

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 24 APRIL 1878

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QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

FIFTH SESSION OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT,

APPOINTED TO MEET

AT BRISBANE, ON THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF APRIL, IN THE FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN
OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1878.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 24 April, 1878.

Meeting of Parliament.—Vacancies during Recess.—
New Members.—Committee of Elections and Quali-
fications.—Petition.—Questions.—Bill *pro forma*.—
The Opening Speech.—Address in Reply to Opening
Speech.

MEETING OF PARLIAMENT.

THE House met at twelve o'clock, pursuant to proclamation, and shortly afterwards the Speaker, accompanied by honourable members, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to hear the reading of His Excellency the Governor's Opening Speech.

The House resumed at half-past three o'clock.

VACANCIES DURING RECESS.

The SPEAKER: I have the honour to report that since the termination of the last session the following vacancies have occurred in the House, viz. :—

1. By the resignation of Robert Muter Stewart, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Brisbane.

2. By the acceptance of office by the Honourable James Francis Garrick, Esquire, member for the electoral district of East Moreton.

3. By the resignation of George Thorn, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Ipswich.

4. By the resignation of John Thorn, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Fassifern.

That upon the occurrence of each of the said vacancies, I issued my Writ for the election of a member to fill the same, and

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that such Writs have been duly returned to me with certificates respectively endorsed thereon of the election of the following gentlemen :—

1. The Honourable Ratcliffe Pring, as member for the electoral district of Brisbane.

2. The Honourable James Francis Garrick, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of East Moreton.

3. John Macfarlane, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Ipswich.

4. DeBurgh Fitzpatrick Persse, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Fassifern.

I have further the honour to report that the writ for the electoral district of Rockhampton, issued by me pursuant to resolution of the House passed on 30th October last—that the seat of Charles Hardie Buzacott, Esquire, was vacant—has been duly returned to me with a certificate endorsed thereon of the election of John Macfarlane, Esquire, as member for the said electoral district.

NEW MEMBERS.

The following members, after taking the usual oath and subscribing the roll, took their seats respectively for the electorates set against their names :—

The Honourable James Francis Garrick, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of East Moreton; John Macfarlane, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Ipswich; John Macfarlane, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Rockhampton; DeBurgh Fitzpatrick Persse, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Fassifern; the Honourable Ratcliffe Pring, Esquire, Q.C., as member for the electoral district of Brisbane.

COMMITTEE OF ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS.

The SPEAKER, pursuant to the requirements of the "Legislative Assembly Act of 1867," laid on the table his warrant appointing the Committee of Elections and Qualifications for the present session.

PETITION.

Mr. FOOTE presented a petition from certain coal-miners residing at Ipswich, Bremer, Bandanba, and West Moreton generally, against the passing of any Act for the regulation of coal-mines until after the forthcoming general election, and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed.

Mr. FOOTE moved that the petition be received.

Mr. PALMER said that, before the question was put, he should like to ask whether it was a petition addressed to the House at all; it was more like a petition to the honourable member himself.

The SPEAKER said that the petition was addressed to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and commenced "Honourable Sir, and Gentlemen." He thought it was intended to be addressed to the Assembly.

Question put and passed.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. MORGAN (without notice) asked the Secretary for Public Lands,—Will he inform the House if the Government have agreed to the proposed exchange of land at Allora and East Prairie?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Mr. Garrick): In reply to the honourable member, I beg to say the Government have approved of the principle of the exchanges of the lands referred to, and the exchanges are in course of being carried out.

Mr. GROOM, without notice, asked the Secretary for Public Works, whether he was in a position to inform the House and the country if the Government have received any particulars of the railway accident on Monday last, on the line beyond Dalby; and if so, whether he would give those particulars to the House?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Mr. Miles) in replying, said that the only particulars he knew of the accident were those he had seen in the newspaper of that day. The accident took place on the third section of the Dalby and Roma line, which, being now in course of construction, was in the hands of the contractors. He might inform the honourable member that at the request of the contractors, and of several inhabitants in the western country, the Government had given the use of a railway carriage to carry passengers from Chinchilla

to Coolumbula, which was the point from which Cobb's coach started, and was a distance of seventeen miles over very bad road. The Government had nothing whatever to do with the portion of the line where the accident happened, as it was still in the hands of the contractors.

BILL PRO FORMA.

The PREMIER (Mr. Douglas) presented a Bill relating to Turnpikes, which was read a first time *pro forma*.

THE OPENING SPEECH.

The SPEAKER reported that the House had, in the earlier part of the day, attended the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber, where His Excellency delivered an Opening Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which, for greater accuracy, he had obtained a copy, and which he would now read to the House:—

"HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:—

"The important matters requiring attention at the present time have induced me to have recourse to your advice and assistance at an earlier period of the year than usual.

"I am glad to be able to inform you that the drought which, at the end of the year, prevailed throughout the coast districts, has not produced the disastrous consequences which at one time were anticipated. The losses in stock have, no doubt, been considerable; but agricultural and pastoral settlement has not been seriously checked. The fact that the proportion of the March rents not paid in due time does not exceed the usual average is a satisfactory proof that the energy, industry, and self-reliance of the Selectors have enabled them to overcome their temporary difficulties, and there is now no reason to entertain any apprehensions regarding their future welfare.

"I have lately had an opportunity of visiting some of the towns in the Central Districts, and while much pleased to observe the contented and prosperous condition of the people, it was especially gratifying to me to find that, as the Representative of Her Majesty the Queen, I met everywhere with a most cordial reception.

"At a time when, from the possibility of a European war, considerable attention has been attracted to the question of Local Defences, I am happy to know that the reorganisation of the Volunteer Forces has led to their being placed on a more effective footing. The services of Lieutenant-Colonel Scratchley have been obtained as an inspecting officer; and under

his advice measures are being actively taken, which it is believed will, in the event of the mother country being involved in war, render the more important points of our coasts secure from attack. An Artillery Staff Officer has been appointed; a Camp of Instruction has been formed; and other steps have been taken which are calculated to promote efficiency in the Volunteer body. You will be asked, however, to make provision for a small Permanent Staff, without which our Defence Forces cannot be made really effective.

"A commencement has been made of the railway enterprises sanctioned by Parliament during last session. The working surveys of all the lines have been pushed on with energy, and tenders have already been accepted for the construction of several sections; other tenders will shortly be called for, and my Ministers hope to have under construction within a few months the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line, as well as that from Townsville to Charters Towers. My Ministers have never wavered in their opinion, which I have previously announced to you, that in addition to the main trunk lines already authorised, branch lines should be made in the more thickly-populated agricultural districts, and they had hoped to be able this year to submit the plans and sections of some of these lines; but having regard to the unsettled state of Europe, and the uncertainties and risks which a European War would involve, they fear that they will not be justified during the present session in asking your sanction to the necessary loan for their construction. In the meantime, all necessary surveys will be pushed forward in order that no time may be lost when opportunity offers for the prosecution of these important works.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,

"The Estimates for the ensuing year have been carefully prepared, and will be laid before you at an early date. The Revenue returns are good, and every year shows a steady advance in the prosperity of this great territory.

"HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

"The increase of population and the rapid extension of settlement in various parts, both of the Southern and Northern Districts, have rendered it necessary that the present distribution of electoral power should be revised and amended. A Bill will be forthwith submitted to you for that purpose, in which you will also be invited to make provision for the periodical adjustment of Representation. In all British communities possessing parliamentary institu-

tions it is most essential that fair expression should be given to the wishes of the people by their Representatives in Parliament assembled. I feel assured that you will devote your prompt and most earnest consideration to this measure, and I trust that it may become law sufficiently early to enable the necessary steps for the compilation of the Electoral Rolls for the new districts to be taken at the usual period during the present year.

"A subject of scarcely less importance than the question of Representation is that of Local Self-Government. The time has undoubtedly arrived when some share of the work now devolving on the Central Government ought to be undertaken by the several Districts of the Colony, and a fair division of responsibility made between the Local and Central authorities. I have to bespeak your most careful attention to a Bill dealing with this subject, which will be laid before you at an early date.

"Bills will also be introduced, dealing with the following amongst other subjects:—The better regulation of the Civil Service; the amendment of the Laws relating to Public Health; making better provision for the care and education of Orphans and Deserted Children; the Regulation of Travelling Stock; an amendment of The Polynesian Labourers Act; the amendment of the Laws relating to the Resumption of Land for the construction of Roads and other Public Works; the prevention of accidents in Mines; and the repeal of the Gold Fields Act Amendment Act of last Session.

"You will also be invited to make temporary provision to enable deserving scholars from our Grammar Schools to proceed to Universities in the neighbouring Colonies or in Great Britain, until a University shall have been established here.

"I trust that these and all matters submitted to you will be dispassionately discussed, and that you may be guided to a wise decision upon all questions concerning the welfare of the people for whom it is your duty to legislate."

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO OPENING SPEECH.

Mr. PERSSE moved—

That a Select Committee be appointed to prepare an Address in reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor in opening this the fifth Session of the seventh Parliament. That such Committee consist of the following members, viz.:—Messrs. Douglas, Tyrel, Low, Macfarlane (Ipswich), and the Mover.

The Committee having retired, brought up the following address, which was read by the Clerk:—

“To His Excellency Sir ARTHUR EDWARD KENNEDY, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies.

“MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

“1. We, Her Majesty’s loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, 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 thank Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present Session.

“2. We shall not fail to give our earnest consideration and attention to the different measures which will be submitted to us; and we beg to assure Your Excellency that our best efforts will be made to promote and advance the general welfare of the community.”

Mr. PERSSE moved that the Address, as read, be adopted, and said that in doing so, he hoped the House would bear with him, as he was yet but a young and inexperienced member. Although he had consented to move the adoption of the Address, he wished it to be understood that he was in no way a blind follower of the Government. He entered the House as a thoroughly independent member, tied to no party, and as such was returned by his constituents, and he intended to advocate and support any views which he considered would be for the general welfare of the colony. Naturally, his first thoughts would be for the interests of the district he had the honour to represent; at the same time he should constantly have before him the welfare of the colony as a whole. The Speech delivered to-day by His Excellency the Governor had been, to his mind, a most gratifying one. The drought which had lately been experienced was one almost without parallel in the annals of Queensland, or any other of the Australian colonies. A short time ago the whole country seemed on the verge of ruin; but the payments which had been recently made into the Treasury by the agricultural portion of the population had shown that the calamity had not fallen so heavily on the people as was at first anticipated. This fact spoke volumes in favour of the colonists, and proved that however the people might have been temporarily embarrassed by the drought, they, and with them the colony, were once more

in a prosperous condition. Many had no doubt suffered considerably, but all, he believed, were now in a fair way of getting over that great trial, which, he trusted, would in a year or two be quite forgotten in a long lease of renewed prosperity. He was glad to find that there was no necessity for the Government to come to the relief of the smaller settlers, as it would have caused much trouble and anxiety. The cordial manner in which His Excellency the Governor had been received throughout his visit to the central parts of the colony was only what might have been expected from the loyalty which the Queen’s subjects in this colony feel towards Her Majesty’s representative. He believed that the welfare of the colony would be looked after in every possible way by the gentleman who now had the honour to represent the Queen in this colony. He was glad to find that attention was about to be paid to the defences of the colony, and that the Volunteer Force was to be placed on a more secure basis than had hitherto been the case. In conjunction with the other colonies, Sir William Jervois and Colonel Scratchley had visited Queensland, and reported on its defences. Up to the present time the Volunteers had never been supported as they ought to have been, and he trusted that a sound Government measure calculated to place them on a better footing, and to obtain a permanent and effective force, would be cordially supported by the House. Without a permanent staff the Force would never be made worthy of the name. Officers were required who had spent half their lifetime in the study of military tactics, and who were able to teach the Volunteers the approved methods of modern warfare; and he believed that if the House voted a sufficient sum to carry out the recommendations of Sir William Jervois and Colonel Scratchley, the money would be wisely expended. With regard to railways, he was disappointed and astonished, after the utterances of the late Minister for Works with regard to branch railways, that they should all have been knocked on the head—more especially the line from Ipswich to Fassifern. He considered that that line would be one of the best paying railways in the colony, and would be of greater advantage to the agricultural community than any other which would be proposed. Already some 500,000 acres had been alienated by the Crown to a very thriving class of agricultural settlers, who, if they only had greater facilities for getting their produce to market, would be able to increase their cultivation very considerably. At present they had so many difficulties to contend against in the shape of bad roads, that in some cases they could not possibly get their produce to market. A low-cost railway in that district, would,

he considered, be one of the best paying and most serviceable in the whole of Queensland. There were no engineering difficulties to contend against—no heavy bridges to be constructed—and there was more than sufficient land in the district still unalienated from the Crown to pay for it—land which, being chiefly heavy scrub, was not of the slightest use at the present time. It was satisfactory to learn that the revenue was steadily increasing yearly, but he trusted that while affairs in Europe were so unsettled, the Colonial Treasurer would keep a vigilant eye on the expenditure, and keep as much as possible within the mark. As to the Electoral Bill, as he was perfectly ignorant of the basis on which it was to be framed, he should refrain from saying anything about it: when it came before him, he should support it or not, as the case might be. He agreed that it was high time the Central Government should be relieved from much of their responsibility for works of a purely local nature. A change in the direction indicated would be advantageous to all concerned. With regard to the Civil Service Bill, it was a pity, he thought, that it had not been brought in long ago. Promotion in the service should go by merit, and not by favouritism as at present. There had been no Bill affecting the Civil Service since 1869 or thereabouts, and numbers of men had joined since that time who had no claim whatever on the Government. He trusted the measure would be carried through as speedily as possible. A measure to regulate the travelling of stock was of almost vital importance to the colony. It was a question in which he felt considerable interest, and about which he knew more than was the case with some of the other questions referred to in the Governor's Speech. He thought it monstrous that people who were not *bona fide* travellers should be allowed to travel stock constantly from place to place, devouring all the grass before them, leaving none for the stock of the actual lessee of the land so travelled over. Many instances of this kind had occurred, as was doubtless within the knowledge of many honourable members. He trusted the promised measure would be passed after due consideration, so that a stop might be put to the spoliation of grass caused by people who made it a business to travel stock from one end of the year to the other. He was not much acquainted with the Polynesian Labourers Act, but from the little he knew of it, he was of opinion that the best way to deal with it would be to couple it with the Chinese enactment of last year, which he noticed was to be repealed. Some alteration was certainly required with regard to the resumption of land for the construction of roads, and other public works. The way in which roads were at present made

was simply ruinous to the colony. If roads could be made through country thrown open to selection, men would know where they could take up land. Under the present system there were no facilities in that direction—any kind of a track was thought good enough, and the work had often to be finished at the cost of the settler. Some regulation was also required with respect to removing timber from Crown lands. The manner in which this was done at present was a very great hardship. A man might have half-a-dozen or a dozen good trees in his paddock, and the overseer of roads could come in and remove them without the slightest obstacle being placed in his way, often involving the destruction of fences as well. It was high time that property of this kind should be protected. Another necessary measure was a Bill to prevent accidents in mines. Miners coming here from Victoria and New South Wales expected protection from fire-damp, &c., and when they found that no such protection was afforded, they left and sought employment elsewhere, not wishing to risk their lives needlessly.

Mr. J. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said that, in seconding the adoption of the Address in Reply, he did so with a considerable amount of diffidence. It was usual for young members to be asked to perform this duty, and having consented to do so, he begged the indulgence of the House while he made a few remarks on His Excellency's Speech. It was very gratifying to observe that the drought had not had the tendency that was anticipated at the beginning of the year, and that its results had been less serious than people thought they would be at that period. He sincerely hoped that the present year would not entail such suffering on the people as its predecessor had done. With reference to the possibility of a European war, he thought it was the duty of the Government to use its best endeavours to strengthen its defences so as to reduce the danger of invasion to a minimum. Personally he was not much afraid of a foreign foe invading Queensland, but still prevention was better than cure, and the best policy was to be prepared for any emergency. Something more might certainly be done to encourage volunteering. There were too few stands of arms in the colony should any unforeseen trouble occur, and in a Bill brought in for re-organising the Volunteer Force something might be done towards arming others besides Volunteers. There were many men in the colony who did not desire to be sworn in as regular Volunteers, but who, if occasion required, would be quite willing, if provided with arms and ammunition, to stand forward in defence of their adopted country. They were informed in the Governor's Speech that tenders had been already

accepted for the construction of several sections of the railways sanctioned last year, and that other tenders would be shortly called for. He also noticed that it was not the intention of Government to proceed with the branch lines at present, but he hoped that at some future time they would carry out their intentions wherever it was seen that the population in the agricultural districts warranted such an expenditure. A Re-distribution Bill appeared to occupy a prominent position in the Speech, and honourable members would agree that such a Bill was necessary; and he thought that if they would sit down with a determination to make the Bill a good one and to do justice to all parts of the colony, they would succeed in doing a very good work; for while each honourable member would have his local prejudices to contend against, yet he thought the Parliament would be able to send such a Bill to the country as would give general satisfaction. The subject of Local Self-Government was the next point touched upon, and he looked upon that as a very important matter indeed; for he did not think that they would be able to continue in the same way as they were very much longer. The duties of the Minister for Works were increasing year by year, and it was almost impossible for him to be able to perform them with satisfaction to all concerned. But by adopting some such Bill as was proposed in the Speech of His Excellency, he believed it would not only relieve, in a material degree, the Ministers for Lands and Works, but also, if properly carried out, create a spirit of independence in the people of the districts, which he was afraid they were now fast losing. In the next paragraph mention was made of the Civil Service, and complaints had been made in reference to the manner of promotion, and he thought that, all things being equal, a plan should be adopted of promoting according to seniority of office. Of course there were exceptions even to that rule, and it could not always be carried out. Mention was made in the Speech of a Health Bill. That he looked upon as the most important Bill referred to in the Speech. The public health was, to his mind, one of the most important subjects that could be brought before that House. Certainly, a good deal had been done already in that direction, but a great deal more required to be done to improve the health of this city, and also of other towns of the colony. A knowledge of the laws of health was not possessed by us all as it ought to be; and he was, therefore, glad that in the Speech read to them attention had been called to the question, and they were promised a Public Health Bill. He only hoped that the Bill would be found such as would deal fully with the various matters required to be dealt

with, and as would tend to the peace and health and comfort of the community. Much had been done by the inhabitants of cities and towns observing the general laws of health; and a great deal might also be done in the same direction by municipalities—by enabling them to bring in an abundant supply of pure water into the townships, adopting a system of sanitary drainage, and other sanitary measures, and by promoting public baths as much as possible; and last, though not least, he thought the time had certainly arrived when the laws of health ought to become part of the education of the young people of the colony in the public schools. It was well known that a great deal of man's comfort and happiness depended on what he ate and drank; and if the young were taught the laws of health they would be able to avoid much of the evils that their fathers had suffered from. Other matters had been touched upon in the Speech which, however, he should not allude to; and with those few remarks, he would simply express the pleasure he felt in seconding the Address in Reply moved by the honourable member for Fassifern.

After a pause,

Mr. PALMER: Mr. Speaker, as none of the younger members of the House have anything to say on the Speech which has just been read to us, I feel it my duty as one of the old members to say a few words on the subject of this very extraordinary *Government Gazette*. Before doing so, I wish to inform you and the House that the position I have long held as leader of the Opposition I have now vacated. I had many reasons for doing so, which are quite satisfactory to my own mind; but I think it is only necessary that I should mention one reason to the House. I have long felt that the leader of an Opposition ought to be not only willing to take office if required to do so, but should be anxious to take office; but the gentlemen who have done me the honour of accepting me as their leader, know that I have been most unwilling at all times to accept office: in fact, that I have made up my mind not to do so. That is, I think, a very good and sufficient reason why I should have voluntarily resigned any claims which I may have had to remain at their head. I have to thank them very cordially for their support to me in the past, and their kind wishes expressed to me to-day, and previously, that I should continue to lead them. But I have felt that it was better for the country and for them that I should fall into the ranks; but I shall continue to be a very ardent opponent of the present Ministry. The honourable gentleman who has succeeded me is the honourable member for Maranoa, Mr. McIlwraith; and the loyal support that I shall give to him as leader of the

Opposition shall be faithfully and cheerfully rendered. I know the position of leader of the Opposition is not a bed of roses. He has responsibilities and burdens cast upon his shoulders such as the Premier of any Administration has, but without receiving any reward for it or having any reward to bestow. He must be actuated by an intense desire for what he believes to be the good of the country; and the Opposition must be prepared to restrain their own wishes and motives in a great many respects, if they mean to carry on their Opposition in the way in which it should be carried on. I have never had any reasons to complain of the way in which the Opposition have supported me. I may have thought that it might have been better if they had not run riot sometimes, and had made fewer speeches; but every allowance must be made for honourable members of the House when they were taunted by the Government as to their motives. I say, then, that I have to thank honourable members on this side for the support I have received from them. Coming now to the Speech which has been delivered to us, there are some things in it that I think I ought to say something about. What the first paragraph was put in for I cannot imagine.

"The important matters requiring attention at the present time have induced me to have recourse to your advice and assistance at an earlier period of the year than usual."

Is that a fact? For the last four months we have been trembling on the verge of war; but notwithstanding all that has been said about Volunteers and local defences, the Government have done literally nothing to put the colony in a position to meet any enemy that might attack her. They have not even done what they might have done on the vote of last year. What had they done? Why, we had not enough powder even to fire a salute, for certainly I did not hear a salute fired to the Governor to-day. I remember another occasion when the same thing occurred immediately before the downfall of a Ministry; and I hope that what happened to-day will be the forerunner of a similar occurrence. Now, I say it was the duty of the Government, in the state of affairs which we have heard of as existing in Europe for months past, when war might have been declared any day,—it was the duty of the Government to have called Parliament together three or four months ago, and asked for further supplies; and had they done so, I have no doubt that the same feeling which actuated the British Parliament in voting six millions of money without one word of objection when they knew the state of affairs, would have actuated us here, and that the Government would have been backed up in any step they took for the defence of the colony. In the

Supplementary Estimates, No. 2 of last session, I find that a sum of £3,000 was voted for field-guns, drill-sheds, and ammunition. But where are they? They might have been here long ago. We do not want those tin-kettle things that we saw in the streets the other day. Where are the 500 rifles, the ammunition, and the drill-sheds? There is not even a gun received, I believe. £4,500 was voted last October for supplying arms and magazines, but no provision had been made for putting them up. Is that making provision for the local defence of the colony? Is that promoting the Volunteer movement? The Speech referred to the engagement of the services of Colonel Scratchley, and stated that "under his advice measures are being actively taken, which it is believed will, in the event of the mother country being involved in war, render the more important points of our coast secure from attack." I saw the Volunteer encampment at Sandgate last week, and as the beginning of an end, it deserved all credit. But if the Government had done their duty, instead of having 700 men there almost without arms and little ammunition, we should have had three or four times that number. Yet this is what the Government call the defence of the coast—a flying army of 700 men to defend the whole coast of Queensland! What has been done for the North? Have the Government given them a rifle or a drill-shed? Have they done anything at all for the North? We know they have done nothing. Yet the first part of this important Speech was in these words: "The important matters requiring attention at the present time have induced me to have recourse to your advice and assistance at an earlier period of the year than usual." It is not an earlier period of the year; though it was earlier than the great Liberal Government have on previous occasions called us together. But you will find that statement is not a fact; it is a subterfuge, it is actually not true. I have referred to the list of the roll of the House, and I find that in 1868 Parliament met on the 17th November; in 1870, on 26th of April, secondly on the 5th of July, and on the 15th of November; in 1871, on 12th April, and 12th November, and in 1872 it met on the 15th April; and in 1874 on the 6th January. Yet this was calling the House together for advice earlier than usual. Now there never was a greater occasion for Government to have asked Parliament to meet sooner than there was at the present time, when we do not know what to-morrow's telegram might bring with respect to the state of European affairs. Yet what has Government done? How have they promoted in any way the efficiency of the Volunteer force? After the Volunteers had been neglected for years they got a vote last

session; but we have seen no results from that vote, not even a paltry drill-shed. I do not know what the second paragraph in the Speech is intended for. I only wish I could believe what it contains. But I am sorry to tell you that it is not true, except in a very trifling degree. I say it in extreme sorrow that the agricultural prospects are very much worse than they were last winter; and if the Government does not know this, the Secretary for Lands ought to know it; he ought to know that the agricultural and pastoral interests have been very seriously checked. I do not blame the Government for it, they cannot help the weather; but it is not true to say that such a check has not taken place. The Speech says:—

“The fact that the proportion of the March rents not paid in due time does not exceed the usual average is a satisfactory proof that the energy, industry, and self-reliance of the selectors have enabled them to overcome their temporary difficulties, and there is now no reason to entertain any apprehensions regarding their future welfare.”

No doubt they have paid up well, but I should like to know how much difficulty they experienced in getting the money to pay those rents. It is greatly to their credit that they have paid, but they themselves can alone know the sacrifice they had to make to secure enough money to secure the land. The second paragraph therefore is, I consider, uncalled for, and it is not true. I am not going further into this Speech. I shall leave it to other gentlemen on this side of the House to say what they consider it, and the propriety of its introduction at the present time. I say the Government have not done their duty for the defence of the colony in any one way: they have peddled at it, nothing more than peddled at it. They have not been able to grasp the difficulty. They could have had a great deal more money last session if they had foreseen the successes of Russia and the temporising policy that has been going on between Great Britain and the other powers, and if the Government had called the House together for only two days, supplies would have been voted, which would have had the effect of putting the colony in a thorough and perfect state of defence. What has been done, however, has been done by the Volunteers themselves; it was done by their own pluck, energy, and endurance, and at the sacrifice of their day's pay. But I am not going to move an amendment on this miserable Address, and I should recommend my honourable friend not to do so. I should like to have a proper Speech to move an amendment upon; for I have criticised many Governors' Speeches in my time, but none so miserable as this one. The best thing in it is the promised Bill to repeal the Gold-fields Act. It is the oasis in the desert.

How often did we tell them from this side of the House that they would have to do this? However, I will not detain the House longer, but will leave it to the House to deal with.

Mr. McILWRAITH: Mr. Speaker, I did not rise earlier, because I thought the House was entitled to receive some statement in reply to the speech of the late leader of the Opposition, for I am satisfied that some such statement should be made. In reference to the announcement made by the late leader of the Opposition, I have to say that I have taken the responsibility alluded to with very considerable regret. But the honourable gentleman, Mr. Palmer, had made up his mind not to accept office, and had therefore retired. In the circumstance of his resignation, and my acceptance of the leadership of the Opposition, I have simply to assure the House that I will do all I can to facilitate the business of the House. Strong comments will no doubt have to be made, but so long as criticism does not come down to obstruction, the fullest discussion will be sought for by me in this Chamber. I hope, therefore, that the Government in bringing forward their business, will give credit to the Opposition, that it is their object to facilitate legislation, and to get the work of the session through as speedily as possible, consistent with full and fair discussion. I intend now to refer more immediately to the subject under consideration. I am glad to see new blood coming into the House relieved from the responsibilities due to old parties. Party feelings and grudges have far too much to do with the formation of our political parties. I am, therefore, always glad to see new blood entering the House, and know its worth, especially when it is not trammelled by responsibilities to old parties. The two new members who have moved and seconded the adoption of the Address in Reply hold moderate views, I am glad to see. They could not well do otherwise seeing how moderate are the measures which are put before us in the Opening Speech. I account for the meagre character of the Speech a great deal by this being the last session of the existing Parliament, and that the country does not expect much from us this session. The Government, however, are bound to do all they can to pass necessary legislation. I do not think the Speech which has just been read gives us much cause for congratulation upon the position to which the party that has been in power for the last four years has brought us. I will pass over the first four items of the Speech; there is only one of considerable importance, and that has been dealt with most efficiently by the honourable member for Port Curtis. I will, therefore, deal first with the one on the second page, describing what

has been done and what will be done in the matter of railway progress. Last year, when the Government announced their railway projects, they not only told us that they had a system which would be the means of finding the capital without the necessity of borrowing, but, in addition, they promised us a number of branch lines, without specifying the principle on which they were to be made. What progress do we see has been made? So far as I can see from the returns published in the *Gazette*, we will expend of borrowed money on the different public works of the colony something like £1,000,000 per annum. We authorised last year £1,300,000; and this money, in addition to what the Treasurer has on hand, will be available to carry on public works. The Government tell us that they do not mean, for certain reasons, to ask for a Loan Bill this year. I understand that it is not their policy to propose any fresh lines, and I take the loose wording of the paragraph to be simply a loop-hole which they leave open for themselves to propose a fresh loan or not. They have got themselves into a perfect muddle. At the present rate of expenditure they will have to stop within eighteen months; they may possibly be able to carry on for two years, but I do not think they will be able to keep on for more than eighteen months; they have not been authorised to borrow more than was sufficient for that time at the present rate of expenditure. I do not think the colony should be put to such straits. The Government, if they believed in their own policy, had good reasons last year for telling the House that they would not be a party to the introduction of a fresh Loan Bill this session, because the system of constructing the public works of the colony was to get money from another source. The result has completely falsified the Government's system. They have not been able to raise the money, and they find they must, in order to carry on these public works, go back to the old system, but they will not do so this year in order not to stultify themselves. They are reaping the results of their own legislation. They went into the construction of a large number of railways, which I say advisedly the House, as a body, never approved of. The House passed them because they promised that the funds for their construction should come from the particular districts in which they were to be built. They did not, under these circumstances, give any great consideration as to whether they were the best lines to be constructed, and what their cost would be. The Government now see that these lines are going to cost a great deal more than they anticipated, or what the House was, at all events, assured they would cost. We were first assured that

they were to be made for £3,000, and then the estimate was raised to £5,000. We see, however, that the first and easiest portion of the Maryborough and Gympie Railway has been let for £4,300 per mile, and this price will leave out a large number of items which will cost quite as much. I have not the slightest doubt in my mind, that when the line is completed we may consider ourselves lucky if we get it at £10,000 per mile. Notwithstanding all our experience, the construction of this line is being carried out under the same system as the Brisbane and Ipswich Railway. I charge the Government with not having shown sufficient attention to the experience of the past; if they had looked to the other colonies, they would have seen they were on the wrong track. The first section of the Maryborough and Gympie railway goes over level, easy country, and the only thing making it a little expensive is one bridge. Within one week of this work being let, a contract was entered into in Victoria for a line with a gauge of five feet three inches, which gauge involves additional expense, being larger than in this colony; the class of work is also necessarily stronger than here as a rule. The contracts were for eighty-six miles, and included one bridge 1,830 feet long, which, I believe, ought to be as expensive as the Maryborough and Gympie bridge; and the amount, including everything excepting rolling-stock and station, was £2,130 per mile. In the face of this experience the Government have entered on the same sort of system as before. What we require is cheap lines having some reference to the work required to be done by it, but the Government instead of recognising this, have handed this Maryborough and Gympie railway over to the engineers in the same way as the Brisbane and Ipswich line, and allowed them to do as they like. It does not require an engineer to be perfectly satisfied that a great advance has been made in cheap railway building all over the world, and that it is possible to do what you, Mr. Speaker, once proposed with regard to the Maryborough and Gympie line, viz., to build lines for £2,000 per mile. I believe for this sum a railway quite capable of carrying the traffic between Maryborough and Gympie and of any reasonable extension could have been made, but the Ministry have not given any consideration to the matter, and I look upon it as hopeless to expect any great advance, because the Government are bound from want of funds to be pulled up within eighteen months. The colony will then have to suffer all the disadvantages and evils arising from the stoppage of large public works. I can quite understand why the Government should be so disinclined to take into consideration the

subject of branch lines. We all believe in public works, but we want to see some practical way of obtaining them. I cannot help blaming the Treasurer also for the position in which he has landed us. He impressed upon us last year the necessity of losing no time in passing the Railway Bill in order that the colony might at once go into the home market; but, as a matter of fact, no money has yet been borrowed. He must be well aware that it would have been no loss to the Government to have borrowed at 4 per cent. He has not shown, with regard to this matter, that business energy which we expected from him. There is another matter to which I must allude. Last year it was given so much prominence to that it must be considered part of their policy. The Colonial Secretary, now Minister for Works, preached economy so frequently that we have looked with great patience for it in his administration. If he has shown any economy it could not have been very great, otherwise I should have been able to discover it. We have heard that he told the Gympie people that his department would be worked with two-thirds its present staff; but he has not reduced his staff. He got a large amount of money voted for his public works last year, but I am sorry to say that the expense of working our railways has largely increased, notwithstanding the extensions which have been made, and which ought to have the effect of decreasing the average working expenses. One of the chief reasons for extensions is, that the expense of working the main lines will be lessened; but we find here, that the average cost increases with the extension. The remarks made by the Minister for Works at Gympie must, I consider, do a great deal of harm to the Civil Service, unless he attempts a cure of the evil which he referred to. It spoils the service to have a Minister speaking against it, and not attempting to reform. A Minister ought to treat the Civil Servants right, but ought not to say that he could do with one-third less in his department, unless prepared with some measure of reform.

Mr. PERKINS: It is correct too.

Mr. McILWRAITH: I think a great deal requires to be said in the action of the Premier on the Kanaka question. He commenced the session last year with a proclamation which legal men in this House considered to be illegal. Whether it was really illegal or not does not, however, affect my argument. The Government brought in a Bill to enact the same thing as the proclamation; and I take it, this shows that in their opinion they had been following an illegal course. The Bill was in charge of the Minister for Works, but I am sure there was no member in the House, whatever his opinions on the Kanaka question were, who was not

thoroughly dissatisfied with the treatment the Bill received from the Government. They were in a position to carry out their policy—they had the voting power, and could have carried the measure as drafted or with amendments; but they shirked to the last. It was far too good a matter to come to a fair conclusion upon last session—it was too rich a plum to be thus passed out of their hands. We next find them dealing with the matter by proclamation; they have strained the Customs, Navigation, and Polynesian Acts, to carry out the same end; but before they could see the result of their proclamations, they ceased to take action, or took action by repealing them. On a question so closely affecting the interests of not only a section of the community, but the whole country more or less, Parliament ought to have been consulted in any attempted settlement. If the Government believed in the measure of last session, it was their duty to have carried it, and see how they stood afterwards with the country; but having failed to do so, I say it was wrong to take any action against the opinion of a party in the House or outside of the House, in the meantime, and if they took any action at all, they ought to have been prepared to stand by it. I could have admired their stability in sticking to it, notwithstanding that they had been wrong; but when we find that one action was founded on a racy interesting narrative, written by a Government agent on board a recruiting vessel, and that another was taken on a letter written by the Bishop of Melanesia, and that the Government retreated from their position afterwards, the colony is reduced to a very poor position. We are surely not to be subjected to the sentimental delusions of men who have very little interest in the colony. I say it showed weakness on the part of the Premier to take action on a letter from the Bishop of Melanesia, who is a young man having very little experience, and inclined from the nature of his calling to take a far too sentimental view of the matter. The Premier has a plain duty to perform to the sugar industry as well as every other. We may all differ about the introduction of Polynesians, but we are all agreed, I take it, that the fairest play should be given to the men who have embarked their money in sugar-growing. I am satisfied that the action taken by the Government will destroy the Northern districts. It would be a manlier course to repeal the Kanaka Act altogether than to take such steps as the Government have during the recess. If the Act were repealed the planters would be ruined, it is true, but they will have life and time left to embark in something else; but this nagging, harassing, and worrying system will kill them also, and will leave them fit for nothing else. I

am satisfied that capital has been forced out of this industry. If I were a planter I would say, "Take my Kanakas at once, and let me see whether I am going to be ruined immediately," rather than submit to this constant war upon my interests. There is another question on which some information from both the Attorney-General and the Minister for Lands is desirable. Honourable members who are acquainted with the legal side of the question are of opinion that attention should be called to the position we are occupying with regard to the land question. At the time when the Attorney-General was not a member of the Government, but sat on the cross benches, he expressed very strong opinions that the position of certain selectors should be dealt with, as they were suffering great harm from remaining in a state of suspense as to what was their legal position. It was felt by the whole House that it was right that such a course should be followed. It was never understood that the intention was to initiate a long series of expensive lawsuits that would have no definite results. The Attorney-General, however, undertook the solution of the question by means of law-suits; he proposed to eject the selectors, and to frame land-laws on the information which might be gained in the course of the lawsuits. That project has been an entire failure; and I should like to know how much money it has cost, without taking into consideration the discredit which has been brought upon our administration of the land-laws in the opinion of other colonies. The business men in other colonies now look upon it as hopeless to get fairness in the administration of our land-laws. If not unjust, the procedure is most harassing. The Government, however, did not wait for their land policy to be developed according to the original theory of the Attorney-General, which was to get all the information with regard to the case; but they brought in a Land Bill—before the cases had actually gone home. Any lawyer could have known that those lawsuits were not going to be settled in a day. I say that the Attorney-General is to blame for all the expense incurred in bringing those cases forward. He was expected to give good advice to the Government as to the position of the selectors, and should have suggested a lenient way of dealing with the matter. But he took the harshest possible method; and in order to show that his opinions of the case were right, he has put the country to an immense amount of expense, and, after all, we find that it was all wrong. What has the country gained by it? A hundred thousand acres of land recovered was our promised reward, but the Attorney-General cannot show us he will recover an acre. Does he intend to enter upon any more suits? An

article of two columns in length recently appeared in one of the papers giving the Attorney-General's opinions on the land question. Had he given that consideration to the question four years ago, the country might have been saved an immense amount of money, and the colony a great deal of discredit. He ought to have the sense to see that the matter must be dealt with as a political question, and not entirely from a legal point of view. Had the results of the lawsuits been otherwise, those selectors, I maintain, could not have been ejected. I hope that some honourable member will ask what those lawsuits have cost the country, and that full returns will be moved for. The Attorney-General will, of course, endeavour to clear himself, and put the matter in as strong a light as he can; but it is unfortunate for him that his private interest should be somewhat connected with his public policy. However, I do not dwell upon that, but I take up the ground that, as legal adviser to the Crown, he made a great mistake in regarding the question as a legal rather than a political one, and thereby involved the colony in very considerable expense, and lowered its reputation in the estimation of men who might be inclined to invest money in our public lands. I do not make the charge that the Attorney-General has privately benefited by it; at the same time it would be interesting to know how much the lawyers have made out of it. I am now coming to the most important matter promised this session. From the Press—the acknowledged Government organs—it seems to be a matter settled by the Ministry that the main question will be the Redistribution Bill; and I am sorry that the way in which the paragraph referring to it is worded does not give very much promise that it is to be the measure which has been asked for in the Press of the colony. I fully concur in the opinion expressed against the representation of the colony at the present time in the House. But the paragraph referring to the proposed Bill does not carry out that opinion.

"The increase of population and the rapid extension of settlement in various parts, both of the Southern and Northern districts, have rendered it necessary that the present distribution of electoral power should be revised and amended."

What we have been suffering from—as has been stated by honourable members again and again—is the single electorate system, and the Government should have shown in their Speech some desire to deal with that. In my own opinion a mere increase of the number of members of the House will only result in greater expense, as long as the single electorate system is allowed to remain. Under the present electoral system the bond of union by which the Government hold their supporters together is

the amount of money which each district is able to get from the Government. What becomes, under that system, of legislation for the colony at large? If representatives are only returned for the sake of the particular districts returning them, what is to become of the general interests of the colony? This great and crying evil is such, that if it continue, I do not think a respectable independent man will be able to get a seat in the House at all. I should find it a very great trouble to get a seat in the House on those terms, and since the action taken by the Government last year in pandering to the claims of members for their localities on both sides of the House, I have been brought to book by my constituents for not having attended to their local wants. I have given a great deal of time during the last four years to the general wants of the colony, and I feel I certainly am not appreciated—if a member is estimated by the amount of money he may get for his district. I am pointing to an evil which is acknowledged to exist, and its remedy should have been the basis of the Redistribution Bill; even if the Government did nothing else, I believe that would be a step in the right direction. If the Government intend to make the question a party fight between the North and South, or between the West and coast districts, they will be simply wasting the time of the session and bringing no good to the colony at all. We ought to put our heads together and try to do something to delocalize the position of a member. Try and make them members of districts, and then we shall get a better class of men whether they are returned by men, women, and children, or only by adult males. We want to get members who will represent the colony as a whole, and we cannot get them under the single electorate system. The Government, however, have not given much hope of coming to any fair settlement of the question this year. The honourable member for Fassifern seemed to consider that the Government intended to do something in the matter of Local Government, but if he reads back through the last four Governors' Speeches, he will find that a similar mention has been made in each. I at one time gave a great deal of study to that question, and did much work towards bringing in a measure; but, though strong promises have been made from time to time, not a single thing has been done towards carrying it. A step will be made in advance if the Government will promptly bring in a Bill, even if they only carry it as far as a second reading. Perhaps if the Government were to attempt it, it might be too much for them, and break their back, but I believe that were such a measure as has been passed in Victoria and New South Wales introduced, it would

get as much support from this side of the House as from the Ministerial. I have now, I think, directed the attention of the House to the various subjects suggested by the Address. Our most serious position is the demoralising administration of the Premier with regard to the Kanaka question, and our dangerous position with regard to the public works policy of the Government. I am satisfied that if immediate attention is not given to the matter, and the time provided for the construction of public works extended beyond the period of eighteen months, the colony will come to a bad state of affairs before many years are passed. We are now committed to certain public works, and I should like to see the men who initiated the policy carry it out to its legitimate conclusion. The Government will have assistance from this side of the House to do what is right in carrying out those works; but the consequences of their policy must always rest with themselves.

The PREMIER: It was not from any want of respect to the honourable member for Port Curtis that I did not follow immediately after he had addressed the House. The honourable member himself so plainly intimated that the honourable member for Maranoa was now the recognised leader of the Opposition, that I felt bound to follow the usual practice and wait to hear what remarks that gentleman might have to make in reply to the Speech of the Governor. I take this opportunity of expressing my own regret—and I think I may take upon myself to add the regret of the honourable members who support the Government—on being informed that the honourable member for Port Curtis has, for the present at any rate, resigned his position as leader of the Opposition. I have always admired his sterling qualities, and although he does not probably expect to receive compliments from me, I hope he will allow me to express, on my own part, and on behalf of many who sit behind me, our high estimate of the manner in which he has conducted the business of the House, so far as it was connected with his position of leader of the Opposition. I have had some bouts with the honourable gentleman of a kind that were sometimes perhaps a little tintured with our ardent natures—for I believe I possess nearly as ardent a nature as that of the honourable gentleman himself. With those few exceptions, I have always entertained a deep respect for the honourable gentleman, and I regret to hear that he is about, for a time, to resign the position which he has filled so long. I must also congratulate the honourable members on the other side in having elected—though I believe there is a certain amount of natural selection involved in the choice of a leader, whether of the Ministry or Opposition—the honourable member for Maranoa, who

has always shown a consideration for honourable gentlemen on this side of the House which has merited our respect, and I am sure that now he is in a more prominent position, he is likely to receive the attention he deserves. He is a close reasoner, and though unfortunately I do not always agree with him, his remarks are always worthy of serious consideration. As I have on previous occasions willingly admitted, the Ministry for the time being must be, and ought to be, subject to free criticism, in order that both its merits and faults may be brought out. The sort of criticism which is fair and aboveboard is always acceptable, and I hope to hear from the honourable member on every occasion when his assistance will conduce to the good conduct of the House, and in bringing out the real points of difference in matters of policy. In answering the remarks of the honourable members for Port Curtis and Maranoa, I will take their remarks as they occur. In the first place, the honourable member for Port Curtis objected to the late period at which the House had been called together. On other occasions, he says, the House met in November and January; but I have never understood that it was the desire of the House to meet at that time if it could be avoided. Certainly there had been no circumstance transpiring during the interval of the recess to lead the Government to suppose that the present time was an inconvenient one. Last session much time was spent in the discussion of various questions, and it was necessary that we and honourable members generally should have a certain interval of rest. It was therefore not considered desirable to meet at an earlier date than that fixed. The Government were most anxious, in the first place, that the Governor should visit the Northern Ports, and it would have been as inconvenient for him to do so in the summer as it would for honourable members to meet in that season. Considering this and the Easter holidays, I think we are justified in the time chosen. With regard to the criticism in which the honourable member for Port Curtis indulged, as to the Volunteer movement, I may say that all the more important steps have been taken that we were justified in taking. I admit at once that there is a great deal to be done; but as Parliament did not see fit to authorise the appointment of a permanent officer to take the charge and responsibility and to give advice, the Government were involved in some serious difficulties. They have at last, with some hesitation, appointed a permanent military officer. They also succeeded in obtaining the services of Colonel Scratchley, and after some difficulty they had come to an arrangement by which it was agreed that

the expenses in connection with his employment should be borne by the several Australian colonies. All the advice that has been given by that gentleman has been acted upon, and everything he has recommended is now in course of being carried out. The field battery is now being provided, and the small arms and ammunition are being shipped. As the authority was only given last October, there has been no such delay as was referred to by the honourable member for Port Curtis. The Volunteers have been thoroughly reorganised, though a great deal of credit for that must be given to the Volunteer officers themselves. The honourable member is very well aware that up to the present time there has been considerable difficulty in getting the necessary authority from Parliament. Everything possible has not yet been done, but a great deal has been done to place the Force in a more effective condition. During the last few months the public mind has been much agitated by the conflicting nature of telegrams received from Europe. There is, however, some consolation in knowing that whatever should occur, we may at any rate presume that the great power, of which we are a part, is mistress of the seas and highways of the ocean, and, therefore, we need not fear any possible Russian invasion. At the present time there is not the slightest chance of an invasion by Russia, great as that power may be. The Government have at any rate done more than any previous Government for the Volunteers, and the honourable member has therefore no right to impute to us discouragement of the Volunteers.

Mr. PALMER: As far as money goes.

The PREMIER: Well, we shall be very happy to have the honourable member's assistance in providing for the Defence Force. For myself, I must deprecate the idea of putting arms into the hands of an indefinite number of men, without subjecting them to some kind of rule. Something has been done in the way of rifle ranges, several of which will be ready for use in a short time, in consequence of a vote I received while Minister for Lands, but it has taken some time to effect the necessary changes in the Victoria Park. Tenders for several armouries have been called, and they will be shortly erected in Brisbane, Maryborough, and Rockhampton; and I am prepared to make the necessary provision for supplying them to all towns where any body of Volunteers exists. I hope before long a more suitable place will be provided in each town for the storing of arms. We are prepared to discuss this question as soon as honourable members are prepared to do so. The honourable member for Port Curtis, in criticising the paragraph referring to the drought, says that we need not plume ourselves on the fact that the difficulties of the past have, to some

extent, disappeared. He is of opinion that the present state of the country justified the anticipations indulged in a few months ago. He does not pretend to say that the condition of the country with regard to grass and water is now what it was a few months ago. The season is not a very promising one even now, but we have had rain, and there is now a good supply of grass and water everywhere.

Mr. GROOM: There is no grass or water on some portions of the Darling Downs.

The PREMIER: There may be some places where there is no grass or water, but that is no ground for an impeachment of the Ministry. We may therefore congratulate the members of the Assembly on the fact that the grave fears that were occasioned at one time by the drought, have been dispelled. I cannot say the season is very favourable at present, but it is not so bad as was anticipated. I shall not detain the House at any length in replying to the observations of the honourable member for Maranoa in reference to the railway policy of the Government, as indicated in the Speech, and as also indicated by the previous action of the Government. I shall not attempt to vindicate the position of my honourable friend the Treasurer in that matter. I am quite sure that he will be able to give a good account of himself; and, in fact, the whole question is one of very great importance which will have to be debated at length in connection with the finances of the country. I do not propose, therefore, to refer to it further at the present time except, perhaps, to say that we have never hesitated to assert our perfect right and perfect liberty to ask for any further loans, if such should be found necessary, retaining to ourselves the discretion of deciding when and in what manner it would be desirable to ask for such authority. The honourable gentleman made a point of reference, also, to the action I have taken in regard to the Kanaka question, and I have no doubt that that subject will also be fully debated. I propose to introduce a Bill amending the present Act in some important particulars. I differ from the honourable gentleman as to the interpretation he has put upon my action, as may be expected. I do not, for instance, consider that I have been guided in my action by the sentimental delusions of anyone. I believe that this is a very real and a very important item in our politics at the present time, nearly connected with a question of the very highest moment in dealing with this subordinate race. I shall not, however, now allude to it further than to say that I entirely repudiate any idea of being governed by any sentimental delusion in connection with it. There are some real and very startling facts which I may have to call the attention of the House

to in connection with it. I cannot agree with the honourable gentleman when he referred to the illegal proclamation which he said had been issued since last session. That proclamation, or notice, or whatever he may be pleased to call it, was simply a notification of a policy which the Government had adopted, namely, the determination we had arrived at to limit the operation of Polynesian immigration as far as possible, and to confine that class of labour to those objects which the original passers of the Act had in view, namely, to promote semi-tropical agriculture. I think we are to be congratulated in so far that we have succeeded in arresting to some extent the inroad of those people, who are coming here not only, as I believe, to our detriment, but to their own serious detriment. The mortality amongst the Polynesians is something startling; and this is not only a fact as regards the existing state of affairs, but applies to the whole time during which they have lived amongst us. It has been said that I issued notifications and then withdrew them. The notifications have been modified, but they have not been withdrawn. The sentimental delusion to which the honourable member referred was simply a statement of fact that these islanders in many cases were actually bought and sold. I do not believe it is a sentimental delusion, and any action I have taken in that respect has not been withdrawn, and will not be withdrawn as long as I am in office, so determined am I to prevent, as far as possible, anything which appears to bear an approach to actual barter and sale in connection with those agreements, such as I believe has in the past to some extent prevailed. With regard to the prohibition in reference to arms, the Navigation Act deals with that. It is true the original notification has been modified and the export of arms under those conditions is placed under proper restriction. These natives should not be permitted to return to their islands with dangerous weapons in their possession; and when I speak of dangerous arms I refer to arms of precision, such as Snider rifles and supplies of ball cartridge, which were going down to the islands in considerable quantities. Was there any sentimental delusion there? They are real facts, and there is no more real fact we have to deal with at the present time than this Polynesian question, for I believe the mortality now is greater than has taken place under any similar form of slavery, for a form of slavery it is; and such being the case, whatever may be the interests that may be involved, I say it is better for us to look the matter plainly in the face and deal with it as it should be dealt with. And whatever charges of vacillation may be brought against me, it is vacillation which has arisen from the real

difficulty of dealing with this question in the absence of the legislation which it requires. I was also surprised and grieved to hear the honourable gentleman, who has a real capacity for understanding the business characteristics of our administration—in the prominent position which he holds, announcing, as he did, in connection with our land administration, that we had so startled people in the neighbouring colonies by our action that they had no expectation of getting justice from our Land Office. I wish to give that statement a direct and confident denial. I say that, so far as I know—and I have had considerable opportunity lately of being acquainted with the working of the Land Office—all persons having business there have received a fair hearing and equal justice; their claims have been met so far as they could be met with justice to the public. They have not been met in the manner represented by the honourable gentleman, and I think it very undesirable that any such statement should be allowed to go to the public with the authority which any statements coming from the honourable gentleman ought to carry with them. Then with regard to his criticism on the measure for the representation of the people, which, as we have admitted, is the principal measure of the session, in connection with the Local Government Bill, he seems to have jumped at the conclusion that we are going to do certain things because he has been so informed by the Government organs. But I am not aware that the Government at the present time possess any organ of the Press. The Press, so far as I am aware, is perfectly free to express their own opinion, and they do express it uninfluenced by any pressure brought to bear upon them by the Government. I am proud to say this, and in vindication of the Press it is only right that I should say it. Then, the honourable gentleman jumped to the conclusion that the measure which the Press had indicated is the measure which we are going to produce. I do not know how he arrives at that conclusion, for I am not aware that he has yet seen the measure which he has characterised as insufficient. It may possibly be insufficient from his point of view; but at any rate, there is an approach in it to doing away with the single electorate system to which he takes such very decided objection. And he must remember that if not he himself, at any rate many of those with whom he is now acting, were the strongest advocates and exponents of the single electorate system. The honourable member for Port Curtis brought in that measure and carried it into law, and he was ably supported by, amongst others, Mr. Ramsay, who pinned his faith to that particular feature of the Bill, which he characterised as one that in his mind recommended it to the considera-

tion of the Legislature. He must remember, at any rate, that the measure has been advocated by honourable members opposite, and I do not think he can expect us to change at one jump from the single electorate system to the enlarged system of bunching to which he refers. We will, however, attempt to give effect to the change, which we consider to be desirable, and we propose to provide for a certain number of double electorates. We are not justified at the present time in going farther than that. I cannot agree with the honourable gentleman in the complaint he makes that the excessive localism and requirements which constituents entail upon their members are to be traced entirely to this measure. There are other reasons, I think. There is the absence of that wholesome system of Local Self-Government which should have prevailed some time ago, which may account for the pressure which is brought to bear upon individual members in order to secure whatever is required in their several districts. In the absence of that, the only recourse they have is to the Central Government, and it is a very objectionable recourse I admit. I was glad to hear the honourable gentleman repudiate the pressure which had been brought upon him, for I am sure his constituents would measure his merits very insufficiently if they regarded them in the light of the amount of money he secured for expenditure in their district. I hope the honourable gentleman will admit, when he comes to consider the Bill, that if it is not what he would look upon as a radical reform of the system to which he takes such a decided objection, it is at any rate a modification of the present system, and a step in the right direction. I am obliged to the honourable gentleman for the moderate manner in which he has criticised the Speech, and I have to thank the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply for the manner in which they performed their duty. With regard to the honourable member for Fassifern, I am quite aware that he was elected as an independent member, and I am very much obliged to him for having come forward and moved the Address. It is quite consistent with that position—and I hope he will consider it so—that he should give independent criticism on all measures that may come under his notice. I do not wish it to be supposed that any members sitting on this side of the House are in any way abject followers of the Government. The sooner they declare their independence of the Government the better, and if they do not feel confidence in us, the sooner they intimate it the better we should be pleased. We have no desire to retain office against the will of those to whom we look for support.

Mr. PETTIGREW should, notwithstanding the remarks of the Premier with reference to the independence of members on that side of the House, which he considered quite unnecessary, make a few remarks. As there was to be no division, they might as well pass the evening in a sort of literary entertainment for the edification of the Ministry, and perhaps of the colony, for it was by fair and honest criticism that they arrived at right and proper conclusions. He had not the slightest intention of saying anything about the Local Defences, because it was a question he understood nothing at all about. But he wished to direct attention to the clause in the Governor's Speech, which said:—

“The increase of population and the rapid extension of settlement in various parts, both of the Southern and Northern Districts, have rendered it necessary that the present distribution of electoral power should be revised and amended. A Bill will be forthwith submitted to you for that purpose, in which you will also be invited to make provision for the periodical adjustment of Representation. In all British communities possessing parliamentary institutions it is most essential that fair expression should be given to the wishes of the people by their representatives in Parliament assembled. I feel assured that you will devote your prompt and most earnest consideration to this measure, and I trust that it may become law sufficiently early to enable the necessary steps for the compilation of the electoral rolls for the new districts to be taken at the usual period during the present year.”

He was rather astonished that the Government should bring forward this measure all at once, and a considerable change must have come over them since they met last year, for it then did not occupy the prominent position it did now. When the House met last session the subject especially drawn attention to, was a measure for Local Self-Government, and this was the third time since the Liberal party had been in power that a Bill dealing with that question had been introduced, but no attempt had ever been made to pass it. He believed the Government were not game to go on with the Bill, and that this was simply playing with the question, because a member who voted for taxing the people would never have a seat in that House again. That was the meaning of it. It was put forward as a try-on, in the hope that they might get members who were not wide-awake enough to fall into the trap, like the South Australian affair. He considered that this was the most important Bill so far as he was concerned—a Bill that would do everything for everybody, and no doubt it would relieve the Government of a great many difficulties. It would also save the passing of measures mentioned in the Speech, such as the Bills for the regulation of travelling stock, which was a matter that could be much better settled by local

people than in that House; “the amendment of the laws relating to the resumption of lands for the construction of roads and other public works,” and even the measure for “the prevention of accidents in mines.” This measure was one which the Government was compelled to put in its proper place, but he had no hope that it would become law. He was certain that it would find its way into the waste-paper basket at the end of the session. Why was there all this anxiety about altering the electorates? He had not heard any constituents complain about the matter, and if they passed a Local Government Bill, there would be no demands for roads and bridges and other public works, which were considered an annoyance. When honourable members came down to the House they had to combine, or to bring pressure on the Government to get what they wanted, and then they got abused by the Press in Brisbane for asking for anything. Honourable members representing country districts got abused by their constituents because they got nothing for them, and thus between the two stools they were bound to fall, or in other words, they were unable to get anything. Now, he looked upon the Local Government Bill as the most important Bill of the session, and if the Government could carry it through, he considered they would do enough without anything else. They would thus bring people to know and understand themselves, and members of Parliament, who were *bonâ fide* elected to go to that House, would be able to attend to their duties properly. He never felt happy when going to the Government to ask them for money for his constituents; he always felt that he was doing something that the people of the district should be doing for themselves, and, in fact, he always endeavoured to get out of begging from the Government as much as possible. He had a few words to say about that part of the Speech which referred to grammar schools:—

“You will also be invited to make temporary provision to enable deserving scholars from our grammar schools to proceed to universities in the neighbouring colonies, or in Great Britain, until a university shall have been established here.”

The honourable the Attorney-General was always pointing to the necessity of higher education, whilst he was neglecting to consolidate his work as he was going on. It was a mistaken policy to hand over large sums of Government money to any body of men who were not responsible, without retaining some control over the expenditure of it. Now, the teachers in the grammar schools were not required to submit to any examination, and the trustees by whom they were appointed administered affairs very much to their own liking. Consequently, if a difficulty arose with a teacher,

no matter how great it might be, there was a want of authority to deal with it. No matter how good or bad the teacher might be, if he was placed in a false position, he could not be removed by the department; whereas if the grammar schools were under the one head, any teacher in them could be removed without difficulty. It was a well-known fact, that the grammar school teachers completely isolated themselves from others in the profession, because they felt that they were under no control, except that of the trustees, who were not, as a rule, educated men, but generally were mere hucksters or Government hacks appointed frequently for political purposes. He considered it was degrading to gentlemen who had taken degrees to be placed under such men, as very frequently difficulties, which now could not be settled, would, if these schools were under one head, be arranged very easily without detriment to the character of the teacher or injury to the schools. He had himself seen teachers who felt degraded at having to submit to things which would be degrading to any man of education, and yet if the trustees were to be asked for a written definite reason for their conduct, they would be unable to give it. In fact, the grammar schools were being worked for political purposes at the present time; but that would not be the case if the teachers were placed in an independent position under one head. If that was done, he had no hesitation in saying that he would support a proposition for making provision for a higher class of education; but there must be consolidation of the whole system before he could consent to anything of the kind. If it was important that the Government should take the whole control of primary education it was of more importance that they should have the sole management of the higher class of schools. He noticed a paragraph in the Speech to which no reference had yet been made, namely, that which referred to making better provision for the care and education of orphans and deserted children. He considered that such a measure should become law as soon as possible, and also that the same system should be adopted in regard to those children as he had advocated in reference to grammar schools, namely, that whenever the Parliament voted money for any schools, it should be placed under the control of the Government. He considered that the State should look after deserted children, and should have them properly brought up and give them a good education. He would not detain the House longer, but he thought that the matter he had referred to, which was the last remnant of State-aid, was worthy the consideration of honourable members.

The Hon. R. PRING: The Governor having this day conveyed to this House what is technically termed a Speech, and

according to usual custom a committee of this House having been formed, and having introduced an Address in Reply to that Speech, I feel that it would ill become me to allow that Speech and Address in Reply to pass without comment. I think it is the duty of every honourable member in a debate of this kind, whether an amendment has been proposed or not, at all events, to offer his opinion and criticise the Speech as he may think best. If in the course of the remarks I am about to make I venture to criticise what is contained in the Speech itself, I hope I shall be within the bounds of fair hearing. In the speeches lately made to my constituents, I promised that I would support any gentlemen forming a Government who would introduce such liberal measures as would, in my opinion, be conducive to the best interests of this colony, be they who they may, and I will keep that pledge. I also stated then, as I will state again, that I have no faith in the present Government. But whilst I have no faith in the men, I will still be true to my principles, liberal principles, which alone should be those introduced by this governing body. I have not been in this House as a representative of the people for some years, and I can say that I owe no grudge to a single honourable member here present, or to any late representative. At the same time, we are invited on the side of the Government to criticise fairly that we have put before us, and we well know that the matters contained in the Speech emanate from the Government themselves and not from the Governor, and that all praise contained in it is self-praise put forward by the very persons who ought not, generally speaking, to do it, namely, themselves. Now, when gentlemen come forward with such a document we all ought, according to our opinions, to criticise it, and either praise or condemn it as we think proper, but to pass it over *sub silentio* is what we should not do. In making these remarks I trust honourable members will not expect from me anything condemnatory of the Government or individual members of it, except, in so far, as it may be necessary for me to point out what I conceive to be in common with other honourable members, especially the honourable the leader of the Opposition, the maladministration of the present Government, or previous Governments, which were the constituted Governments of the so-called Liberal party for the past three or four years, of which the present is merely a shred. As I have often had occasion to say, legislation is useless without proper administration. All the benefit that a colony derives from sound and practical legislation, which has, probably, cost this House and the other Chamber hours of thought and labour, may be rendered useless by bad administration, and when

we find that that administration has been accompanied by illegal acts, then it may be well said that honourable members in this House who think fit to distinguish between right and wrong should offer an opinion. If nobody chooses or dares or ventures to point out that which has been improperly done by a Government in the administration of the affairs of the colony, then he is hardly fit to be a representative of the people. The safeguard of the people emphatically rests with what is technically called the Opposition, not an Opposition bound together solely with a view of obtaining offices, but an Opposition determined, by every means in their power, legitimately and fairly to keep watch and guard over the acts of a body of gentlemen who are entrusted with the administration of the affairs of the colony. To pass over an act of injustice, or to omit to draw attention to what, during the recess, may strike the mind of an honourable member as improper, or as a mal-administration of the law of the land, is to do an injury to the community in general. Now all this can be done without acrimony and without the slightest wish on the part of any speaker to injure anybody. According to the view of the position which I am now assuming, that is a duty which is entailed upon me as a representative of a constituency. When a Parliament constituted of a Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly is addressed by the Governor as the representative of Her Majesty, the least one could expect would be that the words of truth should be imprinted on the paper on which it is written. But when we find that, if not what may be termed untruths, at least incorrect assertions are introduced, is it not our duty to expose them—to expose what in the most mild way I will term inaccuracies. Now there is a great deal of difference between inaccuracies and incorrect assertions. Assertions coming from those who have all the knowledge in their power ought not to be incorrect, and if they are incorrect with a full knowledge of facts, I leave honourable members to judge what they amount to. I have reason to know that the first paragraph in the Speech is wholly incorrect—

“I am glad to be able to inform you that the drought which, at the end of last year, prevailed throughout the coast districts, has not produced the disastrous consequences which at one time were anticipated. The losses in stock have, no doubt, been considerable; but agricultural and pastoral settlement has not been seriously checked.”

The first sentence may or may not be true, as it is impossible to say what disastrous consequences the Government anticipated; but I deny that agricultural and pastoral settlement has not been seriously interfered with. Whoever wrote that para-

graph does not know the colony of Queensland. Then again—

“The fact that the proportion of the March rents not paid in due time does not exceed the usual average is a satisfactory proof that the energy, industry, and self-reliance of the selectors have enabled them to overcome their temporary difficulties, and there is now no reason to entertain any apprehensions regarding their future welfare.”

Now, I answer that in a few words, and I will first of all inform the House that in the district of Rockhampton occupied by free selectors, starvation and ruin stared them in the face. I know one gentleman who has actually distributed £10,000 to enable them to keep their holdings, but that money will have to be paid some time or another, and then the borrowers will find whether this paragraph is true or not. A man who mortgages his property for £10,000 is looked upon as a prosperous man at the time by those who do not know of his borrowing, but when he has to repay that in a few years does he think he is a prosperous man? Why he is like the ostrich who sticks his beak in the sand and fancies he is secure. This paragraph is drawing on the imagination, and it is too presumptuous for any man to say that it is true. Why have the March rents been paid, and how have they been paid, and how is it that they are not far behind what they were in other years? Are we blind that we cannot read? Does not the Press afford us information? Who does not know that pressure was brought to bear on the Government to get a remission of the rents, either for a time or *in toto*? And I may here say that I was glad to see that the Premier took the stand which I expected he would take, and informed the applicants that, however great the hardship, the law would not enable him to grant the request made to him. That fact alone convinces me that the selectors must have been in great straits, otherwise they would not ask the Colonial Secretary for that favor which they ought to have known was not in his power. How, then, were the March rents paid? They were paid out of borrowed capital, to prevent ejection and forfeiture. But the money has to be paid back. It may be that under the statute free selectors cannot mortgage their land; but there is another way by which the thing may be done. They can borrow money without quite mortgaging their land, and still place themselves in the position of losing their land if they do not repay the loan at a stipulated time. I cannot, for these reasons, concur, to say the least of it, in paragraph No. 1. I may say that I have been induced to make those remarks from no wish to appear to condemn the action of the Government, but to preserve my political reputation from

its being conceived that I of all men who sit in this Assembly could give my sanction to that which I know is not true. I think, and probably I am not incorrect in thinking that the second paragraph has not been written by a member of the Government. It seems to be a record of pleasing reminiscences of past events. These reminiscences may be pleasing under the circumstances which occurred, but the deduction from them is, I crave leave to say, falsely drawn. Says the Speech:—

“I have lately had an opportunity of visiting some of the towns in the Central districts, and while much pleased to observe the contented and prosperous condition of the people, it was especially gratifying to me to find that, as the representative of Her Majesty the Queen, I met everywhere with a most cordial reception.”

No one feels more gratified than I do, that the representative of our Gracious Queen should be cordially received in every part of the colony in which he chooses to travel, and I believe there is no more loyal colony in Her Majesty's dominions than Queensland. But the picture is too much *couleur de rose*. He saw the towns with banners flying, drums beating, nobblers flying, people in their best attire, eating and drinking for three days, and everybody with plenty of money in their pockets, got for the occasion. I do not wonder at anybody coming to the conclusion that these towns in the Central district were in a magnificent state of prosperity. But we know quite the contrary. To prove my assertion, I will refer to the town of Maryborough. Maryborough is a very nice little town, but until the railway was commenced and tenders were issued, it was the most dull and stupid place in the colony. But the moment there is £200,000 voted for a railway from Maryborough to Gympie, we see sods turned, horses at full trot, money flying, hundreds of workmen assembled, and ceremonies of various kinds taking place; no wonder it is a good place. But wait until that money is spent, and we shall see a very different state of things. That does not prove that they are either contented or prosperous. Contented they may be while the money is being spent; but does it prove what this paragraph is intended to prove, that the people here are in a sound, healthy, prosperous condition, according to their various conditions in life? I say, nay. In making these remarks, I trust I am not saying anything that will cause the good people of Maryborough to think I am casting the slightest slur on them. Take Rockhampton, again. Until the bridge and the gaol were begun you could not scrape sixpence from one end of the town to the other. So I was told, but whether it was so or not I cannot say. They are prosperous now, thanks to the bridge and the gaol, and perhaps by the time these works are finished, something else will have been found neces-

sary. But this is not what the paragraph means. I understand it to mean that the people in the Central district were in that sound and prosperous condition which would indicate a sound and prosperous colony. A district does not become sound and prosperous by the investment of borrowed money *per se*; but if according to this paragraph the people there are happy and prosperous, I hope they will long continue so. A great deal has been said about Local Defences, and the honourable member for Port Curtis, if I understood him correctly, blamed the Administration for want of promptitude of action. The loan having been granted for the express purpose of making our local defences effective against an invasion, should have been utilized with expedition. That may not be a very serious complaint, but it might have been worse than serious. We might have all been dead and buried for the want of these guns, and ammunition, and drill-sheds; but it evidences how very little the Government in general, and the Premier in particular, cares for the lives of Her Majesty's liege subjects in this part of the world. And the very moment we begin to feel a little secure by the arrival of a shipload of gunpowder in the Bay, the gunpowder is put on board some used-up old punts, and down they go to the bottom. If the Government had taken the greatest pains to prevent the local defences from being properly carried out, they could not have been more successful. It is a long time since Sir William Jervois and Colonel Scratchley were here, and their report was laid on the table during the last session of Parliament. What has been done since? Nothing, as far as I can see. I see here that the Volunteer Force is to be reorganised. I did not know that they wanted reorganising. Is it reorganisation to bring out two military officers, or to say that No. 1 Company shall be called “A,” and No. 2 Company, “B”? Is that the way to save us when the enemy comes? It is asking us to be too credulous; it is treating us as babies to ask us to believe such stuff as this. The Speech says—

“An Artillery Staff Officer has been appointed; a Camp of Instruction has been formed; and other steps have been taken which are calculated to promote efficiency in the Volunteer body.”

If the camp of instruction existed on Saturday, all I can say is it does not exist now. I want to say a few words on this question of Local Defences, because on a previous occasion some remarks of mine, in answer to a question, were very much misunderstood: and I have been charged with ridiculing and condemning the Volunteer Force. I think I am the last man to do that, considering that I was for a long time in the service, and I hope I have too much

good sense to ridicule any body of men who have for their object the benefit of the community. What I did mean on that occasion was, that while the men were ready to act, and the money was there, there was an inactive power who ought to have intervened. In short, I simply charged the Government with laxity. With reference to the Volunteer movement, I am firmly of opinion that in the present state of affairs, whatever may be the determination of England, we should never cease working till we have accomplished some well-devised scheme of defence. It is useless, it would be very improper, with the full knowledge of passing events, and with the probability of what may happen hereafter, to shut our eyes to the fact that we may be called upon at any time to defend our hearths and homes. It would be equally absurd to suppose that we could attempt anything on a large scale, or even ask the colony to suffer itself to be taxed—which of course it must—to any great extent to provide the means of local defence. But probably, and I think most probably, it would not be necessary, for if I understand the report of these officers who have been asked to make it, the only defence which would be within the means or power of this colony at the present moment or for some time to come, would be of a very minor character, but still of great use and of sufficient strength and power to repel an attack, not of a Russian invader, but what I think we have more to fear, privateering bodies. Now, I think that the Volunteers of Queensland deserve great credit. It is well known to every honourable member of this House that for years they plodded on when they had not a jacket fit to appear in in the streets, and a paternal Government shut their eyes to the fact. But notwithstanding all the discouragement the men had to suffer, they have done a great deal of hard work, and I am very happy to think that they will now be placed in that position which all other Volunteer bodies have been placed in at home, and in all parts of Her Majesty's dominions. My own opinion is, that it is the height of absurdity in those who run down Volunteers. Some people are in the habit of sneering at Volunteers; but it is a mistake for any person to do that, for a Volunteer can fight as well as the drilled soldier of the line, and I hope that when the House is called upon to vote a sum of money for the Volunteers, it will vote such an amount as will enable the Government to keep up a sufficient body to watch over our lives and property. But while I believe in volunteers, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that they are not able to spare that time which they require to perfect them in the necessary manœuvres

which are actually required for field service. It is well known that Volunteers brigaded with trained bodies very quickly pick up field and all those other manœuvres which are requisite to men called out for action. It may probably be a little too advanced for this colony to adopt a suggestion which I am about to throw out, namely, that it would be advantageous to this colony to support a small Permanent Force of from 200 to 300, if only for the purpose of brigading them with Volunteers, and so establishing a permanent, active, and useful body in time of need. Probably the time has not arrived for such a line of action; probably I am too hasty in bringing it before the Legislative Assembly; but I hope that it will be regarded as a suggestion worthy of its consideration, and that the time may come when it may be considered advisable to adopt it. The next is a paragraph in connection with railways, and a great deal can be said on the question of railway enterprise in this colony. I for one would like to see the colony intersected with railways, so far that they would not prove detrimental to property; but the difficulty lies in the carrying of them out. At the present moment, and without condemning past legislation, I may offer it as my opinion, that the most expedient course is to extend the main trunk lines before we think of extending any branch lines to agricultural districts, however thickly populated they may be. It appears that, were it not that there was a danger of European war, we should have railways constructed in every direction. The policy of the Government appears to be, to borrow money to carry little lines to agricultural districts, to enable the settlers to bring a few bags of potatoes, a few baskets of eggs, and such like to market, and to neglect to extend the main trunk lines, whereby you would open up your back country and make it available for settlement. No attempt has been made to extend the South-western and Northern lines beyond the limits proposed originally, and for which the surveys have been made; and it seems to me that even now there appears no inclination on the part of the Government to do so. If these trunk lines are extended to their proper lengths, an immense tract of country will be made available which, although utilised now, is not utilised to the extent to make it available within the term which I call country available. Country may be valuable to carry stock, but in my opinion it should repay the occupant, and certainly should produce revenue; and the extension of these two trunk lines would do both; because the extension of the lines would cause the country to be more populated, and the outside portions would be brought within available distance; the occupants of that country, the produ-

cers of stock and the growers of wool, would find their ports in Queensland, and add to our revenues, whereas now they depart and seek their ports in other countries. I ask, then, why, in the name of goodness, has the extension of the trunk lines ceased? If the district was not peopled, or not likely to be peopled; or if there was any inability to raise funds for carrying out the work, such reasons would be very well assigned; but when I find an extreme willingness to make other railways, to the neglect of what I consider the grand railway scheme of the colony, I must say I cannot approve of the Government plan. I shall always advocate the construction of railways within proper limits, but certainly think that one ought to take precedence of the other. As to our system of representation, the time has undoubtedly come, and, probably, did come long ago, when this colony ought to have had larger representation than it now has. I, therefore, shall cordially support any measure giving increased representation to the colony, if it is based on the principles which I think it ought to be. Notwithstanding what has been said by the Premier, I unhesitatingly concur with what has fallen from the leader of the Opposition. I know who introduced the last measure, and which Parliament passed it, and I do not agree with the Premier, who, to my mind, somewhat taunted honourable members for passing the Bill and finding fault with it. It is never too late to mend, and it is no argument to say of men who introduced and supported a bad Bill, that they changed their opinions when they saw the working of the measure; it is rather a compliment to their knowledge. The single electorate principle will never work well, and there is one reason especially which would induce me to oppose it. I maintain that minorities should be represented, and this is not possible under the single electorate principle. I will, however, say no more on this question until the Bill comes before the House. With respect to local self-government; this is an old hackneyed cry. I heard it raised and discussed as long ago as the Road Trusts. I believe local self-government would be beneficial to the districts themselves, and would lighten the burden now devolving on the Central Government; but let us have it. Do not let us be told every session that we are to have it. Then, as to the Orphans and Deserted Children's Bill—why not all widows and deserted wives? I do not understand this half-and-half measure. I do not know what regulation regarding the travelling of stock is required; travelling stock must eat, and necessarily eat the grass of the squatter. I believe that the existing law is, that stock can travel over a mile wide of country, and must go seven miles a day, and

the squatter, when he takes up his run, must know that this mile must be granted; the colony could not exist without it. How could stock be brought to market and travelled from place to place, if there were no such law? What new regulation, then, is contemplated? I am very glad that a Bill to amend the Polynesian Labourers' Act is to be introduced, because it is far better that this House should settle what the law on the subject should be, than that the country should be subjected to what has taken place the last eight or nine months, when illegal acts have been perpetrated by the Government. I am not so certain that the Premier was correct in his definition of the purpose for which the Polynesian Bill was originally brought in. He asserted that the Act precluded the hiring of Polynesians for any other purpose than the growing of sugar. By a forced construction of the preamble it may be held to do so; but I question whether it can be done legally. As I have on another occasion stated, I do not wish to see the hiring of Polynesians for any other purpose than the production of sugar, because I believe that the intention of the Legislature in permitting their importation was only to that extent; but I am doubtful whether the Act carries out the intention of the Legislature. I maintain that an illegal act was perpetrated by the issue of the proclamation preventing Polynesians to return with firearms. It was promulgated under the Customs Act, and orders were immediately sent to Maryborough to enforce it against a shipload of Polynesians who had expended their hard earnings in buying what they highly esteem—some old guns and some few canisters of powder. I call that an act of aggression. The proclamation was illegal; it was rescinded *in toto* because it was illegal, and instructions were given to restore all the muskets. Another proclamation was then issued under the Navigation Act; but, let me tell the Premier, that it does not warrant him in stopping a Polynesian from taking guns to the island if he chooses to do so. Let me be contradicted by any lawyer in this Assembly. The Navigation Act was passed to prevent the exportation of arms in shiploads—not to prevent a man, who earns a miserable pittance and buys a gun taking the gun with him. And the cause of the proclamation was a weak-minded man who was frightened by the sight of a Polynesian armed with a rifle for the purpose of shooting pigs. An act of this kind, unless it can be answered—and I wish for the credit of the colony it could be answered—is unparalleled in the legislation of any colony, or country, except perhaps in the barbarous ages. Other acts of injustice have been done which, if actually legal, have been accompanied by harshness unworthy of any Minister or any Government to which he

might belong. I refer to the actions of ejectment which took place some years ago. I will lay no particular stress on the Privy Council having reversed the legal opinion given by the Crown Law Officer of the day, and by myself as Crown Law Officer of another Government, which opinion was followed out by the learned judge who tried the case in *nisi prius*, followed by the three learned judges sitting in banco. The opinions of all were capsize by the Privy Council. Without questioning the tribunal, which must be supposed to be right, I will assume that the opinions given by the Crown Law Officer and by myself were correct, and that the ejectments were perfectly legal. I will say that it was as just as the action of Shylock in demanding his pound of flesh. He was as just in taking his pound of flesh as the Government were just in taking the land from the selector. Consider the circumstances and the facts. Was it not known during the tenure of office of the previous Government that the forfeitures had occurred? The then Treasurer wanted money, and the Minister for Lands took the rents and did not think proper to take advantage of the various acts of forfeiture which were well known to him. Under such circumstances the succeeding Government ought not to have interfered, the preceding Government having accepted the rents with the knowledge of the forfeiture clauses. Then came two new brooms—one the Minister for Lands, and one the present Attorney-General. The first finds out all the lands and the forfeitures, and the second begins the real work. One would think that one action for ejectment was sufficient, but not so. First, there were four in one lot; six against one man in another case—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No; two.

The Hon. R. PRING: Even so, that was quite enough. There was an action for ejectment under another statute. But the number makes no difference; let us look at the principle. When the action of the Queen against Davenport was being tried before Judge Lutwyche, I discovered he was going to rule against me; and, in addressing the jury, I told the Attorney-General that the Government should, instead of stripping these men of their lands, bring in a Remedial Bill. The Attorney-General went on, however, and the case went to the Privy Council. The present Government then came into office, and discovered that they had a legal right to eject selectors who had been spending their money in improvements. Would it not have been more just and fairer to come to this House, state the facts of the case, and ask them to pass a Remedial Bill, in order to make the selector's title good? I say—not as an attack upon the Attorney-General, but as against the Government of which he was a member

—that I asked for that act of justice for those who had paid their rent to the preceding Government in firm faith, believing that their title would not be disturbed. I would cut my right hand off before I would have tried to eject them under such circumstances. My argument is a sound one, and the House can judge of what an act of justice is, as well as any lawyer that ever sat in the House. An act of injustice has been frustrated by a more enlightened tribunal; and, if I remember rightly, there were some rather severe strictures in the decision given, reflecting upon the conduct of the Government which could bring actions of ejectment under the circumstance which had been disclosed by the case.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not a word.

The Hon. R. PRING: I rather fancy the language employed by the Privy Council was such as to enable any clear-headed man to come to the conclusion that it bears such a construction. My inference from the reading of it was, that the Privy Council thought it was a very bad act to take rents from people, and then to turn them out. It is not likely that in such a decision an express condemnation of the Queensland Government would be given. I dare say it was very delicately suggested. I say again, it was an act—followed by a series of acts—which does not redound to the credit of this Government. I would not be likely to give my support to men capable of doing such things. The spirit of justice is very strong in me, and when I see an act of injustice done, by whomsoever it may be, I would tell him of it to his face. There are other things consequential on this act of injustice—it means a long bill to come in. What will be said of that long bill? How is it going to be paid, except taxation be resorted to? I have indicated sufficiently in the course of my remarks whose fault I think it is that these acts of injustice have occurred, namely, that of the Government. I know nothing of the reason which induced the Crown officer to take the action he did. It may have been against his own judgment, on the instructions of the Government, and without any desire to create an act of injustice. The complaint I make is this: That, knowing the number of selectors who would have been injured, and the number of titles that would have been destroyed, I asked him to bring in a remedial measure, and he did not do so. Why did he not obtain the sanction of the Government to bring it in? If I had been in the House at the time, not a day would have passed before I had brought in a measure of that kind; and if I know the House—if I know the temper of the representatives of the people as they have ever sat here—they would have done that act of justice. I maintain

as a representative of the people, that matters of this kind should be brought under the notice of the House in order that the same may not occur again, or that some answer may be given by the person fit and capable of doing so. I did not intend to take up so much of the time of the House, but so many ideas crop up as one goes on; and all I trust is that I have not taken up time uselessly.

Mr. Fox thought it necessary to make some remarks upon the observations of the honourable gentleman who had just set down, with reference to the paragraph of the Speech which was to the effect that as the rents had been paid up as regularly as in previous years, consequently the distress arising from the drought was more imaginary than real. He (Mr. Fox) took strong objections to that paragraph, but it was not his intention to drag the petition before the House, because, as far as he could see, it would not do the parties any good, and it might do them harm or tend to humiliate them unnecessarily. They had merely asked for a temporary remission of their rents, and it was a concession which might very reasonably have been granted without any loss to the country. He should not have referred to the subject had not the honourable member mentioned some selectors in the neighbourhood of Rockhampton. There were some genuine cases of distress in that district, and there was no doubt that those people had had to raise loans, and make sales, in order to pay their rent, because they believed the Government would not deal fairly with them if it was not paid. The matter was now settled, but those persons would have an opportunity of showing how they appreciated the action of the Government in a few months. He had before him some remarks with regard to the want of administration, and he thought they applied to that House, for, on referring to the history of New South Wales, in 1832, under Governor Bourke, it appeared that a difficulty arose in connection with the payment of rents, and it was treated by a nominee Government in the following manner:—

“A considerable amount of arrears were due by the purchasers of Crown Lands, and, by a notice issued at the close of the preceding administration, they were all ordered to be paid by the 30th June of this year. On receiving a representation that the enforcement of this order would give rise to considerable inconvenience, the new Governor extended to the creditors an important act of grace, by making the debts payable in three annual instalments, security being given to the Government by mortgage on the title deeds. The importance of this boon was proved by the fact that two numerous-attended public meetings were held, one before, and one after the arrival of Bourke, the object of which was to obtain the grace thus conceded.”

Now, he conceived that if this boon were granted to those persons by a nominee Government, before they had constitutional freedom, the least a Liberal Government could have done was to have made a similar concession. He admitted that it would have been contrary to law to have done so, but still, had the Government done so, he was certain every member of the House would have endorsed their action. He also took objection to the statement of the honourable member, that £10,000 was granted by any one person in the district from which the petition had been received, and he was aware that persons there had made great personal sacrifices to meet the demands of the Government. The request made by the petitioners was a manly one—that they should be allowed time to pay—and it ought to have been granted. He thought this proved that it was administration that they wanted much more than representation.

Mr. McLEAN said the second paragraph of the Speech was as follows:—

“I am glad to be able to inform you that the drought which, at the end of last year, prevailed throughout the coast districts, has not produced the disastrous consequences which at one time were anticipated. The losses in stock have, no doubt, been considerable; but agricultural and pastoral settlement has not been seriously checked. The fact that the proportion of the March rents not paid in due time does not exceed the usual average is a satisfactory proof that the energy, industry, and self-reliance of the selectors have enabled them to overcome their temporary difficulties, and there is now no reason to entertain any apprehensions regarding their future welfare.”

Now, with such a season as they had just passed through all the energy and industry and self-reliance that the selectors possessed would have availed them comparatively little in the situation in which they were placed. That the proportion of rents not paid did not exceed the usual average might be true to a certain extent, but there was evidence that the Government in putting that sentence into the mouth of His Excellency had got over the difficulty with which they had to grapple. He could tell the House the reason why the average rents received this year were not less than in previous years. When the Land Act of 1876 was passing through the House, the Government introduced a clause providing that upon the non-payment of rent on the 31st March, a penalty of twenty-five per cent. should be inflicted upon those who had not paid up, and honourable members on that side, with the assistance of honourable members opposite, managed to reduce the penalty to ten per cent. It was then generally understood that that fine included the operations of the Act of 1868, but since the passage of the Act of 1876 it had been discovered that selections of land taken up under the Act of 1868 were still liable to a

penalty of 25 per cent. It therefore simply came to this—that the selectors paid their rents at the end of March rather than incur the penalty of 25 per cent., and in order to do so they had had to borrow money at from 15 to 20 per cent. If the operation of the Act of 1868 had been identical with that of 1876, he believed a great many of the rents would not have been paid at the end of March this year. Settlers had not yet had time to recover from the effects of the drought, for although the rain had come in time to allow them to plant their crops, they had not yet realized upon those crops. The fact of the payments in March of this year being but little behind those of former years, was really no indication of the prosperity of the colony. The honourable member for Brisbane had hardly read the newspapers correctly, when he stated that the selectors asked for a remission of the rents, as all they asked was for a little temporary relief to the extent of allowing the rents due in March to remain over until the end of the lease. Having been one of the deputation which waited on the Government, he could say, that so far from the Government offering any obstacles in connection with carrying out that request, they stated that they were prepared to receive all cases brought to them, and deal with them on their merits. The Government realised that there was a considerable amount of difficulty in connection with the matter, and believed that a considerable number of selectors would not be able to pay the rents; and they said that if it was proved that they were not in a position to pay the money, then temporary relief would be afforded them. With reference to the question of defences, it had been said that charity begins at home, and he thought that when they called upon a body of men to defend them, it should be their first duty to protect those men. He had heard complaints both from volunteers and people outside of the want of proper protection to their heads. It was well known that during great wars, as many deaths occurred from sickness as from actual warfare, and it was of the first importance that the heads of soldiers should be properly protected. That was not the case with the volunteers, and he had been informed that the men who performed sentinel duty at Sandgate, were actually afraid to pass backwards and forwards for want of proper covering to their heads. He thought the least they could do was to take proper care of the men who were sacrificing their time in our behalf. With reference to railways, perhaps there was no honourable member more anxious than he was, to see the main trunk lines carried out as they should be. He thought the honourable member for Brisbane had scarcely done the selectors justice in his remarks upon that subject. Main

trunk lines would be of little service to selectors unless they were connected with them by branch lines—in fact, till that was done railways would never carry out the object of their construction. Honourable members who resided in towns could form no idea of the difficulties selectors had to contend with through bad roads: but if they went into the country districts where there was an agricultural population, they would at once see that there was just as much necessity for branch railways as for the main lines. He rather regretted that the Government had not been able to see their way clear to enter upon the construction of some branch lines, especially in districts which were really deserving of such a boon. The honourable member for Brisbane suggested that cheap lines of railway might be made in agricultural districts, and that the settlers should pay for the construction, but the honourable member might go further, and say that the squatters, who were mainly benefited by the trunk lines, should be taxed for their construction. He regretted to hear from the honourable member for Maranoa, that the Maryborough and Gympie railway was to cost so much. He was himself a firm believer in cheap railways, and he could not comprehend how it was that our railways cost so much more, when he read and heard of others costing so little. He believed that the fault lay to a great extent on the manner in which the railways were tendered for. He thought it was owing to railways being tendered for by schedule, instead of calling for tenders for so many miles, and compelling the contractors to maintain the lines in repair for six or twelve months afterwards. He hoped that whatever Government might be in power, the practice would be stopped of allowing lines to be tendered for by schedule. With reference to the Redistribution Bill, whilst he believed it was necessary that all portions of the colony should be properly represented, he considered that a question of far greater importance at the present time was the question of Local Self-Government. He had had the honour of being in that House for two years, and each session the Local Government Bill had figured in the Governor's Speech, had been laid on the table, and never gone further. He trusted that the Government would show their sincerity by introducing the Bill at an early date, so that it might be considered and passed into law. He believed such a measure would be of very great benefit as it would cause the people to be more self-reliant instead of looking to the Government for everything. He had no doubt there would be some objection to it, but when the people began to understand it they would feel that it was the salvation of the colony. He had been struck with a remark of the

Premier in connection with the proposed Bill to amend the Polynesian Labourers Act. There was no doubt that a considerable amount of drifting backwards and forwards had been manifested by the Government during the recess in reference to that question, and from a remark of the Premier, he feared that if the promised Bill was no better than that of last session, there would be very little use in introducing it. It was well known that the Bill of last session was of a limiting nature, and as he had objected to it on that ground then, he should do so again. It was then stated that no Polynesians should be employed more than thirty miles inland from the coast. Now they had often been accused as a slave-employing community, and had hurled back such an accusation most indignantly; yet the Government appeared in their Bill to embody the very first principle of slavery by affirming that Polynesians should not be employed at more than thirty miles from the coast, as it was one of the first principles of the British constitution that a man should be allowed to sell his labour where, and how he liked. If the employment of Polynesians was right within thirty miles of the coast, surely it was equally proper a hundred miles away. Therefore, to limit this kind of labour to a certain distance from the coast was simply to embody in the legislation of the colony the very principle which they denied and repudiated; and he trusted the Government would avoid that most obnoxious feature of the Bill of last year. Some alteration was imperatively necessary in the law as to the resumption of land for the construction of roads and other public works. In the evidence given before a select committee last session, it was stated that the Government had the power of resuming land for these purposes without giving any compensation to those parties from whom the land was resumed unless they chose, and that it was purely an act of grace on the part of the Government to make any compensation. If that was the present law on the subject, the sooner a Bill to amend it was introduced the better it would be for the country, and the more the people would have confidence in the Government. He did not doubt the integrity of the Government, and he fully believed that they were really anxious to introduce and carry through the Local Self-Government Bill, for he thought that Ministers themselves felt the necessity for some such measure, probably as much as those honourable members who represented the country districts.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am very glad, as I am sure are all my colleagues, to have heard from both sides of the House the expression of a desire that the Bill to

provide a system of Local Self-Government throughout the colony may be proceeded with this session. I am particularly glad to hear the honourable gentleman at the head of the Opposition benches promise his assistance to pass a measure of that kind into law. And, indeed, at this period of the existence of the Parliament, it would be hopeless to attempt to pass a Bill of such magnitude, as this must necessarily be, without assistance from the Opposition—assistance in the sense in which he described the duties of an Opposition, namely, as much criticism as might be necessary, but without anything like obstruction. What I have just said may possibly suggest a reason why a somewhat similar measure introduced in previous sessions could not become law. During the last two sessions we sat for six months; they were the longest sessions ever known in the colony; and certainly there was no time to spare to deal with this subject, which, in the then temper of the House, would alone have occupied two months. I trust that this year the measure may become law, and if it does, the duties of the present Government, or its successors, will be immensely lightened, and all parts of the colony will be greatly benefited. The honourable member for Stanley made some remarks with reference to the question of grammar schools. I can only say I agree with the observations he made. I am certain the grammar schools of the colony will not work satisfactorily until they are brought into some more definite connection with the primary schools. I regret that in 1875 that portion of the Education Bill which related to grammar schools, and which passed this House almost without a dissentient voice, should have been rejected in the other branch of the Legislature. I fear, however, there will hardly be time enough this session to deal with so important a question, but there is no doubt it will have to be dealt with soon. At the same time it must not be supposed that our grammar schools are not doing good work. The results of the recent examinations in connection with the Sydney University show that they have been doing as good work as any scholastic institution in the much older colony of New South Wales. I do not wish to follow the example set by the honourable and learned member for Brisbane—whom I am glad to see again in this Assembly—in addressing the House at any great length. That honourable member will pardon me for telling him that since he left the House, we have got into the salutary practice of making short speeches and confining ourselves as much as possible to the point. Both that honourable member and the honourable member for Maranoa have made some observations with respect to the action taken

by the Government 1874 in respect to the land cases. The honourable member for Maranoa was at that time a colleague of mine, and he expressed his cordial approval of the steps we took; still he is justified, if he now thinks so, in saying that the Government made a mistake of policy in dealing with those questions by litigation instead of legislation. That was a fair ground of attack against the Government which took, or was responsible for, those steps. That was the ground which the honourable member for Brisbane also took. But both honourable members appear to have forgotten what was the state of affairs in the colony at that time—what had been history of these land cases for the past few years. I think I cannot better introduce the history of these cases, on which I desire to make an explanation, than by referring to the observations I made in 1873, when I was not a member of the Government, nor had any anticipation of becoming one. The honourable member for Brisbane has suggested that those actions were brought in accordance with an opinion of mine. I never expressed any opinion on the question involved in the case of *The Queen v. Davenport* from that time to this, in public or in writing, until last week. Indeed, I had no occasion to give an opinion. The question was raised and ripe for decision years before, and had to be settled, no matter what the opinion of any Government or any Attorney-General might be. On the 4th June, 1873, during the debate on a motion of want of confidence in the then existing Government, I referred to a speech delivered by the then Minister for Lands—the present honourable member for Bremer—who had made a statement as to the policy of the Government in what were called “the dummying cases.” I said:—

“The Minister for Lands had said that when he came into office he found that the frauds had been committed, but that rent had been received for the lands; that it was no use to do anything then, that things might as well go on; and that the Government might as well receive the money, because their position could not be altered then. He (Mr. Griffith) held that the Government of a country where, as in Great Britain, the Queen was called the parent of the country, should be the protector of all her subjects; but in Queensland the Queen appeared to be the defrauder, the oppressor of her subjects. What did he find? The frauds alleged were done three years ago. If an individual was dealing with another individual and found that he was being defrauded in respect of a lease, would it not be his duty to let the party know what he had discovered, and to refuse to receive any rent, or to make the position any worse? Most certainly, if he knew anything of law. Since the equity court was founded, no man could make the position of another worse, and take advantage of it. If a man who had been defrauded, lay by, and put

another who had committed the fraud in a worse position, he should not be able to take advantage of it. That was as he (Mr. Griffith) understood it; if that was not the law he would not pretend to know what the law was. If that applied to the Crown, if the Crown was bound by equity, then the Minister for Lands had been guilty of a gross fraud by allowing the fraud he had condoned—by receiving rent for the land which had been obtained fraudulently. Was it the duty of the Crown to lie by, and take a man's money, and put him in a worse position than before; and then to turn round and say ‘Now, sue for your title’? Out of his own mouth the Minister for Lands was convicted. As the administrator of the Government, as the representative of Her Majesty who would do no wrong, he was guilty of fraud on the people of the colony, or on an individual whose rent he had received.”

Such was the position I took in 1873, and I adhere to it still. The honourable member for Bremer had at that time commenced one action, at least, against Davenport, and there was an action pending against the Under-Secretary for Lands, as the nominal defendant, in which all the questions ever raised under the Act of 1866 were brought forward. The honourable member said he would not put himself in the position of a plaintiff. And what were the tactics of the other side? They waited for some other Government to come into power who would give them what they wanted. In 1874 the position was the same. Would any Government then have ventured to bring in a Bill dealing with these questions by giving a lease to the alleged “dummiers”? Any Government daring to propose such a scheme would have been scouted. Several “quieting of title” Bills were brought in by private members, but were they not scouted as frauds on the country? And what member scouted them more vociferously than the present honourable member for Brisbane? It was the general opinion of the colony that no grants should be issued until these disputed questions were settled. I joined the Government in 1874 on the distinct understanding that all the cases then in dispute should be settled at once. There were cases of alleged frauds under the Act of 1866, and also of alleged frauds under the Act of 1868—all of them cases in which grants had been definitely refused by the previous Government, of which the honourable member for Bremer was Minister for Lands. The honourable and learned member for Brisbane has forgotten the rule he once laid down, that one Government should be bound by the acts of its predecessor; and the Liberal Government, it seems, must be denounced for not reversing the acts of the Ministry whom they had succeeded, for not issuing grants to persons to whom a previous Government had absolutely refused to issue them. But the result of the

action then taken is, that the whole of the questions that needed to be determined under the Act of 1866 have been settled by the case of the Queen and Davenport, and all the other questions then pending have also been settled so far as has been possible. The delay, if any, has not been mine. I therefore claim that I have kept my promise, made when I joined Mr. Macalister's Government in 1874, viz.:— that these questions should be settled. In reference to the first of the cases decided by the Privy Council, it is to be remarked that the question decided in that case was first raised in 1869, when the honourable member for North Brisbane was Attorney-General, and gave an opinion upon it. A case was submitted to him under the Leasing Act of 1866 by the Under-Secretary for Lands, and these questions were put:—

“Would the fact of a mere modification by a subsequent Act, in the conditions under which selections were made operate as a repeal of the Agricultural Reserves Act of 1863 by which a forfeiture for non-compliance with conditions was declared? *Answer*: I think not. The conditions alone, upon my construction of the fifth section of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868, are modified; the forfeiture created by the Agricultural Reserves Act of 1863 does, as it appears to me, still attach in case of non-compliance with such modified conditions.”

And again:—

“In the event of the Government demanding and receiving rents on forfeited selections, would such action have the effect of remitting the penalty of forfeiture, or would it preclude the Government from making a re-entry on the land and dealing with it in the usual way? *Answer*: I think not. The forfeiture takes place absolutely upon non-compliance with the conditions. The interest of the selector then ceases and determines, and the forfeiture cannot in law be waived by acceptance of rent subsequent to such forfeiture.”

Now, I have, as I have said, never expressed any opinion upon the question whether the Government could waive a condition imposed by the Legislature; but sir, I have no hesitation in now saying that I agree (though of course we are wrong), with the honourable and learned member for North Brisbane, in the opinion he gave. But I may say that it appears from the report of the case of the Queen v. Davenport, which has been just received by the mail, that the arguments and points upon which the Court here relied were never once mentioned in argument; and I cannot but regret that the case was not argued by some colonial lawyer. However, the questions involved have been settled, in what was then generally understood throughout the colony to be the only way of settling them, and the promise made has been faithfully carried out. The temper of the colony would never have tolerated any suggestion of dealing with these cases by

way of compromise. With respect to the other class of cases pending in 1874, the cases under the Act of 1868 where grants had been definitely refused by Government, on the ground of fraud, I repeat now, that tens and tens of thousands of acres have been recovered by the proceedings then taken by the Government. The honourable and learned gentleman has said that we have been unsuccessful in regard to these cases; but the only one of the questions raised in those cases on which we have been unsuccessful was a very small one, but still one worth while to dispose of, and which the then Minister for Lands wished to have settled, viz.: whether, when a man made two selections, he was absolutely exempt from the conditions of residence on the second selection. The Act of 1868 said that a selector might take up a second selection, and should in that case be liable to all the conditions except that of residence. This was always understood to mean that so long as he resided on one, he need not reside on the other. The Privy Council, however, have decided that the exemption from residence on the second selection is absolute, and that the selector may abandon the first, and keep the second without residing on it. That was the only point decided by the Privy Council; while the substantial points raised under the Act of 1868, they refused to interfere with. The other cases involved questions of fraud, where the men employed to perform the conditions of residence upon the selections were the selector's employer's servants and not his own. There is one other case, which is still *sub judice*; in fact, in the same position as it was when I addressed the House in 1875, owing to delay on the part of the defendants to proceed. That is the only matter that is not settled. It may be that the parties may still carry other cases before the Privy Council. But I do not think that the Government of which I was a member can be charged with any failure in the proceedings they promised to take, and did take; nor do I think that I am open to the charge of having given erroneous opinions for the guidance of the Government. But even if I have, I say that the fact that the Supreme Court, the tribunal by which we must be guided in this colony, was unanimously of the same opinion is ample justification of any error on the part of a law officer. The decision of the Colonial Courts, strange to say, have nearly always been reversed—the courts of the Australian colonies have, according to the Privy Council, been wrong in their decisions on land cases nearly always. Possibly the Privy Council is not the best Court of Appeal that could be selected for the purpose. Now, sir, I think I have said all that I desire on that point. I am glad that the

honourable member for Maranoa had introduced the question of the wisdom or otherwise of the Ministerial policy in this matter in the temperate way that he did, and that he has afforded us this opportunity of making a full explanation. I was sorry to hear the remarks of some honourable members in reference to the March rents. I think the way in which they have been paid up is a proof of the self-reliance of the people, and shows that they prefer to rest on their own resources. I cannot believe that the state of the case is nearly as bad as the honourable gentleman, the member for Normanby, has stated it. I represent a constituency in which there are numerous selectors, and they sometimes came to me and wanted to know how the Government would treat them if they did not pay the rent in due time. I invariably advised them to rely upon themselves, and not upon the Government; and it appears they have done so, and that, I think, has been the view taken generally throughout the colony. But I am sure that if it were necessary that they should seek relief, the Government would always view the question liberally, and the House would be glad to assist them. I confidently believe, however, that the selectors will decline, unless as a last resource, to ask for help; they will help themselves. I have now said all that I desire to say upon the subject, and I trust the Address will be agreed to.

Mr. PERKINS moved that the debate be adjourned until to-morrow.

The PREMIER believed there were other honourable members who wished to address the House, and he would therefore offer no objection to the proposed adjournment.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at two minutes past ten until to-morrow.