rate equal to 2s. 7d. per acre on the 117,688 acres comprised in the railway district. If hon. members will turn to the last paragraph of the Deputy Commissioner for Railways' report, they will see that his recommendation says—

"Although this line traverses a rich district which is closely settled almost the whole way, with a township already established at Engelsburg, I do not anticipate the local traffic for some years to come will be sufficient to pay working expenses and interest at the rate of 3 per cent. on the cost of construction, but as it has been announced that the Government propose asking for authority to construct the *via recta*, *via* Munbilla, I am enabled to recommend the building of this line from Munbilla to Mount Edwards."

I think that is a sufficient answer to the hon. member who has been interjecting. I have had the pleasure of travelling twice over the route of this railway, and throughout the district. The Commissioner reports that this is a very rich agricultural district and very closely settled, and I am able to add that the large estates which were held at one time in that district have now all been cut up and sold for close settlement. I believe the whole of the farms are now settled upon all the way from Munbilla to the foot of the range. The Commissioner's report refers to the fact that perhaps this portion of the line that we are now asking permission to pass the plans of this afternoon will be part of the *via recta*. The question of connecting up the Southern border line with its rapidly increasing traffic by a direct route to Brisbane has had the consideration of the Government. A survey of the route over the range was made quite a number of years ago, and the then estimate for the balance of the *via recta*—that was the 28-mile gap between Mount Edwards and Maryvale, and the bringing up of the Munbilla to Ipswich line to the standard. The estimate was £390,000. I think that with the expansion of settlement from Warwick south and west and with the pushing out of the Southern border line, which is bringing a very large traffic into Brisbane which used to go down to Sydney, the construction of this gap will become an urgent necessity in the near future. I do not know that I need add any more to what I have said. With respect to the resumption of the land, the report states—

"Private property is traversed for the greater part of the route, and much of it is of good quality and extensively improved; the cost of resumptions will therefore be considerable. The total area required (exclusive of station accommodation) will be about 180 acres."

That carries out what is the ordinary estimate of about 11 or 12 acres of land being required for every mile of railway that is to be built. Perhaps I may be permitted to refer to a matter which cropped up last week when some railways were before the Committee—that was as to whether it would be advisable or inadvisable for the Commissioner to give in his report the estimated cost of the resumption of these lands. I had a consultation with the heads of the department on the subject. I was rather in favour myself of having an approximate estimate put in the Commissioner's report, but after very full discussion it was thought inadvisable for quite a number of reasons that the department's

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estimate of the cost should be published. I will give one reason. Suppose the Commissioner was to estimate the cost of these resumptions at £1,000, and put it in his report. The landowners on the route, even although the land might not be worth £1,000, would expect that amount. I think we might safely leave the valuation of the land for resumption purposes in the hands of the very capable officers of the department. At any rate, they will not pay any more than is necessary, for the reason that it is not advisable to pay more for land than should be paid, and also for the reason that the cost of resumption in every case is added to the capital cost of the railway, and the people in the railway district have necessarily to bear their share of the 3 per cent. cost on that capital value. I have already referred to the revenue and expenditure, and the Commissioner's recommendation. In conclusion, I think it is highly desirable, and it will be carrying out the wishes of the Committee, that lines should be built in agricultural districts, and that these plans should be favourably considered by the Committee.

Mr. COLLINS: Are there any Crown lands in that district?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Practically, until we get to the Range itself there are no Crown lands. The only Crown lands, as far as I am aware, are some distance west of Mount Edwards or Sandy Creek.

Mr. MAUGHAN (*Ipswich*): I was waiting to see if the hon. member for Fassifern would have something to say about this.

Mr. MANN: It is more a matter for the hon. member for Rosewood.

Mr. MAUGHAN: I can quite understand that the hon. member for Fassifern is perfectly satisfied for the short time he has been in the House. It is something achieved to have got this line, which for many years has been made a stalking horse.

Mr. ALLEN: We have not finished with it yet.

Mr. MAUGHAN: I can assure hon. members I am very pleased to see the line, and that it is within measurable distance of accomplishment. I can quite understand the pleasant appearance of the hon. member for Rosewood, for the via recta proposal directly affects his electorate. For many years we have been told that if we would elect a Government member for the Rosewood electorate the Government of the day would build a via recta along the Bremer Valley.

Mr. GRAYSON: Do you want to draw a red herring across the track?

Mr. MAUGHAN: I am not drawing a red herring across the track. I am only commiserating the hon. member for Rosewood on the fact that once and for all that hon. member had to go to Rosevale and say, "If you return me as a Government supporter you shall have the via recta." I take it that the via recta is now settled.

Mr. G. P. BARNES: You favour this too.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Most decidedly. I have never made any bones about the via recta. Another thing, I take this opportunity of expressing my sympathy with the hon. members for Toowoomba on the fact that no mention has been made this session of the Drayton deviation. (Laughter.) When the Minister for Railways told the members of the Committee that there was one more line he thought

he might as well tell the Committee about, he (Mr. Maughan) was waiting with breathless anxiety for him to mention the Drayton deviation. (Laughter.) After all the promises which have taken place in that famous old battle ground of Toowoomba for the last twenty-five years on the merits and demerits of the Drayton deviation, to think that in this year of grace 1911, with so many railways about the Chamber, the Drayton deviation was not there! That merely by the way. But I say unhesitatingly that I, for one, am pleased to think that at last we shall know that the route of the via recta is definitely settled, and we shall know where we are. In common with other members, I am sorry that the experts of the department have not seen fit to provide for a heavier rail.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: But they refer in the report to a 61-lb. rail.

Mr. MAUGHAN: But we know that will not be adopted.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, yes!

Mr. MAUGHAN: I understand that the Government were pledged to the 41-lb. rails.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, no!

Mr. MAUGHAN: You must not forget that the other section of the via recta, the Maryvale line, is also to be laid with 42-lb. rails. You must remember there was a good deal of argument over that fact when the 42-lb. rails were laid down. It was distinctly understood that the heavier metal was to be put in. There is only about £7,000 difference in the estimated cost between laying down the heavier and the light metal; and, having regard to the

[4 p.m.] slight amount of extra interest involved, it would be a good business proposition to put down the heavier metal from the start. I know this route from Munbilla to Mount Edwards, and I unhesitatingly say that I believe that even as a branch line it will pay. It is magnificent country, and it will pay those who have not travelled through the Boonah district and West Moreton well to make a trip there. This railway will have the effect of turning many grazing pastures into scores and scores of smiling homesteads and farms. I have no desire to delay the passing of the line, as I am heart and soul with it. There will be no anxiety with regard to the people who are concerned in regard to taking a poll; I do not think that they will bother about taking a poll at all. I am pleased that the farming communities are getting more consideration in the last year or two at the hands of the Committee—as it is not the Government, but the Committee—(Government laughter)—as we are just as interested on this side of the House in extending railways into farming districts as the Government are. I cannot recall a single line being brought down which would have the effect of benefiting the farmers that did not have the cordial co-operation of this side of the House.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What about the line in the Maranoa district?

Mr. MAUGHAN: I express my deep sorrow with the hon. member for Rosewood and the two members for Toowoomba. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER (Hon. D. F. Denham, *Oxley*): The hon. gentleman is slightly in error in saying that no reference has been made to the Drayton deviation this year.

Hon. D. F. Denham.]

Mr. MAUGHAN: There has been any amount of reference to it, but no plans have been tabled.

The PREMIER: I very carefully refrain from misleading any persons or district in matters of railways. This particular line—the via recta—has been discussed for many years. I have frequently expressed the opinion that the further west the Warwick line went the more the necessity for the via recta, and the more surely would it materialise. The line is going west towards Dirranbandi, and it will eventually strike in the neighbourhood of Thargomindah, and that south-western traffic, by reason of the construction of the via recta, will be made possible for the port of Brisbane. Therefore, this line will not merely serve a good agricultural district, but will secure the far Western trade for the port of Brisbane. Hon. members will recall that on the Address in Reply I referred to two deviations which were considered necessary by the Railway Department in order to facilitate the ever increasing traffic. The one was the Drayton deviation and the other the Tinana deviation. I hope that next year, if we are spared to come together again, there will be at least three such lines passed—namely, the Drayton deviation, the Tinana deviation, and the connection between North and South Brisbane—thus bringing the traffic from New South Wales and the south side of the river right into Brisbane. (Hear, hear!) I have already told the Prime Minister of New South Wales that we would expedite the connection between the southern part of the Great Western line with somewhere about Tobermory, and we would be quite willing to bring the line right down to our own border, and he could connect with Bourke if he would also expedite the linking up of the line between Murwillumbah and the Tweed.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: If that connection is made via the Tweed, and the connection is made between North and South Brisbane, it will be the shortest and quickest route from Brisbane to Sydney. I had the pleasure of going over the route of the line now before the Committee. So far as the terminus to Mount Edwards is concerned, it passes through good country, but the next link between it and Maryvale is pretty rough country. It is essential that the line should be consummated, as it will be a benefit to the farmers there and to the port of Brisbane.

Mr. STEVENS (*Rosewood*): I have no intention of opposing the acceptance of this line, and I do not desire to accept the commiseration of the senior member for Ipswich with regard to my position. With regard to the construction of a railway in the Bremer Valley, the people in the Bremer Valley have been looking for a railway for some time, and at the present time a survey is being carried out which I believe will be accomplished by about Christmas time, and I have no doubt the railway will be built in due course. The people in the Bremer Valley are entitled to a railway, independent of whether it is a section of the via recta or not. All I ask the Government to do is to consider the question of the via recta as a national question entirely, and keep an open mind with regard to the actual connection until the survey is completed. When that is done, the two routes can be inspected and the experts can decide in favour of the best

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line. I have not had the pleasure of traversing the country to be served by this particular branch, but I have been informed by the people in the district that it is a necessary line, at all events for the first 10 miles. Beyond that, so far as my knowledge goes, it will not serve the residents so well as a line down the Bremer Valley. Whether that is so or not, I am not in a position to say from my own personal knowledge. I only ask the Government to keep an open mind with regard to the connection until the surveys are completed, and allow the whole question to be looked at from a national point of view. When the connection is finally made, the route which is chosen for the via recta should be that which will best serve the interests of this State, and if it is taken down the Bremer Valley it will save the heavy cost of reconstructing the Fassifern line from Ipswich to Munbilla.

Mr. ALLEN: And also the route over the range.

Mr. STEVENS: The route over the range will be the same in either instance, because the Bremer Valley survey will connect with the survey from Maryvale to Sandy Creek. There will be no difference in the cost whichever line is adopted, so far as the route over the range is concerned, but there will be a difference in the cost if you take into consideration that the section between Ipswich to Munbilla has to be reconstructed. The Government would therefore save money by adopting the Bremer valley route. I do not object to the proposed branch line at all, but it should be left to the experts to decide on the final route, so far as the via recta is concerned.

Mr. WIENHOLT (*Fassifern*): The reason I did not rise to speak before was because I waited for the deputy leader of the Opposition or someone representing the Opposition to reply to the Minister for Railways. I am sure that if this line is passed by the House it will give very general satisfaction. (Hear, hear!) It is a railway which has been looked for for many years. Hon. members know that the railway is a necessity where you have farming districts growing such heavy crops as maize, potatoes, lucerne, and so on; you must have a railway to make them a success. We know that in the best country the roads are generally the worst, while in the inferior country the roads are the best. The Minister, in speaking this afternoon, said that the whole of the Fassifern Estate on being subdivided was sold, but that is not quite correct. Out of 41,000 acres submitted there were 35,000 acres sold, leaving about 7,000 acres still available, the bulk of which is rather inferior country. There are about 115 new settlers in that district, and they are beginning to get their country into a profitable order as regards freight for a railway. It is exceedingly hard to make an agricultural line pay. I notice that the Commissioner says that the line will return £1 7s. 6d. per cent., but I think he has made a slip in arithmetic and we have been credited with £100 less than we should be. The question was raised about the 61-lb rails. The Minister says that those who had to guarantee the line should be considered; but my own personal opinion is that the Government should make "one bite of the cherry," and put down the 61-lb. rails straight away. (Hear, hear!) As one who will have to contribute towards any deficiency, I certainly advise the Government to adopt 61-lb. rails,

and I will advise those in the district to do the same, as the first cost would then be the last. I think it would be far better to use the heavier rails straight away. I have no hesitation in telling my friends in the district that they will probably have to make up some guarantee, and we are prepared to carry out any guarantee we give. In this connection, some little talk has taken place on the question of the via recta. Of course, it is wrapped up to a certain extent in this railway, and I think this railway has the double advantage of being part of the via recta, if Parliament agrees to carry out that proposition. The railway is in a similar position to that of the line between Longreach and Winton. That is a good line in itself, and at one time I looked upon it as having the additional advantage of, perhaps, being part of a transcontinental line. If there is one thing I detest, it is making political capital out of railways. We should treat all railways as business propositions. With regard to the via recta, I think the whole question depends really on the seasons. If we get a succession of really good seasons, and our wool, live stock, and wheat production on the Downs increase, then it will become necessary to relieve the traffic between Warwick and Toowoomba by building the alternative line. That is a business proposition. It is not a question of pleasing Warwick or pleasing Toowoomba, or anywhere else, it is simply a question as to whether the department say it should be carried out for the advantageous working of the traffic. No doubt there will be some difficulty in getting over the range, but I do not think it will be any more difficult than in going up the range to Toowoomba in the first instance. If we continue to get good seasons, then the via recta—apart altogether from political influences—must be considered as a business proposition. I am quite sure the residents of this district will be exceedingly pleased, and it will assist the prosperity of the whole of this part of the West Moreton district if Parliament, in its wisdom, sees fit to pass this line.

Mr. MANN (*Cairns*): I just rise to say a few words in reply to some of the remarks of the hon. member for Fassifern. I wish to impress upon the Minister for Railways that even if this line would cost a little more it should be laid with 61-lb. rails, if it is going to be a section of the via recta, as it will save the department a considerable amount of money in having to lift the 42-lb. rails and replace them with 61-lb. rails. I believe in consulting the local people to some extent, but in this case the department should have the right to use whatever rails they choose, and I am in favour of using 61-lb. rails, if this railway is to be a section of the via recta. At the very most it would cost the people in the district £300 a year extra, and as soon as ever the line becomes payable, that is taken off them. I do not think it would cost more than £1,000 extra altogether, and that is not a great deal when spread over the whole district. I hope the Minister will construct this railway with 61-lb. rails.

Mr. ADAMSON (*Rockhampton*): I compliment both the Minister for Railways and the hon. member for Fassifern on the prospect of this section of the via recta becoming an accomplished fact. I think it is twenty-seven years since I first heard of the

via recta. I have been over every inch of this country, and I know it is exceedingly good country, and the line will meet the wants of a large number of people who are settled on the land. It will help very much in making their calling a good deal more prosperous than it is at present. I am hopeful, too, that in time the hon. member for Rosewood will have his piece of line to open up the Bremer Valley. I am quite certain that people in the Bremer Valley are quite as deserving of a railway as those between Munbilla and Mount Edwards. Then there is another part of the Fassifern which needs a railway as well. To my mind it would settle more people on the land than either this railway or a railway up the Bremer Valley, and that is an extension of the Boonah line to Upper Coochin. Whenever the time comes for the cutting up of the Coochin Estate it will mean the settlement of a very large number of people in that district.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. ADAMSON: I ask why it is, when all these railway proposals are being made, that the Central district is left out? At the time the Rockhampton election was on, it was said the Roop's Bridge was to be erected right away. Yet the wet season is approaching and nothing at all has been done as far as that is concerned, and I do not hear that there is anything in the proposals in regard to the bridge.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: A minute has been passed for the expenditure.

Mr. ADAMSON: Is there any likelihood of the work being taken in hand?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I believe the Chief Engineer has it in hand now.

Mr. ADAMSON: I have been listening to the debate on this railway and about the proposals yet to be brought before the House, and, while there are proposals to build railways in the Southern part of the State and in the Northern part, there is no proposal at all for the Central district. I want to call the attention of the Minister for Railways to the fact that out from Rockhampton there is a very fine district named Alton Downs, where there are something like 40,000 acres of very excellent black-soil country, and there are also about 3,000 acres of good scrub land just outside Rockhampton.

The CHAIRMAN: Order.

Mr. ADAMSON: I hope this line will be speedily constructed. I would like to see the Fassifern district intersected with railways, because I have been over that district again and again, and it is a beautiful district, but I hope the Minister for Railways will remember that there are other places besides the North and South, and that the Centre has claims.

Mr. ALLEN (*Bulloo*): I do not rise to oppose this line, as it is a line I believe in, but I object to this continual talk about sections of the via recta, and not doing the thing properly. I hope that if this line is to be built, the Committee will instruct the Minister to use 61-lb. rails. I asked the Minister, by way of interjection, what he proposed to do, and I did not get the kind of answer that the Minister should be in a position to give members of the Committee. When the Minister introduces a railway, he

Mr. B. F. S. Allen.]

should be in a position to tell us whether light rails or heavy rails are to be used. We have been told the *via recta* is to come—the Premier has just said there is nothing they take in hand that they do not carry through. Of course—

“The best-laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley.”

It would be advisable for the Premier to take occasion by the hand, and now, when he has the opportunity—I have no objection to him having the credit of passing the *via recta*. Now they had the opportunity of passing the *via recta*, why not do it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We are not ready.

Mr. ALLEN: If they start to take risks something might happen, and they might not get the opportunity again. This *via recta* has been a bunch of carrots dangling before the electors ever since I can remember, and I think it is a mistake not to complete the scheme this session.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The other link is a very expensive one.

Mr. ALLEN: I admit that the other link is an expensive one, but no one link is any good without that missing link. All these links are scrap iron without that missing link. After all, the *via recta* is going to be hung up immediately after the elections. That is my candid opinion. I do not believe the Government are in earnest about it, as there is too much Toowoomba influence on the Treasury bench, and the result will be that the producers in the Southern portion of the State will be put to the expense of paying for their produce to go round to Toowoomba, and also to loss of time when they want to come down to Brisbane. Twelve months ago we had Ministers falling over one another in introducing that wild cat scheme, the Great Transcontinental Railway. It has fizzled out now, I believe.

Mr. LENNON: The Great Western Railway.

Mr. ALLEN: The scheme that was going to paralyse the Federal Government.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is evidently paralysing you.

Mr. ALLEN: It will paralyse you before it is done with. What have they done? They have lost the Commissioner for Railways, and we have not finished with it yet. I see no reason why 61-lb. rails should not be used in the construction of this railway. There is no possible chance of getting the *via recta* through the Bremer Valley, for the simple reason that it will cost nearly twice as much as the alternative route will cost, and I think that route is out of the political arena altogether. It is only fooling the electors to attempt to make them believe there is the remotest chance of that line being considered. I hope the Minister will make this line a section of the *via recta* and not a patchwork affair. We have been told there are so many sections of the *via recta* completed already. There are so many miles of railway line along the proposed route, and every one of those sections will need a certain amount of patchwork. Even the new line built to Maryvale the other day will have to be patched. The Minister has not yet learned that [4.30 p.m.] the cheapest way in the long run will be to do the thing properly at the beginning. I believe the ratepayers in this district will agree to the heavy rails.

[Mr. B. F. S. Allen.]

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have no doubt they will.

Mr. ALLEN: The ratepayers at the Warwick end gave the guarantee under the impression that they were going to get heavy rails.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Commissioner's report said 41-lb. rails.

Mr. ALLEN: Interested parties do not always explain what the Commissioner's report says. If I am wrong in saying that, I ask the Minister if it is not a fact when they commenced laying rails there was an outcry about light lines.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There was never a word said about it until we started the platelaying that the Commissioner recommended.

Mr. ALLEN: There will be none of that trouble in this case. So far as we have got I do not know what rails are going to be used, and no member of the Committee knows. I do not think the Minister knows himself.

Hon. E. B. FORREST: You know 61-lb. rails will be used as a matter of course for a line of this sort.

Mr. ALLEN: It does not say so. I asked the Minister a direct question, and he would not give it a direct answer. To judge by Ministerial answers and the prating of intelligent politicians every intelligent individual would have been under the impression that this line would have been built twenty-five years ago, and it is not built yet.

Mr. COLLINS (*Burke*): From what I can see of the programme before us, by the time we have passed the railways before us this afternoon we will have passed lines amounting to £500,000. I listened very carefully to the Minister, who has told us the usual story that the land is very rich. Then I turned up the report of the Deputy Commissioner, and found that he estimated that this railway, which passes through rich land and closely settled land, will only pay £1 7s. 6d. per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The landowners pay the balance.

Mr. COLLINS: There is 15s. per cent. for the people of the State to pay. I am inclined to think that this money is not being put to its best use. This is the second railway introduced this session which is going to pay very low interest on the money invested. I would like to know whether the land is rich, and whether it is being put to its best use.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It is.

Mr. COLLINS: I am inclined to think it is not being put to its best use. I have no doubt that the building of this railway, like all other railways through agricultural districts, will enhance the value of this rich magnificent land, a lot of which, according to the map, is in 1,280-acre blocks.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are some 680-acre blocks, and plenty of 80-acre blocks.

Mr. COLLINS: These large landowners will derive great benefit from the building of the railways. I shall be told that they will contribute any deficiency that may occur.

Hon. E. B. FORREST: They are willing to do it.

Mr. COLLINS: But are there not other districts in the State into which railways could be built which would earn more than £1 7s. 6d. per cent.? I understand that

mining railways practically pay better than agricultural railways, but we are told by members representing farming constituencies that syndicate railways are good enough for mining centres.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER (*Maranoa*): I intend to support this line, as I believe, like many other lines going into agricultural settlements, that eventually, if it does not pay to-day, the settlement in a very few years will relieve not only the guarantors, but the taxpayers generally of any liability. For that reason, I intend to support this line, and all lines which open up new territory, and find homes to relieve the congested labour market. That should be the object of all railway building. I am against building lines into districts where you have large areas of land held in fee-simple. I do not think there is better agricultural or dairying land in the State than on this line. I think people who go out 16 miles from railway communication will not be able to bring their produce to market and make it pay. Maize and other articles will not stand long carriage by road. No farmer can cart maize 16 miles and sell it at 1s. 9d. per bushel. There will be a loss of £1 7s. 6d. per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: At the commencement.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I would like members to remember that they are building it out into a closely-settled district. I take it that the class of settlement that is here to-day is not the class of settlement which will be there when this line is completed. The land is being thrown open, and where there are large areas to-day they will be reduced to small areas to-morrow. The tendency is to cut up large areas into small blocks as settlement takes place, and the man with 1,280 acres along this railway who is taxed, and is not producing anything from the land in proportion to the taxes paid, will be glad to cut up his blocks and let men settle on the land who will put it to more profitable use. The hon. member for Warwick told a pathetic story the other day about the poor settler along the proposed Roma-Orallo Railway, but he says nothing about this one, because it is going towards that long-desired via recta. There is only a difference of $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. between the proposal made to-day and that made this day week, but the hon. member sits back and allows this railway to press heavily upon the poor Boonah and Engelsburg settlers, because it will bring it one step nearer to the long-desired via recta. This does not come within the purview of the via recta at all. I deal with it as an agricultural line, believing that its construction is going to be a good thing not only for the people settled alongside it, but for Queensland as a whole. I believe the railway is a good proposition, and in a very short time the people will be relieved of the responsibility that they are undertaking. They are courageous enough to do it, and if they did not believe in their own district they would not do it. Compare the construction of railways to-day with those in years gone by. Our Western Railway was built without a guarantee, and for years the general taxpayer was called upon to find 3 or 4 per cent. to make good the money invested, but to-day we are making the people who own the land which the line passes through bear the responsibility. It is a good thing for Queensland to have a Commissioner and a Minister who have courage to make a proposition like this.

HON. E. B. FORREST (*Brisbane North*): The hon. member for Maranoa pointed out the great advantage this line would be to the agricultural settlement on this route. I agree with that, and I believe there is no better line than the one under consideration. He said, however, that this is nothing whatever to do with the via recta.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I said it did not come within my purview in dealing with it.

HON. E. B. FORREST: To my mind it has everything to do with the via recta.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I will deal with the via recta when it comes.

HON. E. B. FORREST: Yes, we will all deal with it when it comes. We have been dealing with it a great many years. It is coming, and if we all live long enough we shall see the via recta. If we are here next session, I hope we shall see it. The hon. member for Maranoa speaks of this as a line likely to do great good from an agricultural point of view, and I agree with that. But this is what the Commissioner said about the via recta—

"But as it has been announced that the Government propose asking for authority to construct the via recta, *via* Munbilla, I am enabled to recommend the building of this line from Munbilla to Mount Edwards."

The via recta is not in the dim and distant future. It is not far off. We have got to the top of the mountain with the Maryvale line, and when you build this line we have got to the bottom of it. It is now a question of money only. Railway construction is cheapening, and if ever there was a line which was wanted it is the via recta. If you go into the country and see what is going on, and see the congestion that is there, you will know about the via recta and find that it is necessary. The hon. member for Toowoomba wants the Drayton deviation. (Laughter.) That is a line I am going to advocate when the time comes. All these shortenings of lengths are wanted. There is a congestion going on up on the Downs and right down to Brisbane, which is something that will startle people. This is a line which does not depend entirely on the traffic within its own district. It will help to take the trade from Warwick right to the border as well. That traffic is not yet dealt with and cannot be dealt with properly on our present lines. You will have to have the via recta, and, as sure as God is in heaven, we will have the via recta before long. (Hear, hear! and laughter.)

Mr. MAUGHAN: The hon. member for North Brisbane said that railway construction was cheapening. That speaks well for the construction of lines by day labour.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. E. B. FORREST: Read what they said in New South Wales about it.

Mr. MAUGHAN: There is no doubt about it that the cheapening of the construction of railways in Queensland is the direct result of construction by day labour. There is one thing I would like to ask the hon. gentleman in charge of the railways. I am glad the Treasurer is here, too, as he has to provide the money to build the railways. We are told that the railway will cost about £250,000. Many years ago £500,000 of money was provided by Parliament for constructing the via recta. What I would like to know is if it is possible to get hold of any of that money.

HON. E. B. FORREST: No hope.

Mr. Maughan.]

Mr. MAUGHAN: Where is that money?

Hon. E. B. FORREST: You will find that out all right.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Long ago a certain railway was built which was included in the £10,000,000 loan proposals. That was the line to Laidley Creek, which cost £30,000. If the money could be found for the Laidley Valley line, why could not it also be found for the via recta line. I can assure the hon. member for Rosewood in regard to the Bremer Valley line that he will have no greater supporter of that line than myself, as soon as the Minister brings it down. I was up there some weeks ago and I noticed that just before the by-election there was some talk of a survey of the line being carried out. I would like to know from the Minister—and it would be an interesting thing for the electors of that district to know—when does he think the survey will be complete for that line? The hon. member for Fassifern pointed out that the time was come when the existing lines between Ipswich and Munbilla should be regraded. That should have no connection whatever with the proposal now before the Committee. The Railway departmental officers of years ago recommended the regrading of that line, and I hope that the Minister will bring down the Estimates which will provide for that contingency, as there is no line that wants regrading more than that particular line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I quite admit that.

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): I was inclined to vote for this railway, but the remarks of the hon. member for Brisbane North make me hesitate. We learn from the hon. member that this is not only the Munbilla Railway, but that it is also portion of the via recta. The hon. member has let the cat out of the bag. (Laughter.) I think that the Government, instead of sneaking in the via recta in this way, should have come out with a bold railway policy. I should like to know what the Minister for Agriculture has got to say about this railway. Has he got no voice in the Cabinet at all?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Were you asleep when the Premier was speaking just now?

Mr. HARDACRE: What about the member for Aubigny? Has he got nothing to say? Are these members going to continue to support a Government which destroys the interests that they represent?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What a simple child you are!

Mr. HARDACRE: I notice that the Commissioner has set the cost down at £2,300 a mile, but it will cost a great deal more than that to go to the top of that mountain. I went to the top of that mountain myself once, and I said that the next time I went there would be by balloon. It is so difficult of access that it is impossible for any engineer to construct any useful line there.

Mr. GRAYSON: You got off the main track and got lost. (Laughter.)

Mr. HARDACRE: No; I did not. If this line is going to the top of that mountain, this amount will not cover it at all. I do not object to lines going into agricultural districts, but I want to emphasise what has been said by the hon. member for Burke—that it is about time we had an amendment of our Railway Act to make a different provision so far as calling upon the landowners in the locality to pay for some of the benefits

[*Mr. Maughan.*

which they receive by the construction of the railway. The moment a railway is constructed it enhances the whole of the land in the locality to a very large degree. It may lead to some settlement, but what is more certain is that it will lead to an increase in the price of land, and we make the landowners a gift of that increased value. We might just as well throw the money into the street and let people scramble for it, as only a few get rich without paying anything for it. We do not call upon the people to contribute anything towards the railway unless there is a deficiency, and if there is no deficiency for three years they are free for ever afterwards, although there may be deficiencies in the working of the line later on. It looks to me to be a pretty foolish proposal to spend public money by building railways in certain localities without calling on those who benefit to contribute something to the cost of those railways. I am not going to oppose this railway this time, but I think it is time we built railways quite apart from the guarantee principle, and adopted the betterment principle instead, so that those who receive a benefit from the railway will pay for the benefit they receive. No member of the House can object to a proposition based on common sense like that. When a man travels on a railway he has to pay for the benefit he receives, and the merchant has also to pay for the benefit he receives when his goods are carried over the railways.

Mr. THORN: No, he does not pay; the farmer pays every time.

Mr. HARDACRE: We also make the farmer pay for any benefit he receives, and why should we not also make the landowner pay? I do not like supporting the railway as it is based on our present Railway Act, and I think we ought to have some improvement on it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The senior member for Ipswich referred to the Laidley Valley line being constructed. The plans for that line were approved of by both Houses in 1902 or 1903, and the work was not proceeded with for some reason. I remind hon. members also that the Clermont to Blair Athol line was passed a considerable number of years ago, and it was afterwards constructed by a Government of which the senior member for Ipswich was a supporter.

Mr. LENNON: It was a very good line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am not quarrelling about it, but merely stating the fact. The hon. member referred to the fact that we were introducing this line under the 1906 Act, but there is no parallel at all between this line and the money passed for the via recta twenty-seven years ago. The hon. member also asked a question about the completion of the survey of the Bremer Valley line from Rosewood. That survey has not yet been completed.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Are the surveyors on the spot?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. I may say that the survey was commenced before the late Mr. Keogh's death, and the survey was being carried on, and had nothing to do with the Government's policy during the by-election.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN (*Kennedy*): The Government are looking after the Southern part of Queensland so far as railway construction is concerned, but they are altogether neglecting the other parts of Queensland further North.

I think that the landholders should be called upon to pay something towards the cost of constructing this line. The people in the benefited area have to pay 3 per cent., and the Government have to make up another 1 per cent. Where is the money going to come from? Is it going to come out of the present £10,000,000 loan?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I think the Government are doing a bit of finessing. We have to pay interest on the borrowed money, so that the quicker the line is built the sooner will we be getting some return on the money expended. The Minister for Railways has given an explanation about sur-

[5 p.m.]veyors being in a number of places, and I would like to ask him what is he going to do in regard to the survey of the Blair-Athol connection with the Northern line?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I told you last week he would be there.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: We were told it was too dry for the surveyors, and yet there are two rivers running a short distance from the proposed routes, and there are sufficient creeks and rivers there to keep any survey party supplied with water.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I had a man ready to send there, but we were told there was no water.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: If the hon. gentleman would read the report submitted by Surveyor Phillips years ago he would find there is plenty of water around there. Now we have had a break in the dry spell, I hope no excuse like that will be given in the future. If we can spend more money in that district, it will create a lot of settlement, and it will pay much better than this railway, because they are all Crown lands, and beautiful lands, too, and you could open up a new province in Queensland. I am not opposed to this railway, but I do complain very strongly of the whole of the railways being built down here to the detriment of places in my district and further North. If we do not look after the interests of those people they will be looking to some other power to supply them with railways. Look at what the Premier had said about the Murwillumbah Railway.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I am only referring to what the Premier said.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not the question before the Committee.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I am only showing the needs of the country. If it is in the interests of Australia and the Western parts of Queensland to link up with the New South Wales lines, I am quite at one with the Premier. I am quite in accord with the Murwillumbah to Brisbane route. The Minister should go into this matter in the recess and see if it is not possible to go in for a railway policy in my district.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I think nearly every member who has spoken has referred to his own particular district, and I want to get in too.

Question put and passed.

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

KINGAROY TO TARONG RAILWAY.

APPROVAL OF PLANS—COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

"1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension from Kingaroy to Tarong, in length 19 miles 25 chains.

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

said: This proposed extension from Kingaroy to Tarong is 19 miles 25 chains in length, and is an agricultural and a close settlement line, and not only that, but I hope it is going to be a link in a through line connecting the Darling Downs through the Oakey to Cooyar line, and the North Coast Railway, for the purpose of opening up an extensive tract of very excellent country, and I also hope and desire to see that the through line will be connected in time with Yarraman Creek, the extension to which is now being built from Benarkin with the object of giving the settlers the option of either the markets in the North or the market of Brisbane with the object of shipping oversea. I have taken a good deal of trouble in connection with the proposal of opening up the Southern Burnett, and the Premier, when he was Minister for Railways, also paid an extensive visit to that district. I paid two visits to that locality, and travelled over a very great deal of the country that is to be opened up by this proposed railway.

Mr. ALLEN: Will this line connect with Bell?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is another proposal altogether, and a proposal that will, no doubt, be carried out in the near future. That is not the proposition I am speaking of just now.

Mr. RYLAND: Why not have both?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It will be quite necessary to have both and many other lines as well in that district when the settlement warrants it. We cannot build all the railways at one time. The estimated cost of this railway is £63,596, equal to £3,293 per mile, which, with an addition of £6,000 for rolling-stock, makes a total of £69,596. The interest at 3 per cent. is £2,100 per annum, and the estimated net revenue is £1,400 per annum, equal to 2 per cent. on the capital cost of construction. The estimated deficit is £700, equal to 1 per cent. on the capital cost, or equal to a rate of 7d. per acre on the 272,640 acres comprised in the railway district. This line will serve the settlers of the Taabinga and Tarong resumed lands, and I took the opportunity of asking the Minister for Lands to furnish me with particulars of the selections on those resumed estates right up to date. This is dated the 2nd of this month—

" TAABINGA LANDS.

| | Acres. |
|--|--------|
| <i>First Resumption—</i> | |
| Area opened for selection .. | 14,877 |
| All selected by 111 selectors. | |
| <i>Second Resumption—</i> | |
| Area opened for selection .. | 45,400 |
| All selected by 179 selectors. | |
| <i>Final Resumption—</i> | |
| Area opened for selection .. | 35,149 |
| Selected by 106 selectors .. | 31,764 |
| Open for selection—10 portions.. | 3,385 |
| One portion of 320 acres withheld from selection." | |

So that you see it quite bears out my contention that the land which this proposed

Hon. W. T. Paget.]

line runs into is admirably suited for close settlement. Let us see what the Tarong lands are doing—

| " TARONG LANDS. | | |
|-------------------------------|----|---------------|
| <i>First Resumption</i> — | | |
| Area opened for selection | .. | Acres. 13,679 |
| All selected by 41 selectors. | | |
| <i>Second Resumption</i> — | | |
| Area opened for selection | .. | 21,425 |
| Selected by 34 selectors | .. | 20,832 |
| Open for selection—1 portion | .. | 593 |
| <i>Final Resumption</i> — | | |
| Area opened for selection | .. | 18,791 |
| Selected by 42 selectors | .. | 16,084 |
| Open for selection—7 portions | .. | 2,707 " |

When we are dealing with those very large areas on these two different holdings, in three resumptions, I think the Lands Department might well be congratulated upon the fact of having made these resumptions, and having cut them up with such judgment that within a very short period of their being opened they were all taken up. There are under twenty portions unselected. I remarked whilst I was speaking that I hoped that this would form another section of a complete scheme that has been laid down for opening up the Southern Burnett.

Mr. MAUGHAN: That won't end the scheme.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No; but this is another section.

The PREMIER: There is distinctly a missing link.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There are two missing links. What I would like to point out is this: That the first link in this proposal was the Oakley to Cooyar line, of 38 miles; the second is the one I have the honour this afternoon to ask the Committee to approve of—from Kingaroy to Tarong. I would like to show the difference in the distances when the various sections are completed. From Brisbane to Benarkin the line is now completed; that is 111 miles. From Benarkin to Yarraman—that is at the foot of the Cooyar Range—the line is now being built—15 miles; that is, 126 miles from Yarraman Creek to Brisbane. The connection between Tarong and Cooyar and Yarraman—that would be down the Yarraman Creek to Cooyar—would be about 24 miles.

The PREMIER: That is the missing link.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is one missing link. That would make it 150 miles from Cooyar to Brisbane. Then I took it out another way. From Cooyar to Brisbane, via Toowoomba, will be 160 miles. Then if the deep-water port is built at Urangan, I have taken the figures out so as to show hon. members what it means. From Oakley on the Darling Downs to Yarraman, via Maryborough, and via Cooyar, Kingaroy, and Theebine—that is connecting between Kingaroy and Cooyar—the distance will be 225 miles. The reason I take it via Maryborough is that it is a very short distance between the junctions, and it may be necessary, in connection with taking train loads of produce down the Burnett to Urangan for the purpose of oversea ships, to take these trains into the Maryborough yards for the purpose of marshalling them. From Cooyar to Urangan would be 185 miles.

Mr. ALLEN: What about Bell to Yarraman?

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The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have not the Bell line under discussion at the present time. I hope before my term of office expires to be able to talk about Bell. Whilst I was running out certain figures, I thought I might as well run them out towards the north or east as down to Brisbane. I think it advisable to give the Committee the information which I gathered during two pretty extensive trips in this locality. I spent a considerable time in the saddle riding through, and there is no question that the country through which this proposed line goes is fully as rich as the country along the Kingaroy line.

Mr. HODGE: That is quite correct.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: After visiting the locality I had it in my mind that the extension from Kingaroy might run further west than it does, and I asked Mr. Lethem, the chief surveyor, to visit the district and make exhaustive inquiry into that matter, because he also was under the impression that it might be advisable to swing the line further west. But after exhaustive inquiry he came to the conclusion that it would be wise to leave the route where it was originally intended, for the reason that some of the country to the west is very much rougher than the proposed route and the line would be a costly one to build; in fact, that the disabilities generally were greater than the profit which would ensue from pushing the line further west. I have already spoken on the question of the resumption of the land. All I can emphasise again is that I do not think it advisable that the Commissioner in his report should publish the estimated cost of these resumptions. We must leave these matters to the officers of the department. Hon. members will see on page 2, in connection with the railway district, that the Deputy Commissioner reports—

" *Railway District.*—The map showing the boundaries of the area which, in my opinion, will be benefited by the construction of this line accompanies the plan and section. It includes small portions of the Nanango-Kingaroy and Oakley-Cooyar railway districts, and I propose to amend them by excluding the parts affected, which will be benefited to a greater extent by this line to Tarong than by the other lines referred to."

His recommendation reads as follows:—

" I am well acquainted with the route, and have no hesitation in recommending the construction of this line, which no doubt will ultimately be connected with the terminus of the Oakley-Cooyar Railway, thereby giving through communication between the southern Burnett and Darling Downs districts and increasing the earning power of the whole line from Theebine to Oakley."

The Deputy Commissioner also reports that the line will pay good interest if we are favoured with good seasons. I have no hesitation in recommending this proposal to the consideration of the Committee. I rather regret myself that surveys were not further forward to have enabled me to make a proposal to the Committee for the full length from Kingaroy to Cooyar. I should have been much more pleased to do so, but the surveys have not been made. It is highly desirable that the selectors who have taken up these lands which have been recently resumed by the Government should have full opportunity of economical transit.

Mr. HODGE (*Burnett*): I endorse with the greatest pleasure the remarks which

have fallen from the Secretary for Railways in tabling this railway. I recognise that the proposition is one in regard to which, if hon. members had full knowledge of the district, they would agree with me in saying that it is one of the best railway propositions that has ever been placed before this Chamber. Judging from the report, we have nothing to cavil at in regard to expense—£3,200 a mile. If we went in for a light line of railway we might cut down the cost to £2,000 a mile.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not in that country—it would be false economy.

Mr. HODGE: I have no exception to the experts about getting their opinion here. The country this line will traverse will be quite equal to the line from Wondai to Kingaroy. I recognise that this is one of the biggest propositions that has ever been placed before the State in regard to opening up the country by light lines of railway. In the old days, when the line was constructed from Kingaroy Junction to Theebine—if you look at the records you will find that that railway has not paid for axle grease. We sent it into this good country, and what has been the result? The people have never been called upon for a penny in connection with the guarantee. I am perfectly satisfied that the line under construction to-day is one that will never put a burden upon the people who are going to benefit by it. The people have gone out three or four years ago, and the country has opened up. This line is really going out into development. These people have been agitating, and I have kept the matter very closely before the department. I have agitated for it and I am pleased that we have succeeded in getting the line brought down. It is one of the best propositions from a railway point of view that has ever been tabled in the House. The statistics were given by the Minister for Railways, who has everything at his fingers' ends, and they were quite correct. When

[5.30 p.m.] the line gets to the terminus, it will open up some fine Crown land. That is what I have always advocated—that the Government should build railways to their own land and then throw it open for selection, and that is what will happen in this case. The line goes right through the recently resumed holdings of Tarong and Taabinga, and it then passes on till it reaches Crown land. There is plenty of grazing country there, and plenty of agricultural country. If there were no railway facilities and you were offered that land for 5s. an acre you would not take it.

Mr. WIENHOLT: Yes, you would.

Mr. HODGE: You might now because it has been opened up by a railway, but in the early days they could not get 5s. an acre for it. There are a lot of selections there, but they were established in anticipation of the construction of this line. It would have been a better proposition if the Government had built the line before those settlers went there, and it would have increased the value by £1 or £1 10s. per acre. That is a commercial principle which we should adopt in building railways. We should get the benefit for the State that is created by the building of the railway.

Mr. COLLINS: You do admit that the railway creates the benefit?

Mr. HODGE: Of course I admit it. We should always send out our railways ahead of settlement. I shall have much pleasure in supporting the railway.

Mr. MAY (*Flinders*): On the opening of the line from Nanango to Kingaroy I paid a visit to that district, and I was surprised to find such fine country there—equal in every respect to the Darling Downs. As a practical man I have had experience of land in this country and other countries, and I was surprised at the possibilities of the land in the Burnett district. We have a number of railways the termini of which come within a radius of 40 miles in that district, and we should do something to link them all up and give the farmers and timber-getters in that district the benefit of three markets for their produce. There is the line from Benarkin or Blackbutt to Yarraman, the line from Oakey to Cooyar, and the line from Kingaroy to Tarong. There is no doubt that they have good land, equal to the Darling Downs, and it should be opened by railways in the best possible way to give every facility to the people settled on the land there. I do not know where would be the best place to make the junction of the three railways, as that is a matter which would be best left to the railway experts, but we should do something to give the best facilities for reaching market to those already settled there. The railways enhance the value of the Government lands and also the lands of private individuals, but you cannot help that, and when they are all linked up they will have the best markets north, south, east, and west. I had the pleasure of visiting that district a few weeks ago, and I was told by individuals further out—not those who were promulgating this railway—that the land out back was even better than the land I had traversed. I said to myself when I saw that land that if ever a railway proposal was introduced into the House to open up that land I would be the first to advocate it, and that is why I have much pleasure in supporting this line. I remember in the early days when a shearer friend of mine said that he had been to the Burnett district and it was some of the finest land that could be obtained anywhere. The land was going at 2s. 6d. an acre, and he said he was going to take up some. He wanted to raise some capital at shearing time, and would then go down and take up some of this Burnett land, but he found he could not raise sufficient capital to do so. As hon. members know, shearers spend all their money between shearing seasons, and he could not save up enough money. He said that the land was the finest land in the world and was better even than the Darling Downs. The first occasion I had to go up in that country it opened my eyes, and I found that what my friend said was correct. I found for myself that the land there was equal to, if not better than, the land on the Darling Downs. Whenever a railway is introduced to open up farming districts I am going to support it every time.

Mr. BOOKER (*Maryborough*): I have a few brief remarks to make on this railway. It is a source of great pleasure to myself that the Minister for Railways has submitted this proposal to the House, and I take it that every member of the House approves of it. It is only a matter of time now after the construction of this section when the linking up of Cooyar with the proposed terminus

Mr. Booker.

of this line will be an accomplished fact. When the connection is made with the Darling Downs and the Burnett, there will be an exchange of stock between the two districts. The Burnett has a much more sheltered area than the Darling Downs, and although there is a system of husbandry that must be carried on in the Darling Downs, no matter how closely the Darling Downs is settled, sheep-raising to some extent will be the primary industry. It will be many years before it will be an agricultural district entirely. In the meantime, as a sheep proposition, when the herbage and pasture gets strong, the settler, whether big or small, has to keep down the heavy pasture with cattle, and he has a difficulty in getting what you may term his scavenger cattle down on his pasture. When these cattle have completed their use as scavengers, and winter approaches, it is a difficult thing to get them away from the Darling Downs without any losses. This occurs normally almost every season. This connection between the South Burnett and the Darling Downs will enable the farmers to train their cattle out in the Burnett on more sheltered country, and this will be the source of very great revenue.

Mr. ALLEN: Which connection do you mean? The Bell connection?

Mr. BOOKER: No; the Oakey to Cooyar connection. This section will naturally be linked up with Oakey. The hon. member for Bulloo suggests there should be another connection. This is not the only railway to be proposed in the South Burnett district. We are going to have quite a number of others in a few years. That is a source of revenue that is not indicated in the report at all, and I am quite satisfied when complete connection is made it will be a source of very great revenue, and it will be a source of very good protection to the farmers and stockowners on the Darling Downs.

Mr. RYLAND (*Gympie*): I would like the Minister to tell us if there are any extra engineer's reports with regard to connecting this line with Bell instead of with Oakey.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is an entirely different proposition.

Mr. RYLAND: On looking at the map we find that the proposed terminus is only about 12½ miles from Nanango, and that the whole of the 19 miles 25 chains run parallel with the present line, and is at no part at a greater distance than 12 or 15 miles from it. To the west of this proposed line there is a lot of splendid country, and more Crown lands, and the Taabinga resumption is to the north-west of this route. The proposed line will run through a lot of privately-owned land, and I think the Minister should give the Committee some good reason why it was not proposed to connect it with Bell.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The object is to run it south to connect with Cooyar.

Mr. RYLAND: It should run to the Bunya Range. I know there are engineering difficulties, but I am told there is a gap there, and there are also engineering difficulties in getting to Cooyar.

The PREMIER: Which route did the coaches take when running from Nanango to the Darling Downs?

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Via Jondaryan.

Mr. RYLAND: I am told the engineering difficulties are not so great in order to get

[*Mr Booker.*

to Bell, and a line in that direction would open up far more and better country. We do not open up the Taabinga resumption hardly at all by this route. It is too far south.

Mr. CORSER: You open up a great part of it.

Mr. RYLAND: The most of it is on the Bell route.

The PREMIER: Not one selector will be more than 15 miles from this line.

Mr. RYLAND: I am sorry the Minister did not get an extra report on the Bell route, as I think it would be more satisfactory to this House.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It has been reported on time after time.

Mr. RYLAND: In a few years we will be asked to build another line to Bell. Another thing, this proposed line will go through a lot of big freeholds. I would like the Minister to tell the Committee whether it is proposed to have the terminus at Mr. Lord's station.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I could not tell you. This is a temporary terminus.

Mr. RYLAND: Kingaroy was a temporary terminus at one time. If the railway had gone another mile, it would have been on Crown lands, and I am told that this railway will be in the same position as the Kingaroy line. I think the Minister should see that those lands are resumed before they are enhanced in value by the construction of this railway. If there are going to be townships on this highway to the Darling Downs the Government ought to resume the land now and get the enhanced value. I have been told by residents in the district that the construction of this railway will enhance the value of the land in that district, especially Mr. Lord's, over £5 an acre. I believe that to be correct. There is a lot of splendid agricultural land in that district.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Have you been there?

Mr. RYLAND: I have been all through that country. I have not been on Mr. Lord's station, but I have been within a few miles of it. I know the country; and I know what the people want, and I know that the Government is not going to reap the advantage of the expenditure of this money. If the Government were to build railways into Crown lands they would then get all the advantage of that railway. I would like to ask: Has the Minister not received a largely signed petition from the residents of this district asking him to give due consideration to the Bell route before he went on with the construction of this line?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have already told you the fullest consideration was given to that, but it is an entirely different proposition.

Mr. RYLAND: If you are going to build the other railway also—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I never promised that.

Mr. RYLAND: You led the Committee to believe that a railway to connect with Bell would be considered by and by. Even if you intend to connect with Cooyar, I think the railway should have gone to the west, as you could then have branched off and joined Bell. There is splendid country between

that line and Bell, and while there are engineering difficulties in the way, I have been told there is a gap there.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's time had expired.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has another five minutes.

Mr. RYLAND: We ought to insure that the people will not be blackmailed at the terminus by exorbitant charges for township allotments. One or two big landowners will probably charge the people great prices for business sites. If there is going to be a

[7 p.m.] township the Minister should resume an area and supply the people with the land. It is not fair to blackmail them in the way they have been. There are large areas of timber land, and I am satisfied that the enhanced value will more than build the line twice over, and why is this enhanced value not taken?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Because there is no law which provides for our taking it.

Mr. RYLAND: Then we should make a law. We are allowing landowners to get rich at the expense of the taxpayer, and the people who work these lands afterwards have practically to work at a sweating wage, with the result that the produce has to go in paying railway fares and freights. We want cheap railways. We should run our railways at half the fares and freights that we do at the present time. The unearned increment produced by building these railways should go in some way to pay for the railways, and we should not have to charge high fares and freights to meet interest and redemption. In New Zealand the fares and freights are 50 per cent. lower than ours, and they are reducing them still further. Very few members know anything about the country on the proposed route. I have been over the whole district. In order that members should give an intelligent vote in regard to these railways they should have an opportunity of going over and inspecting the country, and then pass the proposal next session. It would not be possible for every member to go into the Burnett district, but four or five could go to that district and four or five to the Darling Downs, and so on. That would be doing it in a business-like and intelligent way. Even members of local authorities go out and inspect matters so as to see the best way of proceeding before they pass the thing, but we pass the money here without knowing anything about the district we are passing the railway for. We should have the report of the experts so as to determine whether this particular line should be made to junction at Bell.

The bell indicated that the hon. member's full time had expired.

Mr. CORSER (*Maryborough*): I must compliment the Minister for Railways for having, notwithstanding the scarcity of engineers and surveyors, been able to get this 19 miles through this session. It is part of a scheme to connect the Darling Downs with the North Coast, and the scheme is a good one. The line traverses good agricultural land—Tarong and Taabinga are excellent agricultural lands for close settlement. The hon. member for Gympie states that we ought not to run these lines into land that is alienated. He must know that the land alienated on this route has only recently been alienated—Tarong and Taabinga.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The first resumption was only settled two and a-half years ago.

Mr. CORSER: You could not do anything better in the interests of the community than to run a railway in the direction proposed. There has been an agitation to get a line from Bell to Kingaroy, but I look upon that as an entirely different proposition. Doubtless, in time that will come about, as there is some good land between Kingaroy and Bell. The object of this line is to get as direct a route as possible across from the Darling Downs to reach the Burnett and Wide Bay, and when the other link is joined between Cooyar and Tarong, the line will be very largely used not only for the exchange of products but also for passenger traffic, as people who wish to take the shortest route to Sydney will go that way. At the present time we have to import a large quantity of wheat to Maryborough which could come from the Darling Downs if we had means of communication. We ought to do the same as they do in South Australia and export largely, and we shall be able to export largely from that port when the Burnett becomes closely settled. When I first knew South Australia there was very little wheat grown there, and people did not think it could be successfully grown. I remember the statement being made that not a head of cabbage or cob of corn could be grown on the Darling Downs, but these statements have been proved to be fallacious. I am certain that we shall be able to grow an enormous amount of wheat right along from Kingaroy to Oakey. Arrangements are being made to get a suitable variety of wheat for our climate, and there is no doubt that eventually the wheat trade will be very extensive, and that this land will feed Northern Queensland with wheat and flour for many years to come.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They are growing very good wheat in the Kingaroy district.

Mr. CORSER: Very good indeed. This is a splendid proposition, and I hope that one of the next schemes of the Minister will be the connecting link between Tarong and Cooyar.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS.

COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER moved—

"That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty, a sum not exceeding £1,466,500 be raised by the sale of debentures or the creation and sale of inscribed stock secured upon the consolidated revenue fund of Queensland, and bearing interest at a rate not exceeding three pounds ten shillings per centum per annum to provide for the repayment of a loan falling due on the first day of January, 1913."

For the information of the Committee, he desired to state that this motion dealt with a loan which fell due in 1913, and the proposal made herein was to practically renew it by taking the necessary power. It would be necessary to raise another loan. The loan was for a term of forty years, and the interest would be at the rate of £3 10s. per cent. per annum. The loan which they were redeeming was at 4 per cent.

Hon. W. H. Barnes.]

Mr. LENNON. Have you signed it "Wilson Micawber"?

The TREASURER: The hon. member was such a student of Dickens that he would be able to tell them all about it when he got up to speak.

Mr. LENNON asked if it was to redeem the Treasury bill due next year?

The TREASURER: It is to redeem a loan.

Mr. LENNON: Were there two lots of debentures?

The TREASURER: I will give you the full amounts. They total £1,466,500, made up of different amounts.

Mr. LENNON: It was time that they did something to make arrangements for redeeming some of the loan which they floated. Recently they established a sinking fund on a small scale, but it was better than nothing.

The TREASURER: It is provided for here.

Mr. LENNON understood that the present debenture holders were to be given some kind of preference.

The TREASURER: You are confusing this with something else.

Mr. LENNON asked if the loan was to be floated in England or Australia? On glancing through publications like the "Insurance and Banking Record" and other financial journals, he noticed the enormous accumulation of money in the Australian and New Zealand banks, amounting to over £212,000,000. He thought they might make an attempt to float the loan in Australia.

The TREASURER: This is not the proper time to discuss the question. The Bill will be introduced to-morrow, and that will be the proper time to discuss it.

Mr. LENNON: Very well.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Committee had come to a resolution, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow. It was ordered that the resolution be received to-morrow.

PIALBA TO URANGAN RAILWAY.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I beg to move that the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions:—

"1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension from Pialba to Urangan, in length 5 miles 13 chains.

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

Mr. WHITE (*Musgrave*): When this motion was called this afternoon, I called "Not formal" to it. One of the reasons I had for doing so was that it would not open up any new country. This railway goes through what is practically a barren district. It is absolutely barren, and you can practically grow nothing along the line of railway itself. It will certainly open up a railway to the sea, where it will benefit a few landowners and a few allotment-holders. But I cannot see any possible benefit that is going to accrue to Queensland. Urangan is not a deepwater port in any sense of the word. (Laughter.) If anyone will take the trouble

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to look at the chart, they will see that Urangan is only a series of sandbanks with no defined channel.

Mr. CORSER: What rubbish!

Mr. WHITE: If there is any attempt to make a port there, it will mean that there will have to be a system of dredging which will be continued practically for ever, as it is practically a series of shifting sandbanks. If the railway is constructed there and a jetty built, the jetty will only be fit for fishing purposes. (Laughter.)

Mr. BARBER: And then only at high water. (Laughter.)

Mr. WHITE: The Minister did not make any explanation about the railway, as he usually does when introducing a railway.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: This is not the proper time.

Mr. WHITE: If a railway is built there, we have no guarantee that the deep sea ships will be prepared to call there. We have the experience of Port Alma. If there is one vote which I regret giving in this House it is the vote which I gave to the Port Alma Railway. Well, this port will be worse than Port Alma.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: There is deep water at Port Alma.

Mr. WHITE: There is deep water at Port Alma, but will the vessels ever go there.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They are going there now.

Mr. WHITE: Well, I hope the Port Alma Railway and the port itself will be a success. I am quite satisfied that this port of Urangan will never be a success.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Do you know it?

Mr. WHITE: Yes, I do know it. In the last few days I have gone over the chart. I went over it carefully with the shipping master, and he assured me that there is no hope of making a port at Urangan Point. Anyone who would read the Commissioner's report would see that he had no faith in the report at all. It is only a lukewarm report. This was what the Commissioner said. I take this from the *Maryborough Chronicle*—

"He had endeavoured to obtain reliable returns of the oversea traffic which might be reasonably expected to be landed at Urangan if good berthing facilities were provided for large steamers, but unfortunately the oversea and interstate figures are not now kept separate. The imports and exports of Maryborough for the last year totalled approximately £20,000, but it was impossible to say what portion of that amount would still be sent up and down the Mary River in the small vessels or would be carried by rail even if the line were built to Urangan. There were large and fertile areas to the west of Maryborough with immense quantities of timber and plenty of land suitable for agriculture; in fact, 7,000 acres were now under cultivation, while the recently-opened railway to Nanango and the line now under construction to Mundubbera, not to speak of the new proposed line to Tarong, would all add to the trade of the district, and bring a share of business to Urangan. The official figures from the Department of Agriculture and Stock showed that during the year ended 30th June last, Maryborough district, including Nanango, produced 22,000 tons of maize, 25,000 tons of sugar, 1,100 tons of oranges, and 1,000 tons of butter, and great quantities of log timber had been shipped during recent years, but, as he had previously stated, he could not estimate any proportion of that trade that would go to Urangan. Some

coal shipments of traffic might be expected in the future as the Burrum field was only 30 miles from the proposed port."

Burrum is the same distance from Maryborough. I would be sorry indeed to oppose any railway that would open up any new country, but this railway would not do it. There are plenty of facilities for shipping at Maryborough, and the trade will all go from Maryborough by the river steamer. I am not a candid friend of the Government, but I remind the Government that during the next four years they have to provide £20,000,000 to meet loans falling due and to build the railways brought before the House. I think this House is going a bit too far with the construction of railways, and I hold that railways to be constructed

in the near future should be [7.30 p.m.] railways to districts where the amount of money received from the land will pay for the construction of the railway. I make a protest in this case because, during the last sixteen or twenty years, Maryborough has had expended on railways nearly £1,000,000. They have had the Theebine to Kingaroy Railway, the Mundubbera to Gayndah, and the Cordalba to Pialba railways. All those railways have been constructed in the vicinity of Maryborough, and not one sixpence has been spent in the district I represent. I do not blame the members for Maryborough for urging their claims on this House, either just or unjust claims, but I certainly think Bundaberg has claims as well. We have a far better deep-water port within 7 miles of Bundaberg, and can we get a railway to it? Certainly not. We were refused a railway, and the shire council had to borrow money from the Government and build a railway themselves. We wanted a railway to go through good country to the Invicta Mill.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WHITE: A private railway had to be built. I consider I am perfectly justified in lodging a protest against this railway when there is no prospect of it paying. Of course, there is 3 per cent. guarantee, but when there are other districts where railways are urgently wanted and where railways would pay handsomely, and where the Government could sell lands which would repay three times over the cost of the railway, those railways should be constructed before we construct fancy railways to imaginary ports that are not likely to be of any use to Queensland or the district itself within the next twenty years. I think there is plenty of time for that, and I certainly intend to vote against the railway. Firstly, because I do not think it will pay; secondly, because I do not think it is required; and, thirdly, I do not think Urangan is a deep-water port at all. I have prepared statistics, but I do not think it is necessary to go into this matter very much further. In finishing, I would like to refer to the Commissioner's report. The report, if anything, shows conclusively that the Commissioner does not think this railway is either justified or that it will pay.

Mr. CORSER: He says, "I recommend the extension."

Mr. WHITE: Of course, he does. We have heard so much of it in this House, and I have no doubt that the Commissioner has

heard so much of it that he is glad to get rid of it. Anyone who likes to read between the lines of the Commissioner's report must come to the conclusion that the Commissioner is not absolutely of opinion that this railway would be a good paying project, nor is it justified under present paying conditions, as the whole of the money required should be put into railways that will open up new country.

Mr. BARBER: I would just like to have a word or two on this matter. In the first place, in going through this report, I find it is not the report of the Commissioner at all. It is the report of the Deputy Commissioner for Railways. The report, in my opinion, does not in any degree whatever support the construction of this railway. As has already been pointed out by the hon. member for Musgrave, this line will not open up new country. The paragraph referring to the character of the country says—

"The survey traverses thickly-timbered, undulating country for 4 miles, after which the ground is practically level. A considerable area has been cut up into small lots for seaside residences, more particularly in the vicinity of 1½ miles and Torquay (2¾ miles). This short extension is to provide Maryborough, the back country, and the Burrum coalfields with a deep-water port, which will be obtained by the construction of a jetty as contemplated by the Harbours and Rivers Department."

As a matter of fact, from personal observations on a visit to that district, I am satisfied that the people who are going to benefit most by the construction of this line are not the producers—because it will not bring any more land under cultivation—but the land sharks and land speculators who own most of the land there will receive a tremendous increment by reason of this line being built, and they will make a considerable pile on their speculations in that district. Reference has been made to the quantity of land which it is said will feed this line—that is, land out in the back country along the Degilbo and Kingaroy lines—because its real object is to establish a deep-water port for the produce grown away in the back country. Regarding the question of the resumption of land, the report points out—

"As private property is traversed throughout, and a considerable portion of it is in small areas, the cost of resumptions will be somewhat heavy. The total area (exclusive of land required for station accommodation) will be about 135 acres."

And there is no doubt, taking as a criterion the number of lines that have already been constructed in Queensland, and especially those lines that have been constructed through private property—for instance, the line between South Brisbane and Manly, which, I believe, cost £13,000 or £14,000 a mile, the chief reason for which was that the land was held by private individuals, which necessitated very heavy payments being made to them—the resuming of these 140 acres will mean that the Government will have to pay to the land speculators a very heavy sum indeed, and the farmers residing in the Pialba district will be called upon to meet a fairly heavy imposition to pay the interest on this line. A good many men following the life of seamen on our coast look upon the proposal to establish a deep-water port

Mr. Barber.]

at Urangan more in the light of a joke than anything else. When referring to this matter last year in connection with the Mundubbera extension, I pointed out that, after putting in a good many hours in studying all the charts I could get hold of, I found that the whole place surrounding this deep-water port—the spot at the end of the jetty is supposed to contain 2 or 3 fathoms of water at low-water springs, but the great difficulty is to be able to navigate large vessels into this puddle-hole. As I said last year, the whole surroundings is a corrugation of sandbanks and mudbanks, interspersed with small, narrow, tortuous channels, and not too much water at that. I pointed out also that oversea vessels trading to Australia and leaving Brisbane to go round Torres Strait would have to go a very considerable distance out of their way to come down to this deep-water port to pick up cargo. I have submitted the statement I then made to some of the marine officers, who know the channels there, and they quite agree with it. As reported on page 2725 of *Hansard*, for 1910, I said—

“We also have a proposed deep-water port, possibly far better situated than the port the hon. member has dilated upon in this Chamber, and in this respect—that the steamers coming to that supposed deep-water port would have first of all to go right round the northern end of Fraser Island and then double down south no less a distance than 60 miles, and after picking up cargo there they would have to go back on their tracks for another 60 miles.”

Anyone who likes to take a square and compass and mark off the track followed by steamers and see the distance they have to travel back south, will find that these figures are pretty well within the mark. I went on to point out that we have a far better site for a deep-water port, which has been recently reported on by the departmental officers, whose report is in the hands of the Treasurer, together with a chart showing that there are no sandbanks at that place, and within a quarter of a mile of the shore, you have not less than from 3 to 4 fathoms of water. That place was reported upon many years ago by Admiral Scott, who reported that it was the best place for a naval base anywhere on the Queensland coast.

MR. CRAWFORD: Where is that?

MR. BARBER: Just south of the Burnett Heads. As I pointed out last year, a steamer leaving Brisbane and having to pick up cargo at Urangan would have to go round the end of Fraser Island and double back about 60 miles, and then go back that 60 miles again, before getting on her way; whereas in going across to the deep-water course I referred to she would not have to go out of her course more than 25 miles. She would have practically got a clear course there. This is an important matter to the people and district of Bundaberg. As the hon. member for Musgrave has pointed out, whereas the Government propose to spend this large sum of money in building these several miles of railway, which will not open up any new country, and to sink this large sum of money in that puddle-hole, which is said to be suitable for a port, our people want to know where Bundaberg is coming in? Last year the hon. member for Musgrave and myself went into this matter very thoroughly, and we are of opinion that the Government are not giving

us a fair deal. For twenty-five years not one sixpence has been spent in our district in extending railways.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

MR. BARBER: At the same time, money is being spent to further the interests of this particular place. If a division is called on this matter, I intend to vote against the resolution that the line be constructed. I am sure that the settlers of the Pialba district, who for the last two or three years have had to bear a big impost to make up the interest charged on that line, will be charged with a far heavier impost if this line and harbour are constructed than what they had to pay towards the construction of the Pialba line.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: My first action in Parliament as regards this port was in 1905, when I quoted my opinion as to the necessity of a port for the Wide Bay and Burnett and its great hinterland, and I have never varied from the opinion I then expressed. The hon. member for Musgrave said that this was not going to open up any new land, and consequently was not going to be of any value. The construction of this 5 miles of railway is not with the view of opening up new land, but with the view of giving facilities to the land already occupied by providing a market for their produce overseas. He also said that the line does not travel through good country. No one says it does; but the Pialba line, of which this is an extension, travels through country identical to this, and that line paid £3 19s. 2d. per cent. in 1909-10 and £5 4s. 2d. per cent. last year. He also says that he has shown some charts to some ancient mariners—(laughter)—and those ancient mariners said there was no water there. I prefer to take the statement of a professional man who is placing his reputation at stake. I will quote what Mr. Cullen says with regard to this port. I am quoting now from my speech in *Hansard*, of 2nd August, on the Address in Reply. Mr. Cullen says—

“From a critical examination of the charts, and from some personal knowledge of the coastline there, I am of opinion that Urangan Point is the only locality possessing claims worthy of consideration as a deep-water port; moreover, it could be connected with the railway system of the district without prohibitive cost.”

Whose opinion do you prefer to take—that of the hon. member for Musgrave's ancient mariners or that of this professional man?

THE SPEAKER: Order! Is the hon. member quoting from a report of Mr. Cullen, or from his own remarks?

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: I am quoting from the report of Mr. Cullen.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member will not be in order in quoting his own remarks from a speech made in the same session of Parliament.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: I am quoting from Mr. Cullen's report.

THE SPEAKER: I accept the hon. member's assurance.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN:

“To get to Urangan from the sea there are two bars to cross—the outer one, 8 miles from the jetty site, consists of fine ocean sand, and has a depth of 19 feet at low-water springs; the inner one is about 1 mile from the site, and consists of soft material overlying hard clay. It has a depth of 18 feet at low-water springs. Access from sea for larger vessels is therefore limited to the high-water period, when vessels drawing 24 to 25 feet of water could enter.

[Mr. Barber.]

"At the site selected there is a depth of 26 to 28 feet on the outside berth, and 24 to 25 feet on the inside berth at low-water springs, with ample room to turn, and good holding ground for anchoring. It is, so far as the strata are concerned, favourable from a construction point of view."

This conclusively shows that so far as the port is concerned we have nothing to fear as regards water. The Commissioner's report, which I submit is entirely favourable to this proposed extension, points out very clearly that you are not depending on the port; but, even if it were not so, I submit there would be quite sufficient income from other sources to cover the small expenditure that is going to be incurred. In looking over the Railway Commissioner's report last year I find we received from the Wide Bay and Burnett districts over £16,000 in coal freights. The report in connection with this proposal shows that the whole outlay would come to £700 a year. That is not a very big charge. According to the Mines Department report, we imported from New South Wales during 1909-10 something like 55,000 tons of coal and 45,000 tons of coke. That coal could have been supplied from the district if we had had a port from which to ship it. The whole of the district is one coalfield, and by getting a port it would lead to the expansion of the trade there. It would mean further development and an increase of trade, and it would require a very small sum to make the port a payable concern. The hon. member for Bundaberg said it was simply a whole bunch of sandbanks. I do not know where he got his information from.

MR. BARBER: Look at the chart.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: I know more about the chart than the hon. member does, and I have been over the ground. I have studied the site at low water and high water, and I differ from him in one particular—that I happen to know what I am talking about. So far as the south and the west are concerned, the port is practically landlocked. The only danger that could possibly be incurred would be from a northerly blow. The very sandbank which we have heard so much about from the two hon. members who have spoken is simply a sandspit which runs out from the north side, and carries 3 feet of water at low-water springs. As pointed out by several people, and, I think, by the harbour-master at Maryborough, that spit acted as a most excellent breakwater in the event of a northerly breeze, which was a very rare occurrence. I am not going to criticise what they said about a deep-water port at Bundaberg, but I felt inclined to ask what such a port was likely to cost in comparison with this port. Speaking to a very shrewd business man the other day, he said that this was a most business-like proposition. He said, "Fancy being furnished with a deep-water port for the paltry sum of £700 a year!" I submit that anybody who is shortsighted enough to see such a large district kept back merely on account of some parochial jealousy is unworthy to be a member of this Chamber. Speaking on this matter some time ago, I said the essentials for a deep-water port were, first, you must have water, and I submit that Mr. Cullen's report, wherein he says, knowing as he does the whole coast line, that that is the only site where a deep-water port can be established, should be accepted. I think that that in itself is sufficient, and I pass aside any remarks which may come from any other quarter as to the depth of water there.

The next question that crops up is, how are we going to make the port a success? The question of trade comes in. The hon. member for Musgrave said there was no possible chance of expansion in coal. It is unnecessary to point out that in 1883 the output of coal from the Burrum field was 8,000 tons, and in 1909 it had risen to 92,000 tons, notwithstanding the disabilities under which we are labouring. What in the nature of a port have we either in Maryborough or in Bundaberg? Maryborough boasts 12 feet of water and Bundaberg 9 feet. In these days of commercial enterprise and competition, the question of carriage simply means life or death to any enterprise; and, if we are going to compete with other States in the markets of the world, it is necessary that we should be placed on an equal footing. It is impossible to carry coal in small bottoms and compete with larger vessels and ports of greater depth. During the last twelve months we have imported 55,000 tons of coal and 44,000 tons of coke into Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, and Cocktown. All of this could have been supplied

[8 p.m.] from our own district had facilities been obtainable there. There are other avenues where much development might take place. Mount Morgan consumes 25,000 tons of coal a year, and a quantity of coke. The Townsville railways and the railways north of that might also be brought within the scope of that district if facilities are provided which are enjoyed in any other place. It is not only coal I wish to deal with. The Wide Bay District last year turned out 25,431 tons of sugar.

MR. WHITE: No.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: I know what I am talking about. I got these figures from the collector of Customs for Maryborough, and it includes all the sugar which comes from that district, including Mount Bauple, Pialba, Childers, and the surrounding neighbourhood.

MR. WHITE: None of it was sent by steamer.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: No; because the opportunities were not there, but it would have been sent by steamer if they had been able to get anything like a decent place where vessels of any size could go in. There were also 685 tons of butter sent away from the Wide Bay district last year, valued at £72,727, and of that quantity 256 tons were sent to London. That butter had to be sent to Brisbane and thence transhipped home; and look at the impost that meant to the people of Wide Bay. The freight to Brisbane alone would pay half the interest on this loan. Then, with regard to fruit, there were 50,000 cases of oranges sent from the Burrum district last year. It all went to Southern ports, where it averaged as much as 11s. 6d. a case, which is a much higher price than obtained elsewhere. That had to be railed to Brisbane and then transhipped to Melbourne. One reason why I am in favour of this port is because the British-India Steam Navigation Company's steamers go in there now.

MR. WHITE: That is a pure advertisement.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: Why, this is the age of advertising! After listening to those two hon. gentlemen to-night, anyone must be convinced that this is the age of advertising. We have deep water there; we have the products to go over the railway, and the third thing we have to consider is that

Lieut.-Colonel Rankin.]

the cost of the line should not be prohibitive. The total estimated cost of the line is £22,761, and 3 per cent. on that outlay amounts to £700 per annum. The benefited area in connection with the railway includes the city of Maryborough and the shires of Pialba and Howard. The rateable value of the Maryborough municipality is £301,492, of the Pialba Shire £77,192, and of the Howard Shire £61,117, or a total of £438,801. Even if the line does not earn one single penny, those three local authorities will be asked to raise only £700, which is equal to three-eighths of 1d. in the £1. Surely no one will argue that the line will be such a failure as not to earn something, so it will be seen that the ratepayers will not have to raise much money to make up any deficiency. It is embarrassing to find members representing the Wide Bay and Burnett districts condemning this proposal, as they will certainly receive some assistance from it. In political economy it is well known that if you do good for one you must do good all round. I think that the cost of the line is too high. This line practically traverses the same country as the line from Colton Junction to Pialba.

Mr. CORSER: Some of it is better.

LIEUT.-COLONEL RANKIN: On looking over the Commissioner's report I see he estimates the cost of this line at £4,222. The Pialba line cost £2,686—a difference of £1,536 per mile. I cannot see how that large amount is made up. I know the cost of labour has increased, but not to that extent. Land assumptions will make up for some of it, but not for all of it. In the other lines which have been tabled this session the cost of the line from Dalby to Jandowae is to be £2,962; that from Oakey to Mount Russell £3,074; and that from Roma to Orallo £2,935, so I do not see why the Urangan line should be £1,200 higher than any of these. I know this country from A to Z, and I know it will not cost that much to build. It is rather a dangerous thing to overestimate the cost of the railway, because it is apt to make the ratepayers concerned afraid of it. The hon. member for Musgrave asked if it was going to open up any agricultural land. The Commissioner for Railways says that there are already 70,000 acres of land under cultivation. With regard to the port of Maryborough, this is what Mr. Cullen says about it. In his report he gives the exports as follows:—

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----------|
| 1907 | .. | .. | .. | £208,469 |
| 1908 | .. | .. | .. | £116,240 |
| 1909 | .. | .. | .. | £111,326 |

There is a falling off in the exports because it was discovered that they could not be sent away in the small steamers from Maryborough. If we had this deep-water port, we would have a number of facilities for developing this district, and it would lead to rapid progress in the Wide Bay and Burnett district, and make it one of the most important ports in the Australian Commonwealth.

Mr. LENNON I would like to say a word or two on this matter from a State point of view, and not from a parochial point of view. Is Mr. Cullen satisfied that there is a natural port there?

Mr. CORSER: Yes.

Mr. LENNON: And I say that if Maryborough is entitled to a port, she should have a port. It is the duty of every Government to give a port to every place that requires proper development. Maryborough has a pretty good sum in harbour dues account

[Lieut.-Colonel Rankin.

which will be used for the construction of the jetty. If there is a loan raised, the interest and redemption will have to be paid by the local people. The railway will afford facilities which the Commissioner says will be necessary for shipping at that port. Now, the question of the quality of the land does not come into consideration at all. The blot on the proposal is that land is held in small allotments by speculators, and they will benefit to a very large extent by the construction of this railway, but even that is not sufficient to deter me from supporting the proposition. The line is only 5 miles 13 chains in length, and will only cost £22,000, and will mean a tax on the people of the district of £700 per annum, so that the risk of any loss falling on the people or on the Government need not be considered for a moment, because Maryborough, which is in the benefit area, is very well able to bear a burden of that kind. Therefore, I think the House should vote for this railway and let Maryborough have the benefit of a deep-sea port, the same as any other place of the importance of Maryborough. If it has a natural port, it should have the benefit of it. I am not in favour of making artificial ports.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question before the House is the construction of a railway.

Mr. LENNON: The port is part of the question.

The SPEAKER: The question is the construction of a railway.

Mr. LENNON: The Commissioner in his report refers to the matter of a deep-sea port.

The SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman is basing his arguments entirely on the construction of a port.

Mr. LENNON: Not entirely. If there was no port there I would not support the construction of the line.

The SPEAKER: In my opinion the hon. member is basing his arguments on the existence of a port, and I must ask him to keep to the question before the House. If the question was the construction of a port as an adjunct to the building of this railway, the hon. member would be perfectly in order in referring to it, but that is not the main object of his remarks.

Mr. LENNON: The two things are inseparable. It is not possible to deal with the question of building a railway to Urangan without considering the question of a port. We have had a report from Mr. Cullen and Mr. Elliott, and they have been freely quoted during the day. If I was not satisfied there was a port there, I would not support the building of the railway. I hope the railway will go through.

Mr. CORSER: I very much regret that my friend, the hon. member for Musgrave, should have so far forgotten himself as to make such a weak statement as he has put before this House to-night. If he knew the facts with regard to this port, and the line that it is contemplated to build there, I feel sure he would not have made those misstatements to the House.

Mr. BARBER: He can make no other statement.

Mr. CORSER: There is one thing I must refer to—that is, the hon. member's statement that there is no channel, that it is a series of mudbanks or sandbanks. The

report of Mr. Cullen and also of Mr. Elliott, who is a marine surveyor, distinctly state that for the first 2,700 yards in length, and 500 yards in width, there is at least 24 feet of water at low tide, with a rise of somewhere about 8 feet. The chart shows that there is a 3-mile channel, through which the vessels would reach the place where this railway line is to go.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is dealing with the port. I called the deputy leader of the Opposition to order for dealing with that question. The question before the House at the present time is whether the plan and specification for building a certain railway should be accepted. I understand the question of a port was raised by the hon. member for Musgrave and I allowed the hon. member for Burrum to answer it, but I cannot allow the debate to be continued on the question of a deep-water port. The question now is whether the plan and specification of a railway should be submitted for consideration by a Committee of the whole House?

Mr. CORSER: Of course, Sir, I bow to your ruling. I was only answering the hon. member for Musgrave. There is one important matter referred to here by the Railway Commissioner, and that is the condition that a pier should be constructed. If a pier is constructed the business people of Maryborough will make that pier self supporting. There is no doubt a very large district at the back of this port, which will never be properly developed unless we have a railway pier and port to take the products of those districts straight to the ocean-going vessels. We know that about one-seventh of the whole population of Queensland is in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts, and vast settlement is going on there, and it is only a question of a few years before they will produce more than can be consumed in the State, and therefore we must provide facilities for sending products to the markets of the world. There is no port between Brisbane and Gladstone except the one at Urangan. For some time the business people of the Wide Bay and Burnett district have been labouring under great disadvantages through not being in communication with the markets of the world through the British-India Company's steamers. After some negotiations it was arranged that the British-India Company's boats should call at Urangan, and only last week one of their boats landed 480 tons of cargo there, and it is anticipated that 4,500 tons a year will come from that source alone through the construction of this line. As the hon. member for Burrum has stated, there will also be a very large coal trade. In that district the Government hold some thousands of acres of land which is considered to be just as good coal land as that of Burrum and Torbanlea, and the construction of this line will be the means of developing those coalfields, and the annual rent which the Government will receive from those coal lands will be very considerable indeed. I have no doubt that the construction of this line will develop those coalfields, and will also largely help us to develop our Western districts, and bring a lot of trade direct which is now coming in more tedious and expensive ways by coastal vessels—it will come direct from the ports of shipment right up to Maryborough with only one handling. We find it of advantage now to have goods

landed in the bay, put on board lighters, and taken up the river to Maryborough, at a cost of 10s. or 11s. a ton lighterage; but once the vessels are able to come alongside this pier, the cost will be infinitesimal, and the goods will not be knocked about, but will be put in the trucks on the pier and taken straight to Gympie, Kingaroy, Bundaberg, or Maryborough, as the case may be, and there is no doubt it will help to develop those districts. As I have already stated, the channel is there, and a good one, and I defy anybody to contradict that statement. There are no shifting sandbanks, and if we can get the line down there I suppose the coke trade, which is a very large one in Queensland, will be developed in the Howard and Torbanlea districts, and the shipments over that line will be very considerable indeed.

Mr. BOOKER: The hon. member for Burrum and the senior member for Maryborough have given the technical advantages of this particular proposal. I regret very much that the House is a thin one to-night, when such an important proposal is being discussed. Dealing with my friend, the hon. member for Musgrave, I can only feel that the antagonistic attitude he has taken up in connection with this proposal is due to something else, and, knowing the hon. member as I do, I regret very much he has seen fit to take up that antagonistic attitude. It does not do him credit. At heart he knows he has taken up an attitude which he would not have taken up if something ulterior had transpired. The railway from Maryborough to Pialba has paid handsomely since the business of sugar-growing has been established, and this proposed extension of 5½ miles is opening up a large area of sugar lands, and the bulk of the land that will be resumed are the small properties of the workers of Maryborough, and I say in all sincerity, should this railway be built, right along the foreshores cottages will be built by the mechanics and workers of Maryborough, who will spend their Saturdays and Sundays and holidays by the seaside. From Pialba to Urangan Point is the residential area, and that is where the workers of Maryborough will live. The hon. member for Musgrave says this is a good scheme twenty or thirty years hence. If this proposal is good enough twenty or thirty years hence, it is good enough to-day. The people who live in that district are going to take the responsibilities, and are going to make the proposal pay. As regards the remarks of the hon. member for Bundaberg, as a matter of fact, the hon. member for Bundaberg knows nothing about the proposal submitted to the Chamber. He would not have said what he did say if he had any knowledge of the subject at all. The hon. member for Bundaberg says that should the port be established it will not put an acre more under cultivation. If the hon. member takes up that attitude, I do not feel disposed to waste time upon him. Within the last year or two, just beyond Gayndah, 300,000 acres of beautiful agricultural land has been opened up by the Lands Department for close settlement as agricultural farms, and the bulk of it has already been acquired by agriculturists. Will the hon. gentleman suggest that agriculturists who want 300,000 acres of agricultural land are not going to help to pay for this railway? Then, on the top of that, the surveyors are surveying an extension of from 300,000 to

500,000 acres. We were dealing to-day with the railway proposal which is going to be a further feeder to this section. The proposition from Kingaroy to Tarong is one which any Government would bring forward. This is a great district, and railway extension must take place. Every extension which takes place in the Burnett must radiate along this section of railway. Speaking of the Kingaroy to Tarong line—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BOOKER: Every development in that district necessitates the present proposal. The main object is to establish a port at Urangan to deal with the entire produce of that great district. We have in the district something like one-eighth of the entire population of Queensland; and will hon. members question, not only the desirability, but the grave necessity to find a means of bringing our imports at the cheapest rate to the people of Queensland. The hon. member for Burrum has made a very valuable statement as to the desirability of this railway, and the hon. member for Maryborough has referred to the details of it, so there is no necessity to reiterate what they say. Since I have been in this Chamber I have never identified myself with any parochial attitude, and in dealing with this question I ask hon. members to take the statements of the representatives of the district through which the railway is going as absolute facts. I cannot understand any hon. member taking up an attitude other than one which will assist in every possible way to develop the resources of the district, which means the development of the entire State. I desire to pay a tribute to the deputy leader of the Opposition, who has taken up an attitude which does credit to the highest instincts and principles of government.

Mr. ADAMSON: Having lived in Maryborough for a very considerable time, and represented it for two or three years, and having advocated the extension of this railway to Urangan, I feel that I would not be doing right if I did not express my agreement with the proposal of the Minister for Railways. I wish to read the recommendation at the end of the Commissioner's report. He says—

"For the reasons given above, I recommend the extension of the Pialba branch railway to Urangan, on the understanding that adequate facilities are to be provided for handling large steamers and cargoes at the terminus."

It seems that the Commissioner has had the idea that the reason for building this railway is that it is to go to a port where large cargoes are handled.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is no other reason.

Mr. ADAMSON: As the junior member for Maryborough has stated, this line to a deep-water port is necessary, because Pialba has become a place where people go to enjoy themselves, and recuperate their health; and the building of this line to Urangan Point will mean that all the land from Pialba to Urangan Point will be built upon. A great number of workers in Maryborough will have houses there, where they can spend their week-ends during the summer months. It is becoming increasingly a place where people go, because it is one of the best water-

[Mr. Booker.

ing-places in Queensland at the present time. I think the principal reason why this railway should be built is one which you, Mr. Speaker, have tabooed us from discussing. The Wide Bay district, which is developing rapidly, needs an outlet for its produce, and in the interest of decentralisation, and seeing that this railway is necessary, I think that it ought to be built. I hope the railway will pass, because it will be a benefit to the people of the Wide Bay district, Maryborough, and many others outside Maryborough.

Mr. FERRICKS (*Bowen*): I am heartily in accord with the proposal before the House, and if it comes to a division I intend to vote on it. I support it from a Queensland point of view. I have always been an advocate of opening up ports. It has been contended that a port could be obtained in the Burnett district. If that be so, I would be pleased to vote in support of it. The question of ports has been the curse of New South Wales and Victoria. An excellent point was raised by the junior member for Maryborough when he said, exclusive of ports altogether, that the objective of the extension of this railway from Maryborough to Pialba was always Urangan. Urangan and Torquay, as watering-places, have no peer in Queensland. But even if the question of ports had not been raised at all, the extension of this railway is justified. On this extension being completed there will be such a settlement around the terminus as will, I am sure, pay the cost of construction, apart altogether from the land put under cultivation. I noticed, from the Commissioner's report, that there was an extensive area of 17,000 acres of land. I know the country between Maryborough and Pialba, and know that it is capable of producing good sugar. I was interested in the able speech of the hon. member for Maryborough, and I am in accord with all that he has said.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

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

"(1.) That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension from Pialba to Urangan, in length 5 miles 13 chains.

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

said: This small extension from Pialba to Urangan, in length 5 miles 13 chains, is neither an agricultural line nor is it a land settlement line, the same as the lines I have been asking the Committee to approve of this evening. I venture to say that we may call it a purely commercial line. It is proposed by myself on behalf of the Treasury, and it is carrying out the decentralisation policy of the Government—that every district, as far as it is economically possible, shall have its deep-water port. Before I proceed to give any particulars about the port, or the Treasurer's desire to open up this port in the way it should be opened up, I would like to refer to the estimate of the cost of

the 5 miles 13 chains. The estimate of cost by the Deputy Commissioner for Railways is £21,781, which is equal to £4,222 per mile. He also estimates that the probable cost of rolling-stock would be £1,000, making a total capital cost of £22,781, upon which the interest at 3 per cent. under the 1906 Act will be about £681 per annum. Reference has been made by a newspaper to what they call the excessive cost of this extension.

Mr. RYAN: What newspaper?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The *Maryborough Chronicle*. I do not often refer to what newspapers say, but I think it is due that I should explain to the Committee why this extension appears to carry an excessive cost per mile. The reason for it is that if the extension to the proposed deep-water port at Urangan were taken away from the southern side of the present Pialba line some distance out of Pialba, the cost would be infinitely smaller than the estimate, but the Commissioner and the Chief Engineer thought it not a fair thing that Pialba should be left at a dead-end, the same as Maryborough is at the present time. So it is proposed that the junction shall be made some distance west of Pialba, and that the Urangan line should run through Pialba station yards right on to Urangan, thus necessitating what is practically a rearrangement of the Pialba station. It is only a fair thing, if it is necessary to give access to a deepwater port for Wide Bay and Burnett district, that the extension should bear the cost of the rearrangement, and that the Railway Department or the Pialba line should not bear it.

Mr. CORSER: It paid £5 6s. 2d. per cent. last year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; but the Pialba line did not pay that every year. The Pialba line was built under the Railways Guarantee Act of 1896, and the ratepayers in that district and the Railway Department had to bear a considerable loss of interest on that line. But of late years the line has been doing much better, with the result that in 1910 the Railway Department paid to the Pialba Council £1,200 as their share of the profit over and above the statutory interest which the railway had to bear. I do not propose that there shall be any deviation at all from the recommendation of the Chief Engineer or Railway Commissioner with regard to the cost of the rearrangement of the Pialba station falling on the Pialba Railway. It is only right that it should fall on the extension that that rearrangement necessitates. I am introducing this extension of the railway, but not as a matter of the railway business connected with the Railway Department. If it had been merely an extension from Pialba to Urangan I should not be justified in making out the case I am making out now. The reason for the introduction of the line is because the Treasurer would be unable to build a railway from Pialba to Urangan to serve the jetty and deep-water port, for the reason that that railway is outside the harbour area. It is outside the district controlled by the Marine Department. Maryborough itself has no harbour board, and the harbour dues on all the goods entering and leaving the port are collected by the Treasury and paid into the harbour trust fund. Any necessary expenses in connection with the Maryborough harbour are deducted from that fund, but

the whole of the fund is worked in the Treasury Department without any expense to that fund at all. Mr. Cullen's report shows that there is ample water at Urangan for oversea ships to berth there. The Treasurer proposes under this fund to have a jetty and wall built at Urangan at a cost of £46,000, and that is the justification for connecting Urangan Point with Pialba. At the present time there is £13,000 standing to the credit of the port in the harbour trust fund. The Treasurer administers the fund at Maryborough just in the same way as he administers it at Gladstone, where the erection of a jetty was carried out in the same way as it is proposed to carry it out at Urangan Point. If a harbour board were formed for the Maryborough district, they would take over the works from the Treasurer, and they would also take over the credit balance or the debit balance, as the case may be.

Mr. RYAN: Does Maryborough want a harbour board?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That is a matter I do not wish to discuss. It is the intention of the Government, through the Treasurer, to build a jetty out into the deep water at Urangan Point. I thought the Treasurer would have been able to pay the interest out of the dues lying to the credit of that port, but I found he could not do so, as it is outside the Treasurer's province.

Mr. RYAN: Suppose the line does not pay, whom does the loss fall to; is it borne by the State?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: No. No loss can accrue for the reason that if the harbour dues on the imports and exports for the jetty do not pay interest and redemption, then they will be increased. The Treasurer has full power to deal with these matters. He deals with the harbour fund at Bowen in the same way. There are harbour boards at Townsville, Rockhampton, Cairns, and Mackay, but at the other ports the Treasurer administers the harbour dues fund himself.

Mr. RYAN: The Rockhampton Harbour Board carried the Port Alma Railway.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; and had there been a duly-constituted harbour board at Maryborough, we need not have brought in this railway under the 1906 Act, and the Maryborough Harbour Board could have guaranteed the interest on the cost of construction of the line, the same as the Rockhampton Harbour Board guaranteed the interest on the cost of construction of the Port Alma Railway.

Mr. LENNON: Who guarantees the Rockhampton Harbour Board?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The people and the country behind them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The country behind them for tens of thousands of square miles. Something has been said as to whether there is sufficient water to make a deep-water port at Urangan.

Mr. FOLEY: A very important question.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The most important question.

Mr. LENNON: You cannot discuss that phase of it.

Hon. W. T. Paget.]

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I will quote the Commissioner's report. It is absolutely impossible for me—having stated that this is a commercial and not an agricultural line—to discuss this question other than in conjunction with the deep-water port. I am not going to discuss Mr. Cullen's report, but Mr. Cullen says there is sufficient water there, and, as Mr. Cullen is a highly valued officer, I should be entirely guided by his opinion. But what are the facts? It is only two weeks ago that the "Buteshire" went down to Urangan and landed 500 tons of cargo from the old country. The "Buteshire" is a vessel of 9,500 tons.

Mr. WHITE: She was not at this point at all.

Mr. CORSER: She was just outside.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It may be argued that the "Buteshire" was not exactly where the pier head will be. Possibly she was not, but we must remember she is a vessel of 9,500 tons, and she went in there and landed her cargo.

Mr. WHITE: Is there any guarantee that they will use Urangan Point?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: There is an absolute guarantee in the agreement with the British-India Steam Navigation Company that any vessel to which 150 tons* of cargo is guaranteed must call at certain ports.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: If they can get in.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We should not expect them to get to a port at Boullia.

Mr. WINSTANLEY: They refused to go into Townsville.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: If there is not sufficient water there they need not go in. I merely desire to put particulars of this proposal before the Committee, and it is my duty to do so. The [9 p.m.] Commissioner in reporting generally upon the route and resumptions, mentioned that the country traversed is thickly timbered. I am given to understand that the country through which the line runs is not agricultural land. There is no reason why it should be. This line is supposed to make a deep-water port for the whole of the back country, which has many tens of thousands of acres under cultivation. The Commissioner does not give any estimate of revenue or expenditure.

Mr. LENNON: £700 is such a small item.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Practically nothing at all. This was a matter on which it was almost impossible for the officers to give anything like an accurate estimate; and, after consultation with me, I thought it was desirable that they should simply give facts. The Commissioner says—

"It is difficult to give even an approximate estimate of the earnings and working expenses of this branch, as it is only 5 miles in length, and only a small portion of the freight can be credited to it. At the same time, the advantages of a deep-water port for Maryborough, the Southern Burnett districts, and the Burrum coalfields will be very great. I have endeavoured to obtain reliable returns of the oversea traffic which might reasonably be expected to be landed at Urangan if good

berthing facilities were provided for large steamers, but unfortunately the oversea and interstate figures are not now kept separate."

I may say we took the very greatest trouble to get these figures from the Customs Department, but we could not get them. The Commissioner goes on—

"The imports and exports of Maryborough for last year totalled, approximately, 20,000 tons, but it is impossible to say what portion of this will still be sent up and down the Mary River in small vessels, or be carried by railway, even if a line be built to Urangan.

"There are large fertile areas to the west of Maryborough, with immense quantities of timber and plenty of land suitable for agriculture—in fact, 70,000 acres are now under cultivation, while the recently opened railway to Nanango, and the line now under construction to Mundubbera, not to speak of a new proposed line to Tarong, will all add to the trade of the district and bring their share of business to Urangan. The official figures from the Department of Agriculture and Stock show that during the year ended 30th June last the Maryborough district (including Nanango) produced 22,000 tons of maize, 25,000 tons of sugar, 1,100 tons of oranges, and 1,000 tons of butter, and great quantities of log timber have been shipped during recent years; but, as previously stated, I cannot estimate what proportion of this trade will come to Urangan. Some coal shipment traffic may be expected in the future, as the Burrum field is only 30 miles from the proposed port.

"Recommendation.—For the reasons given above, I recommend the extension of the Pialba branch railway to Urangan, on the understanding that adequate facilities are to be provided for handling large steamers and cargoes at the terminus."

One is contingent on the other—

"The burden (if any) upon the ratepayers will be very slight, as 3 per cent. upon the outlay for the railway will be about £700 per annum, and the responsibility will be spread over a wide area."

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the railway district, as designed, covers the Burrum Coalfield, the district between Urangan and Maryborough, and it covers the city of Maryborough, so that those in the city of Maryborough, who have been agitating and asking for a deep-water port for quite a number of years, will be able to say whether they wish to have it or not. I can give the assurance that the Treasurer has given me—that the construction of the jetty and wharves and all the appurtenances, will not be proceeded with until the people in the railway district have said whether they desire this connection to be built or not. If, by their silence, they say they desire the line to be built, then I have the assurance of the Treasurer that tenders will be called for the construction of a jetty.

The TREASURER: Everything is ready.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Everything is ready, but he must hold his hand in justice to the Railway Department and in justice to the people of the State also, for it is of no earthly use erecting a wharf and jetty there the same as was done at Port Alma, unless there is a railway connection.

Mr. LENNON: I hope you will not repeat that blunder.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We shall not repeat that, I can assure you. I have very much pleasure in moving the resolution.

Question put and passed.

(*Nov. W. T. Paget.*)

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

ROMA TO ORALLO RAILWAY.

APPROVAL OF PLAN—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: When the Committee were last sitting, it seemed to be the unanimous desire that the municipality of Roma should take up some proportion of the responsibility of the guarantee of 3 per cent of the capital cost of this proposed railway. The discussion was a fairly long one, and it had practically come to an end, except that there was an expressed wish that the Roma Town Council should bear a certain proportion of the responsibility. In deference to the wishes of the Committee, I moved you, Mr. Stodart, out of the chair, with the view of asking the member for Maranoa to place himself in communication with the Roma Town Council. I think it was very much better that the member for the district should do this than that I should do it as Minister for Railways. I desire to stand entirely apart, so that if the proposal that was made was not one that I could accede to, I could discuss it, and, if necessary, suggest amendments. First of all, I had in my mind the advisability of asking the Committee to pass this plan, if they desired to do so, and I would give the Committee the assurance that at the report stage I would move that it be a recommendation that the railway district be so amended as to include the municipality of Roma. Upon further consideration, I thought it was more advisable—and perhaps would be more acceptable to the Committee—if the town council of Roma guaranteed a certain proportion of the loss that might accrue on this railway. I might state that the town of Warwick accepted a certain proportion of the responsibility in connection with the Maryvale Railway, and the city of Gympie accepted a certain proportion of the responsibility in connection with the Mary Valley Line. On Monday this telegram came direct to me from the Roma Town Council—

“Council guarantees one-third of the loss of proposed railway from Roma to Orallo.

“CONROY, Mayor.”

It would be very much better if the Committee would accept that direct guarantee of one-third, and include the town of Roma in the railway district. I will give this assurance to the Committee: That even if the landowners in the railway district show by their silence that they agree to the railway being built, no step to construct the railway will be taken until the agreement is prepared and completed. The agreement will be made as usual between the Treasurer, who, of course, is an interested party in connection with vacant Crown land, the Bungil Shire Council, the Roma Town Council, and the Commissioner for Railways. The agreement will be framed on exactly the same lines as the agreement between the Gympie City Council, the various local authorities, the Treasurer, and the Commissioner for Railways.

Mr. RYLAND: What is the estimated deficit?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The estimated net revenue is £500 only, and

the estimated deficit £2,170. I really cannot think that there will only be a net revenue of £500, but that is the Commissioner's estimate.

Mr. LENNON: The Roma Town Council will not rest on the telegram; they will enter into an agreement.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. Members the other evening desired that the Roma Town Council should share the responsibility. On this telegram they will take up one-third of the responsibility—an estimated responsibility of £700 a year. No steps will be taken by me to start the construction of this railway until the agreement is completed, but I would not say that I care about delaying the construction of the railway until after the next session of Parliament, so that the validating Bill might be passed, because we did not do that in connection with the city of Gympie council. That railway was started before the agreement was signed; and hon. members will remember that I brought in a validating Bill during the present session. That will be the procedure in this case. The agreement will be signed, and if the Commissioner approve of the plans the railway will be constructed, and next session a validating Bill will be brought forward, in exactly the same way as in connection with the Maryvale line. If there is any further information I can give hon. members, I shall be very pleased to give it.

Mr. WIENHOLT: It appears to me that the Roma Town Council have made a very fair offer. Personally, I do not object to it. The Minister says if we pass this now, he will not start any construction work until the Roma Town Council have signed the agreement. That is all right so long as the hon. gentleman is the Minister for Railways himself. I hope he will be so for a long while, but it seems to me that if we pass this line, possibly the leader of the Opposition may be in power.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: An assurance has been given by the Government.

Mr. WIENHOLT: It seems to me that there is a weakness. I am quite willing to agree to this, provided that the Roma Town Council are definitely appointed to pay a share, but it is rather inadvisable to start it simply because the Minister says that he himself will not start it until the agreement is made. It is necessary to put a definite condition in the proposal.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: You cannot amend it.

Mr. MANN: I think the Minister could amend it in the direction of amending the benefited area. I think that is the best way to do, because it would be rather hard to define what benefit Roma would derive.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Of course, that would be by valuation.

Mr. MANN: I agree with the hon. member for Fassifern that something more definite should be given than the promise of the Minister. The Minister might get promotion, and some other Minister might review the promise which has been made. I think it will be wise if we make some proviso that the date of the starting of the railway will be at a period after the guarantee has been fixed up by the Roma Town Council.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: It won't be built without it.

Mr. Mann.]

Mr. MANN: At the end of February there may be a new council elected, a majority of which might not be prepared to give the same guarantee. I do not think the House will pass the proposal without a proviso that the Roma Town Council gives substantial guarantees in regard to any loss on the line.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: As I have told the Committee, under certain circumstances, the Committee had accepted his assurance that certain lines would not be proceeded with until agreements were signed, and the lines were not proceeded with. Unfortunately the Maryvale line was delayed twelve months until a validating Act was passed by the House.

Mr. RYAN: Why was a validating Act necessary?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: In order to validate the act of the shire council. The Roma Shire Council have not the power, and it is merely a matter of form. I should feel gratified if the Committee would accept an assurance in this instance. The agreement can be prepared at once. It will be merely a copy of the agreement that we have in hand. If the Committee do not desire to take my assurance, I will see if it is not possible to add something to the motion at the report stage. It cannot be done in Committee.

Mr. FORSYTH: The question is whether this is a correct time to add a clause to the provision. I do not see why we cannot do so.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Not in Committee.

Mr. FORSYTH: If that is so, we should do it at the report stage. It will save a validating Bill being brought in next year.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, no! The validating Bill has to be introduced just the same.

Mr. FORSYTH: I think we should accept the Minister's assurance.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: The Minister requested me to communicate with the Roma Town Council and ask them if they would be willing to join with the people along this railway in the guarantee. They [9.30 p.m.] immediately called a special meeting of the council, and a resolution was passed, after which they wired to the Minister stating their willingness to join in the guarantee. They are anxious that they should be joined as guarantors. The position which has been placed before the Committee is one which the Committee has never been asked for before. The Minister has given an assurance, and that assurance should be accepted by the Committee in the same way as it has always been accepted in these matters.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: That assurance has always been taken.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I hope no departure will be made from what the Minister has been asked to do in the past. The Minister holds the whole thing in the palm of his hand. If there should be any shuffling on the part of the Roma Town Council—and I am sure there will not be any—the Minister can refuse to go on with the construction of the line. I am satisfied that the railway will be a good thing for the people of the

[Mr. Mann.

district. The Committee should accept the Minister's assurance and allow the thing to go through.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I am not aware whether the Committee will take my assurance as to whether certain procedure should be adopted. If not, I shall be prepared to move that the resolution be amended by the insertion of the following resolution after resolution No. 1, namely—

"(2) That the construction of this railway shall not be proceeded with until the Roma Town Council have entered into an agreement to guarantee one-third of any deficiency that may accrue in the working of this railway under the provisions of the Railways Act of 1906."

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: There is no reason for the resolution, as the Committee are willing to accept the Minister's assurance in connection with the matter.

Mr. WIENHOLT: I would like to see that extra resolution added to the resolutions we have here. One Minister is not in the Government for ever, and he cannot bind any other Minister. We should not do these things like "buying a pig in a poke," and it is just as well to have the resolution inserted here.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: What guarantee did Boonah give for the railway which we just passed?

Mr. WIENHOLT: I think it is a wise thing to amend the resolution, as one Minister cannot bind another.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The Government will take the assurance from me.

Question put and passed.

REPORT STAGE.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Now that we have reached the report stage, I beg to move that the resolution be amended by inserting, after Resolution No. 1, the following resolution:—

"2. The construction of this railway shall not be proceeded with until the Roma Town Council have entered into an agreement to guarantee one-third of any deficiency that may accrue in the working of this railway under the provisions of the Railway Act of 1906."

I do not propose to speak upon this, as it had already been discussed in Committee.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: I do not see that there is any necessity for the resolution at all. It is a reflection not only upon the Minister and upon his Government, but it is a reflection also on the Roma Town Council, who gave the assurance, and, as representative of that town and district, I resent the member for Fassifern's suggestion. This afternoon a railway was proposed and carried to form a connection with the *via recta* railway, and it only gave a $\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. better return than this railway. It goes through the hon. member for Fassifern's district, and no one asked for a guarantee from the people of Boonah or anywhere else, and we find the member for that district getting up and by an insinuation suggesting and reflecting, not only on the Minister and the Government, but also on the Roma Town Council, who were approached in a cour-

teous way, and who volunteered to this House that they would join in the obligation with the people in the district through which the line passed.

Mr. WIENHOLT: Voluntarily?

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: Yes. They were never asked their position before in regard to that railway. When I wired asking if they would join in the guarantee, a special meeting was held and a resolution was passed by the town council. The assurance given by the Minister is one that should not be disregarded.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I gave that assurance in order to get the plans through.

Mr. J. M. HUNTER: And no one objected to that except the hon. member for Fassifern. I hope the Minister will not press his amendment, but that he will withdraw it, as it is only a reflection on the Government and the Roma Town Council.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I cannot do it now. I tried to find out if the Committee would accept my assurance.

Mr. LENNON: Considering all the circumstances, the general consensus of opinion of the Committee was that if the Roma Town Council gave this assurance further objection would be withheld. As the Roma Council has given the Minister that assurance, and as it will be dealt with in the same way as the Maryvale and other railways, the Committee should be contented. I should be pleased if the Minister would withdraw his amendment. If he does not, I shall vote against it.

Mr. RYAN (*Barcoo*): I regret that the Minister has seen fit to move this additional resolution, and I do not see the necessity for it. Moreover, its insertion will be futile. Supposing we do insert this resolution, what does it guarantee? You must still have a validating Act.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The resolution merely says that the Committee did not accept my assurance.

Mr. RYAN: That is all it does say. It seems to indicate that the Committee would not accept the Minister's assurance. I do not think that the hon. member for Fassifern was reflecting personally on the Minister. He was pointing out very wisely that the Minister has not got a lease of power. I was glad that the hon. member recognised that, seeing that he is a supporter of the Government. This amendment, in adding a resolution, is adopting a precedent. The assurance of the Minister should have been accepted.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I do not care about my assurance not being accepted.

Mr. RYAN: I cannot see why the Minister cannot withdraw it, as he must have known that if the Committee would not accept his assurance they would have got up and said so, and supported the hon. member for Fassifern. The Minister would be wise if he would withdraw the resolution.

Mr. WIENHOLT: I would point out that when I rose I simply pointed out that I thought we were doing a foolish thing to pass the railway without having a surety—that it was an unbusiness-like proceeding. The hon. member for Maranoa made certain reference to me, and used as an argument that the Roma Town Council had come in

voluntarily. I never heard a more extraordinary statement in my life. That is not my idea of coming in voluntarily. They came in after the House refused to pass the railway without a certain condition—that was, that the Roma Town Council should accept part of the guarantee. They came in then, and yet the hon. member says they came in voluntarily. It is absurd. To come in voluntarily is to come in in the first instance, without any outside influence. What is the position of a railway if it is passed by the House on a certain assurance, and the assurance is not given effect to? I do not know whether the railway would be proceeded with, but it puts the country in a very awkward position. It was simply in the interests of the country that I got up and pointed out a thing which I thought was wrong.

Mr. MANN: I gave a certain amount of support to what the hon. member for Fassifern suggested. Not that I doubted the Minister; but, as I pointed out, some other Minister might be there, and he would not carry out the present Minister's assurance. Sometimes we see an entire change in the personnel of the Ministry, and if that came about they might not carry out an assurance given by a previous Minister. I am quite sure the Minister would carry out his word. I think the member for Fassifern was right, but I do not wish to force this thing. There will be very little return from this railway, and I want to be sure that the Roma Town Council will take some of the responsibility. If the Minister is satisfied, all well and good; but I still have a feeling in my mind that the Roma Town Council should be bound down in a more definite manner than simply by a wire.

Mr. D. HUNTER: It will be a written agreement.

Mr. MANN: So long as that is absolutely clear I do not think the member for Fassifern wishes to push the matter further.

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

AYES, 27.

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Mr. Allan | Mr. Macartney |
| " Appel | " Mann |
| " Barnes, W. H. | " Morgan |
| " Booker | " Paget |
| " Bouchard | " Philp |
| " Brennan | " Rankin |
| " Breslin | " Swayne |
| " Crawford | " Thorn |
| " Forsyth | " Tolmie |
| " Grant | " Trout |
| " Grayson | " Welby |
| " Hodge | " White |
| " Hunter, D. | " Wienholt |
| " Lesina | |

Tellers: Mr. D. Hunter and Mr. Mann.

NOES, 25.

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Mr. Adamson | Mr. Mackintosh |
| " Allen | " May |
| " Barber | " Mulcahy |
| " Barnes, G. P. | " Mullan |
| " Bridges | " Murphy |
| " Collins | " O'Sullivan |
| " Coyne | " Payne |
| " Ferricks | " Ryan |
| " Foley | " Stevens |
| " Hardacre | " Theodore |
| " Hunter, J. M. | " Vawles |
| " Land | " Winstanley |
| " Lennon | |

Tellers: Mr. Hardacre and Mr. Ryan.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Resolution, as amended, put and passed.

Mr. Mann.]

NEW RAILWAYS.

MESSAGES FROM THE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of messages from the Council intimating their approval of the plans, sections, and books of reference of the following railways:—

Dalby to Jandowae;
Logan Village to Canungra;
Osakey to Mount Russell;
Tumoulin to Cedar Creek.

SAVINGS BANK ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INTRODUCTION IN COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER moved—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Government Savings Bank Act of 1864 and the Savings Bank Amending Act of 1882 in certain particulars.”

Mr. LENNON: On the initiatory stages of the Bill he expressed the hope that the Minister would widen the scope of the Bill to make provision to deal with unpaid balances, and the hon. gentleman might explain what he intended to do in that connection.

The TREASURER: He had forgotten for the moment that the hon. member had raised that point when the matter was previously before the House. The position, briefly, was as follows:—At the present moment every unclaimed balance was put carefully on one side—an account was opened for unclaimed balances, and they were always there for reference. After going into the matter, he found that the department thought that it would be altogether unwise that unclaimed balances should be advertised. It seemed to him that it would only perhaps encourage people who had no right to unpaid balances to come forward. Take the name of Smith, or Brown; probably there would be a number of Smiths or Browns, and altogether it would be unsatisfactory as far as the department was concerned. He gathered from the officers of the department that, after all, the unclaimed balances were very small items. As a matter of fact, people knew when they had money in the savings bank, and were pretty careful to see that they got the interest or the principal. With that information before him, he did not intend to include provision in the Bill on the lines suggested by the hon. gentleman.

Mr. LENNON was very sorry to hear the announcement of the Treasurer. It could not be argued from the mere fact that this had been the practice for a long time in regard to unclaimed balances that it justified the continuance of such a very bad practice. In all banks there was a considerable number of unclaimed balances, and he thought he had suggested a proper method of dealing with them—that they should be put into an account, which should be let stand for a while, but preparatory to their being absorbed, as it were, by the bank. public notification should be given that such balances were held. Even if a person had the misfortune to be named Smith or Brown—or even Barnes—there was no reason because he was

[Hon. W. H. Barnes.

so named he should be treated in that way. He thought Queensland would do well to make a departure in this matter.

The TREASURER: Don't forget that the money is there.

Mr. LENNON: It was unfair if there was £50 or £100 in the name of John Smith that his heirs should not have an opportunity of getting the money out. It would stay there if they did not afford an opportunity to the rightful owner to come forward to claim it.

Mr. MULLAN regretted that the Treasurer had not acceded to the request to make provision for unclaimed balances. The hon. gentleman said the matter was not of much account, but a sum of £4,343 was last year taken to the profit and loss account as unclaimed balances. The Auditor-General, in a memorandum issued in 1908-09 strongly recommended the Government to immediately legislate in connection with this matter. For about three years he (Mr. Mullan) had been in charge of the savings bank at the Towers, and many cases arose in which the relatives of deceased people knew nothing whatever about money being left in the bank. There was a widow woman whose husband was accidentally killed, and it was only by a mere accident some time afterwards that she found out that he had an account. They had heard a good deal from the Government of the proposed Commonwealth Savings Bank. How did they propose to treat unclaimed balances? Perhaps it might be some information for the hon. gentleman if he read the sections in the Commonwealth Savings Bank Act dealing with this matter.

The TREASURER: I have read them.

Mr. MULLAN: He would read them and place on record the fairness of the men who had been maligned. They read as follows:—

“1. All moneys to the credit of a depositor's savings bank account (not being a deposit on behalf of a minor), which has not been operated upon, either by addition or withdrawal for a period of seven years and upwards, shall be carried to an account to be called the depositors' unclaimed fund, and shall cease to bear interest.

“2. The Governor may, on proof to his satisfaction that any person is entitled to any money which has been carried to the credit of the depositors' unclaimed fund, direct payment thereof to him, and his receipt shall be a good discharge to the bank.

“3. A list of the amounts carried to the depositors' unclaimed fund and not claimed shall be published annually in the *Gazette*.”

The TREASURER: We do practically all that now.

Mr. MULLAN: He was sure they did not do it. Subclause 4 said—

“4. All money in respect of which a claim is not established within ten years after having been included in any published list shall cease to be claimable, and shall become the absolute property of the bank, but the Governor may, with the consent of the Treasurer, allow any claim after that period has expired, if he is satisfied that special reasons exist for the allowance of the claim.”

Those were very liberal clauses, and if the Government refused to include the unpaid balance provisions in their Bill, it would be some justification for the Commonwealth really taking charge of this business. Just to put the matter before the public, he

would read the memorandum which was issued by the Auditor-General on the 4th November, 1908, concerning unclaimed balances—

“The balance to credit of this account in the bank at date 4th November, 1908, is £18,424 5s. 8d.

“On the 30th ultimo the approval of the Honourable the Treasurer was given to the recommendation by the manager—that the sum of £10,439 1s. 10d., being the balance of the account on 30th June, 1912, less amounts subsequently paid to depositors, should be transferred to the profit and loss account, and that, in future, a yearly transfer be made to profit and loss of all amounts unclaimed for the previous six years.

“The period of six years has been chosen for these transfers so as to put them on the same footing as the unclaimed amounts in intestate estates, which are paid in to revenue under the 42nd clause of the Intestacy Act of 1877.

“The amounts referred to herein have really been unclaimed for a much longer period than six years, as they are not transferred from the depositors' account to unclaimed balances account until they have been inoperative for a number of years, and some of them date back over twenty years. Any claims made and proved, subsequent to this transfer, will be paid and be charged to profit and loss account.

“In connection with this matter, I may mention that the Savings Bank Acts are silent as regards “unclaimed balances,” and the transfer appears to me to be legitimate.

“At the same time, however, I consider that these depositors or their heirs should be given every opportunity of ascertaining that money lies to their credit.

“This could be done by publishing in the leading newspapers a list of depositors concerned, giving also the name of the office at which each account was opened.

“No further particulars need be given, and it might be considered sufficient if amounts of, say, £1 or over, or perhaps £5 and over, only, were advertised.

“In lieu of the foregoing, printed lists might be exhibited at the various Savings Bank offices in the State.

“In this regard, I might mention for your information that in England the Trustees' Savings Banks are in the habit of exhibiting in their offices lists of persons on whose accounts there have been no operations for a period of years. Some of these banks fix seven years as the period—others a longer time.

“In New Zealand, also, there is “An Act to provide for giving publicity to information relating to unclaimed funds and for other purposes.”

“Under that Act the banks have to keep an alphabetical register giving particulars of all unclaimed moneys in the colony in an account which has not been operated upon for six years.

“This register is open to inspection for a fee of two shillings, and a copy of every register is published annually in the *Government Gazette*, and the banks, within seven days after such publication, have to post to every person (to his last known address) whose name appears in such register as the owner of unclaimed money a notice specifying the amount of such money, and the fact that it is entered in such register as unclaimed money.

“If the money is still unclaimed after two years from the first publication thereof, it is paid, less expenses of the publication, to the Treasurer for the use of the public revenue; but, if a satisfactory claim is made afterwards on the Treasurer, the money may be paid over to the claimant.”

In reply to that memorandum, on the 12th

December, 1908, the Under Secretary, Treasury, replied as follows:—

“The Treasury,
“Brisbane, 12th December, 1908.

“Sir,—With reference to memorandum of the 4th ultimo relating to unclaimed balances account of the Government Savings Bank, forwarded by you B/C for the consideration of the Treasurer, I have the honour, by direction, to inform you that a Bill has been prepared dealing with the matter referred to.”

As a matter of fact, that Bill was prepared and was in print, showing that the Minister at the time believed that this was really an honest way of dealing with it. He did not know why such a change had come over the Government now. If the Government wanted money, that was not an honourable way to get it. It was money that in many cases belonged to widows and orphans, who were entitled to some consideration. It was a mean way of dealing with public finances that they should enrich themselves at the expense of some unfortunate individual who owned the money. They had the opinion of the Auditor-General, and that was entitled to some respect. The Auditor-General said that the balances belonged to nobody but those who owned them, and they had a right to have an opportunity to identify them. He had known specific instances himself where persons had been seriously inconvenienced through being in a state of impecuniosity, because they did not know that these balances existed. It was a fair thing, seeing what was done in other States and what was done by the Commonwealth, that this State should do something in the same direction. He hoped that the Treasurer would look into the matter, and would try to identify those who were entitled to the money.

The TREASURER: The Committee were unanimous in their opinion that nothing should be done to keep from those who were entitled to the money what rightly belonged to them. The letter mentioned by the hon. gentleman was unknown to him, and the discussion brought a new light on to the matter. Seeing that that was a preliminary stage of the Bill, he suggested that it should be left over until he had an opportunity of looking into the matter. (Hear, hear!) Possibly they might get over it by advertising in the *Gazette* from time to time.

Mr. LENNON: That was my suggestion.

The TREASURER: They had practically done all that the Commonwealth had done, with the exception of the advertising.

Mr. MULLAN: That is the principal thing.

The TREASURER: He hoped to be able to express himself more fully on the matter during the second reading, as that would be the proper time. The question of the Savings Bank was a matter of vital importance, and when he was moving the second reading he proposed to deal with the whole matter, more particularly with regard to the State Savings Bank and that of the Commonwealth.

Mr. HARDACRE: Will that be included in “certain particulars?”

The TREASURER: It could be done by a promise being made.

Mr. MULLAN: They should give consideration to the report of the Auditor-General, who considered that special legislation was necessary before they could claim

Mr. Mullan.]

the balances. If they passed the resolution, they would have passed the stage where they could get in the desired legislation. Would it not be wiser to postpone the carrying of the resolution until they could deal with the unclaimed balances?

The TREASURER: It will be done by instruction.

Mr. MULLAN: He was quite satisfied if the Minister was going to do it by instruction.

Mr. HARDACRE suggested that it could be done by the Treasurer inserting it in the Bill.

The TREASURER: It can be done by instruction.

Mr. HARDACRE: They did not know what the Bill was, as they had not seen it; but if they saw it, and noticed that it was inserted in the Bill, it would be all right.

Mr. LENNON suggested that the Committee could get over the difficulty by deleting the words "in certain particulars." That would leave the whole matter open on the second reading.

The TREASURER: He could not agree to the deletion of the words "in certain particulars." He assured the Committee that it could be done by instruction. If on going into the matter he found it was desirable to do anything in the way suggested—and he thought it might be—he would do it, but he was not prepared to delete "in certain particulars."

Mr. HARDACRE: He was voting for the resolution on the understanding that something would be included in the Bill. He only mentioned it so that it would not be said later on that they had accepted the resolution as it stood.

Mr. PAYNE: He did not want to delay the Committee, but the Treasurer had been speaking for half an hour and he had made no definite promise at all. (Hear, hear!) What did the Treasurer want to blind the Committee for? He said he would look into the matter, and if he found it was as the hon. member for Charters Towers pointed out, he would have it attended to. What kind of way was that to speak to an intelligent body of men? Why did he not say straight out, "No, I do not think you are right, and I will not alter it." It appeared to him that what the hon. member for Charters Towers said was correct. The hon. member had managed the whole of the Savings Bank business in Charters Towers, and instances cropped up which came under his notice of balances in the bank belonging to relatives of people who had died, and nothing was known about it. The Treasurer should assure the Committee that the unclaimed balances would be advertised in the *Gazette*. How many people in Queensland would see the *Gazette*?

The TREASURER: The *Gazette* was suggested by members opposite.

Mr. PAYNE: Now they suggested a newspaper. Did the Government want to steal this money? It was simply robbery to keep these balances. The whole thing was done in a tricky way, as they were not allowing the general public to know that that money was there. When people were killed or died their relatives knew nothing about whether they had money in the Savings Bank or not. They should get an assurance from the Treas-

urer that the unclaimed balances would be advertised in some newspaper, so that the general public could see them.

Question put and passed.

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

FIRST READING.

The TREASURER moved that the Bill be now read a first time.

Mr. HARDACRE: I did not take exception to the passing of the resolution, because it would have meant a delay of a [10.30 p.m.] day, but I would ask the Treasurer to put off the presentation of the Bill until to-morrow. If it is presented to-morrow instead of to-night, it will not delay proceedings, but the hon. gentleman can put into the Bill anything he likes. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that that is the technical way of getting over the difficulty. The Committee has agreed to the introduction of a Bill to amend the Savings Bank Act "in certain particulars." We do not know what those particulars are until we see the Bill; and if the hon. gentleman will put everything necessary into the Bill before he presents it to-morrow, it will be within the scope of the resolution agreed to by the Committee.

The SPEAKER: The particulars of the Bill have already been discussed in Committee, and the Bill has been presented; and the motion now before the House is—That the Bill be now read a first time, in order that it may be placed in the hands of hon. members. I refer the hon. member to Standing Order No. 243.

Question put and passed.

The second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty-eight minutes to 11 o'clock.

[*Mr. Mullan.*