

BILL VALIDATES SALE OF OLD MOSSMAN TRAMLINE

BRISBANE, November 4.—The transfer of ownership of a 60-year old tramway line in the Mossman district is validated under a Bill introduced in Parliament to-day by the Local Government Minister (Mr. L. H. S. Roberts).

The bill validates an agreement between the Council of the Shire of Douglas and the Mossman Central Mill Co. Ltd for the acquisition by the company from the council of the tramway line, with certain of its appurtenances.

CANE HAULAGE

Mr. Roberts said the tramway was used to carry passengers and goods from Mossman to Port Douglas when it was built 60 years ago. It was now used solely for the haulage of sugar cane to Mossman Central Mill.

In view of this, he stated, it was obvious that the tramway should be operated by the mill.

Under the bill, the tramway would be deemed to be vested in the Mossman Central Mill Co. Ltd. as from January 1, 1959.

The Mossman Mill will take over £60,545 in loans on the tramway, and in addition pay the council £2000 a year for five years.

The Opposition leader, (Mr. J. E. Duggan), said the amount of money mentioned seemed to be conservative for the sale of an undertaking which had operated over 60 years.

He sought an assurance from the minister that the mill had not forced any unduly hard terms on the Douglas Shire Council.

Mr. Duggan said that if a sugar mill or any other sector of the State's economy elected to take advantage of mechanisation to make it more economic to market a commodity, there was an obligation on them to accept, as part of the capital cost of new plant, the cost of transferring homes of people, particularly in isolated places such as Port Douglas.

He said that waterside workers at Port Douglas had lost employment on the wharf, and had difficulty in obtaining alternative work in the town or nearby.

NO HOME SALES

It was impossible for Port Douglas people to sell their homes at an economic price, and some of them were still living in the town and travelling to and from Cairns each day to work, he added.

Mr. H. A. Adair, (Q.L.P. Cook), said he felt the council had been bulldozed by the mill and the Government into agreeing to the price for the tramway.

Rate-payers in the Douglas Shire believed the 24-mile tramway was conservatively worth £300,000, he added.

Mr. Roberts said he could not visualise any great market for used tramline in Queensland.

"I feel that when the time comes for this line to be pulled up, you will find that Mossman Mill has paid quite a handsome price for the service they get from it," said the minister.

"RIDICULOUS"

The minister said it was ridiculous to suggest that the council would have the line valued in its books for anywhere near £300,000.

It was expected the life of the tramway would be a very short one, because motor transport would play an increasing part.

The mill could be faced with very heavy expenditure in building a new railway bridge. It was considered, in the main, that the price being paid for the tramway under present conditions was fair and just, said Mr. Roberts.