

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**FRIDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1867**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Friday, 25 October, 1867.*

Brisbane Gas Works Site.

## BRISBANE GAS WORKS SITE.

Mr. MACALISTER moved—

That an address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be laid on the table of this House copies of all correspondence between the Government,

or any member of it, and the Brisbane Gas Company, having reference to a lease of the land upon which the gas works have since been erected.

This motion, he said, was more of a formal character than anything else, but he might, nevertheless, be allowed to state his reason for putting it upon the notice paper. There could be no doubt that during the present session he had been made the subject of a good many charges—many of which had been made behind his back, so that he had not been able to answer them. But he intended, before the session came to a close, to answer them all pretty fully, and, in the meantime, he desired to get the necessary information placed upon the table of the House. He had been told by honorable members sitting on his side of the House, that one evening last week, or the week before, the Secretary for Lands stated that he (Mr. Macalister) on one occasion, when acting as solicitor for the Brisbane Gas Company, addressed a letter, with reference to the affairs of that company, to himself in his capacity as Minister for Lands and Works. He was not aware that he ever did so. He was not aware that during his career as a Minister of the Crown he ever acted with regard to this matter, or any other matter connected with any public affair, in a way that was likely to involve him professionally. He had so studiously avoided doing anything of the kind, that he had sustained very great professional loss in consequence. Now, when charges damaging to his character as a Minister were made by a Minister—a member of a succeeding Government—he had a right to have the correspondence on the subject produced, in order to shew what the charges really amounted to. His own impression was that not only was he not in Brisbane, but that he was four hundred miles away from Brisbane, at the time the transaction alluded to took place. During his absence an application was made, he believed, to Mr. Herbert, who acted for him at the time, and any correspondence that existed on the subject could only be of a formal nature. He was sure there could not be any letter signed by himself on the subject.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he would not oppose the production of the papers now asked for, and he might explain that his authority for making the statement the honorable member complained of appeared in "Hansard." A debate arose on this question in May, 1864, and another in June of the same year. On the latter occasion Mr. Brookes, in the course of reply, said:—

"He was sorry that the Secretary for Lands and Works should have thought it compatible with his official position to speak on the question at all, he being solicitor of the company. That plurality of offices was not calculated to raise the respect of the Government in this colony; indeed, it was likely to be a source of very great danger to the colony."

The honorable member for Ipswich, who was then Secretary for Lands and Works, replied as follows:—

"He was not aware that he was bound to give up his professional practice for the purpose of accommodating the honorable member; nor was he aware that he ought to be prevented from doing so because he was a member of the Government, any more than the honorable member should be prevented from selling pots and pans or lamps for the use of the House. He could state that he had been appointed the solicitor of the company while he was absent in Sydney, and, from information he had received, on the motion of the honorable member himself."

On the occasion that gave rise to the present motion, he alluded to the fact that the honorable member was solicitor for the company. He alluded to the circumstance incidentally in repelling a charge brought against the present Government of acting illegally. The honorable member for the Eastern Downs had with rather bad taste, as he thought, after withdrawing a formal motion attributing illegal action to the Government, made a speech on the subject, and in the course of his speech again charged the Government with illegal action. Now, he thought that that was treating the Government very unfairly, and so, if he was rather warm in throwing back the charge, he certainly did not do so with the remotest desire to cast odium upon the honorable member for Ipswich, while Secretary for Works. The matter being before the House, he thought he might allude to it. The honorable member had now spoken of the terms on which the company held the lands as being those of a lease. In that view, he must say that he differed with the honorable member, for he could not regard the transaction otherwise than as a sale of land with deferred payments. Now, was there any Act under which that could be legally done? No. There was not; and the reason why he took the matter up more warmly than he might have done, was because the honorable member charged the Government with acting illegally after withdrawing the motion he had placed upon the paper on the subject.

Mr. MACALISTER said he would simply observe that the quotation the honorable member had made from "Hansard," did not appear to bear out his observations at all—that was, if he understood aright the language that was used on the occasion. The language used, he believed, was, that he addressed a letter professionally to himself as Minister for Works, applying for this land for the Gas Company. Now, he could assure the House that there was nothing he had been more particular about than the mixing up of his professional duties with his duties as a Minister of the Crown. From the statement that was made by the Secretary for Lands, and from the way in which it was made, there could be no other inference than that he (Mr. Macalister) had acted corruptly while in office.

The motion was then agreed to.