

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Council**

**WEDNESDAY, 16 DECEMBER 1868**

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Wednesday, 16 December, 1868.*

New Member.—Ministerial Statement.

## NEW MEMBER.

The PRESIDENT informed the House, that he had received a letter from the Private Secretary, notifying the appointment by His Excellency the Governor, of the Honorable J. Douglas to a seat in the Legislative Council.

Mr. DOUGLAS then took the usual oath and subscribed the roll.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The Hon. ST. G. R. GORE said, that as important changes had taken place in the Government of the country, as well as in the constitution of the House, he thought it would only be courteous on the part of the honorable gentleman who now represented the Government in the Council, to give some statement in explanation of those changes.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said his honorable friend had anticipated the very short statement he had to make. Honorable gentlemen were no doubt aware of the changes which had taken place, in consequence of certain proceedings in another place, from the official records at their disposal, and they were probably aware of the effect of those changes. For his part he had very little more to say on the present occasion, except that he appeared as a member of the Government, and as their representative in that House. He thought his honorable friend would not ask him at the present time to refer to any matters of policy. The time would shortly arrive when he would be in a position to state the opinions as well as the policy of the Government. Honorable gentlemen were aware that the other branch of the Legislature was adjourned to the 29th December, and he would now move the adjournment of this House until the 30th instant.

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR said it had occasioned him some surprise to hear that the honorable gentleman (Mr. Douglas) had been appointed Postmaster-General, with a seat in

this House. The office was one which another honorable gentleman (Mr. Gore), who had represented a former Government, might naturally have been expected to receive. He would like to know whether the Postmaster-General was aware of the existence of an Executive Minute, passed in 1866, limiting the number of members of the Legislative Council to twenty. The Minute was passed by a Government of which at least one of the colleagues of the honorable gentleman (Honorable A. Macalister) was a leading member. It would be remembered that when the Land Bill was before the House, its passage had been somewhat jeopardized, and he (Mr. Prior) had been recommended to appoint more members, but he had declined, and said that he would rather see the Bill thrown out than advise any such thing; he believed the Minute was still in force. The honorable gentleman had not favored the House with any exposition of policy—in fact it appeared as if he had joined a Ministry of whose policy he was ignorant. However, when it was made known, he might have something to say about it. He would now only express his surprise that an honorable gentleman, thought so much of in the other House, should appear as the representative of the Ministry in the Legislative Council.

The Hon. ST. G. R. GORE said that although he had the pleasure of introducing his old friend, the Honorable J. Douglas, on the occasion of his second appearance in that House, he had no intention of standing godfather in any special way to that appointment. He confessed that the appointment of the honorable gentleman had taken him by surprise, especially after the stinging attack he had made on a gentleman who was now a prominent member of the Ministry. The tactics of the honorable member brought to his recollection a remark made by some French officers, on the occasion of the charge at Balaclava, "*C'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la guerre.*" He could not, however, agree with one of the remarks that had been made by the honorable gentleman opposite, and was far from thinking it desirable that this House should be the scene of a political seesaw, Gore coming up whenever Prior went down. For his own part he preferred a triangular duel between Douglas, Prior, and Gore. Until he had heard what was to be the policy of the Government, of course he could not say whether he could support them; but his friend Mr. Macalister, most of whose opinions he adopted, was a leading member of the Ministry, and he accepted that gentleman's presence in it as an earnest of what the others would bring forth. He was glad to learn that one of the first acts of his honorable friend had been to put a stop to a job in connection with the Warwick railway, viz., the taking of the line by a longer route through the purchased land on Glengallan run, which was, no doubt, one of the strong points of the previous Minister for Works.

He hoped that the present Ministry would come forward with a liberal land policy; for it was to the absence of such a policy in the previous Government that the present difficulties of the colony were, in a great measure owing. The endeavors of the late Government to settle small holders on the land had been unsuccessful. He hoped that there would be a searching inquiry into the past working of the Land Act.

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR said that he had never known a job, or anything like one, to be perpetrated by the previous Government. The change in the route of the Warwick railway he had heard something about. A report had been laid before the late Government, showing how a better line of road could be obtained, and many thousands of pounds saved, and certainly the line went through Mr. Deuchar's land. But if he was not very much mistaken, the present line of railway went through his honorable friend Mr. Gore's land.

The Hon. ST. G. R. GORE: About three acres.

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR: Therefore the proposed change would have been a considerable injury to him, that was all he had to say.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he had heard of an Executive Minute somewhat to the effect stated, but he was not aware whether the number of members was fixed at twenty or twenty-five.

The Hon. J. BRAMSTON: Twenty.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He believed that it had no reference to a case such as his, which was one of pressing necessity. But an Executive Minute might at any time be altered; and at the same time it could not be disputed that His Excellency had a right to call him (Mr. Douglas) to the House. As regarded another matter which had been referred to, he had a very clear and distinct understanding as to what the policy of the Government he belonged to was likely to be. All that the Government asked was that a brief period—at the same time a sufficient period—should be given them to disclose that policy. They had no desire to hold office at the sacrifice of any political principle, and if there was one determination they held more than another it was to disclose a decided policy. As to the incidents that had occurred in another House, his honorable friend (Mr. Gore) had charged him with making an onslaught on a member of the party with which he was connected. He, Mr. Douglas, not only thought what he had done was, under the circumstances, perfectly justifiable, but denied that he had exceeded the bounds of critical discussion. All that he had done was to take occasion to refer to some remarkable differences of policy between his honorable friend the Colonial Treasurer and himself. Those differences had reference to past events. He trusted that he might assume the right to appear there—as

agreeing with the policy with which the present Government had undertaken to give effect to, and it was not likely that he would, as their representative in this House, have to do violence to any of those principles which he had at any time attempted to give effect to. The honorable gentleman opposite (Mr. Prior) had said that the late Government had committed no acts of jobbery. That must be a matter of opinion. He was not entitled to impute to the late Government any wilful determination to compass deliberate fraud, which was what a job almost amounted to, but he must take leave to affirm that during their administration of the affairs of the colony, the most nefarious malversations of the powers of the Government were given effect to, in a way far exceeding all the nefarious proceedings which had been attributed to all previous Governments. He had not language to characterise the monstrous proceedings which had taken place with regard to the administration of the Crown lands during the short period—fourteen months—that the late Government were in office. He believed they had done more to injure the prospects of the colony than all previous defective administrations put together. He assured his honorable friend (Mr. Gore) he fully approved of the inquiry he had suggested, and the Government would furnish all the information that was desired. Mr. Lamb, the late Minister for Lands, had himself invited investigation by giving notice in another place for the appointment of a select committee to investigate the subject. On the present occasion it was not his duty to disclose the policy of the Government, which in due time would be laid before both branches of the Legislature.

The Hon. J. BRAMSTON said he hoped that, as there seemed to be some dispute with reference to the alteration of the Warwick Railway, the Executive Minutes on the subject would be laid on the table.

The Hon. ST. G. R. GORE said he believed things had not gone so far as an Executive Minute. He did not say that a diversion of the line had been formally authorised, but it had been in the contemplation of the late Secretary for Works to make it. No doubt, upon further consideration, and upon the accession of Mr. Macalister to office, it was at once discarded as preposterous, and a return made to the old course marked out, or rather to an improvement on the old line.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL believed that his honorable friend had been slightly misinformed as to the various proposals. The late Minister for Works did not propose the alteration which the honorable gentleman referred to; and the line as at present recommended was a slight divergence from that which had for some time been determined on. The divergence was not material.

The House then adjourned until Wednesday, 30th instant.