

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 12 JULY 1870**

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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, 12 July, 1870.*

*Prorogation of Parliament.*

## PROROGATION OF PARLIAMENT.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker—It will be in your recollection and that of honorable members of this House, that on the last occasion on which I addressed them, I informed them that in consequence of the vote the House had come to on that morning, I felt it necessary to give the Governor certain advice. I think, without going any further into the matter, or saying anything likely to provoke discussion, it will be much better if I simply read to the House the advice I felt it my duty to give to the Governor;—and, His Excellency has authorised me to make use of an Executive minute on the subject of that advice, when it was taken into consideration by the Cabinet, that I may make clear to the House the steps that have been taken. I hope the House, or at all events, a considerable portion of honorable members, will bear me out—will, at least, accept as truth what I tell them—when I tell them that I gave that advice not for one moment on personal consideration, but solely from what I believed, and believe now, to be for the good of the country. If I followed my own inclinations, I would certainly retire from the Government. The honor of being Premier of a colony like this may be something to be proud of, but it hardly compensates

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for the amount of abuse one receives while holding that office. I am not very thin skinned myself; and I do not care much for abuse, particularly when it is not merited; but I say it is a poor recompense to make to men who are willing to devote themselves—who give their time, and attention, and their best energies, to the service of the country. It is a fact that in return for this, they receive continual abuse. The advice I felt it my duty to give to His Excellency is as follows:—

“Colonial Secretary’s Office,

“Brisbane, 8th July, 1870.

“Your Excellency—The vote on the Address, given this morning in the Legislative Assembly, renders it necessary that I should ask your Excellency to dissolve the House. My reasons for supposing that I am justified in asking you to pursue this course, are as follows:—

“1. The present House was not elected during the tenure of office of the present Ministry, and can in no way be called their House.

“2. The first Ministry who met the present House resigned in consequence of the Address being carried only by the casting vote of the Speaker. The Lilley Ministry who succeeded them were beaten by a majority of seventeen to six;—that majority consisted in a great measure of members who had been supporters of that Ministry. The honorable member who moved the amendment on the Address, when sent for by your Excellency, failed in his attempt to form a Government, and I took office as a last resource. The experience of the session has proved that there is no prospect of my Ministry being allowed to place our policy before the House, and that the present Assembly does not contain the materials from which another Ministry could be formed which would be likely to command a working majority in the House.

“3. I have reason to believe that an appeal to the country will materially strengthen my position. Two seats, now vacant, I may reasonably expect, would be filled by members who would support my policy, and several others change occupants.

“4. And finally I would submit to your Excellency that there is a distinct and important issue, on which the opinion of the country ought at this time to be taken—*i.e.*, whether a very large addition is to be made to the debt of the colony, and consequently a very large increase on our present heavy taxation, by borrowing money to enter into a very expensive and extensive system of railway contracts; or whether we should confine ourselves to the policy set forth in your Excellency’s Speech, of borrowing only enough to meet our liabilities, complete the railways now contracted for, and put the roads of the colony into passable condition.

“I am,

“Your Excellency’s most obedient servant,

“A. H. PALMER.”

As I informed the House, his Excellency took time to consider it; and the result at which he has arrived will be best told in his own words, which, as I before said, I am

authorised by His Excellency to make use of:—

"Minute by the Governor on the advice tendered to him by the Colonial Secretary and Vice-President of the Executive Council, to dissolve the House of Assembly, in consequence of the amendments adopted by that body to the Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by the Governor on 5th July, 1870.

"12th July, 1870.

"The Governor has carefully considered the reasons adduced by the Vice-President for advising a Dissolution.

"The Governor has reviewed the proceedings of the present Parliament during the Session of 1870.

"The Governor observes that on the 26th April, he delivered a Speech, at the suggestion of his then responsible advisers, proposing the extension of the railway from Ipswich to Brisbane in the Southern, and from Westwood to the Dawson in the Northern, division of the Colony, and for other public works, and for the encouragement of railways constructed by companies or private individuals. The Speech also advised, 'That, to prepare the way for the introduction of Bills for a re-distribution of the Electorates, and a revision and improvement of our Electoral Law,' you will be desired to 'consider a measure repealing some provisions in the Constitution Act of 1867, which require unusual majorities in passing certain amendments of that Statute.'

"The proposed Address in Reply to that Speech was amended by the addition of words informing the Governor that the Ministers had not the confidence of the House of Assembly.

"On the 5th July, the Governor having, at the suggestion of his then responsible advisers, delivered a Speech which advocated loans only for the purpose of completing present contracts for public works, but which in many other respects endorsed the policy shadowed forth in the Speech of 26th April, the Address proposed in Reply was rejected and an amendment adopted, which points out four matters of importance which the House considers essential to granting its confidence to any Ministers, and expressing its want of confidence in the Governor's present advisers in consequence of the absence of any announcement of such measures in the Governor's Speech on 5th July.

"The four important matters embodied in the amendment consist of—

- "1. Encouragement to the development of native industries.
- "2. A general railway policy, completion of existing lines, and opening up the interior.
- "3. A repeal of the two-thirds clause of the Constitution Act of 1867.
- "4. The northern question of separation.

"The Governor concludes that the first amendment raises an important question of protective duties.

"The second will determine the financial policy of the colony for some years, but the principle was advocated by the Ministry who were defeated on 26th April.

"The third was to have been submitted to the House by the Ministry who were defeated on 26th April.

"The fourth introduces a question which the Governor believes has never been previously brought under the notice of the constituencies.

"Considering, then, the defeat of both parties in the House of Assembly in so short a space of time; considering the vital importance to the colony of a decision on its future financial policy, and the introduction or otherwise of a protective policy, as well as of altering the Constitution Act, and advising a division of the colony, the Governor has arrived at the conclusion that the people at large alone have a right to determine such grave questions; and the Governor grants a dissolution in the earnest hope that the result of a new Parliament will be such a decided expression of opinion by the electors as may lead to the formation of a Government, whose principles will be in accordance with the wishes of the people, and who will possess the confidence of the House of Assembly to enable them to carry on the business of the country with despatch.

"The Governor has not arrived at this decision without anxiously considering the delay to public business; but as a dissolution does not entail any very increased delay beyond that which would ensue from a change of his advisers, the Governor deems it better to endeavor at once to ascertain the opinion of the country at large, which alone he is bound to accept as conclusive."

Now, sir, I think it will be a great piece of impertinence on my part to add a word to the very excellent reasons which his Excellency has given. I shall be quite satisfied with the result of my appeal to the country, whatever that result may be. The appeal is, whether the people of Queensland are willing that this colony shall be plunged further into debt, and whether they will burden themselves with additional taxation to meet that debt. That is their business alone. But I will not accept the verdict of this House, who were not elected to decide upon any such question, and who, I believe, do not express the feelings of the great majority of the inhabitants of this colony. I have, now, to hand you, sir, the proclamation of his Excellency the Governor proroguing this House, and the *Government Gazette* containing it.

The House dispersed.