

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 1897

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

THURSDAY, 18 NOVEMBER, 1897.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 3 o'clock.

DISCOVERY OF CLERMONT GOLD
FIELD.

APPOINTMENT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

On the motion of Mr. CROSS, it was resolved—

1. That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and to report upon the claim of John Memenitch for a reward as the discoverer of the Clermont Gold Field.

2. That such committee have power to send for persons and papers and leave to sit during any adjournment of the House, and that it consist of the following members:—Messrs. Newell, Bridges, Jackson, Dunsford, and the mover.

EXTENSION OF NORTHERN RAILWAY.

SECTION TO WINTON.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Hughtenden-Winton Railway, from 65 miles to the town of Winton, in length 67 miles 38 chains.

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

said: I purposely called "not formal" to this introductory motion for the purpose of making a few remarks on the present position of railway construction in this colony, and also to allow hon. members, if they feel disposed to avail themselves of it, an opportunity to express their opinions upon the proposals of the Government in connection with railway construction brought forward this session. I trust that if hon. members do feel disposed to address themselves to this question they will confine themselves in the House to the railway policy of the Government as now disclosed, postponing till we enter into committee any discussion on the merits of the particular line to which I now propose to ask the sanction of the committee. I also trust that any criticism upon the departmental administration of the railways will be relegated to the Estimates, where it will come in more opportunely. I have no doubt that many hon. members are much disappointed that the railway proposals this session do not comprise a larger amount of construction, and I admit that it would have given me very great satisfaction to have been in the position to have placed on the table of the House the plans for a much larger extension of railways than is now submitted, and to have asked the ratification of Parliament to such extensions. But I trust that hon. members will see the reasons of our proposals at the present time, and will not assume that the limited amount of railway construction for which we are asking parliamentary ratification now is indicative of any weakened desire on the part of the Government to proceed with all convenient despatch—as early as the financial position of the colony admits—with much more extensive railway construction than is indicated by the proposals before the House. Hon. members may have heard a great deal during the recess and the early part of the session concerning the advisability of introducing a system of light railways to act as feeders to the main lines, and I must admit that I had hoped—and I regret that those hopes have not been fulfilled—that before the session closed I should have been in a position to submit some proposals of this kind to the House, because I consider the extension of railway construction in this colony will be largely facilitated by an adoption of that system. But I may say that while, perhaps, at no period has there been a larger amount of information in the possession of the department concerning railway surveys and general information concerning proposed routes, yet at the same time that information has not been advanced to that stage that we might fairly ask the House to ratify any plans of proposed extensions which might be formulated upon it. The House has always advocated the fullest information being obtained on these matters. It will be observed from the Commissioner's report that the very large sum of £16,000 per annum has been expended in obtaining this preliminary information, some of which may be of great value in future in promoting and encouraging the construction of railways, and in protecting us from the egregious blunders that have been made in the past, which have resulted in saddling the taxpayers of the colony with a large amount of taxation for the purpose of paying interest on the money borrowed. I do not think the Government can be blamed if under the circumstances they exercise a wise caution and avail themselves of all the information that can be obtained, so that the lines that may be ratified by Parliament may be a real benefit to the community, and not a burden on the general taxpayer. In many cases we have ratified proposals that should have received more consideration. For instance, the termini of some of our lines have had to be altered, as was the case at Ipswich, Warwick, Brisbane, Dalby, Sandgate,

and other places, and the extension has added very considerably to the capital cost of the lines. There will be an object lesson in that direction next week, when I propose to ask the House to rescind a certain portion of a resolution passed in 1895, with a view of altering the destination of a line in a provincial town, and I think it is well for us to consider seriously whether we should not revise our plans carefully before we ask Parliament to ratify them. The time which might be lost in bringing proposals before the House will be an ultimate gain to the community. I certainly thought it would be possible to act upon the information we have in connection with light railways this session, because there are many lines which it is advisable to extend into sparsely settled country, but a serious difficulty arose in the preliminary consideration of the question. The first difficulty was as to the gauge—whether they should be built upon the present gauge or a narrower one, and that matter has not been definitely decided yet. It is desirable that a uniform gauge should be maintained throughout the colony, and it is also a great question whether we should not also try to arrange for a uniform gauge with our neighbours, so that all lines built upon the light system, at any rate, shall be the same. I do not think that there will be uniformity of gauge on our main lines for a long time, because the cost would be enormous; but I do not see why, in establishing feeder lines, we should not meet upon some common ground. I hope hon. members will appreciate the position in this respect, and will see that although we claim a desire to establish light railways without any delay, at the same time, there are preliminary difficulties to be settled before we impetuously adopt any particular gauge which we might have cause to regret hereafter. There is also another difficulty to contend with. The Engineer-in-Chief had nine months' leave of absence for the purpose of visiting America and the continent of Europe with a view to acquiring information concerning light railways, and the improvement in equipment of railways generally. His report has been before hon. members, and I have no doubt they have all read it, and will furnish a great deal of matter for consideration which may be of great benefit in the future. In the meantime, the absence of the Chief Engineer has somewhat handicapped the department, and has prevented us from being able to submit to the country a more extensive system of railway construction than we have at present. There is another feature in connection with our railway extension which I felt bound to regard. Of course the financial aspect of the question is one that would be more fully dealt with by the Treasurer than I am justified in doing, but at the same time I would point out for the consideration of hon. members that the present position of our railways is satisfactory. While we have embarked £18,000,000 in the construction of railways extending over 2,600 miles, during last year the investment on railway construction, notwithstanding the fact that we may have committed blunders in the past, has returned a net income of £2 17s. 4d. per cent. on all our lines to provide interest on the cost of construction, and it is very gratifying that only the difference between £2 17s. 4d. and £4 per cent. is all the charge on the general taxpayer as against the large development which has accrued to the colony through railway construction.

Mr. GLASSEY: What about the freights?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I shall be able to demonstrate on a future occasion that our freights are considerably lower than those charged by the neighbouring colonies, and that our railways render us, especially in long

distances, better service than the broader gauge of New South Wales to the residents along the lines in that colony. I shall be able to substantiate that statement by figures the truthfulness of which cannot be questioned. In the report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year ended 30th June, 1897, we are informed that £682,000 was expended out of loan for construction during that year, which was £421,000 in excess of the amount expended during the previous year, the average of the previous three years being no more than £163,000 per annum.

The HON. G. THORN: I do not know whether I am justified in rising to a point of order, but I think the speech of the hon. gentleman is foreign to the question. He is initiating a debate on the railway policy of the Government which will take at least three days to discuss. I am anxious to get to business, and I may state that this is the third time the hon. member has made this speech within the last six weeks.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is in order in making a Ministerial statement as to the railway policy of the Government on the motion that the Speaker leave the chair.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have no wish to occupy time unnecessarily, but I think it is only due to hon. members, who are perhaps disappointed at the proposals in regard to railway extension, to explain why they are of such moderate dimensions at present. I was referring to the average expenditure during the past three years as shown in the Commissioner's report, and I wish to point out in addition that the expenditure for the years 1894-5, 1895-6, and 1896-7 represents an average of £349,677 per annum. I hold a list of the works we are now engaged in constructing, and I may inform hon. members in connection with our present position that we expect to expend during the present year in connection with those works no less a sum than £714,000 up till the 30th June, 1898. I think this information is very pertinent to the question of railway construction at present. We must be guided by our financial position; and I have ascertained from the Railway Department that the probable expenditure up to the 30th June next year, notwithstanding our moderate proposals, is considerably larger than last year's expenditure, and nearly double the average of the preceding three years. Therefore, I think, hon. members will see that, though the proposals are moderate, at the same time the expenditure in connection with railway construction, and the employment in connection therewith, is not attempted to be reduced. The Government have every desire to proceed with railway extension to the fullest capacity; at the same time when the annual expenditure attains to a sum exceeding £500,000 of loan money it becomes a serious question as to what lines should be undertaken, and how far we should proceed with them. If I were to submit to Parliament the various proposals made to me by hon. members up to the present, £10,000,000 would be required to proceed simultaneously with even sections of the lines. Many lines of which trial surveys and permanent surveys have been made will come on for consideration early next session, but it must to a large extent depend on the financial ability of the country whether we can incur a larger amount of annual expenditure than we contemplate at present. It has often occurred to me, and the opinion has grown stronger upon me with the lapse of time, that viewing the immense extent of territory we possess and our limited ability, through our small population and our limited financial resources, to proceed with the development of the colony by means of railway construction to the extent we desire—that it would be a very desirable thing for this country

if reasonable proposals for railway construction emanated from private individuals or private companies. When I mention this matter hon. members ought not to associate it with the proposals heretofore made under the land-grant railway system which carried with them an element of suspicion.

Mr. GLASSEY: What is the difference?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I have regard to the earlier development of the country than can be accomplished by a limited Treasury and a limited population.

Mr. GLASSEY: I have regard to the development of the country and the liberties of the country at the same time.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I consider that the people cannot bear additional taxation even for the benefits of railway construction, and we know that different communities are still clamouring for railways. We have not up to the present time received many applications for the construction of railways under the Guarantee Act, because it is now pretty well known that such applications will have to be *bond fide*, and the greatest care will be taken to see what is the financial ability of the guarantors—that it will be equal to the strain of meeting the annual charge for interest on construction. I am very glad, however, to be able to state that some local authorities, in the North particularly, propose to avail themselves of the provisions of the Tramways Act of 1882, for the construction of light railway. That is a new departure, and I believe that under the provisions of that Act such enterprises will not only be beneficial to the community, but will be found to be no burden upon the local authorities. Under the Act of 1882 they will be able to build lines in a very much cheaper way than the State, and special facilities are given under the Act for loans for construction. I believe that system of railway construction should be encouraged, and I trust it will be made use of in agricultural districts where the State is unable to provide railway facilities as early as desirable in the interests of the settlers.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: They are rated enough already.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: I admit that, but I do not suppose that the local authorities would rashly rush into railway construction on that principle without being assured of a sufficient revenue from the line to meet the responsibilities they incurred in its construction. I have mentioned the matter because the Government have had applications in connection with it, and it is a policy of railway construction that is worthy of full consideration. In the debate on the proposal to repeal the Railways Construction (Land Subsidy) Act I mentioned that no proposals had been submitted to the Government under that Act, and if any had been submitted I considered that the House should have the earliest opportunity of considering them before they were in any way entertained. I repeat that statement now as being quite correct, but I must say that since this week commenced the Government have been approached by a private company in connection with the construction of a railway about 95 miles in length from Mareeba to Chillagoe, not on the land-grant principle at all, but upon a principle which I think the House will admit is deserving of consideration when I inform hon. members as to what the proposals are. I give this information to the House on the first opportunity, before it has even been circulated through the Press, because I think it right that the House should receive such information first. The matter is still *in nubibus*, except that the proposals are perfectly *bond fide*, and the Government have favourably considered them in the initiatory stage, and they are

receiving attention with a view to being submitted to Parliament in a concrete form this session. I am not in a position to give such information as to lead to a debate on the question, but to submit the proposal as one which may fairly be considered as offering a basis for negotiation. I may say the proposals were received on Monday last, and they come from gentlemen well known to members of the House—Mr. John Moffatt, of Irvinebank; Charles Chapman, of Melbourne; and Mr. J. L. Reid, of South Australia. They are men with an inter-colonial reputation for integrity and ability and a sound financial position. I may say that the line proposed would involve an expenditure of £300,000, and possibly more; it would take two or three years to construct, and the company would commence at once with working plans as soon as their proposals were approved. I will read for the information of hon. members the proposals submitted:—

Brisbane, 15th November, 1897.

SIR,—On behalf of ourselves and others associated with us, we beg briefly to place before you the following proposal for the construction of a private railway from Mareeba to Chillagoe, with the request that should the proposal meet with the approval of yourself and your hon. colleagues, you will assist us in obtaining, under the existing law or by special Act of Parliament, the necessary rights to enable us to proceed with the work of construction with the least possible delay.

1. We, and those associated with us, are the owners of certain mineral lands on the Chillagoe fields, in the Walsh mining district, upon which large sums of money have been expended during recent years without any adequate return being obtained therefrom.

2. That the bulk of the ores of these mines is of comparatively low grade, and the result of the large amount of work done and of the heavy expenditure incurred is to show conclusively that the mines cannot be worked to advantage or to any profit without complete railway facilities and the introduction of the most modern metallurgical appliances.

3. That the total expenditure involved in giving effect to our proposal, including the construction of the railway and the erection of plant for the effective and economical treatment of the ore, will amount to a very large sum of money, the outlay of which alone must be of very considerable and immediate benefit to the colony.

4. That we are prepared to give you the fullest satisfaction as to our good intentions and ability to carry out successfully and without reasonable delay the work referred to.

5. That the concessions involved in our proposal, and for the speedy granting of which we now approach yourself and your colleagues, are as follows:—

- (a) The right to build and to work a railway, under reasonable conditions, from the Mareeba terminus of the Government railway from Cairns to our mines at Chillagoe, such railway to be of the Government standard gauge, and to be constructed and equipped to the satisfaction of your department.
- (b) In consideration for the large outlay involved, and as a fair and reasonable security for such expenditure, that the tenure of the mineral lands held by us or on our account in the Chillagoe district may be converted to special leases having a term of not less than fifty years, at an annual rental not exceeding 20s. per acre, without other conditions.
- (c) In the event of yourself and your hon. colleagues approving of this proposal, we would be willing to agree to a condition in respect of the railway under which it might be optional for the Government to acquire possession of the line at the end of a period of years—say fifty—at the then value.

Of course this condition of mineral leases is one upon which members connected with mining districts will express an opinion, but as a preliminary basis for negotiation I do not think the proposition is at all an unfair or unreasonable one. Of course the Government have so far expressed no approval of it, and have not committed themselves to a condition of mineral leases for fifty years, or for any other term. They merely say that if the company chooses to construct this line under the supervision of the

Government Engineer-in-Chief for Railways, and subject to such conditions as the Government may impose, they see no objection to the proposal, and there being no claim proposed upon the Government for land or annual interest, I feel sure that no hon. member can object to fuller consideration being given to such a proposal. I think it will be admitted to be a good thing if private companies can be induced, upon reasonable terms, to come forward to construct railways for the development of our immense extent of rich mineral territory which we are unable, unfortunately, to develop ourselves as rapidly as it should be developed in the interests of the colony. I look upon this proposal as heralding a new era of railway construction in Queensland, which will encourage settlement and mining enterprise, and above all promote a large amount of traffic upon lines which are at the present time non-paying. Hon. members will have full opportunity to discuss this matter, if the negotiations proceed, as I believe they will, to a satisfactory conclusion, in which case I shall be able to take the necessary legislative action. I do not intend to take up the time of the House any longer, and I think hon. members will acquit me of any intention to delay the business of the House. It was only due to them that I should explain the financial position of the department and the State, and I think hon. members will admit that in view of the annual expenditure we have incurred for the past three or four years we are justified in holding our hands when the financial circumstances of the colony are not of the buoyant or hopeful character we should like to see, and that we should restrict ourselves to the moderate railway proposals I have the honour to place before the House. Hon. members will understand that I have not said a word upon the extension proposed in this resolution, but have confined myself to other matters, but in committee I shall be prepared to go into the merits of that proposal. I now move the motion standing in my name.

Mr. ANNEAR: I had thought that the leader of the party on the opposite side of the House would have followed the Minister in this discussion, but as he has not done so, I shall make a few remarks on the railway policy of the Government. There is great disappointment in many parts of the colony at the small amount of railway construction which has been placed before the House this session, and I must say that I am surprised at the few proposals submitted to us. I read in a newspaper the other day that the Premier informed a deputation that waited upon him that it was necessary to extend a certain line of railway some 15 miles to permanent water, and now we have plans submitted to the House for the extension of that line for 67 miles. That, as far as we know at present, is the whole of the railway policy of the Government for this session. I trust that during the recess the Government will mature a railway policy, and come down with it in the early part of next session, and not leave it till almost the end of the session. I hope that such policy will apply especially to the settled districts of the colony.

Mr. SIM: Gayndah?

Mr. ANNEAR: Yes, and the electorates of Wide Bay and Burnett. The people in that part of the colony are very much disappointed at not seeing a small section of 33 miles included in the proposals of the Government this session. The Secretary for Railways referred to the report of the Chief Engineer, who recently visited Europe and who came back a few months ago. It is a splendid report, containing a great deal of information which will be of great benefit to hon. members and to the colony, and I think the then Secretary for Railways, who is still

Secretary for Mines, is to be congratulated on sending Mr. Stanley on that tour. With regard to the question of light railways, I maintain that where there is any traffic the railways we have in the colony are quite light enough. If you enter upon the construction of light railways you must have light rolling-stock to suit those railways, and in countries where light railways have been built it has been found that before many months have passed the heavy traffic has necessitated heavier rolling-stock, and then a heavier permanent way has had to be constructed. The House should consider well before entering upon the construction of railways of a lighter character than we have at the present time. The Parliament of this colony did well in adopting the 3 feet 6-inch gauge. If we had had the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge they have in New South Wales we should have had 700 or 800 miles less of railways constructed than we have at the present day. Our permanent way is thoroughly adapted for the work of the colony, and I do not think it could be much improved. I was very pleased to hear the Minister say that favourable consideration would be given to the proposal which has been made to the Government within the last few days, because there are many parts of the colony where, owing to the smallness of the population, we are unable to carry out railway construction, but where railways may be built by private enterprise. What is the result of the construction of railways by private enterprise in other parts of the world? In Canada all the railways except one or two have been constructed by private enterprise, and I think I am correct in stating that in the United States there is not one mile of railway owned by the Government. The railways constructed by private companies in Canada and the United States can carry passengers and freight at half the rates we do, and such being the case I think companies of the kind mentioned this afternoon should be encouraged. Of course, there is an enormous trade in America, which may have something to do with it, and there is also a very large population, but I trust this proposal will be the forerunner of many others.

The SPEAKER: I very much doubt whether the debate is now in order. Of course, it is always allowable for the Minister to make a statement as to the railway policy of the Government, but a debate upon that statement cannot be allowed, unless an hon. member puts himself in order by proposing an amendment. That is the general practice, and I therefore ask hon. members to confine themselves to the question now before the House.

Mr. ANNEAR: I believe you are quite correct, Mr. Speaker, and I shall say no more, especially as the Secretary for Railways requested us not to go into the proposals of the company mentioned this afternoon. As regards the policy of the Government, I know it has been very much criticised by people in different parts of the colony, but I was very pleased to hear that in spite of the tick plague our lines are paying well at present. I hope that next session the Government will come down with a comprehensive railway policy, and try to carry out the railways which are now demanded by the people in the settled portions of the colony. If we require money for their construction, I am sure that money will be very easily obtained.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Hughendon-Winton railway, from 65 miles to the town of Winton, in length 67 miles 38 chains,

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

said: Hon. members would be aware that in the session of 1895 this line was brought forward, and a committee was appointed to inquire into it, and by a majority they confirmed the recommendations of the Commissioner. The first section of 65 miles was approved by Parliament, and a contract for 39 miles of that had been let and was approaching completion. The temporary terminus was at a place called Stamfordham, and the cost, exclusive of rolling-stock, was stated to be £85,416, or about £2,190 per mile. They had not been able to call for tenders for the second part of the 65 miles for two reasons. In the first place it was not convenient to do so until the first part was completed, so that they might have the advantage of the permanent way to carry the necessary material; but the chief delay had arisen from the fact that when the working plans were prepared it was found that the new terminus would land them in a very dry stage, and it was very inconvenient for railway work to be carried out without water, and to obtain a good supply it would be necessary to extend the section 16 miles further to Manuka. With this extension, the new section would be 41 miles long, and although they were asking authority to complete the line to Winton, they only desired to construct this 41 miles at present. When it was first proposed to construct 65 miles of railway from Hughenden towards Winton it aroused a great deal of opposition on the part of Central members, but the Committee then affirmed that the trade route lay between Hughenden and Winton, and I am convinced from personal observation of the correctness of that decision. The late Commissioner, Mr. Mathieson, strongly approved of the line; and the present Commissioner, who has recently visited the district, has satisfied himself that the route proposed is the proper route. It was estimated that the section could be constructed at the moderate cost of £2,100 a mile exclusive of rolling-stock, and that the total cost of the 67 miles would be £148,321. The country presented no engineering difficulties, and the construction of the extension would involve no burden on the general taxpayer. It would greatly assist in the development of that part of the colony, and the traffic on the Northern line would be largely increased.

Mr. CURTIS: When this extension was proposed in 1895 it was unanimously opposed by the Central members, with the exception of the hon. member for Gregory; and they gave very good reasons for their opposition. The balance of testimony then given before the select committee that considered the extension was distinctly in favour of an extension not from Hughenden to Winton, but from Hughenden to Kynuna. He had no desire and never had any desire to deprive Winton of railway communication with the Northern system; but he contended that there were other places requiring railway communication to a greater extent, and that the money could be better expended in carrying the line from Hughenden in a westerly direction to Kynuna. That would give railway communication to a lot of country that would soon be stocked with sheep, and the advantage to the colony would be greater than was to be derived by the extension now proposed. Another ground on which the proposed extension was opposed in 1895 was that it was a distinct violation of the understanding that the three trunk lines should be extended as nearly as possible in a due westerly direction, so as not to bring one line into competition with another; and they contended that the extension of that line to Winton would have that effect,

If both lines had been owned by a private company money would not be expended for the purpose of bringing the Northern line into competition with the Central line. Considering the action taken in 1895 he could hardly be expected to support the proposal, but he had no intention of raising a stonewall against it.

Mr. HOOLAN: You swapped it for a Supreme Court judge.

Mr. CURTIS: That was all nonsense. They were entitled to a judge many years ago.

The HON. G. THORN: If he thought for a moment that the producers in and around Winton would send their produce to Rockhampton rather than to Townsville he would not support the motion, but there was a difference of 200 miles in the distance between Winton and Townsville and Winton and Rockhampton, and in favour of the Northern line. Another reason for supporting the proposal was that the Commissioner had told them that the Northern line was paying £9 19s. per cent., and he believed the line would yet be a phenomenal one; that it would pay between 14 and 15 per cent. beyond working expenses. He only wished they could discover a few more railways that would pay half as well as the line from Townsville to Winton.

Mr. KIDSTON: There were several reasons why they should consider this proposal well before agreeing to it. He admitted the contention of the Minister that it was impossible for the department to satisfy all the claims for railway construction, but in the present case they were giving unfair facilities to one district, and leaving other districts without. The policy of the department should be to first open up those districts which were most in need of railway communication, and it certainly could not be contended that the district between Longreach and Hughenden was most in need of railway facilities. Personally he had no objection to the Northern line being finished at a suitable site where permanent water could be obtained, though they should have to go 15 miles further towards Winton, but he did not think it fair to ask the Committee to consent to more than that, for the reason that it would leave the distance between the termini of the Northern and Central lines at 100 miles, and no point between could be more than 80 miles from railway communication. For pastoral purposes that was comparatively near to railway communication, and much nearer than many other districts in the colonies. For instance, the St. George district, which many years ago was recognised by the House as a district which should be opened up by a railway, for which the money was appropriated by Parliament, had still to do without a railway, though the country to the south and south-west of St. George was from 100 to 230 miles distant from the nearest railway. Besides, in the case of that district Parliament had found it necessary, in order to force the produce of the district on to the Southern line, to impose a border tax upon the pastoralists along the southern border, and surely a district that was penalised in such a way and for such a purpose had a good claim to consideration before the wants of a district within 80 miles of a railway were considered. The same argument applied to the country between the termini of the Central and Southern lines, and the country in the districts between Tambo, Adavale, and Windorah, was from 100 to 230 miles from railway communication. The department was at present surveying a line to Stonehenge, but even if that line was built the district he had named would still be further from railway communication than the district between Longreach and Hughenden.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We cannot build that line until we have the money.

Mr. KIDSTON: He knew that, and was not asking anything unreasonable, but that the districts furthest from railway communication should be first given railway facilities. The district they were now proposing to serve was better off for railway communication than any other pastoral district in the colony. The same thing applied all over the colony. A deputation had waited upon the Minister that morning asking for the construction of two railways, both of which would bring fresh revenue to the department, and would open up new districts, which were further away from railway communication than the district around Winton. Both those districts had far better claims for railway construction than the Winton district. If the Government did not want to extend the railway from Hughenden further than to the 30-mile peg, there could be no harm in limiting the permission to that extent. He was quite willing to authorise the department to extend the railway to that point, but not any further, as the line was running into country which was drained by the Central Railway, and every mile it went further south simply brought it into more keen competition with the Central Railway. The extension of the Northern Railway to the south would not open up a mile of new country, as it would simply come in at the back of Longreach and compete with the Central line. The Commissioner in his report stated that there was no doubt, from a financial point of view, as to the advisableness of building the line. He (Mr. Kidston) thought there was very great doubt as to the advisableness of it, because if the railway were carried down to Winton it would not bring in a penny's worth of fresh trade to the Government. It would simply shift some of the trade that now went to the Central line to the Northern Railway. That would not be the case if the railway went west or south-west from the head waters of the Diamantina, because it would then open up new country, and lead to country that was now stocked with cattle being stocked with sheep. The unwisdom of the present direction of the line seemed to be indicated by the fact that an agitation was being got up asking for railway extensions to Richmond, and he believed that a deputation had brought the matter under the notice of the Minister. The country that should have been opened up by the Northern Railway was being left on the right hand, and the railway was running into Central territory. He thought he had said sufficient to justify him in moving an amendment on the resolution, but would defer doing so till a later hour, as he understood that some hon. members wished to discuss the present proposal more fully.

Mr. SMITH: As hon. members were debarred from discussing the general railway policy of the Government when the Speaker was in the chair, he hoped they would be allowed a little latitude in Committee. He wished to make a few remarks on what he considered was a cause of complaint in connection with this proposal. In the face of the resolution carried by a large majority last session, he should have thought the Government would have included in this proposal a short line in his own electorate. He did not oppose this line, because it was part of the Northern system of railways, and a continuation of the line which ultimately must be made through his district, and, as the Commissioner said, it would have the effect of causing cattle country to be turned into sheep country, which was far more profitable to the railways than the former. The construction of this extension would render the railway he advocated more necessary than ever. The more they developed the Western country the more necessary would it be to have the means of bringing the produce

to market, and to give facilities for communication with their best harbours, so as to make the best they could of their natural advantages. This proposal really went to back up the demand he had made unceasingly for a number of years. He had heard it said that under the present circumstances it would be very difficult for him to engineer his proposal through Parliament; but all he wished the Government to do was to introduce the plans, sections, and book of reference, and let the line stand upon its own merits. If it could not stand upon its own merits then it ought not to be built; but when they had the matter properly before them they would be better able to judge whether the line should be built or not. The second section of the line he referred to was authorised when the present Premier was Secretary for Railways, and there was no justification for bringing it forward unless it was intended to join it to the Northern line. It was absurd to expect a line 48 miles long and ending nowhere, to pay. The present proposal was to add 15 miles to the second section of the Winton line, and at the same time they were asked to authorise the completion of the line. Of course he was in favour of that; it would be one of the best paying lines they had, but he was sorry the Government had not had the foresight to introduce the other line he had referred to. He hoped that they would have a more complete railway policy next session, and that it would be introduced early so that they would not have to deal with it in a hurried way, but would have ample time to consider it.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: The present section of this line ended nowhere, but all the lines in the Northern part of the colony ended nowhere. Lines had been authorised by past Governments which had not been proceeded with, although there were sums lying to their credit; and until they were extended to the places they were intended to reach they would be unremunerative, and would not help to settle people on the land. He was not one of those "dog-in-the-manger" people who would block any line not in his own electorate. He was prepared to support this proposal, although he trusted that the Government would, in their future policy, see that justice was done to every district. People did not understand why railways for which money had been voted were not constructed; and he trusted that when the policy of the Government was brought forward hon. members would rise to the occasion and see that justice was done everywhere. He had much pleasure in supporting this extension.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: While he would like to have seen more railways brought down for consideration, he agreed that they should go steady this year. But whatever railway policy might be brought down by any Government in future, he hoped it would be brought down in the early part of the session, so that it might receive full consideration. With regard to the extension before the Committee, he disagreed with the argument of the members for Rockhampton that it would unduly compete with the Central line. The traffic would find its natural outlet in any case; and the traffic from Winton went to Townsville through Hughenden before the railway was constructed. A great deal of the country in the Winton district was being brought under grazing farm settlement, and the construction of this line would lead to a large increase in that form of settlement, because there were large areas of suitable land available in the neighbourhood. He was very much in favour of the extension because it would be a good work in the interest of the country, and he thoroughly approved of the deviation proposed in the amended plan because it would take the line over high country.

Mr. MURRAY had no desire to prevent trade finding its natural outlet; at the same time he was desirous of seeing the railway policy of the Government put forward on broad principles. In 1895 he was on of the select committee that sat on the Winton extension, and the evidence given then showed that the course now proposed was not the proper course. The strongest objection to taking the line to Winton was that it was coming into direct competition with the Central line by bringing the two lines within 110 miles of each other. By extending the line westerly from the 65-mile peg towards Kynuna more country would have been brought within a reasonable distance of railway communication, and the lines would not have been brought into undue competition. The two trunk lines were 400 miles apart on the coast, but before they extended 300 miles into the interior they approached within 100 miles of each other. He admitted that the trade of the Winton district naturally belonged to Hughenden, and he did not think there was any desire that its trade should go to any other port than Townsville, which was 150 miles nearer than Rockhampton to Winton; but by extending the line westerly from the 65-mile peg, more good would be done to the colony generally. The Minister referred to the evidence given by Mr. Mathieson in support of this proposal, but that gentleman's great difficulty was to find any justification at all for it. He brought down a number of maps showing that it was his policy to have a junction of the Central and Northern lines at Winton and a line due west from Winton, but it must be evident to anyone that the best railway policy for Queensland was to run their main lines parallel in a westward or south-westward direction, and not to bring them nearer to each other than 200 miles if it could be avoided. He knew that the present Railway Commissioner gave evidence before the same committee, and he was opposed to Mr. Mathieson's proposals. He would admit that the people of Central Queensland desired to get all the trade they could, but they knew they had no more chance of securing the trade of Winton than they had of securing the trade of Thargomindah, and perhaps less, for Thargomindah was nearer Rockhampton than Brisbane. He opposed the construction of that line in 1895, and his personal visit to the district had only convinced him that he was right in doing so. The more he knew about it the more absurd the proposal seemed to be.

Mr. STORY represented a district in which there was a railway under construction, for which they should be grateful to Parliament, but unfortunately there was another part of the district which had been promised a railway many weary years ago, and they still had nothing but the promise. He held that before any other line should be built some attention should be given to the line to St. George, as its construction only could justify the iniquitous border tax. Referring to *Hansard*, hon. members would see that that tax was passed—

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member that the border tax has nothing to do with the motion now before the Committee.

Mr. STORY had no objection to a line to Winton, but he was speaking of another line which had a prior and a better right to be built, and he thought he could show that if there was no necessity for the St. George line there could have been no necessity for the border tax. He must speak of the two things. He could not disassociate them. The argument he was putting forward was that there was another line which he considered should be constructed before the Winton line. The hon. member for Bowen had referred to another line, and he thought he should be allowed the same privilege.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. member that the hon. member for Bowen referred to a line which is part of this system, and wished to show that in order to complete the line under consideration it should be extended to Bowen Harbour.

Mr. STORY: Would it be in order to refer to the speech of the hon. member for Rockhampton, who mentioned the St. George line as one that it was absolutely necessary to construct? If so, he had prepared a few figures which he should give to the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member had ample opportunity to discuss that matter when Mr. Speaker was in the chair, as the railway policy of the Government was then under consideration. But there is now a motion before the Committee to approve of certain plans, and I think hon. members should confine their remarks to that motion.

Mr. STORY would not proceed further with the matter if he was not in order, as he would have an opportunity of discussing it on the Estimates.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member will take the proper course if he defers reference to the matter until the Estimates are before the Committee. If the hon. member is allowed to deal with the matter on the present motion other members will claim a similar privilege, and there will be no finality to our proceedings.

Mr. STEWART was opposed to the resolutions before the Committee, not because he belonged to the Central division, but on the broader ground that it was a departure from a line which was attempted to be laid down some time ago in connection with their railway policy. A few years ago there was a revulsion of feeling among the people with regard to the methods under which railways were constructed, it being alleged that the wants of the colony had in a great measure to go under before political influence, and an attempt was then made to reorganise the whole system. The cry was that they should build and manage their railways on business principles, and do away altogether with political influence and log-rolling, and in some slight degree an attempt was made to carry out the resolution then so nobly formed. But the present proposal was a departure from that principle, and an attempt to reintroduce the old system of log-rolling and political influence, which had in the past proved so inimical and injurious to the best interests of Queensland. The whole thing was nothing more nor less than a sop to Townsville. It had been abundantly proved by the senior member for Rockhampton that the railway accommodation at present provided for the country between the Central and Northern Railways was more extensive than that provided for almost any other portion of the Western part of the colony. It had also been proved that there were other portions of the Western district that were languishing for railway communication, and that parts of the North were in a similar condition. The Minister had told them that he was in communication with a private company to construct a railway in the North, because the Government had not the money to build that line, and here they had the Government making a proposal to construct a line that was not necessary. The hon. gentleman could not defend that proposal on any business principles; the proposed extension was not for the good of the colony—it was not even for the good of the North, but was simply for the good and in the interest of Townsville, which was represented by the Secretary for Mines. They all knew that the Government had very little money for railway construction, and he hoped that that policy would be given a very

wide berth until they were more prosperous. If they had only a very little money, it was all the more necessary that it should be well expended. This proposed extension would not open up any new country, and the money would be more profitably expended in some other part of the colony. Of course they would be told that this was the best paying line in the colony, but that had nothing to do with the matter. It would pay just as well if this extension were not made, and even if it did pay better it would be at the expense of the Central line, so that there would be no real benefit to the colony. It would be "robbing Peter to pay Paul," which was not a policy that should be adopted by any Government, and he should oppose the motion most heartily.

Mr. McDONALD: He opposed this proposal when it was first before them on the ground that the line should have been taken in another direction, but at the same time he did not dispute that the proposed line would pay and be the means of increasing the railway revenue from this district. He would not go deeply into the question as to whether this line would interfere with the Central line, but he knew that all the Winton trade had gone to Hughenden because the railway haulage was less than from Longreach. All that the contention of the hon. member for Rockhampton North had proved was that the Central line should have been taken more south. Seeing that the first section of the Winton line was almost complete and tenders were about to be called for the second, he should offer no further opposition, but he would rather the line had gone more westward. Of course, to alter its direction now towards Kynuna would be absurd, as there would be two lines running nearly parallel; but ultimately the Government would have to continue the line to Richmond owing to the large number of grazing farms that had been taken up in that locality. About 100 farms had been taken up during the last couple of years, and there were millions of acres resumed and ready to be selected as soon as the drought broke up and the surveyors could get to work.

Mr. COLLINS: Like the hon. member for Flinders, there was a time when he did not feel very much in favour of this railway, but as half of it had been constructed it was better that it should be finished. Like the hon. member he also thought the traffic would very soon justify the Government in building a line in the direction of Richmond. He had an extensive knowledge of that country, and thought it should be developed. He should support the motion.

Mr. DANIELS did not approve of the line to Winton, because it was against the general policy which the three Railway Commissioners laid down when they first took office. Their policy was to run certain lines so as to give the intervening country access to railways within a reasonable distance; but now it appeared that the direction in which a railway was to go depended on the influence that could be brought to bear on the Government by members. It had been said that this extension would induce people to run sheep where they were now running cattle, but he did not hold that opinion. The commercial value of wool would enable it to stand haulage 100 or 200 miles by teams; and the fact of this line being extended to Winton would not make the people about that district run more sheep than they did at present. Had the line run in a straight line towards Richmond that would have been carrying out the policy of the three Commissioners, and would have opened up a lot of new country.

Mr. JACKSON did not see that the extension to Winton would take traffic from the Central line, because Townsville was the natural port of

Winton. He was a member of the select committee when the extension was considered in 1895, and in his opinion the weight of evidence was altogether in favour of the line going through Winton. He was a little interested in this railway, because the Northern Railway went through a considerable portion of the Kennedy electorate. There was a proposal on foot to connect the Bowen Railway with the Ravenswood branch, instead of connecting it with the Northern line at the 37-mile peg; and a report on that route had been made by Mr. Phillips. He had great pleasure in supporting the proposal before the Committee. He thought there was no life in the opposition to the extension, but it was necessary for Central members to protest in the interests of their constituents.

Mr. KIDSTON moved the omission of the words "the town of Winton, in length 67 miles 33 chains," with the view of inserting "80 miles from Hughenden, in length 15 miles." That would enable the Government to do all they said they wanted to do, and would enable the Northern Railway to be completed to a suitable terminus, so that all the country intervening between there and Longreach would be very well served by railway communication.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS could not accept the amendment and he could not see that there was any necessity for it. He had stated already that while asking approval for the whole extension to Winton, they would not in all probability proceed to let tenders for the construction of more than 41 miles before the end of the present financial year. But it was a great advantage to have a contractor with his plant on the ground ready to proceed. Again, circumstances might arise delaying attention to railway construction, and it might be very undesirable that they should be prevented from inviting tenders as early as possible after the period he had mentioned. The House had agreed to the Winton extension, and he could not agree with the hon. member that it would bring no additional traffic. He expected that a large amount of traffic from country west of Winton would converge to the line. He thought this proposal better than the proposal to take the line to Kynuna, which would have had to be commenced further back than 65 miles from Hughenden, and it would interfere with any extension of the line to Richmond. Hon. members were hardly justified in urging the old policy of extending the main lines due west, because they had themselves, as Central members, urged an extension of the Central line south-west from Ifracombe to Stonehenge, and but for that proposal he might have been prepared to submit proposals for the extension of the Central line westward from Longreach this session. The hon. member would have other opportunities of raising objection when the financial stages of the resolution were reached, and after the assurances he had given he could see no necessity for the amendment.

Mr. KIDSTON thought he had made it clear that the reason he had moved the amendment was that he objected to the Northern line going further south, and when it got to 80 miles from Winton it would then be near enough to the Central line, and after that it was proposed to run it almost due south. In spite of the Minister's statement, he contended that taking the line due south would not open up any fresh country. He had no objection to its extension south-west, though he believed it should have gone west from Hughenden. He believed that a mistake had been made in bringing the line along the present route, and they would now have to have another railway out Richmond way. It would be a still bigger mistake to bring the line any nearer to the Central terminus. As a matter of

fact, every mile the line was brought south of its present terminus only brought it into competition with the Central line for the trade between that point and Longreach, and it was very unwise to spend money for that purpose. He had never been a believer in the "due west" policy, and he had no objection to a line for securing the Winton trade for the Northern railway, but anyone could see that to bring the present line any further south was only to bring it within easy distance of Longreach.

Mr. CORFIELD: The question as to what route that railway should take was thoroughly thrashed out and exhaustively reported upon by a select committee appointed two years ago at the instance of a Central member. Among all the railways that were submitted to the last Parliament there was none that was so fiercely criticised as the line from Hughenden, and it was then decided that the ultimate destination of the railway should be Winton. Everything possible was done by certain members of the select committee which reported on the line to support the assertion that the extension of the line in the direction proposed would injure Rockhampton and the Central Railway, but without success. Yet the same arguments were now brought forward by the hon. member for Rockhampton. For the information of hon. members who might not have read the evidence of the select committee which reported in favour of the line being extended in the direction now proposed, he might state that Mr. Mathieson, in his evidence, said the traffic from Winton *via* Longreach for the previous six months was 17 cwt., while that from Winton to Townsville for the same period was 260 tons. He also stated that if the line were taken west-south-west it would practically go through the same country as the railway which would go to Cloncurry.

With regard to the argument that the extension of the Northern Railway in the direction proposed would injure the traffic on the Central Railway, he would point out, as he had done two years ago, that a number of stations in the district which it was affirmed was served by the Central line at the present time did business with Townsville, and not with Rockhampton. Those stations were—Sesbania, Werna, Ayshire Downs, Manuka, Afton Downs, Oondooroo, Warrnambool Downs, Elderslie, Kynuna, Dagworth, Llanrheidol, Cork, Katandra, Tooleybuck, Eulolo, Strathfield, Beaudesert, Goodwood, Warena, Fort William, Chatsworth, Brighton Downs, Davenport Downs, Glenormiston, Lucknow, Mount Merlin, Roxborough Downs, Herbert Downs, Coorabulka, Happy Valley, Marion Downs, Rochdale, Rangers Valley, and Strathearn. The cost of carrying the loading from those places was £16,050. He might also mention that in December, 1895, there were thrown open to selection in the Winton district forty-six grazing farms aggregating 836,000 acres, and that of that area only 9,442 acres remained unselected. The unselected area consisted of two small farms—one of 5,000 acres, and the other of 4,442 acres. Since that date twenty-one grazing homesteads had been thrown open to selection, and of those sixteen had been taken up. Those facts showed that the people out there always considered that the railway would go in the direction of Winton. It was plain to any unprejudiced person that its extension in that direction would not injure Rockhampton, and it was still plainer that if it was extended in a more northerly direction towards Kynuna it would encroach on the trade which belonged to the Gulf ports. The distance from Birdsville to Rockhampton was 850 miles, from Birdsville to Townsville 780 miles, and from Birdsville to Normanton 650 miles, so that Townsville was the nearest eastern port to the greater portion of the Western country, and that

country would be best served by the railway from Hughenden to Winton. There was really no comparison between the country between Hughenden and Winton and that between Hughenden and Kynuna. During the drought of 1883, 1884, 1885, and the beginning of 1886 all that country was almost unimproved as far as water conservation was concerned, and the country west of Marathon on the Flinders River towards the Diamantina River was deserted, while that in the Winton district continued to carry the greater portion of its stock. All that showed the superiority of the Winton country, and its possibilities for close settlement.

Mr. DAWSON: The question as to the route and the ultimate terminus of the extension of the Northern Railway was fully debated and decided the last time the matter was before the House, and the plans of one section of it were approved. What the hon. member for Rockhampton was doing by his amendment was re-opening the whole discussion, and he had not submitted one single fact or one tittle of evidence to show that there was any reason why hon. members should reconsider the question, but had simply proposed his amendment with a certain amount of Rockhampton assurance. After stating that he quite recognised that Townsville was the natural port of Winton and that Rockhampton had no feeling of rivalry in the matter, because whether the railway was built or not, Rockhampton would not get any of the Winton trade, he moved an amendment which said that the line should not be taken more than 80 miles towards Winton, because after that distance it would compete with the Central system. If the traffic of Winton must necessarily go to Townsville he did not see how this proposed line could come into competition with the Central line. There was a distinct contradiction in the two positions the hon. member had taken up.

Mr. KIDSTON: If the Northern line were taken 50 miles nearer the Central line, the area it would drain would extend more than the 50 miles, and if it went for 80 miles it would get all the share of the trade of the Winton district that it was legitimately entitled to.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions, and the resolutions were agreed to.

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF INVESTIGATION.

The PREMIER: With the leave of the House, I wish to make a further statement in regard to the investigation into the affairs of the Queensland National Bank. It is to the effect that I have received a letter from Sir Samuel Walker Griffith, which, I think, ought to be put into the possession of the House, and with the leave of the House I shall read it. It is dated to-day, 18th November, is addressed to myself, and is as follows:—

Judges' Chambers,

Brisbane, 18th November, 1897.

DEAR SIR HUGH NELSON,—In the report of the committee of inquiry into the affairs and past management of the Queensland National Bank presented to Parliament on Tuesday last there occurs a passage to which I desire to call your attention, inasmuch as it involves a serious charge against myself as Chief Secretary and Acting Treasurer in November and December, 1892.

The committee say (par. 12)—“The Government came to their (the bank's) relief by borrowing a sum of £800,000 from the Bank of England. This was on the 29th December, 1892, and it was repaid by the Government to the Bank of England from proceeds of loan in February and March, 1893. Mr. A. B. Webster admitted in the course of his evidence that the money was not borrowed by the Government to meet the interest on the public debt, but that the loan was really

negotiated in the interest of the bank.” That is to say Mr. A. B. Webster “admits”—surely a singular term to use for the purpose of making a grave imputation on the honour of public men—that the Government borrowed £800,000 not for the purpose of meeting the interest on the debt, but for the convenience of the bank. I have to ask you to make public the following facts, resting not on Mr. Webster's “admission” but on my word, corroborated by copies of the correspondence and the telegrams which passed at the time between the Agent-General (Sir James Garrick) and myself, and which you were good enough to show me this morning. In 1892 Sir T. McIlwraith was Colonial Treasurer. On the 24th of September formal notice was given by the Treasury to the bank that the money then standing to the credit of the Government in London would be required to meet the January interest (about £600,000). (I do not remember actually seeing a copy of this letter till this morning.)

During the month of October I had several interviews with Sir T. McIlwraith and Mr. E. R. Drury, in which the latter informed us that it was impossible for the bank to find the money. I believed the statement, which was supported by telegrams from the London board produced by Mr. Drury.

A loan of £3,704,000 had been authorised by the Government Loan Act of 1890, and part had been floated; but, so far as my memory serves me, it was not proposed to issue the balance of the loan until 1893, the market not being considered favourable.

On the 7th of November Sir T. McIlwraith left for India, and I took charge of the Treasury, which I retained until you relieved me on the 10th of December.

On the 5th of November, no doubt at Sir T. McIlwraith's instance, I sent a confidential telegram to Sir James Garrick informing him that it would be necessary to issue the remainder of the loan before the end of the year, and asking him to consult the Bank of England and the Queensland National Bank and advise me by telegraph.

On the 11th of November the Agent-General telegraphed that the Bank did not approve of the proposed issue in that year, and added reasons which led to the conclusion that if the issue were then made it would result in a serious loss to the colony.

The position then was this: Unless the £600,000 were provided by the 1st of January—the 20th of December, I think, was the day on which the interest payable on inscribed stock was required to be lodged in the Bank of England—the colony of Queensland would have become a defaulter. The colony's bankers asserted, and satisfied me that the assertion was true, that they were unable to provide the funds from the colony's credit balance. What then was to be done? What I did was this: On the 14th November I telegraphed to the Agent-General asking him to ascertain whether the Bank of England was willing to advance the January interest if the issue of the loan were deferred till early in 1893.

On the 16th Sir James Garrick replied that the Bank of England would advance £600,000 on 20th December, to be repaid from the first proceeds of the loan, and on the 17th I instructed him to make arrangements with the Bank of England accordingly, which he did.

I left Brisbane for Thursday Island on the 12th of December, and did not return till after the new year. I never had any further direct control of the Treasury, and know nothing of any subsequent transactions. But I do know that if I had not done what I did Queensland would have made default on the 1st of January, 1893, and I suppose the Queensland National Bank would have stopped payment before that day.

It will be noticed that Sir T. McIlwraith was not responsible for this transaction, for which all the blame (or, as I thought at the time, the credit) falls to me.

Notwithstanding all these facts, it is, of course, still possible that, as Mr. Webster “admits,” the money was not really wanted to meet the interest on the public debt. But that view can only be sustained upon the assumption that Sir T. McIlwraith, Mr. Drury, the directors of the Queensland National Bank (including Mr. Webster himself), and the London board of that bank, combined to deceive me and make me believe that the bank could not provide the money, when in fact they were in a position to do so.

I regret to have been obliged, from the manner in which Mr. Webster's statement has been put forward by the committee of inquiry, to address you on the subject. But I am unwilling either that anyone else should bear any blame properly attachable to me, or that I should be supposed to have been capable of such an extraordinary irregularity as that attributed to me.

I am,

Yours very truly,

S. W. GRIFFITH.

The Right Honourable Sir Hugh Nelson, P.C., &c.

Mr. DUNSFORD : Who is discrediting the committee now ?

The PREMIER: The hon. member can answer that question himself.

Mr. FITZGERALD : They are all tarred with the same brush.

The PREMIER: I beg to lay this paper on the table, and move that it be printed.

The HOME SECRETARY : Except yourself, Sir, I am the only member of that Government now in a position to speak on this motion, and I desire to say that every member will gladly accept his share of that transaction. I endorse every word of the statement just read. By the action of the Government at that time the credit of the colony was saved. No portion of that £600,000, or of the balance of the loan, went into the coffers of the Queensland National Bank, except possibly through their books. Not only was this £600,000 used to pay the December interest, but the balance was received by the Government, and was used to pay the June interest, so that the funds of the Queensland National Bank and their liability to the Government were not increased by the sale of that loan. This was endorsed by the Auditor-General's report in 1893. The Queensland National Bank had been "run" on quietly but surely for several preceding months, and the fact that they could not then finance for the Government and meet the heavy withdrawals of deposits as well, is best proved by the fact that four months later they were compelled to close their doors and reconstruct. Necessity alone forced the Government of the day to borrow temporarily from the Bank of England in order to pay the interest coming due, and the loan was sold to pay back this money. No credit or blame is due to anyone.

Mr. GLASSEY : There is a great deal to be said on this matter—

Mr. BATTERSBY : Wait until to-morrow.

Mr. GLASSEY : I will not wait half-an-hour. We will have a number of these apologies by-and-by. I say that the Auditor-General in his report for 1893 absolutely and emphatically declares that there was no necessity for the loan just mentioned, and that sufficient money had been sent to London prior to that time to meet the colony's engagements.

The HOME SECRETARY: But he says that every farthing of that money went to pay interest.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS : Why don't you quote his words ?

Mr. GLASSEY : The Auditor-General's report will bear out all that I now say. I shall not prolong the discussion now, because I shall have ample opportunities of speaking on the subject.

The PREMIER : I would like to say a word in reply. I read this morning the Auditor-General's report on this matter, which was commented on at the time the report was published in 1893, and he says that the floating of the loan was not necessary. Of course that is on the assumption that the Queensland National Bank was prepared to meet its drafts. But it appears that it was not able to do so; and the credit of the colony being the paramount matter for consideration, I think the Government of the day did a wise thing in seeing that the credit of the colony was established independent of the Queensland National Bank. As implied in the letter, the then Government might have compelled the Queensland National Bank to close its doors. Perhaps it would have been a very good thing if it had done so at that time; I do not say it would; but if you take a generous view of the position you will admit that the Government of that day did the best thing in the interests of the colony. At any rate, the interest on the public debt had to be paid to secure the credit of the colony, and they provided for the interest. As far as I could see

on looking into the matter this morning, the only point in which the Treasury is connected with the matter is this: They had a draft which was payable in London by the Queensland National Bank which ought to have matured before interest was due, in which case the bank in London, independent of the funds in Brisbane, ought to have been able to pay the whole of the interest. But by some means, which I cannot now explain, this draft was not credited to the Treasury until the 3rd January. But even admitting some delay in its transmission, anybody knows that a draft of that sort might have been discounted ten or twenty days beforehand, so I cannot see, if the Queensland National Bank was in a good position, why this Bank of England loan should ever have been taken up at all. It was simply because they were not in a position to meet their liabilities at that time. The only matter in which I was concerned in regard to the floating of the loan in the beginning of 1893 was whether it should be underwritten or not. I was consulted in the matter when I took office without portfolio—doing as I thought the best I could for the colony; and I distinctly advised—considering the fate of the previous loan, which we all know was a terrible blow to the colony—that the amount of commission would be well expended in having the loan underwritten, and it was underwritten. That cost us about £17,000; but the loan was a success, and I believe it was a success on account of being underwritten. That is all I had to do with the matter.

Question—That the paper be printed—put and passed.

TRUSTEES AND EXECUTORS BILL.

MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message, intimating that the Council had agreed to the amendment made by the Assembly in this Bill.

TOWNSVILLE MUNICIPAL LOAN BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message intimating that the Council had agreed to this Bill with amendments in which they requested the concurrence of the Assembly.

Ordered that the message be taken into consideration at the next sitting of the House

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK.

LOAN FROM BANK OF ENGLAND.

Mr. GLASSEY : If the House will permit me I would like to move, without notice—

That an address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be laid upon the table of the House all papers, telegrams, cablegrams, Executive minutes (if any), and any other papers in connection with the paying of interest that fell due 20th December, 1892, the borrowing of the £600,000 from the Bank of England, and the floating of the loan of February and March, 1893.

The SPEAKER : If I remember rightly, notice was given by the hon. the senior member for Toowoomba of a similar motion at an earlier part of this sitting.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : That has been withdrawn.

The SPEAKER : I understand from the Clerk that the notice given by the hon. member for Toowoomba has been withdrawn. Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. member move the motion without notice ?

MEMBERS on the Government side : No, no !

Mr. GLASSEY : Then I give notice of the motion I have just read for to-morrow.

ACTING CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

The PREMIER : In the absence of the Chairman of Committees, I move that the hon. member for Oxley, Mr. Grimes, be Chairman of Committees for the remainder of the sitting.

Question put and passed.

SOUTH BRISBANE MUNICIPAL LOAN BILL.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

The House in Committee having agreed, on the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES, to the Council's amendments in this Bill, the Bill was ordered to be returned to the Council, with a message intimating the agreement of the Assembly.

ABORIGINALS PROTECTION AND RESTRICTION OF THE SALE OF OPIUM BILL.

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

On clause 3—"Interpretation"—

Mr. BATTERSBY: A reserve was defined as "any reserve heretofore or hereafter granted in trust," etc., for the benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants of the colony. About twenty years ago, he believed in 1876, when the Hon. John Douglas was Secretary for Lands, a reserve of 3,000 odd acres was proclaimed on the half of Durundur Run for which the lease was about to expire, and the Secretary for Lands, the late Mr. R. J. Smith, the Hon. H. C. Wood, and Mr. S. B. Nicholson were appointed trustees. The land so reserved was the pick of that part of the run. Sufficient money was collected to keep the aboriginals of the Moreton district in tucker, clothing, and medicine, but ten years afterwards the trustees were abolished, and the land had since been known as a police paddock. He wished to know what was the position of that land at the present time? For some years the paddock was rented for £60 per annum.

The HOME SECRETARY: What has that to do with the Bill?

Mr. BATTERSBY: When he had attempted to give a history of the reserve on the second reading of the Bill he had been told that he should do it in committee. During the last two or three weeks the hon. gentleman had dumped some niggers down on the reserve, and he was going to try and prevent that. The hon. gentleman would do more good for the aboriginals if he would allow them to roam about and place a sum of money at the disposal of the police in order to provide them with food and blankets. Instead of that, the hon. gentleman was employing Archie Moston and his son and two or three others to muster the blacks and try and keep them in a paddock. Was that Christianity? It appeared that the hon. gentleman had been got at by someone. If the Home Secretary had been amongst the blacks as much as he had been during the last thirty years, he would not do what he was doing now.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I trust the hon. member will address himself to the clause, and not make a second-reading speech.

Mr. BATTERSBY: At the present moment the Home Secretary was having houses built on the Durundur reserve. Mr. Moston's son had been shifted back to Fraser Island since the row, and the man who had been at Fraser Island at that time had been brought down to Durundur, and so had the nigger who had got drunk and kicked up the row. The reserve had been proclaimed at a time when they had had no population. It had cost the Government something like 4s. 6d. a rod to fence it in—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: The Committee is now supposed to be discussing the interpretation clause, while what the hon. member is referring to would better come on in connection with clause 8.

Mr. BATTERSBY: The Home Secretary now said that he could give his explanation when they came to clause 8. He was sorry the hon. gentleman had not said so before.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 and 5 put and passed.

On clause 6—"Protectors to be appointed"—

Mr. BROWNE: The Home Secretary might inform them as to how many protectors would be required, what would be their status, and so on. Were the blacks in the North to receive different treatment from those in the South?

The HOME SECRETARY: He did not propose to create any billets under this Bill that would involve expenditure. His idea was that the senior officer of police in the district would be a protector, but where there were mission stations, such as that at Batavia River, the superintendent might be appointed. Any person who by his work showed sympathy with the desire of the legislature might occupy this position provided that it would not clash with the protector appointed to the district.

Mr. SIM asked if it were intended to give the protectors any additional pay for their services, and to whom would they be responsible for their conduct?

The HOME SECRETARY: It had not been decided whether any additional pay would be given, but he would consider the matter when he had found whether much additional work was required. Police who were also clerks of petty sessions received an extra £15, and if they did the work of mining registrars they received £10 additional. He hoped that the work would be done without any additional pay, but it would be taken into consideration in the matter of promotion.

Mr. HOOLAN: It was in regard to the remuneration that the trouble would arise. The police had already very great powers vested in them, and now the hon. member proposed to increase those powers. He thought the police were unfitted for these positions, for the simple reason that the protectors should be men which were imbued with some religious sentiment, if not a very strong religious sentiment. Now, although the police were very good in their way, they were known to be entirely free from anything like religious convictions or prejudices; and to carry out these duties properly and raise the blacks to a better state of mind, religious sentiment was necessary. Those who had cure of their bodies should also have cure of their souls, and therefore he thought the religious bodies should take this matter in hand. In the matter of making converts he thought the Salvation Army took pride of place, because when they once made a convert they never let him go. Amongst the Army there were already aboriginals doing very well, and in a far better condition of mind and body than those under the charge of Mr. Moston. It was turning the Bill into ridicule to provide that protectors should be appointed, and at the same time lay it down that the police should be the protectors. Instead of emanating from a high Christian principle on the part of the Home Secretary, it seemed rather to emanate from the strongest sense of irony, because the police had been cruel oppressors of the blacks. The hon. gentleman might intend that the best way to give relief to the blacks was to get rid of them altogether, instead of allowing them to lead a wretched existence; and if that was the case he was going the right way to accelerate their disappearance. Some of the religious bodies would have no time to spare on the aboriginals, but if the hon. gentleman would place the Salvation Army in the position of protectors, they would readily respond. They treated with kindness and consideration everything in the shape of humanity, and they deserved a prominent position in the Bill. It was a matter for consideration whether the police force had so much improved that they were capable of occupying the position in which they were placed under the Bill; but they were not fit to occupy the

position unless it could be proved that they had something like a religious belief. If the blacks had souls to be saved they should not be handed over body and soul to a lot of blundering policemen.

Mr. KEOGH: Whenever any attempt had been made to convert the blacks they had reverted to their original state. He thought the best religious tuition they could have was sufficient to eat and sufficient to drink. He would like to know from the Home Secretary whether it was his intention to give the catering for the black people over to private individuals, because in his opinion the catering could be better done by the Government. Recently the hon. gentleman had shown that £500 had been spent at Deebing Creek. He did not say that that money was wastefully expended, but it certainly should not be handed over to private individuals for expenditure. It would be better to remove the blacks at Deebing Creek to Durundur, where they would be better cared for and be in their natural element. One of the great difficulties was to keep those people from drink. Every day at Ipswich he had it brought under his notice that they still followed the same old practices. He did not object to them getting plenty of tobacco, which was as much a solace to them as to the white man, but he would remove them from all surroundings where they would be tempted to drink.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I call the hon. member's attention to the fact that his remarks are more applicable to clauses 9 and 10. We are now discussing clause 6.

Mr. KEOGH hoped his suggestion for the removal of the blacks to Durundur would be carried out.

Mr. SMITH: The suggestions of the hon. member for Burke were well worthy of consideration, and the Home Secretary had already adopted one of them when he said that if he could get missionaries to undertake the duty he would appoint them. The whole question was one of expense. The hon. gentleman was taking advantage of the machinery he had at hand—namely, the police, and there was no question that the head of the force was imbued with a very kindly feeling towards the aboriginals, and would see that his men treated them in a kindly spirit. He thought, as a starting point, they might accept the police as the guardians of the aboriginals, and subsequently the ideas of the hon. member for Burke might be developed.

Mr. HOOLAN: Hon. members might think he spoke in jest, but he was going to divide the Committee on an amendment embodying his views. Although he was not very religious himself, he did not wish to deprive the blacks of all the benefits which religion conferred. He recognised that the religious bodies did a great deal of good; far more than he did as a politician. Assuming that the black man had a soul, what he (Mr. Hoolan) wanted to do was to remove him from the surroundings of the rascally, rum-sodden, crime-sodden white man. Legislation was stepping in too late to save the bodies of the remnant of that once numerous race; the white man with his crimes had merged his body and his diseases into theirs. Therefore if there was anything to save it was not their bodies but their souls. He challenged the religious people in the Assembly to say that the blacks and the half-castes had not got a soul, and the question he would put to the Committee was, what was the best way to set about saving those souls.

The HOME SECRETARY: Is this acting or real?

Mr. HOOLAN: It was real. He took up no religious position himself, nor did he wish to force his views on others; but he would ask those hon. members who bowed their heads when

the Speaker read prayers to look into the matter, and if they voted against the amendment he intended to move directly—if they would make no effort at establishing a religion for those poor benighted blacks—they were hypocrites. It was a part of his mission in life to unmask hypocrites. And the Home Secretary asked him if he was acting! He hurled back the insinuation with all the scorn it was possible for him to command, and would repeat for the hon. gentleman's own behoof the words he used recently to the hon. member for South Brisbane—"Suspicion haunts the guilty mind." It was the hon. gentleman who was unreal; he was an unreality as a leading politician, and if he was stripped of his tinsel and gilding he would stand there and be nothing at all.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to address himself to the clause. I do not know what his proposed amendment is, but his remarks are very far from the question before the Committee.

Mr. HOOLAN: He was maintaining that no protection to the blacks that did not protect their souls would be of any use, and he would move that the following words be added to the clause: "the religious denominations of all kinds to have the priority under this Act."

The HOME SECRETARY: Though the teaching which the hon. member urged was no doubt very good in its place, it had never been recognised here as being a function of the State. The rule they had laid down all along the line was that the functions of the State were of a material kind. The functions which the hon. member laid down were the functions of society, philanthropic and religious bodies, and they did the work which the hon. gentleman asked that the State should do. He had never said anything which would cast ridicule upon religion, and never would, and he need say no more on the subject of the amendment than that he very much regretted that the hon. member had introduced it. The hon. member's motives were no doubt as good as his own, but no person who understood how Queensland was constituted would come to the conclusion that the State should take upon itself the function of teaching religion to the blacks. The religious bodies could teach them that. All they could do was to teach them the next thing—cleanliness, for they were told that cleanliness was next to godliness. His object was to take this race and feed and look after them. It was for others to take up the ground suggested by the hon. member.

Mr. HOOLAN could not reconcile the hon. gentleman's very grave statement with the practice of Parliament which commenced its functions with prayer, and should continue and end them with prayer. The hon. gentleman said that it had never been recognised that the State should exercise that function, but it had never been recognised before that there should be special legislation for the protection of aboriginals. It was suggested that hostility might arise from the introduction of religion into politics, but such hostility could not arise under his amendment, because it was wide enough to embrace all religions and even to please the infidel. He would be sorry to suggest that the work should be entrusted to a particular sect, and from his hazy position as a Roman Catholic he was prepared to give the prior position to the Salvation Army, though the two represented the extremes of religion as practised to-day. He put them forward because it seemed to him, judging by results, that they were best fitted to undertake the duties. He intended to divide the Committee on the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: With regard to the observations of the hon. member as to the value of religion, all

great societies had been animated by religious spirit, but it was a question as to how far Parliament was justified in taking up the position of a religious light. Their ancestors had entirely given up adding to their legislative duties the duty of teaching the people which of a large number of differing religions was the right one. Who was to decide under the Bill as to who should get priority?

Mr. HOOLAN: The Governor in Council.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Then he would be very sorry for the Governor in Council if he had to decide that. The difficulty was shown at present in dealing with the question of State education, and it led to a great deal of trouble before the Education Act was passed. The object of the hon. member might be good, but the amendment was impracticable, and if carried would probably arouse animosities, which it was the object of all well-meaning men to allay if possible.

The HON. G. THORN gave the hon. member for Burke credit for good intentions, but was sure that if the amendment was carried it would have the very opposite effect to that contemplated. Some years ago he was travelling with a Mahometan, who told him that in Turkey it took 25,000 police to keep the Christians from killing one another. He said that a religion could not be a good one when those who professed it hated one another so, and that it was not likely that a Christian parson would make a convert of a Mahometan in Turkey. He (Mr. Thorn) was afraid that if the blacks saw that the parsons hated one another, it would have the same effect upon them, and that they would remain in a state of savagery. He hoped the hon. member would not press his amendment.

Mr. DAWSON thought the hon. member for Burke was joking when he first stood up, but it now appeared that he was in deadly earnest, and he was sorry to find that such was the case. The subject introduced by the amendment was one of the most delicate and dangerous that it was possible for any hon. member to introduce in that Chamber. He did not think it would do any good to hon. members, to the aboriginals, or the people of the country to have a dissertation on the different forms of religion, or on religion or no religion. It would be as well to go to a division at once and get the painful subject done with before any damage was done.

Mr. COLLINS: The object of the Bill was to improve the material condition of the aboriginals, and he hoped the hon. member would not press his amendment, which affected their spiritual condition.

Mr. KEOGH did not think that any priority should be given to any sect or denomination to teach any people, whether they were black or white, and he agreed that it was quite wrong that this matter should be introduced into the Committee. If the amendment was carried, it would merely be the thin end of the wedge of religious teaching in State schools, and Roman Catholics would be entitled to claim that the same sum should be granted to them as was voted for the religious instruction of the aboriginals of the colony. He did not mean to say that Roman Catholics should be treated in the same way as aboriginals, but that if the principle of applying State moneys to purposes of religious instruction was adopted, that denomination should receive generous consideration.

Mr. HOOLAN did not wish to rake up religion at all, but if it was raked up he was there. Any day the question of denominational education might be brought up in that Chamber; he might bring it up any day himself, and when the question was brought up it would have to be faced. The Secretary for Public Instruction pitied the Governor in Council if he had to

appoint anyone under the clause. The clause distinctly laid down that the Governor in Council should appoint protectors, and the hesitation which had been shown in stating who were to be the protectors had caused him to move his amendment. If the police were to be the protectors, then the religious bodies should also be appointed protectors, and they and the police would have a mutually controlling effect upon each other. He had moved the amendment to give the blacks the best possible protectors.

Mr. KIDSTON was unable to support the amendment. The Bill provided for the material well-being of the aboriginals, and they could all approve of that, but the question raised by the amendment was very much open to dispute, and it was a mistake to introduce it.

Mr. KERR: The hon. member for Burke had for years past very closely studied the habits of blacks, and had come to the conclusion that it would be better for the persons he had named to be protectors. Those who had taken notice of what had been done by religious denominations for the blacks must admit that none had been so well taken care of as those who were under the Salvation Army. If the amendment went to a division he would vote for it.

Mr. FOGARTY hoped the hon. member for Burke would not call for a division. The question under discussion was a very delicate one. The Home Secretary deserved very great credit for his effort to improve the condition of the blacks, and no doubt their material condition would be much improved. There was no probability of the amendment being carried, and even if it were carried it could do no good. Perhaps twenty years hence the aboriginals would have become at least semi-civilised, and they might then be in a position to say what particular form of religious teaching they would prefer. He was unable to discover, from the amendment, in what way it proposed to give the same rights to all religious bodies. He asked the hon. member for Burke to withdraw the amendment, and let them proceed with the business.

Mr. STEWART was sorry he could not support the amendment. He would ask the hon. member for Burke to consider the probable effect if it were carried. If a number of sects applied to the Home Secretary for permission to go into these reserves for the purpose of seeing to the souls of the blacks, the hon. gentleman would be in a difficulty as to priority, and he would solve the difficulty by giving them all permission. Then every aboriginal would have about a dozen different sects talking to them at one time. The hon. member could imagine the Babel that would lead to. No doubt the hon. member had moved the amendment with the very best intentions. He seemed to have come to the conclusion that not only had the blacks souls, but that he had one himself. He did not know what evidence the hon. member had to lead him to come to that opinion; there was no sign of it in his outward appearance.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member is becoming rather personal.

Amendment put and negatived, and clause put and passed.

Clause 7 put and passed.

On clause 8—"Reserves to be subject to regulations"—

Mr. BATTERSBY said there was something like £60 to the credit of the trustees of the Durundur reserve in the Bank of New South Wales, and he would like the Home Secretary to get that money and hand it to the sergeants of police to be laid out in food and clothing for the blacks, for whom it had been collected. He did not see why the blacks there should be living on charity while that money could be made available.

The HOME SECRETARY : That matter had no relation to the Bill. If the hon. member would come to his office he would get every information.

Mr. BATTERSBY : He had often brought this matter forward during the last two years, and each time he received an evasive reply. He knew that if he went to the hon. gentleman's office he would be told that there was no power to interfere with the trustees.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 9—"Aboriginals may be removed to reserves"—

Mr. JACKSON : On the second-reading debate the Home Secretary said that it was not the intention to restrict the aboriginals to reserves altogether, but to allow them to go about hunting. But he noticed that Mr. Meston in his report said there was no prospect of doing any good without suitable reserves and absolute isolation from contact with the whites, except those appointed to control them. Further on he said that isolation from whites was the principle adopted in Canada and the United States; that to keep aboriginals away from whites was the most beneficial act of friendship it was within their power to bestow, and that it was the only possible method of saving the race from extinction. There seemed to be a general idea that the blacks were nomadic in their habits, and that it would be cruel to restrict them to the reserves; but he thought their roving habits were owing to the necessity of seeking for food more than to any particular desire to roam about. Reference had often been made to the fact that aboriginals who had been taken away and educated amongst white people had afterwards returned to the tribes to which they originally belonged. Those examples were quoted to show that the aboriginals were incapable of being civilised, but he was inclined to think that they could be settled on reserves as proposed. There might be a difficulty in establishing mission stations in mineral districts in the North, and he would like the Home Secretary to give some idea as to his intentions on that point.

The HOME SECRETARY looked upon this clause as one of the most important in the Bill. The idea was to bring these persons under some sort of discipline and curative treatment. He had a very sad narrative in connection with the Cook district. The inspector, referring to the Musgrave station, spoke of 450 aboriginals, very few of whom might be considered as not requiring hospital treatment at once, and went on to say that if there were a few more who worked like Sergeant Whitford amongst the blacks, all would soon be well. The idea of these reserves was to set apart places where the blacks could find a home. The segregation of the blacks on an island like Fraser Island was satisfactory, but it would not be satisfactory on the mainland. Mr. Meston reported that the station at Fraser Island was in a highly satisfactory condition. The blacks there were healthy and content, and not one of them desired to go to the mainland. There were seventy-six of them, and lately they had supplied themselves with food to such an extent that they received only 50 lb. of flour daily. They had done a considerable amount of clearing and burning off, and they lived on terms of friendship with one another. The sum of £40 had been paid for the residence lately occupied by Mr. Mitchell. The buildings had been carefully pulled down and re-erected seven or eight miles away at a cost of £20, and the whole of the blacks were now comfortably housed. At Durundur there was a small two-roomed house for a superintendent, but none had yet been appointed, as there was no need for one until the

blacks were brought there. The half-caste, Percy, referred to by the hon. member for Moreton, had been working there assisting the contractors, and Sergeant King described him as one of the best boys he had ever seen. According to Mr. Meston's report the aboriginals were perfectly happy at Durundur, and that settlement could be made an ideal one. While he wished to get power to take the aboriginals to centres where every consideration would be shown to them, yet whenever the existing conditions were in accordance with the laws of humanity, and some pretence at a home was provided, no interference would take place. But in places where opium was distributed they would have to be taken to reserves, where they would be well cared for. He did not contemplate establishing more than three reserves in the South, and in the North he did not propose to establish reserves except so far as they would form centres for operations in the direction of improving the condition of the people. He should endeavour to add to the staff of the police office an inspector who would be a medical man, who would travel round the different centres, and in a kindly way indicate the best methods of giving medical assistance to the blacks. If it were possible, he should be glad to get such a man as Dr. Roth, who had an intimate acquaintance with the aboriginals, and who understood how amenable they were to kindly treatment.

Mr. LORD had received a letter from a station-owner who was very humane and kind to the blacks, and who had had blacks on his station for many years, pointing out that a great deal of harm was likely to be done if the power of enforced removal was too strictly enforced. The blacks on the station referred to were clothed and fed, and the children sent to school, and he (Mr. Lord) should be glad to know whether the words "if in the opinion of the Minister satisfactory provision is otherwise made" would allow of blacks, who were in the position he indicated, being exempted from the operation of the clause?

The HOME SECRETARY : The provision the hon. member quoted was put into the Bill to meet such a case as had been mentioned, but it would be very jealously used. While the protectors would do all they could to see that the interests of the blacks were studied, they would be made aware that very often the interests of the aboriginals were made subservient to the selfish interests of the whites. If they were being kept at certain places simply to provide cheap labour, or for worse purposes, the provision the hon. member mentioned would certainly not be brought into operation.

The HON. G. THORN : The objection to the removal of aboriginals from one part of the colony to another was largely a matter of sentiment, as had been proved by the report on the Durundur reserve. He did not altogether approve of the latter part of the clause, believing that when the blacks lived happily together the Minister should not have power to remove them from one reserve to another.

Mr. BATTERSBY : Under this clause the aboriginals would be treated as criminals, as there was the power of removal and confinement within certain limits. When the second reading was going through they heard a great deal from the Home Secretary about his Christian feeling towards the blacks. Where was it shown in that clause? He hoped the Committee would assist him in negating it.

Mr. KEOGH wished to know whether it was the intention of the Home Secretary to remove the aboriginals from Deebing Creek to the Durundur reserve? Mr. Meston had suggested that that should be done, and as the blacks there

frequently came into Ipswich and got grog it would be the means of doing them good if they were taken to Durundur.

Mr. BATTERSBY: He should like to have a distinct reply from the Home Secretary to the question asked by the hon. member for Rosewood. Durundur was in his electorate, and if the hon. gentleman intended to shift the Ipswich blacks there, he would hear a good deal about it. They were prepared to take any amount of trouble with their own aborigines, but they did not want others.

Mr. KEOGH: As he had asked his question in a respectful manner he thought he deserved an answer.

Mr. KERR: The hon. member for Moreton had often posed as the champion of blacks, and now he refused to have them brought from any other portion of the colony into his electorate. He had it on the best authority that the Ipswich blacks were very depraved, and he thought it would be a wise thing to remove them to Durundur.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 10—“Aboriginals excepted from liability to removal to a reserve”—

The HOME SECRETARY explained, in answer to the hon. member for Rosewood, that he had nothing to do with Deebling Creek. The place was conducted by a religious body, who made satisfactory provision for the blacks, and while they did so on general principles there the blacks would stop. If they wanted him to draft some to Durundur, and he thought it would be to their benefit to do so, they would be drafted to Durundur. What would be done would depend entirely on the circumstances in each case.

Mr. BELL reminded the hon. gentleman that he had not yet carried out his promise to have the report of the Protector's visit to Charleville printed, and he suggested that the report of the visit to Gayndah might also be printed. He asked whether the clause gave the administrator of the Bill power to permit any blackfellow remaining on a station to receive Government rations, or whether it was not possible under the clause to say that he must be removed to a reserve before he could receive any support from Government? He questioned whether subsection (d) of the clause gave the necessary power. If it did not he was prepared to move a subsection to provide for it.

The HOME SECRETARY: The power was ample with the 9th section. There was no hard-and-fast rule laid down casting upon the Minister the duty of removal, and as a guide to the intention of the legislature he had himself added the words in clause 10 providing that amongst the persons exempt from removal to a reserve there should be those “for whom, in the opinion of the Minister, satisfactory provision is otherwise made.” The two clauses operating together would give absolute discretion to the Minister in regard to any removal.

Mr. BELL was very glad to hear that, because in his opinion it was possible that a Minister might under the Bill consider himself justified in refusing Government rations to aboriginals on stations. He emphasised what the hon. gentleman had said, because he had in his mind the case of two aboriginals on a station for whom he had asked Government assistance, and he was told the Government were unable to grant it. However, they had the assurance of the Minister, and he was satisfied with that.

Mr. BOLES knew that there were many blacks who had been about stations all their life, and they would be very uncomfortable if called upon to leave them. He thought the clause would meet the difficulty.

Mr. BATTERSBY: This clause stated that the doing of certain things should be penal. He would like to know who was to prove that those things had been done? The Bill was a Meston Bill, and it was a fool of a Bill.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 11—“Persons who are prohibited from entering a reserve”—

Mr. BROWNE pointed out that in this clause only a maximum penalty was specified, while in clauses 14 and 21 both the maximum and minimum penalty was fixed.

The HOME SECRETARY: The clauses in which there was a minimum penalty fixed were misleading, and would have to be amended, inasmuch as under the Justices Act the justices had a discretionary power, even where the legislature had fixed a minimum penalty. If in their opinion injustice would be done by imposing the minimum penalty they could reduce the punishment.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 12—“Aboriginals and half-castes may be employed”—

Mr. LEAHY: This clause provided that a protector might permit any aboriginal or half-caste, who before the commencement of the Bill was employed by any trustworthy person, to continue to be so employed by such person. He knew of two half-castes on a station in the West who for the past twelve years had been in charge of mobs of cattle going into New South Wales. It would be simply absurd to apply the provisions of the Bill to that class of people, and he thought the word “half-caste” in the first line of the clause should be struck out. There were two classes of half-castes, those who generally went with the blacks, and those who went with white people, and the provisions of the measure might very well be restricted to those half-castes who would come within the definition of an aboriginal—that was, those who habitually lived or associated with aboriginals.

The HOME SECRETARY: The very class of persons he wanted to get at were the half-caste girls out in the West and other places. There were a large number of them all over the country, and it was desirable that they should be placed under the care of some responsible person. A half-caste was defined as “any person being the offspring of an aboriginal mother and other than an aboriginal father,” and under the present law relating to reformatories every child born of an aboriginal mother was a ward of the Home Secretary until he or she was twenty-one years of age. He could bring them in at any time, and had often done so. Some half-castes were the offspring of an aboriginal mother and a kanaka father, and he was informed that in the Gayndah district there were a number who were the children of an aboriginal mother and a Chinese father. What harm could there be in saying that all half-castes should have the permission of a protector to be employed by some trustworthy person?

Mr. LEAHY: It is absurd that men in charge of a mob of cattle should have to go to a policeman and ask permission to be employed.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member took the case of the boys, but left out of his consideration the girls, of whom there were a number out West. The State said that no one should employ a kanaka unless he signed an agreement. The only object was to see that half-castes understood the conditions under which they worked, and it would not be wise to exclude them from the clause.

Mr. LEAHY: So far as he was concerned they might bring all the half-castes in the West under the clause, but surely the interpretation clause drew the line distinctly between what was an aboriginal and what was a half-caste. If

a half-caste girl was in the service of white people, why should she be compelled to come under a protector? Some of them could read and write, and were very intelligent. Of course if a girl elected to go with the blacks, she at once came within the definition of "aboriginal." He knew of instances in which half-castes had charge of 500 or 1,000 head of cattle, and had five or six white men under them. He knew one man out on Cooper's Creek who was the son of an aboriginal mother, and who owned 1,000 head of cattle. Surely it was not intended that the Bill should apply to such a man as that! He knew as much about the condition of things in the West as most people, and he trusted the Home Secretary would reconsider his decision. As the hon. gentleman had said, there was not a great deal in this particular clause, but it was the first clause in which the term "half-caste" was applied, and it was necessary to raise the question there in order to preserve the harmony of the Bill, and there would have to be several consequential amendments in subsequent clauses. In several of those clauses much more serious questions were involved than in this clause. There was no parallel whatever with the kanaka the hon. gentleman had spoken of. It was required that a kanaka should understand the agreement he was signing, but it was not provided that an aboriginal or a half-caste should understand anything about the agreement. It was a principle in British law that it was better that a great number of guilty persons should escape than that one innocent person should suffer an injustice; but the Bill would affect a great many people prejudicially. The Bill, if it were not amended, would have the effect of driving those people back to the blacks, which was the very thing they did not want to do. He moved the omission of the words "or half-caste," in line 28.

Mr. KERR was rather favourable to the clause as it stood, so that it might protect the half-caste girls to whom the Home Secretary had alluded. He had known of a case in which a half-caste girl, who had been living with some white people, left them and got into bad company, but they had no power to make her return. It was only right to give power to someone to prevent those girls falling into bad habits. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Bulloo that there were numbers of very intelligent half-caste men—men who were as intelligent and as cleanly as any white man, and it would be very hard if they were driven back into the blacks' camps.

Mr. BELL had been disposed at first blush to follow the hon. member for Bulloo, but since the Home Secretary had raised the point with respect the half-caste girls he had changed his views. The hon. member for Bulloo had suggested the inclusion of the word "girl" after the words "half-caste," and if the hon. member would withdraw his amendment and move the insertion of the word "girl," he would support it. There were numbers of half-caste girls who did not associate with the aboriginals sufficiently to bring them under clause 4, but the conditions of whose association with white people was anything but commendable. It was very desirable that in their case there should be some parental jurisdiction. The same condition of things did not apply to half-caste men. Some of them were superior men, while the others who were not superior would bring themselves within the definition of aboriginals.

Mr. LEAHY asked if the Home Secretary would be prepared to accept an amendment in that direction?

The HOME SECRETARY: The legal interpretation will be exactly the opposite to what you want.

Mr. LEAHY: He would like the hon. member to explain what he meant.

The HOME SECRETARY: The clause had the same effect as a proviso. If they decided that an inspector could permit a half-caste female to engage herself, the court would construe that to mean that he could not permit a half-caste male. He would meet the hon. member as far as he could when they reached the restraining clause 14.

Mr. BROWNE thought they had better stick to the clause as it was, because he could see that the amendment would have the opposite effect to what was intended. Somebody always suffered under legislation of this kind, but that could not be helped.

Mr. FITZGERALD: The matter was more serious than it appeared, and it was a question whether they had any right to deal with half-castes at all as they were defined by the Bill. Clause 9 did not refer to half-castes, so that although they could not be put upon reserves, they had to go to the protector for permits to work.

The HOME SECRETARY: One of the functions of the Bill was to remove all aboriginals to reserves, but one clause said that certain half-castes should be included as aboriginals. Only last week he had a telegram saying that a man of grossly immoral character was travelling with a half-caste girl about fourteen years of age towards Cloncurry. Of course that man had no proper purpose in view; but if he had been a man of good character and wanted the girl to assist him in his home, the protector would permit her to go. The clause was intended to prevent half-caste girls being kept on stations for no moral purpose. The girl was not restrained, but her improper employment was prevented. In fact, the Bill took the place of a parent to the female child of an aboriginal mother, and said that no engagement should be made with her without the consent of the State.

Mr. LEAHY had no wish to press the amendment. This was experimental legislation and he had no doubt that experience would prove the necessity for amendment. He might say that the hon. gentleman could do no good for those girls.

Mr. BELL differed from the Home Secretary when he said that the insertion of the word "girl" after "half-caste" would complicate the Bill and create confusion. In order to prevent confusion the Committee had only to put in a clause stating exactly what was meant.

Mr. LEAHY, by permission, withdrew his amendment.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 13 put and passed.

On clause 14—"Harbouring of aboriginals and half-castes prohibited"—

The HOME SECRETARY: This clause dealt with the question of the employment of aboriginals and half-castes. He did not want to deal with half-castes who were able to look after themselves, but he would move the insertion of the word "female" before "half-caste" on the 3rd line.

Amendment agreed to; and clause passed with a consequential amendment.

On clause 15—"Aboriginals and half-castes to be employed under written agreement"—

After consequential amendments,

Mr. BROWNE: He had alluded to this clause on the second reading, and had had an amendment drawn preventing the employment of aboriginals by coloured aliens. He moved the insertion of the proviso "that it shall not be lawful for any coloured alien to make any such agreement with, or employ, an aboriginal." If the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill showed that this was unworkable he would withdraw it.

The HOME SECRETARY thought the hon. member would be wise to withdraw the amendment. This Bill was intended to deal chiefly with aboriginals on the mainland. The Premier had under consideration a Bill dealing with those employed in the bêche-de-mer trade, but was awaiting the report of the Royal Commission. The Government were fully aware of the abuses that existed, and were satisfied that the trade, under present conditions, could not be allowed to exist under any civilised Government. He would ask the hon. member not to press his amendment, as the matter would receive the very serious attention of the Government.

Mr. HAMILTON: It was well known that abuses existed in the bêche-de-mer trade, and that outrages had been perpetrated by both coloured aliens and whites. He had repeatedly brought those abuses under the notice of the Government, and on his suggestion two clauses were inserted in the Bill introduced last session, which time did not permit being passed. One provided that the engagement of every native must be recorded in the shipping office; that he must be discharged in the presence of the shipping master, and that for every native found on board not so engaged a penalty of £25 would be inflicted. It would therefore be seen that the Government were last year fully alive to the abuses about which the hon. member for Croydon sought to give them information.

Mr. BROWNE admitted that aboriginals were employed chiefly by coloured aliens engaged in the bêche-de-mer trade, but pointed out that many were employed by Chinamen on the mainland.

The HOME SECRETARY: Regulations will be made prohibiting the employment of native women by Chinamen.

Mr. BROWNE: He was glad to hear that. After the explanation of the Home Secretary he would withdraw his amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Question put and passed.

Clause 16—"Conditions as to payment of wages"—put and negatived.

Clause 17 passed with consequential amendments.

On clause 18—"Prohibition of removal of aboriginals from one district to another or beyond the colony"—

Mr. HAMILTON: Frequently black boys were employed travelling with cattle. How would they be affected by the clause?

The HOME SECRETARY: The permission of the protector would have to be obtained. The object of the clause was to prevent kidnapping. What the hon. member referred to could be provided for in the regulations. If an aboriginal was lawfully employed, the protector would allow him to be employed in Queensland.

Mr. BELL: But if he has to go over the border with his employers' cattle.

The HOME SECRETARY: Then he should have the authority of the protector.

Clause passed with a verbal amendment.

On clause 19—"Possession of blanket, etc., issued to an aboriginal or half-caste a punishable offence"—

The HOME SECRETARY moved that after the word "issued" the words "by any officer of the Government" be inserted.

Mr. BOLES: He did not think that would accomplish the object the hon. gentleman had in view. In many districts blankets were sent to the station owners for distribution to the blacks.

The HOME SECRETARY: They were issued by an officer of the Government and bore the Government brand.

Mr. BOLES contended that the station manager who obtained the blankets from the police magistrate for distribution was not an officer of the Government.

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

On clause 20—"Penalty for supplying liquor to aboriginals and half-castes"—

Mr. BOLES drew the attention of the Home Secretary to the excessive minimum fine proposed. He often gave an old black whom he knew a glass of liquor. He thought the minimum penalty of £5 was altogether excessive.

The HOME SECRETARY pointed out that there would have to be a reasonable administration of the Act. The clause had been in force for years, and was now transferred to this Bill. When he was at Tewantin the other day he gave the aboriginal who pulled him in a boat a glass of liquor; but no sane man would go on to a bench and punish him for it. Those people had to be treated as children, and the net must be wide enough to catch all who injured them.

Mr. BOLES: The clause said that the fine should not be less than £5, when a fine of £1 might meet the justice of the case.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is covered by the Justices Act; and besides that the Bill does not bind the Executive, who may remit the fine if it is £10 or £20.

Mr. JACKSON: There would have to be a very liberal interpretation put upon the Bill, as the penalties were very high. Under clause 14 any person permitting an aboriginal to be on his premises was liable to a fine not exceeding £50 and not less than £10. Under the Publicans Act the fine for supplying aboriginals with liquor was £1, and under the Sale of Liquor Act of 1895 the penalty for a first offence was "not exceeding £20," and for subsequent offences up to £50. If the clause was interpreted literally it would be impossible to get aboriginals to do any work on stations, because they would not work without some grog.

Mr. KERR was in favour of the clause as it stood. The hon. member for Kennedy ought to know that it was almost impossible to get convictions against publicans for supplying aboriginals with liquor. No bench would interpret the Bill as the hon. member had interpreted it.

Mr. BOLES did not suppose that anyone would prosecute a person for giving an aboriginal a little liquor for work done, or by way of a gift, but still he thought that even where a publican gave a darky two or three nobblers the fine was altogether out of proportion to the offence. To test the feeling of the Committee he moved that the words "and not less than five pounds" be omitted.

The HOME SECRETARY: Sooner than keep the Committee up any longer I will accept the amendment.

Mr. KERR thought the minimum fine should not be reduced, as it was well known that persons, even after they had been fined for supplying drink to niggers, continued supplying them with liquor, and it was very difficult indeed for the police to get a conviction in such cases.

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

Clauses 21 to 31, inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 32—"Regulations"—

The HOME SECRETARY moved that subsection 14, which empowered the Governor in Council to make regulations authorising a protector to inflict summary punishment upon aboriginals or half-castes, be amended by inserting, after the word "punishment," the words "by way of imprisonment for fourteen days."

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY did not like subsection 16 at all. He did not want to be bothered about aboriginals and half-castes selecting land, and he moved that the subsection be omitted.

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

Clause 33 put and passed.

On clause 34—"Certain half-castes may be exempted from provisions of Act"—

The HOME SECRETARY said that if this clause had been noticed before it would have saved a great deal of discussion. He remembered having given instructions for its preparation, but it had escaped his notice. Under it certain half-castes could be exempted from the provisions of the Act.

Clause put and passed.

The schedule and the preamble put and passed.

The House resumed; the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the third reading was made an Order of the Day for Monday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I move that this House at its rising do adjourn until Monday next.

Mr. BROWNE: I believe some arrangement has been come to with regard to this, but to-morrow is private members' day, and I have been asked to mention that there is a Bill on the paper for to-morrow which is of great importance to hon. members on this side—that is the Shops Early Closing Bill—and I would like to know whether an opportunity will be afforded for its consideration in committee if we adjourn over to-morrow.

The PREMIER: So far as I can see, ample opportunity will be given to discuss that Bill and all the other business on the paper. If hon. members on the other side have any particular subject to bring forward I think I can guarantee that an opportunity will be given to discuss it.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER: I move that this House do now adjourn. On Monday we shall take the State Education Act Amendment Bill, and after that Supply.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at eighteen minutes past 11 o'clock.