

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 29 DECEMBER 1868**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, 29 December, 1868.*

Adjournment—Personal Explanation.—Ministerial Explanation.

## ADJOURNMENT — PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. A. Hodgson said, that before proceeding to the Orders of the Day, he wished to make a personal explanation, and, with the view of placing himself in order in doing so, and enabling honorable members to reply to what he might say in justification of himself and other honorable members, he begged to move formally the adjournment of the House. He wished to preface the observations he was about to make, by stating that he had not the slightest wish by anything he might say to embarrass in the slightest degree the members of the present Government. He had come to the House prepared to give the members of the present Government a fair and liberal support—a far more liberal support than they accorded to their predecessors on a late occasion, when they took the first opportunity of displacing them, and placing themselves on the Ministerial benches. He, however, wished the honorable gentlemen who now occupied those seats, a thorough enjoyment of their position. As regarded his own occupation of a seat on the Ministerial benches, it was very short indeed. It extended to only three short days. The fight then was for men, not measures. No quarter was given, and the Opposition was especially hard upon him. After the division which led to the retirement of the late Ministry, as he walked home to his residence, about two miles along these dusty roads, from the Parliament Houses, he thought for a moment that he had entered into conversation with the honorable member for the Kennedy, whom he addressed thus—

"So farewell to the little good you bear me.  
Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness!  
This is the state of man; To-day he puts forth  
The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,  
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him:  
The third day comes a frost—a killing frost;  
And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely  
His greatness is a ripening—nips his root,  
And then he falls, as I do."

The remainder of the celebrated cardinal's speech might be more applicable from the mouth of some other honorable member than from his, and therefore he would not complete it. But he must say for himself, that he did expect, so far as he was concerned, considering the short time he held office, a little more gentle handling than he received from honorable members who now occupied the Ministerial benches. He knew not what might be the tactics of the present Opposition, but this he knew, speaking for himself, that he should offer the present Ministry no factious opposition. If the Ministry introduced liberal and honest measures, they should have his support. He had been sent to the House to represent one of the most distant districts of the colony; not to interfere with the Ministry of the day in any way whatever,

but to assist in carrying out measures that might be considered to be conducive to the best interests of the colony. He represented a district which, at the present time, was suffering from one of the severest droughts that had ever been experienced in the colony, and he hoped that one of the earliest measures that would be introduced, would be one that might be called a Pastoral Relief Bill for the outside squatters; giving them, not only increased security of tenure, but also a reduction of the high rents, as he considered them, which they had at present to pay. He hoped that would be one of the measures the House would be informed of in the course of the Ministerial statement about to be made. So far as he was concerned, he knew not what might be introduced, but he was prepared to support a motion for passing, *in globo*, Estimates for three months, based on those of the present year, upon the understanding that the Ministry would also bring forward a motion for doing away with the military establishment, that was maintained at a cost of £3,600 a year, and from which the colony derived no corresponding benefit. Nothing would give him greater pleasure than to see the buildings at present occupied as a military barracks converted into a benevolent asylum. But to come back to the reason that induced him to rise—the matter of a personal explanation, not only as regarded himself, but also some of his late honorable colleagues,—any honorable member who had read the local papers during the last few days, could not have failed to observe certain remarks that were made in another place by a late honorable member of the Assembly, about a job and acts of jobbery, which had not only been practised by himself, in his late official position as Minister of Works, but stating that the same acts of jobbery had been frequently carried out by his colleagues. He hoped, before sitting down, that he should be able to explain to the satisfaction of honorable members that he had been guilty of no job, and that he had been guilty of no acts of jobbery. As to his late honorable colleagues, from his short acquaintance of them, he must say that he was fully satisfied they could not be guilty of any such acts of jobbery as were charged against them. But those honorable gentlemen were well able to defend themselves; and, no doubt, they would take an early opportunity of doing so. He was aware that the rules of the House would not allow him to allude more particularly to what was stated elsewhere, and which very much annoyed and distressed him. He also knew that the rules of the House would not allow him to allude to the person he would like to allude to, in the manner that would be most agreeable and satisfactory to him. And he would like to allude to another gentleman, who, till recently, was a member of this House, and ought, therefore, to have known better than to have referred, in another place, in the way he did

to what had taken place in this House. That honorable gentleman had been under the honorable the Speaker for some years, and ought to have possessed a larger amount of parliamentary education than he appeared to possess. The honorable gentleman, at any rate, seemed to have forgotten the good tutelage he must have received under the guidance of the honorable the Speaker; for no sooner did he get into another place than he launched forth into a torrent of abuse against the late Ministry, that did him no credit, and which called for the remarks it would now be his duty to make. One honorable gentleman had accused the late Ministry of jobbery in connection with the Warwick Railway works; and another, who was, till very recently, a member of this House, explained, or endeavored to explain, the meaning of the word jobbery, by saying, in the course of his remarks, that—

“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 taken the trouble to consult Webster's dictionary, as to the exact meaning of the word “job;” and he found that a “job” was, “an undertaking set on foot for the purpose of some unfair, private, or unreasonable emolument or benefit; business or work done for the public, with special benefit to the performer.” That was the meaning of the word “job;” and he had no doubt that every honorable member knew by the definition what a job was. Jobbery, again, meant dishonest management. Now, he found that an honorable gentleman elsewhere had not failed to accuse him of having been guilty of underhand work as a Minister of the Crown. It was under such circumstances that he felt justified in rising to make a personal explanation; and, before sitting down, he hoped to prove that the accusations made against him were unfounded, ungenerous, illiberal, and entirely out of place. When he assumed office as Minister of Public Works, one of the most pressing subjects brought under his consideration was the extension of the railway from Allora to Warwick. He went into the question with as much ability as he could give it; and he went to Toowoomba and saw the Engineer-in-Chief of the Southern and Western Railways on the subject. He then saw that gentleman for the first time, and in the course of their conversation he suggested to him that a letter should be written to Mr. Williams, the contractor, asking him if he would take a less sum, than, as he found, had been mentioned once or twice—a less sum than £25,000, or at the rate of thirty-three per cent., to relinquish his contract for the

original line of railway from Allora to Warwick. He wrote a letter to that effect himself, and gave instructions that it should be copied and sent to Mr. Williams. He next proceeded with Mr. Plews, the Engineer-in-Chief, to examine the line from Allora to Warwick; starting from Allora station, they came, at about seven miles distance, to Glengallan Swamp, which in rainy seasons became a small inland sea, and over which, for at least a mile and a-half, the line would have to be carried on piles. Having crossed the swamp he asked Mr. Plews as to the direction in which the line was continued from that point, and that gentleman informed him that no trial survey exclusive of the original survey had been made beyond that point. He was much astonished at being told that, but he proceeded with Mr. Plews to trace the line from that point to Warwick. As they proceeded he found that the engineering difficulties increased; and when they reached the Condamine he found that the line (as surveyed) was carried along for a considerable distance under a very steep range, with the main road from Toolburra to Warwick running immediately below this proposed siding, and below the road were the steep banks of the Condamine. He did not pretend to be much of a bushman, but he was certain that the line he had traversed might, with careful re-survey, be materially improved, both as to distance and engineering advantages. He was sure, by the terms of the contract, that it was competent for the Government to make a divergence of the line; and, though he did not say much to the Engineer-in-Chief on the subject, perhaps, on that account, he thought the more. However, he was confident that a better line could be made in another direction; and he was sure that honorable members who were acquainted with the country, would agree with him in saying, with regard to the survey from Toowoomba to Warwick, that there never was a more disgraceful survey or job perpetrated; and the line surveyed was nine or ten miles longer than the route that was travelled by the pioneer squatters twenty-nine years ago. From Allora station as far as Glengallan the line passed through open country, but beyond Glengallan the country was very different indeed, and gradually changed so much that there was great difficulty in bringing the line to Warwick at all. When he went to Glengallan, he asked the proprietor, Mr. Deuchar, whom he had known for many years, if he could shew him a better route than the one along which it was proposed to carry the line. He said he could; and he rode out with him and the Engineer-in-Chief, taking them along a shorter and easier route, to the confluence of the waters, and where the two waters could be crossed by two small bridges with no piling. He asked Mr. Plews what he thought of the route, and that gentleman said that if the swamp, as he had been informed, was almost an inland sea in wet weather, it would

be an enormous difficulty and would render heavy piling necessary; while, by the route Mr. Deuchar had pointed out, only two small bridges would be required for the crossing of the waters. From that point to Warwick the line could be carried along good open country, the greater part of which, besides, was still the property of the Government, whereas much of the land through which the present line was carried, belonged to private persons, and would have to be bought back at very high prices. Those were the reasons, formed from his own observations on that occasion, that actuated him in drawing up the report, which it was his intention on the following day to move should be laid upon the table of the House. The honorable the Minister for Works, when addressing his constituents at Warwick on the occasion of his re-election recently, did him the honor of alluding to him; but he thought that, when in the zenith of his power, and surrounded by his own personal and political friends, the honorable gentleman might have afforded to speak of him even more creditably than he did. Instead of saying that the late Minister for Works had changed his mind as to the line, the honorable gentleman might have told the electors of Warwick that the late Minister for Works had given way from a sense of public duty—that he had given up his frequently and strongly expressed opinions, from a sense of public duty, in consequence of what had come under his own observation as Minister for Works. He took no credit to himself for acting as he did, for he believed that any other gentleman holding the same position would, on obtaining the same information, have acted as he did; and he did not think that any one would have consented to give Mr. Williams, the contractor, £25,000 to relinquish a contract which did not amount altogether to £75,000. While continuing his observations on this subject,—and he made them somewhat with the view of wiping away those cobwebs with which the question of the Warwick Railway seemed to be surrounded from want of explanation—he would like to give the honorable the Minister for Works a hint as to the site of the Allora station. At present it was fixed on a sandy ridge where there was no water; and the honorable gentleman, he was sure, would excuse him for informing him that a former proprietor of the land sunk a well in the locality at a very considerable expense, but the water obtained was so bad, from being impregnated with sulphate of magnesia or some similar ingredient, that the well in a short time fell into disuse, and was ultimately altogether abandoned;—and he would further ask the honorable gentleman to bear in mind that something of the same kind had occurred at the station at Dalby, where a well was sunk which it had been necessary to abandon, and now water was brought from Toowoomba to feed the engines. He also desired to observe that he thought it unfair

that those persons who had invested their money in the purchase of land on the representation of certain railway advantages being afforded should not be deprived of those advantages. Those hints, of course, had nothing to do whatever with the explanation he was now offering, but they had something to do with the extension of the line to Warwick. With respect to the charges that had been made against him in another place, by a late honorable member of this House, all he had to say was that he despised and spurned them and treated them with scorn and contempt; and he most emphatically declared in the face of the Assembly that he had been guilty of no job; that he had been actuated in all he had done not by any desire to perpetrate any act of jobbery but solely with a view to promote, according to his views, what he considered to be conducive to the welfare of the colony. He had no feelings of friendship to satisfy, and no feelings of enmity to gratify, in proposing the alteration of the line which he had proposed. It was a matter of no moment to him that the line went through the purchased land of Mr. Deuchar, of Mr. Gore, or of any other man. All he felt was that he had a public duty to perform, and he desired to carry it out honestly. Therefore he threw back with scorn and contempt the accusations that had been made against him by an honorable member elsewhere, and, in the face of the Assembly, he declared those accusations to be as false as hell.

Mr. LAMB said that as the honorable member for the Warrego had brought under the notice of the House what had been said in another place by a gentleman who formerly occupied a seat in this House, he thought it but right to state, in reference to the charge of malversation of the Land Bill, which malversation the honorable gentleman said his vocabulary did not furnish him with words sufficiently strong to describe and denounce, that he desired also to give the charge the lie as far as regarded the administration of the Bill while he was in office. Like the honorable member for the Warrego, he too had been consulting the dictionary, and he found that malversation, as applied to his conduct, meant gross jobbery in his position as a member of the late Government; and it was on that account that he had risen to give the same denial to the charge as had been given by his honorable friend who preceded him. The honorable gentleman who made the charge did not specify any of the acts; but, nevertheless, he defied him to substantiate any charge of malversation.

Mr. FRANCIS said, that having some interest in the matter before the House, inasmuch as the only gentleman to whom the remarks could apply was lately a colleague of his in the representation of East Moreton, he should like to know from the honorable the Speaker if it was competent for an honorable member

to refer to remarks made in another place as being "as false as hell."

The SPEAKER: Did the honorable member ask for his opinion?

Mr. TAYLOR: The honorable member was not in order, as he did not rise to a point of order, but to ask the opinion of the Speaker.

Mr. FRANCIS begged to assure the House that he did rise to a point of order. He maintained that honorable members were in danger of infringing the rules of debate unless they knew how far they were in order in referring to proceedings that took place elsewhere.

Mr. PALMER: If the honorable member for East Moreton wished to raise a question of order on that point, he should have done so at the time the words he objected to were made use of. It was both irregular and improper for him to do so after other honorable members had spoken.

The SPEAKER said he considered the honorable member for the Warrego was perfectly in order in what he said. The honorable member particularly guarded himself against alluding to an honorable member of the other branch of the Legislature. The honorable member said, all through his speech, that he was referring to something that had been said by a gentleman elsewhere, but he did not say where.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he very much regretted that any observations had been made in another place with respect to the action of the honorable member for the Warrego, whilst Minister for Public Works, in regard to the Warwick Railway; for in looking through the correspondence which had taken place on the subject, he could see nothing in it that would form a ground for a charge of corruption or anything of the kind. It was because of what had been said in another place that he had considered it advisable to have the papers printed, in order that the House might see the position in which the matter really stood. It seemed to him that the whole question resolved itself into a difference of opinion between the honorable member for the Warrego and the Engineer-in-Chief. The honorable member appeared to have been of opinion that a deviation of the line from Allora to Warwick through Glengallan would be an improvement, and, with the view of ascertaining by observation whether such would be the case or not, he accompanied the Engineer-in-Chief over the country, or a part of it. The honorable member wrote to the Engineer-in-Chief on the day that he went over the country, informing him that the Government intended to complete the line from Allora to Warwick, and instructing him to make a trial survey of the deviation. With the question of difference he had nothing to do, but the letter he was now about to read, which was from the Engineer-in-Chief, in answer to the letter of the honor-

able member, might throw some light upon it. The letter was as follows:—

"Engineer-in-Chief of Railways Office,  
"Toowoomba, 8th December, 1868.

"Sir,—I have the honor to report, for the information of the Secretary for Public Works, that in compliance with the instructions embodied in an Executive Minute, passed upon the 24th ultimo, and conveyed to me in a letter of the same date, I proceeded upon the 3rd instant to make an examination and rough traverse of the country between Allora Railway Station and Warwick, *via* Cattle-camp Gully, being the direction in which the late Secretary for Works and Gold Fields proposed that a trial survey should be made of an alternate line for the railway from Allora into Warwick.

"I am of opinion that a good line, with probably a rather better section and less earthwork than the original surveyed line, could be got starting from the site for Allora Station (or at 45 miles 47 chains 14 links on the main line), and running in a south-easterly direction across the high land dividing the waters of Dalrymple and Glengallan Creeks, towards a point upon the latter creek, indicated in the Executive Minute, and fixed upon during the recent visit of the late Secretary for Works, as the point of crossing.

"The country, however, beyond this part of Glengallan Creek towards Warwick, *via* the Cattle-camp Gully, which had not been previously examined by me, I found very broken and unfavorable; and I am fully of opinion that the best and easiest line which could be obtained through this part of the country would entail much heavier works than those required upon the original line as amended; and I believe that the numerous detours which the broken nature of the country would render necessary, to avoid excessively steep gradients and deep cuttings and embankments, would be found to make the length of this line nearly, if not quite as great, as the amended line by the original route.

"This heavy broken country could to some extent be avoided by keeping very considerably to the east and up the valley of Glengallan Creek. But starting, as any new line now must do, from a fixed point at the end of the completed portion of the Warwick line—viz., the site for Allora Railway Station, this detour would be too great and lengthen the line to an excessive extent.

"From the examination I have made, I am perfectly satisfied that any further surveys would only prove more certainly that the country by the Cattle-camp Gully, or in the direct line from Allora Station to Warwick, is unsuitable, comparatively, for the extension of the railway, and I have not considered it necessary to proceed with the surveys in this direction any further, and I could not advise the Government to expend more time or money in investigating this particular route.

"Seeing, therefore, that this route is practically unfavorable, that the extension must commence at a point on the completed line, which cannot now be altered, and that the *general* direction from that point into Warwick of the original line is as direct as the intervening country will admit of, I would recommend that the old line, in its general direction only, however, be kept.

"I have in former reports shown that by judicious deviations from the original surveyed

line from Allora Station to Warwick, I have been able to shorten the distance between those places about 2½ miles.

"I fully anticipate, from further examination of the country, that I shall be able to still further straighten and shorten this line, and in all probability reduce the distance between Allora Station and the Warwick Terminus to twelve miles, without increasing in any way the constructive cost of the line or diminishing its carrying powers.

"As it is advisable that the works upon the extension should be proceeded with without any further delay, so as to save the Government from further claims on the part of the contractor for loss of time, I will at once proceed, with the permission of the Secretary for Public Works, to make the necessary trial surveys, to fix these deviations, and to get out the new plans and designs required for them.

"I have, &c.,

"HENRY T. LEWIS,

"Engineer-in-Chief.

"To the Commissioner for Railways,  
"Brisbane."

He thought it would be well that the correspondence should be placed in the hands of honorable members, as it would enable them to see that both the honorable gentlemen who preceded him in the office of Minister for Works, as well as the present Government, had acted in the matter of the Warwick Railway, in the way they believed was best for the public interest. He must repeat that he certainly did feel regret that any observations should have been made in another place, reflecting on the honorable member for Warrego while Minister for Works, for he felt the fullest confidence that in that matter, as in everything else, his conduct was straightforward and aboveboard, and that he was actuated solely by a desire to promote the public interest and to benefit the country.

Mr. A. HODGSON said he could not consider the letter which the honorable the Minister for Works had read as at all satisfactory, for he could not possibly imagine how the Engineer-in-Chief could, in so short a time, have properly inquired into the respective merits of the two lines. He stated that, because the Engineer-in-Chief, when he travelled with him for the purpose of inspecting the proposed divergence of the line, took him only half the distance, and, under a gum tree in the middle of the bush, told him that there his trial survey ended. The trial survey was made, not through the most difficult part of the line, but through a part of the country that was almost entirely open; and when he came to the difficult part of the country, the Engineer-in-Chief appeared to be wholly at sea. He did not mention this matter as a party question in any way whatever, but he believed that if the line were carried out by the route he had proposed, a saving of from £20,000 to £25,000 would be effected in the matter of construction alone, and in addition to that, the distance would be very much shortened. He would

ask the honorable the Minister for Works to think over what he now stated, and instruct the Engineer-in-Chief to make a more careful survey of the route than he could possibly have done in so short a time. If that gentleman was not competent, or had not time at his command, to carry out the work, let it be given to some one else; and he could inform the honorable the Minister for Works of a gentleman who could carry out the work, and that too in a way by which a great amount of money would be saved to the country. He made those remarks in the best of feeling towards the honorable gentleman, and not with any desire to embarrass him or place any difficulty between him and the Engineer-in-Chief.

Mr. WALSH thought that after the earnest way in which the honorable member for the Warrego had pressed his views upon the honorable the Minister for Works, it would be the duty of that gentleman to give them his earnest consideration; and it would be the duty of the House to see that the suggestions were carried out, if it should be shewn that, by the course proposed, a saving would be effected of about £20,000.

The motion for adjournment was then withdrawn.

#### MINISTERIAL EXPLANATION.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL rose and said that perhaps it would be convenient to honorable members that he should now enter into a short explanation of the course the Government intended to take during the present session. He might state, at the outset, that when he received His Excellency's commands to undertake the formation of a Government he had considerable hesitation in entering upon the task; because he felt in respect to his professional practice he could scarcely hope, without occasioning considerable injury to himself, to be able to give to the duties of first Minister of the Crown that attention they would demand of him. On reflection, however, he thought it was possible that by his acceptance of the position he might be able for a time to stay that party strife and contest which had for some time gone on, as, he thought, every honorable member must admit, to the detriment of the public business of the country; and if his occupation of that position should for a time facilitate the discharge of the public business of the colony he would be perfectly satisfied. He had no desire himself personally to retain office one moment longer than his doing so might be for the good of the community; and the moment the House felt that his holding the position had answered the public purpose for which he had undertaken it, he would be very willing to retire from it. He felt sure, from the speech of the honorable member for the Warrego, in personal explanation, and from the general tone of other honorable members with whom he had communicated, that the Government

would receive a fair constitutional trial; and that, he submitted, they were entitled to, by constitutional practice, as the advisers of the Crown. If they should fail, after that fair trial which he was sure they would receive, then they must follow unhesitatingly, the constitutional practice and retire, should an adverse vote be passed against them. The Government intended, should it meet the approval of the House, to ask for a vote of supply for two months—that would be for the months of January and February—and further, to ask for an adjournment till the 19th of January. At that time they proposed to enter upon the passing of the Estimates for 1869, as the first business; and he thought the House would agree with him that such would be a convenient course to pursue, as they would, by that means, avoid the passing of two sets of Estimates during the same session. He had some fear that it would lead to confusion, now that the Estimates were growing in bulk, if they were to enter on the consideration of the Estimates for 1869 and 1870 during the same session. The Government accordingly proposed to adopt the course which he had suggested. But they did not intend to limit their labors to the passing of the Estimates. The Government would be ready at the meeting of the House to lay before honorable members a defined plan of immigration. He was not at that moment prepared to state what the details of the plan would be; but the measure would receive, and was now receiving the careful consideration of his colleagues and of other honorable members; and if the House should meet on the 19th January, the Government would then be prepared to state fully the details of the plan. The Government had not lost sight of the fact brought before the House by a petition from the pastoral tenants, representing that there was some necessity for granting a measure of relief to the outside squatters. He hoped he did not make an unreasonable request, or one that would be met with any degree of feeling, but one rather that would be received with some degree of favor and attention when he ventured to ask that some gentlemen more thoroughly acquainted with the subject than he was, and having practical experience of the wants of the outside squatters, would come forward and intimate to Ministers, frankly and fully, what measure of relief they conceived should, with due regard to the public interests, be extended to the outside squatters. If the Government should receive sufficient assistance in that direction, or if they should have time by their own unaided efforts, they would be prepared to bring forward at the earliest sitting some measure for granting relief to the outside squatters; but they would be greatly facilitated and benefited by receiving such assistance as he had suggested. The Government also proposed to bring forward a measure for the election of additional mem-

bers to the House. There would not be time to enter upon the consideration of a measure for the re-distribution of the electorates, but he thought it would be possible to pass a measure for adding a few members to the House. With the immigration question, and the question of additional members; and, it might be, a measure providing relief to pastoral tenants in the outlying districts, they would have as much business as they could expect to get through by the end of January. But there was another question which it would be necessary to bring forward, that the Government might have the authority of the House to take action upon. He referred to the proposed international conference on trade and commerce between the several Australian colonies. If there were not so early a prospect of obtaining the opinion of the House on the subject, the Government would have felt compelled to act on their own responsibility in the matter. He had no doubt the House would be disposed to authorise the Government to send representatives to the conference, though he did not think, that on the part of Queensland, they could anticipate any practical results. He did not know that any further practical result could be obtained, than to see how the colony stood in relation to such a conference; but at the same time, it seemed to him to be a step in the right direction to ascertain their position in respect to the other colonies, and if that should be the only result, it would justify their joining in the conference. But that would be a matter for the House to consider. It was, however, a matter in which the Government, as representing the colony, felt an interest, and would therefore bring forward for the approval of the House. He thought those would be the immediate objects that would be brought forward for consideration in January. After the session in January, the Government proposed that there should be another session in May or June. That was, within three or four months after the rising of the House in January or February, the Government would summon Parliament again. Indeed, they must necessarily do so, for the Government did not propose to introduce any Loan Bill this session. His honorable colleague, the Treasurer, would be able to inform the House respecting the Loan Bill; but it was not proposed to introduce the Bill this session, but to introduce it during what might be considered the regular session of 1869, which the Government hoped might commence in May or June. Such was their immediate proposition. Of course, the Government had a prospective policy for the session of 1869; but it might be somewhat idle for him to enter upon it at present. (Cries of "No, no.") Well, he was not unprepared to mention to the House some of the measures the Government proposed to bring forward during the session, which he hoped would commence in May or June. At that time the Government would

have to be prepared to submit a plan for the re-distribution of the electorates; but he was not at present prepared to enter into the details of such a measure. In proposing any plan of the kind, the Government would not lose sight of any one class or interest in the community, but would deal with the re-distribution of electorates on a basis that would be acceptable to all, and that would be just to all. The Government would also be prepared to deal with certain subjects relating to the administration of the law. One of those would be a measure for the reform of the insolvency law, upon which the commercial community had set their minds, and which measure he understood, had already been prepared, and was now in the office of the honorable and learned member for the Burnett. Believing that the measure was one which had the approval of those who were most interested, he was willing to bring it forward and have it passed into law. As to the expediency or inexpediency of having an insolvency law there were different opinions. Some thought that the matter should be left to the operation of time, as under the Statute of Limitations; and that fraudulent insolvencies and acts of fraud should be dealt with under the statute of Elizabeth, and other statutes passed for the punishment of frauds. The subject was one of great importance to the community at large, and would require the most careful consideration the House could give it; but the Government would be prepared to introduce the measure he had referred to, either in its entirety, or so amended as to make it even more acceptable to the commercial community. With regard to the insolvency law generally, whether it was reformed or not, very great inconvenience had been undoubtedly experienced from their inability to get sequestrations of property—from the fact that parties must come down from the country to Brisbane, or send, in order to get the estate of a debtor sequestrated. He thought it but just to the business people in the north, that the Legislature should endeavor to effect some reform in that direction. There was a Bill, which, also, he found had been printed, from a hasty perusal of which he was inclined to think—he believed the honorable member for Maryborough had had some hand in preparing the measure—would be effectual in remedying some of the difficulties in connection with the Civil Service. The Government were now making their appointments in the Civil Service of such a character as—the probability was that they had made no appointment, indeed—could not in any way be considered permanent,—or could not become a permanent charge under the Civil Service Act: they were on probation; so that the way was clear, with due regard to existing interests, to reduce the expenditure of the colony. He was inclined to think that the Government might save future expense, in the extension of the district courts system, by adopting some-

thing like the English establishment of quarter sessions; or, at any rate, by empowering magistrates in outside districts to preside at trials for, at any rate, minor offences. He meant the remarks he was making to apply especially to those remote districts of the colony, where it was almost impossible, he was sorry to say, from their remoteness, to afford the people the benefits of the administration of justice. The expense of the administration of justice was enormous in this colony; nevertheless, the Government ought, as nearly as possible, to bring justice to every man's door. The administration of justice increased in expensiveness as the community extended outwards, and increased in numbers. There was nothing so difficult to deal with as the administration of justice, when regarded from an economical point of view. He imagined that in some of the remote districts there would be no objection to something like rough justice; by which, however, he did not mean to infer injustice, but substantial justice—administered by men who could read the statutes—not only in criminal cases, but in the civil differences constantly arising between man and man. He would also grant an extended jurisdiction to the remote districts. He would endeavor to prepare a plan which, if accepted, would, he indulged the hope and belief, be the means of effecting a considerable saving in future in the expense of the administration of justice, and of allowing justice to be dispensed where at present, he was afraid, it did not reach. With regard to the general expenditure of the Government, he might remark that economy would be exercised. He was very sincere in his desire to act with economy, and he hoped that his colleagues would administer their several departments with all the economy consistent with the fair and effective conduct of the affairs of the colony. But, of course, it was the business of his honorable colleague, the Treasurer, to speak upon all money matters; and his statement would be made in January. It did not behove him to speak confidently on such subjects, but his honorable colleague, when he addressed the House, would be able to enter upon them more elaborately; and would impress the House more favorably than one of his (the Attorney-General's) profession could be supposed to be able to do. In the meantime, he could only, on behalf of himself and colleagues, express their desire to exercise a just and wise economy in the administration of the public affairs of the colony. There were many subjects he proposed to deal with, but he did not think them of sufficient importance to detain the House. The public works of the colony at present in progress would, of course, be proceeded with to completion. During the session of 1869, he should have to submit to the House some plan for the local administration of local revenue. The subject would not be so difficult to deal with as he, at first, supposed. They had the model of Canada before them:

although he should not be disposed to grant to District Councils such large powers as those given to the once separate colonies of Canada. A plan might, however, be devised for the local expenditure of local funds, though the power granted to those councils of making by-laws dealing with public works, education, police protection, and other matters, should be sharply defined by statute. At all events, some such system might be applied to portions of the colony, if not to every part of it. The subject was one to which they ought all to give serious attention. He believed that local administration in some parts of the colony would be of great benefit. He knew, of course, that it had been often urged upon Parliament from motives of local ambition; but if the House could satisfy the ambition of their fellow-colonists, by giving scope for the employment of their latent energies, and at the same time confer a benefit upon the colony generally, he thought they might very well do so. Of course, they knew the great evil of delegating to those inferior jurisdictions—as he might call them—or local administrations, the power to borrow money. He should have considerable hesitation in granting it. The evils of such a course had been most painfully exemplified in this colony under the Trustees of Public Lands Act. Most of the public institutions of the colony were in a state of insolvency. They had availed themselves of the powers of that Act to borrow money in times past, and had got into trouble in consequence; and, no doubt, the property of some of them would pass into other hands, and thus be diverted from the purposes for which it was originally granted. He would only grant powers of borrowing under the sanction of Parliament, obtained from time to time; and even then, there should be such an effective supervision of the expenditure as to prevent any misappropriation or reckless expenditure of the money borrowed. He had touched on nearly all the leading matters. The Government and the House would have to deal with the question of water supply to large towns. That would be forced upon them, if they did not enter upon it very soon, by some visitation of disease. However much they expended in supplying the towns with water would be well spent. He hoped the Government would be able to bring in a liberal measure to provide a large and ample supply of water to all large towns; and, indeed, he did not see why the same benefit should not be extended to all other towns in the colony. There ought to be an ample reserve and full provision made for the supply of water to inland, and indeed to all, towns in the colony. There was another matter in which it was well known, he—and he was sure he might speak for his colleagues—had always taken a great personal interest; he referred to the question of public education. He had long been of opinion that, at all events, some measure of English education should be given free to every child in the

colony; and he hoped—in fact, he was confident, from the liberality of Parliament—that he should be enabled, before he left office, to see some such plan carried into effect. If he left office before it was carried out, he should be glad to assist any Government in such a measure. He would not refer to the loans required for meeting the Treasury bills. He asked the indulgence of the House with reference to all matters of finance, which were more appropriately within the province of his honorable friend the Treasurer. It would be necessary to bring in a Bill to amend the Land Act, not so as to alter its spirit in any way whatever, but to aid its fair and effective administration. He had hoped to have been in a position to do something speedily with respect to the gold fields laws. He had sent to Victoria for the gold fields laws of that colony, but they were so numerous—contained in a book as large as the first volume of the Consolidated Statutes—that, as yet, he had found it impossible to prepare even a useful digest of them. His honorable friend, the Minister for Mines, Mr. Macalister, had the same work before him, and assured him that it would be possible, by Executive action, to give greater scope to the employment of capital on the gold fields than was at present allowed. He was himself strongly in favor of giving persons on the gold fields—what every one must allow was absolutely essential in almost every pursuit—permanency and security of tenure. People could not be expected to invest their capital when it might be swept away at any moment by the capricious action of the Executive. Leases ought to be granted on reasonable conditions, when it appeared that men intended really to utilise the land. If men of capital could give reasonable guarantees that they intended to use the auriferous land they applied for, the Government would be justified in giving them security of tenure. The Minister for Mines assured him that that could be done by Executive action; but if the law were found defective, the Government would be prepared in the session of 1869 to go further with legislation on that subject. With reference to the remarks of the honorable member for Warrego respecting the military contribution, he might state that that was a matter upon which the Parliament could not finally act. They could only pass a Bill to repeal the Act; but, it being the Imperial policy that the colony should contribute in that way to its defence, the Bill would have to be reserved for the Royal assent. Personally, he thought it would be very desirable if they repealed the statute. The military contribution was a great expense; and when they came to consider the standing army it enabled them to support, they should have no hesitation in sending it away; especially when they had such a gallant band of Volunteers, who, by the way, were well represented in the House.

Mr. PALMER said he did not rise with any intention to reply to the statement made by

the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government, but he thought that, having held a position in the previous Government, it was only right that he should state in a few words, the course of conduct he had sketched out for himself in the present session. He had determined to give the gentlemen who now occupied the Treasury benches such support as he could, provided they introduced good measures. He would give them what they had always refused the Government of which he had been a member—a fair trial. He had no hankering after the “sweets of office,” and so long as those gentlemen introduced good measures, so long would he endeavor to support them. He might, however, be allowed to say, that of all the policies he had ever known sketched out, that of the present Ministry was about the queerest. The honorable the Premier positively proposed to go to the squatters for his squatting policy; to the merchants to know the sort of Insolvency Bill to bring in; and he would, no doubt, go to the gold diggers for his gold fields policy. Was that anything like a policy? While he (Mr. Palmer) was in office, the Government were perpetually twitted by the present occupants of the Treasury Benches upon their want of a policy; but the policy sketched out by the Premier was borrowed entirely from Bills left in the departments by the previous Ministry. No doubt it would suit the present Government to get the Estimates passed first, and afterwards to “do the little Bills.” He could, however, see no reason for refusing to adopt the course always hitherto followed. If the Estimates were once passed, honorable members would be sent about their business, in the same manner as they had been on a former occasion by one of the members of the present Government. Notwithstanding that he had very little dependence upon the Government, judging them from their antecedents, he would endeavor to give them as fair a support as he possibly could. It all depended upon the measures they introduced, whether he supported them or not, but there should be no factious opposition on his part.