

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

TUESDAY, 7 MAY 1867

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DURING THE

FIFTH SESSION OF THE SECOND PARLIAMENT OF THE COLONY
OF QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA,

APPOINTED TO MEET

AT BRISBANE, ON THE SEVENTH DAY OF MAY, IN THE THIRTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER
MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, ANNOQUE DOMINI 1867.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, 7 May, 1867.

Meeting of Parliament.—Vice-Royal Speech.—Sewerage and Drainage of Towns Bill.—Address in Reply to Opening Speech.

MEETING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Parliament, which had been prorogued successively from the 23rd October, 1866, to the 12th January, 1867, and thence to the 7th May, 1867, met this day for the despatch of business. The Honorable the President and members of the Legislative Council assembled in the Council Chamber at noon, pursuant to the Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor, and the Proclamation was read by the Clerk of the House.

VICE-REGAL SPEECH.

His Excellency the Governor came down to the House in state, and having taken his seat on the dais, the Acting Usher of the Black Rod was directed to request the attendance of Mr. Speaker and the members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Honorable the Speaker and the members of the Legislative Assembly being present, and honorable members of both Houses being seated,

His EXCELLENCY was pleased to deliver the following Speech:—

“HONORABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“1. It is with much satisfaction that, at the usual period of the year, when it is most convenient for many of you to attend upon your Parliamentary duties, I again invite you to the consideration of the public business.

“2. I have much pleasure in directing your attention to the result of the Postal Conference which has lately been held at Melbourne. Papers referring to the proceedings will be laid before you, and your

sanction will be asked to the course of action agreed on. The experimental steam service *viâ* Torres' Straits, undertaken during the last year, has been conducted with moderate success, and its establishment as a permanent postal route is now recommended upon terms which may be considered advantageous to this colony, and which will afford additional facilities for postal and telegraphic communication to all the Australian colonies.

“3. The Leasing and Agricultural Reserves Acts have been brought into active operation during the recess, and the survey of crown lands has been vigorously prosecuted. Extensive areas have been proclaimed in the districts of Moreton and Darling Downs. An ample supply of suitable land has thus been secured for agricultural occupation; while, at the same time, an almost unlimited amount will still be available for competitive purchase and pastoral investment. The public domain is, happily, of such vast extent, and of such a varied character, that there can be no practical difficulty in supplying the utmost possible demand for the possession of landed property. I invite your special attention to a Bill which will be introduced to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the leasing of crown lands. It is of the highest importance that leasehold as well as freehold tenure should be placed on the most favorable footing possible; and my Responsible Advisers think that this may be done without detriment to the revenue, or without any sacrifice of those rights which it is essential to conserve for the public benefit.

“4. The arrival on our shores during the last two years of considerable numbers of unsuitable immigrants, whose passages were

defrayed from funds provided by the colony, has rendered it necessary to bring to a close a system sustained chiefly by borrowed capital, and liable in its operations to be abused. It is, however, important to keep in view the fact that no new country has ever advanced in material wealth and prosperity unless aided by the influx of an industrious population. A Bill on this vital question will be submitted for your consideration.

"5. The authorised public works are rapidly approaching completion. Already the most important and most expensive of our railway contracts has been finished, and the line to Toowoomba is now ready for traffic. It is confidently anticipated that in a few months other contracts will be brought to a close, and additional lines of railway thrown open for public use.

"6. Bills for the consolidation and amendment of the law of distress and replevin; of the law relating to small debts courts; of the police in towns; of the laws relating to bills of exchange, promissory notes, and cheques; with other measures of public importance, will also be laid before you.

"7. You will be requested to appoint a joint committee of both Houses to inquire into and report upon the monetary position of the colony; the interests of trade and commerce require that the principles of credit and of the currency should be thoroughly understood and appreciated. I commend to your dispassionate judgment this interesting subject, which so intimately affects the welfare of the whole community.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY :—

"8. The Estimates for the year 1868 have been prepared with the utmost economy consistent with the making due provision for the necessary expenditure of the year.

"9. My Responsible Advisers are of opinion that the time has arrived when it will be necessary to place the representation of the people on a footing commensurate with the altered circumstances of the country since the passing of the Constitution Act. Several populous places are now inadequately represented, while there are some extensive country electorates which may conveniently be re-adjusted. It is, however, essential, before making any changes involving such important consequences, that a true estimate should be formed of the number, character, and distribution of the population. With

this view, a Bill to authorise the taking of a census will be placed before you.

"HONORABLE GENTLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN :—

"10. Queensland, in common with the United Kingdom and the rest of the British Empire, has suffered severely from the financial crisis of 1866. Nevertheless, there are many encouraging features in the official returns. The export of gold during the past year amounted to £85,561. As compared with the neighboring colonies, we do not at present rank high as a gold producing country; but when it is remembered that but little capital has been hitherto invested in machinery, the amount just quoted tends to shew that the employment of the methods adopted elsewhere would in all probability confirm the opinion entertained by scientific observers, that our auriferous deposits are both extensive and abundant. Rewards have been offered for the discovery of new gold fields, and you will be asked to sanction the terms upon which they have been notified. In other new branches of productive industry remarkable progress has been made. The cotton crop of 1866 considerably exceeded in value that of 1865, and the still larger increase of this year places it beyond a doubt that, before long, the export of this valuable commodity will prove an attractive feature for the intending immigrant. The sugar-cane also is being extensively cultivated; refining machinery is being erected in both the Southern and Northern Districts, and there is every reason to anticipate that at no distant date the amount of sugar manufactured and of rum distilled, will much more than meet the large demand for local consumption. At the same time, our coal-fields are increasing both in number and in quality; and the rich copper mines of the North are being rapidly developed.

"11. From the published returns, it appears that our imports during the first quarter of last year amounted to £724,536, and our exports to £463,768. The returns for the first quarter of the present year shew, as nearly as can be ascertained, our imports as amounting to £473,597, and our exports to £645,572. This is the first period since the colony was established during which the exports have exceeded the imports, and I have much pleasure in offering my congratulations upon this subject.

"12. The matters to which I have directed your attention will, I am confident, receive your best consideration. I earnestly pray

that your deliberations may promote the general prosperity and future progress of Queensland."

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE OF TOWNS BILL.

The Honorable the POSTMASTER-GENERAL presented, *pro formâ*, a "Bill to provide for the sewerage and drainage of towns in the Colony of Queensland," which was read a first time.

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO OPENING SPEECH.

The Honorable the PRESIDENT read the Speech of His Excellency the Governor at the opening of the present session of Parliament. A select committee, consisting of the Honorable the Postmaster-General, the Honorable W. Hobbs, and the Honorable J. C. Heussler, was appointed to prepare an address in reply.

The committee retired, and shortly afterwards brought up 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,—

"1. We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Legislative Council 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 shall give our best attention to the papers laid before us relating to the Postal Conference lately held in Melbourne, and trust that your Excellency's anticipations of advantage to the Colony from the measures therein recommended may be realized.

"3. We are glad to learn that the Acts passed last session with a view to the settlement of the country have been brought into operation, and that measures have been taken for keeping the quantity of surveyed land up to the requirements of the public. Our best attention shall be given to any measure which may be introduced by your Excellency's Government for the improvement of the leasehold tenure of the crown lands.

"4. The question of immigration shall be considered by us with a care proportioned to its importance.

"5. We rejoice to hear that the public works of the colony are in so satisfactory a state.

"6. We shall be prepared to give our attention to the alterations in the law suggested by your Excellency's Speech.

"7. We agree with your Excellency's Advisers that the monetary affairs of the Colony demand a Parliamentary investigation, and to that end shall gladly co-operate with the Legislative Assembly, as may be deemed most advisable.

"8. We agree with your Excellency that the production of gold in the Colony cannot be expected to increase without the combined application of capital and labor, and trust that our quartz reefs, which we believe to be second to none in the Australian colonies, may soon attract the attention from capitalists to which their richness entitles them.

"9. We see with pleasure the increase of the several industries developed in the production of cotton and sugar, as well as the increasing value of our coal fields.

"10. We reciprocate your Excellency's congratulations on the satisfactory relation borne by our exports to our imports; and, in conclusion, trust that, by the blessing of Providence, the depression in our affairs will be found to have passed by, and that all classes of Her Majesty's subjects in the Colony of Queensland may participate in returning prosperity."

The Hon. W. HOBBS: Honorable gentlemen—I rise to move that the address which has just been read to the House be adopted. It is now some years since I had the honor of moving the adoption of a similar address in reply to an Opening Speech from His Excellency the Governor. At that time the colony had emerged from its obscurity—Mr. Jordan was in England, lecturing to the people at home, charming them with his descriptions of the resources of this colony and the liberality of our land laws, and inducing many to leave their homes and to emigrate to Queensland. Then a tide of immigration had fairly set in to our shores, agricultural settlement was advancing, new townships springing up, a pastoral population was spreading over a wide extent of territory, new interests were being created, and trade and commerce were flourishing throughout the colony. This state of things continued until the middle of last year, when the news of the

great commercial crisis reached this colony, and plunged it at once into embarrassment and distress. The effects of that crisis were sorely and severely felt. Immigration still continued—ships arrived which had been previously arranged for in England—and the consequence was that the immigrants, upon their arrival, found all the public works suspended and no field for employment open to them. Since that time—and but a few months have elapsed since then—this state of embarrassment and misfortune has more or less existed; but I shall be able to shew honorable gentlemen, from statistics, that, in spite of these disadvantages, the colony has still progressed. (Hear, hear.) I hear some satirical cheers from certain honorable members, but I think I shall be able to satisfy them by giving them—not my own bare statement that this is the case, but the facts and figures of the Registrar-General in confirmation. I have stated that, in spite of this embarrassment and the monetary pressure from which we have been suffering, the colony has continued to progress. I find that in 1865 our population was estimated at 87,775 souls. This was at the end of the year; and at the same period in 1866 it was 96,172, which shews a considerable increase. The amount of live stock had also increased considerably. On the 31st December, 1865, the number of sheep in the colony was estimated at 6,810,005, and in December, 1866, at 7,227,019, shewing an increase of 9.58 per cent. The cattle had increased from 887,856 to 919,393, or 8.37 per cent.; and horses from 51,091 to 52,291, or 2.35 per cent. The land under cultivation in December, 1865, was estimated at 14,414 acres, and in the corresponding month in 1866 at 24,433 acres. The quantity of wool exported was calculated at the end of 1865 to be 12,251,841 pounds; and in December, 1866, it amounted to 14,346,239 pounds, valued at £987,659. I quote these figures to shew that the colony has progressed, in spite of the monetary depression under which it has labored; and there is no doubt that it will continue to progress, if facilities in a money point of view are afforded, such as it ought to command. I make these observations at the outset, because I shall probably have to refer to them again. I will now invite the attention of honorable members to the several paragraphs in His Excellency's Speech. I think it is a matter of great congratulation, not only to the country, but to the Government, that the negotiations connected with the Postal Conference have been of so satisfactory a character. If honorable members will look over the papers having reference to this subject, they will see that the facilities for postal communication are very much increased, at an almost nominal increase of expenditure. Instead of one monthly mail, by way of Suez, at a cost of £10,000 a year, or thereabouts, we shall have fortnightly communication *via* Suez and King George's

Sound and by way of Singapore and Torres' Straits, and a third line *via* New Zealand and Panama. The advantage to the colonists of these additional opportunities will be great; for it will bring them in communication with America and with the various islands in the seas through which these mail lines pass, and also with New Zealand. The additional cost will be something like £14,000 a year, and we shall have three postal lines instead of one. The next subject referred to in His Excellency's Speech is the Leasing and Agricultural Reserves Acts. Honorable gentlemen are aware that this Act has only been in operation six months. During that time 29,000 acres have been taken up under its provisions; and in furtherance of the operations of that measure I see that the Government have wisely proclaimed extensive areas in the districts of Moreton and Darling Downs, their object being to prevent the country from being monopolized by a few capitalists, to the exclusion of agriculturists. Now, it is well known, and has been for years—and I believe it is well known in England also—that the Darling Downs is the garden of the colony, and that there are very few productions which cannot be raised in that fertile district. It possesses the advantage of a railway, and, instead of three days, the journey to Toowoomba can now be performed in six hours; the climate is most salubrious, the soil rich, and not too heavily timbered; it is in all respects all that an agriculturist can wish for. I have been informed that cotton can be grown on the Downs almost as well as on this side of the Range, and I believe it can also be produced on the Dawson. Under these circumstances the Darling Downs promises to be one vast cotton field, the produce of which can be conveyed by rail to the shipping ports at a moderate cost. In paragraph No. 3 I see it is the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the leasing of crown lands; and His Excellency states at the close of it:—"and my responsible advisers think that this may be done without detriment to the revenue, or without any sacrifice of those rights which it is essential to conserve for the public benefit." I do not know what is meant by "sacrifice of rights," for I am not in the secrets of the Cabinet, and I cannot say what may be the intention of this Bill; but I cannot conceive that any individual or class more than another can have any rights to be sacrificed, and I hope the Government do not contemplate doing anything to give one portion of the community an advantage over another; in other words, I hope this does not mean anything like the introduction of a further Leasing Act for either five or ten years leases. The railway having been made—and it was made in opposition to many honorable members in this House—it is essential, and indeed only fair, that the Darling Downs and West Moreton con-

stituencies who caused it to be made should allow the land in their districts to be reserved in order to pay for the great expenditure required for its construction. This, I think, is only fair and reasonable. Another subject referred to in the Speech is immigration. Five years ago this was in a prosperous condition—every ship brought out a large number of immigrants, who possessed capital and other qualifications necessary in a young colony. It was estimated, I believe by Mr. Jordan, in his evidence, that the immigrant ships in those days brought with them, upon an average, from £25,000 to £30,000 each. Unfortunately, the system under which that state of things occurred was interfered with, and upon it was engrafted another system, or rather an excrescence, which provided for the introduction of immigration from funds founded upon loans. I am of opinion that immigration should be self-supporting, and that if we encourage men to come out here we should offer them land in payment of their expenses; but I do not think it is a proper system to borrow money in order to introduce a class of immigrants who are likely to stay only a day or two here and then go elsewhere. The land order system was of such a nature that it required a man to remain in the colony two years before he could obtain his land, and during that time he became so wedded to the country that it would take a great deal to tempt him to leave it. A Bill on this question I see is also to be submitted for consideration, and I am sure honorable members will see the necessity of some alteration when they compare the immigration of late years with that of 1862. I may mention here, that in order to carry out that system properly it would be very desirable to secure Mr. Jordan's services again. He has never been a party to the excrescence which has been founded on the original system; but when he had entire control of the immigration under the land order system there was very little to find fault with;—it was not until the foolish tinkering with that system were commenced that we got into difficulties. With regard to the public works, I have very little to say. I am very glad to hear that the railway to Toowoomba is completed and open for traffic. There is, I am aware, an omission in this part of the Speech. No reference is made to the Brisbane bridge, which I consider almost as great a national undertaking as the railway. I think it was great folly to entrust such an important work to the Brisbane corporation, and I hope the Government will come to the rescue and devise some means of completing it. I pass over the sixth clause of the Speech, as I have no acquaintance with the legal measures to which it refers. There is, however, one subject upon which I must occupy the attention of the House for a short time, and I wish it had been alluded to in the first rather than

the seventh paragraph. I need not say that, in conjunction with other honorable gentlemen, I have been deeply concerned at the monetary position of the colony. In the exercise of my vocation I, of course, come into collision with many persons, and the great cry is that they have plenty of property but they can get no money for it. This state of things has occurred before now in England, and the Government have had to step in to relieve the country. I have before me a volume of the Imperial *Hansard* for 1826, during which year there was a great commercial crisis at home, and I find that when the King opened the Parliament this subject occupied the first clauses of his speech. [*The honorable gentleman read the opening speech of his Majesty King George IV., in the year 1826.—Vide "Hansard," 2nd series, vol. 14.*] During that session a select committee was appointed to consider the subject, and various suggestions were made. The Lord Mayor and aldermen and the merchants of London waited upon the Prime Minister, and urged him to adopt the course pursued by William Pitt in 1793, viz., to make advances on the security and deposit of goods. Great distress existed at that time, a great number of banks had smashed, and general commercial depression prevailed. The suggestion urged upon the Prime Minister was carried out, as I have stated, by William Pitt, on which occasion five millions of exchequer bills were issued and advanced to the merchants on the deposit of goods as security. It so happened that these five millions were more than sufficient—two and a half millions only being required; and, instead of losing by the transaction, the Government made a considerable profit to the revenue, the money having been borrowed at 3 per cent. and lent to the merchants at 5 per cent. Well, it was urged upon the then Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, that it was desirable to adopt this plan again, and Lord Liverpool refused at first to do so. They then called upon the Bank of England, as they looked upon that institution as unequal to carry out the monetary interests of the country, to give up that portion of its charter which prevented other banks from being established within sixty miles of London unless they had more than six partners. The consequence was that the Bank of England had to give in, and joint stock banks sprung up in every direction, and the commercial disaster was swept away. Other remedies were adopted, but I merely mention this to shew that when there is a commercial crisis it is the duty of Parliament to step in and endeavor to remove it. The subject is an inexhaustible one, and I will not trouble the House with any further observations upon it, but, if it goes to the length of a select committee, I may perhaps be able to lay before them certain facts and figures which have come to my knowledge lately. I have noticed the fact that the Registrar-General has shewn an increase

in the population of the colony to 96,172, and this brings me to the census referred to in the ninth paragraph of the Speech. In 1863 Parliament was dissolved, and a census taken before entering upon any railway expenditure—honorable members will find in the records of this House that I moved a resolution to that effect—and the consequence was that a Railway Parliament was returned. The population, which on the 1st January, 1864, was estimated at 61,457, having since that time shewn an increase of 35,715, I think that it is only fair that during the present critical juncture of affairs a fresh census should be taken prior to any dissolution which may take place; and I think it would be judicious to introduce an Electoral Act for the purpose of grouping together this population into something like fair electoral districts. The present distribution of electorates is anything but fair. There are some which do not contain more than twenty electors, and some which have probably but five or six;—in one election I think only three votes were polled, and that electorate returned one member. The district of East Moreton, which returns two members, and contributes largely to the revenue, had, I think last year, a roll of 1,500 electors, which has since greatly increased, and I have no doubt there are others in a similar position. I will only advert to one or two other topics in the Speech, and chiefly to cotton and sugar, both of which have considerably increased during the past year. I find that on 31st December, 1865, there were only 477 acres of land under cotton crops, while the quantity of acres estimated at the corresponding period of last year was 2,884 acres; there were 449 acres of sugar crops in 1865, and in 1866 607 acres. So that, as I have before observed, in all these essential elements of prosperity the colony has steadily progressed, notwithstanding the late monetary depression; but in consequence of the languishing state of our commerce it is necessary that something should be done this session to put the currency in a healthy condition, and to prevent our banks from inflating their circulation at one time and contracting it at another. If this be done I feel convinced that the country will advance instead of retrograde. I will now conclude by moving formally that the address, as read by the Clerk of the House, be adopted.

The Hon. J. C. HETSSLER seconded the motion, and observed that he could indorse the remarks which had fallen from the honorable member who had just sat down, especially in reference to the result of the Postal Conference, which he regarded as highly satisfactory. The advantages which would accrue from the establishment of the new route *via* Torres' Straits would be great; the colony would be connected with a large portion of the Asiatic Empire, and have direct communication with the East Indies. The increased expense, too, of £14,000 annu-

ally, would be considerably modified, inasmuch as some of the northern ports would be included in that route. With regard to the third paragraph, which referred to the introduction of a Bill to amend the laws relating to the leasing of crown lands, he would observe that, notwithstanding the passing of the Act last season, he still heard complaints outside from persons possessing from £400 or £500 to £1000 that they wanted to take up land, and could not obtain it. His idea had always been to have large agricultural reserves throughout the length and breadth of the colony, and especially in the districts below the Range, and in the Darling Downs. Unfortunately, there had been too many theories on the subject, and the ideas of moderate thinkers had not been adopted. He should be sorry if such reservations should press hardly upon any gentlemen owning property in what was termed the garden of Queensland, but that was unavoidable; and it was an old and well-known maxim of political economy, that the greatest good should be done to the greatest number. Some of those gentlemen, he believed, had made up their minds to turn their attention to cotton growing, and he could only say, he hoped they would be successful in their endeavors. With regard to immigration, he could not quite indorse all that had been said by the honorable member, Dr. Hobbs, about the introduction of unsuitable immigrants. It was impossible that Mr. Jordan could personally inspect all the immigrants who were sent out; he had to depend in a great measure upon the agents in different parts of the country. The great object, he thought, was to avoid placing too much power in the hands of any one mercantile firm—that had hitherto been the great fault, in his opinion. The honorable gentleman had spoken of £20,000 or £30,000 of capital arriving by each immigrant ship; but it must be remembered, that when such a state of things existed there was a great deal to do in the old country about Queensland, and many persons were induced to come out who were greatly disappointed when they arrived. For the future, more moderate expectations would be formed. In the main, however, he entirely concurred with the remarks of the honorable member. He was not in a position to say much about the public works of the colony. He had not been over the railways, but could not doubt that, in the absence of other modes of transit, they would do much to promote the traffic of the country, and ultimately yield a return for the money invested in them. He quite agreed with the honorable gentleman, that the Government during a commercial crisis had not only a right, but should consider it a duty, to seek for remedies; and although the science of banking had been greatly improved since 1826, an inquiry such as had been suggested, would doubtless be productive of much benefit. He fully concurred in the tenth paragraph of the Speech, in reference to

new branches of productive industry; and he was glad to see, in the eleventh paragraph, that the imports for the first quarter of the present year amounted to £473,597, and the exports to £645,572. That statement could, however, hardly be considered, in a commercial sense, as a correct index of the prosperity of a country, because there were countries who did not export quite as much as they imported, which were still rich, and *vice versa*. It was, nevertheless, a good feature to find the exports were in excess of the imports. He would not take up the time of the House at any greater length. He concurred with the honorable mover of the address, that the continued progress of the colony under present circumstances was a subject for congratulation, and he had great pleasure in seconding the motion.

The Hon. W. Wood said he had listened to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, and to the address in reply, as read by the Clerk, as well as to the speeches in support of it made by the honorable mover and seconder, and he could only regret that the honorable gentleman who moved it, who belonged to the Government, who was a Government official, had not considered it his duty to move it from his proper place on the Government benches. He did not intend, at that time, further to raise the question whether, under the Constitution Act, it was right to have five Government officers out of nineteen members of the House. So it was, however; first there was the honorable the Postmaster-General, the Collector of Customs, then the Immigration Agent—

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER: I must disclaim the honor of being Immigration Agent.

The Hon. W. Wood: At any rate, he (Mr. Wood) had seen the honorable member's name gazetted with the names of Mr. McDonnell and Mr. Lyons, as having received money from the Government for immigration; he thought, therefore, he was right in calling him a Government official. Then there was the newly appointed Health Officer, and the honorable member who was absent from the colony, the Parliamentary Draftsman. There were thus five in all, and he thought if the Government could only find Government officials to move and second the address, they should at least keep them on the Government benches. He only purposed to occupy the attention of the House for a short time on the subjects referred to in the address, as he would at once state his intention of moving an amendment upon it; and he trusted that when he had read that amendment some honorable member would move for an adjournment, in order that time might be afforded fully to consider the nature both of the address and the amendment. Before doing so, however, he wished to point out a few of the fallacies which had been advanced by the honorable mover and seconder in their speeches to the House. The former had quoted a long roll of figures in support

of his assertions—in fact, the honorable gentleman seemed stuffed with figures, which it appeared he had obtained from the Registrar-General's Report for 1866. Now, supposing such a report was in existence, he could conceive nothing more unfair than for one Government official to go to another Government official, and get out of him, for the purpose of making use of in the House, information which had not been laid before Parliament. The only report before the Legislature was that for 1865, which by no means bore out the figures quoted by the honorable gentleman, and, until that was replaced by a fresh return, the honorable member had no right to try and make the House believe in a totally different state of things. The honorable member might or might not be correct; at any rate, the House was in possession of no evidence for or against the figures he had made use of. He was glad to hear from the honorable gentleman who had seconded the address that the colony was not only exporting wool, but also cotton, sugar, and other productions. That was, no doubt, a gratifying fact, and very creditable to those gentlemen who had exerted themselves to promote the cultivation of those articles. The honorable mover had stated that the country ought to be very thankful that the railway to Toowoomba had been completed. His Excellency had been very reticent on that subject, and, for his part, before he indorsed the statement, he should be glad of some further information on the subject, which, perhaps, the honorable the Postmaster-General would be in a position to afford. The House had been informed that Toowoomba could now be reached in six hours; but that was, of course, only when the train did not run off the line. Then the honorable member had dilated a good deal on the cotton which could be grown on the Downs, and, of course, it was well known who was his authority—it would be sufficient to say that it was a gentleman who had lately visited his constituents at Dalby. The honorable member had also stated that he was not in the secrets of the Cabinet. He thought that was hardly fair, and that after the honorable gentleman had been seduced from the party with whom he had always previously acted, and robbed of the dignity which then attached to him, he ought to have been allowed a little glimpse into the Government policy—just a peep into the secrets of the Cabinet. Why should the Government put up a man to support such a speech—such an absurd speech—without allowing him to know what was really meant by it? The Speech, of course, like all speeches, merely consisted of a lot of words piled up together—one promise for one constituency, another for another, and a general effort to induce as many as possible to vote for the Ministry. The honorable gentleman had next proceeded to talk about the census, but he (Mr. Wood) should have thought that

honorable member must have known that the last census was taken at the wrong time, and was worthless, inasmuch as it was not taken at the same time as the imperial census, or that of the other colonies. The honorable gentleman had then gone on to say that in some of the electorates there were only some five or six electors. The honorable member must recollect, that even in his favorite districts, Brisbane and East Moreton, it was impossible to get all the constituents to vote; even in the City of London not more than one-third of the electors exercised their right, and it did not by any means follow that, because electors who resided at great distances from the polling places did not avail themselves of their privilege, the electorates contained an inadequate number. The honorable member had then made a long tirade against the banks, affirmed that they had been the ruin of the colony, and advocated the establishment of a national bank; but he had omitted to say whether that bank should be a bank of deposit only, or a bank of discount. He (Mr. Wood) did not intend to make any further comments upon the speeches of the honorable mover and seconder. The honorable gentleman who had seconded it, as a junior member, had made a very good speech, although, of course, he had only echoed what had been said by his Excellency, and the honorable gentleman who had preceded him. He was not, however, going to let off that honorable gentleman so easily. For the last seven sessions he had been a determined opponent of the present Premier's Government, and why should he turn round all at once and support the Ministry; and if so, why not, since he had been newly gazetted, go over and occupy a seat beside the other Government officials? There was nothing in the Speech or address that coincided with the views the honorable member had consistently advocated in the past, though it appeared that they agreed with his views for the future. He (Mr. Wood) was quite surprised to see a gentleman, for whom he had always entertained the highest respect, bought over so easily. Could it be that he had allowed himself to be placed in such a position for the sake of ousting a really good and deserving officer—was that really the cause of the wonderful change which had come over the honorable gentleman? He felt bound to make these remarks, as he felt that the honorable member, whom he had hitherto supported, had not acted up to his general principles. He would now move the amendment:—

We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, members of the Legislative Council of Queensland in Parliament assembled, desire to assure your Excellency of our loyalty and affection to the person and government of our gracious Sovereign; but, whilst thanking your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present session, we regret that we are unable to return the usual *pro forma* reply.

2. We consider that the formal resolutions and express wishes of Parliament when last in session have been unconstitutionally disobeyed and disregarded by your Excellency's Ministers during the recess.

3. We feel that Parliament, through those members of its body who have twice addressed your Excellency, has been treated with contumely and insult, and we must most respectfully decline to consider any of the topics of your Excellency's Speech, until the power of the people, as represented by Parliament, shall have been fully vindicated, the rights of both Houses re-asserted, and their dignity restored.

4. We trust that the essential elements of prosperity are still abundant in Queensland, and we unite with your Excellency in the expression of a fervent hope that the blessing of Providence may attend us in all our efforts.

The amendment might possibly take some honorable members by surprise, and he hoped, therefore, as it was not competent for him to move the adjournment of the debate, that some other honorable member would do so, in order that the address and amendment might both be placed at the same time in the hands of honorable members. He would observe that the amendment arose entirely out of the course pursued by the Government during the recess. Further than that, he declined to take the slightest notice of the Vice-regal Speech, until some satisfaction had been given for the insult which had been offered to the Parliament. The honorable gentleman at the head of the Government had informed the members who formed the deputation to His Excellency, that they were only private gentlemen during the recess. But Parliament had met, and they were private gentlemen no longer, but members of Parliament meeting the Government face to face, determined to have the answer to their request which was denied them in January last. Honorable members would recollect, that during the recess a large number of members of both Houses went up to Government House and obtained an interview with His Excellency, in order to protest against the continuance of the works on the Warwick Railway, which were being carried on against the express wish of the Legislature. Those gentlemen were met by His Excellency, and also by the present—or rather the late—Minister for Works, who had, he regretted to say, resigned. They heard then that the Premier was unwell, and they were informed that they would get an answer in a short time. After a short time they received an answer from the Premier, which he could only characterise as one of the most glaring specimens of special pleading which could be produced. Instead of leaving it to the Minister for Works, who was the proper officer to give the reply, and who was present with the Governor when the address was presented, the Premier had gone out of his way to impute all sorts of motives, and to state that, as a certain loan had been passed, it was impossible for the Government to

spend the money in any other way than that for which it was voted. He feared the honorable member and his colleagues entirely forgot that they had never expended one farthing of money for the purposes for which it was voted. In every case they had adopted a system of robbing Peter to pay Paul. Certain sums had been voted which they had expended just as they chose, totally ignoring the directions of the Legislature. The new Houses of Parliament were an instance of this; and the new Hospital another—where was the money voted for them? An Act of Parliament had been passed which authorised the sale of the site of the old Hospital in order to construct the new one; he would ask whether any such fund had been so applied. Many other similar instances could be shewn. The Warwick Railway itself, and the Dalby line, were commenced with money voted for the railway from Ipswich to Toowoomba; that had been acknowledged by the Government in both Houses, but they said that as the money had been voted for railway purposes, they considered themselves authorised to use it upon one line as well as another. In fact, the Government did not seem to have acted with the slightest intention of carrying out the instructions of Parliament; as soon as they got the money voted, they expended it on the first thing that came before them. Their only object appeared to be to try and borrow money for some fresh piece of reckless expenditure; and then they had attempted to prove that—although the colony was heavily in debt, and retrenchment had become absolutely necessary—unless sums of money which had been previously granted were expended for the purposes for which they were voted, faith in the colony would be lost. That appeared to him to be a most fallacious argument. For his part, he thought capitalists at home would be far more likely to lend money to a colony which shewed a desire to draw in its horns and make an effort to keep its expenditure within moderate bounds. But now, it was found that the course adopted by the Premier and his Government was such as to shew to the world that the colony was plunging deeper and deeper into debt. The reply which had been given to the deputation by that honorable gentleman had been characterised by the most insulting language. Words had been used which he would have been ashamed to employ if he had been face to face with the deputation. The course taken throughout by the Premier had been to insult the members who had dared to address His Excellency on the subject. The next course taken by the members who signed the memorial was to address a protest to His Excellency the Governor, which was signed, not as stated by the Premier by thirteen, but virtually by sixteen members of the Legislative Assembly, although the honorable gentleman chose to ignore

that three of those members were not then elected, and by nine or ten members of the Legislative Council. The request they then preferred was a very reasonable one—that Parliament should be called together as speedily as possible. His Excellency had chosen to inform them that he could not entertain their request when the Parliament was not in session—that the will of Parliament must always be considered, and that the Ministry could do nothing for which they were not accountable to Parliament. That being the case, the members in question very naturally considered that the sooner Parliament was called together the better, and they requested His Excellency to take that course in order that the Parliament, who were the masters of the Ministry, should be in a position to order their servants to do what they considered to be right. They did so at once, and their object in doing so was simply to enforce a resolution passed through the Lower House, and agreed to in the Upper House without a division. The resolution which was passed by the Assembly did not, through some inadvertency, pass through the Council, but should have been considered equally binding. The honorable gentleman who had just moved the address in reply was one of those who signed the memorial, and should, therefore, if any fault had been committed, be considered *particeps criminis*. Well, what answer was received? The first notice that any reply had been given, was through one of the newspapers, the *Brisbane Courier*, in which it appeared long before it was made by the honorable member representing the Government—in fact, it was not until some time had elapsed that it was published in the *Government Gazette*. It was all very well for the Premier to say that members of Parliament were only private gentlemen during the recess; if so, why did he not treat them as private gentlemen, and send an answer direct to them, instead of replying to them through the columns of a newspaper? All that those honorable members desired, was to pin the Government to the instructions given to them by the Legislature, which, in purely colonial cases, it was their bounden duty to obey. The Governor was not bound to follow the advice of his Ministers in all things, but he was bound to carry out the wishes of the Parliament; and it was only desired to shew that the Ministry were wrong—that they had acted uncourtously and as timeservers—in not calling Parliament together, in accordance with the wish expressed by the honorable members who signed the memorial. He would next refer to the first paragraph of the Speech, which contained the following words:—"It is with much satisfaction that, at the usual period of the year, when it is most convenient for many of you to attend upon your Parliamentary duties, I again invite you to the consideration of the public business." How

was that paragraph to be understood, when it was understood that Parliament was to meet three months after January—why should it have been a month later? One part of the answer, published in the *Gazette*, went on to say, that His Excellency could not interfere between his Ministers and the Parliament, unless on a question affecting imperial interests, or where it could be shown that a majority of the House had lost confidence in the Ministry, and that he could not see that either position was occupied. That statement was made in spite of the fact that the memorial was signed by sixteen members of the Assembly and ten members of the Council—an actual majority in each House. The last part of the answer was evidently the whole and sole production of the Vice-President of the Executive Council, and he (Mr. Wood) had not the slightest scruple about telling honorable members what he thought of it. The Premier went on to say that the whole responsibility rested on Ministers during the recess—that, in fact, during the portion of the year that Parliament was not sitting the Ministers for the time being could do what they liked. He could only say that if the honorable gentleman were present, and the rules of the House permitted him, he should not hesitate to tell him, in the strongest possible language, that that was untrue. The only object the honorable gentleman could have had in using that phrase, was to inflame the passions of the people, and endeavor to make out a case to prevent the Ministry from being brought to book. It was a matter of public interest in which a great constitutional question was involved, and the members concerned felt it their duty to move in it. He affirmed, that resolutions having passed both Houses, the Ministry of the day were bound to obey them, or if not, to resign office. Honorable members had come down the country from long distances, and passed all sorts of resolutions, in the expectation that they would be carried out, but the moment their backs were turned the Government said “you are only private gentlemen, and we shall do what we like with them.” He affirmed, that not a single instruction or Act passed by the Legislature had been acted up to by the Government—in fact, they seemed to do nothing but disobey and set at naught the resolutions passed by both Houses. Every one was deluded. Threats had been used, especially with regard to opening up agricultural reserves on runs, if the occupiers of the said runs did not vote as they were desired. The question was, whether the country was to remain in the hands of one Minister, who appeared to have no earthly aim but his own aggrandisement, and to secure persons to vote for him by hook or by crook in order to keep him in his present position. The precious document in question went on to say that the Ministers themselves were the guardians of the privileges of Par-

liament; and pretty guardians they were, when they trampled upon every right and overrode the actions of the Legislature. The honorable member at the head of the Government seemed to think Parliament had nothing else to do but to come down to the House, vote money for him to spend, and then go about their business and leave him to do as he chose. In the third section of the document in question, the Premier went on to say that the Ministers, as Ministers, knew nothing of the petitioners. That, of course, was absurd, because they knew very well who the petitioners were, and it was idle to say that he did not know who had signed the address. And as to there being a thin House when the resolution was passed—there were only thirty-two members in all—and the Premier knew very well that out of the twenty present seven or eight would have voted for it, and it was only beating about the bush to say that the resolutions were not brought under the notice of the Governor in Council. At the close of the document it was stated that the petitioners had deliberately endeavored to place the Queen's Representative in the position of an autocrat, and to induce him to over-ride the wishes of the majority at the instigation of the minority; which was anything but the case, as the protest was really signed by a majority. The Government took every care that the session should be delayed as long as possible, and he (Mr. Wood) had no doubt that he should hear before long, from the honorable Postmaster-General, that the delay was caused in order to enable that honorable gentleman and the Premier to attend the Postal Conference. But, if that had been the case, the Governor might still have stretched a point and called Parliament together in February instead of waiting until May, one month later than the usual time. He believed that if the Premier had not wanted money to carry out some of his schemes it would not have been called together even now. That would appear to be the way in which he exercised the *ipse dixit* which he seemed so desirous of possessing and retaining. It was only the other day that he had ousted one Minister—one honest man—who, in the opinion of private gentlemen outside the House, had been hounded out and had every obstacle thrown in his way. He (Mr. Wood) hoped the House would hear some revelations made by that honorable member. The honorable the Premier wished to have everything his own way—he would be glad if Parliament never met at all, and when he was obliged to meet them he brought forward such a Speech as had just been read to the House. But he (Mr. Wood), and the honorable members who felt with him, declined to consider the Speech at all until the rights and privileges of the Parliament had been vindicated, and some explanation afforded of the extraordinary course pursued by the Government.

Until the constitutional question involved were properly decided, it would be impossible for them to entertain any of the topics embraced. There might be many very good things in the Speech, but he repeated, he should decline to deal with it until the dignity of the Parliament had been asserted and the question which had been agitated for the last three or four months set at rest. It must be seen whether the Premier would be allowed to over-ride the resolutions of a majority of members of Parliament, and to offer those members the greatest insult possible. He felt perfectly convinced that he should carry with him the votes of all those members who had signed the memorial to His Excellency, and those who signed the protest, including the honorable member—the Inspector of Hulks. He hoped some honorable member who would follow him would move the adjournment of the House, so that an opportunity would be afforded for fully considering the address and the amendment. And he trusted that all honorable gentlemen who had the slightest regard to constitutional law, would record their votes in favor of that amendment. It would be perfectly competent for them to discuss those topics after the amendment had been put, but he considered that it was the first duty of every honorable gentleman to defend the privileges of the House, in order to shew plainly that no Minister, however strong and powerful, could be allowed to over-ride the wishes of one or other of the Houses of Parliament, and more especially those of both Houses.

The PRESIDENT pointed out, that until the address had been disposed of, it was not competent for the honorable member to move his amendment.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was not at all astonished at the speech delivered by the honorable gentleman who introduced the amendment. It was so much in the style indulged in by that honorable gentleman during the last session, that it quite recalled to his mind the pleasing sensation with which he had so frequently listened to the honorable gentleman. Indeed, it almost seemed as though he had gone to sleep for six months, and suddenly woke up to listen to the honorable gentleman's declamation. He must, however, protest against the inconvenient way in which the honorable gentleman had introduced the amendment to the House, and would suggest to him the propriety of allowing the address to pass, and then bringing in a direct vote of want of confidence in the Ministry. It was evident, from the speech of the honorable gentleman, that he had been cramming himself for this occasion for weeks past. But it was certainly unfair for him to come down suddenly, as he had done, and ask him, as the mouth-piece of the Government, to reply to the reckless assertions made by the honorable member. The honorable member had

affirmed that in no single instance had money voted for certain purposes been properly applied by the Government. That was an assertion which it was very difficult to answer, except by a direct denial. If the honorable member had specified any particular works—

The Hon. W. WOOD: I specified them—the Toowoomba, Warwick, and Dalby Railways.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was very hard to expect him to answer such general charges on the spur of the moment, especially as the facts must be based upon the records of the House. He should only reply to the one particular charge, that a vote of the House had been treated with contempt by the Government. That vote was not one which could be treated with contempt, because it was a vote which gave large latitude to the Government, it allowed them to consider whether it was expedient to carry out the works in question or not. The resolution was worded:—

“That, to relieve the country from some of the authorised expenditure, which it is now proved it can ill-afford to incur, so much as is practicable of the railway line under construction between Toowoomba and Warwick, and can be agreed upon with the contractor, ought to be discontinued.”

The resolutions, of which the foregoing was one, were passed on the 2nd October, transmitted to the Legislative Council, and returned to the Assembly, signed by the President, with the usual message of concurrence—that was to say, it was agreed to abandon the Warwick Railway if it could be done without loss to the country. He thought, however, he had on that occasion shewn to the House that a greater loss would have been incurred by putting a stop to the works at that time. With regard to the charge brought forward with so much virulence by the honorable member, in reference to letters addressed to the memorialists by his honorable colleague, he could only say that if the document to which they referred had been signed by a majority of members before the day on which Parliament had been prorogued, the Government were perfectly prepared to accede to the request it contained. But that was not the case, or nearly so, and as the names attached to it appeared from time to time in driblets in the newspapers, the Government did not feel themselves called upon to bring Parliament together, especially as it had been prorogued for another six weeks. The Government gave those members a certain latitude, up to the 12th January; and when no address adequately signed made its appearance they declined to take any further notice of the matter. He did not think it was necessary to refer to what had occurred in another place. It was true that a certain resolution had been carried by the casting vote of the Speaker, and in the absence of certain honorable members who would have placed the

majority on the other side; but that was a matter which would no doubt be a question for the Legislative Assembly. It was not his intention to answer any more of the rambling charges made by the honorable gentleman opposite, Mr. Wood, and he would proceed to say a few words about the Speech, which was the question before the House; and he trusted that the good sense of the House would induce honorable gentlemen to pass that address, after which a vote of censure could be introduced; and if it were carried, the Government could either appeal to the tribunal of the country, or at once give place to honorable gentlemen in whom greater confidence was placed by the majority of the members of the Legislature. His honorable friend, Dr. Hobbs, had gone so fully into the various topics dealt with in the Speech and address, that it was unnecessary for him to go over the same ground. He would, however, make one explanation concerning the public works, or, in other words, the railways of the colony. He was happy to state that those works were now fast approaching completion; and, while addressing honorable gentlemen on the subject, he might state that since the House last met he had paid a visit to the neighboring colonies of Victoria and New South Wales, and had had many opportunities of examining the railway works in those colonies, and he was glad to say that the result of his observations was very satisfactory as regarded the execution and design of the Queensland railways. As to the slight casualties which had taken place, he might say they were nothing more than might be expected. They knew that the carriages on one occasion had gone off the line, but that was caused by the depression of a certain portion of the embankment, the effect of the recent heavy rains. Nothing serious had resulted from the casualty, as the rate of speed had been so carefully regulated as to avoid danger. One proof of the safety of the line was that not a single accident had occurred on it since it had been opened for traffic, and that was saying a great deal. With reference to the washing away of a portion of the ballast, although that was something unpleasant, it had occurred simply from the fact that the waterway in the vicinity had not been constructed sufficiently large. The place had been examined, and it would seem that the engineer was right in expecting that the waterway would have been large enough, but the country was of a very peculiar character. The necessary alterations would be made, and it was probable that a similar washing away would not occur again. But even if it were not so it could not be helped. As to the Range, the late rains had produced very little effect, except that some of the newly-formed earthworks had slipped, and it would take some considerable time to repair them. He might state that it was the intention of the Government to run only one train a day between

Ipswich and Toowoomba while the contractor was effecting the necessary repairs, as it would not be fair to him to impede his operations by running a large amount of traffic. Every train would, however, go as far as Helidon, and this arrangement would last for the next week or ten days. Another point the honorable gentleman had alluded to, in moving the adoption of the address, was that which bore reference to the proposed Bill for regulating the tenure of the leased lands of the colony. It was intended to bring all the lands which were either now, or would shortly be, open for settlement, whether intermediate lands or lands still unsettled, into settled districts; and it was proposed in some cases to give longer terms—in extreme cases, where expensive improvements had been made, fourteen years, if necessary—but in no case where there was any chance of agricultural settlement would a fourteen years' lease be granted. That, he believed, would be a great boon to the outside squatters—though not, perhaps, to certain honorable gentlemen, squatters, in that House, who put themselves forward as representatives of the squatting interest, but who, in his opinion, had really been the greatest curse to the squatters. They had been very successful upon lands which ought to have been held for agricultural purposes, and by their success had inflated the minds of the public with an erroneous idea as to the profits to be derived from squatting pursuits; and as the outside squatters had been weak enough to join them, the latter had obtained a great deal of odium which they had not deserved. It was very well known that, during the last few years, very few squatters had received any return for the capital and labor they had invested. He did not attach much weight to the argument advanced by the honorable gentleman, Mr. Wood, that unless a census were taken at the same time in all parts of the empire it was useless; at any rate, he thought it would be very undesirable to make any alteration in the electoral law until a fresh census had been taken. He did not think it necessary to proceed any further with his remarks until the address were either confirmed or negatived. If it were affirmed there would be an end of the whole matter, and each honorable gentleman would have an opportunity of speaking on the second question. He only wished, in conclusion, to enter an emphatic protest against the reckless assertions and vague charges made by the honorable member who moved the amendment.

The Hon. H. B. Fitz said he regretted he could not support the motion for the adoption of the address, and that he would as concisely as possible state the reasons why he could not support it. He further regretted that an amendment had not been moved upon the address at the proper time. He must, however, state that he could not support the

amendment he had heard read by the honorable member, Mr. Wood; but, had a motion of a direct want of confidence in the Ministry been brought in, or sent from the other House, he would have willingly supported it; because he had no hesitation in stating that the country was indebted to the present Government for the position it was now in. There was, however, one clause in the opening Speech which he could support. He referred to the seventh clause, which proposed to invite the co-operation of the Legislative Council with the Legislative Assembly to an inquiry into the monetary affairs of the colony. With regard to the second clause, which related to the proceedings of the Postal Conference lately held in Melbourne, he must express his disapproval of any proposition for incurring further expenditure at present in connection with postal communication. He thought that till they got into a better pecuniary position it was the duty of every Government that might be in power to avoid as far as possible every expense for postal or telegraphic extension beyond the colony. They ought to avoid all such further expenditure till the colony was in a better position to bear it. Though, it appeared, the colony had been put to the expense of members of the Ministry going down to Melbourne and entering on the conference, that expense was comparatively trifling to the expense that would be incurred in carrying out the propositions of the conference. It was proposed that this colony should bear £24,000 of the expense of the extended postal communication proposed, and that was far more than the colony was at present able to bear. Looking at the circumstances of the colony, he thought it was highly advisable that every possible expense should be postponed for the present. There could be no doubt that the colony was in a state of bankruptcy; and he was astonished to find the honorable member, Dr. Hobbs, who moved the Address, trying to impress on the House a belief that the colony was still in a prosperous condition. The honorable gentleman, he thought, stated that the population of the colony had increased from 67,000 in 1865, to 97,000 in 1866; and that this information as to the increase of the population he had obtained from the Registrar-General's report. Of course there had as yet been nothing laid on the table of the House to shew there had been such an increase in the population, and therefore the information of the honorable gentleman must have been privately received from the Registrar-General. Well, the information might be correct; but as the Statistics were not yet completed, they were liable to alteration. However, this much he would aver, that not only the Registrar-General, but any one else who might be induced to form any idea of the number of the population from the ordinary returns, would be very much astray; for neither the Registrar-General

nor any one else could form any idea of the exodus that had been going on during the last twelve months. For his own part, he had no doubt whatever that the exodus from the colony by steamers and over the border was as five to one compared with the immigration. The third paragraph, however, was on a subject which he was, perhaps, in a better position to offer a few remarks upon than most honorable members. That paragraph referred to the policy of the Government with regard to the reservation of crown lands for agricultural purposes. Now, he thought that every well-wisher of the colony must admit, on thinking the matter over carefully, that the recent conduct of the Government, in proclaiming such extensive tracts of country in the Darling Downs as reserves for agricultural purposes, was one of the most unwise steps any Government could have taken. The action the Government had taken had caused a most sudden disturbance in the value of property in the Darling Downs district, and especially in the position and affairs of a number of crown tenants. There could be no doubt that the lands which had been reserved were choice lands; but he thought that the wants of the colony might have been fully supplied by the present Government without their taking the action they had taken. No doubt the lands which had recently been reserved on the Downs had, while they were held by tenants of the crown, been much coveted by other members of the community. No doubt the lands were very rich, and would at some future day become exceedingly valuable; but, granting that land was required to be reserved for agricultural purposes in the Darling Downs district, a much smaller portion than had been reserved would have sufficed. What he chiefly had to complain of was that the action taken by the Government had been so partial. If the Government thought it necessary to go into the Downs and proclaim reserves, they should have gone more generally into the lands held by crown tenants, instead of altogether sacrificing a few of the runs. Or they might have taken a different course of action altogether. They might, for instance, have gone up the line, and reserved the land for four or five miles on each side of it for agricultural purposes; and have even given them to the agriculturists on easier terms than the reserved lands could be given up to them. But the Government had not done that. On the contrary, they had acted in a very partial manner; and their conduct, he must say, looked very bad indeed. In the present Government, there were three Ministers who were very large squatters themselves; and it shewed the partiality with which the lands for agricultural reserves had been selected, when it was found that no portion of the runs held by those gentlemen was included in the proclamation. The honorable gentleman who now held the office of Minister

for Lands was a very large squatter. That honorable gentleman held 273,288 acres on one run, Jimbour, for which he paid an annual rental of £224; and, in all, he held crown lands—valuable crown lands—to the extent of 541,248 acres, for which he paid the large sum of £1,196 per annum—or, in other words, only about two farthings per acre. Again, the honorable the Postmaster-General, Mr. Gore, held 211,400 acres, for which he paid an annual rental of £213, or about one farthing per acre. The third member of the Ministry to whom he had referred, and who had been a large squatter, when he found the Government pursuing such an insane line of policy, felt that he could not continue to be a member of the Government; and he accordingly declined to be a party to such proceedings, and, as an honest man, he resigned his position in the Ministry. Now, it did look very strange that, out of three Ministers who were very large squatters, two of them, whose runs remained untouched by the proclamation, continued to be members of the Ministry. The Ministry, he had no doubt, had taken up this question of agricultural reserves as a mere political cry. He had no doubt the honorable the Postmaster-General would go before a constituency with this cry—probably the constituency of Warwick, where he had made an unsuccessful attempt before as a candidate for election, and where he had been defeated by Paddy O'Sullivan. Now, for his part, were he in the honorable gentleman's position, he would rather go before any other constituency in the colony than go before the constituency that had rejected him in favor of such an opponent. However, he found that the honorable the Postmaster-General held the property he had mentioned, and yet, as a member of the Government, he could be a party to sacrificing a large number of people in the colony for the value of a political cry, and that he might continue to hold his run for a farthing an acre. The honorable the Secretary for Lands did the same. Those members of the Government would, of course, when the time came, be found going before their constituents, and calling out to the electors—"See what we have done for you! We have reserved all those rich lands for you for agricultural occupation; of course you who may take them up must pay a pound an acre for them, but allow us to keep what we now hold at a farthing an acre." Now, he should be sorry to say what he thought any one, who would remain a member of a Ministry that could act as the present Ministry had acted, would be capable of doing. But there was another part of the policy of the Ministry on account of which he thought that every one who had the welfare of the country at heart should vote against the present Ministry continuing in power. The country, it was well known, was in want of money, and scarcely knew where to get it. While the honorable the

land at so low a rental, the country was actually paying ten per cent. for money; and yet there were persons—and he could name them—who were prepared to purchase the lands of Jimbour, and give a fair price for them, to-morrow. Before he would act, under such circumstances as the honorable the Secretary for Lands had acted, as a member of the Government, he would go and act again as a superintendent. But there was another point. He believed it was a universally acknowledged principle that no law or proclamation should have a retrospective effect. Now, he could inform the House that, prior to the issuing of the proclamation, there were applications put in for the purchase of 32,000 acres of land on the Darling Downs. Well, the applications were granted, and orders were given for the survey of the land; yet, though the colony was in want of money, the proclamation was allowed to be issued, including the lands that had been applied for, thereby setting aside the applications previously granted; and, at the same time, the honorable the Secretary for Lands continued to hold 541,248 acres, worth a pound an acre, at an annual rental of about two farthings an acre. But the lands that had been applied for, and that would have been purchased, were refused because the Government desired to have this proclamation of lands for agricultural purposes as a political cry for the hustings. Now, he maintained that the sooner they were rid of a Government that could be guilty of such conduct the better. Most likely the honorable the Postmaster-General would say that he spoke thus keenly because he felt keenly in this matter, as every acre of his run had been taken from him and included in the reserve. No doubt he had made himself obnoxious to the Government by having exposed the extravagant expenditure that had taken place on the railway, and shewn that the public money had been shamefully wasted. Every one, he thought, must admit that the present position of the colony had been brought about to a great extent by the extravagant way in which the money had been spent on the railway works. When the question of railway construction was first brought forward in 1863, and a Bill was brought up on the subject, he supported the proposition. It was found, however, that there was a majority against the Bill; and some honorable members, who were more far-seeing than others, insisted that the colony was not ripe for such undertakings. Well, he found, on inquiry, that the Bill would not have passed if it had been pressed forward; but he had often regretted the action he took on the subject on that occasion; and but for which they would not have had any railway works yet for some time to come. Still, all that only went the more to shew how greatly he had been punished, under the recent proclamation, by the original promoters of the railway system. With the exception of his purchased land, the Govern-

ment had taken every acre from him. The same had been the case with others. Now, while he complained of what had been done, he readily admitted that there would have been no ground for complaint had the land been required for public purposes; because he, and others who had suffered like him, knew perfectly well, that under such circumstances they must give way. But what he complained of was this, that the Government did not take the whole of the lands in the Darling Downs district, if they wished to give those lands for agricultural settlement. Why were they partial in their selection? Why did they not take all the lands, including Jimbour and Yandilla. He wished also to call attention to another fact. Hitherto, there had only been two classes in the colony cared for—the agriculturist and the squatter; and it appeared, from the action the Government had recently taken, that they now desired to sacrifice the squatter wholly for the benefit of the agriculturist. But there was another class in the community, whose interests had been wholly overlooked; and that was the small sheep-farming class. Now, he contended that all the lands held by the honorable the Postmaster-General, and also the lands of Jimbour, should be immediately surveyed, and put into blocks at once, and sold to the highest bidder, or should be leased to the small sheep farmer. But what would the Government say to such a proposition? Why this:—"Go and survey West Moreton and a portion of the Darling Downs; there is no occasion to survey those lands west of the railway line, as you will get as much as is required in West Moreton and on the Downs." It was very easy to manage those 320-acre blocks, though there were some restrictions. Now, he maintained that, if the Government were to act *bona fide* in the matter, and for the benefit of all classes, all the rich lands in the district of the Darling Downs would be taken and disposed of. The construction of railways had been gone into, and the works must be paid for; but he felt that instead of disposing of the most valuable lands for the purpose of meeting the liabilities of the colony, the members of the present Government did all in their power to secure them for themselves; and to secure longer leases of the stations which they held—though it was intended that the system of long leases should only apply to outside stations. For his part, he thought that all the lands in the neighborhood of railways should be set apart for sheep farming, that only those lands that were far outside from the centres of population should be regarded as squattages, and that to the occupiers of such lands every encouragement should be given that could be given by granting them long leases. Now, as to the question of railways, had it not been for the action taken by the Legislative Council, there would have been no such thing as a railway in the

colony to-day; for when the Railway Bill was brought into the Council there was a majority of three to one against it. He took a prominent part in respect to that measure, for he found that £39,000 had been spent on the road between Ipswich and Toowoomba; and, with several other honorable members, he thought it would be better to have a railway constructed between those two towns, than to spend such a large sum from time to time upon the maintenance of the common road. Under such an impression, he had Mr. Fitzgibbon summoned to the bar of the House, and it was on account of the statement that was made by that gentleman, and the evidence he gave—to the effect that the railway could be constructed for about £5,000 a mile,—that he was induced to support the Bill for the construction of the railway; and had the line been made at a cost not exceeding that amount per mile, as honorable members were led to believe it would be, the colony would not have been in its present financially embarrassed position. But such an assurance had not been realized. Far from it. And, that being the case, and as they had a Ministry in power who would spend £50,000 or £60,000 on railway works without Parliamentary or Executive authority, it was time, he thought, that some definite action were taken in respect to such a Ministry. It was only last session that he got all the Executive minutes relative to the railways laid upon the table; and owing to the honorable the Postmaster-General opposing the printing of those minutes, they did not at present form a record of the House. He was not, therefore, in a position to direct the attention of honorable gentlemen to them. But still he could say this much, that, in looking carefully through them, there was no Executive minute whatever authorising the construction of the railway bridge at Ipswich. Now, when any minister behaved in such a way, some action should be taken by the Legislature in reference to him—some such action as would shew him that there was no more confidence in him. He did not mean to blame all the members of the Ministry, but he did blame the head of the present Government for the embarrassed position of the colony. There was another matter he felt he ought to refer to. It had been stated that, by the reservations of lands that had been made, the former lessees would not suffer at all; that their holdings would be as available to them in time to come, till the lands were purchased, as they were now; that any selector taking up an allotment of land on any portion of the 7,000 acres reserved, had no exclusive commonage right to those lands; that the former lessees would continue to have the same rights as formerly as regarded commonage; that, in fact, as the Minister for Lands had told him, and as he would now state publicly, no selector purchasing lands on the Downs would have

any right to depasture cattle upon any lands except upon those he had purchased. If such should be the case, it was probable the present lessees, so far as their grazing rights were concerned, would not be very much affected.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL : It stands so in the regulations that have been made, and the Government will make such regulations. I may also further state, for the information of honorable gentlemen, that it is the intention of the Government to survey all lands on either side of the railway, for agricultural purposes.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ : Well, at any rate, the Secretary for Lands had informed him that no selector on any reserve would have a right to feed cattle over the whole reserve, but only on the land that he had purchased ; and the Agricultural Reserves Act gave the crown tenant an exclusive right of feeding cattle over those lands. Now, the Parliament deputed to the Government the making of regulations for the sale of the lands, and the Government had given the selector the right of commonage over those lands. As shewing the pernicious effect the course taken by the Government had had upon the colony, he might mention that at the present time there was a large station in the market, for which a gentleman had been prepared to pay £30,000 ; but the moment the proclamation of the reserves was issued, he abandoned his intention, and immediately left the colony.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL : Quite right.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ : It was all very well to say "quite right"; but it was not quite right, when they were requiring money, that the Government should take such action as drove capital out of the colony. Well, there was another paragraph in the Speech which was calculated to deceive people. He referred to the eleventh paragraph, which pointed out that the exports during the first quarter of the year exceeded the imports. The honorable gentleman who moved the adoption of the address pointed out this circumstance as an evidence of the progressing and encouraging state of the colony. But honorable members were all aware that the imports were greatly increased in 1864 and 1865, in consequence of the large importation of railway material. The importation of such material had been greatly lessened, because they had already imported nearly all that was required. Besides, the *ad valorem* duties had operated to prevent to a great extent the introduction of goods ; and so the wonder was that their imports, instead of being what they had been, were not much less. They all knew that, in a young colony, they must expect the imports to exceed the exports ; and it was not, therefore, to be taken as an evidence of prosperity that their exports exceeded their imports. On the contrary, it might be shewn that the amount by which their exports exceeded their imports

was a sign of depression. He would not take up the time of the House any longer, but would only further add, that he would vote against the adoption of the address, and would be prepared to support an amendment expressing that, as no doubt existed that the present position of the colony had been brought about by the gross mismanagement and extravagance of the Government, and as the Government had not given any promise or hope of a change of policy, the House had no further confidence in them.

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR moved that the debate be adjourned till the following day.

On the question being put, the motion was negatived without a division.

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR expressed his sorrow that he could not have a little more time to think over the matters under consideration. It would have been far better if the debate had been adjourned ; but he should proceed with what he had to say. He was sorry he could not vote for the address moved by the Honorable Dr. Hobbs. He trusted that the result of the honorable the Postmaster-General's visit to Victoria—which he had almost termed a dream—would be of some good. There were no papers relating to the Postal Conference on the table ; perhaps the honorable gentleman (Mr. Gore) would say whether there were any to be seen ?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL : They were not on the table ; but they soon would be. They were rather voluminous, and would take some time to prepare.

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR held, with his honorable friend, Mr. Fitz, that this was not the time to enter upon an undertaking of the kind proposed. According to the Postmaster-General, an addition of £14,000 would thereby be made to the colony's postal expenses. He (Mr. Prior) believed that the mail service of Queensland, two years since, cost something over £3000. This year it was £7000 ; and he was further informed by the honorable gentleman that the branch services would come to £2000—the whole amounting to about £10,000. Yet, under the proposed new arrangement, the colony would have to pay another £14,000. He was perfectly satisfied that there were very few persons wishing to communicate with England who would address their letters *viâ* Panama or Torres' Straits from choice, when the other route was open. For a mail service, the Torres' Straits route might be looked upon as almost useless to Queensland, and wholly so to the other colonies to the southward. As a commercial undertaking, he was not prepared to say anything against the opening up of that route. The service *viâ* Suez cost a certain sum, and the British Government paid half of it—half of the cost of the intercolonial service as well as of the ocean service. He thought he might safely say—and the honorable the Postmaster-General would bear him out—that another £5,000, or £6,000 at the

outside, if all the colonies were joined in supporting it, would give us fortnightly communication with England *via* King George's Sound, Galle, and Suez. Of course, he could not say what the other colonies would do; but, if practicable, it would be better for all of them to unite for that service, than to distribute their services over several routes. Hereafter, no doubt, the Torres' Straits service would prove very useful, and would be carried out; but not for years to come. With regard to the late action of the Government on the agrarian question, he did not agree with many of his honorable friends who sat on the same side of the House as himself. His opinion was, and always had been, that where the agriculturist came forward on the public lands, the squatter must either become a purchaser and an agriculturist, or the lands must be given up for agriculture. Therefore, he indorsed any reserves given by the Government along the railway, according to the requirements of the country, whether two miles, four miles, or six miles on each side. He would not have liked to have seen an agricultural reserve made on the honorable the Postmaster-General's run, because he did not think it was fit for agriculture; nor did he believe in the cutting up of any runs that were not fit for agriculture. Without doing any good for the agricultural interest, it disturbed the tenure of the squatters, and interfered with the pastoral interest;—it might prevent persons, who would otherwise grow cotton, from producing a new and valuable export, and induce them to attempt to grow wool, which was now sufficiently well managed. He dissented from the action of the Government, in that they had proclaimed an area that included a very large quantity of land which was wholly unadapted for agriculture, and which would never be taken up by an agriculturist. He alluded not to the land on the Darling Downs abutting on the railways, but to that on creeks and in gullies running up into the mountains, and which the Postmaster-General must know would be very good places for sheep. He (Mr. Prior) did not agree with turning the squatter off his run, unless some good was done for the country thereby. The land alongside the railway was more than enough for an agrarian population for many years to come. The evil the Legislature had to deal with, was, the large quantity of land available. When an agriculturist had too much land, he was not likely to do all he should do with it; and, therefore, it would be better if only a limited quantity were thrown open to be taken up by agriculturists. Another point whereon he differed with the Government was, that in proclaiming the reserves they had interfered with existing interests. He could not better explain his meaning than by relating a circumstance which came within his knowledge a few days ago. He was at the land office, when a man—not a wealthy

squatter, or an owner of property, but an industrious working man, whom he knew to be such—came in with the view of selecting a small portion of land near his own, which had been opened under the Leasing Act. That was on the Thursday before Good Friday. The man brought forty sovereigns to pay for the land. Honorable members all knew that it was very easy to get an allotment on a map, though difficult to find it on the ground. The man had some doubt whether he was selecting, on the map, the piece of land he wanted, and the agent recommended him to go and look at it. The next day was Good Friday, Saturday was a holiday, Sunday was a *dies non*, Monday was a holiday, on Tuesday the floods came down, and it was Wednesday before the man was able to go again to the office. When he went, he was told—"My dear fellow, you are too late; a new regulation has come out; you must wait until the reserve is proclaimed." Now, that poor man, who had been running about for some days, might not actually be able to get the land he wanted; for the reason that, so soon as it was found that any person was looking for a particular lot, a number of others was sure to fancy the same—some of his own neighbors might be anxious for it. He (Mr. Prior) could mention another circumstance. Those practical things shewed more than could be shewn by any theorising. A person selected and purchased a piece of land some years ago. Another piece of land was put up subsequently, and he purchased it. Again, he applied for certain other land to be surveyed, and at great inconvenience purchased a portion, with the intention of leasing, in due course, more that was contiguous; but, upon applying for his lease, he was told that the land was in an agricultural reserve. Consequently, his homestead would be nearly two miles from where his other land was; and his holding was separated by the new regulation of the Government. That person opposed no *bonâ fide* agriculturist who wanted to purchase land; and he (Mr. Prior) could answer for the facts stated, for the person was himself. It would have been wise of the Government if they had considered the effect of their act in the future, before they proclaimed a whole district an agricultural reserve. He knew, and he durst say the Postmaster-General knew, that there were many persons who had taken up land under the Agricultural Reserves Act, and who had not complied with the requirements of it, and who did not intend to comply with them. Either the land they held was unfitted for an agricultural reserve, or those persons ought not to have gone on to it at all. In travelling from his station, which was not very far off, he had noticed the growth of cotton. He had had his doubts about its success before. If it proved a success, he should be very glad to exchange his occupation as a grazier for the calmer

one of a planter. There was a large quantity of very good land between Cunningham's Gap and Ipswich—the honorable the Postmaster-General understood where it was—on a very large reserve, known as the Peak Mountain Reserve, which had been proclaimed miles in extent. More was hardly required at present—as the land was taken up, the reserve might be extended. He was very much in favor of agrarian interests. He never had agreed with the policy of the Darling Downs squatters; and, many years ago, he said, at a public meeting, that he believed one day the Darling Downs would be divided into farms, and he was very much laughed at. He believed the change should be progressive, not that a whole community should be ruined by it. Shew a man that it is for his interest, and he would be ready to change from one pursuit to another; but he would do so gradually. If he was compelled to do so suddenly, ruin might ensue. If the reserves were extended gradually, then the squatters would have time to make their arrangements before the wave of advancing agricultural settlement could overwhelm them. He (Mr. Prior) was one of those members who had signed the memorial to the Governor, to call Parliament together on an early day. The honorable the Postmaster-General had said that the Government were prepared to meet Parliament, if a majority of the House had signed the memorial. The country was in a state of jeopardy; the insolvency list shewed the condition of the people; in fact, in Brisbane alone hundreds of houses were untenanted; persons having debts were unable to pay them; those who formerly were well off and held mortgages over good property could get no interest for their money, nor could they get anything if they sold. It was time the Government and the Parliament did something to get the country out of its difficulties. The owners of property, whether of only ten acres or much more, must bear the burden;—they were “the bone and sinew of the country;”—they were all laborers—he had worked, and the Postmaster-General himself had done a little;—yet they must be taxed. Whom else could they go to? They could not get money out of people who had nothing. The memorialists had merely asked that those who had the control of the property of the country—in whose hands its welfare was entrusted—should come together and say what was best to be done. Some of the Ministry he had had a respect for, and perhaps still had for one or two; but their conduct did not meet with his approval. They seemed to say, “We will spend the public money as we think proper; when we spend what we have, the House must vote more for us again.” The Postmaster-General, last session, said he would never lend himself to such a proceeding; yet he was one who now supported the Premier. He (Mr. Prior) could not adopt the address.

The Hon. J. GIBBON said, that in the few observations he had to make, he should address himself to the subject of the enormous debt the colony was subjected to in the making of the railways, and to the only obvious means of paying it. That expenditure, it appeared to him, had been premature and most unwise. It was quite evident that the land of the country was the only resource to meet the debt.

The Hon. W. WOOD rose to order, and called attention to the state of the House.

The House was counted, and there not being a quorum present, was adjourned.