

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 12 APRIL 1871

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 12 April, 1871.

Opening of Parliament.—Address in Reply to Opening Speech.—Adjournment.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The House having met this day, at twelve o'clock, pursuant to proclamation, the honorable the Speaker and members of the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the Acting-Governor's Opening Speech. Upon their return the SPEAKER took the Chair, and some routine business having been disposed of,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, according to usage, presented a Bill for the consideration of the House.

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO OPENING SPEECH.

On the motion of Mr. WIENHOLT, a Select Committee, consisting of Messrs. Scott, Royds, De Satgé, Thörn, and the mover, was appointed to prepare an Address in Reply. The committee having retired for a short time, brought up the following Address, which was read by the Clerk of the House:—

"To His Excellency the Honorable MAURICE CHARLES O'CONNELL, by Her Majesty's Royal License, a Knight Commander of Isabella the Catholic, Knight of the Second Class of San Fernando, a Knight Extraordinary of Charles III. of Spain, and Administrator of the Government of the Colony of Queensland.

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

"1. We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Person and Government of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to tender our thanks to your Excellency for the Speech with which you have opened the present Session.

"2. We lament, in common with your Excellency, the loss the Colony has sustained from the death of the late Governor.

"3. The question of Additional Representation, and a more equitable distribution of the Electorates, shall have our serious consideration.

"4. The various important subjects referred to by your Excellency shall engage our earnest attention.

"5. We receive, with satisfaction, the assurance of the improved condition of the Revenue, and of the encouraging progress made in the development of the Gold Fields, and of the production of Sugar and Cotton in the Colony.

"6. We learn, with sincere pleasure and thankfulness, of the restoration of Peace in Europe."

Mr. WIENHOLT: Mr. Speaker, in rising to move the adoption of the Address in Reply

to His Excellency's Opening Speech, I may say that I have seen no reason to alter the opinion I formed when I became a candidate for the representation of a constituency in this House, that the present Ministry were deserving of confidence; and I have been very glad to find that opinion so generally shared by the people of this colony. They have shewn their satisfaction at the conduct of the Government, and their confidence in their willingness and ability to promote the interests of the community. The inhabitants of Queensland have testified, by a universal expression of regret at their loss, the esteem and regard they entertained for the late Governor of this colony; and I feel sure that both Houses will willingly concur in the expenditure of such a sum of money as may be required for the erection of a suitable monument to his memory. This, I believe, will be the proper course to pursue, and I think it is only right that such a step should be taken by the Parliament of the colony, rather than be left to private individuals. It must be satisfactory to members of this House, more especially to those who represent the pastoral interest, to find that they are called together at a period of the year when they can devote themselves to their public duties without sacrificing their private interests. I trust this arrangement will be adhered to in the future. The introduction by the Government during the present session of a measure to provide for additional representation and a redistribution of electorates has been looked forward to; and I think the Government have been wise in making provision for taking a census prior to the introduction of such a measure, so that full information in reference to the population of the colony and of its several districts should be before the country. Such a course has been rendered very necessary by the important changes which have taken place in many of those districts, in consequence of the extensive settlement of the lands and the discovery of new gold fields. I hope, sir, that when full information upon this subject is before us, we shall lose no time in legislating upon the question, and that we shall succeed in passing such a Bill as will promote the various interests of this colony. That, I feel sure, we shall be able to do if honorable members of this House will lay aside local prejudices and consider the good of the community at large. In the fourth paragraph of the Speech, I observe that the Government intend, at any rate, that we shall be fully employed. They propose to introduce no less than fourteen Bills, to deal with questions of great importance. Among those Bills I am glad to see one to provide for the due registration of brands on horses and cattle. A measure of this character is highly desirable, in order to check the crime of cattle-stealing, which, owing to the present unsatisfactory state of the law, is, I am sorry to say, very prevalent. There are other measures of

great importance, which will tax the best energies of honorable members to bring to a satisfactory issue. Among the most important of these is, I think, the proposed Bill to re-adjust the financial arrangements of the colony. I am glad to see that the attention of the Government has been directed to the re-occupation of abandoned runs, and the further settlement of new country. Very liberal inducements will have to be offered to attract capital in this direction. There can be no doubt of the benefit which will accrue to the colony if these lands are taken up. I think that indefeasible leases for long periods, with full compensation for improvements, might do much to bring about the desired result. It is satisfactory to be assured that telegraph extension is proceeding vigorously in this colony. It is to be regretted that the British and Australian Telegraph Company have not considered it desirable to connect their lines with our telegraph system at the Gulf, which is, without doubt, the natural outlet, and the one which would tend more than any other to the general advantage of the Australian colonies. With regard to new steam routes, I must say that I do not at present see any necessity for them. I am one of those who think that the best thing to be done with the steamship "Governor Blackall" is to dispose of her. The question of railway extension has also, I see, occupied the attention of the Government. This is, no doubt, a question of great importance, and I fully coincide with the views expressed in His Excellency's Speech as to the desirability of extending the Northern line from Westwood across the Dawson. I am strongly of opinion that this is the first great public work which should be undertaken. Looking at it simply as a matter of justice to the North; taking into consideration the fact that the present short line to Westwood is perfectly useless, and that the extension to the Dawson would drain a very large tract of country and bring in a considerable accession of traffic, I should be inclined, as soon as the finances of the colony warranted it, to assist the Government in carrying out such an undertaking. I am glad to see that the Government have not decided to propose to this House the extension of the Southern and Western Railway from Ipswich to Brisbane. I think, sir, in the present state of our indebtedness, it would be unwise to proceed with this unnecessary work—a work which, I have no hesitation in saying, would not materially benefit one single interest in this colony. I think, sir, it would be very selfish on our part, as representatives of the southern portion of the colony, to urge the prosecution of a work involving such a heavy outlay for the benefit of a few people travelling between Brisbane and the Downs, while so many important and necessary works in other portions of the country are neglected or let alone for want of funds. It is highly gratifying to note the improved condition of the revenue. This, no doubt, has been in a

great measure due to the care and skill of our late Treasurer. It is satisfactory also to see that this improvement has taken place in each branch of the revenue, as it goes to shew that the various industries of this colony are steadily progressing. It is equally satisfactory to hear such good accounts of our gold fields, and that the cotton and sugar interests are flourishing. I think, sir, we may congratulate ourselves on the condition of the country, and may take it for granted that Queensland has seen her worst days, and that, with careful and wise legislation, she will soon be in a more prosperous position than ever. I beg, sir, to move that the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech be adopted by this House.

Mr. SCOTT seconded the motion. The honorable member said that while he regretted, as every one must do, the great loss which the colony had suffered in the death of His Excellency the late Governor, he could not help feeling it a subject of congratulation that the Administration of the Government had fallen into the hands of a gentleman so well qualified for that position, and who so fully possessed the confidence and esteem of all classes of the community. Among the many important measures referred to in the Speech, perhaps the most important was that which related to additional representation and the redistribution of electorates. Many of the districts had been hitherto very inadequately represented, more especially in the northern portion of the colony. A great deal of dissatisfaction had been the result, and a re-arrangement of the electorates, so as to establish a fair basis for representation, would tend to do away with that feeling. At the same time he must, however, express his own opinion that full justice would never be done to the North until the country to the north of Dawes Range was formed into a separate colony. Among the Bills which the Government proposed to introduce, he observed one for the appointment of a third judge of the Supreme Court. He hoped that, when that was carried out, provision would be made for the establishment of a branch of the Insolvent Court at Rockhampton. The want of such a court had long been felt, and the inhabitants of that place had been put to serious expense and inconvenience in consequence. The question of railway extension was one of paramount importance. He was sorry to see that there was a chance of delay in the extension of the line from Westwood to the Dawson, for he believed that a railway to the latter place would not only be of great benefit to the whole colony, but that it would be a remunerative undertaking. It would not only be an act of justice to the North, but it would be a piece of good policy, inasmuch as it would make some amends for the unjust and unfair way in which that portion of the colony had been treated for some time past. He was glad to see that the finances of the colony were in a satisfac-

tory condition, and he therefore trusted that the Government would receive every assistance from the House in carrying out this important line. He protested most distinctly and decidedly against any extension of the southern lines of railway until the North obtained its due.

The question was put, and no honorable member rising to address the House, was passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was hardly prepared, as he did not expect the Address would be so readily disposed of, to inform the House when His Excellency the Acting-Governor would be prepared to receive the Address. He would, however, take upon himself to say to-morrow, at three o'clock.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved—

That the Speech of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government be taken into consideration to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved—

That this House do now adjourn until half-past two o'clock to-morrow, in order to proceed to Government House, to present the Address in Reply to His Excellency.

Mr. GROOM said it was not intended by honorable members on his side of the House that the Address should be passed so suddenly. It was intended to move an amendment—not an amendment which involved a vote of want of confidence, but one to the effect that the Government should come down to the House with an Additional Representation Bill before any other business was entered upon. They proposed to take a census first, but for his part he could see no necessity whatever for putting the country to such an expense—

The SPEAKER: The honorable member should have taken advantage of the opportunity to address the House when I put the question that the Address be adopted. He can now only speak to the question of adjournment.

Mr. ATKIN said he had always understood that it was competent for a member to speak on a motion for adjournment upon any question of policy.

Mr. STEPHENS said that, to prevent any misunderstanding, he should be glad to have the Speaker's ruling on the point raised by the honorable member for East Moreton. He had also been under the impression that, upon a motion for adjournment, a member might address the House upon any question. Honorable members were, in fact, in the habit of moving the adjournment of the House with that object.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY pointed out that the motion of adjournment before the House was for an adjournment for a specific purpose, and he presumed that the Speaker had ruled

the honorable member for Drayton and Toowoomba out of order on that account.

Mr. ATKIN: Is it not competent, sir, for an honorable member to move you out of the chair as an amendment upon the motion before the House?

The SPEAKER: No, certainly not.

Mr. ATKIN: I presume, if I move an amendment to the effect that this House do adjourn until twenty minutes past two o'clock instead of half-past two o'clock, I shall be in order?

Mr. LILLEY: Supposing an honorable member moves the omission of all words relating to time and space, so as to leave the motion one of adjournment only, will it then be competent for him to get up a discussion upon it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I should like, sir, also to have your ruling as to whether, if the motion be amended in reference to the time of adjournment, it will be competent for honorable members to discuss any questions other than the question of adjournment, or whether the mover of such an amendment would have to confine himself entirely to the question of adjourning until twenty minutes past two or half-past two o'clock to-morrow.

The SPEAKER: I certainly think it is not desirable to get up a discussion upon any other question. The Speaker of the House of Commons has endeavored to prevent this practice as far as possible, but I am not aware that an honorable member is obliged to confine his remarks strictly to the question. In May's "Parliamentary Practice," p. 299, it is stated—

"Considerable laxity has prevailed in allowing irrelevant speeches upon questions of adjournment, which are regarded as exceptions to the general rule. In 1849, the Speaker endeavored to enforce a stricter practice, and called upon members to confine their observations upon such motions to the question properly before the House, viz., whether the House should adjourn or not. But the House has not since acquiesced in any limitation of the supposed privilege of members to speak upon every subject but that of the colorable question of adjournment. Until the discontinuance of the weekly question of adjournment from Friday till Monday, in 1861, an inconvenient latitude of discussion was also permitted. Nor did the House deprive the members of this opportunity of raising general debates without an equivalent, but required the Committee of Supply to be the first order of the day on Friday, when there is like freedom of discussion."

"But though irrelevant discussions have been permitted on questions of adjournment, it should be well understood that no amendment can be proposed to such questions unless it relate to the time of adjournment, &c."

According to that authority, the honorable member for Drayton and Toowoomba is not, therefore, precluded from speaking, though it is very undesirable to raise a general debate upon a motion of this kind.

Mr. GROOM then proceeded to address the House. He said the most important para-

graph in the Speech was unquestionably that which related to the introduction of an Additional Members Bill. He repeated that he could see no necessity whatever to wait until a census had been taken. Such a proposal amounted, in point of fact, to this—that the Government and their supporters did not desire an Additional Members Bill at all; they were afraid to bring in such a Bill. He had arrived at that conclusion from reading “Hansard” that morning. He found that the honorable Premier had, on three or four different occasions, met the House, and told them that it would be his duty to bring in a Redistribution Bill. As far back as 1867, the honorable Speaker, who was then Premier, had made the same promise, and it had been repeated every succeeding session. In 1868, when the honorable member now at the head of the Government was a member of the Mackenzie Administration, a similar promise was made. Subsequently, that Government had stated that they were not prepared to bring in such a Bill, because it was necessary that a census should be taken. Well, a census had since been taken, ostensibly for the purpose of bringing in a Bill to provide for additional representation. He should like to know in what different position the Government were in 1871 than they were in 1868. The honorable Premier knew that he had sufficient information in his hands to enable him to come down to the House with such a measure without waiting for a census at all. The inequality in the representation of the colony had been a general grievance. In discussing the question on a former occasion, the then honorable member for Rockhampton, Mr. Archer, had complained that he had been outvoted by three members who represented a smaller population than he did. He felt constrained to state that he should avail himself, as far as possible, of the forms of the House, to oppose every measure brought forward until the Government came down with a Bill to provide for Additional Representation, and there was no necessity to take a census before introducing such a Bill. Such a proposition virtually amounted to an indefinite postponement of the Bill. They had been congratulated because honorable members who represented the pastoral interest could attend to their public duties without sacrificing their private interests; but no other interests appeared to be taken into consideration. He repeated that he should take advantage of the forms of the House in every possible way to prevent the transaction of any business until an Additional Representation Bill had been brought in; and, in doing so, he should not look upon himself as an obstructionist, but should consider that he was only doing his duty. The honorable member who had moved the adoption of the Address in Reply had expressed his satisfaction that there was no probability of the extension of the Southern Railway to Brisbane being carried out, but that honorable member repre-

sented only a very small portion of the population. The honorable member had gone on to say that such an extension would not benefit a single interest in the colony; but he would like to ask whether that honorable member had not benefitted by having the railway brought almost to his own door. Such appeared to him to be the argument of the honorable member, and of others who took a similar course. If it was not the intention of the Government to bring in a Bill for the extension of the railway from Ipswich to Brisbane, what was the use of the expensive commission that was appointed to inquire as to the advisableness of such an extension of the Southern and Western Railway? The commission had travelled over a great portion of the southern part of the colony, and the expense, he understood, would amount to three guineas a day to every member. Now, what, he would ask, would be the good of having incurred such an expenditure, if the Government did not intend to take advantage of the information obtained by the commission? He had been informed that at a meeting of the commission, which took place on the previous day, the honorable the Postmaster-General and another member of the commission spoke for three hours, in order to prevent any report being brought up. When the honorable member for North Brisbane, Dr. O'Doherty, brought forward his motion last session, for the appointment of the commission, he (Mr. Groom) feared that little, if any, practical good would result from it; and he must say that he was now more than ever confirmed in that opinion. He understood that the Government did not wish to have a report brought up from the commission, and that they would not, in the Opening Speech, propose the extension of the railway from Ipswich to Brisbane; because they knew that, if they did so, they would at once lose the support of the Ipswich members; and consequently concluded that if they lost the support of those members, they would not have a working majority in the House. There was every reason to deplore the unfortunate position in which the House was placed, on account of the influence of the Ipswich interest. Everything seemed to be made subservient to it, and the utmost care seemed to be taken to preserve the support of that interest. Now, he felt convinced that if the honorable the Premier would throw himself entirely upon the House, and say he would go on with a measure for the extension of the railway, irrespective of the Ipswich interest, he would obtain a strong working majority, and be able to carry any measure he might wish. If, however, he trusted mainly to the Ipswich members for support, he would find that he and his colleagues would be placed in similarly difficult circumstances as other Ministries had been, by pursuing such a course. There was another portion of the Opening Speech to which he would like to refer; and that was,

the tenth paragraph, which brought under notice the importation of South Sea Island laborers. He could not agree with that paragraph; and he thought that the gentlemen in England, who, he might say, had had the kindness to bring the question of Polynesian immigration under the notice of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, had, by the steps they had taken, done that which would be productive of great benefit to the colony. It was a matter for congratulation that those gentlemen had taken up the subject, and dealt with it as they had done; for he maintained there was every reason to believe that in the introduction of Polynesians a species of slavery was carried on.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I say there is not.

Mr. GROOM: Well, he maintained there was. Those islanders, it was true, were not offered for sale in an auction mart and knocked down to the highest bidder, but they could only be obtained on the payment of a certain sum; and, therefore, it was that he held the system to be one of slavery. When the Bill for the regulation of Polynesian immigration was brought in, it was stated that the islanders would be employed only in sugar-growing, for which it was urged they were well suited; but now they were employed in every kind of labor, many of them even as domestic servants. He considered it a duty to protest against the colony being inundated by such a class of laborers. It appeared to him a perfect farce to have an immigration agent in England, if those who might be persuaded to come to the colony, under the impression that they would secure profitable employment, had to submit to competition with Polynesians whose services could be obtained for six pounds per annum, in addition to rations. If the Government would not take some steps to put a stop to Polynesian immigration, it would, he thought, be necessary to call upon the Imperial Government to interfere. He felt it to be his duty to dissent also from the paragraph relating to the appointment of Mr. Archer as Agent-General, in the room of Mr. Douglas. It appeared to him that in some instances an over-strong Government was worse than a weak Government, and this was one of them. At the present time, the colony was laboring under the misfortune of having a Government that took advantage of the strength of their position to do as they pleased. He looked upon it as an insult to the colony to appoint Mr. Archer to the office of Agent-General, considering the opinions he expressed while a member of the House with respect to Queensland as a field for immigration. That gentleman had frequently denied that there was any necessity for European immigration, and had as frequently asserted that he would not advise any one to come to the colony with a view to the investment of capital. Mr. Archer, according to his repeatedly expressed opinion, considered the colony as only fit for the

growth of wool, tallow, and hides; and yet it was he who had been selected by the Government to fill the office of Agent-General at home, and to explain the advantages of the colony as a field for immigration. He very much regretted that the amendment which had been referred to was not brought forward; because, if it had been, he and other honorable members would have been afforded an opportunity of recording their votes as to the appointment of Mr. Archer to the office of Agent-General, and as to other matters referred to in the Opening Speech. Mr. Archer, it was well known, here, was a strong advocate for the introduction of South Sea islanders; and if that fact became known at home, injury would result to the colony as regarded European immigration. He had been given to understand that the chief difficulty Mr. Douglas had had to contend with in advocating the advantages of Queensland as a field for immigration arose out of the information that was conveyed by private letters from immigrants to their friends at home. Well, if in addition to that, it became known at home that Mr. Archer, while a member of the Legislative Assembly here, opposed the measure for the introduction of European immigrants, but supported a measure for the introduction of Polynesian laborers, the effect could not fail to be injurious to the colony. There was another matter he would like to refer to; and that was the appointment of road boards. Now, he could not agree with the establishment of such bodies; because, while they were entrusted with the expenditure of public moneys, they were irresponsible. However popular the establishment of those road boards might be at the present time, he did not think they would continue to give satisfaction. One of the civil servants, so it was said, had had the indiscretion to write a letter to one of the newspapers on the subject of the road boards; and the consequence was that he had been called upon to resign his situation, otherwise he might have been dismissed. Now, though he did not mean to defend, or in any way justify, civil servants in writing to the newspapers, he wished to remark that in doing so they only followed the example that was set them by heads of departments. He knew for a fact that the honorable the Minister for Public Works wrote letters to the newspapers; and sometimes wrote very curious ones, which got into the hands of those whom the honorable gentleman never expected would see them. He knew of one letter that was written by that honorable gentleman to a newspaper respecting the traffic in non-transferable land orders, which had become the subject of litigation. The sympathy of the public, he believed, was with the Government; as the prosecution was instituted for the purpose of putting a stop to the traffic, in order to secure that those non-transferable land orders should only be used for the purpose of settlement by the holders upon the

public lands of the colony. He must say that the honorable the Attorney-General deserved great credit for the ability he displayed in the working up of the case for the prosecution. But when notice of appeal was given against the decision of the Court, the honorable gentleman now holding the office of Minister for Public Works wrote to the *Darling Downs Gazette* on the subject; and in his letter he said that he rejoiced in Barnett's victory, as it was another proof of the incapacity of the quack Ministry. Besides that, the honorable gentleman had requested certain persons to write to the local papers on particular subjects, and informed them at the same time that he would get their views backed up by the papers in Brisbane. Now, he thought it was only right that such facts should be known, because they shewed that if a Minister of the Crown wrote in that way to the papers, civil servants, in writing to the papers, only followed the example that was set them. He would have preferred that the Government had come down with an Additional Members Bill, instead of the long list of Bills mentioned in the Opening Speech. Of the fourteen measures mentioned in the Ministerial programme, all might have been put off except one, and that was the Bill for the amendment of the law of insolvency. Such a measure was very much required, and, in his opinion, it was the only measure of the fourteen proposed on which it was necessary for honorable members to bestow much attention. He should also have liked that the Government had proposed to go on with public works, in order to provide employment for those who might be induced to come to the colony, and for the younger members of the population. From 1859 to 1869, there were born in the colony about twelve or thirteen thousand boys. Now, he would like to know how they were all to be employed; and the question was one to which the House, and to which public men would, sooner or later, have to direct their attention; but there was no reference whatever in the Opening Speech to the prosecution of public works. For his part, he would heartily support the extension of the Northern Railway to the Dawson; but at the same time he would wish to see the extension of the Southern line from Ipswich to Brisbane, and also from Dalby to Roma. Those works were most essential for the development of the resources of the colony. It had been said that the colony could not afford to continue the extension of the Southern and Western Railway, but he denied the accuracy of that assertion. The public debt of the colony was about £4,100,000, and he was certain that if the unsold lands on the Darling Downs were judiciously dealt with the proceeds would be sufficient to meet the indebtedness of the colony. Now that money was so plentiful, it should be the anxious desire of the Government to take advantage of the opportunity so afforded for the furtherance of

public works. He understood that a former contractor in this colony had obtained a railway contract in Victoria, amounting to about £250,000, and that he was anxious to obtain the services of many of those who had been in his employment in this colony. It was well known that there was a large floating population in the colony, and, he maintained, that if steps were not taken to secure them in employment here they would go elsewhere, and consequently the colony would sustain great injury. At Dalby, a short time ago, an advertisement appeared in the papers for thirty working men, and the number of applications amounted to about six hundred. Now, he maintained, that under such a state of things it was the duty of the Government to take some steps in order to secure the residence, in the colony, of this floating kind of population. The Minister for Works, he considered, had done all in his power to obstruct the formation of railways, and the promotion of the welfare of the colony,—except in so far as regarded the interests of Maryborough and its neighborhood. The management of the railways should, he thought, be taken out of the hands of the Minister for Public Works, and placed under the control of a body of gentlemen. His reason for saying so was, that the Minister for Works altered the fares and rates of charge for goods from day to day, and it was therefore impossible for passengers or merchants to know what they might have to pay until they arrived at the railway station. All the other colonies—New Zealand, New South Wales, and Victoria, were going in for the extension of railway works; but here they had a Ministry that obstructed the progress of the colony, while at the same time they had lecturers employed in Europe to speak of its prosperity. As to the state of the revenue, it was well known to mercantile men that an increase similar to what had taken place lately in the Customs department, would not likely occur again. The increase over the corresponding period in previous years arose from an unusually large importation of gin. He knew, for instance, of one firm that paid £5,000 to the revenue, as duty upon gin, to avoid the increased duty; but it might not be necessary for the same firm, or any other, to pay such an amount of duty again during any other quarter of the year. It was well known that the agricultural interest had nothing to expect from the present Government; for, with one exception, he believed all the members of the Ministry were opposed to everything but the wool, tallow, and hide interest. It was proposed to bring in a measure for the amendment of the law relating to parliamentary elections. He hoped that the honorable member to whom the measure might be entrusted, would remember to provide against the occurrence of such scenes as took place at a recent election at Warwick. It appeared

to him that the only thing that would do for Warwick was universal suffrage; and, for this reason, that a vote was refused on the ground that the property of the voter, which at one time was worth £500, had, by the depression of the times, fallen so much in value, as not to provide the required qualification. He must say he very much regretted that the amendments which had been prepared had not been moved. They did not amount to a vote of want of confidence in the Ministry, but chiefly referred to a disapproval of the appointment of Mr. Archer as Agent-General, in London, for the colony; to there being no mention, in the Opening Speech, of any intention, on the part of the Government, to introduce a Bill providing for additional representation; and also to the fact, that the Government had not carried into effect, during the recess, the resolutions that were passed by the House last session, proposing that pecuniary rewards should be offered to the discoverers of new gold fields. He had only further to add that he should consider it his duty to join other honorable members in opposing any of the measures mentioned in the Ministerial programme, until a Bill providing for additional representation was laid before the House.

Mr. KING said he wished to move as an amendment, that all the words after "half-past two o'clock" should be omitted from the motion, because, unless that were done, honorable members would not have an opportunity of bringing forward amendments on the Opening Speech. The amendment would have the effect of preventing the Address in Reply being presented to His Excellency the Acting-Governor, and at the same time affording honorable members an opportunity of discussing the several propositions in the Opening Speech, and also the Address in Reply. The amendments that had been drawn up and placed in the hands of the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Atkin, to bring forward, were that the fourth and fifth paragraphs should be amended as follows—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY rose to order. He wished to ask the ruling of the Speaker as to whether it was competent for the honorable member now to bring forward any amendments, and have them discussed.

The SPEAKER said that according to the practice of the House of Commons he could not object, unless the House itself took action in the matter.

Mr. KING said he would, with permission, read the amendments which it had been intended to propose; and if the honorable the Premier and the Ministry would consent to the principles embodied in them, he would willingly withdraw them. It was intended to have proposed that the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the Address should

be struck out, and that the third should read as follows:—

"But while recognising the desirability of postponing the question of the redistribution of the Electorates till the population of the colony has been accurately ascertained, we regret that no immediate steps are to be taken by your responsible advisers to remedy some of the most glaring injustices of the present system.

"Being fully convinced that the extension of public works is necessary to ensure the progress of the colony, we regret to find from your Excellency's Speech that your responsible advisers have no definite policy of action on the subject.

"We regret that the appointment of Agent-General for Immigration under the Act of 1869 should have been offered to a gentleman who has so publicly and pointedly opposed the system of immigration which that Act was framed to carry out.

"While rejoiced to find that the accounts from our various gold-fields continue to be encouraging, we are sorry to see a disposition on the part of the Government not to acknowledge the importance of that interest, as evinced by their ignoring the resolution, passed by this House during its last session, affirming the desirability of offering pecuniary rewards for the discovery of new gold-fields."

The amendment he had proposed on the motion for adjournment would, if carried, amount to a refusal to go to Government House to present the Address in Reply. In the Opening Speech, and also in the Address in Reply, reference was made to an Additional Members Bill. In the Opening Speech of the session of 1867, an Additional Members Bill was proposed. During the session, the then Ministry was thrown out, and the honorable gentleman now at the head of the Government was a member of the succeeding Ministry. That Ministry promised that a census should be taken as a basis for an Additional Members Bill. Well, a census was taken, but no action followed upon it as regarded an Additional Members Bill, though it was admitted that many important districts were unrepresented; that others were not represented in proportion to their population; while others were represented in excess of the proportion of population. However, he believed that almost every Ministry that had been in power for several years past had promised an Additional Members Bill; but in no instance had the promise been fulfilled. Under those circumstances, he thought the House was entitled to expect that one of the first Bills that would be laid before the House this session would be one for increasing the representation of those places that were admittedly inadequately represented. Some districts in the northern and western portions of the colony had been so trifled with that the honor of the House demanded that some attempt should be made to remedy the injustice. In 1869, a Bill was brought in to provide for additional representation, but it was not carried through the House, and

the honorable the present Premier was then a leading member of the Opposition. Now, under those circumstances, he could not think that the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government had any right to expect that the House would allow him to put off for another year the bringing in of a Bill for the increase of members. If such a measure should be put off for another year, an injustice, he maintained, would be done to the constituency he had the honor to represent, and also to several other constituencies. Now, he was prepared to say that, like some other honorable members, he would oppose any measure being proceeded with till an Additional Members Bill was introduced. No doubt, such a course of action on the part of several honorable members would lead to a dead-lock; but he maintained that any delay that might take place in legislating on the subject must be attributed solely to the Government. If they were to have another census taken before a Bill was brought in, what guarantee had they that the census would be taken this year; or, if taken, that the Additional Members Bill would not be again put off for several years? It was proposed by the Government to introduce a Bill to re-adjust the financial arrangements of the colony. Now, it would be required that such a measure should provide for special financial arrangements between the different districts of the colony; and, in order to secure that, it was necessary, in the first instance, that the different districts of the colony should be adequately represented. He had heard it said that the House did not at present represent the country; and if that was correct, a Bill should be brought in that would have the effect of making the House adequately representative of the colony. Another important question the House would not be in a position properly to deal with until it fairly represented the colony was the settlement of the people on the lands. That was a question which applied particularly to the Darling Downs district. A large amount of money had been expended on the construction of railways in that district, which was one of the most fertile and valuable in the colony. Every other district of the colony, however, was suffering from the burden of debt incurred for the construction of the railways through that district. Those railways were constructed with a view to promote the settlement on the lands of those who might desire to enter upon agricultural pursuits; but the Commissioner for Crown Lands—so he had been informed—had stated that there was no land in the district available for agricultural settlement. Now, if such information was correct, he would like to know if the statement meant that the Darling Downs were closed as against further settlement. If it was correct, the subject was one that, he thought, should have been referred to in the Opening Speech. If the whole of the lands on the Downs which were

open to settlement had been taken up, the country would sustain great loss from the construction of the railways in that district, unless steps were taken either for the forfeiture of lands that had been illegally taken up, or the doing away with the ten years' leases. The colony had been plunged into debt for the construction of public works, because those works had not been adequately charged to the district in which they were constructed. But that, he thought, might still be remedied, either by the imposition of a land tax, or the setting aside of a large reserve for providing funds sufficient to meet the interest for loans for the construction of reproductive works—such as might be necessary for the opening up of the country, and consequently the settlement of the people on the land. As to Mr. Archer, he did not believe, from what he knew of him, that he would accept of the office of Agent-General. He was well aware that Mr. Archer held strong opinions as to the undesirability of introducing a large number of people into the colony; and that he did not consider Queensland a favorable field for the introduction of a large number of laborers, or for the investment of capital to any great extent. For his own part, he must say that he had too much faith in the honor of Mr. Archer to allow him to think that he would accept the office of Agent-General for the colony. He would next refer to the resolution that was passed last session, proposing that pecuniary rewards should be made to the discoverers of new gold fields. That resolution had not been acted upon, and therefore he held that it was the intention of the present Government to ignore it. He could believe that one of the excuses that might be advanced would be that it was undesirable to take any action in the matter till the report of the Gold Fields Commissioner was brought up and considered; but it should be remembered that it was after the passing of the resolution for the appointment of a Gold Fields Commissioner that the resolution for the rewarding of discoverers of new gold fields was passed. He did not imagine that the Government objected to the soundness of the principle that the discoverers of new gold fields should receive pecuniary rewards; and it was the opinion of the House, when the resolution to which he referred was under discussion, that rewards should be given. The question, therefore, arose as to whether the Government considered themselves bound or not by a resolution of the House. The Government had, up to the present time, ignored it; and he would wish to know whether those honorable members who supported the motion would submit to have their decision ignored by the Ministry. He had already referred to the necessity for an increase of members, and now he would desire to express his objection to there being so many Ministers on the Treasury benches. The number was altogether out of proportion

to the number of members; and he wished it to be distinctly understood that while he said so he held the highest feelings of respect and esteem for the ex-Colonial Treasurer. However, he remembered that when a fifth Minister was proposed, the honorable gentleman, Mr. Ramsay, opposed the proposition, and in doing so made some very strong remarks as to the undue proportion of five Ministers to a House consisting of so few members. Now, the number of members was still the same, and, therefore, he did not think it was consistent on the part of the honorable gentleman to hold a seat as a member of the Ministry even without a portfolio—thereby increasing the number of the Ministry to six.

The SPEAKER, after quoting from May's "Practice of Parliament," pages 298 and 299, ruled thereupon that he could not allow the discussion to be further continued. The debate was really one upon the Address, and not upon the motion before the House, which was that the House should adjourn till the following day, at half-past two o'clock. To debate the Address upon such a motion—seeing the Address had already been agreed to—was quite irregular, and contrary to the practice of Parliament.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had no wish to take any part in re-opening the discussion on the Address; but he desired to assure the House that he was astonished the Address was agreed to so quickly. He was quite prepared to enter into any debate that might have taken place upon it when it was properly before the House; but as he looked upon the present debate as quite irregular, he would not take any part in it.

Mr. KING then proposed that the words in the motion, after the words "to proceed to Government House," be struck out.

The SPEAKER said that such an amendment could not be made, because the motion stated that they should proceed to Government House to present the Address.

Mr. KING: The motion did not say at what time.

Mr. ATKIN said he thought the amendment could be put.

The SPEAKER informed the honorable member that he had already ruled that the amendment could not be put.

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

Ayes, 15.
Mr. Palmer
" Bell
" Bramston
" Walsh
" Royds
" Lilley
" Forbes
" Johnston
" De Saigé
" Scott
" Wienholt
" Thorn
" Ferrett
" Ramsay
" Thompson.

Noes, 10.
Mr. Stephens
" Edmondstone
" Handy
" Jordan
" Morgan
" King
" Atkin
" McIlwraith
" Miles
" Groom.