

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1870

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 17 November, 1870.

Pre-entation of Address in Reply.—Governor's Answer to Address in Reply—Adjournment—Outrages by the blacks.—Proceedings at Elections.—Election of Chairman of Committees.—South Toolburra and Canning Downs Runs.—Surveys.—Prayers on Opening the Proceedings of the House.

PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS IN REPLY.

The House having met at half-past eleven o'clock, in accordance with the resolution passed on the previous day,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved—

That the honorable the Speaker, and other honorable members present, proceed to Government House for the purpose of presenting to His Excellency the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech, which had been adopted by the House on the previous day.

The motion was agreed to, and the honorable the Speaker, accompanied by honorable members present, proceeded to Government House.

GOVERNOR'S ANSWER TO ADDRESS IN REPLY.

The SPEAKER, on the House re-assembling at three o'clock, reported that he and other honorable members had waited upon His Excellency the Governor at an earlier period of the day, and presented to His Excellency the Address in Reply which had been adopted by the House. To that Address, His Excellency had been pleased to make the following Reply:—

“ TO THE HONORABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“ GENTLEMEN,

“ I thank you in the name of the Queen for the Address you have presented to me, containing an assurance of your continued loyalty and attachment to the Throne and Person of Her Most Gracious Majesty.

“ I have every confidence that the result of your labors, in considering the various matters submitted to you, will tend to the advantage of the colony.

“ I thank you for so cheerfully responding to my appeal to enable me to enforce (so far as lies in your power) the neutrality which has been proclaimed as the policy of the British Government, and your readiness to assist, should any unfortunate circumstances render it necessary to do so.”

ADJOURNMENT.—OUTRAGES BY THE BLACKS.

Mr. MacDEVITT moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of calling the attention of the Government and the House to a report that appeared in the newspapers of certain outrages which had been committed by the blacks in the northern districts. The paragraph, he had no doubt, had been read

by most honorable members; but with the view of bringing the matter directly under the attention of the House, he would take the opportunity of now reading it. The paragraph was as follows:—

“TOWNSVILLE.

“November 16, 1:25 p.m.

“The blacks continue to create disturbances in this neighborhood, and commit many outrages.

“Lately they tracked a white man to a water-hole near the Haughton River, and tomahawked him, and it is suspected that several other murders of a similar kind have been perpetrated.

“In another direction, towards ‘Waterview,’ a mob of blacks stole Mr. Allingham’s rifle and revolver, with which they fired several shots at him.

“A party of aboriginals surrounded the Eureka Hotel, on the main road to the Cape and Gilbert diggings, when there were only two women in the house. They were threatening to bail up the premises when assistance came up and drove the marauders off.”

It was not only on account of the report of those outrages having been published in the *Brisbane Courier* to-day that he wished to call attention to it, but also because he had received communications from his constituents on the subject. He was also informed that this was only one of many outrages of a similar kind that had taken place in the same district. It was, therefore, he considered, the duty of the Government to take some steps, without delay, to put a stop to them. A few days before he arrived at Townsville, as a candidate for election, a black boy, he was informed, had had the audacity to attempt to tomahawk persons in the district who were out in the bush in search of cattle. He, therefore, thought that some steps should at once be taken to strengthen the hands of the police, in order, if possible, to put a stop to such outrages. He knew that the officer in charge of the police in the district did all in his power to stop them; but it was absolutely necessary that his hands should be strengthened, in order to give security to the settlers there. On the Herbert River, a large number of the settlers there had taken up land, for the purpose of sugar-growing; and, consequently, a great many people would be employed in the prosecution of that industry. The same was the case along other rivers in the district; and unless those people were afforded protection against such outrages, it would be impossible for them to follow their occupation. Now, he thought that on the Herbert, a good site might be found for a police station, and also a telegraph station. A site might be chosen from which the police could act with the utmost alacrity and effect throughout the surrounding district; while, as a telegraph station, it would form a central position of communication. If anything of the kind had taken place in Brisbane or the neighborhood, some one of the honorable members for North Brisbane would have at once

called attention to it, and demanded that there should immediately be an increase made to the police force; and in making such a demand he would have been backed up by all the other metropolitan members. Or if it had occurred in Ipswich, the honorable member, Mr. Cribb, and the honorable members for West Moreton, would at once have made a similar demand. He understood that the attention of the Government had been called to the matter by their officials, and that they would do what might be necessary to provide a remedy, if they received the support of the House.

Mr. KING, in seconding the motion, said he could fully bear out the accuracy of the statements that had been made by the honorable member for the Kennedy. He knew personally that the prospectors in that district were greatly harassed by the blacks; and he had no doubt that in that district many murders, which would never be discovered, had been committed by them. He hoped the Government would take some steps to secure the white inhabitants against such outrages, and that they would receive the support of every honorable member of the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had no doubt whatever that all that had been said upon this subject was quite correct. It was also quite true that the attention of the Government had been called to the matter through the chief officers of the police; but the Government, being tied down as they were to a limited number of police, could not move parties of the police force from one point to another,—even where it might be considered an increase of the force was more required. It was only within the last fortnight that the attention of the Government had been called to this matter; and he might inform the House that since then arrangements had been made for the removal of the police camp from Cardwell to a point half way between Cardwell and Townsville, where it was thought the police would be more generally useful for the surrounding districts. He was not sure that the House would agree with him if he asked for authority to place the native police force on the footing he thought it should be placed upon; and that was that it should be so increased as to be capable of repressing outrage, instead of being capable, and that only in some cases, of securing the punishment of those who committed such outrages. If it would afford any consolation to the honorable members who had brought this matter before the House, he could assure them that there were other districts in as bad a position for want of police protection. Every week during the last five months his sheep stations had been robbed. The Government had to do the best they could with the limited number of police at their disposal. He knew that all the outside districts were suffering annoyance to a greater or less extent from the blacks. It was true that the blacks did not now commit so many murders as they formerly did, but they had become very

expert in the art of stealing, and that they accomplished with the greatest impunity. He hoped the House would consent to the application that would be made by the Government for an increase of the police force, especially as it was not such as could be considered an extravagant one.

PROCEEDINGS AT ELECTIONS.

Mr. GROOM said that, before the motion for adjournment was withdrawn, he wished to bring forward another matter, and it was one which he considered deeply affected the privileges of the House. He desired to call the attention of the House to what he must describe as the somewhat disgraceful proceedings that took place in connection with the late election for the Northern Downs. On the occasion of the declaration of the poll at Dalby, on Friday, the 2nd September, the returning officer for the district, according to a report in the *Dalby Herald* of the following day, was reported to have said that—

“He had officiated as returning officer for many years, and hitherto he had had it in his power to compliment the electors on the straightforward manner in which previous elections had been conducted. On the present occasion he could not do so. A circumstance had occurred at the late election which he wished to bring prominently under their notice, because it was a disgrace to the parties concerned in it. A shameful practice of personation had been discovered, and he hoped that the guilty parties would be severely punished. He did not wish to throw the least blame upon Mr. Bell or Mr. Thorn. It appeared to him that some of the supporters of the candidates had allowed their party feelings to overcome their discretion, and they had unwisely and unscrupulously induced ignorant men to vote in other persons' names. He hoped the disgraceful practice would never be tried again. It was a serious matter, and the supporters of the candidates ought to recollect that, by inducing a man to personate another, such personator was liable to several years' imprisonment. These supporters would not like to maintain that man's family during the time of his incarceration. Hitherto he (the returning officer) had felt great pleasure in discharging his duties, but if such shameful unfairness were persisted in he should resign the office; he would not be returning officer for a district where such disreputable practices were carried on.”

The honorable member for the district, in the course of his speech in returning thanks, said—

“From what they had all seen of the election, they would all agree with him it was quite time some change should be made in our Electoral Act. For the first time, they had found several attempts had been made to personate and double voting in this election. He did not believe that his opponent in the contest had been a party to the practice; but he did say that there came from Ipswich a number of persons, and amongst them a gentleman whose name he was not afraid to give—it was Mr. George Thorn, jun.—who had openly avowed that he had succeeded in increasing a small number of votes into a large number before

now in some electorates, and who appeared to revel in the opprobrium arising from such malpractices. He (Mr. Bell) should take the first opportunity to get the Electoral Act improved. He thought, if the Government could be induced to bring in an Act similar to the one existing in Victoria—one which would meet the desires of the electors, and at the same time prevent such nefarious practices—the country would be greatly benefitted.”

In the next place, Mr. Wakeling, who seconded the motion of a vote of thanks to the returning officer, was reported to have spoken as follows:—

“Mr. Wakeling seconded the vote of thanks, and expressed his surprise that no elector, not directly interested in the contest, had said anything about what had taken place at the polling booths, and which had been referred to by the returning officer. He thought that the disgraceful proceedings referred to ought to be condemned by all honest men. He wanted to know if the election for Northern Downs were to be decided by a representative and a rabble brought from another town, and aided by a few unprincipled men here. He was at Jondaryan on polling day, and he found there a great number of Ipswich men, a large proportion of whom had names similar to those of electors on Northern Downs, who all declared that they intended to vote, although they had not a vote amongst them. He also found that telegraphic communication with Jondaryan had been interrupted, and from that he judged they were prepared to go to any length, even to rioting had they not been overawed by the measures taken to check them.”

Now, if what was stated in the extracts he had read was true, the question involved was one of a very serious nature. He would like to ask the honorable the Colonial Secretary if he approved of persons being sent from one district to another to carry out such malpractices, or that telegraphic communication should be interrupted. Though asking the question, he must say that he believed the honorable gentleman did not approve of such proceedings. At the police court at Dalby, on Tuesday, the 30th of August, one James Brown was brought up on a charge of attempting to personate an elector on the previous day. The returning officer for the Northern Downs, in the course of his examination, said that when the prisoner came into the polling booth to vote, he gave his name as James Brown. Mr. Roche then asked him, “Are you the James Brown, No. 48 on the electoral roll?” He replied, “Well, I'll chance it; I am.” He understood that the success of a prosecution in such cases depended, to a great extent, on the production by the Crown prosecutor, of the writ of election. In this case the writ of election could not be produced, and the prisoner was discharged. He was aware of another case in which the writ of election could not be produced, and the Crown prosecutor asked that the case might be postponed till the next sitting of the court, in order that he might, if possible, pro-

duce the writ of election. As the gentleman occupying the office of Attorney-General was not in the House, he would like to know if the officer in charge of criminal prosecutions in such cases would be assisted by the Government to perform his duties, by being furnished with the writ of election?

Mr. ATKIN said he had intended to bring forward this question in a more comprehensive form. At the election for East Moreton, a band of ruffians attended, many of them from Ipswich, who were brought in buggies to the principal polling places, and were kept in such a condition, pending the election, that, as he had been informed, many of them voted the wrong way. He remembered that on one occasion there were two hundred cases of personation at an election for West Moreton; and he must say that it was exceedingly strange that the name of one gentleman should always crop up in connection with such proceedings. He could not avoid taking advantage of the opportunity at present afforded him of expressing his astonishment at the invariable habit of honorable members for northern districts always pointedly referring to what would be done by southern members if certain occurrences took place in the South similar to those that had taken place in the North. As to increasing the police force in the northern districts for the repression of outrages by the blacks, he would give his support to the Government so far as he could; and he would gladly support them in increasing the police force to such an extent as might be deemed necessary for the protection of the settlers in the outside districts.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved—

That Frederick Augustus Forbes, Esquire, be appointed Chairman of Committees of the whole Assembly.

In doing so he said, that in proposing Mr. Forbes, who had been so long a member of the House, with the exception of a short interregnum, he thought he would have done all that was necessary. He believed it would be generally admitted, that few honorable members had been more regular in their attendance in the House than Mr. Forbes, or that anyone was better acquainted with the duties of the office of Chairman of Committees, or could discharge them so well. Mr. Forbes was so well known, and so favorably known, to honorable members, that as he thought, all that was required to secure his election was that he should be proposed for the office. He had hoped that the motion would have been allowed to go without a division, and he still hoped that it might be allowed to go without a division. But he had been led to understand that it was intended to propose some other honorable member for the office of Chairman of Committees. Now, he could

only say to the House, what he had said to the gentleman he alluded to, that any opposition he would give to him would be solely because the Government last session pledged themselves to support Mr. Forbes. On that ground alone the Government would oppose the other honorable member, who he understood was to be brought forward. The opposition of the Government would not proceed from any personal feelings whatever. Still, he would not disguise from the honorable member to whom he referred, or from the House, that this election of Chairman of Committees was anything but a party question. The election of Chairman of Committees had always been made a party question. On the last occasion of the election of a Chairman of Committees, he and those who acted with him showed the then Government that the election of a Chairman of Committees was a party question by the fact of the Opposition carrying the election of the honorable gentleman who now occupied the office of Minister for Lands. When his honorable friend, Mr. Thompson, was elected to the office of Chairman of Committees, it was strongly urged by the honorable and learned member for North Brisbane that the question at issue was most decidedly a party question. He hoped that, in recording their votes, honorable members would understand that the question was really a party question; although, of course, it was not a question on which the Ministry, if outvoted, would consider it necessary to resign. Still, if the Ministry should be defeated, he would, he must confess, feel he was beaten, and that he would feel a little raw about it. With those few observations, and believing that Mr. Forbes would make a most efficient Chairman of Committees, he had much pleasure in proposing that he should be elected to the office.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS seconded the motion.

Mr. LILLEY said he was sorry it should have fallen to him to perform the duty of proposing an amendment on the motion of his honorable friend at the head of the Government. In making the proposal he was about to bring before the House, he disclaimed the slightest intention on his part to convert this into a party question. His honorable friend, of course, said that it was a party question, and that the election of Chairman of Committees had always been a party question. He (Mr. Lilley) knew full well the capability of the rule on which the honorable gentleman relied, and which he had laid down strongly—though not accurately—and that his object was to ensure the co-operation of the gentlemen who sat around him on the Ministerial benches. He begged leave to support the contradiction he gave him in the course of his speech. He was sure that the honorable gentleman had forgotten the circumstances of the last election of a chairman. On the occasion he alluded to, two of his colleagues in the same Government—Mr. Macalister

and Mr. Taylor—voted against the gentleman whom he had proposed. He then disclaimed any intention in bringing forward his motion other than of a personal nature in regard to the two gentlemen whose names were submitted to the House. Therefore, he was sure his honorable friend would see that upon this occasion, as on the former, he treated the question as no party question. In moving an amendment, now, he did not in any way disparage either the claims or the personal standing of the honorable member whose name had been submitted to the House; but he thought it his duty to submit the name of another honorable member who had been long and honorably known in another legislature in these colonies, he meant Mr. Alexander Fyfe, the member for Rockhampton. In doing this, he thought the House could not pay a more graceful tribute to the constituency the honorable member represented, or to the northern portion of this colony, of whose interests Mr. Fyfe was so active and zealous an advocate, than by electing him to fill the post of Chairman of Committees of the Legislative Assembly. Therefore he had very much pleasure in moving—

That the question be amended by the omission of the words "Frederick Augustus Forbes," with a view to the insertion in their place of the words "Alexander Fyfe."

Mr. MACDEVITT said that, in agreeing to the course he had been requested to take, of seconding the nomination of Mr. Alexander Fyfe, as Chairman of Committees, he did not think there should have been any party considerations imported into the question to affect the choice of the House. He certainly came to that conclusion, when he heard different gentlemen named, and thought there was to be a number of candidates for the position, that he would not be properly fulfilling the duty he owed to the House and the country, did he not vote for the gentleman whom he considered best qualified; and it was solely with that view that he rose on this occasion to second the amendment. As to the other gentleman who had been proposed, he had certainly been long and honorably known in the legislature; and, with reference to him, he did not wish to say anything either by way of praise or disparagement. But this he could say, that if honorable service and distinguished position, as representing a large constituency, could give a claim to parliamentary honors, then Mr. Fyfe had that claim. It was a matter of notoriety that he had represented perhaps the most important constituency in the colony from which he had come to this; that he had sat in the Parliament of Victoria for a considerable time, and occupied no mean position with the party with which he was associated, shewing by his usefulness in the House and by his attendance upon committees, and by the able way in which he spoke upon

questions which affected the resolutions of that Assembly, that he was a gentleman of no ordinary ability, and experience, and influence. Hence it was that he (Mr. MacDevitt) had great pleasure in seconding the nomination of Mr. Fyfe, and he disclaimed for himself having any party motive in the matter. In fact, if it were a party question, the becoming sense of a new member like himself would have deterred him from taking such a leading position as seconder of the amendment. Upon reference to party usages, he considered that he should be borne out in his view that this was never made a party question. He recollected that in the Assembly of New South Wales, when Mr. Garrett was elected Chairman of Committees, the House did make it a party question; but he hoped that the Queensland Assembly would long remain free from the bitterness of party strife which had characterised the Legislature of the sister colony, and which did not tend to increase its *prestige*. The first Chairman of Committees of this House was no other than the honorable gentleman who now occupied the position of their Speaker; and, if he was not greatly mistaken, the honorable gentleman was the most uncompromising opponent of the Government who helped to put him in that position. Coming nearer, he was very much mistaken if Mr. Charles William Blakeney, who then represented Brisbane, was not also an opponent of the Ministry for the time being; notwithstanding that, he was put into the chair. And, coming nearer still, to another gentleman who was also a member for Brisbane, and who was elected Chairman of Committees; he was put into the office notwithstanding that he too was an opponent of the Government, who did not oppose him. And the last precedent that had been alluded to—of course the facts in connection with that had been given by a far higher authority than he. The honorable and learned member for Fortitude Valley would surely get credence when he stated that in moving the appointment of Mr. Pugh, he was not actuated any party motives; particularly when it was borne in mind that two of his own Ministry voted against his nominee. He hoped the party attitude on this question, which was assumed by the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government, would not characterise the debate, but that the decision of the House would be, that the individual of their choice had the necessary qualifications to conduct their proceedings with dignity and effect. He most certainly thought that, under these circumstances, Mr. Fyfe ought to have the office. He was encouraged in the course he took, because he thought it would be a becoming compliment to the large constituency that the honorable member represented. It was well known that for variety of interests, for number of population, and for the neglect that had been shown it as a constituency—it had not had a proper share of influence in the deliberations

of the House — Rockhampton was pre-eminent. To elect its representative to the position of chairman, would show a conciliatory disposition to the disaffected in the North.

Mr. LILLEY said it appeared he was wrong as to the honorable the Speaker, when a member of his Government, voting against his nominee. Mr. Hodgson and Mr. Taylor voted against him.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Neither was a Minister.

Mr. LILLEY: No; they were not in the Ministry. It was all the same.

Mr. GROOM took this opportunity of saying that he was not in the House, last evening, when the Premier stated that he would recognise him (Mr. Groom) as the leader of the Opposition. He thought, from what had taken place this afternoon, that the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government could make no mistake as to who was the leader of the Opposition; and he trusted that before the Session was over, he would have better occasion to recognize him in his proper place. He regretted that the choice of chairman was made a party question, because, he assured the Premier that, by his assertion of it, he had lost his (Mr. Groom's) vote. He had great respect for Mr. Forbes, having sat in the House with him since 1862; he met him outside the House, and he had a sincere respect for the honorable member. He should have voted for him, unhesitatingly; but, as it was made a party question, he must vote with his own side of the House, and he should certainly support the amendment.

Mr. DE SATGÉ said, as it appeared to him that the important constituency of Rockhampton was not properly represented in the House, and as the election of chairman was assumed to be a party question, and he believed, rightly so, he desired to explain his vote as the representative of a northern constituency closely allied to that of Mr. Fyfe. The constituency of Rockhampton did not wish, as the honorable member for Kennedy stated it did, to be recognized in the shape or form of an appointment for its member. It wished its member to occupy a position of thorough independence in the House, such as had been held by the late member for Rockhampton. He believed no man was ever in the House who assumed such independence, refusing, in fact, the emoluments which he was offered of a Minister of the Crown, so that he should not be tied down in any way by which his liberty of action and freedom of speech would be infringed. Whatever effect the decision of the House on the question might have, he considered Rockhampton too important a constituency—one that he was prepared to work with closely—to allow the honorable member who now represented it to take the position of Chairman of Committees, in the face of the work that was about to be brought forward for consideration. As was

remarked by the honorable and learned member for Brisbane (Mr. Pring), last night, that constituency was not adequately represented in the House, and its interests required the closest attention on the part of its only representative. He could not give that attention if trammelled with office. He could not be spared to undertake the very arduous duties of chairman, this session; the other northern members could not spare him, as they required to work together. No doubt, if the honorable member for Rockhampton were allowed to speak, he would acknowledge that he felt himself in a false position; for he was perfectly aware that the town of Rockhampton—the popular element of the constituency which had beaten the large holders of property—had returned him, a man of great talent and experience, as the popular representative who was to advocate a just and considerate attention to its interests. The constituency did not return him that the consideration of £400 a year and an office should interfere with his usefulness; that the consideration of a bribe offered by the liberal party should affect him. He (Mr. De Satgé) felt strongly on the point, and he spoke in the interest of the town that had elected the first paid member to the Assembly. That honorable member did not come down to the Assembly to have his tongue tied by a bribe of £400 a year offered by the liberal party; and he objected, on behalf of Rockhampton, to the honorable member being put into office. He objected as one who had an interest in Rockhampton, and as one closely allied to it—for every sheep farmer in his own constituency regarded Rockhampton as its natural port—and, as one who knew Rockhampton long before the honorable member himself. He could not understand why the northern party was to be lost when they had to work together for the whole of the northern districts; and he should vote against the amendment because he did not want to lose a man from whom everything was expected. He would support Mr. Forbes. He did not know what his qualifications might be; but he objected to the representative of a constituency that might be the capital of a northern colony being at the outset tied down by a bribe. There were plenty of other members who could be spared for the chair.

The Hon. R. PRING: He was very astonished at the speech which he had just heard, the more so, because it came from an honorable member who was not new to the House—one who had filled a seat in the previous Assembly, and who well understood the usages of Parliament, and who knew that the language he had used and reiterated was unparliamentary, though he was not called to order. When he said that the liberal party had offered a bribe to Mr. Fyfe, he knew that he was making a charge against an honorable member that he ought not to make. He (Mr. Pring) wanted to know what business the honorable member for Clermont had

to bother his head about Rockhampton? He did not suppose the Rockhampton people would have returned him! Why did he not attend to his own constituency? What reason had he to be indignant because the honorable member for Rockhampton chose to stand for the chairmanship? He might as well say, if he (Mr. Pring) put up for office that he wanted to sell Brisbane for a bribe. Let every man mind his own business, and not come into the House to give utterance to a lot of absurdities. The honorable member for Rockhampton was frightened out of his life at the vote he was about to give, and how he might have to account for having failed to support the North, and he was obliged to find some salve for his conscience. What would Rockhampton lose by Mr. Fyfe being elected to the chair? Some honorable member must be elected. What would West Moreton do if Mr. Frederick Augustus Forbes was elected?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He is one of three.

The Hon. R. PRING: One of three men of extraordinary talent and intellect to represent West Moreton. Why, he surely could not be spared! He (Mr. Pring) hoped, when the redistribution of electorates was brought about, that one could then be spared. He thought the honorable member for Clermont had better mind what he was about, if he meant to make such speeches as that just delivered. He was not going to vote for Mr. Forbes. He was not going to butter him up by saying that he would make a good Chairman of Committees, for he did not think he would—he was not fit for the office. He had heard that honorable member make speeches which he never could understand, and bring forward quotations of which he never could discover the applicability. He did not think he could fill the chair properly, and he could never learn to do so. He did not think the honorable member could put a question properly; and if he did, he could never understand him. He was not going to blink the question. There were two candidates; and he should vote against Mr. Forbes, because he did not like him, and because he did not think the honorable member was fit for the duty of chairman. He did think the honorable member for Rockhampton was far superior in talent to some in the House; therefore, for his ability, which he knew the honorable member possessed, and for his knowledge of parliamentary matters, which he was sure the honorable member possessed and Mr. Forbes did not, he should support the amendment. As to the question being made a party question, it was not because the Premier chose to get up and say so, that it was so. It was evident why the honorable gentleman had done so: he had got one vote already by doing so. He had stated his reasons why he would not support the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Forbes; he supported the the best man; and, if another candidate and

a better than the honorable member for Rockhampton had been put forward, he would support the best.

Mr. THORN said it was well known what course he would take on this occasion. He was astonished to hear the remarks of the honorable member for Brisbane. On the last occasion of the election of a Chairman of Committees, that honorable gentleman proposed an honorable member for the office from purely party motives. No doubt that was the reason, now, why a second candidate was brought forward, and the honorable gentleman in supporting the amendment was only doing the bidding of the honorable member for Fortitude Valley and the honorable member for South Brisbane, or else he would be hauled over the coals. Were there no other candidates? Where were the honorable members for East Moreton? The honorable and learned member for Brisbane, Mr. Pring, was obliged to give his attendance at the House a little oftener now, than when he sat for Burnett. Now, with regard to the merits of the two gentlemen who were candidates for the office:—Some hints had been thrown out to the disparagement of his (Mr. Thorn's) honorable colleague; but he could tell the new members that Mr. Forbes was as well up in the practice and usages of Parliament as any honorable member of the Assembly, and always was so. In addition to that, Mr. Forbes had been a representative for many years, doing the service of the country, nearly ever since Queensland was a colony. Mr. Fyfe was only a short time in the House, and, whatever his qualifications, it was a general rule to prefer of two gentlemen the one who had served longest and who had always been with his party. He asked, again, why was not an honorable member for East Moreton brought forward? He would have been elected if he had been willing. No; Mr. Fyfe was brought forward and made a tool of; he was brought forward by the other side to get another vote. It was all through two members, the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Atkin, and the honorable member for South Brisbane. He knew of their whole proceedings; he heard them half an hour afterwards. One honorable member at a meeting that was held shed tears because he could not get the office; another held down his head, in sorrow, if not in anger, that his chance was gone. He (Mr. Thorn) assured the honorable member for Rockhampton that he had no chance, and that he was being made a tool of by honorable members on the Opposition side of the House; and that he was being so treated, the honorable member ought to see clearly. If the honorable member for West Moreton should be elected he would fulfil the duties of chairman with pleasure to himself and honor to the House.

Mr. ATKIN had no doubt that the statement made by the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Thorn, that he had picked

up information relative to Mr. Fyfe's candidature, was perfectly correct, because it was the habit of the honorable member to run about from place to place touting for odds and ends of information to retail. He was not at all surprised that the honorable member should make such an admission. The honorable member referred to him (Mr. Atkin) as if he was one of those who had brought forward Mr. Fyfe. Now, he should be very glad if the idea had struck him. On the contrary, he had had nothing to do with it, having pledged himself to another honorable member. He had very great pleasure in supporting Mr. Fyfe's claims, believing the honorable member would make a very efficient chairman; his long experience in the legislature of a neighboring colony, and the fact that he was there once offered the very position for which he was now a candidate, should prove that he was quite qualified for the office. With reference to what had fallen from the honorable member for Clermont, why should he take the town of Rockhampton under his wing, instead of attending to the affairs of his own district? He (Mr. Atkin) would just remind the honorable member that a certain petition had come down from Clermont and Copperfield, praying that the lease of some four hundred miles of country might not be granted to the firm of Milson, De Satgé, and Co. If the honorable member would attend to that in the interests of his constituents, and see that the prayer of that petition was acceded to by the Government, his constituents would be very much obliged to him, rather than for talking, as he did, about Rockhampton. The honorable member for Rockhampton, if elected Chairman of Committees, would not have his hands tied at all. What was the chairman's position? Supposing, in committee, that the members were equally divided, the chairman had the casting vote, and, of course, he could record it in accordance with his own views. If he had any amendments to be brought forward in committee, he would always have a friend who could propose them for him. In the House he was as free as any other honorable member. He (Mr. Atkin) should vote for the honorable member, not only because he was a northern member, but because he was more competent to fulfil the duties of Chairman than the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Forbes. He hoped no one would allow himself to be influenced by the speech of the honorable member for Clermont, which was simply an attempt to draw Mr. Fyfe away from his candidature by impressing his pride. He believed it would be a compliment that would be properly appreciated by his constituency, if Mr. Fyfe were elected; and he was sure that, if elected, the honorable member would shew the House that those who supported him had acted well and wisely.

Mr. CRIBB said he could not give a silent vote on this occasion. He considered Mr. Forbes competent for the office; being familiar

with the practice of Parliament, and especially the Queensland Parliament, of which he had been so long a member. Why, then, should the House pass by a gentleman whom they knew? They did not know after all, that Mr. Fyfe was a suitable man.

Mr. ATKIN: Seven years' experience.

Mr. CRIBB: Well, then, he had not been a member of Parliament longer than Mr. Forbes. If an office was to be bestowed, they were bound to give it to one they knew rather than to a stranger.

Dr. O'DOHERTY said he felt it to be his duty to support the amendment. He should do so for two reasons;—first, because he sincerely believed that the honorable member for Rockhampton had qualities better adapted for the office of chairman than the gentleman who had been proposed by the Government; and second, because he thought it was a compliment due to the northern members to give them one of the two appointments in the disposal of the Assembly. With regard to the objection that had been raised by the honorable member for Clermont, he was surprised to hear the statements made by him; and he thought the honorable member took a great deal upon himself in the presence of the honorable members for Rockhampton and Kennedy, who supported Mr. Fyfe, to dictate to them as to what was their duty. There was really no force in the objection put forward that the honorable member for Rockhampton would in any way derogate from his duty to his constituents by being Chairman of Committees. Honorable members knew very well that, as chairman, his independence would not be interfered with—that it was only when the Estimates were passing that any possible deprivation from speaking might be experienced, and that all questions of importance were brought up in the usual sittings of the House. Therefore, he (Dr. O'Doherty) felt it his duty to support the nomination of the honorable member for Rockhampton. He would say a word, also, to the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Cribb, who objected that Mr. Fyfe was a new man; and he would remind him that, on the last occasion, the House elected a man perfectly new to the House in preference to one who was well known, and who had filled the office with great credit. The argument was very strong in favor of the honorable member for Rockhampton.

Mr. JORDAN observed that he thought he ought to say a word or two, though he was very unwilling to take up the time of the House. He fancied that the question was pretty well settled. He hoped that the honorable member for Rockhampton would be elected, and he should vote for him. The House must make a choice, and only one member could be elected, whether this was made a party question or not; and he did not think honorable members need say whether they did or did not coincide in that view. He felt that he should make some remark in answer to the honorable member

for West Moreton, Mr. Thorn, who had taken the liberty of using his name in connection with that of his honorable colleague, Mr. Atkin, and asked why either of them had not been chosen for the chairmanship. In his own case—simply for the reason that he was not a candidate for the office. He never thought, and never should think, of occupying the position; he had no experience, he had no time, and he had no inclination, even if he had the time and the experience, for the office. He believed it required a person of considerable parliamentary experience, and that the necessary qualities were possessed by the candidate nominated by the Opposition side of the House. He had known Mr. Forbes a long time; but from what he had heard of the honorable member for Rockhampton, he believed he was best qualified for the office.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: With regard to the candidates before the House, there could be no choice, in his mind; both from personal friendship and from knowledge of the services which Mr. Forbes had performed for this country, he should vote for him. The ground the Government took was that this was a party question; and he should demonstrate that it was a party question out of the mouth of the late Attorney-General, who had laid it down as a principle that a question was a party question if the Government considered it as such. The Government considered it as such. The honorable and learned member for Brisbane, Mr. Pring, when moving, as he very kindly did, that he should occupy the office of chairman in a former Assembly, said that it was a "battle royal." His words applied now; this was a "battle royal." And the honorable the Premier of that day—whether he saw that it would not do as a battle royal—distinctly stated that he declined to accept it; that "it was only a question of party where it was considered such by the Government." There was a complete answer. The Government said they regarded the present one as a party question, and they were willing to abide by it. There were honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House who highly appreciated the honorable member who was brought forward as the Opposition candidate, and, as a matter of friendship, they would be glad to see him in some new position. In regard to Mr. Forbes' abilities, they all knew that he was extremely industrious, that he was well up in the forms of the House, and that he would perform his duties satisfactorily. He was a very old acquaintance, and a very old colonist. He had lost his fortune here, it might not be without any fault of his own, altogether; and honorable members would be certainly not doing an ungraceful or improper act in remembering an old acquaintance.

The question was then put, and the original motion was carried on a division, as follows:—

Mr. Ayes, 15.	Noes, 14.
Mr. Palmer	Dr. O'Doherty
" Ramsay	Mr. Lilley
" Royds	" Edmondstone
" King	" Jordan
" Thorn	" Handy
" Ferrett	" Bell
" Cribb	" Groom
" De Satgé	" MacDevitt
" Wienholt	" McIlwraith
" Italy	" Miles
" Moreton	" Morgan
" Scott	" Atkin
" Johnston	" Pring
" Thompson	" Stephens.
" Walsh	

SOUTH TOOLBURRA AND CANNING DOWNS RUNS.

Mr. MORGAN moved—

That an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed on the Table of this House,—

(1.) Copies of all correspondence between the lessees of the South Toolburra and Canning Downs Runs, having reference to the subdivision of those runs.

(2.) Copies of all telegrams and correspondence between the lessees of Canning Downs Run and the Government departments, having reference to selections on the River Condamine, under the provisions of the Leasing Act of 1866.

(3.) Copies of telegrams and correspondence between the lessees of Canning Downs and the Minister for Lands, having reference to the Lucky Valley before and since the survey of that Gold Field.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said: The Government had no objection to the motion. Returns were often a very great expense, not merely for the copying of the papers, some of which went back, perhaps, several years, but otherwise. They were laid on the table, and the next thing was to print them, and more expense was the consequence. He hoped that the honorable member had some object in moving for the returns; if his object was not to be carried out, there would be no use in printing them. What he (the Secretary for Lands) proposed would be to lay the returns on the table, and, if the honorable member would be kind enough to look over them, he might make such a selection as would answer his purpose. He warned the House of the magnitude of the expense of preparing and printing returns, many of which were never looked at afterwards, even by the honorable members who called for them. The Government were expected to be economical, and yet expense almost without end was sanctioned by the House in that way. He hoped that the Speaker as Chairman of the Printing Committee would set his face as much as possible against printing papers. It was by saving here and there that economy was practised. The House had got into a slipshod system of printing everything. When the Right Honorable Robert Lowe thought it not beneath his dignity to make regulations as to the use of quill pens in the public offices, that they should be used after cutting more than once, it was not improper

that the Queensland Government and the House should endeavour to avoid unnecessary expense.

Mr. LILLEY said he should support the motion. He believed that all such very wise reforms mentioned, as the using of often-cut quill pens, and many others, which got vast praise as cheese-parings, had been abandoned. Nothing could be more important than the fullest information given to the House of all matters connected with the administration of the lands. They might save the cost of printing one return, and lose some very valuable land to the people. He recommended honorable members, in moving for their returns, to fix the time for laying the papers on the table. He had found in his experience that it was very difficult to get returns from the departments. He was not speaking of the responsible heads of the Government. He had found it very difficult to get returns to lay on the table, even with the authority of a Minister. He recommended honorable members to name the time, so that the order might be peremptory; and that there should be some very good reason or excuse if the returns were not laid on the table in the time named. If that were done, he thought there would be a little more promptitude displayed by the departments. He made the recommendation with no desire to hamper the Government.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was no disposition on the part of the Government to refuse any returns relating to the waste lands of the Crown, or any other thing; they were quite ready to give them. He agreed that after returns were prepared at great trouble and expense, not one honorable member in ten ever looked at them, or took the trouble to found any motion on them. The returns now asked for involved going back through correspondence that extended over several years, and he hoped when the honorable member got them that he would take some action upon them.

Mr. MORGAN: He would do so.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There was plenty of time for any honorable member to say anything he wanted to say; but not a single reason or argument had been offered for the production of the returns moved for.

Mr. MORGAN: There was reason enough in the papers.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Expense might be avoided by printing only so much as was necessary.

Mr. MORGAN: He would pick out the tit-bits.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The honorable member could speak at the proper time, and not interrupt another member when addressing the House. He, for one, would not submit to be interrupted by any honorable member. With respect to the suggestion made by his honorable and learned friend, the member for Fortitude Valley, he might remark that it

was easier to make it than to carry it out. The House might order the returns to be laid on the table in a week, a fortnight, or at any date they liked; but he should be glad to know from any practical man how they could be produced. They had power to do many things, but whom were they to order to produce them? The head of the department, the Minister, or the clerk who had to prepare the returns? He thought the suggestion could not be carried out, and that it would be better to leave the matter in the Ministers' hands, as before. It was extraordinary what reformers persons became when out of office! He thought the notice of motion given this day, which motion had been carried out during two sessions, that the Clerk should, every Wednesday, read the list of returns ordered and not furnished by the Government, would be quite a sufficient check. It was impossible for any Minister to furnish such returns as those moved for without very considerable delay. The staff of the departments was supposed to be equal to the ordinary work only, and not to the extraordinary work; and no allowances were made for extra assistance in the offices. The Government could promise that they would furnish the returns at the earliest possible moment.

The Hon. R. PRING remarked that the House had not settled down to their work yet; they had not got into their stride, much more come into the straight running—though the honorable member at the head of the Government seemed to think he was at home. He would not be interrupted by any honorable member, said the Premier. Well, the honorable gentleman must be told that he might be sometimes interrupted, and he must not threaten the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY appealed to the Chair. He had not threatened the House.

The SPEAKER: He thought it would be better that honorable members should avoid expressions calculated to give annoyance or to evoke complaint.

The Hon. R. PRING: The honorable gentleman might very likely have to submit to more interruptions before the session was at an end; and, when they were in accordance with the rules of the House, to threaten honorable members might be in good taste or not—that was a matter of opinion. It was highly necessary to order returns, cost what trouble or money they might, so that honorable members should know what was being done with the waste lands of the colony—especially when they saw the name of Canning Downs mentioned in connection with them. The honorable member for Warwick had not asked for the returns to be printed. He (Mr. Pring) agreed with the honorable member for Fortitude Valley; and he took it that, during a short session of Parliament, extra hands might be put on, and extra wages paid in the departments for the additional work required. At the same time,

he should not be disposed to print any return without reason shewn.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS, in answer to the suggestion of the honorable and learned member for Fortitude Valley, said that if an honorable member could state the time in which a return should be prepared, he ought to be able to state also what it should cost. The House had been asked to order large returns, and not a word had been said, or a reason given, by the honorable member who made the motion for their production; and, because his honorable colleague, in his character of a custodian of the public funds, had warned the House against needless expenditure, the present discussion arose. It happened that he knew something of the papers, and he said they would be of value; they would lead to startling exposures—they would lead to the exposure of the tricks of Ministers and of their supporters.

Mr. ATKIN said if anybody on the Opposition side of the House shewed no necessity for the production of the returns, that necessity was shewn by the honorable the Secretary for Works. The old feeling was breaking out; the honorable gentleman could not avoid making the statement he did make. It was very well known that exposures would be made—not on the Opposition side of the house, however. The members of the Government exhibited extraordinary tenderness in connection with this subject. He (Mr. Atkin) could not see that the papers were very voluminous; there was a certain amount of correspondence, and the letters and telegrams had to be copied;—it was not like copying tables, and there could not be very much expense attached to the production of the returns. The very name of Canning Downs shewed that they should be produced. Charges had been made in the public press and on the platform that most nefarious transactions in the lands of the colony had taken place; and when the papers were seen, the House would know whether the charges were true or not. With reference to the Lucky Valley Gold Field, he knew something, and he thought it was very important that the papers should be laid on the table and the public made acquainted with the facts, whether the expense was great or not. They were in some office of the Lands Department.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said there seemed to be some mistake, and he explained that no objection had been made to the production of the returns.

Mr. GROOM said he should vote for the motion of the honorable member for Warwick, as it was only by these motions that reliable information could be obtained. He did not say the Government intentionally withheld information, but there was always a great deal of difficulty in obtaining it. He found the Colonial Secretary was actually ignorant of the provisions of an Act recently passed, the working of which came under his own

department—the Lunacy Amendment Act. In fact honorable members met in that House and passed Acts, but not the slightest care appeared to be taken by those who were authorised to carry them out. The Minister for Public Lands might call attention to the necessity for not producing these papers, but he begged to call attention to the fact that the action of that honorable member in connection with the Darling Downs was viewed with great suspicion. Perhaps if there were no Darling Downs squatters in the Ministry, it might be otherwise; but, as long as that was not the case, there would always be a feeling of dissatisfaction in reference to that district. He was glad these returns had been moved for. A great desire had been shewn to know how these lands had been manipulated. In another place, a much more voluminous return had been asked for, and he could assure the honorable member that, if these papers were not produced, a much more elaborate return would be demanded. He hoped the honorable member who moved for them would not be deterred by any bounceable expressions on the part of any member of the Ministry, and that he would persevere in the course he had taken. He thought a great deal of indifference was shewn by members with regard to official returns, and that the public outside did not get that amount of information which ought to be supplied to them. If there were not clerks enough to prepare these returns, there ought to be, considering the amount of money the country had to pay for them. He was afraid that a great portion of their time was taken up in other pursuits, and in walking about the streets instead of attending to their public duties. He should certainly support honorable members in asking for information in connection with these particular lands, and he would remind the Minister for Lands that the House, and the inhabitants of the Darling Downs, were very anxious for information on the subject. That honorable member's predecessor in office had made a distinct statement, that to interfere with them would involve the Government in endless lawsuits. Now, he should like to know if that were true, and, if so, were the Government prepared to come down to the House with any remedy? The colony, in the meantime, was losing a large number of colonists, and, under the circumstances, the honorable member for Warwick was perfectly justified in asking for information. When the papers were produced, no doubt a substantial motion would be founded upon them.

Mr. McLLWRAITH said he understood that the honorable member for Warwick had asked for certain papers, and the Minister for Lands had replied that they would be laid on the table of the House except for one reason—that their production would cost a considerable sum of money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The honorable member was in error. What he

said was, that the papers would be laid on the table. He had only observed, at the same time, that they would cost a considerable sum of money.

Mr. McILWRAITH: Well, the honorable member professed his willingness to supply the returns; and, as a motion would be founded upon them by the honorable member for Warwick, he thought it was a waste of time to continue the debate. The discussion would come on at the proper time, and the House could now proceed with the business of the country.

Mr. HALY said he thought the last speaker had misunderstood the Secretary for Lands. He felt sure the honorable member for Warwick would be supported in his demand for a thorough investigation into all matters connected with the Darling Downs, as a great deal of dissatisfaction existed among certain persons on the subject. It was reported that the whole of the land along the railway had been taken up under the Act of 1868; and if that was the case he thought it was a robbery of the country which ought to be made public.

Mr. MORGAN said he could assure the honorable member who had read him a lesson on his behaviour that his constituents had not sent him to the House to offer any factious opposition to the Government. He had no desire to put the country to any useless expense. He believed the papers he asked for would furnish some very necessary information, and he had therefore moved for them. When they were produced, he should not move that they be printed unless there should be an actual necessity for it.

The question was put and passed.

SURVEYS.

Mr. MORGAN moved, pursuant to notice, That there be laid on the table of this House,—

(1.) A return of all moneys paid for surveys on the Railway Reserve between Gowrie Junction and Hendon, and between Gowrie Junction and Dalby.

(2.) Return of all survey fees paid by selectors on the Railway Reserve between Gowrie Junction and Hendon, and between Gowrie Junction and Dalby.

(3.) Copy of the Government instruction to the Surveyor-General, authorising that officer to cancel surveys.

His reason for asking for these returns was, that it had come to be known that a certain officer had been cancelling surveys; and he wished the House and the country to know what loss had been suffered, and whether that officer was authorised to act as he had done.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he could produce numbers 1 and 2; number 3 did not exist.

Mr. GROOM said, before the question was put, he would offer a few observations. He thought the question was too serious to be passed over without remark, although it

might, perhaps, suit the Minister for Lands to treat it in a cavalier way. It might be that no copy of the instructions referred to existed; but was the honorable gentleman aware that the Surveyor-General, recently, when in the Supreme Court, had asserted his power to override his authority, and to override Acts passed by that House? He thought it was time some action should be taken to restrain an official, in cases of this kind. That officer had admitted, in giving evidence in a court of justice, that nine allotments had been proclaimed and offered for sale; that, owing to circumstances which had not yet been explained, they were withdrawn from sale, and that, shortly afterwards, a gentleman occupying the position of a member of that House had applied to the Lands Department to have these nine surveyed allotments put into one unsurveyed allotment; and the Surveyor-General had asserted that he possessed the power to cancel the surveys, and to declare the land unsurveyed. Now, who gave him that power? He had, in fact, given the land, in one allotment, for a lower price than it would have brought as originally proclaimed. Well, what did they find? The Secretary for Lands, in three words, stated that no such instructions had been given to the Surveyor-General. That officer, then, possessed more power than the honorable member himself. He really thought that, in justice to the country, the Government should give some explanation on the subject, and state whether it was their intention to allow one of their officers to exercise such arbitrary power for the future—to override the Acts of the House, and to place his own construction upon them. If he were allowed to do so, the sooner he was removed from his office the better.

The question was put and passed.

PRAYERS ON OPENING THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. McILWRAITH moved, pursuant to notice—

That the practice of opening the proceedings of the House of Assembly each day by reading prayer be abolished.

He said, in bringing forward this motion he had no wish to hurt the religious feelings or sensibilities of any member of the House; he would endeavour to keep religion as much out of the question as possible. The strongest argument he had to address to the House in favor of abolishing the practice of reading prayers was, that in an Assembly of this kind prayer should be thoroughly unanimous; and if there were but one member who dissented from the practice, and who could not conscientiously attend while the prayer was being read, there was sufficient reason to discontinue it. If the practice were abolished nothing would be lost; as whatever effects were obtained from it could be obtained by every

member who thought fit to do individually what now the House was forced to do collectively. There were but few precedents to bring forward in support of the motion, because there were not many places where the circumstances were the same. In England the case was very different, because there there was an established religion, which there was not here. The mode of conducting the prayers in the House of Commons too, as well as the form of prayer, were very different. They were read by a chaplain, not in the House, but in the Speaker's room, where the members knelt down; and if that were done here, he should not object, though as a member he should not attend himself. The only precedents which could be brought forward must be taken from the other colonies, where the attendant circumstances were much the same as in Queensland. He would take Victoria as an instance. The practice had been abolished there because there were certain members who could not conscientiously sit in the House while the prayers were being read, and it was not in force now. There was also a slight argument in favor of abolishing the practice to be found in the fact that here no minister of religion was allowed to take a seat in the House. The ground upon which that provision was made was, he believed, not a desire to exclude religion as to prevent clergymen from bringing into the House the amount of influence they possessed outside of it. Referring to the colony of Victoria, which he had cited as a precedent, and to the results which had followed the abolition of the practice there, it would be found that they had not gone back at all—that, in fact, no results, either one way or the other, had followed. The custom of reading prayers on the commencement of the proceedings of the House was first initiated in this colony in 1860, by the following motion by the present honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Jordan:—

“1. That this House, feeling the need of Divine counsel to guide its deliberations, and as a public acknowledge of God, resolves to open its proceedings with prayer.

“2. That the form of prayer contained in the Prayer Book of the Church of England, entitled a ‘Prayer for the High Court of Parliament,’ with some slight alterations, be the form adopted—the prayer to be read by the Honorable the Speaker upon his taking the Chair, or in the Speaker's absence by the Chairman of Committees, or the Clerk of the Assembly, before commencing the ordinary business of the day—the expressions in the prayer ‘thy Church,’ and ‘thy whole Church,’ being understood to include all denominations of Christians.”

He quoted the motion, as it appeared to embrace all the arguments adduced in its favor. For his part, he thought the proposition savored of profanity: it looked like patronizing God by bringing his name publicly forward at the commencement of proceedings. He did not know that he had any-

thing more to say. He based his argument chiefly on the fact that there were members who could not conscientiously sit there while the prayer was read. He, for one, disapproved of the form of prayer, and the way in which it was read. He could understand that members might desire to invoke Divine assistance in any particular emergency; but to enter the House and immediately to join in a particular form of prayer, as was done in this Assembly, was a practice of which he could not approve.

Dr. O'DOHERTY seconded the motion. He believed that the only rational ground for adhering to this practice was the belief that the proceedings and deliberations of the Assembly required the aid of Divine providence. Now, he had had two or three years' experience in the proceedings of the House, and the only palpable and visible effect of this custom, as far as he could see—the only influence which had been the result—was the influence of the squatting party in the House. No doubt they believed that they ruled the House and the country by Divine right, and perhaps they ascribed that to the effect of the prayers which were read daily. He did not think that the country would coincide with them, and he was quite inclined to agree with the honorable member for Warrego, that the custom, in its results, savored of profanity. He confessed that he himself should long since have taken steps to alter this practice, but he had been deterred from doing so so long as the ancient, venerable, and patriarchal gentleman who had so long presided over their deliberations, had fulfilled the duty of reading prayers. The very appearance of that venerable gentleman must, he felt sure, have been sufficient to induce honorable members to listen to the prayer with respect. But now he found a change. That gentleman's place was now occupied by one who did not possess the venerable aspect of his predecessor, though he, doubtless, possessed qualifications which peculiarly fitted him to occupy that honorable position. He must, however, confess that the feeling which, during the occupancy of the Chair by the late venerable Speaker, induced him to uphold the practice, no longer existed. Were the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in the position of the British House of Commons, with a chaplain at hand to perform the duty, he might, perhaps, alter his opinion, for he would venture to say that no member of the House had a greater respect for the institution of prayer, or more fully believed in its efficacy, than himself.

Mr. MILES supported the motion, because he looked upon the daily repetition of a formal prayer simply as a mockery, and he thought, now that a new Speaker had been elected, it was an opportune time to discontinue the practice. His objection to it was not based on any unfitness on the part of the honorable gentleman who now occupied the Chair. It had been stated in one of the

public journals that it would be unseemly for that honorable gentleman to read prayers to the House; but, for his part, he considered the honorable member to be quite competent to do that, or anything else. If the motion were pressed to a division, he should vote for it.

Mr. MACDEVITT said, that being a new member, and not much versed in the proceedings of the House, he had hardly had an opportunity of knowing what the nature of the prayer was; but having read it, he should cordially support the motion, because he quite concurred with the mover that if any member of the House conscientiously objected to it, it should be discontinued. He would go a little further, and express his opinion that the practice should be abolished—not only if there were any members who objected to it, but if it was likely there would hereafter be any members who would do so. If persons who were eligible to become members of the House did not believe in it, it was not fair that those whose piety was so exuberant should insist upon it at the expense of other people's feelings. If they all believed in the efficacy of prayer, they must all admit it was that which was earnestly put forth. They were told to "pray in secret," and the formal and public way in which the daily prayer was read in that chamber was, in his opinion, objectionable. Besides which, the initiation of the proceedings of the House with prayer frequently offered such a striking contrast to the subsequent proceedings, that the prayer became little more than a mockery. Even that very evening, there had been an altercation between the Premier and the honorable member for North Brisbane; and while members possessed the natural attributes of humanity, these scenes would occur. The chief ground, however, upon which he supported the motion was the argument of the mover, that if any one member objected from conscientious grounds to join in the prayer, it ought to be discontinued.

Mr. HALY said he should not have risen but for the extraordinary argument made use of by the honorable member for Kennedy—that because an altercation had taken place between two members there should be no prayer. The honorable member might just as well say there should be no religion at all, because it was well known that there were black sheep in every religious body. He could not agree with that argument, and therefore he should vote against the motion. He was sorry to see this motion made after prayers had been read for so many years in that House. Any member objecting to attend could remain outside until the prayer was over—he need not come in unless he chose. He could not see why, if the majority of members wished to pray that their deliberations should be of advantage to the country, they should be prevented from doing so because one or two objected to attend. He hoped every honorable member present would give

his vote conscientiously. He was sorry to see any discussion arise upon it. He was also sorry to hear the honorable member for North Brisbane talk about the squatters having a Divine right. They certainly had the right given them to occupy the country, but what they had got out of it they had got by hard work, and for that they returned thanks to the Giver of all good. He did not see that the squatters made a whit worse colonists than the honorable member himself, or why that honorable member should take upon himself to abuse them as he had done. They had made the colony what it was, and had borne the brunt and burden of the work. It was disgraceful on the part of any man to make use of such pitiful remarks for the sake of gaining a little political popularity. He affirmed that the squatters were a hard working and industrious class, and he was not ashamed to say he was a squatter. He was as good a member of the community as the honorable member, and knew more about the wants of the country than he did; but he did not bring his profession into everything he said, nor did he make any remarks about the honorable member's profession. He might perhaps go to the honorable member if he wanted him, but the less he went the better he should be satisfied. He hoped the honorable member would not continue to bring the squatting question into every subject he discussed, and that if he had anything to say against the squatters, he would say it in a straightforward and manly way. He did not like to see that interest dragged before the House in such an unseemly manner.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he thought the proposition to abolish a custom which had been established for so many years, ought to be supported by some stronger arguments than any he had listened to that evening. He believed all the members of the House were christians, and it was only proper for christians of all denominations to invoke the Divine blessing upon their actions. There could at any rate be no harm in opening the proceedings of the House with prayer. He had never heard of any harm resulting from the practice, and he saw no reason to alter his opinion on the subject. The form of prayer used was a beautiful and a very simple one. There was no necessity for any member who did not wish to join in it to enter the chamber while it was being read. He did not think the change in the Speakership had anything to do with the question. He should listen to the prayer with the same respect and attention if it were read by any member of the House, as he had done when it was read by the late Speaker. The reasons adduced in favor of abolishing the practice were the weakest reasons he had ever heard. One honorable member objected to it, because there had been a slight altercation between himself and the honorable member for North Brisbane not very long afterwards. He could assure that honorable member that if he

occupied a seat in that House much longer, he would look upon that little difference of opinion as a mere flash in the pan. In fact, he (Mr. Palmer) had forgotten the words that were used. That he thought was a very poor reason; and if, as an honorable member said, they did not appear much better for the prayer, he should consider how much worse they might have been without it. No House required it more; and he, for one, should adhere to the custom which he thought had been wisely established.

Mr. KING said the chief reason given for the adoption of this motion was, that if one or two members objected to it, it ought to be discontinued. Now he did not look upon the form used as a prayer, so much as a formal acknowledgment that without the blessing of God, the deliberations of members would be useless. With regard to the prayer itself, there was no one to whom it could be offensive; and even if, at any future time, a Jew should obtain a seat in the House, he did not suppose he would object to acknowledge that the Divine blessing was necessary. There was certainly one argument which had some little force, and that was that a too great familiarity with religious things tended to lessen the respect for them; but he did not think that argument was a very strong one, or that the daily repetition of this prayer would have the effect of producing any levity of feeling in connection with religion. For these reasons he thought it desirable that the practice should be continued, and he should vote against the motion.

Mr. JORDAN said he regretted that the honorable member for the Warrego had brought forward the motion now under discussion. The practice of opening the proceedings of the House with prayer had obtained for ten years. It was adopted on the establishment of parliamentary government in Queensland, and was adopted almost unanimously by both branches of the Legislature. He would repeat that he regretted the honorable member for the Warrego had moved that the practice should be abolished. He must, at the same time, say that he was very much pleased with the tone and spirit that had characterised the debate. In the course of the debate nothing whatever had been said that could be regarded as offensive to any honorable member on either side of the House; and he was glad to think that the motion would be lost, and that the practice which had hitherto existed in connection with the opening of the proceedings of Parliament would not be abolished. Both chambers of the Legislature in England were opened with prayer, which service was conducted not in either House, but in the chapel connected with the House. That practice had been imitated by the United States of America, since the establishment of an independent government in America. Though in America they had no State church, it was considered decorous, seemly, and reverent, to have a

chaplain to open the proceedings of the Legislative bodies of the several states, and of Congress, with prayer. In the Legislature of New South Wales it was at one time proposed to open the Parliament with prayer, but the motion was objected to, on the ground that it would cause discord as to who should be the chaplain of the House, but not on the ground that it would be indecorous or disadvantageous to honorable members that the proceedings of the House should be opened with prayer. It was afterwards proposed that the opening service should be read by a clergyman of the Church of England; but again it fell through, because of the difficulty experienced in making a satisfactory arrangement. He believed that it was for somewhat similar reasons a proposition for opening the proceedings of the Parliament of Victoria with prayer fell through. Now, the difficulties that were raised in New South Wales and Victoria were avoided in this colony by the arrangement being come to that the prayer should be read by the honorable the Speaker. It was he himself who suggested that plan, and it was unanimously adopted by the House. He also selected the form of prayer from the Church of England Prayer Book, with one or two slight alterations; and its title was simply a prayer for the High Court of Parliament. The Government of the day did not bring forward the motion, but they promised him their support, and the resolutions he submitted were adopted almost unanimously by both Houses. Now, the custom of reading prayers had never done any harm to any one, and it might have done good to some. It was certainly too much to say that any honorable member did not join sincerely in the opening prayers. There could be no doubt that there was a degeneracy in prayer, but who was to judge his neighbor? and who could say that some word or some sentiment might not at some time so impress the minds of those who were present as to be, in the very highest possible sense of the term, beneficial to them? Most honorable members were present when prayers were read, and he did not believe that there was one honorable member who was not ready to admit that it was decorous, seemly, and advantageous that the proceedings of the House should be opened with prayer. He had no hesitation in saying that it was he who selected the prayer that had hitherto been used, from the Church of England Prayer Book, and he did not think there was any one could object to it. It was related of the celebrated Frenchman, M. Guizot, that there were two things which especially attracted his attention during his visit to England. The one was that he saw inscribed over the main entrance of the Exhibition building in Hyde Park, in 1851, the words—"The Earth is the Lord's and the Fullness thereof." He understood that it was the late Prince Consort who

suggested the adoption of those words instead of any Latin or Greek inscription. The other matter that chiefly attracted the attention of M. Guizot during the same visit to England, was to find that the Houses of Parliament were opened with prayer. It might be said, and truly said, that there were times and places appropriate for everything; and that churches were the proper places for prayer. Now, here, honorable members were assembled for the grave and serious purposes of legislation; and he maintained that if there was any work requiring, more than another, the blessing of Divine guidance, it was that of legislating for the welfare of the colony. If there were any honorable members whose prejudices might be offended by the reading of prayers, it would be very easy for them to remain outside the chamber while prayers were being read, and in that way shew that they had a sympathy for what they might consider to be the weaknesses of other honorable members. If it was considered to be a weakness on the part of those who desired to have the proceedings of Parliament opened with prayer, he would remind honorable members who thought so, that those whom they considered to be weak members were in very good company in this matter, inasmuch as it was the practice of the British Parliament that the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament should on every day of meeting be opened with prayer. He believed, besides, that a most excellent impression was produced on the people of England by the fact that the Legislature had adopted the solemn form of opening the daily proceedings of the Parliament that was observed in England and America. He could assure the House that the fact of its being known in England that the form of opening the daily sittings of Parliament at home was observed here, exercised a most impressive effect upon the minds of those disposed to emigrate to this colony. The practice of opening the daily meetings of Parliament with prayer had extended over ten years; and also, as the practice had been adopted in accordance with the example of the Imperial Parliament, he thought that it would not only be wrong in principle, but that it would be a very great mistake, now, to do away with it. By way of amendment he would, in conclusion, move the previous question.

The amendment was not seconded, and therefore, could not be put. The original motion was then put and negatived.