

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 14 MAY 1879

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 14 May, 1879.

Financial Districts Bill of 1879.—Mines Regulation Bill.—Divisional Boards Bill.—Electoral Rolls Bill.—Annexation of Islands in Torres Straits.—Publicans Act Amendment Bill.—Criminal Expulsion Bill.—Impounding Act of 1863 Amendment Bill.—Sale of Food and Drugs Bill.—Election of Members during Recess Bill.—Stamp Duties Act of 1866 Amendment Bill.—Petition.—Questions.—Motions.—Estimates.—Address in Reply to Opening Speech—adjourned debate.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

FINANCIAL DISTRICTS BILL OF 1879.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) moved that this Bill (forwarded by Message from His Excellency the Governor this day) be read a first time.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said he was under the impression that the course pursued by the honourable gentleman was rather an unusual one, and was out of order, as the Bill was of the character which should originate in a resolution of the House. He believed that in 1876 a similar course was adopted inadvertently, and that it was found necessary to correct the mistake afterwards.

The SPEAKER said the better course would be to refer the Message of His Excellency to a committee of the House.

The PREMIER said he would withdraw his motion, and move—

That the House at its next sitting resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider His Excellency's Message No. 2.

Question put and passed.

MINES REGULATION BILL.

The PREMIER moved—

That the House at its next sitting resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Message No. 3 from His Excellency the Governor this day (forwarding this Bill).

Question put and passed.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL.

The PREMIER moved—

That the House at its next sitting resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 4 (forwarding this Bill).

Question put and passed.

ELECTORAL ROLLS BILL.

The PREMIER moved—

That the House at its next sitting resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 5 (forwarding this Bill).

Question put and passed.

ANNEXATION OF ISLANDS IN TORRES STRAITS.

* The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) moved—

That this Bill (forwarded by message No. 6 from the Governor) be read a first time.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said that the course adopted by the honourable member was altogether an innovation on the usual practice.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was a course which had originated with the honourable member himself.

The SPEAKER thought that a precedent could be found for the course followed in the present instance.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the Bill was ordered to be printed, and its second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday, the 20th instant.

PUBLICANS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved—

That the House, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 7 (forwarding the above Bill).

Question put and passed.

CRIMINAL EXPULSION BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved—

That the House, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Message No. 8 of His Excellency the Governor (forwarding this Bill).

Question put and passed.

IMPOUNDING ACT OF 1863 AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, this Bill (forwarded by message from the Governor this day) was read a first time, ordered to be printed, and its second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday, the 20th instant.

SALE OF FOOD AND DRUGS BILL.

The PREMIER moved—

That this House, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider His Excellency the Governor's Message No. 9 (forwarding this Bill).

Question put and passed.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS DURING RECESS BILL.

The PREMIER moved—

That this Bill (forwarded by Message from the Governor this day) be now read a first time.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said that the Standing Orders provided that any Bill introduced by message from the Governor should originate by resolution of the Committee of the Whole, and he was not aware that that rule had ever been broken, except on one occasion in 1876, when it was by inadvertence, and the mistake was corrected. The practice had always been to first pass a resolution

that a message be addressed to His Excellency, asking him to send down a Bill. He thought it would be a great pity that a Bill which had caused some labour in drafting should be thrown on one side through an informality, and he drew attention to the subject, now, in order to avoid any waste of time eventually.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that whenever there was the slightest approach to interfering with the consolidated revenue, they had moved that the Bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole, but in all other cases the Government had a perfect right to introduce their Bills in the form they chose.

The SPEAKER said that it appeared to him that the action taken by the Premier was a proper one, and that a precedent could be found for it.

Question put and passed, and the second reading of the Bill made an order for Tuesday, the 20th instant.

STAMP DUTIES ACT OF 1866 AMENDMENT BILL.

The PREMIER moved—

That the House, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider Message No. 12 of His Excellency the Governor (forwarding this Bill).

Mr. DICKSON said it appeared to him a most extraordinary way of introducing a Bill which, to his mind, should originate in a Committee of Ways and Means. It was a Bill which affected the revenue of the colony, and therefore one which should originate in a Committee of Ways and Means. He thought it was a departure from the usual mode of introducing such measures, and he considered that he had reason to point out that this Bill, particularly affecting the revenue, should originate in a Committee of Ways and Means.

The SPEAKER said that, if he had time to look up the Votes and Proceedings, he believed he could find a precedent for the course adopted.

Question put and passed.

PETITION.

Mr. NORTON presented a petition from Crown lessees residing in the Gladstone district, praying that certain clauses in the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act be amended.

The petition was received and read.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Secretary for Public Works—

Has provision been made on the Estimates for a bridge over the Six-mile Creek, near Gympie?

1879—D

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) replied—

No special provision has been made on the Estimates for this work.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Premier—

1. What remuneration was paid, or agreed to be paid, to Henry Rogers Beor, Esquire, for the performance of the duties imposed upon him by proclamation of 20th February, 1879, contained in *Government Gazette* of 22nd February, 1879?

2. Was such remuneration authorised to be paid by the same Executive Minute which authorised the issue of the proclamation?—If not, what are the dates of the Minutes authorising the proclamation and the payments respectively?

3. Will the Government lay copies of the Minute or Minutes upon the table of this House?

The PREMIER replied—

1. Fee, eighty guineas; travelling expenses, eighteen guineas.

2. Yes.

3. Yes.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Premier—

1. What remuneration was paid or agreed to be paid to the Honourable Ratcliffe Pring for the performance of the duties imposed upon him by the proclamation of 5th February, 1879, contained in the *Government Gazette* of the 8th February?

2. Was such remuneration authorised to be paid by the same Executive Minute which authorised the issue of the proclamation? If not, what are the dates of the Minutes authorising the proclamation and the payments respectively?

3. Will the Government lay copies of the Minute or Minutes upon the table of this House?

The PREMIER replied—

1. Fee, one hundred and twenty guineas; travelling expenses, twenty guineas.

2. Yes.

3. Yes.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the papers produced in reply to Mr. Bailey's questions Nos. 2 and 3 were ordered to be printed.

Mr. DOUGLAS asked the Colonial Secretary—

If there has been any correspondence in reference to the extradition of escaped convicts from New Caledonia?—If so, will the Colonial Secretary have any objection to lay the correspondence on the table of this House?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer): This is rather a difficult question to answer precisely, for there has been a quantity of correspondence, but nothing new. I have no objection to lay anything on the table which has occurred since the last publication of papers, but there is not much, and it consists, I think, of a legal opinion.

MOTIONS.

Mr. DICKSON, by the permission of the House, moved, without previous notice—

That there be laid on the table of this House, the respective tenders forwarded to the honourable Colonial Treasurer by the Union Bank of Australia, and the Queensland National Bank, in pursuance of Treasury notice of 13th February, 1877. Also, all correspondence from 1st June, 1878, between the Colonial Treasurer and the several banks, regarding withdrawal of special deposits lodged with them, and also relating to the management of the public account.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That, unless otherwise ordered, this House will meet for despatch of business at 3 o'clock p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and at 10 o'clock a.m. on Friday, in each week, the sitting on the last-named day to terminate at 1 p.m.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That on Tuesday and Wednesday in each week Government business take precedence of all other business.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That Standing Order No. 8, relative to business under discussion and business not disposed of at time of any adjournment of this House for want of a quorum, be suspended, so far as it relates to notices of motion, with a view to giving effect, until otherwise ordered, to the following recommendation of the Standing Orders Committee, adopted by this House on the 22nd December, 1870, viz.:—"That Remanet Motions, instead of being placed at the bottom of the Notice Paper for the following sitting day, shall, with the motions for that day, take precedence in the order of the dates for which they were first given; but that they shall not be permitted to displace motions originally given for the day to which such Remanet Motions go over."

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That it be an Order of this House during the present session, that on each Wednesday, when the House is sitting, the Clerk shall read out the Titles of all Motions for Returns agreed to previously by the House and not yet furnished.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that it be an Order of this House for the present session—

1. That every Motion or Order of the Day for the third reading of a Bill to which *(on the question being put from the Chair, "Whether there is any objection to its being a 'formal' Motion or Order of the Day")* no objection shall be taken, shall be deemed to be a "formal" Motion or Order of the Day.

2. That, before the ordinary business of each day shall be entered upon, the Speaker shall call over the various Notices of Motion, and the Orders of the Day for third reading of Bills;

and, on any such motion or order being called, it shall be competent for the member otherwise entitled to move it, to have the above question put with reference thereto; and such "formal" Motions or Orders of the Day shall be disposed of in the relative order in which they stand on the business paper, taking precedence of all the other Motions and Orders of the Day.

3. That no debate shall be allowed on any such "formal" Motions or Orders of the Day, or upon the further proceedings following the reading of such orders; but the House may proceed to division thereupon, without amendment or debate, as in the case of the motion for the first reading of a Bill.

4. That in consequence of any such "formal" Orders of the Day having been disposed of as aforesaid, it shall not be held that the House has proceeded to the Orders of the Day upon the business paper, so as to exclude thereafter the asking of questions, the presentation of petitions, or the reception of notices of motion.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

1. That, in compliance with the Standing Order 266, a Select Committee be appointed to assist Mr. Speaker in all matters which relate to the printing to be executed by order of the House, and for the purpose of selecting, and arranging for printing, returns and papers presented in pursuance of motions made by members.

2. That such Committee consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mackay, Mr. Kingsford, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. O'Sullivan, and Mr. Tyrel.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That the Standing Orders Committee for the present session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Douglas, Mr. Archer, and the Mover—with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer upon subjects of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council.

Question put and passed.

ESTIMATES.

On Order of the Day No. 1, Government business—

Estimates of expenditure for the half-year ending 30th June, 1879: Consideration of His Excellency the Governor's Message, of date the 13th instant—

being called,

The PREMIER moved that the consideration of the matter be postponed until Wednesday next.

Question put and passed.

ADDRESS IN REPLY—ADJOURNED DEBATE.

Mr. GRIMES said it was not his intention to occupy the time of the House by making any lengthy remarks; but before resuming the debate he might say that he did not

move the adjournment in order that he might air his grievances and eloquence. He had very few grievances to air, and he did not lay claim to such an accumulation of eloquence as would necessitate its being turned over lest it should become mouldy. It was their privilege, and a good opportunity on an occasion like the present, to express their opinions as to whether they approved or not of the action of the Government during the recess. Actions spoke louder than words, and they could gather from the actions of the Government their real intentions better than they could from any speech from the Throne. In making these remarks he should ask that indulgence from honourable members which was usually accorded to new members when making what was called their maiden speech. He had entered the House last session under no pledges to his constituents as to who or what party he should support. He came into the field neither as a Ministerial or Opposition candidate, and being returned, he took his seat as an independent Liberal, upon what were then the cross benches, on the Government side. He voted with the Government, believing it was right they should have an opportunity of showing what they could do under the re-arrangement of the Ministry. If he were found shifting his seat from the cross benches, and directly facing the Treasury benches, it would be the result of the actions of the Government during the recess. His criticisms on the action of the Government would not be altogether unfavourable. He was pleased with some of the things they had done, and very much displeased with others. He was pleased to see that the Government saw the necessity of economising and retrenching, and also that they had made attempts in those directions; but whether the whole of the attempts would meet with approval was another thing. He was pleased to see that they had dispensed with the services of the supernumeraries in various offices under the Government, and imposed an extra hour upon the members of the Civil Service. The members of the Civil Service had easy times of it compared with the rest of the community, who, in these times of depression, had to work far harder and received less remuneration for their labour. If the extra hour of work were the full extent to which the Civil Servants would feel the effects of the bad times, they could not complain. In his opinion, the Government might have taken a step further, and proposed some reduction in the salaries—reducing, say all salaries over £250 by fifteen per cent., and under that amount by ten per cent. Even then, the members of the Civil Service would have been as well off as in former years, because the cost of living had been reduced to fully that extent. He did

not agree with the action of the Government in reference to the workshops at Ipswich. Had they dispensed with the services of supernumeraries only, there would not have been so much room to complain; but men who had been employed by the Government for six, seven, or even more years, and who had had no complaints laid against them, either as to their skill or industry, should not have been dismissed in that summary way. He quite agreed with the remarks made by an honourable member, that it would be far better to reduce the time of working in the same way as the cotton manufacturers in Lancashire had done during the cotton famine caused by the American Civil War, thereby reducing the quantity of stuff turned out from their mills. Instead of stopping so many looms and dispensing altogether with the services of a certain number of operatives, they reduced the working hours to one-half or one-third time. Had the Government acted in a similar manner there would have been no complaint, and nothing of the matter would have been heard during this debate. It would be seen by the Speech that it was intended to extend railway communication further into the interior, in which case more rolling-stock must necessarily be required by-and-by, and there might be some difficulty in getting skilled labourers. Had the men been put upon half time they would have earned sufficient to make both ends meet, and have been on the spot when their services were required. There were other departments in which the Government might have economised without doing much harm. For instance, the Police and Administration of Justice Department entailed an expenditure which was something enormous when compared with our population. Upwards of £214,000 had been spent on police, gaols, and administration of justice. In this department the Government might have economised to some extent. There was no need of so many police in our streets. They were a fine body of men, no doubt; but he often thought, when passing them in the streets, that it was a pity such fine men should be walking about so lazily, and being little more than ornaments to our street corners. If their services were dispensed with as police they would, perhaps, appear equally fine upon the roads with a pick-axe or shovel in their hands. In the Administration of Justice Department they could dispense with a few of the paid magistrates, as he did not see any reason why those who accepted the honour as justices of the peace should not also do some work. In that case some of the police magistrates might be dispensed with, and the justices of the peace could take their place. For his own part, he would not refuse to do his share of the work in his own neighbourhood, and by such a course being adopted a large

amount of expenditure might be saved. He had heard it rumoured that the occupants of the Treasury benches intended to reduce their own salaries. Such a course would no doubt be a step in the right direction and was no more than might be expected of them. Though there were six Ministers of the Crown, there did not appear to be anyone to fulfil the functions of Attorney-General. Instead of increasing expenditure by paying fees to barristers, they might have got one among themselves competent to act as Attorney-General, or reduced their own salaries a little to pay the fees. He would give his hearty support to all measures that would tend towards a fair and equitable reduction in the cost of Government, because it was absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the colony that taxation should be reduced. If they did not take that course, every producing interest in the colony would soon be crushed out. As an agriculturalist and a member representing an agricultural district, he was in a position to say that that interest would not bear any increased burden of taxation. They had arrived at that stage when it was necessary to cultivate some production that would form an export; but while they were heavily handicapped by the burden of taxation it was impossible to compete with other countries whose taxation was perhaps only half the amount of that of this colony. At present the taxes amounted to about £3 10s. per head, three-quarters of which was raised through the Customs, and chiefly upon the necessities of life. Under such circumstances, how could those who employed labour hope to compete with other countries, where the working man could live so much cheaper? The Acclimatisation Society had made praiseworthy efforts to encourage the growth of articles suitable for export, and no doubt honourable members had noticed the sample of rice in the library. That showed the country and climate were suitable for the growth of rice, but agriculturalists knew it was no use to endeavour to compete with other countries under the present circumstances. The same thing might be said of hemp, jute, and indigo, which would, no doubt, grow well in Queensland, but would not be remunerative under the existing high rate of taxation. It had been said that the various road-parties around Brisbane had been placed there for political purposes; but some of those men had been working on the roads for four or five years, and how was it possible that they could have been employed by the present Opposition party for political purposes during the elections? Honourable members were no doubt aware that the products of farmers had fallen in value fully 50 per cent., and that corn was now selling at two shillings per bushel.

Dairy produce had fallen to the same extent, and not long since he was offered butter in Ipswich at sevenpence per pound. While the price of produce was so low, if the Government took off the road-parties and allowed the roads to get into a bad state, the cost of transit to the market would be more than the value of the goods. That certainly would be economy in the wrong direction. It was wrong to suppose that because they were steadily increasing railway communication there was no necessity for roads. That seemed to be the impression however, and it had been the policy of former Governments rather to spend money to build railroads than to lay it out for the benefit of the agriculturist and the settler. It would be found that, whilst upwards of four and a-half millions had been expended out of loan for railways, only just half-a-million had been spent on roads and bridges in the various districts. He was sure that honourable members who had travelled around Brisbane would not say that road-parties were not needed; and he was pleased to find that the Minister for Works had travelled around the suburbs, for he must have seen that there was still necessity for road-parties being engaged on the roads in the suburbs and around the farms. It would give honourable members some idea of the state of the roads around the farms when he stated that the cost of carriage from the farm to the mill was one-third of the value of the cane. It cost as much to cart two miles along the road as to cultivate the cane. Such a state of things was not satisfactory, and was not giving the agricultural interest that fostering care which it should receive. If the Government wished to foster agriculture they would not have taken this step of disbanding the road-parties. He had a word to say about immigration, in reply to the challenge thrown out by the Colonial Secretary that there was no other course to adopt than the one followed by the Government. It might be necessary, through the depressed state of the labour market, to control or lessen in some measure the number of immigrants coming into the colony; but he (Mr. Grimes) questioned the wisdom of stopping immigration altogether. These times of depression were, he hoped, only temporary. It must be remembered that the colony had been suffering from a severe drought for two years, affecting agriculturalists and pastoral lessees alike, and compelling them to reduce their expenditure. No works or improvements were going on on the stations, and the same might be said of the farms. But he hoped that better times were now setting in. The interior had been refreshed by plentiful rains, and things looked prosperous for the graziers as also for the farmers; doubtless, as prosperous times set in, the

proprietors would be improving their holdings, and there would be then requirement for more labour. Again, various sugar mills would commence operations soon, and they would require labour. This would absorb a large number of the labourers now walking about the colony idle. He did not think there was reason for the Government inferring that by continuing immigration they would inundate the colony to such an extent that there would be any large amount of starvation. If it was understood that this colony could only support the number of souls now in it—a population of some 200,000—they had no right to send to the home money markets and borrow money. The colony certainly would not be a good security for the money-lenders if it was reduced to that. What was required in the matter of immigration was, not to stop it completely, but to use a little more discrimination in the selection of the immigrants. A great many of the people who came out had been fit neither for employment on public works, nor by agriculturists. Lately there had been far too many artisans and tradesmen sent out, and they had not been able to get employment at their own trades, and had been comparatively useless when engaged upon farms. This was one reason why there were so many unemployed in the colony. He noticed by the report of the Auditor-General that, at home, local agents were appointed at salaries of £150 each, to get emigrants for the various vessels. He supposed this was a kind of “filling up,” and he also thought that these local agents might be called “street scavengers,” judging by the quality of the immigrants sent from home. He might remark, here, that, from the action of the Government in regard to continental immigration, he could not but deduce the inference that they did not wish to see German immigrants. When they only stopped part of the immigration from the United Kingdom they had completely abolished it from Germany. He could not see why they should have done this. With the exception, perhaps, of the people brought by two vessels, the people introduced from Germany were a very desirable class to bring into a new country; they were almost all competent farm labourers, steady and industrious, and made desirable settlers. He was sure honourable members would bear him out in the statement, that when the Germans got little farms of their own, more thrifty, enterprising colonists could not be had. If anyone had any doubt upon this head, he could easily settle it by visiting the Middle Ridge, Toowoomba, and the German settlements on the Albert, Logan, and elsewhere. It seemed strange to him that the Government, when they considered it necessary to stop immigration altogether, owing to the depressed state of the labour market, should not have considered it ex-

pedient to check in any measure the introducing of kanakas. If so many men were walking about idle, and there was so much distress, how was it that the Government did not endeavour to check the introduction of this class of labour also? The late Government saw the necessity of dealing with kanaka immigration, and alluded to it in the Speech; but this Government did not mention a word about it in the Speech read yesterday. He believed that the importation of kanaka labour was in a great measure the reason why immigrants had not found employment. On consulting returns he found that, during the years 1875, 1876, and 1877, as many kanakas had been imported as Englishmen and Germans. During these three years 9,000 immigrants over the age of twelve years had been introduced from Great Britain and the Continent, as against 6,355 kanakas. If from the number of European immigrants they took those who could hardly be called working men—namely, persons between the ages of twelve and seventeen—and those who were not likely to engage as agricultural labourers, such as tradesmen, clerks, and mechanics, it would be conceded that he was right in asserting that as many agricultural labourers had been introduced from the Polynesian Islands as from Great Britain and the Continent. It was said that these kanakas had been brought for the purposes of sugar cultivation, and did not compete with white labour. Did they find that this was so on looking abroad? He had no hesitation in saying there were sufficient kanakas in the colony to grow two or three times the quantity of sugar now being produced. They had only 15,250 acres of land under sugar-cane, and they had in the colony 6,669 kanakas—enough to grow three times the amount of sugar now being produced. He would go further and say, that they had as many kanakas as would do half the unskilled menial work in all the cultivation in the colony. There were only 100,000 acres under crop, and if they took what was the usual rate of labour employed on farms—namely, one man to eight acres, it would be seen that his assertion was justified. It was well known that kanakas were competing with white labour. They were not found in the sugar plantations alone, as honourable members well knew, but they were engaged as shepherds, stockmen, ploughmen, fencers, farm labourers, grooms, stablemen, and coachmen, and, if it were possible to overcome the prejudice to a black face, they would also be employed as housemaids and nurses. Further than this, they were even becoming masters and taking contracts for tree-ringing, fencing, clearing, and other kinds of work; they could even be seen coming into towns and taking out licenses for wood-carting. A couple of kanakas

passed his door nearly every day hauling wood into town and selling it. Was it right that kanakas should be allowed to compete in this way with the labour of white people? He had no hesitation in declaring that half the distress at present in the colony among the labouring classes was chargeable to the importers and employers of kanaka labour, and he certainly wondered that the Government had been blind to the fact—it was an important national question, and it undoubtedly deserved bringing forward in the House. Why the Government had not done so was because there were among the chief supporters of the Government the agents' representatives and employers of this kind of labour;—he was glad to be able to say, also, that they were all on the opposite side of the House, and that the hands of all honourable members on his side were clear in this matter. He thought, too, that the Colonial Treasurer might have seen that the revenue was being affected also. There had been imported into the colony 14,000 kanakas. Had white labour been employed in place of them, had one-third the number of these men been imported from home with their wives and families, the return that would have been given to the Treasury through the Customs, at the rate now paid per head in taxation, would have given the colony an increase of something like £60,000. The Government need not be afraid that the withdrawal of kanaka labour would injuriously affect the sugar industry, as that industry did not depend upon black labour. A great deal had been made of the work required on sugar plantations. It had been stated that white men could not possibly do a certain kind of labour called "trashing"; that no men but kanakas could stand it in the North. If that was the case, let "trashing" alone. He had dispensed with "trashing" for six years, and he had no hesitation in saying that the cane did just as well. If kanakas were required for "trashing" only they could remain at home. Perhaps there was some reason why the Government did not like to tackle this question. There was reason to believe that the Government were themselves employers of kanaka labour. If one might take any notice of what was reported by the Ministerial organ, the *Courier*, they found that for the surveying craft "Llewellyn," eight or nine kanakas had been engaged as seamen, the reason given being that British seamen could not stand the heavy work required—pulling oars in a hot sun. The hardihood and powers of endurance of her seamen had been the boast of Great Britain; but it seemed that this boast was vain, and that their pride was about to be humbled, when the Gov-

ernment of Queensland found that the powers of endurance and the skill in using oars of British seamen was not equal to that of a savage race. Such a statement was an insult to British seamen. Turning, now, to the Speech from the Throne, he must certainly say that he was disappointed with it. He expected to see something better, something more bold, and something a little plainer from the Government. There seemed to be too much pulling down instead of building up in the Speech, and he thought a very homely proverb might be looked upon as a fair comment upon the first five or six clauses in the Speech. He would put it in this way:—"The most untutored and unskilled labourers walking in our streets could pull down the most stately edifice in the city, but it would take a master builder to erect a better edifice upon the site of the ruins." He thought that the Government had something before them to do. Clause 11 in the Speech told honourable members that no increase of taxation would be necessary through the Customs. Well, if Government could manage to carry out the policy shadowed forth in the second clause, he had no doubt that it would not be necessary to increase the Customs duties. They found it stated in that clause, after it had been mentioned that the Local Government Act had been a failure, that honourable members—

"Would be asked to sanction the necessary steps for relieving the Government of the colony from its responsibilities in connection with purely local affairs."

What need would there be for increased taxation, if Government were going to relieve themselves from their "responsibilities in connection with purely local affairs?"—by which he presumed roads, bridges, &c., were meant. The expenditure for these items amounted to something like £93,000 a year; but if this amount was to be raised, was it not still a burden upon the people?—who was it to be upon? Not upon the pastoral tenants of the Crown—they did not require money for roads and bridges, because they occupied a wide extent of country, and when one part became cut up they could move on to another. But in the case of agricultural settlers it was very different. They had only certain roads to use, they were hemmed in by fences, and if there was no money expended on these roads they would be completely blocked up, so far as traffic was concerned. These roads would have to be repaired, and if the Government did not do it he supposed that it would have to be done by local taxation. It therefore seemed to him that this statement was very much like trying to hoodwink the people. With reference to clause 4 of the Speech, it had been remarked that, if there was only £2,350 difference between the tenders for carrying our

mails by vessels manned by Europeans and others manned by kanakas and Chinamen, that was a very small sum; and he quite agreed that the Government were not justified in not accepting that tender. If the seamen on board those vessels were married men, and their families resided in the colony, they would consume dutiable articles that would more than pay that sum through the Customs. With regard to clause 12, taking into consideration the speech of the Premier on the famous three-million loan vote, he thought a little alteration in the terms of that clause would suit their purposes better. Instead of reading—

“12. My Ministers are of opinion that the settlement of population and the increase of land revenue depend upon the speedy extension of our facilities for internal communication.”—

It should read: “My Ministers are of opinion that the settlement of sheep and cattle on the lands of the interior, and the income of a few pastoral tenants of the Crown, depend upon the speedy extension of our facilities for internal communication.” That was really the drift of it. He could not understand what other use a railway out to the far west could be put to but to encourage the settlement of sheep and cattle. True, it was stated that there was fine agricultural land out there—splendid wheat-growing country; but how were they to get wheat down from there when it was grown?—It would cost more to bring it down even by railway than it could be brought from Adelaide for by ship. With respect to the Bill to reform the electoral law, if it had the effect of doing away with the large amount of corruption and impersonation that was now practiced at elections, it would be legislation in the right direction. Every honest straightforward man who now became a candidate, and who would not descend to the low tricks and dodges that were practiced at elections, was placed at a great disadvantage, and, a measure to remedy that was well worthy of consideration. As to the Bill to make better provision for the granting of publicans' licenses, he thought it came from the wrong side of the House to be of any use.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS: After what has been said during the course of the debate in reference to the discharge of a number of men in the Works Department, I expected to hear some statement from the honourable Minister for Works, and I intended to wait until he addressed the House; but as it seems to be his intention not to do so, I propose to address a few remarks on the subject of the Speech. In the first place, I may say in reference to the opening remarks of my honourable friend the present leader of the Opposition, that he has correctly interpreted my wishes in regard to the leadership of that side of the House; and it seemed to me that it did not neces-

sarily follow that, because I happened to be at the head of the late Government, that therefore I should occupy the position of leader in the Opposition. I felt not only that, but also that probably my honourable friend would perform those functions better than I could, and that I was really consulting the wishes of those gentlemen who are now acting together as an Opposition by making way for the lead of my honourable friend. And more than that, I felt that I was consulting my own wishes—that I should thereby enjoy a liberty of action and freedom of expression and opinion which I could not have enjoyed as the leader of a party. That right I intend to exercise, and having been the exponent of a party in this House, I feel that under present circumstances I may also value equally the privilege I enjoy as an independent liberal, expressing my own opinion in virtue of the responsibility conferred upon me by my constituents. While, therefore, I am very willing, and shall be proud to give every assistance to my honourable friend in the conduct of the business of this side of the House, I have sufficiently indicated my determination in certain matters to express my own opinion, and I believe I am best serving the interests of the colony by doing so, because I do not think it is desirable in the interests of the country that we should absolutely divide into two hostile camps. The movers of opinion, those who really create opinion, are more likely to be found amongst that moderate class of men who are determined not to look at things through mere party spectacles, and who have made up their minds that the good of the country shall be their first consideration. I shall now refer to a few remarks made by honourable gentlemen opposite during the debate; and in the first place I must take notice of something said by the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government, in reply to the criticisms of my honourable friend the leader of the Opposition, in reference to the conduct of the election for Townsville. The honourable gentleman's reply was a *tu quoque*. He said if there had been anything wrong done there, equal wrong was done at the election for Mulgrave. The objection of my honourable friend the member for North Brisbane was to two polling-places being appointed within a very short distance of each other outside the electoral district, and that at these polling-places certain acts were performed that were not in accordance with propriety—that a large amount of personation had been effected. I am not acquainted with this matter; I paid no attention to it, but I have no doubt it was correctly stated. In reference to the charge made against me by the Premier that I, when in office, appointed a place called Musket Flat a polling-place for the electorate of Mul-

grave, I have simply to say that it is a customary thing to appoint polling-places outside the bounds of an electoral district. The object is to secure the convenience of the electors, and I did no more than follow out that practice in appointing Musket Flat a polling-place for Mulgrave. Certain representations were made to me as to the desirability of appointing it as such, and I had to judge of that matter and decide, and I finally decided against it. With regard to Maryborough, that also was a polling-place for Mulgrave, and very properly so, for the convenience of electors. A large number of votes were polled, and I believe the honourable gentleman prides himself upon having secured a majority there. I know a great many electors came in, and that I had to take exception to the conduct of an ardent supporter of my own, because he afforded facilities that I hardly expected for the conveyance of electors to the poll. The result was that the honourable gentleman opposite got a considerable majority there, and I know that a considerable amount of the expenses of those who came in to vote on that occasion were paid by the agents of the honourable gentleman opposite. I am sorry to say, in connection with the general election, that there was a great deal more of this kind of thing going on than was healthy or desirable. I am satisfied that it was illustrated to a far greater extent by honourable gentlemen opposite than it was by gentlemen on this side of the House, and I am quite sure that a considerable amount of money was corruptly expended during the elections, and that the result of that expenditure materially influenced the returns that were made.

The PREMIER: No doubt of it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Road-parties.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I will come to the road-parties by-and-by. With regard to accusations in connection with the Mulgrave electorate, I hope that I have disposed of them. I endeavoured, in my capacity as Colonial Secretary at that time, to administer the Act as fairly as I possibly could. It was a new Act, brought into operation at an inconvenient time and under pressure, but I tried to carry it out honestly, and I may congratulate myself that no serious hitch occurred; and I am conscious that no influence was used on my part that was in any way likely to interfere with the freedom of the electors in expressing their opinions. I will now deal with the statement respecting road-parties. The statement made was a very distinct one, although the Colonial Secretary appeared to try to modify it to some extent afterwards. The Premier said—

“The late Government had used their influence and the funds of the colony in putting on road gangs in every part of the country merely for election purposes.”

Now, I challenge the honourable gentleman to the proof of that, and I shall bring him to prove it in time or to disprove it. It is a broad statement that I, as head of the Government, did this with the assistance of the Minister for Works, I presume, for the time being. I shall take the honourable member for Darling Downs first and include him in the category, for he administered that office for a considerable time; and I will add my honourable friend the leader of the Opposition, who also acted as Minister for Works. If there was anything of this sort done, it must have been with my cognizance, and the cognizance of either one or other of those honourable members. The charge is a direct one—that of corruptly using the power of the Administration in order to affect the result of the elections; and if the honourable gentleman opposite is an honourable man, as I know him to be, he will come out with his proof. I will not say, as the honourable gentleman said yesterday, in reply to some statement, that it was false. I do not indulge in that kind of language, but I shall claim that he proves what he said.

The PREMIER: There is plenty of proof.

Mr. DOUGLAS: If there is plenty of proof it can be produced. It must be furnished in such a form that the House can judge of its proof; and, unless the honourable gentleman does so, I shall impute to him the capacity for making reckless statements which have no foundation. The next reference I shall make is to the statement made, that the decisions arrived at by the late Government in regard to the adoption of lighter rolling-stock and a lighter permanent-way for the Townsville railway has been rescinded, and, I presume, the orders countermanded. I quite admit that the honourable gentleman, if he, on entering office, arrived at the conclusion that our deliberations in this matter were based on a wrong foundation, was perfectly justified in rescinding them. I do not dispute his power and right to make use of his responsibility in that way, but I say that in so doing he has receded from the path of progress in which we entered, and by so much has, I believe, diminished the amount of railway communication which we are likely to have in the future.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Mr. DOUGLAS: The honourable gentleman has been an exponent of cheap railways all through his career. I remember the first notice I had of him was a statement he made to the effect that railways might be made for 2,000 a mile, and, if I recollect rightly, he followed that up by a statement that he could get competent gentlemen in Melbourne to undertake to complete railways at that price, or a price a little in advance of it—£2,500 per mile. I do not know whether he is now likely to change his opinion, but my experience of railways,

formed on the gauge and by the method of construction which we have hitherto adopted, leads me to the conclusion that that cannot be done; and I am also satisfied that, by the adoption of the principles which I believe Mr. Ballard is quite competent to carry out, both as to dividing and executing the work, some approach at any rate to that might have been arrived at. But the honourable gentleman has done his best that that approach shall not be attained, and I say he has been wrong in revising the course of conduct which we had adopted after deliberate consideration.

The PREMIER: It is the best thing we have done yet.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I believe the whole secret of cheap railways depends upon light rolling-stock, constructed upon proper specifications, and I believe the specifications in this case were maturely arrived at, and that you will never arrive at the construction of cheap railways without light rolling-stock suitable for light traffic. Now that time is deferred, and the responsibility is upon the honourable gentleman's shoulders.

The PREMIER: I never said anything about rolling-stock, and have done nothing with regard to it. I gave the particulars in which the minute was rescinded as to the gradients and rails.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I believe it was acknowledged that the rails should be steel. There was some difference of opinion as to whether they should be thirty or forty pound rails, and I am inclined to forty-pound rails. But the matter upon which I place my dependence for the construction of cheap railways is, that until we get light rolling-stock we shall never have cheap railways. I now proceed to a further statement of the honourable gentleman, that the dismissals of the men at the Ipswich workshops were at present a necessity. If he considers that those dismissals were an absolute necessity, then he has failed altogether to apprehend what are the real necessities of the country. He has surely some hope for this colony, notwithstanding that during the last few months we have had to go through bad times. He has surely some conception that our railway systems are to be extended. He knows that he has been to a great extent instrumental in passing those very railway measures which are now being carried out. If they are not exactly in the form he desired, he knows that he was the great prophet and apostle of railway extension everywhere, saying constantly that nothing could be done without railways. Surely he does not think that everything is over with us—that we are never going to make any more railways because we have had six months of a dry season, a little difficulty as to financial arrangements, and a probable deficit at the end of one financial year. Is he going to lose courage on this account?

Is the country to have nothing because during one year out of some half-dozen we are likely to have a deficit? If that is the character of the honourable gentleman, then he has not the courage which he ought to have to make him capable of being a ruler and governor of this country. He says these discharged men were not necessary. Surely he might have held out, at any rate, until he shadowed forth his policy—until he had given Parliament an opportunity of saying whether or not it considered that those large reductions in this form should be made. If it is the intention of the Government to construct rolling-stock, on private tenders, by private firms, that is a distinct policy, and I shall be prepared to discuss it when the occasion arises. A great deal may be said for it, and I do not mean to say that I should always feel justified in advocating large Government shops wherever there is a railway, and where rolling-stock could be constructed by private firms probably with equal advantage to the public. But surely, if there is going to be a marked change in the policy of the Government in this respect, Parliament should have been consulted before Executive action was prematurely taken. The honourable gentleman said this was a dire necessity, and that no one more than he felt how hard it was to come to this decision, adding that he would be no party to the dismissal of working men for political considerations. I hope if, after due investigation and examination into the mode and manner of these dismissals, it should happen to be proved that political considerations have weighed with the honourable gentleman, he will stand by his words and be no party to the dismissal of any single man for political considerations only. I speak now with some reserve, the papers not having yet been laid on the table; but my information leads me to the conclusion that direct personal and political considerations have weighed in this matter. I will give one instance. I have been informed—and doubtless the facts are pretty generally known—that amongst those who were dismissed was a man who had been employed at Ipswich for the last twelve or thirteen years—a pattern-maker of the name of Blunt, an excellent workman, whose work has never been found fault with, but who is perhaps better known as a captain of Volunteers than as a pattern-maker in the workshops. I am told that this man has always been a most faithful workman, and that the Government are not likely to get a more faithful or a more efficient one in his place. Why was this man dismissed? It is said that he was dismissed because he had taken a prominent part in elections. This may be wise or not on the part of a working man in the employ of the Government;

but has he not a right to do so if he chooses? We have not disqualified him. We have not made it a condition that he should hold his tongue because he was receiving pay from the Government. If we had done so he would have known it, and would have violated that condition with the penalty of dismissal before his eyes. But he has violated no condition, and because he happens to have expressed his opinion offensively, doubtless, to some politicians, he has now been cashiered, to all appearance, for political considerations. Other facts connected with these dismissals have come under my notice, but I shall not detain the House by referring to them now, for the subject will, I hope, meet with a most exhaustive discussion, and, if necessary, a thorough examination before a committee of this House. I will now say a few words with reference to the Colonial Secretary's speech. That honourable gentleman is no doubt a perfect adept at the "shillelagh" style of argument—at a sort of robust banter—when addressing this side of the House. That style is all very well in its way; there is a good deal of sound in it, although not very much of argument. The honourable gentleman told the honourable member for Enoggera that he had no right to criticise the financial actions of the Government. I should like to put it to the common sense of honourable members, if my honourable friend has not the right to criticise financial statements, who in this House had? Are we going to be muzzled by the honourable gentleman? Are we to sit here like dumb dogs, because nobody has a right to criticise him? I submit that if the honourable member for Enoggera has not a right to open his mouth about financial matters, there is no man in this House who has. And, certainly, I have never heard matters of finance, especially the banking transactions of the Government, handled with more effect than they were by my honourable friend last night. The Colonial Secretary in this matter handled his club with considerable force, but without much dexterity. In referring to the sale of leases, the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government said the sale was carried out in the way it was because it was the only way in which they could be sold in accordance with the law; that he was a rigid legalist, and therefore he had determined to put the law in force. I had the honour of waiting with others upon the honourable gentleman at the Treasury on a late occasion, when we entreated him to stay his hand in this matter. He declined to do so, and in reply to us I was struck with the way in which he expressed himself, and communicated to those present the thoughts that were really passing in his mind. He said, first, that as a matter of fact he had determined to

make the law as bad as possible, and he immediately corrected himself by saying as "little bad" as possible. I think there was more truth in the first statement than in the second. A statement has been made—a very startling statement—by the Colonial Secretary, that the action of the Government in this matter had prevented a contemptible ring from getting a loan for the purchase of those runs.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I never said any such thing. As a matter of personal explanation, I may say that my speech was so badly reported that I have positively refused to correct it. I said nothing about getting a loan. Where were they to get a loan from?

Mr. DOUGLAS: The honourable gentleman ought to know more about that than I do; but I was really startled by the remark that there was a contemptible ring likely to be formed in order to buy up those runs, and that he was thankful to say that the action taken by the Government had defeated this ring.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did say that, but I said nothing about a loan.

Mr. DOUGLAS: Well, there was a contemptible ring formed for the purpose of running up the present holders of those runs to a higher figure. That is really a very startling statement. The honourable gentleman hearing of the existence of this ring, and learning that it was going to run up the price the present holders were paying, took action accordingly to defeat them. What right has the honourable gentleman to assume that this was a ring? I presume the origin of it was some information received in mercantile circles, by which a number of capitalists were prepared to go into the market to buy these runs. But the honourable gentleman seems to have had better information. No doubt he had, for the secrets of the bank parlour are open to him; and he enjoys, now, the position of having defeated the designs of this contemptible ring. I hope the honourable gentleman will furnish us with the names of the members of this ring, so that we shall learn whether they are really a ring—really dishonest men. They may have been *bonâ fide* competitors.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They were not.

Mr. DOUGLAS: How does the honourable gentleman know?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know anything about there being a ring, but I do know that they were not *bonâ fide* competitors.

Mr. DOUGLAS: The honourable gentleman determined at all events that they should not have the chance of proving their *bona fides*. Would it not have been much better to have allowed things to take their course? Does not the test of a man's *bona fides* in a matter of this kind consist

in his payment of the money? Could not the honourable gentleman have allowed the sales to go on in such a form as would have enabled these gentlemen to test the market? That would have been only fair. But the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government probably knew nothing about this. He only looked at the law, and said that the law must have its way, although, perhaps, he was aided in his interpretation of the law by the information he received from his colleagues. The Colonial Secretary is very good sometimes at blurting out the truth, and he did so on this occasion on the principle, no doubt, of "telling the truth and shaming the devil"—although I do not wish to associate the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government with the personage referred to in that proverb. It is uncommonly like it, however, for he has put his chief into a corner and made him look very foolish. I now proceed to notice what was said by the Colonial Secretary in reference to the Education Department, leaving aside for the present the general question, and touching only a matter in which I am specially concerned. The honourable gentleman was pleased to speak of the town of Maryborough as a pet constituency of the late Ministry, and in this sense I must take up the cudgels. Maryborough was instanced as a case in which the Act had been frightfully over-ridden, saying that the people there had not contributed their fair quota according to the Act, and that the leader of the Opposition, in his capacity as Minister of Education, had shown undue favour to Maryborough in virtue of its being a "pet constituency." The honourable gentleman is in error. I do not say he made a false statement, because that is not in my line, but he was making an incorrect statement. The full contribution was originally made by the Maryborough people to their school under the old Act, and their school constituted a very valuable property. When the immigration depôt was finished, it was considered by many that it would be more suitable for a school, and that the old school would be quite suitable, with some slight repairs, for an immigration depôt. Accordingly, the local committee advised the Government to exchange buildings, and, with the good will of the people of the town finally assured, the transfer was effected. What harm is there in that? There is no violation of the Act. Since, then, certain play-sheds have been built at this school, and the Maryborough people have contributed their quota towards that work to the uttermost farthing, although there was some little grumbling about it. Other matters connected with education I will leave the late Minister for Education to defend, but I must say that I am, and always have been, opposed to the system of contributing

one-fifth of the cost of school buildings. I believe it would be better to build schools entirely from the public resources, and that, if additions have to be made, the Government should take the responsibility of them. Although I do not believe in the contribution at all, I still think that the administration of the Act, as carried out by my honourable friend, is better, is more likely to contribute to the effective administration of the Act, than that which has been lately adopted under the new rules promulgated by the Government. Before proceeding to say a few words on the Address itself, there are just one or two other matters to which I had better refer at the present time. In the first place, the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government took occasion to express great indignation at some remarks made by the leader of the Opposition in respect to some ballast on the Western Railway. I suspect that not much importance was attached to the remarks of my honourable friend, but the honourable gentleman who criticised them took up the matter in a somewhat different way, and said it was a strictly professional question. If that be so, I would ask why did the honourable Minister for Works undertake to settle it by the light of his non-professional wisdom? The story is that the honourable gentleman went up to inspect the Western line, and seeing some ballast there which he did not approve of, instead of referring the matter to his professional adviser, the Engineer-in-Chief, he brought down a sample—I believe a gin-case full, to some office in town—I heard the *Courier* office—where it could be inspected. This was a very unfair proceeding to the Engineer-in-Chief—for, surely, if anyone is competent to judge of the quality of ballast it is a professional man. I know myself that when walking along the railway line you will see heaps of stuff, much of which appears unfit for ballast; and if you go to Ipswich where stone is crushed, or examine the Corporation stone heaps, you will find the same. The heavier matter gravitates, and you will see some metal large and other very small. It seems to me that the quality of ballast can only be judged on the whole. If what I hear is true, a sample of this ballast has been sent to Melbourne for further judgment by a professional man; and this is still more ridiculous, as I do not conceive that, whatever opinion may be expressed by this gentleman on the sample forwarded to him, any judgment could be given on the whole quantity, as you must judge on the spot, not by a specimen, but by a large quantity. Some objection was taken to a remark made by my honourable friend the leader of the Opposition, that the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Works happened, at the time of the election for

Northern Downs—being what I may call one of the undesigned coincidences that have happened lately—to be travelling in that direction, not on the polling-day, but some two days before; at any rate, by what I will call an undesigned coincidence, they were called in that direction. Those honourable gentlemen are somewhat inexperienced as Ministers, and I hope they will not take it amiss when I say that what I have called an undesigned coincidence may not always be accepted as such by the public. I give that advice in the best part possible, because they have not had that experience which I have had. Proceeding now to the Speech, I may remark that it would not have been unbecoming to have made some reference in it to the death of the late President of the Legislative Council, Sir Maurice O'Connell. He filled a conspicuous position here, and had acted as Governor, so that I think that it would only have been a fitting recognition of his long service to have taken notice of his decease in the Speech. It is an ordinary custom to take notice of the arrival and departure of Governors and Royal personages; and as the deceased gentleman held a high position in our domestic government, it would only have been becoming to have noticed his death in an official way. At the same time, I do not wish it to be supposed that the Government were not sensible of the very high services rendered by the late President of the Council, and I am only expressing my personal regret that the fact of his decease did not find a place in the Speech at the opening of Parliament. With regard to the Speech itself, I do not wish to say either that there is nothing in it or a great deal in it. I know that these addresses are usually constructed for certain purposes, and I do not myself place great reliance on opening speeches, knowing that they are a kind of formal announcement which the practice of Parliament renders necessary should be made, and which sometimes does not give quite so much information as you would expect, and sometimes touches on matters not always anticipated. I do not think Parliament, as a whole, should place much importance upon these official programmes. They are very often puzzles, and, as I know, there are great difficulties in constructing them. Sometimes I have had the greatest difficulty in the world in making a Governor's Speech, and I can quite sympathise with honourable gentlemen in the difficult task which lay before them in order to get through this Speech. There is a sort of artlessness in some parts of it, which has my entire approval and admiration; but it is not quite so definite on some points as I should like to see, or as the general public would like to have it. We who are within the inner circle, and who know the difficulty of construct-

ing these official notifications, are willing to make some excuse on the points which do not appear clear, but for the general public there is a want of definiteness and clearness on some matters for which they cannot easily account. Passing, however, to the first paragraph of the Local Government Bill which is advocated, I hope the Government will be successful in improving the law if they find it necessary; but I think that for many purposes the Local Government Bill which was passed last session is as good a Bill as you will get, and does not warrant the accusation brought against the late Government, and impliedly against their successors as well. You are only postponing the difficulty, and for many purposes the Local Government Bill of last session is a good one, and you will not get a better; but I never anticipated that it would come into effective operation until, at any rate, a session of Parliament subsequent to its being passed had been gone through, because at present local districts do not see the necessity of coming under its operation until Parliament has shown it does not intend to pursue the former system. The Act certainly anticipated that the districts would incorporate themselves under it, but experience tells us that they will not do so. It is not until they feel the shoe pinch that they will come under its operation, and the shoe pinches only when this House says it will not vote money for local works except under certain conditions. But I mean to say this, that the Local Government Bill passed last session is quite equal to do all the work you require. We have, however, always asserted that this Parliament would reserve to itself the right to vote certain sums for special works. For instance, my honourable friend has told us that there must be certain main lines of road constructed, which need not necessarily come under the operation of the Local Government Act, and for which a direct appropriation would have to be made, and which would still require to be made even if the Bill spoken of in the Speech is passed. If you expect to see the operation of any measure of local self-government you must wait; and you only arrive at the real kernel when you have decided upon the sums of money you will vote and what you will not vote. Let a district see the amount of money you will vote for it, and it will know what you mean by local self-government. Pressure will have to be brought to bear on districts in the way I have stated, for I believe there is no other way of securing their co-operation than by that means. At the same time, I may say that I am quite prepared to discuss such a question as this on its merits, but I think that it is not necessary to provide for outside districts in any very elaborate manner, for

they have not yet had to meet the demands of a large population, and therefore there is no such desire in those outside districts for local self-government as in the older established districts. It is in Moreton, Wide Bay, Rockhampton, Townsville, and in the Darling Downs districts that the inhabitants are most affected by measures of local government.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkins): They are not coming under them.

Mr. DOUGLAS: Then they will not come, I suppose, under your Bill either. However, it will be a cardinal principle of any Bill, I presume, that votes will be made by Parliament in an equivalent proportion to sums raised in any district, and it will be agreed that Parliament will be willing to find those means if the local districts will find the machinery for carrying out local government. I have not very much doubt, however, about their then coming in, but the principles I have indicated will have to be stringently applied; and I think I can promise for this side of the House, we will give full consideration to any measure on this subject the Government are prepared to bring forward. There is another tolerably definite announcement that there will be a loan, but there is a certain amount of haziness about what it is to be applied to. Then the settlement of population and internal communication are mentioned; but nothing is said about railways. The honourable gentleman has taken care to say nothing about railways at all. I must say I should like in time to know what really are his definite proposals. He may take plenty of time, and I am not sure it was necessary to say anything more than this in the Speech. And if this means there is to be a definite proposal for the making of certain railways, I shall be prepared to entertain it on its merits; and I hope it will not be long before we know what it is. However, it appears to be certain that there is to be a loan; and I presume from what the honourable gentleman has said before, that it will be a bigish loan. He has always said that when we were about to borrow we had better go in for something heavy. He always propounds a theory which leads me to suppose that, in the matter of loans, he is in favour of very heavy ordinance. I hope the honourable gentleman will also be prepared to remember that a loan means so many hundreds of thousands a year of revenue, if not taxation. I presume, therefore, he has forecast all this, and that in time, though there is to be no addition to taxation derived from the Customs, the means of paying the interest upon this loan are somehow or other to be found. And I dare say the honourable gentleman has the wit, and, I hope, the willingness, to discover the means of finding it. He

knows, and I know, that there is only one way of finding it. He has already indicated how. He has indicated that it is on the territorial revenue in some form or another that it is to be found. We cannot have an addition to our revenue of from two hundred to three hundred thousand pounds a year unless it is to come from the magnificent landed estate which we have, boundless as it is, and unmeasured in its resources. The honourable gentleman has already expounded to some extent, I believe, his ideas, and I assume when he announces his works and financial policy he will, at any rate, indicate how we are to derive this largely increased amount, which is inevitable, from the magnificent territorial revenue we possess. I must tell the honourable gentleman it cannot come from the industrial classes. They are already sufficiently burdened, and I will be no party to increasing the present burdens of the colony from such sources of revenue. I believe it is quite possible to obtain what is required, but it must be done by a process that has not been at all referred to in this Speech. His friend and colleague the Colonial Secretary told us that, though it has been intimated there will be no additional taxation from the Customs revenue, the Government is not precluded from arranging an entirely different tariff. Possibly this may be the means employed, and perhaps the honourable gentleman may announce that we are to have an entirely different tariff. It is possible, also, he may have measures in reserve in which he will indicate how he is to acquire the additional revenue which must necessarily follow from any large increase of our loan expenditure. One other matter which the Speech sets definitely within the policy of the Government is the Pastoral Leases Act of 1876, which is to be repealed. I do not think there is any necessity—bad as the administration of that Act has been, chiefly made bad by the insufficient means taken to make it effective—to pass a new Bill. If you touch this question, better touch the whole question of leases in the settled and unsettled districts alike; and if you wish to obtain additional revenue there is a way for it. If we are to open up country by extending railways in all directions it must unquestionably be on the principle that the districts benefited must find the means, and that must involve the complete re-consideration of the present pastoral tenure. It is time there was a re-consideration. The Government are at the present time powerful by members, and we must presume powerful by organisation. They have the best men amongst them in office, and now is the time to propose such a measure. If the present is not the time, then I do not think you will find a time for the proposal of the works policy

which I suppose the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government hugs to himself as the measure in which he places the greatest confidence for the retention of the confidence of the people. He has always propounded this scheme, and now he is in a position to carry it out. The plan may involve responsibility, but the Government have a strong following, and ought not to shrink from it. I have no hesitation in saying that the land question requires to be dealt with here quite as much as in the neighbouring colony of New South Wales, where it is indeed wanted. With regard to immigration, the conduct of the Government has been very different from what I should have expected from the honourable gentleman at its head. He, if any man, has invariably maintained that we should do all we could to support immigration. From the very outset he has affirmed that the best thing to do was not only to induce people to come out, but to assist them in coming. He has illustrated over and over again the value to the colony, above anything, of population—men, women, and children; and he has always up to the present time consistently adhered to those principles. I hope that this departure from those principles is only a temporary one. I am afraid he has been overborne by the influence which the honourable the Colonial Secretary exercises in this matter. That honourable gentleman has done exactly what he did in 1870, and has not justified the action he has taken. He asked, I think, one of my colleagues what he would have done under the circumstances: I have no hesitation in saying what my proposal would have been under the present circumstances. I do not think so much of the reduction in the number of the immigrants, but the way in which it has been done is most destructive to the best interest of the country. The simple and plain thing would have been to give instruction to the Agent-General that during the present year he was not to send out more than a certain number of ships—it might be half-a-dozen, or only three or four—anything to keep up the connection. But you have obliterated for the time all trace of the past—you have disconnected yourself with business—you have shut up your shop and practically declared your bankruptcy. You have done this just at the very time when it was necessary to convince the people of England that, though for the present we are not prepared to take a large number of immigrants, we wish to keep up the connection, in order that when the time comes to take more immigrants we may be prepared to do so. What more paltry excuse could there be than that offered by the honourable the Colonial Secretary—that he had stopped German immigration because there was no contract in existence? That hon-

ourable gentleman must know that a contract could have been got at any time even for a single ship, and that an advertisement in *The Times* would have secured any number of ships in a fortnight. So that after all, that was a mere paltry excuse, and no reason. You have therefore done the wrong thing by not reducing immigration to a moderate extent, and taking greater care of the immigrant. I am willing to acknowledge the fault of the late Government that they did not look after immigrants half enough; but then that would involve not only legislation, but the authority of this Parliament to a great extent. We ought—as I advocated as a private member years ago—to make distinct provision for the settlement of immigrants in a special manner by allocating certain Crown lands for that purpose, and laying ourselves out to make them available for that purpose. That has been done with advantage in New Zealand, and I endeavoured to introduce it here. I was met with insuperable difficulties. I was told that it was an attempt to plant in this vast wilderness certain “Edens” as satirised by Dickens in “*Martin Chuzzlewit*,” and the project was objected to by the House. I was not very sanguine that I should be able to carry it; but it has been apparent to me ever since that it is the proper way to encourage immigration. The argument used against it was, “why give a preference to the people of England and Germany against our own people?” That was a most fallacious principle. By setting aside certain portions of the magnificent land out west, and authorising an insignificant amount of money for laying out the land, I will undertake in a year or two to find thousands of people to settle there permanently. There is no difficulty about it. There is a way to do it; but the will is wanting. I hope still to be able to convince Parliament that this may be done. Moreover, I will never be a party to the borrowing of money and increasing the present indebtedness for public works, unless the expenditure is associated with the introduction of population. What is the reason for making railways, but to supply convenience for the people? It is simply ridiculous to increase public works and railways unless the population of the country is also increased. The ultimate justification for a works policy is, that while carrying on the works you are also introducing people, making the country habitable, and preparing it for further accretions of population. With regard to the paragraph concerning the A.S.N. Company, I will just simply say that, whatever may be urged from the other side, I believe my Government did a wise and patriotic thing in giving notice to the company. It was the right thing to do, and I would do it over again. Whatever

honourable members may say, I appeal to the past to show that our action was not one of words, but of acts. We acted deliberately, according to the best interests of the country, and I hope the course we took will be pursued and maintained. I do not, therefore, regret anything that has been done in this matter; and I will support the Government in carrying out this matter to its legitimate conclusion. I think they are right in refusing the terms of the A.S.N. Co. It is absolutely necessary that we should have communication with our Northern ports, and if that cannot be secured through the intervention of the company it must be secured in some other way. I agree with the honourable gentleman opposite that we must not be held bound hand and foot by the company, as it is said we are at the present time. We must find means to free ourselves, and carry out whatever may be necessary to maintain our communication with the Northern ports. I come now to the bank question—probably the most serious of all. The honourable gentleman at the head of the Government winced rather at the remarks made by the honourable leader of the Opposition. It is quite possible that he may have been somewhat justified in that, but he must remember that this question is very pressing, and one about which people are thinking, talking, and writing, more probably, than upon any other. I find from conversations that I have had that this matter is looked upon as one of the most serious, and one upon which we shall be called on to deliberate. The honourable gentleman, therefore, must not be surprised if his actions are carefully and, perhaps censoriously criticised. He has not been prudent, though to some extent we may make allowance for him in this respect. He was imprudent in entering so hastily upon the matter and then—without counting the cost, in drawing back. He ought to have seen from the first that it was not wise suddenly to interfere with the existing arrangements. That ought to have settled the matter, apart from the difficulty about the legal construction to be placed upon the existing arrangement. The honourable gentleman ought to have seen that it was not desirable to give such a brief notice, and, therefore, it was desirable that the agreement with the Union Bank should have been allowed, by giving notice to that effect, to run out in the ordinary course of six months. Shareholder as he is, and director as he was, in the Queensland National Bank, and one of the moving spirits of the bank, he must not be surprised that a certain amount of suspicion and jealousy was directed to his acts in connection with this matter, and that they would be narrowly observed. If, therefore, more has been said than ought to have been, I think he is himself to blame to a

great extent. I say at once that the explanation as to the way the tender was received is amply sufficient to satisfy me as to the complete *bona fides* of the honourable gentleman in that matter. I do not suppose that he would lend himself to any unfairness, but he must not forget that the public look upon him as an interested person. He has been instrumental in developing the policy of the bank, and his friend and colleague is a leading director.

Mr. PALMER: I am only a young director.

Mr. DOUGLAS: The honourable gentleman must necessarily be a leading director, because he is a man of strong will, and I must give him the credit that, wherever he may be placed, he will make himself felt. He is a man of strong marked individuality, and being so, and being a director of the National Bank, I must submit that the conclusions he arrives at will have a material influence upon the policy of that institution. This being the case, both the Colonial Treasurer and the Colonial Secretary must not be surprised that a certain amount of suspicion is directed to them in regard to this transaction. It is therefore very necessary that they should scan their actions very carefully, and avoid even the appearance of offence in this matter. The Queensland Bank is a local institution, and everybody, I think, wished that it should have fair play. I see no reason why it should not have a part of the Government account, or even the whole, if it can be shown that it is competent to carry out the work committed to it; but arriving at the point at which the tenders were received, and passing over the indiscretion and whatever suspicious acts may have been committed previously, I contend, when it became apparent that there were only two tenders put in, that, if there was anything approaching to reason in the terms on which the banks would do the public business, both tenders should have been accepted. One of the objects of having a Government account is to have, not only an institution in which to deposit your floating capital, but to have security that, if you want money, you are dealing with a bank competent to give it. Was it not the object of the Government, and ought it not now to be their object, taking a common-sense view of the matter and leaving out the special features that one tender was said to be somewhat lower than the other, to get as much strength as possible out of the banks? I say more strength would have been got by accepting both than by accepting only one.

Mr. McILWRAITH: What strength do we want?

Mr. DOUGLAS: I tell the honourable gentleman that this want may come before he anticipates.

Mr. McILWRAITH: It will be a pity for us if we should have to depend upon the banks.

Mr. DOUGLAS: It may be so, but what are you doing? It will be a pity, the honourable gentleman says, if we should ever have to depend upon the banks, and yet the Ministry are going to hand over our large balance of available Government money to one bank. They have various Government moneys, which are the property of the people, and are voted for certain purposes. What are the Government going to do with it? By this agreement they are going to hand over large proportions of this sum to one bank. It is possible that, when this agreement comes into force in September, the Government balance then available will exceed a million, and it may approach two millions. They are going to hand over that money to a bank or to two banks—I do not care which, having great doubts as to whether it should be given to any. I declare that I would almost prefer to invest it in 3 per cent. consols. As a positive fact, seeing the evil that has arisen in a neighbouring colony, and here even, from the application of public funds to private purposes, we must find some means of funding our money in a better way. In one respect the whole banking system is bad. In every place in the world there is great competition between the banks for money; and they give high rates for interest, and lend it out at a higher rate upon security which is not first class. What will be the outcome of this, apart altogether from the question of the Queensland National Bank, or a combination of associated banks? The outcome will be, that if we do not provide for the matter as we ought this session, the public funds will be handed over to the bank to operate on them for private purposes. The Colonial Treasurer is probably much better acquainted with banking business than I am, but I must say that I view with great distrust that the National Bank may have half-a-million of the public money to discount to its customers, and I hold this distrust for this reason, that at the present time you cannot invest money profitably on short dates. You may find long-dated investments. I do not mean to say that there is not plenty of property which will admit of investments of that kind, but there is very little property that will admit of your investing any large amount at short dates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I am sorry to hear the honourable gentleman say so, because it is an assertion of opinion based upon dangerous premises. It is, at least, debateable ground, and yet the Ministry propose to afford the means of large discount to one bank without having any certainty that when the money will be required it will be available. They have no right to play

ducks and drakes with the public money. It was lent us by home capitalists to improve our property, not for the purpose of increasing the discounts; such a thing was never contemplated, and yet that is what the Government plainly now contemplate. I point to the neighbouring colonies in illustration of the mischievous nature of this policy. I say what is contemplated cannot be done with safety. It will follow that you will require more loans. Having given a large amount of your money to be used in discounts, it may possibly be dangerous to withdraw it—you run, possibly, even the risk of losing the money altogether. You may induce an institution, by handing over to it large sums of the public money, to enter into large speculations to such an extent as to prevent us availing ourselves of the money when it may be needed. The very condition of the bank may be questioned—whether it be in a condition to place the public funds in it with safety. People have a right to know that the public money is safely invested. Interest is not the consideration, but the real consideration is security. I hope I have given the Colonial Secretary reasons for reviewing the dual position he now holds. I have not the slightest doubt that, if he does not take my opinion now, it will some time or other be forced upon him. I have not the slightest doubt that I shall be able to prove that he is holding positions incompatible with each other. If these advances are made, the bank will inevitably operate upon them. The honourable gentleman is the guardian, associated with his colleagues, of the public interest, and he will assuredly never contend that he is justified in transferring his trust to a private institution, whatever its credit may be. We shall hold him accountable if he dares to speculate with the public funds—if he dares to give that institution the means which will enable it to speculate with the public funds. We have had sufficient warning to deter us from facilitating such a thing. I am justified in making these remarks, because the Colonial Treasurer has stated that what was wanted was capital for distribution. The more capital we can get through the legitimate channels of commerce—banking and so forth—the more we can induce capitalists to place their trust in us—the better; but not in this form. I will never give my consent to the application of the public funds for purposes of private speculation, for that is what it will come to. I say we are on the verge of it. The honourable gentlemen opposite are competent to carry out such a principle, but they shall never have my consent. I have thus, I trust, given some reasons why a considerable amount of attention, and even suspicion, should be attracted to the action of the Government;—in this respect my motives arise entirely

from a desire to serve the real interests of the country, and I believe I am doing so in thus giving expression to my opinion. I desire and am anxious to see all due facilities given to the establishment of local banking institutions. They may be of the utmost benefit to us, and are certainly much preferable to institutions that have their directors at some other seat of commerce. Every encouragement should be given to the Queensland National Bank, which I look upon in that sense, or as an approach to what I hope to see carried out on a larger scale hereafter, because I do not think we shall have our commercial and industrial wants properly looked after until we have local banks with local shareholders and managed by local directors. These I am sure will be of great benefit; but never imagine for one moment that I will give my support to bolster up even a local institution with the public funds in order to promote even the very best objects. The objects may be good, but they ought not to be promoted in this way, and I count upon the intelligent support of what I believe to be a large majority of this House in determinedly putting our foot upon any attempt of the Government to carry out any system of this kind. They must be warned by what has occurred in New South Wales, where we see the most suspicious transactions between the Government and the banks. Let us hope we shall never see any such transactions here, for I am sure they cannot conduce to the good of the community. I have thus discharged my conscience in making this statement simply for the good of the colony. I shall endeavour to assist honourable gentlemen opposite in everything I can agree with; and where I cannot agree with them I will oppose and thwart them as much as I can, with the endeavour to carry out what I believe to be, not the advantage of any political party, but the necessities and well-being of the country at large.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan): I think, sir, after the long speech we have just heard, the honourable member need not complain of not having spoken before. He has tried the patience of the House, and I am sure the patience of his late colleagues, in the speech he has just delivered. However, as far as I am concerned, I shall leave his speech to a later portion of my own, and confine myself as much as possible to what was spoken by the leader of the Opposition yesterday evening, and especially to his attack upon myself. He began his speech, as I thought, in a very pleasant and benign manner, telling the House that he would assist the Government in carrying on the business of the country as far as he possibly could. I certainly expected from that, and from

other circumstances that came to my knowledge during the recess, that the honourable gentleman had changed his conduct—that, like the snake that hibernates and comes out and changes its skin, he had also changed his skin and was going to appear in the House in a different position, and use different language to what he had been in the habit of using formerly; but I find that the Ethiopian is still the Ethiopian, and I believe it is impossible for the honourable gentleman to be anything else than he really is. Yesterday evening he began by accusing myself, first, for being here; and secondly, as to the manner in which I came here; but I believe the whole head and front of my offence, so far as he is concerned, is that I am here at all—that I am here to confront him and his late colleague who has just sat down. I remember well upon the last occasion, when this House was debating a speech similar in nature but not in matter to the present, the gentleman who has just sat down, with somewhat feminine spite, called out exultingly, "Where is the member for Kennedy?—where's the member for Rockhampton?" I now answer that honourable gentleman that the honourable member for Kennedy is here, and the honourable member for Rockhampton is where he ought to be. He took exception to the placing of the late member for Rockhampton in the Upper House because he was a defeated candidate, but I ask if fault is to be found with the Government for placing in the Upper House that gentleman, who, when he was a member of this Assembly, commanded the respect of all honourable members, and who proved by his ability that he was capable of being a Minister of the Crown—what fault, I ask, should not be found with the placing of his predecessor there? That gentleman was placed there without having evinced any evidence of his ability or desire to enter into politics. No doubt he afterwards proved himself to be an able leader in the other House—I give him every credit for having conducted the public business properly, but I say the act of placing him there was one which received the reprobation of the House and the country; but has there been a single whisper against the placing of the late member for Rockhampton in the Upper House? None whatever, except from the honourable gentleman himself and two or three of his supporters. With regard to what he said respecting the late member for Townsville resigning his seat to allow me to take his place in this House, he is very kind for granting that gentleman, myself, and the people of Townsville what he could not refuse us. Coming now to the gist of his accusation against me, which is that I came here, and came here by a majority larger than was received by perhaps any member

of the House, considering the opposition I had to encounter, an opposition brought about by that gentleman himself, and by the secret workings which he controls through his family and political connections. He insinuates that that majority was got in an unfair and improper way. That I utterly deny. In fact, his whole speech, as far as regards myself as Minister for Works, was one long tissue of imputations, with the exception of one assertion, which, unfortunately for him, is utterly untrue. I think the gentleman who occupies the position of leader of the Opposition, which is only second to that of the leader of the Government, should take up a different rôle from being the insinuator, and one who tries to take away the character of any member of the House. I think nothing can be baser than to insinuate, and to try to filch away a man's character by insinuations, when he has not the manliness or the courage to make the accusation boldly. He says the Government was guilty of a most extraordinary act in appointing two polling-places outside the electorate of Townsville, and within three-quarters of a mile of each other. But they were two miles and a-half from each other; I know the distance well, having ridden, and walked, and driven over it, and he knows it as well as other members of the House. Then he is surprised at the enormous majority that was obtained there, and asks triumphantly, did anybody believe that there were any electors within twenty miles of those polling-places? Unfortunately for the people of Townsville, on former occasions they had never had justice done to them in the appointment of polling-places in that portion of the country. There is a large population living in Townsville who live by carrying: it is estimated that there are about 250 carriers in Townsville, and they employ men to accompany them on their journeys, so that altogether there are about 350 living by carrying in the electorate of Townsville. The majority of them are carrying on the Charters Towers road, and one of these polling-places—Fanning Downs—was appointed for their convenience. At the other polling place, at the Burdekin Bridge, there is a population of from 60 to 80. Besides all this, I can tell the honourable gentleman what he does not know, and what, perhaps, the late head of the Government does not know, although he ought to know something about it, that when the collection of the electoral rolls took place for Townsville, the collectors, either from want of instructions by the bench or from want of knowledge of the country, actually collected the roll for Townsville up to the banks of the Burdekin and beyond it. There were men put into the electorate of Townsville actually living at the Charters Towers side

of the Burdekin, as the honourable gentleman can satisfy himself by looking at the roll. Now, we know that the mining population of the North, and in fact of the whole colony, is rather given to changing places of residence; also that a very large public work is being carried out at Townsville—namely, the jetty—where about 180 men are employed; but when the rolls were collected every one of them was put on the roll, but at the time the election took place there were only 76 remaining there: where were the remainder of the 180? They were at Charters Towers—that was where the majority came from. The travellers upon the road were compelled to camp there, as was said last night, because the Burdekin was in flood. The men at the Burdekin Bridge, the absent electors from Townsville and at Charters Towers, combined with the men living upon stations between fifty and sixty miles from these two polling-places, make up the majority. The honourable gentleman said he had received certain information; whence did he get it? From one of two sources—from his own paid agent, the gentleman who opposed me in Townsville.

MR. GRIFFITH: Nonsense.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The gentleman does not say it is nonsense. If it was not from him it was from another gentleman at Charters Towers whose word is worth nothing whatever. Anyone who knows the person I allude to knows that any statement he makes is not fit to be trusted. Everyone who knows the man I allude to knows that not a word he utters can be trusted, more especially anything that concerns me. I think I have given the honourable member a sufficient reason for the majority I polled at those two places. And the reason why those two polling-places were so close together was this, that what would suit the carriers would not suit the men at the bridge, and what would suit the men at the bridge would not suit the carriers. The polling-place for the carriers was on the main road at the ferry across the river, at the house he spoke of as a "shanty;" and the polling-place for the men at the bridge was at the bridge itself. They could not afford to lose a day's work to give a vote, and they voted in the most convenient place for themselves. I know there were men who rode sixty miles on that day to give their vote. But if the honourable gentleman will analyse the votes given elsewhere, he will find that the majorities in my favour were equally as large proportionately; and I think I have sufficiently explained why so large a number voted at the Burdekin Bridge and Fanning Downs. The honourable member also asserted that, when the scrutineers of my opponent came down to do their duty, they crossed the bridge and were mobbed. That is untrue. Those gentlemen never crossed

the river at all. They located themselves at a public-house on the Charters Towers side of the river, and stayed there until they got half drunk, when they were joined by the scrutineers who came to act for me, and, being all hot partisans, a quarrel arose and blows were exchanged. But there was no mobbing. There were only three men on one side and two on the other; and my information on this point is equally as correct, and, I believe, more so, as that of the honourable gentleman. The honourable gentleman says—

“The whole transaction may have been quite innocent, but it certainly looks as if a remarkable inference could be drawn on behalf of the Minister for Works.”

I think I have shown what that “remarkable inference” is. When the honourable gentleman charged me with using my position as Minister for Works to act unfairly in the election, he was simply looking at himself in a mirror. When he went North as Minister for Works, ostensibly on an official visit, but really on an electioneering tour, his conduct was certainly very unlike mine. When I was contesting the election at Townsville I never went near the working men employed on the public works, and I particularly refrained from addressing them lest it might be charged against me that I was misusing my position as Minister for Works in order to influence the votes of the men employed. The chief difficulty I found in Townsville arose from the great number of idle men whom the promises of the previous Minister for Works had drawn thither. We were actually compelled to commence the construction of the railway to Charters Towers before we were ready, in order to give employment to 260 men who were brought there on the promise of the late Minister for Works, no doubt for electoral purposes. The honourable gentleman also charged me with using my position as Minister for Works to influence the election for the Northern Downs, and the honourable member for Maryborough spoke in the same connection about an undesigned coincidence. What an “undesigned coincidence” may be I cannot tell, but there was no coincidence designed or undesigned in the matter. The leader of the Opposition says distinctly that the Minister for Lands and myself were at the Northern Downs on the day of the election. The Premier said last night that that was untrue, and the honourable member for Maryborough, letting his leader down as easily as possible, said that probably it was only an “undesigned coincidence” that we travelled together, and he gave us his advice as a veteran politician—advice which I certainly shall not take, because, although not so old a politician as he is, I think I am quite as wise. I tell him and the leader of the Opposition that the Minister for Lands and

myself never travelled one mile by railway together since we became Ministers of the Crown; and that so far from being on the Northern Downs on the day of the election, I was in the Works Office in Brisbane.

The Hon. Mr. GRIFFITH: How long before the day of election?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have often been obliged to bring the honourable gentleman to book to prove his untruthfulness, and if we remain in the House long together I shall often have to do it again. There is a certain twist in his moral character which prevents him from stating the truth, but of course he is not responsible for it any more than he is for the colour of his hair. What really happened was this: On Easter Monday I received information that the ballast that was being used on the Western line was not according to contract, and on that day I made arrangements with the Commissioner for Railways to visit the line and inspect the ballast. The gentlemen who accompanied me and the Commissioner for Railways were the Chief Engineer and the Resident Engineer of the Southern and Western line. Not a word of politics was spoken between us or any other individual from the moment we left Brisbane till our return, with the exception of a conversation I had with Mr. H. Thorn and Mr. Hugh Nelson on the platform at Miles. They wished me to afford facilities to the men working on the line to go and record their votes. After consultation with the Resident Engineer, who assured me it was usually done, I accorded that permission. My entire absence from Brisbane lasted only twenty-four hours, during which time I travelled 500 miles, and I should like to know what opportunities I had for going about electioneering? I went up for the specific purpose of seeing the ballast, and I brought back a sample of it which is now in the Works office. A week afterwards I went up again and brought back larger samples, one portion of which was sent to Melbourne and another to Adelaide. The honourable gentleman says I should not presume to interfere in a professional matter. But if I am not to judge in a matter of this kind, who is? I think I have as much right to judge of the quality of the ballast as the honourable member for Maryborough. Am I not responsible to the House and the country for the due performance of the contract entered into between the contractor for the Western line and the Government? I ought to know what good clean gravel means as well as the honourable member for Maryborough or the senior member for Brisbane—I have handled enough of it in my time. But the ballast used was not good clean gravel according to the terms of the contract, and it was never said to be. It was simply said that it

would make a good road. But if we are to pay the price of good clean gravel and get an inferior gravel for the money, I, as Minister for Works, am bound to see that the terms of the contract are carried out, or else to see that a lower price is paid for the inferior article. There is a history connected with these contracts, a history which is not very creditable to the gentlemen composing the late Government. I have lately gone through all the documents pertaining to the history of this transaction, and if I laid them on the table of the House, they would surprise some honourable members who speak highly of the late Government's method of entering into contracts. With regard to my visit to Townsville, and that of the leader of the Opposition—both electioneering, I for myself and he for others—I have this to say, that he not only caused embarrassment to his successor by bringing unemployed men there from all parts of the North, but he also embarrassed me as Minister for Works and member for Townsville in a way which I think is not very creditable. A very large proportion of that town is still Crown land—indeed, with the exception of a few small allotments sold long ago, the whole of one side of the main street is Crown land. It happens that upon these Crown lands a great many people have squatted, and they have built houses along the creek—in fact, all along one side of the main street. The Government are receiving no rent or benefit from them whatever, and the Corporation are only receiving a sort of quit-rent, and that not much. A site on this land was selected for building a telegraph office, but the person who lived upon it, and who had used it for years—in fact, it is the very best site in Townsville, as many honourable members may be aware, and a site that would sell well—that person refused to go without being compensated for moving off—for moving off Crown land. Now, what did the honourable gentleman opposite do? Why, sir, he actually awarded this man £50 for compensation, at the same time saying he had no legal right. It happened very unfortunately for the honourable member that Mr. William Davie, the man to whom the compensation was awarded, was the candidate who opposed Mr. John Deane, the late member for Townsville. The consequence of the action taken by the honourable gentleman has resulted in this way:—Alongside this site for the telegraph office there is another person at present living named Wilson, and the piece of land on which he lives is also required for the office, but he refuses to go because Mr. Davie had compensation. The place will be required most probably within the next six months—at least, I hope so—for the purpose of making the railway, and the consequence will be that we shall have to eject these people, and I, as Minis-

ter for Works, shall have to bear the blame; but I shall, notwithstanding, do my duty as Minister for Works, even if it costs me my seat. Yet the honourable gentleman opposite, who is the cause of it, stands up in this House and accuses me of doing that which I have not done in Townsville. In connection with this railway which I have said I hope to see made, I have something to say. The honourable gentleman has stated that the new Minister for Works, "like a new broom, not only sweeps clean, but sweeps away all that his predecessors had done;" but, as has been stated by the honourable Premier, we have made no alteration in the rolling-stock, but only in the gradients and in the weight of the rails. We did that in the interest of the country, and we should not have been doing our duty had we not done so; I think, also, I may say that we have a preponderance of professional opinion in our favour. We must recollect that the Northern railway is what is called a trunk line; it is one which I believe ultimately will have as large a traffic to bear as either the Central or the Western line, and with that future before it we must take care not to make a mistake in the construction of it. I maintain that the honourable gentleman made a very serious mistake. He asked Mr. Stanley and Mr. Ballard for their opinions on the question of cheap railways—

Mr. GRIFFITH: I have not seen them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have the papers here; they have been printed for some time past, but if the honourable gentleman has not seen them, I believe he is at any rate fully aware that Mr. Stanley condemned light rails. Mr. Ballard proposed 25lb. rails, but Mr. Stanley would not agree to laying down lighter rails for that description of line than 35lb. steel rails, although he said, under some circumstances, he would consent to 30lb. rails; but the honourable gentleman—being, I suppose, an engineer himself—took the medium and got an Executive minute passed authorising 30lb. rails. I will just read Mr. Stanley's memorandum, and I think every honourable member will say that we acted rightly in rescinding that portion of the minute. Mr. Stanley says—

"Experience has shown that our rail of 40 lbs. to the yard—weighing 41½ lbs. in steel—is rather light to be economical for the traffic it has to bear, especially on those portions of the line where sharp curves and steep gradients are prevalent, although the weights on the drivers of the locomotives, with a few exceptions, are well proportioned to it."

Further on he says—

"Even for the light lines now contemplated, I should not recommend the adoption of a lighter section of rail than 35lbs. to the yard in steel, as I am confident that no economy would result in the long run from doing so."

The actual reduction in first cost, effected by substituting a 30lb. rail, would only amount, at present rates, to about £83 per mile, the saving in annual interest upon which would certainly not compensate for the increased cost of maintenance due to an inferior class of permanent-way. It would be preferable, in my opinion, to lay the road, in the first place, with a minimum quantity of ballast, and lessen the speed, rather than reduce the weight of the rail below what I have recommended; for in the former case the permanent-way could at any time be improved by putting on an additional quantity of ballast, whilst to relay with a heavier rail, should the development of traffic necessitate it, would prove an expensive matter and occasion more or less inconvenience to the working of the line."

Further on he says something which is more conclusive still—

"With respect to the adoption of a gradient of 1 in 25, as suggested by the honourable the Secretary for Public Works, it will be found upon investigation that, under ordinary circumstances, the saving effected in the first cost is inconsiderable, whilst the carrying capacity of the line would be reduced fully one-half, and the cost of equipment and working expenses largely increased, as more than double the number of trains would be required to convey the same weight of goods."

Now, I ask any honourable member whether we should have been justified in continuing a line of this character, with a gradient of 1 in 25, and with rails of 30lb. weight, knowing that that line would be doubly handicapped afterwards as regards the traffic on it? I think not; and, seeing that the engineer of the Southern and Western district so strongly recommended a gradient of 1 in 50, and 40lb. rails, we were quite justified in rescinding the minute. There is another point in connection with this line which will bear a strange proportion to the cost of it, and that is the way in which it is carried out. The line, on starting from Townsville, starts on an island on the opposite side of the creek from where the township is built; it is carried along on what is called an island, which is, in fact, an island formed by the separation of the river and a creek. Upon this island the railway starts, and it is carried across it and then crosses the river, and so into the interior. The whole of the portion called the Island is a swamp, and in heavy rainy weather is subjected to inundation—in fact, to heavy floods. It is known to the residents of Townsville, and they are not very old ones, that horses and cattle have been swept away in not very heavy floods. When I was there I rode, in company with some other gentlemen, across the island, but we could not go where it is proposed to take the line—it was too soft. This portion of the line would not only cost a very heavy sum for maintenance, but it goes through private

property for six and a half miles. Well, sir, when a blunder of this sort is made in railway engineering, one would naturally ask, as a policeman asks in the commission of a crime, who is to receive any profit from it? Is there any individual in this House who has any interest or profit in the carrying out of this blunder? Yes, there is; and that gentleman who is so well able to make insinuations against Ministers, who is so well able to make insinuations of dishonesty against them—that gentleman is the man who has an interest and profit in this line. He is part owner of the land through which the line runs, through which at least it is surveyed, but not, as I hope, through which it will be carried. He is a partner with the late Manager of the Joint Stock Bank, at Townsville, and they purchased the land as a speculation, as I know that the late Manager of the Joint Stock Bank boasted that he expects to get £70 or £80 an acre from the Government for it. That is why the honourable gentleman was so interested in keeping me from being a member of the House for this very town in which the blunder was perpetrated. It is no wonder he did so; and the honourable gentleman should be the very last member in this House to make a charge, either direct or indirect, against me as Minister for Works. During the last session of Parliament, when he displaced the present honourable member for Darling Downs, and became Minister for Works, Mr. Stanley was engineer for the Northern line; the appointment was made by his predecessor, who refused it to Mr. Ballard, as that gentleman insisted on certain terms. He and Mr. Douglas assured Mr. Stanley that he would have the making of that line. Immediately the late Minister for Works went to the Works Office, he asked Mr. Stanley how far the plans for the construction of the Townsville and Charters Towers line were advanced; and Mr. Stanley referred him to a memorandum stating that he was carrying out certain deviations. The line was taken from Mr. Stanley and given to Mr. Ballard, whether to prevent this deviation or not I cannot say. The deviation, at any rate, would have been a dangerous thing for this speculation. Now, I am determined to carry out a deviation, and as Minister for Works I should be unworthy of my place if I did not do so. It will carry the railway, every inch of it, through Crown lands. Not a yard of land will be purchased of any individual, and it will enhance the value of the Crown property through which it will pass. Another Toowong or Milton can be established within two miles of Townsville, by taking the course along the line, which I intend to pursue if the House will give me permission. If the other plan be adopted, every inch of land

for six or seven miles will have to be purchased, and the route would be in other respects a most expensive one. On the other hand, the deviation I propose is upon firm hard ground, upon a road which has never been known to be impassable, which is easy of construction, and almost as level as this floor. Is it not wonderful that this was never found out before? The inhabitants of Townsville certainly did try their best during the late Administration to have a line taken into the town; but engineers and Ministers were both against it. I hope the honourable gentleman will in future, when he is dealing with me as Minister for Works, insinuate nothing, but make a charge if he has one, and if I am not able to meet it let me go to the other side of the House. When we come to think of the enormous robberies—for I can call them nothing else—which have been perpetrated in this colony from the making of railways over private property—when we come to know the extraordinary value which has been placed upon parcels of land taken by the Railway Department for railway construction, we should be careful in an extreme degree in carrying railways through land which is the property of private individuals. If there is a possibility of taking a line through Crown lands, it should always be done where the construction will admit of it. We have heard a good deal about immigration and the dismissals from the public works. I think the way in which these two questions have been discussed prove that the gentlemen who have been considering them have not studied the two questions together as they ought to have done. Before entering into these questions I will comment upon a remark made by the leader of the late Government, respecting my dismissal of men from the Ipswich workshops. He asks us if we have not the courage to look before us and hope and believe on the resources of the great colony. I tell him I have the courage to believe in those resources, and have spoken in defence of them against themselves when they sat on this side of the House. We had the courage to do that which almost every member of this House knows ought to have been done, and which the Opposition when they were here had not the courage to do. The late Minister for Works (the member for Darling Downs) said that he was able to dispense with one-third of the men in his Department. Why did he not do it? Let him say why, and whether it was not because his colleagues lacked the courage. This cry of stopping immigration amounts to this: we did stop immigration; we have dismissed men from the roads; we shall dismiss a certain number from the workshops where they are not required;—and I ask whether it is not better to have stopped immigration and leave places

open, which immigrants would have taken, for those who are dismissed. Now, the Opposition would try to make the working man believe that they are his friend. They are not; they are his foe. They would bring immigrants to the coasts of Queensland without caring what became of them, and I say that we are acting in the interests of the working man in stopping immigration and in reducing the expenditure on public works. Who pays the greatest bulk of the taxation derived from the Customs but the working man;—is not this the money which maintains chiefly those idlers on the public roads and in the workshops? I did not take upon myself to dismiss any man from the roads and workshops without due deliberation. I have been a working man—why should I injure the working man; but where the working man has to put his hand in his pocket to sustain incompetent men in keeping them in work which were far better not done, then, sir, I will not be a party to such a thing. When I took office as Minister for Works I found an army of no less than 2,500 men in the Department, paid entirely from the revenue of the country—not from loan revenue, but from the consolidated revenue—an army of 2,500 men in one Department with our limited population. If our resources in the future are ever so great, yet they require to be developed, and with an army of this sort weighing us down, as this has done in the past, how is it to be expected to carry on the construction of railways in the interior and on the coast as it ought to be carried out? I have dealt out these dismissals indifferently. I have not done it in the north or the south, the east or the west, alone; each has received the same meed of justice. But where was the cry of unjust dismissals raised? Why, only in Ipswich. And why? We have not dismissed men because they were political partisans, or because they belonged to any creed, but we have dismissed only those who were not wanted, though they might have been placed in their positions because they were political partisans. Before I took upon myself to dismiss any men, I took very good care to ascertain to what length I could go, and I may tell honourable members that I can go even still further. I have a recommendation now lying in the Works Office which enables me to discharge an even larger number of subordinates than is proposed, and which recommendation I have not yet acted on. And now what is all their cry about the dismissals? When I took office the first thing I did was to ascertain the number of men in the Department; the next thing was whether they were wanted or not. I ascertained the amount of rolling-stock in hand and under construction, and found the amount that was required, and I then dis-

covered that we were making rolling-stock at least twelve months a-head of our requirements. I will not be one of a party to sit in this House to maintain men on such terms as these at large wages simply for the sake of keeping them in employment. Such a course as this the working men of this colony neither expect nor require. They are able and willing to work for themselves, and the colony should not bind itself to maintain idlers. For myself, I have simply applied the broom spoken of by the honourable leader of the Opposition to the antechamber of corruption;—that broom will be applied elsewhere. So long as I remain Minister for Works I shall endeavour to carry out the arrangements of the Works Office as I conceive they should be carried out—not on political but upon commercial principles. If I can, I will endeavour to go beyond the construction of railways—I will make railways pay, and if I do so I shall surely earn the gratitude of every head of the Works Department who may come after me, and who will say—"Thank God that there was one Minister for Works who had the courage to sweep away the corruption which existed in this department of the public service." The leader of the late Government has said a good deal about the borrowing of money for the construction of railways. Now, I ask him what is the use of borrowing money or constructing railways if we do not make them pay. We do not, surely, construct them for the pleasure of making them, but for an ulterior purpose—the purpose of opening up the country and developing its resources. The more revenue that we have to dispose of in paying for money borrowed, the more railways we shall be able to construct, but we must first reduce unnecessary expenditure. That principle has never been applied, because we have never had a Minister for Works with sufficient courage. Even you, sir, though you had courage, had not sufficient courage for that. The honourable member for Darling Downs, who has courage enough to do many things that another would not do, had not sufficient courage for that. He knew that the Works Department was not what it should be—that the house required to be swept by the new broom which has been referred to. If he had attempted to do what I am trying to do, I would have given him a hearty assistance, and I expect him to assist me in doing what he should have done. As to the politics of these men, I do not know the creed or country of a single man in the workshops; but this I do know, that I have had many complaints made to me by gentlemen not holding the politics of that side of the House, that I had not given them fair play. Day after day, men have come to the Works Office—not men of the religion and politics some mem-

bers may think—complaining that I have not acted fairly. So that when I find both sides complaining I know that I have done right. As to the capacity of these men, I believe I have also acted in that regard with discretion. I may have made mistakes, but, if so, they are such mistakes as every Minister of Works or any Minister of the Crown is liable to make. I believe that if not all, nearly all, were bad men, and more or less incompetent for the work they were employed at. Whether or no, of this much I am certain—their work at the present time is not required; and I shall never be a party to reducing wages, as suggested by the honourable member for Wide Bay, for it is a principle I never did believe in. I say if a man is able to do a fair day's work he should get a fair day's pay. Another proposition—made by the honourable member for Ipswich—that we should dispense with a fourth of the men, and take them back in a month's time, was a most ridiculous proposition. Those men should be dispensed with, and if I remain Minister for Works they will be dispensed with, and others besides. As a sample of the incompetence of the men, the honourable leader of the late Government could hardly have made a more unfortunate choice of an individual case than he did. I know, from information received, he is not worthy of the money he has been receiving; and, that, if we want a pattern-maker, fifty equal to him can be found in the colony. As another example, I may mention that we have been paying tradesmen's wages to thirteen carriage-painters; and, out of the thirteen, three only were tradesmen. These were the competent men spoken of by the honourable member for Ipswich. I may also tell that honourable gentleman that the information he gave the House yesterday evening, concerning a man being taken on, is not correct. I took the opportunity to telegraph to Ipswich—"Has any man been taken on since authority was given to dispense with men on the 6th instant," and the answer I received was—"No one taken on since in this department—G. F. Moore, per Superintendent." No charge has been made by the honourable gentlemen who have spoken on the other side of the House, either in connection with road parties, regarding my election, or my conduct as Minister of Works, which is not utterly untrue. I have never acted otherwise than conscientiously; but since I have sat as Minister for Works I have been stricter with myself than usual, and shall continue to be so while in that department. All the insinuations of the honourable leader of the Opposition are utterly without foundation. I have never in my lifetime been guilty of an act which I would not acknowledge before the whole world, and my acts in the Railway Depart-

ment stand in the same position. I do not know the religion of a single man in the workshops. I do not know a single man of them by sight. I have never been in the workshops of Ipswich until I went, about three weeks ago, accompanied by the present leader of the Government and some other honourable members; so it is impossible that I could have had any bias in the matter. The information concerning these men was obtained, first from the local superintendent, next from the Commissioner of Railways, and next from the clerk in charge. I am quite confident, as sure as that I am standing here, that the action I have taken is right, and that the selection also is right. The same thing has been said in connection with the Roads Department. The junior honourable member for Enoggera complained to me one day that some men were going to be dismissed from a road party, and the honourable member can tell what answer I gave. Those men wanted to have reduced wages instead of being dismissed. The fact of the matter was this: different road parties who had done their work round East and West Moreton were being discharged, and I found that the road overseer, instead of discharging the gangers along with the men, put two or three gangers into a party and discharged the men. These men were then receiving gangers' wages, and I said that should not be so; no distinction should be made between gangers and men. The honourable member desired that the men should be allowed to remain in the place of the men discharged at lower wages. I said that the men displaced should go back to work and the gangers take their chance with the others. Every act of mine has been of a similar complexion to that; and I challenge any man in the House, or out of it, to prove otherwise. Dismissals have taken place in every portion of the colony, and will go on until I have reduced the number of men on the railways so that they can be carried on on true commercial principles. I do not intend to have one idle man, or one man too many, in the Railway or Roads Department. In future, as far as possible, I shall abolish the old road system, and, instead of allowing men to do the "Government stroke" for 6s. a day, I shall try to call for tenders for what is to be done. If any former Minister for Works had tried to do this he would have received the applause of members on the other side of the House; and it is simply because I am not their Minister for Works that I am blamed. If I were their Minister for Works my conduct would be praised by them, and by the press that represents them; but, because I am of the party with which I have been connected during the last three years—the party which I believe

to be the right party and the national party—I am maligned and calumniated by those honourable members and the press representing them. I would finally ask those honourable members who have found fault with the action of the Government, whether the Government have not done the proper thing? Have they not done what every individual in private life would do, if he succeeded to an estate overburdened with debt through the extravagance of a former possessor—have they not done what any honest man would have done?—reduce expenditure in order to bring it within his means—which, so far from injuring the credit of the individual, would be the course most likely to induce the creditors to lend still more money. The same thing applies publicly as privately; and I believe the action we have taken, when it becomes known to the public creditors in England, so far from causing them to regard our demand for a loan—should we want one—with eye askance, will make them more willing to lend, because they will see we have the courage to carry out the policy of economy which should be carried out by every honest man.

Mr. KINGSFORD said he did not intend to speak to the main question, but moved the adjournment of the debate, in order that an honourable member against whom some charges had been made in the powerful speech of the honourable Minister for Works might have an opportunity of replying.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: After the charges which have been made against me by the Minister for Works in his speech, I desire that my answer shall appear in the same newspapers which contained the charges. Those statements have been circulated as slanders against me for the last six months; they were circulated industriously during the North Brisbane election by the committee who promoted the return of my colleague in the representation. I challenged them to come forward and say publicly what they had to say, and not one of them dared. I have given this challenge publicly, and this is the first time that any man in the colony has dared publicly to make the accusation the Minister for Works has made. He has not made it directly it is true, but I will put on his words the only meaning that they can have. The honourable gentleman has been complaining a great deal about the way he had been calumniated, but he should have been the last to do the same thing himself. He seems this evening to have forgotten the responsible position in which he is placed, and that his duty is to administer the affairs of the country, defend himself when attacked, and not make slanderous attacks upon others. The attack that he has made upon me was, that when he went to Towns-

ville, he saw that the first mile or so of the railway from there proceeds over low swampy ground, which is private property and is utterly unfit for railway making, and that close by there is another route available running over Crown lands perfectly high and dry. He asked who had the motive in seeing the line take this course, and he said that I had. He dared not say, however, that I had anything to do with the selection of the route, but leaves the public to infer that it was chosen at my instigation and by my means. The honourable gentleman knows very well that he is asserting a malicious slander against me. I will tell the House the facts. The honourable gentleman says that during the time the late Government were in office a deviation of the line was suggested: that I believe to be perfectly true. He also says that when I took charge of the Works Department Mr. Stanley's engineers were surveying a deviation, and he suggested that it was just out of Townsville, but in reality, as he ought to have known, it was situated some fifteen or sixteen miles from Townsville. It was continued and completed before I left the Works Office. Now I will say something about the other deviations. The deviation suggested in August last, when the honourable member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) was Minister for Works, was one that would have brought the railway across a piece of mangrove, and would have involved I do not know how much in the purchase of a large amount of valuable private property. I believe it was unanimously condemned by everyone, and I tell the honourable gentleman this—it would have been a great advantage to myself if carried out. With respect to the other, he suggests—and if he does not suggest what I say there is no point in his charge—that I had something to do with fixing the route of the line. The facts are, the line was surveyed in 1876, or earlier, but in 1876 the plans were laid upon the table of this House; no question was ever raised about the route. I never had been in Townsville up to that time. The route was passed by this House, but the plans were rejected by the Council. In 1877 the same plans were brought before the House, and approved without objection. They were also approved by the Council, the money was borrowed, and instructions were given to carry out the railway on the plans. That was how the matter stood in 1877. I had never heard of this land in which it is said I have an interest until the railway line had been surveyed and twice approved by this House. I heard of it first when some months afterwards I was at Townsville. A gentleman there, Mr. Sachs, informed me that he had bought some land belonging to the

late Captain Towns, part of which was called the Island, and asked me to join him in the purchase. I paid no attention to the subject at the time. Then he wrote to me at Brisbane, and asked me if I was prepared to join him in his purchase; and in August last, for the first time, I agreed to do so. What I had to do with bringing the line along that route is absolutely nothing. Upon the question whether it is the best route, I presume we shall have professional reports. I do not express any opinion upon that further than this, that it is the first time I have heard that the land it passes over is low swampy ground. With respect to the deviation now proposed, when was it first suggested, and by whom? It was first suggested when the Minister for Works was canvassing for Townsville, by a man who had been dismissed from the Government service, and who in his letter avowedly suggested that he was bringing the idea forward as a means of doing me an injury. Whether the route is desirable from a public point of view I do not know, but he suggested that the railway should be taken through the most valuable private property in Townsville. So far as the deviation is concerned, I should personally be glad to see it carried out. It would be infinitely more profitable to me than the line in which it is insinuated I had an interest. The honourable gentleman is at perfect liberty to take it either way. But, for my part, I trust the railway will be carried along the route most conducive to the public interest. Now, as to the extent of the motive which it is insinuated I had. I think seven acres is the quantity of land that is proposed to be resumed. Is it likely that a public man who has borne a tolerably fair reputation, as I think I may say I have, would ruin his prospects for the sake of a share of the proceeds of seven acres of land? It is only the paltry mind of the Minister for Works which could suggest such a thing. I am obliged to the him for two reasons—for giving me the opportunity of refuting the slander in this Chamber, and secondly, for showing himself in his true colours.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The honourable gentleman has taken the precaution to induce one of his supporters to move the adjournment of the debate for the purpose of enabling him to refute the slanders that he complains of, so that the charge and the refutation may come out together. He knew well, better than any man, the danger of allowing any slander to go one hour in advance of the refutation. It has been well said by a great writer that if an hour's start was given to a lie it could not be overtaken, but the slanders that were uttered against me last night have had twenty-four hours' start. The refutation which he has made I accept. I simply stated what was common rumour in Towns-

ville. The ex-Colonial Treasurer has told us that there are certain rumours about the bank, but I tell him that if half the rumours afloat about him and the leader of the Opposition were stated in the House, they would require to be constantly moving the adjournment of the House. I accept the honourable gentleman's explanation, but I tell him that every word I have said is common property in Townsville.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Who circulated them?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Mr. Sachs, your partner, circulated them.

Mr. GRIFFITH: He publicly denied them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I had nothing to do with the deviation. It was spoken of long before my candidature for Townsville, but I believe it came out in this way:—The gentleman who was dismissed the public service was under the pressure of the bank managed by Mr. Sachs. He dare not speak of this proposed deviation, but as soon as the pressure was removed he spoke of it. As to the honourable gentleman's statement that it passes through much valuable private property, if he will come to the Works Office to-morrow, I will show him the map which indicates that not one inch of private property is required for it—that it goes through public property. Whether it benefits the leader of the Opposition is a matter which will not be taken into consideration, and neither this House nor myself need thank him for the gratuitous offer that he made to take it where we like.

The motion for adjournment being withdrawn, by leave, the debate was resumed.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said the Minister for Works could not have been in his usual form, or else he must have been labouring under agitation arising from a belief that certain rumours had been circulated about his management of his Department, with a malicious design to do him injury, for he had not done justice to his reputation for eloquence that evening. He was sorry if the honourable gentleman had been labouring under this impression, for, as far as he (Mr. Rutledge) knew anything about any rumours, it was entirely erroneous. The general feeling about the dismissal of the men from the Works Department was that the Minister for Works, under a mistaken idea of retrenchment, had allowed himself to assume perhaps too much the position of a martinet. It seemed to him that the gentlemen sitting on the Treasury benches were moved by a spirit of despotism to lay the iron hand upon certain departments. He thought, however, their supporters must yet come to the conclusion that a little more elasticity would be requisite in the pressure of that hand. With regard to the speech of the honourable the leader of the Opposition, although the honourable the Premier did not consider it

satisfactory, in consequence of the strictures passed upon his actions and the mode in which he and his colleagues had conducted the public business during the recess, he thought that gentleman ought to be thankful for those rumours and so-called insinuations being brought forward by the leader of the Opposition, because it gave him an opportunity of refuting them. He (the Premier) had succeeded in disposing satisfactorily of the rumours circulated respecting the manner in which he opened the tenders for the Government banking account; but while that was satisfactory, his reply as to the way in which the Government account was handed over to the Queensland National Bank was far from satisfactory. The Treasurer said that only two tenders were received, and therefore the tender of the Queensland National Bank was selected, it being apparent that the acceptance of it would result in some slight saving. But was that a sufficient reply to the strictures of the honourable the leader of the Opposition? In the first place, why were only two tenders sent in? For the simple reason that every one from north to south believed firmly that the thing was settled beforehand; that no matter how many tenders were sent in, the Queensland National Bank, by some process of a mysterious character unknown to outsiders would obtain the preference. And had bank managers and their clerks nothing else to do but to prepare whole folios of figures and carefully constructed statements merely to go through the farce of laying them before the Treasurer? The reason, he repeated, was, that it was looked upon by managers and other bank authorities, as well as the general public, as a foregone conclusion. Did the Treasurer repudiate this statement as he repudiated other statements? No, for out of his own mouth, he (Mr. Rutledge) would convict him. The Treasurer, in commenting on the manner in which the tenders of the A.S.N. Co. were dealt with, stated that the late Government were wrong in giving the A.S.N. Co. notice of the termination of their contract until they had made other arrangements for carrying out that contract. Now, he would ask if these remarks might not be used as the key by which to understand the action of the Government, in giving notice to the Union Bank of the termination of their contract for the Government account? Apply the honourable the Treasurer's own way of dealing with a matter of this kind to the case. Was it likely that these prudent gentlemen, with so much forethought, who would not allow the contract with the A.S.N. Co. to be terminated until some other arrangements were made—was it likely that, in this matter of transcendent importance, they would have given notice to the Union Bank of the termination of their contract until they had made

satisfactory arrangements elsewhere? In the face of this they could all understand the solemn farce of calling for public tenders through the Press. The Treasurer accused the honourable the leader of the Opposition of using many insinuations, but the leader of the Opposition had only given expression in the House to what was the almost universal sentiment out of doors. The outside public were not admitted to secrets of august banking institutions, and in dealing with a case of this kind all they could do was what was done by judges and juries, and others concerned in courts of justice at times when men, accused of things not altogether satisfactory, were put upon their trial and convicted—they were obliged to put this fact and that fact together, and from these undeniable facts draw a reasonable inference. That was precisely what was done by the leader of the Opposition, when he was called to account for indulging in unseemly insinuations. Now, what were the facts? The honourable the Treasurer, at the time of his acceptance of office, was a director of the Queensland National Bank, and everybody knew very well that his moving aside to admit the Colonial Secretary to the directorship amounted to this—that the Colonial Secretary was the Treasurer's *alter ego*—it was just the same as though he were sitting there himself. Then, who was another director of the bank? One of the most servile followers of the Government; one of the most obsequious supporters that ever bowed to the dictation of his superior officer, and who would not be less likely to obey his superior officer in the bank parlour than he was in that public chamber. Another director was a gentleman who was bound by the strongest political ties to the present Government, and was their supporter in another place. He maintained that the only legitimate inference they could draw from this was, that the Queensland National Bank was a political institution which was controlled by the Government in its official capacity; and, as the honourable member for Maryborough said, to hand over the Government account, and to do so with the unseemly haste with which it was done to an institution governed in this way was, to say the least of it, a proceeding open to the gravest suspicion. Now, another strange fact was that under the same roof as the Queensland National Bank there was another mystic institution—the Land Mortgage and Investment Company. Common rumour had it—and he gave the opportunity of denying it—that the honourable the Treasurer, whose substitute sat at the board of directors of the Bank of Queensland, was himself chairman of this Land Mortgage and Investment Company, and it did not require that a man should be a banker or a

financier to understand that the whole thing could be very easily managed. When the Queensland National Bank obtained, say half a million or more of money to invest, it was very easy to make a private arrangement for the directors of that bank to lend or place at the disposal of the Land Mortgage and Investment Company a large amount of that money; and that company, in its turn, could let out that money at a profit to squatters, landowners, and others, who might be in need of assistance; so that the honourable the Treasurer and the Colonial Secretary, and their obedient supporter, the other member on the board of directors, could reap one set of profits out of the transaction between the Government and the bank and the Land Mortgage and Investment Company another set of profits out of transactions with its constituents. He believed if they were in any other Assembly than that of Queensland, which had always been characterised by a decorum amounting almost to severity, and which he hoped it would always maintain, it would have been stigmatised in anything but complimentary terms. He was well aware that the honourable the Colonial Secretary imagined that he could justify his position in the dual capacity of bank manager and Minister of the Crown by reference to a precedent in New South Wales, but they all knew what an outcry there was about that very thing in New South Wales. Sir Henry Parkes, in his political exigencies, was driven to employ the services of the present Treasurer of New South Wales, and the whole proceeding was most strongly denounced in the same session in the Parliament of that colony. But although it might be justifiable in the case of New South Wales that the Colonial Treasurer should be a director of the City Bank—a bank which had nothing to do with the Government account, it was quite different in Queensland, where the Colonial Secretary was a director of the very bank which had charge of the Government account. He was far from casting imputations on those gentlemen. He should consider it presumptuous to charge them with being actuated by dishonest motives; but they must remember that no man, no matter how immaculate he might be, could afford to have a contempt for appearances; and although those gentlemen might be as free from blame as it was possible for men to be, yet by setting at defiance the rules of propriety and rendering themselves hostile to public opinion, they were placing themselves in a position which, to say the least, laid them open to grave suspicion, and would have only themselves to blame if persons who did not know them arrived at conclusions the reverse of gratifying. Were he a shareholder in the Queensland National

Bank—which fortunately he was not—he should look with great alarm at those little private arrangements by which one director went out of office, and another was put in his place who was not elected by the shareholders. If parallels and precedents were wanted they were ready at hand. The directors of the City of Glasgow Bank were implicitly trusted. They were not gentlemen of yesterday, as some of those who kept interrupting him on the other side were; they had some of them an ancestry and a claim to public confidence on that account, which could not be said of all those who opened their mouths here. But these little arrangements were constantly going on, and although those men were thoroughly honest at first, yet the very liberty they enjoyed to do these things produced that speculative tendency of which the honourable member for Maryborough spoke, and so, without knowing it, they became dishonest. And there was just a chance that, in entrusting the functionaries here with the direction of such large sums of public money, they were placing them, to say the least of it, in a position of great temptation. The Colonial Treasurer last night, in speaking about the appointment of a Minister for Justice, said he had only done what the measure introduced and passed by the leader of the Opposition enabled him to do. But the Colonial Treasurer overlooked the fact that, when that Act was passed, the leader of the Opposition was almost the only barrister in the House. How was he to know that this new Parliament would bring into the House not less than five barristers who should take their seats behind the Premier? But because the Colonial Treasurer had not the moral courage to select one of those gentlemen and make him Attorney-General, he went out of his way and appointed as Minister for Justice a gentleman about whom nothing but what was respectful should be said, but who would have done very well in the position occupied by one of his colleagues; and he tried to satisfy the claims of the barristers behind him by giving them sops all round. The consequence was that, while the Minister for Justice drew his full salary for the discharge of his particular duty, there was an amount equal to the salary of another Minister being distributed in the shape of honorariums. He wondered the five barristers at the back of the Premier were so tame as to submit to it. Either they had been slighted by the Premier, or the Premier did not consider any of them fit to administer the Department of Justice. Could a greater parody on justice be imagined than to have, during less than four months, no less than six Attorneys-General in this colony? Could anything be imagined more likely to create a feeling of distrust in the public mind? One of the functions of

an Attorney-General in this colony was that of a grand jury, and they had arrived at this pass—that there was not a gentleman throughout the length and breadth of the land at the present time capable of discharging the functions of a grand jury. Any man in the interior might be committed to-day on a charge triable in the Supreme Court of the colony, and yet he must languish in gaol for the next four, five, or six months, although perhaps innocent of the charge, because there was not an Attorney-General in the colony who could read the depositions and see whether he ought to be put on his trial or not. This mode of doing things threw open the door to a host of abuses. The Minister for Justice, as the head of a firm of solicitors in this city, took cases for defending men charged with a breach of the criminal law. The head of the Department of Justice, in his private capacity, employed gentlemen of the legal profession to defend men charged with violating those laws which his office had been created to maintain. He would now say a few words regarding the speech of the Colonial Secretary. A country pedagogue could not have addressed a little ragged urchin ten minutes late at school in a more contemptuous manner than the Colonial Secretary addressed his colleague in the representation of Enoggera last night. The greater part of that gentleman's life had been spent in connection with banking institutions and commercial affairs of importance, and, if he was not qualified to speak on the subject of finance, he wished to know who in this House was? It was a bad example to the younger members, when they found the veterans of Parliament, as soon as they assumed the reins of power, beginning to hurl words of defiance at those who had the misfortune to sit on this side of the House. They had a right to look for some better example, and the honourable gentleman ought really, out of consideration for those who were so anxious to study the best models in the House, to come down from that lofty pedestal of infallibility on which he took his stand, and try to be more conciliatory towards those who might happen to differ from him. The twelfth paragraph of His Excellency's Speech stated that the House would be asked "to make provision by loan for carrying on public undertakings with vigour." If "with vigour" it really implied that it would be with greater energy and at a more rapid rate from now than it had heretofore been, the words implied that they had been carried on in a languishing, dilatory way hitherto, and that now the Government were going to carry on public works differently. But what was the kind of vigour they had displayed? They had got rid of the very elements which would constitute

that vigour—the very means by which public works could be carried out. Their very first step on taking office was to cast adrift some hundreds of men, because forsooth they had material for twelve months already in stock. That was an unanswerable argument, that what they had promised they did not intend to perform. For his part, although perhaps not qualified to express an opinion, he did not think twelve months' material in stock was too much if they were going on with public works; and if the Government really intended to carry on works with vigour, they must know that only a few weeks or months could elapse before men would be required, and it would not have ruined the country if their services had been continued. But there were some public works which required vigour. Anyone had only to walk down the principal street of this city to see where the vigour was required. Anyone seeing the hideous posts which had been lately erected in Brisbane for carrying the telegraph wires could not do otherwise than connect those disfigurements with the scornful epithets which used to be hurled against the late Government by the present honourable Colonial Secretary, when he was wont to wind up his remarks in a climax denouncing them as a Queen street ministry, and now it seemed that that honourable gentleman took advantage of his opportunity of wreaking his vengeance on Queen street. Brisbane was the only city throughout the length and breadth of Australia where such a hideous method of carrying the telegraph wires existed. When it was stated that public works would be carried on with vigour, there might probably be some reference to an undertaking of which they had read in the public prints. They had seen a railway scheme of gigantic proportions mentioned in the columns of the leading journal, and with regard to that trans-continental railway he was not prepared to say anything hostile. He believed that it could be carried out advantageously to all parties and a scheme for carrying it out might be submitted to the House which they might be able to sanction. But if the Government were in favour of such a scheme, why had they not had the manliness to say so? But not a word had been said about it, or about providing the necessary means for connecting the railways on the coast with the metropolis. Not a word had been said about branch railways, and this he considered a fatal omission. There were many parts of the Speech to which he should have liked to refer, and also many remarks which had been made by honourable members opposite; but he had trespassed sufficiently long on the time of the House. Whatever might be the outcome of the present debate,

he believed that all honourable members on his side were prepared to go with the Government on all questions of public utility, quite independently of party.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the honourable member who had just sat down was a many-sided man, and he felt that he laboured under a disadvantage in replying to him. The honourable member had had experience first of the pulpit and then of the courts of law, and he (Mr. Morehead) felt he could not compete with him. He thought, however, that if the honourable member had served his God faithfully, as he was now going to serve his King, He would not have deserted him in his adversity. The honourable gentleman had been kind enough to describe him as a slavish follower of the honourable Colonial Secretary, but he had not supposed that he should ever be called the slavish follower of anyone. He certainly had been called an Ishmael by some honourable members opposite, but how the two terms agreed he was at a loss to know. The honourable and lately reverend, but now learned, junior member for Enoggera had made an attack upon him for being not only a slavish follower of the honourable Colonial Secretary, but for being worse than that—he had accused him of what no honourable man would stand being accused of—of having acted improperly in his position as a bank director. What right the honourable member had to question his character as a bank director was a puzzle to him. He was responsible to those persons who made him a director, but certainly not to the junior member for Enoggera. If the honourable member could charge him with doing anything unjust or improper as a member of that House, he should be ready to meet such a charge; but the honourable member had no right to charge him with misconduct as a director of a bank, and he thought the honourable member's own good sense should lead him to retract what he had said. To go away from that honourable and *quasi* learned gentleman, and to come to the policy of the Government, he would say that he was there to support the Government in carrying out their policy, and to justify every word which had been uttered in the very eloquent speech by the honourable Minister for Works. The members of the Government were placed in a position which the majority of men would have shrunk from accepting. They had been called upon during a time of great commercial depression to make reductions in the Government departments; and were they, he would ask, to be blamed, as they had been by honourable members opposite, because they had undertaken the work of retrenching the public expenditure? At the same time, in answer to the

honourable member for Ipswich, he would remind the House that Ipswich was not the whole colony, and that it had been shown that it was not the only place which had suffered; it had been shown by the honourable Minister for Works that there had been no partiality on his part, but that he had simply done his duty. It was the duty of honourable members, as custodians of the public purse, to support the Ministry in their efforts to retrench, instead of abusing them. A policy of retrenchment had never been one that he opposed, and he had never gone in for advocating the employment of people who could be done without. He had sat in the cold shade of Opposition for five years, and therefore felt himself in rather a peculiar and difficult position now in not having anything to criticise, but he thought the debate on the Speech would have taken a very different tone if it had not been for the remarks made by the honourable the senior member for Maryborough. Had that honourable member restricted himself to a fair criticism of the matter contained in the Speech, and not gone outside of it, further progress would probably have been made; but he had narrowed it down to a series of personal attacks on individual members of the Ministry. That honourable member had not discussed the condition of the colony on the broad lines of a policy, but he had simply attacked the honourable Colonial Treasurer and the honourable Colonial Secretary on the bank question, and attacked the Minister for Works—as his leader, the leader of the Opposition, had done—on electioneering topics. He must say he felt great regret that the senior member for Maryborough should have been deposed from the leadership of the Opposition—though whether it was necessary or not he did not know—he supposed it was. He felt truly sorry that the course of the debate should have been turned by the other side—who had no amendment to propose—to a combined attack simply and solely on individual members of the Ministry. They had not attacked the policy of the Speech, and he might remind them that when the senior member for Maryborough was leader of the House he had deprecated that course—a course which he (Mr. Morehead) as a guerilla sitting on the other side would not have fallen in with. If such an attack on the Government had come from a member sitting on his flank he could have understood it, but, coming from the leader of the Ministry which promulgated the doctrine of broad principles and not attacking individual members, it did come very badly. He spoke, however, now more particularly to justify the action he was taking in supporting an unpopular proposition, for it was invariably unpopular

for any Ministry to reduce the employment of labour. It was not only an unpopular thing to do, but it was very unfortunate for the Ministry that they were put in the position of having to do it; nevertheless, it was the duty of every independent member of either side of the House—and he was an independent member himself—to assist the Government in so doing. Many difficulties surrounded the colony—daylight had not yet come, and for that reason it came very badly from the other side that they should cavil at—when they had no strong point to take up—and seek to hamper the Government in doing what they themselves admitted it was absolutely necessary to do. He trusted that the independent members on both sides of the House would do their duty, and assist the Government to get through these bad times.

The Hon. R. PRING said he had not intended to address the House, and would not have done so had it not been for certain expressions of opinion from an honourable member (Mr. Rutledge) in reference to the position of the bar in the House. He had not the slightest desire to criticise adversely any part of his remarks but this, for he could assure him that he (Mr. Pring) was quite as well able to take care of himself on his own opinion as he would be likely to do from advice to be received from any one of them. Although he respected them all as members of the profession, he had not always received that amount of consideration which might have been shown him from the honourable the senior member for North Brisbane. There was a good deal to be said about the position of the bar inside and outside the House. He thought it ill became any junior member of that bar to make unpleasant remarks about members of the bar sitting on that (the Government) side of the House, and who ought to have refrained at the same time from insinuating improper motives. He would like to know whether that honourable member would not have jumped at a Crown Prosecution himself, if he had had the chance. He would have jumped at it like a cat at a mouse. However, that honourable member had fallen into an error in blaming the Government for taking advantage of an Act of Parliament; and he had not stated the case correctly. The honourable member (Mr. Griffith) brought in that Act—a most injurious one to the profession—and it was done for a purpose. The facts were that he (Mr. Pring) had been asked by the honourable member he referred to if he would accept the office of Solicitor-General without portfolio, the senior member for North Brisbane being Attorney-General.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The honourable member is quite wrong. I never had any com-

munication with him on such a subject in my life.

MR. PRING said that that only convinced him that the statements he had heard in the House that night could not be as truthful as he had supposed. He repeated that the senior member for North Brisbane had offered him (Mr. Pring) the Solicitor-Generalship, without portfolio, at £700 a-year, with private practice; but he was in the meantime offered a District Court Judgeship, and accepted it. He went on his circuit rejoicing, and when the Bill was introduced all the clauses providing for a Solicitor-General were swept away, but that for the creation of a Minister for Justice was left in. Why was the Bill not allowed to go when its principal provisions were cut out? Why, the Bill was retained because the honourable member was the only barrister in the House, and he pointed out that anybody could be Minister for Justice, but anybody could not be Attorney-General. That was why the third clause of that statute was retained, which enabled the appointment of a Minister for Justice. If the other clause had remained it would be far different. He felt surprised that a member of his own profession should charge the Government with taking advantage of one of his own side's deliberate acts. Why should members of the bar set up their backs against an appointment which an Act of Parliament sanctioned? The junior member for Enoggera had spoken about members of the bar on his (Mr. Pring's) side of the House getting a "sop." Who gave that sop? Was it not the late Attorney-General and Minister for Works, when he originated the course of employing members of the bar to do Crown work—a course he (Mr. Pring) had studiously avoided himself during the whole of the period he was Attorney-General? But he found that the honourable member he referred to, when he came into office, never did the work—he had too much to do, so he commenced the system of paying barristers. He (Mr. Pring) had acted for him and under his conditions, and others had done so, and it appeared, therefore, most extraordinary that any one member of the other side of the House should be found to try and upset his (Mr. Pring's) seat and that of Mr. Beor for doing that which had been done in the past. The question had always been decided in the affirmative. He supposed that by calling him and his learned friend by a misnomer they were going to base an argument; but as there was no Attorney-General it was perfectly absurd to use the expression "Acting-Attorney-General," and equally absurd to attempt to dislodge himself and his learned friend.

MR. GRIFFITH: I rise to a point of order. It is not competent for the honour-

able member upon this motion to discuss the subject of another motion upon the paper.

THE SPEAKER: A notice given to-night touching this question has been sent to the printer, but as it is not in the House I cannot refer to it. The honourable member is well aware that he will have an opportunity of discussing the question subsequently, and I trust he will not evade the rules of the House.

MR. PRING said he had not the slightest intention to evade the rules of the House, but he could not hear such an expression as "taking a sop" directed against him without rising to defend himself. He felt in such a case he was justified by the rules of debate, common sense, and attack and defence, in replying. If an honourable member could put such a motion on the paper, why did he not add "during pleasure" or "for a term of years?" He could not do that. But he would ask, who first commenced giving sops? Was it not the late Attorney-General who employed Crown Prosecutors to prosecute while he himself held briefs in the other court? He should have thought that the "sub" should have been in the civil cases, and the bigwig taking the Government duty for which he was so well qualified and so extraordinarily well paid. With regard to the Minister for Justice, the honourable member (Mr. Griffith) must have been perfectly certain that the Act under which that appointment was made was a good measure, and that it gave the Government power to appoint anyone. The appointment was the best that could be made, and was not made for the purpose of giving "sops" to the members of the bar. If he thought that, he would not sit on that side of the House, nor would he have accepted a commission. It should be recollected that the present Minister of Justice had been a long time in the colony with great credit to himself, and that no one doubted the purity of his conduct. If there was any office more than another where there should be pure and honest conduct it was the office of Minister of Justice. So far as his ability was concerned, if the amalgamation of the profession had been brought about, there would have been no question about it. He could not see why the Government should not carry out the spirit and letter of the statute introduced by the late Attorney-General, appoint the Minister for Justice, and dole out the briefs. The only difference was that in one case the thing was done by commission under the great seal, and in the other by simple proclamation. In reference to the debate which had taken place on the general question, he would say that if ever in his life he was satisfied with the line of political action he

had taken, it was to-night. He was convinced that the Government was in more able hands than it had been before since the colony had been a colony. The members were actuated by good motives and aimed at the prosperity and welfare of the colony. That the Government was in the hands of able men was quite clear to him from the tone of the debate and the remarks which had been made by the several speakers on the Government side of the House. Where the truth was told there could be no mistake, for it always prevailed against subterfuge or any amount of wriggling. The position of the Government and their intentions had been very truthfully laid before the House and the public—and it was a difficult duty to face the colony and tell the truth. He had heard the word “diplomacy” used, but had ever connected it with a very small word, “fraud;” and he preferred straightforward conduct whether it pleased or not. He was thankful that there was now at the head of the Works Department a man who thoroughly understood the work. No one could doubt from that honourable gentleman’s manly, honest, and steadfast speech to night, that he knew exactly what he was doing, had done, and was going to do. He had had the courage to do what was right, and through his action many men in this colony would ultimately reap a very great benefit and advantage. There could be no doubt that it was a very disastrous thing for any Government to keep a number of persons in employment when there was no adequate work to support them. No doubt it was hard upon the men themselves, but between two hardships the least should be chosen. While one course might be hard upon the men who had been dismissed, the other course would be harder still upon the whole community because they would be taxed to keep up a quota of men, and the Government and the country would be doing them no service whatever, so far as he could see; such action might give temporary relief, but it would not be beneficial to the working class as a whole. He questioned whether the working classes would, after hearing the explanation of the Minister for Works, view the honourable gentleman’s action with dissatisfaction.

Mr. STUBLEY said he had a few remarks to make in reference to the present Government, since they had been eulogised by the honourable gentleman who had just spoken. With regard to the gold mining industry, they had got in their programme the “eternal song” about regulations including the inspection of mines; but no inspection was wanted until, in the first place, some assistance was given towards developing the goldfields of the colony—towards helping an industry which had been the

chief means of settling the Australian colonies and California. The Government might have inserted a promise in the Speech of a bonus for the development of the industry, especially when it was remembered that when Queensland was at a very low ebb, a few years ago, it was the discovery of the goldfields which gave it a stimulus that had been maintained until last year. The Government might have made some promise for the purchase of diamond rock drills, for instance. He did not see why these drills should not be purchased for the development of the goldfields as well as for the purpose of obtaining water in the far west. The gold miners had not been assisted by the Governments of Queensland, but, on the contrary, had been retarded. The principal part of the gold which had been obtained from the Palmer goldfields had been taken to China by the abominable creatures into whose hands it had been allowed to fall. The money taken away by the Chinese was not available for the development of the Northern fields, as well as Gympie, as would have been the case had it been obtained by Europeans. A climax had been reached in the reefing industry; there were a few claims doing well, but the assistance of the Government was wanted in the shape of a few thousand pounds to prove that goldfields existed at a greater depth, either by rock-drills or by some other means. This was the least the Government could do, seeing that the Chinese had been permitted to “scrape” together most of the alluvial gold of the North and carry it away with them to the detriment of the mining industry. As a body, miners were as intelligent as any class which could be found; they were industrious, energetic, and persevering men, not afraid to expose themselves to any privations in searching for gold. Squatters followed after them and reaped the benefits of their enterprise. This was especially the case in the North, where the squatters had been solely maintained by the diggers, all the fat stock of the Kennedy and other districts having been sold at the goldfields at high prices. The objection that he had to the Ministerial programme was—because it contained no indication of an intention to assist the gold-mining industry. To show the importance of gold-mining, he might mention that in ten years Victoria and New South Wales had delivered to England ninety-six millions worth of gold, and it was probable that during the same period the value of the total amount of gold produced by these two colonies was one hundred and twenty millions. The mining industry had always been neglected in all the colonies; it was only within the last few years that it had come to the front in Victoria, where

£10,000 had not long since been offered to parties who would first reach a given great depth. It would be a fallacy to afford assistance to Queensland goldfields in that form, for it would be always within the power of a few claims to secure the reward. He himself would be able to secure it with his Charters Towers mines, for they were always being worked at a greater depth than the generality of claims on that field. Every goldfield in the colony was suffering from the want of Government assistance to the extent of a few thousands. Had the Chinese, however, been kept away from the Northern alluvial fields, this want, as he had already remarked, would probably not have existed. The present Government professed to be animated with a desire to foster settlement upon the lands of the colony, and they should be animated with the same desire with regard to goldfields, which were of more importance. Ten thousand pounds, judiciously spent within the year in developing the gold-mining industry, would return several hundreds per cent. upon the outlay. Coming next to the land question, he noticed that the Government had not intimated that they intended introducing a land Bill. The next important question was a land Bill, and he was disappointed in finding no reference to a measure of that kind in the Speech. He hoped, however, that the Government would introduce a land Bill, because he was satisfied that, by passing a measure dealing properly with the public lands, they would not only revive the colony from its present depression, but send it far in advance of what it was likely to be for the next twenty years without such a measure. He contended that in legislating on this subject they should do so in such a way as to enable any man to take up any quantity of land he liked, from 500 to 20,000, or even 100,000 acres, if it was very poor land, according to his means and the character of the country, at the same price that the squatters now paid for it, and with the right of purchase at the expiration of, say twenty years. By that means they would secure an influx of capital, and men possessing a few thousand pounds would be able to take up as much land as they required, and stock it according to their means. That could not be done under the present conditional purchase system, because he had proof of it. The whole of a small man's means was swallowed up in improvements, and he would attach no conditions of improvement, but let the money be expended in something remunerative. He held that the great industry of Queensland and all the Australian colonies was grazing, and that they should endeavour to encourage that industry. If Bills on these subjects calcu-

lated to advance the interests of the colony were brought in, he should vote for them. He was an independent member, and should vote with whichever side brought in measures that suited him best. The Minister for Works had challenged anyone to say that there had been any such thing as a row at the polling-places already referred to in connection with the Townsville election, but he could say that there had been, and that at least one of the two men was struck. The version of the affair that he had received in writing from one of the men, whose word he would believe as soon as that of the Minister for Works, was, that on going to the polling-places they were challenged by a mob who demanded to know their business. They replied that they were scrutineers for Mr. Morgan, and they were then told that they had done enough mischief in canvassing for him (Mr. Stubbley) when he opposed the Minister for Works, and they were to go away and do no further mischief. They then went back for police protection, but being only able to get two constables they did not return. With regard to personation, he knew, from his own experience, that at the previous election for Townsville there were ten or twelve cases of personation, and he believed there were twenty. With reference to the discrepancy in the statement that there were 170 men employed on the Townsville jetty, and within a few weeks 100 of them were dismissed, he would ask by whom were they dismissed? for it must have been done between the general election and the election of the Minister for Works. This was a very extraordinary proceeding. He could not understand how 265 votes could come out of fifty-seven, and as to the polling-booths, there was clearly no necessity for two so close to each other.

Mr. McLEAN moved the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. GROOM seconded the motion, and expressed a hope that the House would adjourn till Tuesday next, so as to enable His Excellency, and such members of the House as chose to do so, to visit the Toowoomba races to-morrow.

The PREMIER said he was willing to agree to the motion, but he could not think of adjourning the House till Tuesday.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked the honourable member for Fortitude Valley whether he had any objection to showing him the letters he had referred to.

The Hon. R. PRING: I have not the slightest objection.

Question—That this debate be now adjourned—put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes past 11 o'clock.