

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1892

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 25 October, 1892.

Question Without Notice: Resignation of the Chief Justice.—Formal Motion.—Mineral Lands (Sales) Bill: Report from Committee.—Marsupials Destruction Bill: Legislative Council's Amendments; Committee; Recommittal.—Companies (Winding-up) Bill: Committee.—Messages from the Legislative Council: Fitzroy Bridge Bill; Church of England Lands Sale Bill.—Justices Act Amendment Bill: Committee.—Supply: Resumption of Committee: Committee.—Resignation of Member.—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

RESIGNATION OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I desire to put a question to the Chief Secretary with regard to certain statements which have appeared in the public Press referring to the resignation of the Chief Justice of Queensland. I want to know, first of all, whether the Chief Justice has resigned, and, secondly, if the resignation is absolute, and if not, upon what conditions it has been tendered? I would like to know also whether the statements in the Press have any further foundation than simply the letter addressed to the Chief Secretary, expressing an intention on the part of the Chief Justice on account of ill-health to resign at some future date, which intention, should Providence restore His Honour to the use of his mental and bodily faculties, may be altered or withdrawn?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—I received a letter yesterday from His Honour the Chief Justice, informing me, in pursuance of an intention he conveyed to me verbally some months ago, of his intention to retire on the pension to which he is entitled by law; and he has definitely fixed the time at which he will retire at the 13th February next. That statement is made definitely, and not dependent upon any conditions. I consider that it amounts to an absolute resignation from that date. The practice of fixing a future date for a resignation to take effect is quite common in the case of high judicial officers.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—May I ask the Chief Secretary whether that letter has been replied to by the Government, and whether they have accepted the resignation?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is not a matter for the Government to accept the resignation. The letter has been acknowledged.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: It is a contract.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We do not make contracts in such matters. In the meantime His Honour has asked for leave of absence on the ground of ill-health, which application will be considered at the next meeting of the Executive Council.

The HON. P. PERKINS said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to ask the Chief Secretary whether there has been any parleying between himself and the Chief Justice? We are entitled to more information than the hon. gentleman has given. The bald statement he has made is altogether at variance with what we have seen in the papers.

After a pause,

The HON. P. PERKINS said: Mr. Speaker,—I have got no answer to my question. Is the hon. gentleman unable or unwilling to answer it?

The SPEAKER: There is no question before the House.

The HON. P. PERKINS: I have asked a question.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member may ask a question, but it is quite optional for the Chief Secretary to answer it or not as he thinks fit.

The HON. P. PERKINS: Then I will make him answer it in another way, which will be much more effectual.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. BLACK—

That there be laid on the table of the House all papers and correspondence in connection with the removal of the Polynesian hospital at Mackay, and its appropriation by the Department of Public Instruction for State school purposes.

MINERAL LANDS (SALES) BILL.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEE.

Mr. MORGAN, as Chairman of Committees, presented this Bill as amended in committee.

Amendments read a first time.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. W. O. Hodgkinson), the amendments were read a second time and severally agreed to with a verbal amendment in the third amendment in clause 5.

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

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

On the Order of the Day being read for the consideration in committee of the amendments of the Legislative Council in this Bill,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. Tozer) said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that you do now leave the chair.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

On clause 5—"Qualification of members and electors"—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the amendment in the clause be agreed to. It provided that the resident owner or manager of a run on which were depastured 100 head of cattle and under 500 should have one vote; for 500 head and under 1,000, two votes; 1,000 head and under 2,000, three votes; 2,000 head and under 5,000, four votes; and 5,000 head and upwards, five votes; also, that where 500 sheep and under 2,500 were depastured on a run, the owner or manager should have one vote, and so on, up to five votes for 25,000 sheep and upwards. That simply meant that the representation should be in some proportion to taxation. He would have preferred that the maximum number of votes should not have exceeded three, as was the case under the Divisional Boards Act and the Local Government Act. Still any number would be an arbitrary number, and as it was not really a very material matter, he did not like to risk the loss of the Bill by disagreeing to the Council's amendment. It was, however, simply a voluntary Bill, and the Council probably thought that those who would have to meet the larger amount of taxation should have the larger voting power. Why the numbers should be fixed as they were, except upon the sweet will of the members of the Legislative Council, he could not distinguish. He did not see his way to make any alteration in the amendment, as he could give no reason for it except on the lines the members of

the Council had taken. He was prepared to accept the opinion of hon. members interested in pastoral matters, and who would be most affected by the measure.

Mr. NELSON said the Colonial Secretary had said he did not wish to risk the passage of the measure by disagreeing to the amendment, but he (Mr. Nelson) did not think the Council were so obstinate as that. If they could show good reasons for disagreeing to the amendment, he had no doubt the Council would listen to them and adopt any reasonable suggestion which might be made. The matter referred to in the amendment had not cropped up in this Assembly at all, and to a great extent he agreed with the principle affirmed by the amendment. It was entirely opposed to the principle of one man one vote, as it gave a man a vote according to the stake he had in the country. The suggestion of the Colonial Secretary that the number of votes should be limited to three, so as to assimilate the measure with the Divisional Boards Act, was a good one.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Where would you draw the line?

Mr. NELSON said there was no reason why they should not adopt the numbers according to the amendment, but with a limit of three votes. As it is, there was no end to it. Why should they stop at 5,000 head of cattle? There would be just as much reason in fixing the number at 10,000 or 20,000.

Mr. ALLAN said the amendment was a very good one, and he hoped the Committee would agree to it. There might be a difference of opinion as to whether there should be five votes or three; but the question of one man one vote did not arise, because, under the Bill, a man must have a stake in the country to the extent of 100 head of cattle or 500 sheep before he could have a vote at all. It would be rather an anomaly to provide that if one man had 100 head of cattle, and another 5,000, the first should have just the same voting power as the second, who would have to pay so much more under the Bill. He admitted that it was difficult to draw the line; but it must be drawn somewhere, and the principle of the amendment was right.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said he would like to hear some logical reason given for the amendment. The owner of 100 head of cattle or 500 sheep was to have one vote, and the owner of 5,000 head of cattle or 25,000 sheep was to have five; but the voting power of the owner of 250,000 sheep would be cut down to the same as the owner of 25,000, and no reason was given for it. The Colonial Secretary admitted there was no reason for the amendment, but accepted it because he did not wish to imperil the Bill. He (Mr. Morehead) did not wish to do that either, but he thought the members of the "revising chamber" should have given some definite reason for fixing the limit of the voting power as they did. The number of votes should be fixed at three, which would be consistent with other legislation on matters of that sort.

Mr. CALLAN said while 5,000 head of cattle might be a fair maximum, 25,000 sheep was not. There were many men in the colony who owned 300,000 and 400,000 sheep, and a man owning 25,000 was to have the same number of votes as they would have. In Victoria the comparison made was nine sheep to every head of cattle, and that was a far better comparison than that provided by the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said it occurred to him that a man owning 5,000 head of cattle and 25,000 sheep might under the amendment have ten votes. He was afraid he would.

Mr. FOXTON said he hoped the Government would not accept the amendment in its present form, because the maximum was really ten votes. The hon. member for Fitzroy very properly said that 25,000 sheep was comparatively a small number, and if they were going to differentiate the voting power at all, why place the man with 25,000 sheep on the same footing as the man who had ten times as many? He thought the old system would work much better. At all events, three votes would be ample.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was no doubt that the man who had 5,000 head of cattle and 25,000 sheep would have ten votes.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: And if he had 100 head of cattle and 500 sheep he would have two votes.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said directly they began to go in for differential votes they did not know where to stop. The Council desired to establish the principle that as they paid so should they vote. It was unfortunate that the amendment had been inserted, because the old system worked very well, and he was not aware that any complaints had been made that unsuitable men were chosen as directors. No doubt some other basis would have been advisable, so as to provide that no person should have more than five or three votes. He did not think, however, that the matter was of sufficient importance for them to alter the result that the Legislative Council had arrived at.

Mr. CALLAN said it was perfectly well known that some people owned 500,000 sheep, and to put them on the same basis as the owner of 25,000 sheep was a most unfair procedure. Why should not the man who had ten times as large interest as another be allowed additional voting power?

Mr. ALAND said the Colonial Secretary had given a good reason for not agreeing with the amendment. There had been Marsupial Acts in force for ten or eleven years, and no complaints had been made. Why should they disturb the old state of things for the new proposal, which did not give satisfaction to those who would be most affected by it?

Mr. ALLAN said the feeling seemed to be that there should not be more than three votes. He would suggest that for cattle the clause should read—100 to 1,000, one vote; 1,000 to 5,000, two votes; 5,000 to 10,000, three votes. Then for sheep, 500 to 5,000 one vote; 5,000 to 20,000, two votes; 20,000 to 100,000, three votes, or 50,000 and upwards three votes. That would give three votes to each proprietor.

Mr. FOXTON said it would be much fairer, instead of saying from 100 up to 1,000, to say 100 up to 2,000, and then to 5,000. It was a very large jump from 1,000 to 5,000.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that in deference to the wish of the Committee, he would withdraw his motion that the Legislative Council's amendment be agreed to, with the view of amending the amendment in the direction suggested by the hon. member for Cunningham.

Motion withdrawn.

The amendment was amended to read as follows:—

- One hundred head of cattle and under two thousand, one vote;
- Two thousand head of cattle and under five thousand, two votes;
- Five thousand head of cattle and upwards, three votes;
- Five hundred sheep and under ten thousand, one vote;
- Ten thousand sheep and under twenty-five thousand, two votes;
- Twenty-five thousand sheep and upwards, three votes.

Amendment, as amended, put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 12 was agreed to.

The House resumed; and the CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had agreed to the amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 5 with amendments, and agreed to the other amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 12.

RECOMMITTAL.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the Bill was recommitted for the purpose of further considering the amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 5.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the following words were added to the end of clause 5:—"But so that no person shall have more than three votes."

The House resumed; and the CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had agreed to the amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 5 with a further amendment.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council, with a message intimating that the Legislative Assembly had agreed to the amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 5 with amendments, in which they invited the concurrence of the Legislative Council; and had agreed to the other amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 12.

COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) BILL.

On the motion of the CHIEF SECRETARY, the House went into committee to consider this Bill in detail.

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 3, inclusive, passed as printed.

On clause 4—"Official trustee to be appointed liquidator, and meeting of creditors to be summoned"—

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the time within which the meeting of creditors should be summoned was printed in italics, and was fixed at not earlier than "six" days nor later than "twenty" days, from the date of the order for winding-up the company. He thought that the italics must be treated as blanks, and moved that the first blank be filled up by the insertion of the word "seven."

Amendment agreed to.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said he had some doubt whether "twenty" days was not too limited a time as the maximum period, as a great number of mining companies were registered locally, and the creditors might not be there for the purpose of sending in their proofs. He therefore moved that the second blank be filled up by the insertion of the words "forty-two."

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 5 to 19, inclusive, passed as printed.

On clause 20—"Enforcement of payment of calls"—

Mr. GANNON said he wished to congratulate the Chief Secretary upon the introduction of that clause. There had been a great deal of talk about contempt of court, and many reputable citizens had been arrested, with a chance of going to gaol for contempt of court, for neglecting to pay calls. He was very glad indeed to see the clause introduced, as it would put a stop to anything of that kind in the future.

Mr. POWERS said that he also could not allow that clause to pass without congratulating the Government upon it. The only reason the Bill was not being discussed was that it was one with which they could not find fault, and he was glad to see it going through. By the clause

providing for the appointment of a committee of inspection to assist the liquidator, and by clause 21, dealing with the costs of winding-up, the Government would earn the gratitude of all people interested in mining companies or liable for calls. He wished to draw the attention of the Chief Secretary to the amendment of which notice had been given by the hon. member for Kennedy, providing that no call should be enforced after the expiration of twelve months from the date of the commencement of the winding-up, unless an order of the court had previously been made. He understood that amendment was intended to meet cases in which companies appeared to be dead for some time, and when people thought they had paid up everything a new liquidator was appointed who took up the whole proceedings, and sent notices for calls three or four years after it was thought the matter had been settled. Another point to which he would direct attention was that while people took an interest in companies in which the directors had power to make calls of 1s. or 3d., when those companies got into the hands of a liquidator they might be given notice of a call of 5s. at once. The investors might be prepared for the first liability, but not for the second and unexpected liability. He would be glad if the Chief Secretary could meet those two objections in any way.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the two objections were contradictory, as if a limit was put upon the amount of the calls, and the creditors were to be paid in full, the winding-up could hardly be concluded in one year. He did not quite understand the amendment of which the hon. member for Kennedy had given notice, as a call could not be enforced at all except by an order of the court.

Mr. POWERS: He wants the order made within twelve months.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said that was not expressed in the amendment. It would never do to fix an arbitrary rule of that kind, as there might and probably would be litigation going on in connection with a large company, and it would not be known whether the money would be wanted within twelve months or not. He was satisfied that the appointment of a Government officer as liquidator, whose duty it would be to see that the creditors were paid as soon as possible, or the alternative of a liquidator elected by the creditors, would result in speedy winding-up.

Mr. FOXTON said that at the present time, in the case of an insolvent estate or estate in liquidation, a great deal of interest was taken by the creditors for the first few months and until the first couple of dividends were paid, and then they wiped the whole thing off as a bad debt. But the trustees had the run of those estates for a considerable time, and he feared that under that system, improved as it was, there would be a great evil in the getting in of the debts due to a company in the shape of calls. Only that day an instance had come under his notice in which, after a lapse of three years, a friend of his received notice of a call in connection with a company in liquidation for a debt to a bank that had been running on at interest during the whole of that time. A large majority of the persons who would have been good three years ago had gone in one way and another, and the result was that the whole of the calls would fall upon one or two shoulders. The amendment suggested by the hon. member for Kennedy might be a rather drastic one; but he could quite understand the necessity for placing some limit to the continuation of the proceedings in a way that was very unfair to men who might thus be called upon to pay up for a number of defaulters.

The HON. P. PERKINS said the difficulty was that a man who had shares in a company whose office was at Charters Towers or Croydon sold his shares through a broker, and though it looked all right he might get notice of a call upon them years afterwards, though he might not know then who held the shares. He thought that was a most unfortunate thing, and the Chief Secretary could remedy it if he gave his attention to it. He only woke up to that fact during the past six or eight years, and he thought a clause should be introduced providing for such cases.

Mr. BARLOW said he was sorry to hear that the limitation was not going to be introduced, because he should suppose, if an order of the court was got to authorise the proceedings, no possible harm could arise. It was a palpable hardship that the winding-up of a gold-mining company should be a veritable gold mine to the liquidator.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It will not be under this Bill.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 21—"Rules in insolvency to prevail in winding-up"—

The CHIEF SECRETARY said he would point out to the hon. member for Cambooya that the matter he referred to could not be dealt with in that Bill. It was discussed fully about three years ago, when they were dealing with the Companies Act of 1889. They were only now dealing with the winding-up of companies, but the hon. gentleman referred to the difficulty of getting shares transferred in solvent companies. He moved that the clause stand part of the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 22 to 24, inclusive, passed as printed.

On clause 25—"Percentage to be paid to consolidated revenue fund by official trustee acting as official liquidator"—

Mr. GANNON said he would draw attention to the rate of commission—5 per cent.—which was very high.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is the same as in insolvency.

Mr. GANNON said where large companies were concerned it was too large a commission.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It will be taken out of the official liquidator's hands then.

Clause put and passed.

The House resumed; and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments.

The amendments were read a first and second time, and agreed to; and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

FITZROY BRIDGE LOAN BILL—CHURCH OF ENGLAND LANDS SALE BILL.

The SPEAKER reported the receipt of messages from the Legislative Council, returning, without amendment, the Fitzroy Bridge Loan Bill and the Church of England Lands Sale Bill.

JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL. COMMITTEE.

On this Order of the Day being read, the House went into Committee of the Whole to consider the Bill in detail.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed as printed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY moved the insertion of the following new clause to follow clause 2:—

In the one hundred and sixty-second, one hundred and sixty-third, one hundred and sixty-fifth, and one hundred and sixty-seventh sections of the said Act the term "defendant" shall include any person against whom a warrant of execution is or may be issued.

The clauses referred to were all clauses relating to the issue of warrants of execution, and in each clause the person against whom warrants might be issued was spoken of as "the defendant." The proposed new clause was merely consequential on clause 2 of the Bill, which provided that warrants might be issued against any party liable, whether plaintiff or defendant.

New clause put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with an amendment.

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

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On this Order of the Day being read,

The CHIEF SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that you do now leave the chair.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

RAILWAYS—GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. T. O. Unmack) moved that £22,917 be granted for railways—general establishment. The item of £7,050 for clerks, apprentices, and operators showed a small increase, under the rules and regulations of the department, with which hon. members were familiar. Unlike the increases accruing under the regulations of the Education Department, those in question were not paid until they had been voted by the House; and they were chiefly to men in the lower ranks of the service. There was also an increase of £16 to be apportioned between two messengers, who had had no increase for three and a-half years. Under the head of "Chief Engineer" hon. members would notice an item of £5,752—of that amount £5,452 was previously paid from loan; but it was considered that as railway construction had virtually ceased those salaries should be paid from revenue. The decision, he was sure, would commend itself to the Committee. The only other increase was one of £20 in the travelling expenses of the locomotive engineer.

Mr. DRAKE said he wished to call attention to the petition presented to the House by Mr. Girling, asking for compensation in consequence of his services having been dispensed with. Mr. Girling had been some five years in the department, and he had received notice in October last that his services would not be required after the end of the year, owing to the cessation of work in the construction branch, in which department Mr. Girling had been a clerk. Compensation had been granted to a number of other officers in proportion to their length of service, but Mr. Girling had been treated differently, although there was nothing against him in the department.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that Mr. Girling's case did not come under the same category as those where compensation had been paid. Mr. Girling was not a regular employee, and only received a daily wage, whilst under the Cabinet minute compensation was only paid to those who had been on the regular staff. He had only been temporarily employed, although he had performed his work satisfactorily.

Mr. GANNON said that a large number of men had been turned out of the railway service almost at a moment's notice. Possibly the Commissioners were right in dismissing men if there was no work for them, but they should be given some compensation. He had just heard of a man named Kline, who had been dismissed without compensation after eighteen years' service; and there were dozens of such cases. In regard to Mr. Girling, it had evidently taken the department five years to find out whether he was on the staff or not. Those unfortunate men were entitled to some compensation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that the question of compensation entirely rested with that House. If they were willing to vote money for the purpose, the Commissioners would be delighted to pay it away; but, at the same time, compensation was not paid to wages men. He had made inquiries about Mr. Kline, and he had been informed that he had been a carpenter on daily wages.

Mr. ALAND: He was a sort of superintendent.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that it was inconvenient to have to overhaul the names of the whole staff. If any hon. member wished to refer to any man he should have given him notice of it, and he would have had all the information ready; but he could not answer any questions at a moment's notice, as there were some thousands of men in the department.

Mr. GANNON said that the hon. gentleman could not blame him for not having given him previous notice, because a short time ago, just as the House was rising, he had wished to give the hon. gentleman some information with regard to an assertion he had made, but something appeared to have ruffled the hon. gentleman's temper, and he refused to look at the papers. He was not going to run after the hon. gentleman with information, and he intended to ask any questions he chose.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that if the hon. gentleman would tell him where the man he referred to had been employed he could find the information in the report of the Commissioners, as the name of every man whose services had been dispensed with and the reasons were given in the report. It was hardly just to bring up such a matter, because the staff was under the control of the Commissioners.

Mr. ANNBAR said that the Secretary for Railways could not charge him with any injustice in bringing up the matter he was about to refer to. It was only through the hon. gentleman they could speak to the Commissioners. He was not going to refer to wages men, but to men who had been in the Chief Engineer's department for from eighteen to ten years, and with whose capacity he was familiar. When the Commissioners undertook to deal with those matters they should have endeavoured to mete out equal justice to all who received notice to leave the public service. But what did they do? They dismissed without any compensation men who had been for six, eight, ten, or twelve years in the Department of the Chief Engineer for Railways, among whom were the first class inspectors S. Sivyer, John Knott, senr., and John William Knott, junr. Why should those men not be entitled to some compensation, when about a dozen other men in the Railway Department received compensation on leaving the service—one man who had not been more than seven or eight years in the service getting as much as £170? There was not a scratch of the pen against the class of inspectors to whom he had referred during the whole of their service; and they certainly had a right to have their cases brought before

Parliament, especially as they had already been brought under the notice of the Minister and the Commissioners.

Mr. DRAKE said the remarks made by the Minister could not apply to the case of Mr. Girling, because that gentleman had already presented a petition to the House asking that his case should be taken into consideration. The Minister had stated that the matter was in the hands of the Committee, who could, if they liked, vote money for compensation. Surely the hon. gentleman did not suppose that he (Mr. Drake) was going to table a motion that the Committee should grant the paltry sum of £30 to the Government for compensation to Mr. Girling. That gentleman claimed that he was entitled to compensation, because it had been given to others under similar circumstances, and because it had been recommended in his case by the chief of the department, Mr. Stanley, who would scarcely have done so if Mr. Girling were not entitled to compensation according to the ordinary rules of the service. The Minister stated that Mr. Girling was only temporarily employed; but if a man was employed for five years, that was very much like a permanency. The mere fact of a man being paid a daily wage instead of so much per week, or per month, or per year, should not interfere with his claim for compensation when his services were dispensed with after a long period; and when the head of the department recommended that compensation should be granted, some very good reason should be given for withholding it before the Government sought to evade such payment.

Mr. BARLOW said they had got either too much information or too little. If Parliament, in its wisdom in the year 1888, handed over the railways body and bones to a number of gentlemen who were probably quite competent to carry them on, perhaps it would be better to vote the money for railways in one lump sum, and avoid all those little details which allowed members an opportunity of poking their noses into the administration of the department. The Minister had told the Committee that if they provided the funds compensation would be granted; but, unfortunately, the 18th section of the Constitution Act stated that the Legislative Assembly could not "originate or pass any vote, resolution, or Bill for the appropriation of any part of the consolidated revenue fund" to any purpose "which shall not first be recommended by a message from the Governor." So that the initiative of those proceedings evidently rested with the Government. If in every case a motion had to be tabled praying His Excellency to cause a certain sum to be placed on the Supplementary Estimates, such motions would be like leaves in autumn—innumerable. The Civil Service was a matter beyond finding out. Some officers were entrenched behind the schedules, and occupied a perfectly impregnable position; others had devoted their lives to the service of the country and got certain vested interests, and when a proposition was made a short time ago by the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Sayers, to attack their salaries, the Committee were told that to reduce those salaries would be to impose an income tax on the officials concerned. Then, the employees of the Railway Department were not technically Civil servants, and were liable to be dismissed at any moment. He never could see the difference between the faithful service of a man at per day and the faithful service of a man at per year, and he was quite sure that if the present or any future Government would submit a vote to provide reasonable compensation for men who were turned away at a moment's notice, perhaps burdened with small liabilities, it would be agreed to by the Committee.

Economy had been practised in other directions, and hon. members had cheerfully surrendered half their salaries.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: Not cheerfully. Ipswich made a stout fight against it.

Mr. BARLOW said he would not pursue the subject further now. He had drawn attention to it every year he had been a member of the House. He did not question the right of the Commissioners to dismiss men whose services were no longer required, but in many cases considerable hardship was inflicted. If he was one of the gentlemen administering the affairs of that department he should feel exceedingly grieved to have to sign a minute for the dismissal of a man in that way.

Mr. LUYA: But you would do it all the same.

Mr. BARLOW said he would do it in the discharge of his duty, but he would feel a sense of regret at having to do it.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: Probably the Commissioners feel the same sense of regret.

Mr. BARLOW said he hoped they did; and therefore he said it was the duty of the Government to make some provision for those cases. Of course the railway employees understood that their salaries depended upon the general prosperity of the colony, and when the country became prosperous no doubt it would be a pleasing duty for the Commissioners to place the wages in their department on something like the level they occupied in New South Wales. He did not want to say one word to annoy the Secretary for Railways, because he felt that that hon. gentleman had to explain and defend the doings of a department which he really did not administer.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he would like to know what private employer employing a man at daily wages for a month or a year or twenty years, would pay him compensation when he had no further need for his services?

Mr. NELSON: Plenty do.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he had never heard of any. It would probably not be proposed that compensation should be given in the case of a man employed at daily wages for only a month or so, and if compensation was insisted upon for daily wages men employed for twelve months or over the result would very likely be that the staff would be continually changed in order that the payment of compensation might be avoided. In that way no daily wages men would get permanent employment. He could not see where the claim for compensation in the case of daily wages men came in.

Mr. ANNEAR: You have already paid compensation to daily wages men.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he was not aware that any daily wages men had received compensation. The number of daily wages men who left the service during the year was something over 300, and if they were all to get compensation the amount required would be a sum that the Committee would not be inclined to vote.

Mr. ANNEAR said he trusted the Secretary for Railways would bring the facts he was about to state under the notice of the Commissioners. He had mentioned Mr. W. H. Knott, who had been discharged from the Chief Engineer's department. That man had received the following letter from the Chief Engineer, Mr. H. C. Stanley:—

"To whom it may concern,—

"This is to certify that Mr. W. H. Knott was appointed to this department in January, 1884, and promoted at the latter end of 1885 to inspector of concrete on construction works, and occupied that position to the end of last year.

"Mr. Knott proved himself to be an intelligent and competent inspector in the supervision of concrete, stone, and brick work, kept his books well, and is a reliable officer. I can recommend him for any similar employment."

The following was a list of persons who had been paid compensation for dismissal by the Railway Commissioners. The first, under the heading of draftsmen, was Mr. J. Ainscow, who had been getting a salary of £300 a year, and received £187 compensation. Then, amongst wages men, W. Farrington, who was getting 10s. a day, received £19 compensation; R. T. Shrigley, getting 10s. a day, got £13 10s. compensation; F. Rowling, 10s. a day, got £8 compensation; F. Matthews, 10s. a day, got £8; A. Czisz, who had been getting £4 a week, got £18 13s. 4d. compensation. Then J. Darker, whose wages were not given, got £13 compensation. A man named Lymburner, who was getting 10s. per day, got £6 compensation. T. A. Walker, 10s a day, got £34; J. P. Hennessy, 10s. a day, got £14 15s.; C. H. McCowan, 10s. a day, £12; Mr. B. Daveny, 10s. a day, £33 10s. Then, Mr. H. Shuttleworth, who had been superintendent of iron bridges at a salary of £416 a year, got £170; and a field assistant engineer, Mr. A. W. Fraser, who was getting £200 a year, got £70 compensation. That was an answer to the statement that no wages men got compensation. He wanted to know why all were not treated alike—why some men should get compensation when others who had been for years in the service of the department did not get one farthing on being discharged? A man who had been in his employ for five years, and though he had been in the employ of the department as an inspector for twelve years—and no better man had ever worked for the department—he was not allowed a farthing as compensation on his discharge.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD said he sympathised with the Secretary for Railways, who was discovering that what was sauce for the goose was also sauce for the gander. When the hon. gentleman was on the Opposition side of the House there was no member who was more captious in his criticisms of the administration of the departments by Ministers. The hon. gentleman did not seem to like it himself as well as he liked baiting a Minister. The hon. gentleman was now being subjected to the same process by the "whip" of his own party.

Mr. ANNEAR: I hope I have done my duty respectfully at all times.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD said he thought the hon. gentleman was doing his duty, and he only hoped the Secretary for Railways enjoyed it. At the same time he did not agree with the remarks of the hon. member; if he had any specific charges to make against the Minister with regard to any particular case, he should bring it forward at another time. He agreed with the Secretary for Railways that there was a great difference between men employed by the day and scientific servants of the State employed, say, in surveying. It was right that the department should get rid of daily servants if there was no work for them, although he did not say he would dismiss a servant of twenty years' standing without a moment's notice; and he was certain no such injustice had been perpetrated. He had had some railway grievances brought before him, but when he investigated them he invariably found that if he had been in the position of the Commissioners or of the Minister he would have acted as they had done.

Mr. PLUNKETT said he would ask the Secretary for Railways if the Government intended to take any steps towards constructing the railway line from Nerang Creek to the

border, which was only twenty-eight miles in length, or was there any probability of the line being constructed on the land-grant principle? It would, if constructed, give railway communication from Lismore to Bundaberg.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he could hardly imagine the hon. gentleman was serious, and he certainly felt he must know beforehand the answer he was likely to get. The money for the construction of that particular branch line was not on the Estimates, so that it was not likely to be provided for.

Mr. DRAKE said the only reason the Minister had given why Mr. Girling was not paid compensation was that he was employed on daily wages.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: He was not on the regular staff.

Mr. DRAKE said the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, pointed out that in other cases men who were employed on daily wages did receive compensation.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: The statement of the hon. member for Maryborough is not correct.

Mr. DRAKE said would the Minister inform him whether other gentlemen who were in the same position as Mr. Girling with regard to the terms of their employment were paid compensation?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said Mr. Girling's case was no exception to the general rule. He had been treated in exactly the same way as others in a similar position. He had made inquiries in reference to the assertion made by the hon. member for Maryborough in reference to the wages men receiving compensation, and he was informed that those men were regularly paid under the Estimates. They were on the staff, and were entitled to the compensation paid to them.

Mr. BARLOW said he could not exactly understand the doctrine that men were so much favoured by receiving notice. To receive notice of dismissal in these times was not a pleasing thing. If a man had served him for many years as a wages man, he felt that he could not dismiss him without doing something for him. The fact of a man having been twenty years in a service was an indication that he had behaved himself. He knew nothing could be done now, but it would come before the next Parliament, and probably some effort would be made to settle it. It was a question well worthy of consideration.

Mr. SAYERS said he sympathised with those who had to leave the service; but he did not understand why other people should be taxed to remunerate them. If men were employed by a private person under similar circumstances, the employer would say: "I must either pay these men compensation and go through the insolvency court, or not do it at all." The Railway Department was in a somewhat similar position. The Government had to tax the general public to give compensation. Very few men in the country could get employment for five or ten years from private employers continuously. He could not understand how hon. members could advocate the giving of compensation to every man who had been in the employ of the department for a certain time. Men entering the service of the department must know that they were not going to be kept on for ever; and yet hon. members seemed to think that when a time of depression came those men should be paid compensation at the cost of the general public, most of whom were just as badly off as themselves. If the Government were to be called upon to pay compensation for every person they dismissed, the question would arise whether it would not be better to keep them on.

Mr. BARLOW: Could not some half-time arrangement be arrived at?

Mr. SAYERS said that half-time would mean starvation to all. He believed the Commissioners had done nothing but what was fair, and he could not support any motion that every man who had been employed by the Government should receive compensation on his services being dispensed with.

Mr. BARLOW said that when he used the expression half-time he did not mean it to be taken literally. He wished to see if the general burden could not be distributed over the whole of the service, instead of falling on a few individuals who had committed no fault.

Mr. ALLAN said the entire question resolved itself into one of supply and demand. If a man entered into the Railway Department thoroughly understanding that he was to be paid so much per week, and that his services were liable to be dispensed with when there was no work for him to do, surely there could be no claim for compensation when that eventuality occurred, even through no fault of his own. There could be no grievance whatever in the case, because the contract they had entered into with the Government had been carried out.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that in all the cases that had been brought under his notice by men who had been dismissed for want of employment or otherwise, and who represented themselves as having a grievance—and he had gone carefully into every one of them—he found that the Commissioners had acted in a fair and straightforward manner. He had not found a single case in which any injustice had been done; no favouritism had been shown, but the same treatment had been extended to all. The hon. member for Ipswich seemed to be under an impression that men were dismissed at a moment's notice. Such was not the case. By the rules of the department every man was entitled to a month's notice, and in many instances more than a month's notice had been given to men whose services were dispensed with.

Mr. GANNON said he was glad to hear the last statement of the hon. gentleman, because it was not the opinion outside.

Mr. BARLOW said it was done under an arrangement made by the House in 1888.

Mr. GANNON said that when the Railways Act was passed there was no difficulty in voting a pension of £500 a year for the then Commissioner; but when it came to a question of men who for a few pounds a week had spent the best years of their life in the service of the department, they were allowed to be turned away at a moment's notice without any compensation whatever. That was most unfair. He wished to ask the Minister if a person named Mansfield was still in the department, and, if so, where he was at present employed?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said Mr. Mansfield was still in the department, and he hoped he would remain in it; but where that officer was at present situated he was not in a position to say.

Mr. BARLOW said there could be no doubt that the Civil Service Act and the Railways Act imposed certain conditions upon the old employees, who were to a certain extent quasi Civil servants. Those who entered the service now did so with their eyes open, and as they were under no compulsion to enter, of course they were bound by all the rules incident to the service. In old times, however, there had been a general idea, both on the part of the Government and of the employees, that every appointment was permanent during good behaviour.

Mr. GANNON said that it had always been considered that once a man got a Government appointment he was there for life during good behaviour. The Secretary for Railways deserved credit for looking after the public money, but the principle should be carried right through. Some of the men had been very hardly treated. They had worked in the department for many years, and considered that they ought to be kept on while they were able to work; and although there had been upwards of 300 dismissals during the year, many men had been taken on. He would now ask the hon. gentleman what position Mr. Mansfield filled at the present time?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said Mr. Mansfield was at the present moment in Brisbane. He was used as a sort of substitute in any possible position where his services might be utilised—for instance, when an officer was absent on leave—and he had proved a most useful officer to the department.

Mr. GANNON said he was glad to hear that they had got such a good all-round man in the department. He wished now, on behalf of the hon. member for Carnarvon, to bring under the notice of the Minister and the Committee a matter with regard to the refreshment-rooms at Wallangarra. It appeared that tenders were called before July of this year for the lease of the refreshment-rooms for six months, and the following persons sent in tenders—namely, P. Mayne, £140 per annum; C. McKenna, £174 per annum; and J. McCook, £124 per annum. No intimation was given that any improvements would be made in the refreshment-rooms, or that a lease would be granted beyond the unexpired term of six months which the then existing lease had to run; but it seemed that £245 was subsequently spent on the rooms, and that they were leased to Mr. Campbell without competition at a rental of £10 for the first six months, £50 for the next twelve months, and £60 for the succeeding twelve months. Was that a fact?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he had not papers in reference to that matter with him, but full information was given on the subject in the House a short time before in reply to a question by the hon. member for Carnarvon, so that the facts were, no doubt, stated correctly. The fact of the matter was, that there was no refreshment-room on the line about which there had been more complaints than there had been with reference to that at Wallangarra, and it was considered absolutely necessary that some change should take place. Hon. members would recollect the discussion which took place on the same subject last year. Tenders were called for the lease of the refreshment-room, and a man named Canny sent in a tender; but it turned out subsequently that the man who had been in charge all along had put that person forward, and was conducting the room in as disgraceful a manner as it was conducted previously. He then got notice to leave, and some men who were rivals and had always been disputing with one another, put in tenders at a price which it was utterly impossible could pay. None of those tenders were considered eligible, from the point of view that the tenderers were not thought to be the right men for the place. The decision of the matter did not rest entirely with the Queensland Commissioners; it had to be jointly decided and jointly paid for by the Commissioners of New South Wales and the Commissioners of Queensland. Their own Commissioners could not deal with the matter just as they liked. Both parties fully considered the matter, and the conclusion came to was, that in order that the travelling public from both colonies should be provided with satisfactory accommodation, the course which

had been adopted should be taken. Certain improvements had been made, and he had no doubt hon. members could bear him out in the statement that the refreshment-room at Wallangarra was now managed most satisfactorily, and he had every reason to anticipate that it would continue to be so.

Mr. GANNON said he had no reason to question the statement that the room at Wallangarra was now very well managed, but they should consider that the Commissioners took every penny they could out of the previous contractors. One man paid £200, and another £300, for it, and they gave as little as they could to the public because they had to give so much to the Commissioners, and the traffic was so small. Both the previous contractors were running one against the other, and that was how they came to pay so much. They had both asked for improved accommodation, which had since been provided, and no doubt if it had been provided for them they could have worked the rooms much better. He contended that in the case of the contract for these rooms the Commissioners had given a most undue preference, and it would be a very wrong and unfair practice if all contracts for railway services were let in such a way. If it had been known that the rooms were to be put in such a state of repair as they had been there could be no doubt that the Commissioners could have got a much higher price than they had got from Mr. Campbell. As Campbell was getting the rooms at such a low rate, he would like to ask if the public were going to get anything out of it in the shape of a reduced tariff? He was sure hon. members would agree with him that it would be better for the Commissioners to give away the rooms to a good man who would provide the public good meals at a low tariff of 1s., or something like that.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that, so far as he was aware, there had been no reduction in the tariff. It was all very well to say the Commissioners had shown an unfair preference in letting the contract. They were usually charged with extracting too much from the pockets of the people; but now it appeared that they did not extract enough. He might say that the two previous contractors would not have got the rooms no matter at what price they tendered, because they had both been tried, and both had been found considerably wanting. The Commissioners of both colonies had been sick and tired of hearing complaints from travellers of the way in which the rooms were kept; but now they heard no complaints at all, and surely that was something gained. The money spent on the rooms had been provided, half by Queensland and half by New South Wales. That the present arrangement was a liberal one for the contractor he admitted at once; but they would take good care to see that his duties were properly performed.

Mr. CALLAN said he had travelled over the railway a good many times, and before the last arrangement had been made there was no more disagreeable place to stop at than Wallangarra. The reduction of the tariff was not what was wanted by the travelling public, but decent accommodation. The Secretary for Railways had explained that half the expense of the improvement of the rooms was borne by New South Wales.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS : And they share the rent, too.

Mr. CALLAN asked what was the good of quibbling over such a matter? The last arrangement made reflected great credit upon whoever had made it.

Mr. WATSON said it was very nice to hear the Secretary for Railways taking the part of the Commissioners. Of course all matters in connection with the railways had been taken out of the hands of the House by the appointment of the Commissioners; but he could speak from experience with regard to what the Commissioners had done. If anyone who had a grievance against the Commissioners would call upon them he would find that he had been judging them rather harshly. One difficulty now was that if a man went to the Secretary for Railways he was referred to the Commissioners, and if he went to the Commissioners he was referred to the Secretary for Railways or to the Traffic Manager, and from him to the Secretary for Railways, and so on. While that was the case there was no getting at the bottom of any matter connected with the railways. He asked the Chief Commissioner what he would carry timber for from Caboolture or Logan to Brisbane, and he said, "Let me know the quantity you have to carry, and we will come to an amicable arrangement." That was at the time he took the contract for the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company's new wharf, and if he had succeeded in making the timber-getters agree he would not have been involved in a lawsuit. If ever he again took a contract he would not give a single timber-getter a contract, except on the condition that the timber was delivered by train, for the reason that he could always make satisfactory arrangements with the Commissioners for the carriage. A great number of farmers were crying out against the Commissioners, but if they would only put their heads together and use their brains, and go to the Commissioners and say, "We have one, two, or three trucks of produce, what will you carry it for?" he was sure they could make satisfactory arrangements. There would then be no complaints, and the whole of the grievances they heard so much about would be settled amicably.

Mr. CAMPBELL said the Commissioners had done right in giving the care of the refreshment-rooms at Wallangarra to the present caterer. In the past the treatment that travellers received was a disgrace to Queensland. He had passed through and paid 2s. for breakfast, and 2s. 6d. for what was called dinner, but he felt it would have been better had he not taken any; and the last time he went through he breakfasted at 10.30 in New South Wales, rather than take breakfast at Wallangarra. Even if the present caterer had been given the rooms rent free, that would have been better than continuing the state of affairs that had been going on for two or three years. Whatever might be said, he trusted the Commissioners would adhere to what they had done, because by that means the public would be treated better than they had been in the past.

Mr. GANNON said he quite bore out what had been said about the man who had the refreshment-rooms at present, but he complained of the way in which the contract had been given. It was a dangerous thing for such a system to creep into a large department like the Railway Department. When tenders were called, seven or eight times the amount now paid was offered, but the tenders were set aside, and the refreshment-rooms with their additional accommodation given to Campbell. He was glad Campbell had the contract for catering, because he now knew that the travelling public would be properly treated, and it was the Commissioners' duty to see that they were well treated. He could not speak too highly of the other servants of the Commissioners. Anyone who travelled in Victoria or New South Wales must notice the marked difference between the servants of the Commissioners in Queensland and

the railway servants in the other colonies. He thought it was a mistake to give contracts in the way that one had been given, unless the public received some special benefit; but if the Commissioners gave the refreshment-rooms free to a good man, and the public were treated well, they would do good work.

Mr. AGNEW said no doubt some change was very much wanted at Wallangarra, because the catering for the travelling public had been an absolute disgrace. When the Estimates were before them last year he brought the matter up, and pointed out that visitors from the other colonies were very much inclined to form their first impressions of Queensland by the reception they got at that station; but the reception was not in accordance with the general way in which they treated visitors. Of all the miserable places he ever had a meal in that was the worst. It was a perfect chamber of horrors. The food was badly cooked, and the beef seemed to be cut from as near the horns as possible. The travelling public would be very glad to know that they could expect much better accommodation now than in the past; and he congratulated the Minister, or the Commissioners, or whoever brought about the change. If they wanted the overland service to be better patronised they should afford passengers similar accommodation to what they could obtain on board steamships.

Mr. LITTLE said the hon. member for Toombul seemed to have forgotten that he had been told that the present arrangement was the result of the joint action of the Queensland and New South Wales authorities; and the result of the debate had been to endorse the action of those who were responsible for the change. All the travelling public would receive benefit from it.

Mr. BARLOW said all the Commissioners had done was to throw the extra rent into the improved accommodation of the place. The lessee paid less rent, and the public were supposed to receive better accommodation in consequence. The place was very bad last time he was there; but he was going up again shortly, and hoped to see it improved.

Mr. HYNE said the hon. member for Toombul had asked a question about the appointment of Mr. Mansfield that had not been answered. No reason had been given why that appointment should have been made outside the Civil Service. He was told Mr. Mansfield was not a professional man, and yet he was placed over professional men. He would say nothing to hurt that officer's feelings; but he held a most unenviable position in the Railway Department, and wherever he went trouble immediately followed.

Mr. AGNEW said he first met Mr. Mansfield some five years ago, when he was connected with a contract being carried out by Mr. Robb. He did not know whether he was employed by Mr. Robb or by the Government; but he was well spoken of, and he believed he was an engineer.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he had many times given the reasons for Mr. Mansfield's appointment, and the hon. member for Maryborough would find what he said in *Hansard*. He acknowledged that that officer held an unenviable position. He was sent to different places, and was always fortunate in being able to put his finger upon weak spots. He had been the means of saving many thousands of pounds to the Railway Department in finding out where there had been mismanagement. The Commissioners considered him a most valuable officer, and one whose services they would be sorry to dispense with.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said he hoped the hon. member for Maryborough would formulate his charges against Mr. Mansfield. If he could be proved to be incompetent, then he was occupying a position he should not; but no member of the Committee should get up and make an insinuation against a public officer unless he gave his reasons. The Secretary for Railways had given a perfectly satisfactory explanation.

Mr. GANNON said he believed Mr. Mansfield had very unpleasant work to do, and the Minister said the work was well done. Possibly it was well done; but it would be far better if they let the men working under the Commissioners know that there was a detective in the department.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: That is cowardly.

Mr. GANNON said it was all very well for hon. members to say it was cowardly. He was not afraid of anybody, and would say what he thought was the right thing. He was not going to be put down by Ministerial supporters sitting on the Opposition benches. The feeling in the department against Mr. Mansfield was widespread, and while travelling along the line he had been told certain things by men employed in the department with regard to that gentleman. It was a mistake to employ Mr. Mansfield as a detective on the line; or at any rate, if so employed, the fact should be known openly. He would ask the Secretary for Railways where those weak places were which Mr. Mansfield had found out, whereby thousands of pounds had been saved to the department?

Mr. HYNE said the hon. member for Balonne evidently knew nothing whatever about the subject before the Committee. He had asked the Minister a simple question with regard to Mr. Mansfield, but if pressed he would read something that would be very disagreeable to that gentleman.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: Why don't you?

Mr. HYNE said he had no wish to do so. It appeared now that Mr. Mansfield was employed to find out the weak spots in the department. What an admission to make? If the officers were not capable of finding out the weak spots let them be dismissed, and their places filled with others who were capable. There was a feeling of fear and dread the moment Mr. Mansfield made his appearance in any of the railway offices or shops.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said it was perfectly true that he did not know anything about Mr. Mansfield, whose name even he had not heard before; and that was the reason why he was anxious that the hon. member for Maryborough should formulate some charge against that officer, so that the Committee might be in a position to adjudicate fairly upon it.

Mr. HYNE: I do not want to do so.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said that until some distinct charge was made the Committee, as well as himself, would remain quite in the dark on the subject. Something terrible seemed to have occurred; but the hon. member declined to give them the particulars. How could the Committee arrive at a verdict on the matter until all the facts were before them? It was necessary to go a little further. They had been told that there was a detective in the service.

Mr. GANNON: He is supposed to be a detective.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD said the hon. member had first made a broad assertion, now they found that it was only a case of supposition. It seemed to be a fishing inquiry to discover whether there was or was not a detective of the name of Mansfield in the service.

Mr. GANNON said it was supposed all along the lines that the man was a detective in the employ of the department.

Mr. CALLAN said the hon. member might just as well say that an inspector sent round by a bank was a detective. The inspector was sent out to find the weak spots in the branches, and it was his duty to pay his visits when he was least expected. That was evidently what Mr. Mansfield was employed to do. Instead of making vague accusations that could not be answered, it would be far better to make some distinct charge against Mr. Mansfield, so that the Committee could deal with it. But neither the hon. member for Maryborough nor the hon. member for Toombul had pluck enough to do so.

Mr. BLACK said he hoped those hon. members would not keep the card up their sleeve much longer, but would let the Committee know what the charge against Mr. Mansfield really was. Each of them had admitted that, if pressed, they would make some charge at present unknown, and his desire was that the charge should be plainly stated, so that hon. members having once heard it could take the matter into consideration, and decide upon it one way or the other. But he would ask the Chairman whether the discussion was not somewhat foreign to the question before the Committee, and whether it would not more properly come on when the vote for the locomotive branch was moved?

Mr. GANNON said that he was willing to postpone the matter until they were discussing the next vote. But he had asked what that man had done which had been the means of saving thousands of pounds.

Mr. HYNE said that if the Chairman decided that the discussion was not in order, he would postpone the question until the next vote.

The CHAIRMAN said: I understood the hon. member for Mackay to address the question to the Secretary for Railways, and not to the Chair. If the question is addressed to the Chair, I am unable to say whether the discussion in regard to the officer in question is relevant to the particular vote before the Committee, which deals with the general establishment; but if Mr. Mansfield is an officer whose duties are distributed over the various railways, then any discussion upon him would be fairly in order on this vote. Not knowing what Mr. Mansfield's particular duties are, I am unable to say distinctly whether the discussion is in order on this vote.

Mr. BLACK said that if the discussion was in order, the two hon. members should disclose the nature of the charge against Mr. Mansfield, so that it might be fairly discussed.

Mr. GANNON said that he had disclosed it. The railway employees looked upon him as a detective, and there was a widespread feeling of distrust wherever he went. His reports were made *in camera*, and men did not know what charges had been made against them. He had asked the Secretary for Railways three times what particular services Mr. Mansfield had rendered.

Mr. HYNE said that he did not intend to make a charge against Mr. Mansfield. He did not know that officer, but he held a position which was anything but enviable. It was a pity that the Government should employ a man to perform such duties as those alluded to by the hon. member for Toombul. He had received a

document relating to Mr. Mansfield, but he would take another opportunity of bringing it forward. It contained no charge.

Mr. BARLOW said that one of the principal objections of the railway employees was to the manner of Mr. Mansfield's appointment. On 13th November last year he had asked the Chief Secretary, who had been acting for the Secretary for Railways, whether the 53rd section of the Railways Act had been complied with in appointing Mr. Mansfield. That section provided that before an officer was imported into the service, the Commissioners should certify, under their corporate seal, that there was no other person in the service fitted to occupy that position. The answer of the Chief Secretary, who had admittedly been imperfectly informed, was to the effect that Mr. Mansfield had been engaged temporarily as travelling inspector in the locomotive department on 26th February, 1890, at a salary of £3 a week. On the 22nd of July following, he had been appointed by the Governor in Council as one of the examiners of candidates for employment in the Railway Department, and had performed those duties for about six months. He had thereafter been again employed in the locomotive department, where he had done very good work, and had materially assisted in keeping down the expenditure, and that he was then in receipt of £200 a year. That did not in any way aver that the 53rd section of the Railways Act had been complied with. If that were cleared up, a great deal of the misunderstanding would be removed.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that he was informed that the appointment had been made in the first instance by the Executive.

Mr. GANNON said that that was evidence that he was not appointed under that clause. Would the hon. gentleman tell them of some of the good work which Mr. Mansfield had done?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that he was not going to defend every officer against whom a charge of incompetency or anything of that kind might be made. If any charge was made it would be strictly investigated; but it was ridiculous to ask what savings Mr. Mansfield had been the means of effecting. He could not carry the whole of the Railway Department in his head, and neither could the Commissioners, and he was not going to get the information. He had no fault to find with Mr. Mansfield, who was a most valuable officer, and he hoped the Commissioners would soon give him promotion.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD said that the hon. gentleman had made a mistake when he said it was not his business to defend the officers of his department. It was the bounden duty of a Minister to defend his officers. That was the duty of all others which devolved upon a Minister when defending his Estimates. Until a case was made out against a subordinate in his department he should champion his department. That was the position taken up by one of the greatest statesmen England ever saw—Lord Palmerston. If Mr. Mansfield was incompetent, or unjust, or dishonest, let it be known by all means; but it was not courageous to hurl those vague aspersions against a man who those who were most in touch with him said did credit to his position.

Mr. GANNON said not one word had been said against Mr. Mansfield, but against his occupation. The railway servants supposed that he was a detective, and that militated against the good service of the department. Would the Minister inquire whether Mr. Mansfield did good work as locomotive superintendent at Townsville?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said Mr. Mansfield did his work there entirely and completely to the satisfaction of the Railway Commissioners.

Mr. PHILP said he was in Townsville six months ago, and was told by a man who ought to know that if Mr. Mansfield had been there very much longer none of the engines would have been fit for use at all.

Mr. HYNE said when an hon. member brought a matter of that kind before the Committee he was immediately jumped upon by some member who took the part of the Civil servant. It was now admitted that Mr. Mansfield was a non-professional man, and he appeared to have been placed over some of the cleverest mechanics in the colony, which was considered an injustice. He (Mr. Hyne) had been requested to bring before the Committee another matter—a grievance under which timber-getters laboured with regard to the railway freight on timber.

Mr. BLACK asked whether a discussion of that subject was relevant to the question before the Committee?

The CHAIRMAN said: I understand that the hon. member for Maryborough desires to raise the question of freight charges, and, as that is common to the whole colony, I am of opinion that it may be discussed on this vote which deals with the "general establishment" and "general traffic manager."

Mr. HYNE said there was a fixed rate of 2d. per ton per mile for the carriage of timber, but what the timber-getters complained of was that if they sent 4 tons they were charged for 5 tons, and if they sent 5 tons, they were charged for 7 tons. It would almost seem as if the Commissioners had received instructions from the Government to "make money; make it honestly if you can, but make it;" and he desired to get an expression of opinion from hon. members as to whether it was necessary for the Commissioners to adopt that manner of obtaining money from timber-getters. He had about forty consignment notes in his hand, showing overcharges during the last two or three months, amounting on an average to about 15 per cent. One man consigned five hardwood logs weighing 5 tons 7 cwt., and was charged for 6 tons. Another man consigned three hardwood logs weighing 4 tons 9 cwt., and was charged for 6 tons. He had put two other logs on the truck but the stationmaster would not allow it to depart until they had been removed. Another man sent a truck load weighing 4 tons 14 cwt., and was charged for 6 tons. Surely there was no necessity to resort to such practices in order to swell the railway income? The next man sent down a load of 6 tons 14 cwt. and was charged for 7 tons. Another man sent a load weighing 4½ tons, and he was charged for 7 tons. He knew that the Commissioners thought they had good ground for those charges by the minimum weight fixed to be carried on the trucks; but the department could not supply the trucks required, and when they sent up big trucks, and the men could not load them, they were charged the minimum weight for those trucks. The consequence was that what the timber-getters had to study now was the size of trucks and not the requirements of the trade. If certain gentlemen sent down a load of 4 or 5 tons of wool and were charged for 7 tons there would soon be an outcry against the hardship of the charge, and the Secretary for Railways would be told that such a state of things should not exist. What was wanted was that the Commissioners should carry the timber at the schedule rate of 2d. per ton per mile, irrespective of what was on the truck.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he was surprised at the hon. member's demand. It was the question of the railway tariff over again in another form. Since the reduction in the tariff a few months ago he unhesitatingly stated that the timber industry had been more liberally dealt with than any other, inasmuch as greater reductions had been made in its favour than in that of any other. What the hon. member wanted was to be able to send any quantity of timber, irrespective of the truck required. The charges made for timber were at per truck, and each truck was supposed to carry a certain quantity. That could be seen from rule 16 of the traffic regulations. The timber-getters required to send large logs, and they required a large truck for the purpose, and it should be remembered that the trucks had to be brought back empty. There was no overcharge whatever in the cases the hon. member had referred to, as they only carried out what the rule required. What the hon. member really wanted was to have a reduction in the tariff for the timber trade.

Mr. HYNE: Nothing of the sort; I utterly deny it.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that was exactly what the hon. member desired, as he wanted the charge to be in accordance with the weight of timber sent, and not according to the truck, as provided for in the rules of the department. If there were any cases of overcharge outside the rules they were departmental matters, which could be rectified upon application to the department.

Mr. HYNE said the hon. gentleman had not stated the facts, as he had not been asking for a reduction in the tariff on timber. The matter did not affect him at all; but it was a serious hardship to the timber-getters. Every timber-getter would ask for 4-ton trucks if he could get them, but they could not, and when they were supplied with the eight-wheeled trucks they considered it a hardship to be charged for a 7-ton load when they only sent down 5 or 6 tons of timber. One man was charged an overcharge of £1 10s. on one truck of timber. When he was told that, he admitted it was a grievance, and he asked to be supplied with the consignment notes in order that he might bring the matter before the Committee, as an application to the local authorities for redress had not been granted. The Commissioners knew he was to bring the matter up that night, and he asked now whether it was fair that a 4-ton load should be charged as a 6-ton load? It made a great deal of difference where the timber had to be carried a long distance, and some was being taken to Maryborough now from this side of the Blackall Range. The regulation the hon. gentleman read should be altered, and the timber carried at the schedule prices.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD asked whether wool or timber was *per se* the better paying traffic?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Wool, of course.

Mr. HYNE said he was speaking of timber carried per rail, and the timber trade was a very good paying trade to the department, as the timber was loaded by the timber-getter and unloaded by the millowner, and the department did not spend one penny in labour upon it. No doubt hon. members interested in wool would be calling out for the sympathy of the House before the session was over.

Mr. POWERS said he knew that the complaint made by the hon. member for Maryborough was a great cause of grievance with the timber-getters. The question was not whether

the wool traffic paid better than the timber traffic, but whether the wool growers would not complain if they had to pay upon more wool than was carried by the department. They would be the first to complain; and their complaint would be heard sooner than that of the timber-getters. He would direct the attention of the Secretary for Railways to one case quoted by the hon. member for Maryborough, in which a man loaded a 6-ton truck with 6 tons of timber, and he was compelled to take some logs off, as that was considered too much for the truck to carry; and yet he was charged for a 6-ton load. That was not fair. He thought, in such cases as the hon. member for Maryborough mentioned, it was not fair to make those charges.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he quite agreed, if such were the case, it would not be fair. He was not in a position to contradict a one-sided statement made by a man who might be mistaken. One side of a story was good until the other side was told. He did not say the statement was incorrect, but he did not think it was likely to be correct; probably there were circumstances which would put a different aspect on the case. He quite admitted if a man was charged for a truck of a certain weight, and he chose to put that weight on, he should be allowed to carry it.

Mr. ANNEAR said he had already raised the question of the payment of compensation to certain persons on leaving the Railway Department and not to others, and he had read a document on the subject; but the answer given to him by the Secretary for Railways was tantamount to saying that the statements contained in the document were absolutely untrue. Now, he would refer to one name in the document that had come under his own observation. The gentleman he referred to, Mr. Sivyver, had been for twelve years inspector of wooden bridges in the Southern division. Not one word could be said against that man's qualifications, and no more faithful officer had ever served the country. There was also a gentleman who was chief superintendent of iron bridges, Mr. Shuttleworth, who had been for four years in the employ of the Government. Mr. Shuttleworth was told there was no more work for him, and he received £170 as compensation for loss of office, whilst Mr. Sivyver got nothing at all. The figures he had read before were supplied to him by the men themselves, and no hon. member could come to any other conclusion but the one he came to—that the answer given by the Commissioners through the Minister was that his statement was untrue. No man could say a word against Mr. Sivyver, who was a good colonist and tradesman, and he had seen a letter from the Chief Engineer stating that no man in his department had more faithfully done his work than he had done; yet that was the way in which he was treated by the Commissioners! If a rule was made that no man should have compensation, and all were treated alike, no complaint could be made; but he had given the names of persons who had been treated differently, and those men would, no doubt, supply the people of the colony through the Press with full particulars, to show that the statements he had made were perfectly true.

Mr. GANNON said when Supply was on about a fortnight ago he spoke with regard to the losses of the department through the action of certain officers, but as the matter he wished to refer to was in the hands of arbitrators he would allow it to stand over. He wanted now to read an extract from the Auditor-General's report with regard to their railways, or one railway in particular. He had a special reason for reading it, because he wanted the

country to take notice of it. The House was well informed about the business, but he wanted the country to know a little about it and see how money had been expended. He would quote from the second annual report of the Auditor-General, Appendix E:—

“EXTRACT FROM REPORT BY MR. J. A. PETERSON, SENIOR AUDIT INSPECTOR, ON THE EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS, DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS.

“The most striking item in the expenditure is the amount paid to John Robb, under the contract for the second section of the Cairns-Herberton Railway, which is as under—

Amount of contract	£290,984	3	0
Amount already paid	874,078	16	11
Excess paid	£583,094	13	11.”

This was what he wanted hon. members to take special notice of—

“Interest paid	£5,426	15	8
Costs paid	900	0	0
			6,326 15 8

Total excess	589,421	9	7
Add amount of contract	290,984	3	0

Total paid £880,405 12 7.”

The report went on to say—

“In addition to this, the contractor has put in a further claim for the sum of £262,311 9s. 8d., which the Government decline to pay, and it is to be submitted to arbitration.

“The Commissioners resisted the payments of claims under certificates 47 and 48, and the contractor commenced an action at law against them for the amount of these, with interest added—£104,697 7s. 5d. This action, however, was settled before trial, by payment in full, with interest and costs added, as shown above.” That was the first chapter. The next one would follow by-and-by.

Mr. SAYERS said he wished to know when the lavatory carriages that were being constructed would be ready, and on what lines they would be run? There was a long line from Townsville to Hughenden, a line that paid very well; and the people travelling on that line looked for a fair amount of accommodation. Some of the present carriages were without shades or blinds.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said there were eight lavatory carriages under construction, and some of them were just about finished. Six were intended for the Southern and Western Railway, one for the Maryborough line, and one for the Central Railway.

Mr. SAYERS said they were told last year that lavatory carriages would be obtained. The line to which he had referred was the best paying line in the colony, and it was very hard that fair accommodation should not be provided. If the line were not paying the Commissioners might have some excuse for not putting on more carriages. He was told that it was intended to send some of those lavatory carriages to the North, but now it appeared that there was not one for the North. The fact of the matter was that the Commissioners were continually being worried by Southern members, whereas the Northern members seldom troubled them.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he had consulted with the Commissioners; and every effort would be made to let the Northern line have one of those carriages if possible.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE said he was of opinion that the provision proposed to be made was wholly inadequate to meet the requirements of the travelling public. He suggested last year that if the Commissioners had not the necessary funds to enable them to construct a sufficient number of lavatory carriages, provision should be made for the accommodation of passengers in the inexpensive mode adopted on the New South Wales lines. The present lack of provision did not reflect credit on the Queensland railway system.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD asked whether it did not strike some hon. members that it would be advisable to get those lavatory carriages constructed outside the colony, seeing that it took such a long time to construct them in the colony? Knowing the wants of the North, and bearing in mind the fact that the North, to a great extent, did not sympathise with the present tariff conditions of Queensland, he thought it would be well if the Government would take steps to have carriages constructed in the mother country or in America to meet the requirements of the North. It was stated that possibly one carriage might be sent to the Northern Railway, which was one of the best paying lines in the colony; but why should travellers on that line suffer discomfort because those carriages had to be made at the workshops in the South? That was a clear example of the folly of protection in Queensland at the present time, and he commended the matter to the attention of the strong protectionists in that Assembly. It was protection run mad; and the people of the Central and Northern parts of the colony would not submit to it much longer. It was the bounden duty of the Government, if those cars were a necessity, to have some imported; and he hoped that what he had said would have some effect on the Secretary for Railways, who was at one time—and was still, he hoped—an ardent freetrader.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he did not wish to intimate that the Government could not get carriages built in sufficient numbers, because they could; and the price and finish were more satisfactory than those of the imported articles. The lavatory carriages were not to replace all the carriages, but there would be one attached to each train. They had not sufficient money just now to get many of those carriages built. There were eight being built at present, and they would be delivered before long.

Mr. LUYA said the Northern lines were entitled to better rolling-stock. He travelled from Townsville to Hughenden lately, and he was sure the carriage he was in would not be tolerated down here, although the climate was more temperate. He felt very sorry for a woman and child who were there, because the carriage was like an oven. He was sure the Southern members would not have remained as quiet on such a subject as the Northern members had been.

Mr. BLACK said he had heard the explanation of the Secretary for Railways in regard to the carriage of timber, and thought it should be paid for per ton, and not by truck load. He had a way-bill in which he saw that 5½ tons were charged as 7 tons, and 6 tons 13 cwt. were also charged as 7 tons. It was like buying 10 lb. of goods from a shop, and being charged for 12 lb. In another case 6 tons 8 cwt. were charged as 7 tons, and in another 5 tons 6 cwt. as 6 tons. That sort of thing greatly increased the cost of carriage. The Secretary for Railways might say that they were only carrying out the regulations; but those regulations were framed by the department, and were not Acts of Parliament. The hon. member for Maryborough was justified in saying that the department charged for services that were not performed. They ought to charge per ton per mile, irrespective of the truck that was sent. The Secretary for Railways should put himself in the position of the timber-getters, who were charged an extra 40 per cent. for reasons that were not very intelligible to them. He hoped the department would alter the regulations so that people who used the railways would only pay for the services actually performed. It was quite evident that the timber-

getters really did not know what it was going to cost them to send timber to the nearest saw-mill, because it depended upon the size of the truck that was sent to them.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said to deal with the question they would have to go back to the commencement of the present system. Some years ago Parliament decided wisely to appoint three Commissioners to manage their railways, and he maintained that those appointments had given satisfaction to the colony. By the serious logic, not of facts but of Treasury receipts, they found that although they had undertaken the management of the railways at a time of great depression—which was moving away, but had not yet gone—they had worked the department in a manner which redounded to their credit, and which showed that the system was a good one. They were asked by perfect tyros in the business—including the hon. member for Mackay, Mr. Black—to revise a tariff which had been arrived at after very grave consideration, and after the Commissioners had exhausted every means of information at their disposal. He admitted that, no matter how perfect a system might be devised, imperfections might be found in it by a body of men, some of whom were personally interested in the question; but before casting any strictures on the Commissioners hon. members ought to be very sure of their facts. No doubt the objections of the hon. member for Mackay would be completely answered by the Secretary for Railways. But timber was not the only article carried on the railways. For the last twenty years the firm with which he was connected had had a great deal to do with the carriage of wool by railway, and he asserted unhesitatingly that no Minister could possibly have facilitated the development of the colony in the direction of bringing wool from the interior to Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville, than the present Railway Commissioners had done; and they had been able to do that because they were more closely in touch with the mercantile community than any Minister could possibly be. And they had done equally good work in other directions. The Government of which he was a member had the first to do with the present Commissioners, who worked hand in hand with them for the good of the State, and he believed the present Secretary for Railways would admit that equally valuable results had accrued during the time he had held office. What was the use of splitting straws, for that after all was what they were doing? The question under discussion was entirely of a departmental nature, and one to be settled between the Commissioners and the Minister. He did not think they ought to discuss such small matters on the Estimates.

Mr. HYNE: It is not a small matter to those concerned.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said he admitted that; but it was a matter that ought to be settled outside the Committee. If every objection—every paltry objection he might say, as far as the general public were concerned—to the railway tariff was to be discussed by Parliament, the lash would be endless, and the last state of things would be worse than the first. They had at the head of the Railway Department a body of capable business men, who had done their work loyally and justly, and who, if they saw any possible injustice, would speedily correct it. He had absolute confidence in their justice, integrity, and loyalty, and he believed they were doing all they could not only to make the railways pay, but to show to the English public that the colony had in many of its railways a valuable and increasing asset.

Mr. BLACK said that he had not in any way endeavoured to impugn the ability of the

Railway Commissioners. On the contrary, he endorsed every word the hon. member for Balonne had said as to the ability they had displayed in reforming the administration of the department. At the same time, he did not deprecate such a discussion on the general principles of the railway management, as the Commissioners, who were present, would get ideas which they might not otherwise have heard, and which might bear fruit. What he had referred to was a matter of business. If anyone were to buy 7 lb. of beef he would not expect to be charged for 10 lb. He testified his appreciation of the efforts of the Commissioners to put their railway system on a satisfactory basis. Hon. members on that side exercised their privilege of criticism. It was not done in a hostile spirit, but with the desire to improve the government of the country.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that there was no injustice done to anyone in regard to the carriage of timber, and he would explain the matter. There were two rates chargeable for timber. The one rate was at per truck load, with a certain minimum in the truck to be charged for, and the other rate was at per ton, which could be availed of by anyone. The rate at per truck load was under what was called the B rate in the new tariff, and the rate at per ton was under the first-class rates. For fifty miles, for instance, the B rate at per truck would be 9s. 8d. For the same distance at per ton, it would be £1 1s. 8d. Anyone shipping timber could get a truck, and even if he had to pay for a small quantity over and above the actual weight he sent in the truck he would still effect a considerable saving.

Mr. ALAND said that there might be something in the contention of the hon. gentleman if the person who sent the timber had the choice of trucks; but if a man wished to send 4 tons he was told he would have to take a 6 or 7 ton truck. That was the objection taken by hon. members who had spoken. If a man wanted to send 4 tons, and the department had not a 4-ton truck, the department should be at the loss.

Mr. AGNEW said that one point which had to be considered was the length of the timber. It would be useless for a person applying for a 4-ton truck in order to send timber even 20 feet in length, as the longest four-wheeled truck was only 14 feet. They had only a few four-wheeled trucks in the colony, which were old-fashioned, and had come from England. None had been made in the colony for ten or fifteen years. He was interested in the timber industry, and he had experienced difficulty. He had proposed a solution of the difficulty to the Chief Commissioner, and that gentleman had asked him to call at his office and put his views in writing. He had not done so, and to some extent he might be considered as a partner in the blame, as the grievance might have been obviated. The time taken up by the discussion was not wasted. Another point which he was surprised had not been alluded to was that the new tariff, instead of encouraging the sawmillers already established on the railway lines, practically strangled them, and was quite in favour of those who, like the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Luya, had their mills on the river banks. All the riverside sawmills got their log timber down by water, and being situated close to the city delivered the sawn timber to their customers by drays, so that the Railway Department derived no revenue from them. The sawmills situated on the railway lines throughout the colony had been asked to pay an increased rate upon log timber, and a very considerable increase upon the freight for sawn timber, with the result that their trade

had entirely left them and gone into the hands of the riverside millers. He thought that the timber rates should be restored to what they were originally. If the Commissioners could see their way to encourage sawmillers whose works were established on railway sidings they would certainly get an increase in the income from timber traffic. At the present time, if a mill situated ten miles from the city had to supply 100 feet of timber 24 feet long, at a place distant five miles from the mill, it would cost 18s. or £1 to send it by rail. That timber would be sold at the mill for less money than the Railway Department were asking for freight, and of course it was delivered by drays, and the freight was entirely lost to the department. Even in cases where persons had spent £400 or £500 on a siding, as he had done, the timber was carted by drays because of the heavy charges for railway carriage.

Mr. BARLOW said farmers and firewood-getters could not understand that minimum rate question any more than timber-getters. He was not prepared to say that the system was wrong, because he had not sufficient knowledge to express an opinion on the subject; but the fact was that farmers could not understand why, when they sent a certain quantity of produce, they should have to pay for a greater quantity, and there was considerable dissatisfaction over the matter. Some time ago persons engaged in the firewood trade made a complaint to him about the same thing.

Mr. HYNE said the Minister had stated that timber-getters had the choice of sending their timber under two schedules, A and B. Such was not the case, as they could only send their timber at so much per ton or so much per 100 feet, so many 100 feet being reckoned to the ton. If timber was sent under schedule B it must be sawn timber, and not exceed 18 feet in length. Not long since one of the men to whom he had referred had the pole of his waggon broken, and telegraphed down for a new pole 18 feet long. It was sent on an empty truck which he was to load. The distance was about forty-five miles, and the charge made for taking up the waggon-pole was £2 5s. He had not brought forward that matter with any intention of disparaging the Commissioners; but he thought, as the representative of an important constituency, he was justified in bringing such a grievance before the Committee. He did not care whether it pleased the Commissioners or not, and though as gentlemen he respected them highly, he would give his vote, or fifty if he had them, to do away with their office. There had been some pooh-poohing of the timber industry, but he could say that a couple of firms in the Maryborough district paid the department about £10,000 a year for the carriage of timber. They were entitled to some consideration, as were the hundreds of men living by the industry. Before he sat down he wished to refer to another matter. A gentleman named Booker, who was in the habit of travelling with cattle from the Maryborough district to Sydney, had what was known as a drover's pass. The pass was a second-class one, and Mr. Booker, being desirous of getting into a first-class carriage at Brisbane, offered to pay the difference between the first and second-class rates, but his offer was refused. He understood the difference was 6s., and he had thought the Commissioners were desirous of swelling the railway revenue. Yet a railway official refused to take the extra 6s. from a man who could have travelled for nothing, but wished to travel first-class. The only reason he could suggest for the action was that perhaps the Commissioners had in their minds the kind of drovers they met with in the old country. He would

like the Secretary for Railways to say whether the officer who refused Mr. Booker's offer exceeded his duty or not?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that such a case had never occurred within the knowledge of the Commissioners, and he could say nothing about it, as he had no knowledge of the circumstances.

Mr. HYNÉ: And you treat it with contempt.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have given you an answer, and I can do no more.

Mr. GANNON said that he wished to bring under the notice of the Secretary for Railways and the Commissioners a letter which appeared in a Victorian paper on the subject of railway management, which he thought was particularly applicable to Queensland. He would only read a portion of it, and hon. members would do well to listen to it. The writer said—

"These desired and easily attained results will not be accompanied by any reduction whatever (but will be accompanied by an increase) of the wages of the toilers. These results can be accompanied by using our State railroads on a system conformably to what prevails in other of our State departments. In a word, let the general revenue bear the whole of the burden of the railway loans interest. Let the railroad charges cover nothing but the working expenses; exclude the interest. Adopt this plan, courage is infused anew into the community as a whole, production is immensely stimulated, and confidence is restored. Of course it will be objected, but how about the interest, it must be paid? Certainly the interest must be paid, but the whole of it must not fall on the producers, it must come out of the revenue. But then, it is further objected, to do that the revenue must be increased to meet the new burden. The answer is, it will not be necessary to add to taxation, because the increased 'profitable production' resulting from this great change means and includes increased wealth, increased purchasing power, and consequent enormous swelling of the revenue, more than enough to cover the interest over and over again. I venture most strongly to urge that the true use of our railroads has been of late woefully misconceived. Adopting readily, too readily, a phrase, 'the railroads must pay,' our politicians have failed to grasp what the phrase really means. The meaning generally accepted has been that the railroads must earn both interest and working expenses, and when that has been accomplished then they have been made to pay. But is that the true meaning? Is that a satisfactory result? Railroads may earn all that and yet have absolutely failed of their true use. The result may have been achieved, and yet the producers have been impoverished by the heavy railroad charges. No man labours except with the hope of improving his condition; it is the hope of reward which sweetens all labour. If, then, the result is the reverse of what is hoped for, is production under such circumstances stimulated? The railroads must be made to pay in a sense rightly understood. Do they pay if they fail to develop the country to its utmost limits? If our railroads earn interest in addition to working expenses, in what respect do they differ from a private railway? Railroads owned by shareholders are purely to enable them to earn interest. But the State railway rightly used has to serve higher purposes—purposes of State development. The doctrine that the railroads must pay in the sense of late insisted on is absolutely fatal to the development of Victoria."

That letter was signed "David Gaunson," and it bore out a great deal of what had been said on the Estimates that evening.

Mr. NELSON said he had been listening with some interest to the debate, and thought to some extent there was a misapprehension in the minds of the public as to the functions of the Commissioners and the Government. If, as had been argued, they were to take into consideration the lease of refreshment-rooms, the tariff on timber, and a whole lot of details, then they had better take into their hands the management of the railways—and then God help the colony! They could not possibly do it, and the whole spirit of the Railways Act was to do away with such details being in the hands of the Committee. Any matter connected seriously with the public in-

terest the Committee ought to deal with; but they should not go into small details. They had nothing whatever to do with the Commissioners. They had to deal with the Minister, and could abuse him as much as they liked; but he had always deprecated discussing any Civil servant and his actions when he could not defend himself. The Ministry were superior to the Commissioners, and if the Commissioners recommended even a by-law which was contrary to the public interest it was a matter for the Ministry to take in hand; and they had further power if a by-law was detrimental to the public interest to repeal it. What was the use, then, of bringing all those comparatively serious charges against gentlemen outside the House? Why not attack the Government? When the Railway Bill was before the House in 1888, there was a clause introduced into it to this effect—

"It shall be the duty of the Commissioners to maintain the railways and all works in connection therewith in a state of efficiency, and to work the same in such manner as will best conduce to the general public benefit."

That remained in the Act; but there was a further part of the clause in the original Bill which said—

"The promotion of settlement and the development of the industries of Queensland."

The very same gentlemen who were indulging in serious criticism objected to that clause. He objected to it himself, and he agreed at once to eliminate it, for the simple reason that the Commissioners were not politicians or statesmen. They had a certain duty to perform, and must stick to it; and if there was anything that militated against the public interest it was the duty of the Government to step in and see that it was corrected. If the Government did not step in it was quite competent for the Committee to make a charge against the Government who are responsible to the House, but not against the Commissioners. He thought the public were satisfied the Commissioners had done their duty well; but he could easily understand old members, finding their patronage with regard to the railway service done away with, taking up grievances. He did not sympathise with them. The corruption that existed before the Commissioners came into office was such a crying scandal that it was time it was done away with. As far as the Railway Department was concerned the Commissioners had to stand a lot of blame, and so long as it was given outside the House he did not object. They had to stand it all from the public, but he wanted to see what reason there was for hon. members bringing those charges forward on that particular vote.

Mr. GANNON: This is our only chance.

Mr. NELSON said that if there was a grievance, if the department was not being worked in accordance with the public interest, the Government were to blame, and the Government should be attacked. But he was not aware that the Government had been asked to take action in any particular matter and had refused. As to any man having been dismissed without compensation, he did not think that was a matter of public policy, and he did not see why it should be brought forward on that vote.

Mr. DRAKE: We say there should be fair play.

Mr. NELSON said the matters that had been introduced were irrelevant to the vote, and the best thing hon. members could do was to let the vote go and get on with business.

Mr. GROOM said that if the contention of the hon. member who had just spoken was correct, he would ask what was the use of hon. members

attending in that Chamber at all? Surely they were bound to comply with the reasonable requests of their constituents. If a railway employee had been unjustly treated, surely he had a right to ask his representative to bring the case forward? He remembered once having signed a document in that Chamber with other members, a document that was presented to the late Marquis of Normanby, who was always looked upon as a Governor who acted strictly in accordance with constitutional principles; and they were told that their duty as an Opposition was not to ask him to dissolve Parliament, but to criticise the Estimates of the Government on the floor of that Chamber. But if the contention of the leader of the Opposition were correct, it was not their duty to criticise the Estimates. It was true that the Assembly had abrogated its functions in the Railways Act in connection with the management of railways, and handed them over to a board of irresponsible Commissioners, who must not be challenged on the floor of that Chamber on account of anything in their management. The hon. member said that members should go to the Minister; but the Minister simply referred them to the Commissioners. The Secretary for Railways had exercised a chivalry which did him credit, in his defence of the Commissioners; at the same time, he had to convince the outside public that things were going right.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: The outside public are quite satisfied.

Mr. GROOM said he thought the hon. member was labouring under a serious mistake. He believed that a large number of candidates at the next general election would be asked whether they were in favour of repealing the Act under which the Commissioners were appointed; and that in a large number of cases the election would depend on that. As to hon. members being influenced by the loss of patronage, he did not know where the loss of patronage came in. There was at present extreme dissatisfaction with regard to the timber rates and produce rates on the railways, and he did not think it would do the Minister or the Commissioners any harm if questions were asked with regard to those matters. He had had the same experience as the hon. member himself. People frequently came to him with complaints, and sometimes when he had investigated the matter he found there was no ground for them; but it was difficult to make the people themselves believe there was no ground for them.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said that was a secondary consideration.

Mr. GROOM said it might be to the hon. member, but not to a man who might be the breadwinner of a family; and to whom were such men to apply if not to their representatives. If a man considered he had a grievance, Parliament was the proper place for him to seek redress, and he would soon find out if his grievance was ill-founded. He would not make any charges against the Commissioners, because another time would come when the matter could be thrashed out in its entirety. The system of railway management by commissioners was on its trial in Australia. It had failed in Victoria, and it might or might not be acting satisfactorily in New South Wales, and it was on its trial in Queensland now. The people were at present unable to form any definite opinion; but so far as discussing the Railway Estimates was concerned, they were out of the hands of the Committee.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON said this was the first evening that the Estimates had received anything like that close criticism and attention that was usually bestowed upon them, and the Secretary for Railways had been able to show that he could defend his position, and was master

of the situation. He disclaimed altogether the idea that the Commissioners were placed on a pedestal far above the criticism of the Committee. They were servants of the State, and the Minister was responsible for their actions. He believed that the good they had done was not thoroughly understood, and that was the reason of the complaints that were made. The benefits accruing to the State by economy in working the railways had not been placed before the people intelligently; but, however excellent the Commissioners might be, they were still amenable to Parliament, and the Minister had to explain their administration, which he had done already. One or two matters had been touched upon which he would refer to. In regard to the timber traffic, he thought the Minister and the Commissioners might consult together and see if something could not be done, because it seemed hard that a man should have to pay for an amount of carriage in excess of the quantity of goods sent. He did not think there was any insuperable difficulty. He should be sorry to think that the Estimates were going through without the fullest discussion. Even if the present system of railway management were better than the old one, it was still capable of improvement. There was a feeling of dissatisfaction amongst the agricultural population in his own constituency with the Railway Department; but with a more thorough knowledge of the system he thought they would be better satisfied. He was more satisfied now than he was at first with the present administration, and many items of the railway tariff and administration which at first appeared oppressive and anomalous had assumed a different complexion since he had been in the Committee. He believed the Commissioners had done very good service to the colony. Although the administration of railways by Commissioners might be, as had been said, on its trial, yet, as far as Queensland was concerned, he believed that those who closely investigated the subject would admit that so far the system had been an improvement on the former administration. He was very glad to be able to express to the Committee his altered convictions on the subject. At the same time, he could not for one moment admit that the Commissioners were beyond the reach of criticism and full discussion in Parliament on their estimates; nor did he accept the position that the Secretary for Railways was relieved of the responsibility to Parliament for the actions of the Commissioners.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have never claimed that position.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON said it had been stated by an hon. member that the Secretary for Railways presided over a department which he did not administer. That placed him in the position of a mere recording clerk, and Parliament would never allow that state of things to exist. He believed the prolonged debate would result in good, and he trusted that the Minister would not consider it outside his province to consult with the Commissioners and see whether some measure of relief could not be granted to those whose grievances had been so prominently brought before the Committee.

Mr. BARLOW said that when he stated that the Secretary for Railways presided over a department which he did not administer, he meant that, like a constitutional sovereign, the hon. gentleman reigned but did not govern.

Mr. NELSON: That is a distinction without a difference.

Mr. BARLOW said he regarded the debate which had taken place not as a series of attacks upon the Commissioners but as consultations with them for the general good.

Mr. GANNON asked what had been the amount of costs in the case of *Willcox v. the Railway Commissioners*?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he was not in a position to give the information.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAYS—SOUTHERN DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £409,714 be granted for railways—Southern division.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Adjourn.

Mr. BARLOW said he did not want to detain the Committee, but he had something to say on the question.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said he did not wish to force the Estimate through, but they had been five hours in passing one vote, and it was only a little after 10 o'clock.

Mr. GANNON said the hon. gentleman would have a very poor chance of getting the vote through that evening.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS said that as it seemed to be the wish of the Committee to adjourn, he would not proceed further to-night.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

RESIGNATION OF A MEMBER.

The SPEAKER reported that he had received a letter, of that day's date, from Mr. J. B. L. Isambert, announcing his resignation of his seat as member for the electoral district of Rosewood.

ADJOURNMENT.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that the House do now adjourn. After the formal business to-morrow we shall go on with Committee of Supply.

Question put and passed.

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