

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 11 JUNE 1872

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 11 June, 1872.

Supply.

SUPPLY.

The Order of the Day for the further consideration of Supply having been read,

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved—

That the Speaker leave the chair and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Question put.

Mr. GRIFFITH said: Mr. Speaker—I rise, not for the purpose of obstructing the House in going into Committee of Supply, nor for the purpose of obstructing the business of the country; for I am sure that no one regrets more than I do that we have been so long detained from going on with business. I believe that there is a general wish amongst honorable members, on both sides, to get on, if possible, with business. I only regret that it has not fallen to the lot of some one more able than myself to make the suggestion which I am about to make on this occasion. I waited for the question to be put, and it would have been carried had I waited longer, before rising to make the suggestion which I think ought to be made. It appears to me, and to a great many other persons, that, in all the negotiations that have been attempted on both sides of the House, there have been too many negotiators; and there can be no doubt, I think, that if this were any other case than a contest between the Government and the Opposition parties, there would not have been so many negotiators. That may, to some extent, account for the want of success that has attended the attempts to get over the difficulty. It appears to me that we are like two contending armies, neither of which will lay down its arms to the other. It is certain that, in any other case, or where there was a desire to effect peace between two contending armies, it would be very surprising if the private soldiers on each side should get up and make suggestions the same as their leaders, or different from their leaders. And this, I am sorry to say, has been too much the case, on both sides of the House, in our battles; and I confess that I believe no one is more to blame for this than myself. I believe that both sides of the House have perfect confidence in their leaders;—that honorable members on this side have perfect confidence in the leader of the Opposition, and that honorable members on the other side have perfect confidence in the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government; and I am certain that any action of the Premier will be fully acquiesced in by his supporters on the Ministerial side, and I believe that any action on the part of the honorable and learned member for Fortitude Valley will be acquiesced in by honorable members who follow him on this side—

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. GRIFFITH: On this occasion, therefore, I would suggest that any other negotiations shall be left to those two honorable members; and that the House, generally, call upon them to confer together, for the purpose of arriving at a solution of this difficulty; and a great deal more will be done by a private conference outside the House than has been done inside, where there were too many auditors and too many speakers.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I do not know what will be done by the House in carrying out the suggestion I make. If I am supported generally in this suggestion—if the House will agree that both those honorable members should meet—some proposition should be made, that you, Mr. Speaker, leave the chair, say, at five o'clock, so that those honorable members may meet in consultation, and an understanding between them be arrived at. I trust that this will meet with no opposition on the other side, for the reason that there can be "no surrender." I think honorable members will see that this suggestion involves nothing of the kind. I wish to leave the question entirely to the discretion of the two honorable members in whom both sides of the House have confidence. I hope the suggestion will be adopted, and if it is, I trust that we will do more business this week than has been done since the session commenced. I do not think that I should move, until some other opinion is expressed, any formal amendment upon the motion of the honorable the Colonial Treasurer.

Mr. GRAHAM: I cordially agree with the remarks that have just fallen from the honorable member for East Moreton. I think, in fact, what every honorable member of the House states in private conversation, that we all anxiously wish to see this dead-lock at an end. I am aware that if we carry it on much longer, although each side will endeavor to make out that the other side is wholly in fault, yet the blame will fall on us all as a body—the country will blame the House. It ought to be the chief aim of every honorable member to bring the dead-lock to an end. For my own part, I think that is the only way out of the difficulty—that is, that the leaders of both sides should confer and come to some understanding. If it cannot be done, if they cannot agree for the two sides of the House, I cannot see what the end will be. I very much fear, if we carry on "to the bitter end"—which was the expression used by some honorable members in this contest—I do not know what the consequences will be; no one can foresee the consequences. We shall endanger the liberties of this colony. There is one thing that might happen:—We shall have to call in some other authority, superior to ourselves, for the settlement of our differences; and such authority is the Crown alone. I think if we carry things to such a pass, and call upon the home authorities to interfere with us, we shall endanger the liberties of the colony by laying it open

to the substitution of a new form of Government, under which we shall not be able—that is, under which the people will not be able, to choose their own legislators. I think, therefore, it becomes a personal duty with honorable members, and it is the duty of the House as a body, to try to lay aside party feelings as much as possible, and to try to bring the present unfortunate state of things to an end. For my own part, if no arrangement is come to, to-day, I am fully determined upon the course I shall pursue, which I shall fully explain at a later hour, if necessary. But I hope, with the honorable member for East Moreton, that the two leaders of this House will confer, and thereafter will be able to come before the House with some agreement that both sides will be able to fall in with.

MR. WIENHOLT: No man in this House regrets more than I do the lamentable state into which the business of the country has drifted—a state that promises to become chronic; for we have had the same thing going on for three sessions past. This present condition of affairs induces me once more to rise and appeal to honorable members on the other side of the House to look upon it in no spirit of party: for, Mr. Speaker, I do not myself look upon this as a party question at all. I would ask them to look upon it as a question concerning future parliamentary government in this country. It must be patent to honorable members that it is impossible that the Ministry, and the majority of this House, can recede from the position they have taken up in defence of constitutional government, without admitting and acknowledging the principle, and creating a precedent, that a minority may, when it thinks fit, jeopardise the credit of the country and throw into confusion the whole administration of its affairs, by adhering to the forms of the House to stop the passing of Supply that is required by the Crown. Now, sir, if it is at once admitted that a minority may constitutionally act in this manner, there is an end to all government, except one of compromise!—

HONORABLE MEMBERS on the Opposition benches: Hear, hear.

MR. WIENHOLT: And, sir, compromise may not satisfy a few stubborn men who may find their way into this House, and who may, if they think they have cause, take advantage of the forms of this House to force their views upon the majority. I appeal to honorable members on both sides of the House—I ask them, if this is desirable? Would it not rather be fatal to sound government—to any government at all? I call upon honorable members on the other side to shew that they have some feeling, other than for party—some thought for the people of the colony—some consideration for the future of representative government! Now, if honorable members opposite were straining the forms of the House to prevent the passing of some

measure they disapproved of, it would be very hard to defend their course of proceeding; still, there might be some shadow of reason for their proceeding; but how can their conduct possibly be defended, when the object of their obstruction is, not to defend the passing of any obnoxious measure, but to throw into confusion the administration of the affairs of the colony, to jeopardise the credit of the country—

MR. STEPHENS: No.

MR. WIENHOLT: To create distress amongst numbers of their fellow colonists, and to lower in the eyes of the world—I say it with regret—the Legislature of this colony.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear; and No, no.

MR. WIENHOLT: I have been accused by honorable members, before this, of endeavoring to create ill-feeling between the two sides of the House. I trust that honorable members will not for a moment imagine that I have so reckless, so evil, a disposition, as to attempt to create it.

DR. O'DOHERTY: Your language does.

MR. WIENHOLT: I am sure there is a number of honorable members in this House who can understand and appreciate what it is necessary to uphold—what they know and feel is the right cause; who would not sacrifice what they can see well is a great principle; and who would not be pointed at by succeeding representatives in this House as men who flinched from protecting the constitution of the country and from maintaining the integrity of the constitution and the dignity of the Assembly. I am quite sure that if honorable members opposite will only look with an unprejudiced eye upon public affairs, they will do that which is wanted for the country: they will stop the present obstruction to business, and will allow Supply to be granted. Some honorable members opposite have stated that what the Premier stated in the House—that he must insist upon Supply being granted, or, at any rate, upon the Estimates being fairly gone into, before other business could be proceeded with—they objected to, and that that has been one great cause of the obstruction of business. I am quite sure that if honorable members will think over the matter, they will see that, as first Minister of the Crown, it was his bounden duty to come down to this House and ask, and insist, that the back Estimates should be passed—those Estimates which are absolutely necessary to be granted to the Crown, to carry on the business of the country.

MR. STEPHENS: No, no.

MR. WIENHOLT: It is a matter of urgency, and honorable members opposite know full well that the Estimates should have been passed last session.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER on the Treasury bench: Last year.

MR. WIENHOLT: Last year! But the Premier, to shew his perfect good faith, and his intention to call the House together at an

early date, took the unusual course of asking for only three months' supply, when he could have insisted upon the full year's Estimates. Honorable members opposite must acknowledge that the Premier has kept his word to the letter. The honorable gentleman called the House together at the earliest possible opportunity; he placed before us, and we have read the first time, the new Electoral Districts Bill; and honorable members must see that it is impossible that the Government could submit to the indignity of having Supply doled out to them by a minority, even supposing that the majority of this House would have permitted such a course of action. Now, sir, the Government have never alluded to the Estimates for 1873; they have not brought the subject forward in any way. Honorable members opposite know that those Estimates must be passed this session; and, it is merely a perversion of truth to say that the Ministry are attempting to get the Estimates that should be granted this session before going on with the business. It is merely the Estimates of last year they have asked for—the Estimates which it is the bounden duty of this House to see are granted at once, unless they wish to let the administration of the affairs of the country fall into confusion. Now this would be the most undesirable state of things, and I do believe that if honorable members opposite will only think impartially, they must see that it is the duty of this House to grant the Estimates, as asked for. If it is not the object of honorable members opposite to drive the Ministry from office, let them shew it by joining us in going on with the business of the country. We can, if we like, pass the Estimates in two or three days: I am quite sure we can do it, because a great deal of the money has been spent. If we set to work with a will, we can in a few weeks get through with this Redistribution Bill, or an Additional Representation Bill, if honorable members opposite honestly desire it. We have now been kept here for something like two months, and nothing has been done. I would point out to honorable members opposite that this is a great strain upon country members, who are here at considerable inconvenience and expense to themselves, and, for the most part, at great sacrifice of their private business. There may be some few members on the other side who rather rejoice at this state of things, whose aim it will be to wear out the patience of country members; but I sincerely trust and believe that such is not the wish of a large majority of honorable members opposite. I will point out that in the state of things which has been brought about here of late, and which now exists, there is very great danger that some of the measures which have been brought forward for this session, must stand over until next year; for it is unreasonable to expect that any Legislative Assembly can be kept together throughout the whole year, and it is unfair to

think that any body of men can be expected to sacrifice the whole of their time to public duty. I therefore trust that honorable members opposite will not throw any further obstruction in the way of our proceeding with business. I am quite sure that the clear judgment of the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, and other honorable members who act with him, will admit that obstruction and opposition carried beyond a certain point must be pernicious, must be detrimental in every way.

Dr. O'DOHERTY: I cannot, sir, avoid regretting that, when a proposition of this kind has been made to the House, from the two youngest members of it, in the interest of peace and with the desire to further the transaction of the public business, the effort should be met, as usual, by honorable members on the other side, and by such a speech as that made by the honorable member for Western Downs. That honorable member, sir, stated that he hoped the House would not for a moment credit him with any desire to create ill-feeling amongst honorable members on either side; and, yet, in the same breath, he charged us on the Opposition side with taking the course we have pursued, having no other object in view than that of utterly disturbing the business of the country and throwing it into disorder. Now, the honorable member is acute enough to understand thoroughly the meaning of the words which he employs; and I, for one, cannot conceive what earthly object he can have in view in reiterating charges of this kind, unless he desires to further carry out this system of obstruction to the public business which he professes to deprecate. He cannot suppose, for a moment, that honorable members who confront him on the Opposition side of the House will be frightened into yielding up their independence as representatives of the people, because of any charges he thinks proper to bring against us. I, for one, as an humble and independent member of this House, throw back his charge upon him; and I claim for myself the same honesty of purpose and intention as I am quite prepared to concede to him. I can only say, in addition to what has been said by the honorable member for East Moreton and the honorable member for Clermont, that I do sincerely hope that the honorable gentlemen holding the positions of leaders of the House will, in courtesy, at all events, to this graceful proposal from the two youngest members of the House, not treat it with the silent disdain they seem disposed to accord to it. I certainly will join my voice to the voices of those who are disposed to see in this proposition a possibility of a conclusion of this war that has been carried on for some time past. There can be no question, now, I imagine, on the part of any honorable member on the other side of the House, that the standard argument which has been brought forward by honorable members backing the Government, that a minority as such must

yield to the majority, is an argument that cannot hold water ; inasmuch as the minority claim, at all events, what they recognise as their support, that they represent the vast and overwhelming majority of the people of this colony. If honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House would only place themselves in the position of honorable members like ourselves—like us on the Opposition side—and bear that in mind, they would see how utterly impossible it is for us to recede from that position. To recede from it, according to my view of the matter, would be to abolish representative government in this colony ; for, I hold that a representative Assembly like this is utterly valueless, unless it has on the left side of you, Mr. Speaker, as determined an Opposition as it has a determined Government party on your right hand. If we concede to the Government that, because they have two or three members on their side more than we have on ours, and that therefore we have no right, when vital questions arise for discussion, to exercise the authority which the constitution gives to us, we advance an absurdity. If we have no right to exercise that authority, how is it that we have carried it on for so long a time ? We maintain that the first blow against the constitution has been struck by the Government, and by the Government side of the House : it is the foundation of our argument, and we simply defend the constitution of the colony in taking the course that we have adopted. Now, sir, what is the simple and exact state of the case, as between the two sides of the House, at this moment ? We of the Opposition claim that we have a right not to trust the Government that they will carry out this session the Representation Bill—that they will pass it into law—and, if they do, that it will be in such a way as not to justify its acceptance by the country, backed as the Government are, at this moment, by such supporters as we see on the Treasury benches. Why, his Excellency the Governor, in his reply to the memorial presented to him by members of this House, put the matter simply, that no Opposition he ever knew trusted the Government. The very object and meaning of an Opposition, is, distrust of the party they oppose ; and, it strikes me that it is one of the grossest absurdities that we are standing here as representatives, and that, with one exception, the greatest interests of the colony are not represented in this House ; and we have a perfect right, too, seeing the constitution of the Government, and of those who back them, to distrust entirely their intention to pass an Additional Representation Bill, such as will be acceptable to the people. I repeat, that we have a perfect right to demand in substance such a guarantee as will satisfy us that our voice will not be unheard in the House in the discussion that will take place in the passing of such a measure of reform. Suppose that we accede to the demand made by the Premier,

that we hand ourselves and our position as an Opposition minority over to him ; what is to prevent him and his party from doing as they like ? There are individuals amongst the Government supporters perfectly honorable men—men who believe in what they say ;—they tell us to trust them. I say unhesitatingly, I do not trust them ; I say the Opposition are justified in saying that they will not trust them—as a party. I may trust them as individuals. But, as an old member of Parliament, and knowing what the result of passing Supply is in the House, I do not trust honorable members opposite as a party to give effect to a measure for additional representation, if we once give them Supply. I say the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, leading this side of the House, would neglect the highest duty that devolves upon him as leader of the Opposition, if he did anything of the kind. But the question comes, as to how that guarantee may be accepted, by both sides of the House, without any derogation of dignity or loss of principle. I cannot see that both the leaders of the House shall not in five minutes agree to such an arrangement as to the discussion of these measures as will let the House go on with business without any sacrifice of principle or dignity on one side or the other. I do not care to enter further into the question as to how the thing is to be done. Every honorable member knows the private friendly relations that subsist between the Premier and the honorable member for Fortitude Valley. I cannot but believe that if those two honorable gentlemen retire from the House and discuss how to carry on the business of the country, an arrangement satisfactory to both sides of the House can be entered into. I sincerely trust that some such arrangement shall be carried out.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY : I felt anxious, sir, that the question proposed by the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Griffith, should have been discussed by more honorable members of the House than have addressed themselves to it ; and I should have liked to have heard the opinions of honorable members on the Opposition benches, and of honorable members unconnected with the Government, as their supporters on the Treasury benches, against or in support of the proposition. As, however, it does not appear that any other honorable member is willing to address the House on this occasion, I wish to say a few words upon the question. I am as well aware as any man in this Assembly, or in this country, and perhaps better than any one else, of the injurious effects the system that we are pursuing in the House has upon the colony. I yield to no man in the anxiety I feel to put an end to this unhappy state of things, and to bring affairs back into their proper groove ; and, if it will in any way tend in that direction, that the honorable member for Fortitude Valley

and myself shall have a consultation on the subject, I am, for one, perfectly willing.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: But the House must fully understand that there is a broad constitutional question involved in this matter, and that if they expect me to give way on that constitutional question, I cannot do it. I have little doubt, sir, that honorable members on the opposition benches—many of them—will yet have to thank me for the stand that I have taken on this occasion on behalf of constitutional government in this country. However blind they may be now, by party passion, or by feeling, I do, as I stand here, conscientiously believe that many of them, as I said before, will live to thank me and the Government for the stand we have taken on this occasion.

HONORABLE MEMBERS on the Ministerial side: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It has been stated in the course of our debates, from the first, that I stand on my personal dignity. Now, I think that many members of the Opposition will admit that my personal dignity is well able to take care of itself—quite as well able to take care of itself for the future as it has been for the last thirty or forty years. I do not want a vote of this House to maintain my personal dignity, but, as leader of this House, and as leader of this Government, I say that I would not be justified in taking any other course than the course I have taken on this great question. The question, now, has been enlarged in a remarkable manner from the simple one it was at the beginning—as to Whether the Government were to get their estimates or not?—and it has reached another phase, and resolves itself into this—Whether the Government will acknowledge that a minority of this House are to govern the country? That is the question, as it strikes me.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear; and No, no.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It strikes me as the great question at issue. That being conceded, I am willing to make some conditions that, perhaps, I would not have done at an earlier part of the session. That is the question into which the present dispute resolves itself—whether the Government of this country is to be carried on by a minority of this House? And, sir, it is the most dangerous precedent for the Opposition to set us, in attempting, as they have been doing for the last two or three sessions, to dictate by a minority of the House in what way the business of the country and the Government is to be taken in this House. A great deal has been said on both sides of the question, and it will be tiresome in me to reiterate the arguments that have been used; but they all resolve themselves into this—Is the constitution to be set at defiance? Are the minority of this House to govern the country; or, are we to be governed by a majority? If honor-

able members opposite will only look before them, they will see that no Ministry remain in office a long time—the tenure of office in this colony cannot, in all human probability, last for any long period—and I would ask them to consider for themselves, if they will put themselves into the position of the present Government, how they would feel if they were dictated to by us, if we were in the minority on the other side of the House? That is the way to look at our position. Would they not declaim a great deal more than we do upon the injustice of the minority, and the impossibility of the Government being carried on, under such circumstances? It has been pointed out so often how they should act, to increase their minority, and to convert their minority into a majority, that I need not repeat the arguments upon this matter, which would be rather tiresome to the House. But they can believe this, that their action, such as it has been, and is, in this House, is never likely to bring them a majority. If they pursued a different course of policy, the probabilities are strongly in their favor, that honorable members who now support the Government most strongly, would, for reasons of their own—from differing with the Government on minor questions, and from a variety of causes—have changed sides in the House. But the policy they have pursued, instead of having such a tendency, has concentrated the Government majority and made the Government supporters an undivided body; and such will be the inevitable result of any such course of proceeding as theirs in any assembly of this kind. The threadbare argument put forward by the honorable member for Brisbane, Dr. O'Doherty, as to the minority resisting the majority, has been so often controverted in this House that I shall not waste time upon it; but I would inform the House that the gift of prophecy which seemed to hover round the head of the honorable member for Wide Bay, the other night, when he told us that the Rockhampton people would not endorse the action of their representative if he joined the ranks of the Government, has been completely falsified.

Mr. KING: £60,000.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: So far from that being correct, at a great public meeting, last night, a vote of confidence in the member for Rockhampton was proposed by Mr. Shaw, who has proposed him for election on three occasions, seconded by the chairman of his own committee, and carried unanimously. That does not look as if Rockhampton does not endorse the act of its member. And as for honorable members on that side of the House representing a great majority of the people of the colony, if the argument is of any weight whatever, which I will never admit, we all sit here under the constitution as representatives, all equal. But if it is worth answering, it is answered by the proceedings of that honorable member, doing what was his duty, and protesting against the

action of the Opposition. But I do not wish to irritate parties in this House. If, by a conference between the honorable member for Fortitude Valley and myself, any good purpose can be secured, I will be happy at any time to meet the honorable member, and to meet him fairly. But the House must fully understand that upon the great constitutional question, which the honorable member for Brisbane has denied is the question—Whether the minority shall dictate to the majority as to the mode in which Government business shall be carried on?—I cannot give way.

MR. LILLEY said: Mr. Speaker—I am somewhat puzzled, after hearing the speech of the honorable member at the head of the Government; for, whilst professing his willingness to meet me, at the suggestion of the honorable member for East Moreton, he has stated most distinctly that there is no point, in fact, upon which he is prepared at all to yield.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. LILLEY: I understood that. I do not see how he can yield, if the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government is determined to hold the position that he has maintained during the past weeks of the session; but, perhaps, if I should meet him, as I am willing to do on all occasions, and more especially if there is any hope whatever of bringing the present state of affairs to a reasonable termination, he may be able to put me in possession of the points upon which he would be willing to make any concession to honorable members on this side of the House. I may state, sir, that I was wholly unaware of the proposal that has been made by the honorable member for East Moreton, until I heard it from his own lips in the House. I had no idea that he was likely to make any such proposition. But I would not be one to refuse to meet the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government, if, by so doing, we can in any way advance the interests of the country. At the same time, I take exception to the statements that he has made about the nature of the issue between the two sides of the House. We have maintained nothing contrary to the principle that questions which come before the House are to be determined by the majority of voices. I have never maintained, sir, that a minority are at liberty to force upon the Government any particular kind of legislation for the country, or to force upon them a law of any particular nature. But the minority have, surely, some rights in this House. They surely have some controlling power in the State; and it is for that that we have all along been contending. A minority in the House have the power to resist the passing of obnoxious laws. Suppose a majority, such as we see before us to-day, to be composed of one section of the community, the actual tenants of the Crown, holding here the position of landlords and tenants, and governing their own contracts with the State—suppose that that majority

choose to enter upon any law, for the sake of argument, of the most despotic character, or for their own interests;—would the minority have no position in the House? Of course they would. And, even, if at this time there is an acknowledged deficiency in the representation of the country—if the adult manhood of the colony is not represented in this House—is it beyond the scope of our duty to contend: is it not righteous that we should resist that majority, in order that the representation shall be fairly and fully adjusted, as soon as possible, this session? On the contrary, it is not the right of the majority to force upon the country any law whatever; and the minority are justified in resisting any obnoxious laws, and, in doing so, they are not in any way controlling the Government. Assume that the forms of the House are swept away—as you, the majority, have not the power to do, any more than you have power to get a shilling of Supply!—and that just representation is denied to the people—as it has been all along, by subterfuge or denial—

AN HONORABLE MEMBER on the Ministerial benches: Whom by?

MR. LILLEY: By honorable members on the other side of the House. Additional Representation Bills, so called, have been introduced, but they have not been intended to give representation to the people. We know how sturdily it has been denied. We know how sturdily the repeal of the two-thirds clause was resisted; and that was practically to deny the representation of the people. I admit that, for some years, I myself doubted the expediency of its repeal; but, at all events, it amounted to a practical prohibition of just representation. Well, we have it repealed. It would have been a fair test of good faith if honorable members opposite—I am making those observations, now, in the best possible temper—after that two-thirds clause had been repealed, had introduced a measure for anything like fair representation of the people in this House. But we know they did nothing of their own motion. The Bill of last session did not deal fairly with the question; by their own admission, in withdrawing it, the Bill was not one that fairly provided for the just representation of the colony. I say, therefore, seeing the way in which this question has been trifled with, year after year, that we have a right—the minority have a right—as far as we have the power, to withhold and to enforce the withholding of Supply, unless the majority will do their duty, until the representation of the people is properly adjusted. I do not know, of course, what we, that is the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government and myself, are to discuss when we meet. We may be able to see our way out of the deadlock; but it is perfectly clear that if we stand rigidly in the positions we are in, we shall not see our way out. Something must be done.

I am not prepared to concede that the majority is to rule absolutely. That must be distinctly understood by the House and the country. I am not prepared to concede that we are to have an absolute majority in this House. If we meet, I hope that will be understood. I hope our meeting will not be fruitless. I have been willing to give the Supply necessary to carry on the business of the country, and have been for months past; I am as anxious as any one to see the business go on, in order that no man in the community shall suffer hardship, either by want of action, or by the action of the House; but, at the same time, I am determined that the question of representation shall be settled during the present session—and to back out, now, from that position I cannot. I have no apprehension, or any fear, whatever, of the action of the Imperial authorities; and I am not to be coerced, nor will I surrender unconditionally the position I occupy, by any threats. Why should they interfere? Dare they take away the liberty of men peacefully asserting their rights? Will they venture to take away from us the constitution under which we live? I venture to say that you will find no statesman in England recommend that. And, if any statesman, or so called statesman, in this colony has dared to recommend that, he will be roundly snubbed, whatever may be his standing. What would be the effect if this terrible threat of Imperial interference with us, in the assertion of our rights, peacefully and legitimately, under our constitution, should be given effect to? Forsooth, instead of having a majority of nineteen honorable members, all of one class, governing, we should have government by the Imperial authorities: we might be, but we could not be much, worse; and we might be very much better. One intelligent gentleman sent out from home, instead of an oligarchy of Crown tenants, to look after our affairs! But I have not the least fear of the Imperial authorities stepping in; because they would not venture on an act of interference with a people who have not, through all this excitement, disturbed the peace—not a man has raised his voice, not a blow has been struck, to disturb the public tranquillity. And, I say, that this conflict, anxious and bitter as it has been, does the most infinite credit to the people of the colony, who are clamoring, as they are justified in doing, for their rights. Absurd as it may appear for honorable members of this House to be crossing the floor from side to side, we have been content to avail ourselves of the forms of the House in the maintenance of the just demands of the people; and, I say, that this struggle, conducted as it has been with such splendid temper, and so peacefully, by the people of the colony—and there is an intense public spirit amongst the people outside this House—

An HONORABLE MEMBER; Of Brisbane.

Mr. LILLEY: It reflects, I say again, the greatest credit upon them. I say, that honorable members on the other side, instead of sneering at them, ought to be proud that the people did so conduct themselves.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Who is sneering?

Mr. LILLEY: I do not refer to the honorable gentleman; but I thought I observed some honorable members doing so. However, that is nothing. We are to meet, as the Premier will understand, in the best possible temper. I am quite sure that, so far as I am concerned, when we leave this chamber to discuss this matter, and to negotiate, or endeavor to do so, we shall meet in the best possible temper, as we always do—although in public we are sometimes greatly animated in our expressions. As for the observations that were made about the honorable member for Rockhampton, they will not in the slightest degree affect my action in this House. I am not more influenced by his present conduct than I was by his past. I did not ever attach the weight of a feather to his support, and his change of sides can certainly have no weight with me. I value the opinions of his constituents; but as for the honorable member himself, I have nothing to say, except that I believe his conduct, if put to the fair test of his constituents, would not be endorsed by them. As to the meeting, I do not know anything. It would not alter my course or standing in the House, if every other man changed his views. I believe my conduct in this matter is correct; and I am prepared to stand so long as there is an inch of plank under my foot. I am quite willing, if any fair way can be seen to enter upon the transaction of the public business, to meet the Premier. My observations, I may say, have been called for by the few remarks of the honorable gentleman; and I have made them in the best possible temper. If I have spoken my opinions with anything like animation, with any degree of strength, I am confident that will not disturb in any way the harmony of our meeting. I hope that anything I have said will not give offence to honorable gentlemen opposite, and that if we do come to an agreement, honorable members on both sides of the House will be prepared to accept it in a fair spirit.

By leave of the House, the motion was withdrawn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, in moving the adjournment of the House, with a view to a conference between the honorable member for Fortitude Valley and himself, said that they had agreed to meet to-morrow morning, at ten o'clock. If they should come to any arrangement, it would be for him to lay it before the House; if nothing was arrived at, no harm would be done.

The House then rose,