

they ought at once to proceed to pass such of the others as there was no objection to, leaving the remainder to stand over for further consideration.

Mr. ROSS remarked that the Engineer-in-Chief, at the request of Mr. Anderson, promised to supply a statement of the estimated cost of each of the proposed lines, but that information was not contained in the printed paper which had been circulated amongst honorable members that night; in fact, the Engineer-in-Chief mentioned that the information could not be prepared in less than about three weeks.

Dr. DOBSON said the absence of the information referred to by Mr. Ross was no justification for retarding the progress of the Bill. Dr. Hearn had tried to hoodwink the committee and create the impression that the present Government had neglected their duty in not supplying more information with respect to the various lines contained in the measure, but the fact was that they had furnished as much information as had been supplied by any previous Ministry in connexion with a Railway Construction Bill. It would be absurd to delay the measure until an exact estimate of the cost of each line could be obtained.

The Hon. J. LORIMER submitted that the discussion was altogether irregular.

Mr. ZEAL contended that Dr. Hearn's assertion as to the want of information in regard to the various lines proposed in the Bill was quite unjustified. The fact was that there had not been so much information furnished with respect to any previous Railway Construction Bill as had been supplied in connexion with the present Bill. Only seven of the proposed lines had not been surveyed, and the printed document circulated amongst honorable members that night contained a note with reference to each of those lines. One of them was the line from Coburg to Somerton, which was inserted during the passage of the measure through the Assembly, and the note as to that line was as follows:—

"This country is so well known that it was not difficult to form an estimate of the cost of construction without a survey. An engineer is now sent there."

There was a similar memorandum in regard to each of the other unsurveyed lines.

The CHAIRMAN.—It will be necessary to postpone the schedules to the Bill before the committee can go back to the postponed sub-sections of clause 3.

The whole of the schedules to the Bill were then postponed, and the committee

proceeded to consider the postponed sub-sections of clause 3.

On the 2nd sub-section (Alphington and Heidelberg Railway),

The Hon. J. BALFOUR moved that the sub-section be further postponed. He said that a poll of the inhabitants of Heidelberg would be taken in a few days as to the question of the site for the terminus of the proposed line.

The sub-section was postponed, as were also the 4th sub-section (Avoca and Ararat Railway), and the 6th sub-section (Coburg and Somerton Railway).

On the 7th sub-section (Ballarat Race-course and Springs Railway),

Mr. McCULLOCH suggested that the sub-section should be postponed. The Ballarat district was already well supplied with railways, while there were many districts without railway communication to which the Bill did not propose to make lines.

The sub-section was carried without a division.

Mr. McCULLOCH said he understood that every line to which objection was raised was to be postponed.

Dr. DOBSON remarked that this line could be recommitted.

The 8th sub-section (Beaconsfield Railway), the 9th (Brighton and Picnic Point Railway), and the 11th (Clifton Hill and Royal-park Railway) were postponed.

The Hon. J. CAMPBELL observed that, as perhaps the youngest member of the House, he ventured, with great diffidence, to offer a suggestion on the subject under consideration. Were honorable members a board of directors carrying out works which affected their own pockets, and a dispute arose as to the locality in which the works were to be constructed, what would they do? Why they would see the country for themselves. And why should not that course be pursued by a select committee of the Council with regard to those of the lines in the Bill which were in dispute? Were this done, honorable members could collect information for themselves, and be able to judge of the facts with their own eyes, and there would be no occasion to bring the mountain to Mahomet, as the bringing of witnesses from all parts of the country, to the Council bar, might be likened to. It had been the practice, in connexion with the public business of the country, to appoint commissions to investigate matters of far less significance; and he did not see why a similar instrumentality should not be resorted to in connexion with railway lines which would involve the

expenditure of millions of money, and the construction of which might spread over six or eight years, and materially interfere with the condition of the labour market. He would suggest the appointment of six or seven members of the Council as a select committee, to visit the districts through which the disputed lines would run, and to take evidence on the spot. The inquiry might occupy perhaps a month, but that time was small compared with the time which would be occupied in the construction of the lines.

The **CHAIRMAN**.—The question which the honorable member has raised can be entertained only on motion submitted in the House.

Mr. **CUTHBERT** considered Mr. Campbell's suggestion a very good one. He believed the appointment of such a select committee would be the means of saving a great deal of time. Certainly it would be a great relief to many persons who, because of the remoteness of the districts in which they lived, could not come to Melbourne to give evidence without experiencing much inconvenience. From his professional experience he knew how much more competent were a jury to give a correct decision if they were enabled to inspect the locality which formed the subject of an action at law than if they had to be content with oral evidence. The only difficulty about the matter was that perhaps seven members of the House could not be induced to devote the time necessary for the inquiry. (Mr. Wallace—"The number need not be seven.") True, the committee might be limited to five, and, with the assistance of a shorthand writer and the engineer who laid out the lines, they would probably be able to furnish such a report as would dispel all doubts that honorable members had previously entertained with regard to the lines in dispute.

Mr. **MACBAIN** remarked that no doubt any suggestion offered by Mr. Campbell—whose ability, as exhibited outside Parliament, was admitted on all hands—would receive very serious consideration. But there would be great difficulty in carrying out the suggestion now made. In the first place, it was doubtful whether seven members of the House could be induced to take the responsibility of such an investigation; in the second place, whatever evidence they might take would be open to all kinds of criticism; and, in the third place, if the Ministry were to consent to such a committee they would abdicate the functions devolving upon them under the rules of

constitutional government. It should be recollected that what Mr. Campbell suggested should be done by a select committee had already been done by the Minister of Railways. Indeed, that honorable gentleman was held up to public obloquy for daring to interfere in matters which, it was said, pertained only to the professional officers of his department. But the Minister of Railways wanted information to justify his proposals to his colleagues, and he obtained it; and the Bill was the result. He (Mr. MacBain) believed there would be no difficulty in the Council dealing fairly with the whole of the railway lines proposed by the Bill without resorting to the machinery recommended by Mr. Campbell.

At this stage, progress was reported.

The House adjourned at nineteen minutes to eleven o'clock.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, November 28, 1882.

Metropolitan Reserves and Gardens—Assent to Bills—
Railway Department: Wheat Shipments and Wharf
Accommodation: Employment of Labour: Engine and
Tender Buffers—Irrigation—Order of Business—Land
Acts Continuation and Amendment Bill: Second
Reading: Sixth Night's Debate.

The **SPEAKER** took the chair at half-past four o'clock p.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Sir **B. O'LOGHLEN** presented messages from the Governor, intimating that, at Government House, on the 22nd November, His Excellency gave his assent to the Married Women's Property Act Amendment Bill and the Temporary Advances Bill, and that on the 23rd November, he gave his assent to the Consolidated Revenue (£653,785) Bill, the Loans Redemption Bill, the Inscribed Stock Bill, and the Hobson's Bay Railway and Bendigo Waterworks Debentures Redemption Bill.

PARKS AND GARDENS.

Mr. **BOSISTO** asked the Minister of Lands if it was the intention of the Government to hand over the control and management of the reserves and gardens in and around Melbourne to the City Corporation, or if the agreement now in force would be renewed at its expiration? Early in the session the Premier promised that an opportunity would be afforded to the House for