

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 2 MAY 1865

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 2 May, 1865.

Meeting of Parliament.—Attendance of Members in the Council to hear the Governor's Speech.—Adjournment to three o'clock.—Address in reply.

At twelve o'clock this day,

The Honorable Speaker and members of the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Governor's Speech, and having returned, the Speaker left the Chair, and gave notice of his intention to resume it at three o'clock p.m.

The SPEAKER having resumed the Chair, after the disposal of some routine business,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, according to usage, presented a Bill for the consideration of the House.

THE ADDRESS.

On the motion of Mr. WATTS, a Select Committee was appointed to prepare an Address in reply to the Opening Speech. The Committee having retired for a short period, returned with the following Address, which was read by the Clerk of the House:—

“To His Excellency Sir GEORGE FERGUSON BOWEN, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same, &c., &c., &c.

“MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

“We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Legislative Assembly in Parliament assembled, desire to assure your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the person and Government of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present Session.

“2. We receive with deep satisfaction your Excellency's announcement, that Her Majesty's Government has seen fit to accede to the earnest desire expressed by ourselves, in common with the other Australian Legislatures, that the transportation of criminals to any part of this continent should be discontinued; and we confidently trust that this generous compliance with our wishes will have the effect of still further strengthening the strong feeling of regard which unites these colonies to the mother country.

“3. We are gratified to learn that the progress of northern settlement has been satisfactory, and anticipate much advantage from the additional representation now enjoyed by the newly constituted districts.

“4. We thank your Excellency for your assurance that the provisions made for the introduction of immigrants have attained their object, and that the important public works referred to by your Excellency have been well executed.

“5. We shall not fail to give our careful attention to the whole question of steam communication between Australia and Great Britain, as well as to the other measures indicated by your Excellency's Speech.

“6. In conclusion, we feel much pleasure in again returning your Excellency's congratulations on the continued prosperity of the colony. We trust that we may be enabled, under the blessing of Providence, to contribute in some degree to the maintenance and increase of that prosperity.”

Mr. WATTS: Sir, I rise to move that the Address in reply to the opening Speech of His Excellency the Governor, as read by the Clerk, be now adopted by this House. It will be necessary for me to occupy the time of the House for a short period, to say a few words on the subject matter of the Address. I must confess, sir, I feel proud to undertake this duty, though I experience at the same time a degree of sorrow, when I recollect that in taking my position in this House I occupy a seat which was so worthily filled during the last session by a late honorable gentleman, a member of the Executive. I feel, sir, that I, as well as every member of this House, have lost a dear friend, and that the colony has been deprived of the services of an able minister and a faithful servant. Having said thus much, I will now address myself to the question before the House. I repeat, sir, that I am proud in having been called upon to move the Address in reply to His Excellency's opening Speech. I believe it is customary to entrust this task to a new member. I am to a certain extent a new member, for although I occupied a seat in this House as representative of a constituency during the first session of the first Parliament of Queensland, it was my lot to resign it, and subsequently to accept a seat in the Upper House. It affords me great satisfaction to become again a member of the Legislative Assembly, to perceive many new faces around me, and to see the same Ministry occupying the Government benches. It is usual, I believe, for a new member who moves the adoption of the Address to express his faith in the whole policy of the Government. I will say upon this, as I have upon other occasions, that I believe in the general policy of the present Ministry, and that I shall do all I can to support them in their position. In saying so, however, I do not bind myself to become a blind follower of the Government. Whenever my opinions are at variance with the views they put forth, I shall feel it my duty

to express them, and I shall upon every occasion record my vote conscientiously. It is a matter of congratulation to find that the anticipations contained in the speech of His Excellency the Governor at the opening of the first Parliament of Queensland have been so fully and literally fulfilled. Our harbors and rivers teem with shipping, the population of the colony has rapidly increased, and the statistics given in the last paragraph of the Vice-Regal Speech to-day, are sufficient proof that similar progress had been made in all the essentials necessary to advance the interests of the colony. Not only has our population been largely increased, indeed doubled, but it is being daily augmented; our trade and commerce have also greatly increased; our general prospects are improved, and our revenue has been proportionately enlarged. I think, sir, we cannot fail to repose a certain amount of confidence in a Ministry, under whose auspices these changes have been effected, who have held their seats during a period of five years, and who have introduced the laws under which we now live. I do not say that these laws have been altogether the work of the Government, for I do not forget that honorable gentlemen on the other side of the House have lent their aid in maturing and perfecting them. I have but little to say, sir, in reference to His Excellency's Speech. It refers to the proposed introduction of several important measures, and I am glad to learn that among these will be a Bill for the establishment of district courts. I believe, sir, this will prove as useful a measure as has been introduced by any Legislature. In the absence of such courts, residents in the interior of the colony have found that justice was not to be had. Many persons have, in fact, preferred to lose their cases, and even sacrifice a great portion of their property, rather than come down to the settled districts of the colony to sue for justice. I believe it to be the duty of the Legislature to extend as far as possible, even to the more northern portion of the colony, the provision for establishing courts of justice, and also district courts. I think, sir, it is unnecessary for me to say more in support of the Address, and I will therefore briefly move that it be adopted by this House.

Mr. MILES seconded the motion. He said, in doing so, he did not in any way pledge himself to the policy of the Government. As long as they introduced measures which in his opinion were calculated to advance the interests of the colony, he should support them. He did not propose to make any lengthened comments upon the Vice-Regal Speech, or the Address in reply, the honorable member who had preceded him having treated the subject so fully. He would, however, observe, in reference to the proposed establishment of district courts, that he represented a district which was from 300 to 500 miles distant from the nearest Circuit Court, and he could state from his own ex-

perience that residents in that district suffered themselves to be robbed with impunity rather than incur the expense which a journey over such an extent of country necessitated. He thought honorable members on both sides of the House ought to view the question as one of the highest importance. The establishment of district courts would, he felt convinced, be a very great boon to a large portion of the community. There was only one other point in His Excellency's Speech to which he would allude, and that was the proposal to amend the laws affecting the pioneer squatters. He thought that would be a highly beneficial measure, and one to which the squatters were justly entitled. He should therefore cordially support its introduction.

Mr. BROOKES said it was not his intention to occupy the time of the House at any length. But he wished briefly to express his opinion on the Address, and upon what had been said by the honorable gentlemen who had moved and seconded its adoption. He did not think a document of such importance as the Address in reply to the opening Speech of His Excellency the Governor, should be so hurriedly passed over. Possibly some good might accrue from the expressions of opinion from honorable members on his side of the House. It would, in his opinion, have been but fair if the honorable gentlemen who occupied the Ministerial benches had allowed members a little more time to consider the contents of the Address. It would be remembered that a similar remark formed the subject of conversation during a previous session. He observed in the *Times* that in England both the Conservative and Whig leaders were in a position to present copies of the opening Speech to their friends and followers before it was delivered. The adoption of such a practice in this colony would, he thought, tend to the public interest. Possibly no great evil arose from the absence of such a custom; but it might be introduced to advantage, as members on both sides of the House would then have an opportunity of giving more attention to the leading features of the Address. He was glad to observe that the Address itself was of a more promising character than usual. Honorable members were made to say that they were unanimous in expressing their gratitude to Her Majesty for the effectual stop put to transportation to these colonies. And no doubt they were. But there was a kindred question, to which neither the Speech nor the Address made allusion, and that was a question, not of convicts, but of Coolies. The best information he had been enabled to collect upon that question, had led him to form a very decided opinion upon it, and he wished very much that His Excellency's responsible Ministers had arrived as decidedly at the same conclusion. He regretted that some allusion had not been made to the subject. For his part, he considered that the introduction of Coolies would be a

distinct violation of the promise embodied in the fifth paragraph of the Vice-Regal Speech. Nothing, he thought, could be more effectually devised to put a stop to the adequate and sustained supply of emigration referred to in the latter portion of the clause than the introduction of Coolies. In times gone by the colonists were wont to talk of the three Cs—"Convicts, Chinamen, and Coolies." He would not, however, enlarge upon the question, but he must say he thought the Government had shown symptoms of having, at any rate, no very great repugnance to the introduction of this degraded race, and entertaining those opinions, they might go on from bad to worse. He trusted they would see the desirability of withholding all encouragement to those persons who wished to do nothing less than close this colony to the honest and industrious—perhaps starving—artisan in the old country, in favor of a class who would only differ from slaves in the merest technical distinction. He was glad to perceive that the Government had recognized the zeal and ability of the Agent-General for Emigration, and that they expressed their approval of the legislation of last session upon this question. He cheerfully accepted that portion of the Address, and he felt convinced that the whole colony would rejoice at Mr. Jordan's success, inasmuch as the whole colony had suffered from the interruption to the immigration caused by that gentleman's return. He saw that the public prints whether or not they were justified in doing so, he could not say, had alluded to some action taken by the honorable member at the head of the Government in reference to immigration. But with the document before him, which had just been read to the House, he (Mr. Brookes) had no desire to touch upon that point. He would merely express a hope that the honorable gentleman would never again come to the conclusion that he had any occasion for suspicion or mistrust. He was glad to find that the Vice-Regal Speech promised the introduction of a number of measures, some of them of a very urgent nature. He was especially pleased to note the proposed establishment of industrial and reformatory schools. For it was his lot to pass daily the only place in Brisbane in which the boys and girls who would form the inmates of those schools had to live at present. It had made his heart ache to see little children placed in such contaminating vicinity to the inhabitants of the Benevolent Asylum. He did not know, but he thought it probable, that the proposed measure had originated with the Honorable Minister for Lands and Works, for any person going in and out of that office could not fail to hear the coarse and disgusting expression which proceeded from the asylum. From this subject he was led to remark that there was a strange silence on the subject of national schools; he thought the question might have been treated at greater length. But with reference to the business nature of

the Address, he could not express the satisfaction with which he had listened to that portion of it which stated that during the present session the Government would not be called upon to avail themselves of the facilities which were afforded of borrowing money. That lifted up a corner of the curtain, and proved to him that the business of the country might be got through very well without unduly prolonging the session. As to the congratulations in which members were asked to join, and in which, no doubt, they did join, to a certain extent, in the rapid and solid progress of Queensland, he would point out to the House, that, however rapidly the colony progressed, the Government possessed the ability to make the expenditure quite equal to the revenue. The money was absorbed in salaries, in the creation of a multiplicity of offices, and in the administration of justice, which seemed a stock subject on which to hang the expenditure of any amount of money. In conclusion, he would express his satisfaction that the Anglo-Saxon and the Gulf of Carpentaria had both been left out of the Speech. He quite agreed with the honorable mover and seconder in the confidence they expressed as to the action they would take during this session. On such occasions it was an invariable rule to say that they would support the Government whenever they could do so conscientiously, and if not, of course they would go over to the opposition side of the House. He presumed the conscientiousness referred to meant political conscientiousness, and he therefore took these remarks at their proper value; they meant, no doubt, support of the Government on all occasions, through thick and thin. He was glad, however, to hear the honorable mover speak with some degree of justice of the members on his (Mr. Brookes') side of the House. It was highly satisfactory to know that the session would be commenced without an "organised Opposition." The organised Opposition was dead. It had been pointed out to him that more harm than enough had been done by it, for honorable members sitting opposite the Government, rather than be identified with an organised Opposition would vote with the Ministry. Now, those members were perfectly free, either to come to an understanding with the Government, or to oppose them, as they thought fit, and he trusted the Government would listen to their remarks upon the different subjects which would be introduced.

Mr. DOUGLAS rose to make a few remarks on the question before the House, and expressed his regret that he had not an opportunity of following his honorable and esteemed friend, the member for the Burnett, who was kept away by important private duties. No doubt the honorable member had satisfied himself, from the general tone of expression throughout the country, that the

political atmosphere was sufficiently tranquil to admit of his temporary absence from the considerable and important position he held in the House. He (Mr. Douglas) was perfectly aware, as the honorable member for North Brisbane had stated, that the organised Opposition was dead, and he fully concurred in what that honorable gentleman had said on the subject. But he should be sorry to think that organised opinion was dead also; for that alone, on one side or the other, where difference of opinion existed, was likely to conduce to good parliamentary government. He observed that many seats were vacant in the House, which was a further proof of the tranquillity of the political atmosphere; since honorable members had every confidence that their presence could be dispensed with during the ceremonial which had just been gone through. He felt, therefore, some little diffidence in criticising the Speech of His Excellency. He certainly looked upon it as perfectly inoffensive; there was nothing in it that he could take hold of, nothing that he materially objected to, and much that he cordially approved of, and which, if properly carried out, would be of great benefit to the country. The tribute paid to the late Colonial Treasurer by the honorable mover of the Address claimed, he thought, some remark from him. He felt sure that honorable members on his (Mr. Douglas) side of the House would cordially reciprocate those expressions of opinion. He had always recognised in the late Treasurer an upright and honorable gentleman—one who was fully identified with the best interests of the colony. Whenever that honorable member had entertained opinions contrary to his own or to those of any other member of the House, he had frankly expressed them. But on no occasion had he harbored in his mind any malicious or personal feeling upon such questions. He had always been ready to yield a point to his opponents, and had invariably exhibited that courtesy which was inborn to his nature. He (Mr. Douglas) would take the opportunity of congratulating the friend and relative of the late lamented gentleman, the honorable member who had succeeded him; and would remark that there was no gentleman whom he had more pleasure in seeing in the position of Colonial Treasurer than the honorable member for West Moreton (Mr. Bell). He would now make one or two remarks in reference to the subjects touched upon in the Address. He observed that the Legislature had been congratulated on the temperate tone of their addresses on the question of transportation. Whether they had surpassed the other colonies in this respect he could not say; but it was at any rate satisfactory to know that a question which had given rise to so much unpleasant feeling should be finally set at rest. In reference to another question referred to by the honorable member for North Brisbane, he would observe that he recognized the

existing law as giving effect to Coolie immigration. He did not think it probable that such immigration would take root in this country—that a race of Asiatics would settle down in any country governed by European laws. Still he could see no reason that, as nations increased in intelligence, and as the various powers of civilization exerted their influence, in the course of natural events, the two races should not harmoniously amalgamate. As far as he was concerned, he should respect that law. He did not say that he should endeavor to give force to it; but if the Legislature should be called upon to give effect to it, he should act in accordance with that opinion. A very important matter was referred to in the third paragraph of the Speech—"the term of office of all future Councillors." That was a subject which affected the fundamental principles of the constitution. He believed that a desire had been shown on his, rather than on the Government side of the House, not to make any changes in that constitution without the fullest and most careful consideration. He thought it might be well that a term for the tenure of seats in the Legislative Council should be laid down. It did not appear that the honorable member who moved the adoption of the Address had held his seat in very great estimation, since he had quitted it for a seat in the Assembly, where, no doubt, he found greater scope for his legislative abilities. He (Mr. Douglas) still thought it might be desirable to continue the nominative principle in the Upper House. He was aware that objections had been taken to that principle in Canada, and that it had been found a stumbling block in amalgamating the provinces of North America. The question was one, however, which could be discussed during the session. To pass over other important matters, he would next express his satisfaction at the probability that steam communication would be carried out *via* Torres' Straits. No doubt the experiment would be a costly one, perhaps exceeding the present powers of the colony, and would scarcely be embraced by the scheme defined last year by the honorable member at the head of the Government, in which the postal revenue and expenditure were to balance each other. That could hardly be the case if a vote of £30,000 or £40,000 were asked for this year for such a purpose. But there were other objects to be considered in the establishment of such a service. It was desirable that this colony should be brought into communication with the teeming populations of the east. If a market were to be found for the produce of the country—if Queensland were to become a great commercial country, something must be done to open up a trade with other ports. He observed that both the mover and seconder of the Address had laid considerable stress upon the eighth clause, which referred to the establishment of district courts. No doubt

those honorable gentlemen, coming from the country districts, had ascertained that considered difficulty was experienced by residents in the interior in collecting their debts. But there was another light in which the proposal might be viewed. It would afford the Government the means of conferring favors upon certain gentlemen of the long robe. No doubt there were gentlemen anxious to take office. He trusted the appointments would be of a satisfactory nature. Referring to the last paragraph, he should have been glad if the views he entertained had been similar to those expressed in the tenth clause of the Speech, in which His Excellency said he felt "justified in renewing his congratulations upon the rapid and solid progress of Queensland." The progress had certainly been rapid, but it was a question whether it had been so solid. Experience told him that his own progress had been neither rapid nor solid, and he had no doubt many honorable members could say the same. If individual rapidity and solidity had anything to do with those qualities in the aggregate, it would be very easy to come to a conclusion on the subject. It was to be feared that when the question of the Darling Downs assessments was discussed, the honorable member for the Western Downs would come down to the House and record an experience similar to his own. His (Mr. Douglas's) opinion was, that the prosperity which the colony at present enjoyed, resulted from the very considerable Government expenditure. He wished he could fancy it arose from the real productions of the country, which, however, did not, he believed, at the present time, equal those of three or four years ago, in proportion to the population. He trusted, nevertheless, it would be found that some of the measures indicated in the Vice-Regal Speech were calculated to stimulate the languishing industries of the colony. Every source of industry, whether pastoral, agricultural, or manufacturing, required, he felt convinced, closely looking after, and it would be found necessary to hold forth such inducements, which did not now exist, as would tend to more energetic efforts to develop the resources of the country.

Mr. R. CRIBB said he entirely approved of the Speech, and the Address in reply. His object in rising, was simply to express his satisfaction at hearing that the "organised Opposition was dead." He was overjoyed to learn that such a desirable event had taken place. He had considered it a very tiresome thing to sit in the House night after night listening to dreary speeches, containing no substance or point whatever, and he thought it was a matter of congratulation that the organised Opposition no longer existed, as the business of the country would be got through more harmoniously, and with much greater despatch.

Mr. FITZSIMMONS supported the motion, and expressed his satisfaction at the increased

representation given to the northern and western districts. He hoped the Government would use the energy they had hitherto shewn in forwarding the construction of a Great Northern Railway. He entirely approved of the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, and of the Address in reply, and trusted that the propositions they embodied would be effectually carried out.

The question was put and passed, and the Address agreed to *nem. diss.* The House then ordered that the Legislative Assembly, with the Speaker at their head, should wait upon His Excellency the Governor tomorrow, at half-past two o'clock, with the said Address; after which the House adjourned.