

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 21 MAY 1879

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ever since; but in this case he was accused of being connected with the taking of certain contracts on the Southern and Western Railway—a subject on which the leader of the Opposition had given notice of motion for the production of all papers in connection with the acceptance of those contracts. He hoped the papers would be laid on the table shortly, for when honourable members had seen them he felt perfectly sure that, instead of his action being condemned as it had been, they would, when in possession of the facts of the case, unhesitatingly commend what he had done. In order that the House might really be made acquainted with what had taken place he would state the facts, and if the Minister for Works did not know them he would admit that there was no cause for condemnation in what took place. Everything was fair and square and above board which had anything to do with the acceptance of the contracts for sections 3 and 4 of the Southern and Western Railway. When those papers were produced it would be seen that certain tenderers sent in tenders for those sections, and the tender of a certain firm received the recommendation—and a very strong recommendation it was—of the Engineer-in-Chief, that it should be accepted. Seeing that it was not the lowest tender he opposed the recommendation of the Engineer-in-Chief for some time, it might be a month, for he was anxious that the lowest tender should be accepted. It was not as if the tenders sent in were all from tenderers in this colony: there were tenders from other places, and one from Victoria. On inquiry it appeared that Mr. Higginbotham had condemned the lowest tenderer, who had done work in Victoria, and this it was that caused the recommendation of another, not the lowest. He (Mr. Thorn) would not have been doing his duty to the country if he, after learning this, had pressed the lowest tender, nor would the Engineer-in-Chief have been justified in recommending it. He believed the name of the lowest tenderer was McNiel. However, the tenders of Messrs. McNiel and Bashford came before the Cabinet, and, after consideration, it was decided to call for fresh tenders; and if he had not done this he would, as Minister for Works, have been guilty of a gross dereliction of duty. One case to which he might refer, in which he went against the permanent head of the department, was when he was in the Post Office, in regard to the acceptance of the lowest tender for the construction of the telegraph line from Cooktown to Townsville. The lowest tender then was objected to by Mr. Cracknell; but he (Mr. Thorn), seeing that it was the lowest tender, accepted it, and the result was that the line was some six months longer in construction, and at a cost of 30

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 21 May, 1879.

Adjournment of the House.—Estate of W. B. Tooth—private Bill.—Petition.—Adjournment of the House.—Supply—committee.

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

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE.

The Hon. G. THORN moved the adjournment of the House, in order to have an opportunity of refuting the statements and insinuations of the honourable Minister for Works in his speech, last night. He recollected when he was in office and sat on the other side of the House that he had not given effect to the recommendation of the head of a department, and he had regretted it

or 40 per cent. more than it would have been if they acted on the recommendation of Mr. Cracknell. It would be found when the papers were on the table that, in taking the recommendation of Mr. Stanley, he had only done his duty. He did not think he was in Brisbane when the tenders for those two sections were sent in—he was travelling in the North. Another charge, or rather insinuation, made against him was that he had the Engineer-in-Chief's prices. He could truly say he never asked the Engineer-in-Chief for prices; neither had he asked Mr. Herbert. He never saw them either before or after the contract. As a matter of form they should be shown, but he never recollected seeing them. He did not recollect Mr. Herbert's showing them to him, or even bringing them to him as a matter of form, though for initialling they might have been. He never looked at them, and never knew anything about them. Another charge was with regard to the ballast used on the Southern and Western Railway. The honourable member for Townsville ought to give him credit for his action in that, at any rate. He did his duty to the country; but when he got *Hansard* that morning, he saw that it was then stated, with regard to Bashford and Co., that he had asked the Engineer-in-Chief to report on the ballast. He made the contractor stick to the contract, and in doing so did his duty; and now he had it thrown in his teeth that he had favoured them in the matter of ballast. But he challenged the honourable member for Townsville to prove anything against him. Since that time he had known many tenders called, but he had never been present when they were opened. He had always acted so as not to leave room for a sign of suspicion to rest on him. In the Post Office the practice was that a board was appointed to open tenders, consisting of the Auditor-General, the Commissioner of Police, and the Under Secretary. On these occasions, when tenders were opened, he was never present. The board having opened the tenders made their recommendations to him, and he almost invariably adopted them and brought them before the Cabinet. In the Works, tenders were opened in the presence of the permanent head and one of the clerks, and in the presence of the tenderers; and in the Railway Department, in the presence of the Commissioner for Railways and the Engineer-in-Chief. He (Mr. Thorn) was never present at the opening of any tenders for the construction of railways. He challenged the very strictest scrutiny in regard to the contracts, and anything he had ever had to do with them. He never had pressure brought upon him with regard to tenders;—it was never attempted during the time he was in the Post Office, and he never

recollected anyone coming to him and attempting to interfere with his duty to the country. Every action he took was on the recommendation of the permanent heads of the department, except on one occasion, and then, making a mistake in regard to the telegraphic construction, he had thought twice before going against the permanent head. He was most anxious an inquiry should take place, and, when it did, instead of being blamed he would be commended, and the Minister for Works would commend him. He only hoped that the honourable member for Townsville would leave office with the same unsullied reputation he (Mr. Thorn) had done. He might also say that the main reason why he had left the Government of which he was a member was because it should not be said that any one connected with himself had tendered for Government contracts during his term of office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) said he would answer the last part of the honourable member's speech first. He had said that, while he was in office, no person had ever attempted to bring pressure to bear upon him. Was it not an attempt to bring pressure upon him in that matter of the ballast, when the honourable gentleman was written to asking for his permission to use a different kind of ballast to that specified in the contract? If that was not pressure, he (Mr. Macrossan) did not know what else it could be called. About the pressure brought, and the strong recommendation of the lowest tender to the engineer, he had no more to say. If the engineer did not recommend the lowest tender, so much the worse for the engineer to have recommended a tender when there was one before him which offered to do the work for £3,000 less.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS: The recommendation complained of is not in the name of the Minister for Works.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS contended that it was plainly in the name of the Minister for Works—that was, George Bashford's tender—and he did not, of course, know what might have passed between the engineer and the honourable member previously. As to the statement that it was a mere matter of form to place the engineer's estimates before the Minister for Works, that was a complete mistake, for the Minister for Works should not have them in his possession. The estimates were deposited, sealed, in the hands of the Commissioner, and neither the Commissioner nor the Minister for Works knew anything about them: it was quite right that they should not. The plan he intended to pursue was, that in future the engineer should make out his estimates with his own hands, and not leave them to be drawn up by his clerks, which had been the practice hitherto.

This practice, it could be seen, was a dangerous one. As for being a mere matter of form for the Minister to have them in his possession or see them, he could tell the honourable gentleman this much, that the engineer had never furnished him with the tenders because he had never asked for them. When produced they would speak for themselves, but he knew all the circumstances connected with the cases quoted by the honourable member for Northern Downs, and had read all the papers through, so that he was acquainted with the facts of the case so far as the papers went. There might be circumstances outside those of which he had no knowledge, but he knew that when tenders were opened the honourable gentleman telegraphed to Melbourne, and received a telegram in reply, from the Chief Engineer, that McNeil was disqualified in Victoria so far as Government contracts were concerned. That he knew of his own knowledge, and anybody who was in the House in 1876 knew all about it as well. There was a saving on McNeil's contract of £230 a mile, as it was that amount below the next tender; but it was no evidence that because he had performed his work unsatisfactorily in Victoria he would do so here. Why, they could easily have taken care he did not, and, by appointing three or four additional inspectors, have put on an effectual check, and then have saved money out of the £5,000. However, whether the second lowest tender was taken on the recommendation of the Engineer-in-Chief or of the Minister for Works, that recommendation was wrong. He gave the honourable gentleman's colleagues credit for wishing to act for the best, and he hoped, when the papers were published, they would give the credit the honourable gentleman claimed for himself. He had not drawn any conclusion further than the papers went, but when they were published it would be found that every word he had stated was correct.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said that, after the frank statement made by the honourable member for Northern Downs, he really did expect to hear something like a reciprocal reply from the Minister for Works. The terms in which his honourable friend had taken notice of this matter were so thoroughly conciliatory that he had been led to expect something of a similar nature from the honourable gentleman opposite, but it was clear he had attacked Mr. Thorn when he had said that he gave his colleagues credit for having rejected a tender recommended by the honourable member for Northern Downs when he was Minister for Works. After what had now been said, it appeared that the Minister for Works had been aware, all the time, of the circumstances of the cases in connection with the tender of McNeil. A more ungenerous

and disingenuous justification than he had made after that he had never listened to. It would be a good thing, now, if the facts of the case were sifted to the very bottom. When the honour, reputation, and common honesty of a man who had been in office were called in question upon such flimsy grounds as those which the Minister for Works had put forward, it appeared to him to be a course which no member of the House should for a moment tolerate. In this justification there was an opening for the honourable gentleman to have expanded into something like reciprocal terms. He might have said, "We will wait until the papers are produced;" but instead of that he shifted his ground entirely, and now charged the Engineer-in-Chief with making a recommendation for the acceptance of a tender which was not the lowest. He trusted that they would see the matter to the last, and discover who was to blame.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is there.

Mr. THORN begged to say that there was nothing in the papers the honourable gentleman could point out—a signature, an initial, or anything at all—which justified him in making the statement. He now proposed to withdraw the motion. He might say that, in regard to the tenders, there were several from beyond the colony; and he was anxious, therefore, in order to give full consideration to the matter, not to accept any for a month. With regard to the matter connected with himself, he might inform the House that he fought it for a month with the engineer. He was anxious, notwithstanding the telegrams that had been received by the engineer, that that gentleman should send down additional memoranda to the Engineer-in-Chief in Victoria before he (Mr. Thorn) took the matter before the Cabinet. He thought to do his duty on the recommendation of his engineer, and at the same time it would be found, if Mr. Stanley was called to the bar of the House, that he (Mr. Thorn) was anxious to take the lowest tender. He had always liked to work in unison with his engineer, and at the same time to do his duty to the country. In the present instance he had acted on the advice of his engineer, and he considered he was justified in so doing. With regard to contracts in other departments: on a late occasion he had gone into one of the Brisbane shops, and the first thing shown to him was a contract for stores which was complained of, but which he knew very well the honourable Colonial Secretary had had nothing to do with, but had acted on the recommendation of the permanent head of the department, as he always would do. With the permission of the House, he begged to withdraw the motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said that, before the motion was with-

drawn, he would remark that although the honourable member for Northern Downs wished to pay him a compliment he would not accept it, as he made it a rule to look into every tender for the departments under him. He had never accepted a tender blindly and without looking into it, and he should never do so.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

ESTATE OF W. B. TOOTH—PRIVATE BILL.

On the motion of the Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH, leave was given to introduce a Bill to enable the Trustees, for the time being, of the Will of William Butler Tooth to Sell and Dispose of the Trust Property comprised therein.

PETITION.

MR. RUTLEDGE presented a petition from Henry Milner Clarkson, financial agent, praying that circumstances by which, owing to mistakes on the part of the Real Property Office, he had suffered great loss of property may be investigated by the House.

On the motion of the honourable member, the petition was read and received.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE.

MR. BAILEY moved the adjournment of the House, for the purpose of giving the Government an opportunity of reconsidering their decision in refusing to give to the House certain information respecting the dismissals from the workshops at Ipswich, which had been requested by the honourable member for Ipswich. The reason given by the honourable the Premier for refusing to lay the papers on the table were not sufficient ones, and it was upon that ground that he now gave the honourable gentleman an opportunity of reconsidering his decision. The reason assigned by the honourable gentleman was, that one of the papers was from the foreman of the works, and he believed that that man's life would not be safe in Ipswich if they were produced. That honourable gentleman, only a few nights ago, threw out the insinuation that the dismissed workmen were political loafers, but he had since characterized them as being something infinitely worse—namely, assassins, and said that, if they knew how the foreman of works had done his duty to the head of his department—the Minister for Works—they would be guilty of murder. This was a shocking thing. It was a shocking thing that men, many of whom had been in the employment of the Government of the colony for years, should be considered guilty of such a crime as the assassination of an officer for doing his duty. For the character of that officer—

nay, more, for the character of the workmen—he called upon the honourable Minister for Works to produce the papers. He did not believe for one moment that any person under the Government had the least objection to any paper written by him seeing the daylight. Such a man had merely done his duty to his employer; and if for doing that duty he was liable to be assassinated, it was time to increase the police force or to take some other steps. There was another reason why the papers should be produced. He had in his hand a letter signed by E. W. Hardgraves, who gave quite a different account of the whole affair from that given by the honourable Minister for Works. That honourable gentleman said—

"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."

Mr. Hardgraves did not say so, however.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith): Who is Mr. Hardgraves?

MR. BAILEY supposed he was an Ipswich man, who wrote to the editor of the *Queensland Times*. He said in his letter which was published in that paper, which he believed was a Government organ, as follows:—

"The Minister for Works sent up to the head of the department, asking him to send down a list of the names of those persons who could be dispensed with. This list was sent down, containing fifty-one names. This official gave only those names that he could spare and still carry on the works with efficiency. This list was not returned, but another sent up with about half of the names taken off and others substituted in their places, together with fifty-two names added thereto, having not the slightest regard to the qualities of the men to be discharged or their long standing and service in the yards."

Thus it would be seen that the statement made in that House, and that by Mr. Hardgraves—who, of course, was a man not to be believed, nor was the *Queensland Times* any authority—clashed; one was, that if the papers were published the lives of those in authority would not be safe; and the other was, that the lists of the men to be dismissed were drawn up in Brisbane by the Minister for Works or his agents, and were not drawn up by the superintendent of works at Ipswich. For the sake of those officers who were represented as being in danger of their lives, to protect them from the assassinations which seemed to be hanging over them, and to save those unfortunate people from the crime of murder, he called upon the Government to publish those documents, to vindicate the character of the men who were attacked, and prove that we lived in a land where law did count for

something, even under a conservative Government.

Mr. GARRICK said the charges made against the workpeople were really of a very serious character. What had been said meant, simply, that if the honourable the Minister for Works and his chief the Premier were to disclose the official information on which that part of their policy had been carried on, men were in danger of their lives from the workmen of Ipswich. That was a monstrous assertion to be made. What had the workmen done? Were they not entitled to know the reason why they were deprived of their bread? It had constantly been asserted against the late Ministry, from the opposite side, that they were anxious to secure those who had large salaries and were in the possession of sinecures, but would discharge and humiliate men in humble positions in the Civil Service. But would the present Government now dare to say that the hard-working, honest, industrious men who, up to the moment of being dismissed, had not had a single word against them, were prepared to assassinate any person who had given information leading to their discharge? It was monstrous; and every workman in the country would be up in arms against such an assertion being made, while the Ministry sat in silence and dared not rise and excuse themselves, or only gave such a reason as that for withholding the information. The country was entitled to have that information. A large part of the community was made up of what an honourable member had been pleased to call the "lower orders." It had been said on one occasion, with reference to giving municipal local government, that one of the advantages, apart from the financial consideration of placing economic burdens upon local persons, was that it would be the means of educating the lower orders. Those men to whom that remark about local-government law was intended to apply formed a large part of his constituency, and he knew from intimate acquaintance with them that, if prudence, honesty, and intelligence formed any part of a man's character, those men were not of the lower order—they were as intelligent and prudent as any set of men in the whole of this community. He had not had an earlier opportunity of vindicating them, or he should have done so. That honourable member said what had been asserted in the House time out of mind, and what was said when he (Mr. Garrick) occupied a seat there ten years ago—that there were no two parties in this country. It was asserted by the present honourable member for Blackall, who was an old veteran in politics. He said, "Peace, peace;—you may imagine there is war, but all is peace. There is no difference between your selectors and you pastoral tenants. Men for years have been under a cloud: I

have come amongst you to dissipate it. Take the scales from your eyes and for the future be one happy family!" He (Mr. Garrick) was willing to believe that, but he could not because the evidence against it was so strong and so continuously before him. Wherever there were large areas of Crown lands there would be a constant quarrel going on between those who must give way and those who would take their places—between those always pressing on and those unwilling to retreat. While there were large tracts of waste lands which the pastoral tenants were seeking to hold, and the agricultural tenant pressing to occupy, he saw no peace. While that state of things lasted there always would be in the colony two parties. It was said by an honourable member that there were parts of the lands held by pastoral tenants of the Crown which were not needed by them, in the low flats and on the margins of creeks; but he did not say what he (Mr. Garrick) would interpret for him—where the grass was sour. He should have said, where the grass was sour and was not wanted by the pastoral tenant. It was said by the honourable member for Stanley—whose voice was once heard on the popular side, but who was no longer there—in endeavouring to screen the honourable member for Clermont, that it was his first speech in the House, and honourable members should not be too hard upon him. But did they go to such honourable members as the honourable members for Blackall and Leichhardt to hear about those things? No!—they were too old foxes to be caught. Did they go to the honourable head of the Government, or the most liberal member on that side, the honourable the Colonial Secretary? No; they were all silent, or said like the honourable member for Blackall—that it was all imagination. There was an old proverb—*In vino veritas*; but he would say, "In nervousness comes out truth." It was because of the honourable member for Clermont's newness, greenness, nervousness, that he spoke truth. They did not go to the old veterans of the party for that information, but to the verdant amongst them. This instance was another proof to him that they were divided into two parties, and that the one party would not give way, however pressed, or would only give up what was sour. But if, in the case of these two parties, the true economic principle were applied—that the industry which got the most out of the Crown lands with a given amount of capital should be encouraged—then the agriculturalist stood far before the pastoral tenant; and it was for the interest of the country, not that the agriculturalist should have what the pastoral tenant did not want, but that he should have what he wanted, even though it should be the very best land to

be found in the pastoral tenant's holding. He would not take advantage of any new member, but where there was a point to be made by his party he should never hesitate to sink individual interest to forward the good of the colony. The Government ought to say why those men were discharged, and on whose authority. The honourable members sitting on the Treasury benches seemed to think they could carry on the Government by a policy of concealment because they had a large party behind them. He attributed the remarks of the honourable member for Clermont to which he had referred entirely to newness. It had been said that the honourable member had got an inkling of the policy of the Government from attending a caucus meeting—that he had been behind the scenes, and knew something beyond the Speech that honourable members generally were not supposed to know. The honourable member for Normanby, on that occasion, said that nothing had been divulged—that the Premier had read the Speech to the party assembled, and then said—“There's no more business to be done.” Was that the way honourable members were content to accept the policy of their leader? When he (Mr. Garrick) had the honour of a seat on the Treasury benches the Ministry was never allowed simply to say, “That's the Speech,” and discharge their supporters, saying, “There's no more business—we've counted your noses, and that's all we want; now you can all go.” If that was the way in which the present Government were going to carry on affairs it would be regretted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the honourable member for Moreton was breaking out in a fresh place. The honourable the Premier never said there was no more business. The honourable member had imagined it, and, if he got excited in that way, might confine his ideas to himself.

MR. GARRICK: I was quoting the honourable member for Normanby.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that honourable member did not wave his hand in that theatrical style. And as to the manner in which the new Premier conducted business, if the party were satisfied he did not see what the honourable member for Moreton had got to do with it. He told the House that he had made a great point—as he was pleased to term it—of a green member. He (the Colonial Secretary) could not see where the point was. If the honourable member had used a little of his superfluous energy when in the Lands Department, and made some inquiry about land, he would know that what the honourable member for Clermont had said was absolutely true. Much land which was of use to agriculturists was of no use to pastoralists, and *vice versa*. That was so as a rule,

and everybody knew it. If an attempt were made to cultivate the country of which the honourable member for Clermont was speaking—namely, the plains in the interior on the Peak Downs—it would be found that it was only on the banks of creeks and low flat land that there was the slightest prospect of agriculture being carried on successfully. The honourable member for Moreton tried to make his point by attributing what had been said by the honourable member for Clermont to the Government; but that honourable member distinctly denied that he was in any way expressing the Government policy: he was expressing his own opinion, which he had quite as much right to do as the honourable member for Moreton had to express his. The ideas of that honourable member on the subject, although a new member, were a great deal clearer than those of the late Minister for Lands;—they were much more to the purpose, a great deal clearer, and a great deal truer. The honourable member for Darling Downs had already given his opinion that the late Minister for Lands did not do his duty when in the Lands Office, and that that honourable gentleman had been blamed by his late colleagues, and by his Premier, as a man who would not work. Scores of members had heard the honourable member for Darling Downs say so during that grand *resumé* of proceedings after, as he said, he had been kicked out of the Ministry. The then Premier also gave his opinion of the honourable member for Moreton when in the Lands Office. As far as the policy of the Government was concerned, it would be found, if honourable members would wait until papers which had gone to the Executive came back, that land selection was not to be confined to any land or any particular sort of land. When the lands which were proposed to be thrown open were known, the honourable member would be inclined to alter his opinion. The Ministry certainly did not intend that selectors should have to take land which was either low or swampy, but that they should take what they liked, and plenty of it. They would not be confined to eighty acres either, as they were by the late Government. The honourable member had no doubt stated what he did state for the sake of making a point. He had also blamed the Government because no member had got up to answer the honourable member for Wide Bay. How did the honourable member think the business of the House could be conducted if they were continually getting up and answering every ridiculous speech made on a motion for adjournment? The information required had already been given, and no amount of letters written by anybody to any paper would alter the opinion of the Government. The honourable member had been told that

the men were discharged because the Government could not afford to keep them. There was not money to keep them; and it was impossible to get it without running head over ears into debt. The men had been discharged for economic purposes, and on that account only. The Government were not to be drawn by motions for adjournment, and kept talking for hours together about what had been spoken of over and over again.

Mr. MOREHEAD would not detain the House more than three minutes. But he was anxious to point out to the ex-Minister for Lands the fact that he had been complaining very bitterly, strongly, and strenuously about an action of the present Government—imaginary, he should say—which had not been vindicated by the Government themselves. He had inferred that they were going to keep the land in the hands of the pastoral tenants, and that the best lands of the colony were to be still held in the possession of those who were not making the best possible use of them. The honourable member should remember that he was a member of the Government which had thrown the best agricultural country in the colony into the hands of the pastoral tenants, through the action of the Railway Reserves Act. They had forced pastoral lessees to buy the best agricultural land in the colony, and now they came forward and abused the Government for doing what they had done all they possibly could to prevent. The late Government had been the creators of the large estates and of the large landed proprietors in the colony, and they were the party who were to be blamed for usurping what had been called the birthright of the people. They (the members on the Ministerial side) had opposed what the present Opposition had carried out.

Mr. AMHURST said he represented an agricultural district, and was perfectly certain that the honourable member for Moreton, in his speech, had made several mistakes. What the honourable member for Clermont meant by swampy land was this: The honourable member was accused of saying that coarse grass was the best sign of agricultural land. What he meant was land liable to be flooded. He (Mr. Amhurst) knew the description of land spoken of, and the honourable member for Rosewood, who came from an agricultural district, no doubt knew that the lands on the Hawkesbury and Hunter were the finest agricultural lands in that colony. He was sorry that the honourable member—the late Minister for Lands—had made such a mistake as to impute motives. If that honourable member had attended more to his business as Minister for Lands he would have known more about the subject.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL wished to say a few words in explanation. He trusted the

honourable member for Moreton now felt much relieved. He had, no doubt, disburdened himself of a speech which he had prepared for previous delivery, judging from his evident self-satisfaction and the immense display of temper. Without entering upon the question fully, he might be allowed to know a little more about the country he came from than the honourable member, who showed the most complete ignorance upon the whole matter. He (Mr. Weld-Blundell) had been returned in a great measure by selectors, and had held several conversations with them at Clermont. From those conversations he could state that it was undoubtedly the opinion of almost every selector that the high black-soil downs existing in that part of the country were not favourable, or would not be used for some time to come, probably, for agricultural purposes. It only required that a man should put a plough into the ground to convince him that the soil was not suitable. He had only known one instance in which a man had tried it, and that man had said that, but for the fact of having a public-house to assist him, he would have been ruined. Similar opinions had also been expressed to him by several selectors in that part of the country. In endeavouring to make a point of the fact of his having used the term "swampy," the honourable member for Moreton had failed to act in a straightforward and honest manner. It was thoroughly well known by everyone that land spoken of in this country as swampy meant land occasionally under water—a class of land which was made use of for agriculture, and which was at the present time the only land so made use of. He sincerely trusted that before very long they would hear of the black-soil country being thrown open to selectors on all parts of the Peak Downs. If people would cultivate it it would be all the better for the landowners, because, thanks to the late Government, owners of stations had been forced to buy, at a paltry rate, large tracts of black-soil land, greatly to the disadvantage of the country. That land had been altogether taken from the selector and forced upon the present owners. If it could be worked for agricultural purposes, the owners would be just as thankful as any person in the colony. A great deal of capital had been made out of the term "lower orders." He did not remember using it, but whether he had used it or not, he supposed it was only in consequence of an impending election that so much capital was made out of it. The honourable member for Moreton knew perfectly well that he did not employ the term in its literal signification. He ought to know from the views he (Mr. Blundell) had expressed, that he thoroughly appreciated not only the classes who were working but

every individual who earned his bread properly in the colony; he did not think it right that so much should have been made of the matter because he happened to make use of a term—he did not see it reported in *Hansard*, but, if he did use it, it was a slip of the tongue—which was constantly heard in England, where he had been brought up; and he would frankly admit that it was in no way applicable to the position of things here.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said he would not have spoken but for the remarks of the Colonial Secretary. It had been said, over and over again, that these men were not wanted;—granting that, would not the object of the Government, which was stated to be economy, have been attained by the alternative course which had been pointed out in the House? If the men were willing to be placed on three-quarter time, would it not have answered the purpose of the Government equally as well? The Colonial Secretary had said that no amount of newspaper writing would alter the decision of the Government, and that was probable; but was the country come to this—that the Government could defy the House in a simple matter like this, as they were doing by refusing the information? The statements that had been made as to the way the dismissals were arrived at clashed, and the only way that honourable members could come to a conclusion was by having the correspondence placed before them. There was nothing unreasonable in such a request, if this was really a free country. The senior member for Wide Bay had referred to the Colonial Treasurer's statement that the superintendent would be absolutely in danger if the papers were produced. It struck him (Mr. Macfarlane), from what he knew of that officer, that he would be far better pleased to see them laid upon the table than to live in a "reign of terror." It would clear him and the Minister for Works, and satisfy the country. He did not believe the country would be satisfied until the papers were forthcoming.

Mr. SIMPSON said that, if they went on at the present rate, they would never get through the business. The "young foxes" of the House were getting tired of this eternal harping upon one subject.

Mr. REA said the Government had delayed calling honourable members together from January to May; and when they did bring them together they tried to reduce the business to a nutshell. He objected to any rushing through of business after such delay.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Leichhardt) said every dispassionate man must have arrived at the same conclusion as himself, that the Government workshops at Ipswich were a great danger to the country. The prosperity of the country had continued for four

or five years, and increases had continued until the shops numbered 1,000 men. He was glad that there was a Ministry in power which had the courage of its opinions. To his mind, the explanation of the Minister for Works had been perfectly satisfactory. The honourable gentleman was informed by the Colonial Treasurer that the money to keep these works going could not be got; and he was also told that there was a superabundance of rolling-stock, and that there was no need to construct more. In the face of these things he reduced the staff, and every right-thinking man would agree that he did right. He (Mr. Macfarlane) hoped the House would take the lesson to heart, and see that the workshops were kept on the smallest possible dimensions, and if any more rolling-stock was got that it was by contract. Ipswich was not the whole colony. Reductions had been made right through the country, but not so much noise had been made as at Ipswich, and it said little for that town that it could only live by keeping up these overgrown workshops. As to the idea of laying on the table the correspondence, such establishments could not be managed by this House but by Ministers alone, and in whom the responsibility should rest. He hoped that business would be allowed to proceed.

Mr. GRIMES said that, as an agriculturist, he could not allow the statement to pass by that low swampy ground was best suited to farmers. Honourable members did not seem to have drawn a proper distinction between swampy ground and land occasionally flooded, such as that in the Hawkesbury and Hunter districts in New South Wales, and, it might have been added, that on the Oxley Creek in this colony. The latter, which was occasionally flooded, was something like twenty-five feet above the ordinary water level, and could not be classed in the same category as low swampy land. He hoped some honourable member opposite would try to farm on such land;—the contents of his pocket would shrink, and he would soon get utterly disheartened.

Mr. STUBLEY said that if the Government were acting such a courageous part in going in for all this retrenchment, the best thing they could do was to further prove their courage by laying the papers on the table.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that honourable members opposite had spoken about the time of the House being wasted with motions of adjournment. It had always been the practice of the Opposition to get full information about all doubtful transactions before proceeding with Government business, and it was one of the most useful functions which they possessed. The neglect to produce these papers to the House

had been the cause of loss of time, and would probably give rise to still more discussion. With regard to the speech of the honourable member for Moreton as to the conduct of honourable members opposite, the honourable gentleman had simply quoted from a speech made by the honourable member for Normanby, who stated that the policy of the Government was not disclosed at the Ministerial caucus; that the Speech was simply read, and that the Premier had then said,—"Gentlemen, that is all the business." This statement was referred to as giving a reason why the honourable member for Clermont could not have intentionally disclosed the policy of the Government. The Opposition only judged by what they heard, and when they heard the honourable member for Clermont speak of the "lower orders," they concluded that he meant it. He was glad to hear the honourable member say he had merely used the term because it had been familiar to his boyhood, and that it was inapplicable to this colony. Coming, now, to the dismissal of the workmen at Ipswich, that was a very serious matter. They had been told that the dismissal was for the purpose of retrenchment, there being too many men employed in the shops. That might be so, but honourable members could not judge, because the Government would not give them the necessary information. The next question—how were these 100 men selected out of the 300 employed—was a very serious one. The first time he spoke during the present session he said they should look anxiously to the papers to ascertain whether the men had been selected on some principle of fair dealing. They were not given to understand then that the papers would not be produced, but were told that the charges which had been made against the Government were utterly unfounded, and would be dispelled. The next thing they heard was the Minister for Works telling them that there were documents which would bear out his statements; and yesterday they were told by the Premier that, so long as he sat at the head of the Treasury benches, the papers should not be produced because the life of the men recommending the dismissals would not be safe. That was the grossest libel ever passed upon a body of respectable men in this Chamber. He challenged the honourable member to prove that statement, by which he slandered a body of respectable men, many of whom had been in Government employment before he came to the colony. He said, in effect, that they were such desperate characters that the life of the overseer over them would be in danger for recommending their dismissal. He should like to know who really made the recommendation, for he did not believe that the dismissal of those 100 men was ever recommended by any officer in

the department. The statements made last night in regard to this matter were not consistent with those given last week, and he must be forgiven if upon these materials he came to a conclusion adverse to the Government. There must be some reason for the non-production of the papers—for, if the dismissal was recommended by an officer of the department, as had been suggested last night, the papers would simply prove that circumstance, and the man would be in no more danger than if the people of Ipswich believed that he did make the recommendation. The Government, in reference to this matter, evidently expected the House to take for gospel the statement that the men had been dismissed on the recommendation of the officer placed over them; and they virtually said, "How dare you doubt our words?" He must confess that the statements made by the Government did not hang together, and he, for one, should hold upon the present information that the dismissals were not recommended, as had been asserted. He believed the statement made by Mr. Hardgraves in the *Queensland Times*; he had various sources of information, and from what he had heard he did not believe that the dismissals were recommended, and so long as the Government persisted in concealing information he should continue to hold that opinion. If there had been any waste of time the Government were to blame, and the Colonial Secretary was to blame for falling into his old style of lecturing.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Who began lecturing?

Mr. GRIFFITH said his friend the honourable member for Maryborough had not lectured, but had made an exceedingly appropriate speech. He hoped they should get on with the business, but the more readily information was given the quicker they should get on. When the Colonial Secretary and the Premier were in opposition they scouted the idea of any information being withheld from honourable members; but their opinions had wonderfully changed since they had got into office. The Premier now declared he would go out of office sooner than give up the papers in regard to this matter. The only inference he could draw from their refusal to comply with what had been the universal practice was, that after the production of the papers they would not dare to retain office.

The PREMIER said the honourable gentleman who had just sat down had made an extraordinary statement when he asserted that the Government were bound to produce papers at the request of the Opposition. No one stuck out more resolutely against the production of papers than the honourable member himself when in office, for when the honourable member for Bur-

nett made a motion for the production of a return of deeds granted during the honourable gentleman's *regime* as Attorney-General, he prevented the information being given for a whole session, although it would have materially assisted the House to have had it in dealing with a question then before it. This was an instance in point to show that the honourable gentleman did not practise what he preached. There were a great many cases in which it would be the duty of the Government not to furnish information, and the present was one in which it would be cowardly for them to comply with the request of the Opposition. They were here to be responsible for their administrative acts, and to protect the Government officers; and if they considered any information got from them as information that should not be presented to Parliament, they showed, by refusing to produce it, that they had the courage of their opinions. The honourable gentleman said he wanted the information about the dismissal of the men. If there was any correspondence between the Superintendent and the other officers with reference to the reasons why the men should be dismissed, or the object or necessity of their dismissal, he believed that the House would be entitled to have it. If there was any correspondence recommending that the services of a certain number of men should be dispensed with, the House should get it; but he understood from his colleague that the only information was a simple list sent down by the foreman of names of men who could be dismissed, but no information as to how the work should be carried on. It was the duty of the Government to protect the foreman, whether that officer was agreeable or not to the list being disclosed. It was quite possible that he might not object to the disclosure, but in any case it was the duty of the Government not to allow any such information to become public. The Government were placed in exactly the same position as the owner of a large foundry in England, who made up his mind to dismiss a certain number of men in consequence of the slackness of trade;—he consulted his foreman, and asked him to give the names of the men that he could best spare, and whom he considered least efficient. The foreman acted on that request. Would the owner of the foundry be acting prudently and fair to the foreman if he stuck up that list with the information that "these were the recommendations for dismissals?" Such information was all-confidential between the foreman and the owner of the works. So far from the refusal of the Government being cowardly, he maintained that the information was such as Parliament had no right to ask for, and he did not believe that it wanted it. With

regard to the suggestion made by the honourable member for Ipswich, and on a previous occasion by the junior member for South Brisbane, that the men should be put on half-time, he did not believe a more ruinous step could be taken. There was a difference in the quality of the workmen in the Ipswich workshops, and if all the men were put on half-time, the effect would be that the best men, who could always find work, would leave, and the inferior ones remain; so that the workmen would be actually culled, to the detriment of the shops. The dismissals had been made by the Government for a very definite object. The work of the men was not wanted at the present time, and the Government had therefore to consider what was the easiest way of getting rid of them. The only way open was by dismissal, for no more money could be raised by taxation; a great many more dismissals must follow, not only in the workshops but throughout the colony, before he would consent to more taxation being put on the country than the Government proposed. The question, therefore, was between the working men in Ipswich and throughout the colony. It was the duty of the Government not to keep men in employment for whom there was no work, because the burden would then fall upon men placed in similar circumstances. Why should the Government *employés* receive different consideration to what was given the men in private employment? Why should all their sympathies be confined to men who had been getting the best wages, and had been in comfortable billets for years? The men who were actually out of employment and suffering from the bad times were the very men who would have to contribute to pay these Government men, if the Government kept them employed. The Government did not want the labour, and they refused to tax the colony for its continuance when men were walking about idle. He did not think that any Government would be justified in asking for additional taxation, simply for the purpose of keeping men in employment. It was a slander against the colony to insinuate that it could only be kept in existence by employing the working men here on Government funds—the country was not in that distressed condition, and to make such a hubbub about the dismissal of 100 working men did the colony more harm than the stoppage of emigration.

Mr. DOUGLAS said they were gradually getting a little more light upon the subject, and the circumstances of the case justified the discussion that had taken place. Originally the statement was made, and it was just now re-stated, that there was no work for these men; that there was a superabundance of rolling-stock, and, therefore, a reduction should be made. He had endea-

voured to impress upon the Government that, before taking action in this matter, they should have waited until Parliament met, because they were anxious to discuss the question of economy, which was an important one, and one that might reasonably be entertained by Parliament—that it was anticipating events to take the action that had been taken, and taken in a precipitate way, without consulting Parliament on the subject. Upon that a general discussion arose, in the course of which the Minister for Works justified his action on the ground that he had simply made up his mind that reductions were required in order to economise, and that he knew nothing whatever of the men who had been dismissed, but had merely referred to his subordinates for advice, and left the carrying out of the details to them, which was the natural and proper way. He (Mr. Douglas) then stated that he was not prepared to discuss the matter at that time, and would wait patiently until the papers were produced, but that certain facts had been brought under his notice which led him to arrive at the conclusion that political considerations had had weight in connection with the matter. He mentioned particularly one man named Blunt, who, he knew, could not have been dismissed upon professional grounds, because he was an able workman, who had always done his work faithfully and well. The honourable gentleman at the head of the Government repudiated the idea of political considerations having had any weight, and maintained that the Government were guided solely by motives of economy; but he (Mr. Douglas) still considered that there was a political taint in the matter. They waited patiently for the production of the papers connected with the case until last night, when they were distinctly told that they would not be produced. If they were refused, all he could say was that it would be upon the responsibility of Ministers; and if they succeeded in preventing the House from getting those papers, honourable members would at once come to the conclusion that there were some grounds for the accusation that the Government had made use of their powers for political purposes. Last night they were told they should not get the papers, but now the Premier appeared to have retraced his steps, and said that if there were any papers referring to certain matters they might have them, but others would not be produced. The honourable gentleman was now beginning to see that he had got into the wrong box—that under the principles upon which the Government was conducted the country would not stand his keeping back those papers. That he had the right not to produce them he (Mr. Douglas) admitted, but it was not following out the principle by

which they had been previously guided, which was that it was desirable to carry on the business of the country in the fullest blaze of light that could be brought to bear upon it. He was sure there was no Star-Chamber business carried on by the late Government—there was nothing they were not willing to produce in the proper time and in the proper way, and lay before Parliament. Every paper was available for that purpose. In some Governments, and especially those having transactions with foreign nations, it might be desirable, or even necessary, for the peace and safety of nations, that papers should not be produced; but seldom indeed had the circumstance arisen that papers referring to a mere domestic concern would be refused by any Government. The excuse that this course was adopted to protect the overseers was a very paltry one. There was no justification for it. They had heard of no rattening, of no unionism; and yet the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government seemed to have arrived at the conclusion that this course was necessary to protect the officers of the Department. One of the reasons given, yesterday, was that the Ipswich people had a monopoly of power in these workshops, and it was desirable that that power should be taken away. He admitted that it might be desirable to stop the overgrowth of large workshops under the Government, and that it might be desirable to have all this work done by tender. In that respect he agreed with the honourable member for Springsure; but he did not think that at the present time they were so hard up that they could not find means of paying those men until the end of the half year. And why distinguish these men from the whole Civil Service and other men in the employment of the Government? In a few days the House would be asked to consider the Estimates for the past six months of 1879; up to the present time, beyond the removal of a few overtime Customs officers, there had been no retrenchment, on the understanding admitted by the House and acted upon by the Government—that retrenchment should hardly commence until the Estimates for the year were before the House, and that until Parliament was consulted they might carry on upon the old scale. Why, he repeated, single out these Ipswich men, as indicating the policy of the Government in this respect, and anticipate the opinion of Parliament? He suspected that they were singled out for some political vengeance that had assumed this form. He did not wish to anticipate the verdict upon this point. He desired to have the matter thoroughly inquired into. There was no matter upon which they could better devote time than

inquiring fully into the Ipswich workshops. Surely, it would be desirable to know the amount of rolling-stock in hand, the amount that could be made, and the amount that ought to have been made by the staff as it had been and the staff as at present retained. Surely, the Premier was not going to say that he would refuse the right to inquire into these important matters! The honourable gentleman's actions would probably have received the sanction of Parliament if it had been done in an orderly manner, and in accordance with the usual practice; but he had acted precipitately in this matter, as he did in regard to the bank agreement, and probably, when he was longer in office, he would find it to his advantage to have the consent of Parliament rather than anticipating its action in the way he had done.

Mr. LUMLEY-HILL said that a great deal of unnecessary fuss had been made respecting the dismissal of those men. He had known several cases in which men were dismissed under similar circumstances. Take the Peak Downs copper mine, for instance, where 300 miners, many of them good and valuable men who had been imported to the colony at great expense, and had worked there for a number of years, were dismissed simply because it was found that the mine would not pay. Why did not the Government take up the Peak Downs copper mine and carry on the work in order to retain the services of these valuable men, who must go out of the country because, forsooth, it would not pay to raise copper at a certain rate of wages? It was the fact of that mine being unworkable at a profitable rate, and of all our industries having shrunk—the price of copper, wool, and tallow having fallen—that forced this retrenchment upon the Government. They, as large employers of labour, found it necessary to dispense with some of it in order to relieve the taxpayers from unnecessary burdens. He deprecated the disclosure of information given by an overseer to his employer, because, as an employer of labour, he could say that he looked upon such communications as confidential. He did not always tell the men he discharged what they were discharged for, and he did not think such a rule would be carried out in any mercantile or manufacturing establishment. Such disclosures could do no good, and were only likely to cause ill-blood. He thought, under the circumstances, the Government had acted very fairly in regard to this matter; and if he did not think so he should not support them. The honourable the Minister for Works had stated that he was not in favour of reducing wages, but he (Mr. Hill) did not believe in that theory when bad times compelled it to be done. As an employer he always rejoiced when wages were highest and labour was scarce, because

at those times he could always make a profit; but when they were low he had to get on as best he could until good times came round again.

Mr. GROOM said he observed that during the debate, last night, the honourable the Minister for Lands was good enough to say that he (Mr. Groom) had been constantly dinning into his ears something about the rascality connected with the Ipswich workshops. Now he desired to say that that statement was not consistent with fact. He was never at the Ipswich workshops in his life, and knew nothing about them. He did, however, ask that honourable gentleman to assist him in trying to get the workshops at Toowoomba utilised, because he believed that if that were done a good many men from Ipswich would be transferred there, and, being a much better climate, a good deal more work would be done. To that he pleaded guilty; but as for saying that he spoke of the rascality connected with the Ipswich workshops, he did nothing of the kind, and the honourable gentleman had certainly misconstrued his words. He wished to say this:—That if the honourable gentleman now at the head of the Government, when he applied, as leader of the Opposition, to the House to authorise a loan of three millions sterling, £200,000 of which was to carry on immigration on a more ample scale than previously; £350,000 of which was for branch railway lines; and £1,920,000 to carry railways into the interior—if he had then told the House that he intended to do what he was now doing, he would never have got to the Treasury benches; and Mr. Davenport would never have been returned as his (Mr. Groom's) colleague if the people of Toowoomba thought for a moment that he would do anything of the kind. He believed the honourable the Premier was sincere in the speech he made on that three-million vote—so sincere that he took the trouble to print it upon an ampler scale than it had been given, in order to give the public an idea of what his policy was. But what had he done? In place of doing what the honourable member for Port Curtis did on a former occasion, when the colony was in difficulties—in place of decreasing the salaries of Ministers by £200 a year, and deducting ten per cent. from highly paid public officers, and increasing the tariff in such a way as to assist struggling agriculturists, he attacked the industrial classes of the colony. He (Mr. Groom) was not talking about the Ipswich workshops; but there was one case he would mention—it was the case of an engine-driver who was imported by Mr. Brassey, at the request of Mr. Fitzgibbon, and who had been on one of the best railways in England—a man who was known for his sobriety and perfect dependence in all times of danger—that man would be

sent about his business to-morrow morning, and he (Mr. Groom) was informed that a fireman with no experience whatever was to take charge of the engine. He would ask who would travel by our railways if this were the case? If that was the sort of economy that was to be exercised, he felt that it was economy of a kind that would be ruinous to the country. If there was any department in the whole of the public service in which sober steady men should be employed it was the Railway Department, and those engaged as engine-drivers should be specially qualified in that way. He remembered the case of a locomotive superintendent, who, when coming down the Range on one occasion, said to the engine-driver, "Let me take the engine; I will show you how to go down the Range." And he did go down the Range, and nearly sent himself and the honourable Arthur Macalister to somewhere else. The fact was the man was drunk. They did not want men of that stamp, and he thought Mr. Fitzgibbon exercised a wise discretion when he advised Sir Charles Fox and Mr. Brassey, in England, to send out only men known for downright sobriety, and he believed that Queensland, in that respect, had been blessed by immunity from accidents. Whatever lives had been lost, and there were very few, had not been lost through the conduct of the engine-drivers, but had arisen from circumstances entirely beyond their control. They were indebted to Mr. Fitzgibbon for the class of men that were sent out to this colony as engine-drivers, and many of those very men would, to-morrow morning, receive *carte blanche* to go somewhere else. It had been said that these men could go elsewhere in the colony and get employment; but he would ask where could they go? Even when the Government wanted a dredge built they did not get the work done in the colony. Notwithstanding the enormous cost of the "Groper"—and it was a "groper" in more senses than one, for it had cost the colony something like £40,000—they were going to get another dredge built out of the colony. He did not wish to impugn the professional character of the firm who had undertaken to carry out this work, but still there was nothing to show that it would not be a repetition of the "Groper;" whereas, if the work had been carried out by Smellie and Co., of Brisbane, or Walker and Co., of Maryborough, the officers of the Government would have been able to inspect it as it progressed, and any defects could have been remedied. Even if the work cost a few thousand pounds more, it would have been far better to have it done in the colony, because not only would they have a guarantee as to its character, but it would afford employment to a large number of men. He regretted that during the

course of the debate something had been said about sects. He did not care what the men were, but he said there was a principle which all public men should recognise as far as possible, and that was justice to all classes and sects of the community. Rumours had been circulated in connection with this subject, but he could not undertake to say whether they were true or not until documents which ought to be produced were laid upon the table. He believed it had been said that if some of those men went to Toowoomba they could obtain employment, but he did not know where the services of a single engineer were required in the neighbourhood of Toowoomba. True, they had the iron foundry there, but the proprietor of it was almost at his wits' end to try and get a living and keep his men together, and the cause of it was this—that many of the pastoral tenants, when they had any work of that character to be done, sent it down to Sydney or elsewhere; they did not believe in encouraging colonial industry. He believed they did not do so because it was cheaper, but because they believed the best professional men were employed there; and this colony laboured under that disadvantage at the present time. It was therefore a farce to say that these men could get employment at Toowoomba. The fact was that they would be ostracised and sent out of the country because there was no employment for them. It was all very well to say that our railways did not pay, but there were many reasons for that, and perhaps the present Minister for Works, to whom he gave every credit for endeavouring to conduct the department properly, had not discovered the true cause of it. But he did not think that the dismissal of the men who were now driving our engines and otherwise employed upon the railway works, and replacing them by other men who were unskilled in the work, would improve the position of affairs. He was sure that when the fact became known that inferior men were placed in charge of our railway trains that fewer people would travel—and no blame to them for it, because no man, especially if he had a wife and family, would care to trust his life in the hands of inferior men. He did not mean to say that the picture with regard to the deficiency in our revenue had been exaggerated, but the fact that there was a deficiency was no reason why they should fall back upon the dismissal of these workmen. He contended that the deficiency in the revenue should be met by the men who had ample means to fall back upon—the men who had estates of sixty, seventy, and a hundred thousand acres of freehold land. These were the men who should contribute something to the

revenue of the country. The people on the Darling Downs had been repeatedly told that they had a railway, and no doubt it was of immense benefit to them, and he wished every other district had a railway as well; but who were the parties who derived the greatest benefit from it? The pastoral lessees, who had turned their runs into freehold, and were now able to get their wool in the London market in March, when previously it had not even left the station at that time. These were the men who were reaping the greatest benefit from that railway, and they should share the taxation which the construction of those railways had placed upon the country. Take Eton Vale Station, and he would ask what Messrs. Hodgson and Ramsay, with their 69,000 acres of land, and with the railway brought up to their very door, contributed to the revenue of Queensland? They contributed little or nothing, and, in place of spending their income in the colony, they spent it in the mother country. And why should they, at the present time, visit the sins of such men as these, who held large squatterages in this country, upon the industrial classes by making them pay the revenue which these men ought to pay? With respect to the remarks of the honourable member for Clermont, he understood that gentleman to say that on the black-soil plains of the Peak Downs selectors found that farming was simply ruinous, and, therefore, it was useless to embark on agriculture. He (Mr. Groom) could well understand that, and they need not go to the Peak Downs for proof of such state of things—they had only to go to a far richer district, one that had been proved admirably suited for agriculture. They were told by the electric telegraph, the other day, that at Inverell quantities of wheat were grown, but there was no market because there was no outlet. People in Brisbane were paying £15 a ton for Adelaide flour, when it could be bought in New England for £9: the reason was that the farmers in New England had no outlet for their produce. There was not a very large local consumption, and there were no means of taking it where large populations were located. Everyone acquainted with the history of railways well knew that even some of the best districts of England would have languished but for the continued extension of railways there. A late member of the House (Mr. De Satgé) once gave an eloquent description of what Peak Downs would become if the House gave it a railway; but, without local consumption, and without means of getting produce to centres of population, he (Mr. Groom) did not wonder at the decline of agriculture in such districts. The whole of the votes polled on both sides during the recent election for

Clermont was only something like 310, and there were more people residing in any one street in Brisbane. To talk about locating people on areas of black soil in that neighbourhood was nonsense. He was amused, yesterday, in taking up an English paper, to find an advertisement evidently inserted by some one interested in Queensland, although dated from Melbourne, to the effect that there were some very "neat little farms" in the Maranoa district now for sale, and one of them was described as containing 350,000 acres of land with 16,000 head of cattle; and the advertiser added that, if that acreage was not enough, the purchaser could take up other large areas in the neighbourhood at the price fixed by the Government. Such were some of the "neat little farms" in the Maranoa district. On the strength of railway extension, those "neat little farms" had been advertised in the English market, although whether they would get a purchaser or not was an open question. These were not the 20, 40, or 60 acre farms spoken of by the honourable member for Clermont, but a block of three hundred and fifty thousand acres was referred to in this advertisement as a "neat little farm." Having said so much in reply to certain imputations that had been thrown out, he would repeat that he did not care one iota to what creed a man belonged, in connection with his labour. Ever since he had been a public man he had been returned to the House by all classes and sects; and although his private sympathies might be with one class or sect more than with another, that fact would not prevent him from doing an act of justice to any class of his fellow-colonists, no matter by what means they chose to go to heaven. The great question at issue was, is the dismissal of those Ipswich mechanics justifiable? Looking at the Estimates, he noticed that the whole of the salaries of those men were voted up to the 30th June; and it was a question whether a Minister of the Crown was justified in dismissing one hundred and three men without first obtaining the sanction of the House. What were they here for?

The PREMIER: What are we here for?

Mr. GROOM said, if Ministers wished to know what their responsibilities were, he would refer them to the debate which had recently taken place in the Imperial Parliament, on the motion of Sir Charles Dilke censuring the Government for not recalling Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, in declaring war against the Zulus without first consulting the home authorities. In that case every single paper in connection with the matter under discussion, even confidential letters between Sir Bartle Frere and the Duke of Cambridge and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, were pro-

duced. A similar practice ought to prevail in this colony. With regard to the story about the overseer of the Ipswich workshops being in danger of his life from the dismissed men, he did not believe a word of it. The whole affair reminded him of what happened some time ago at Toowoomba, where a man, for purposes of his own, circulated a story that he had been attacked by a person while walking out at night, had stabbed him, and had left the knife sticking in his body. The police, although at once put in motion, failed to discover that any man in Toowoomba had been stabbed on that particular night, and the whole affair was discovered to have been a fabrication. This story about the Ipswich overseer being in danger of his life was evidently a similar bogus story. He (Mr. Groom) had too high an opinion of the working classes to think that they would endanger any man's life because he had done his duty to his employers. It was the duty of the House to protect such a man in the honest discharge of his duty, and in justice to that man the papers ought to be laid upon the table. He did not mean to insinuate that the Premier had said what was not true, but he was of opinion that none of those men would be insane enough to endanger any officer's life because he had sent in an honest report to the Government.

Mr. NORTON said the honourable member for Toowoomba was entirely mistaken as to the causes that had produced the low price of flour in the Inverell district. Some three months ago he (Mr. Norton) passed through New England, and had an opportunity of hearing something with regard to the circumstance mentioned by the honourable member. There was no train running to Armidale, and yet it was true that, last February, contracts for the supply of flour for the whole of the year were made by the millers in Armidale at £8 per ton. In the previous year, when the line had not reached as far as Tamworth, the price of flour was exactly double, or £16 per ton. But now the Maitland millers were able to send their flour by rail to Tamworth, thence to Armidale by drays, and it paid them to sell it there at £8 a ton. Thus it would be seen that the extension of railway communication was the cause of the low price of flour in New England. He obtained this information from a gentleman who had lived in that locality for many years, and who was thoroughly acquainted with the facts of which he spoke. He (Mr. Norton) was exceedingly sorry to hear the honourable member for Moreton attempt to distort certain remarks made by the honourable member for Blackall, the other evening. His opinion was that the speech of the honourable member for Blackall was quite straightforward and honest, and he felt he

could hardly say the same of the speech just delivered by the honourable member for Moreton;—indeed, although he was but a new member, he felt disposed to think that it was an exceedingly crooked and dishonest speech. The honourable member for Moreton ought certainly to know that all the runs in the settled districts were open for selection. The selectors could take up land on any run in the settled districts, and if that was not sufficient it was always within the power of the Government to throw open land in the unsettled districts when it was required. Such being the case, he thought it was very unfair of the honourable member for Moreton to take advantage of a remark made by the honourable member for Clermont, that he was willing that certain land should be taken from him for purposes of settlement; for the honourable member knew perfectly well that those lands could be taken from the honourable member for Clermont whether he was willing or not;—in fact, the honourable member for Moreton reminded him of a line from the poet Cowper—

“A noisy man is always in the right.”

Mr. McLEAN said he had listened patiently to the reasons adduced for the dismissal of the men from the Ipswich workshops, and for the refusal to produce the papers in connection with that question. The reason assigned for the latter was that the production of the papers might be injurious to the interests of the officers in charge of the different departments of those shops; but, in his opinion, that was the very reason why those papers should be laid on the table. A statement had gone abroad, and was generally believed, that the lists supplied by those heads of departments contained only fifty-one names, whereas the number dismissed was one hundred and three. The men knew well enough that they had to go, and that the dismissal of at least one-half of them was owing to the recommendation of the heads of departments, and he failed to see why Government should not table the whole of the papers. There was no analogy whatever between this case and the dismissal of men by the master of a private concern in England. However sincere the Government might be in their assertions, it was necessary to disabuse the public mind of the idea that there was something underhand in connection with these dismissals; and in order to do that, and to vindicate the officers themselves, the papers ought to be laid before the House. Even if that were done, how could the life of the overseer be more in danger than it was at present?—what more could the men know than they knew already? He believed the Government were right to a certain extent, and that there was a necessity for dismissing a certain number

of men from the Ipswich workshops; but, in vindication both of themselves and of their officers, it would be only right to place all papers in connection with the affair on the table of the House.

Mr. BEOR said he should be sorry indeed to see the Government give way, and lay on the table the list of men recommended for dismissal by any of their officers. No doubt, in the minds of some of the dismissed men, there existed a certain soreness with regard to their having been turned off, and some slight ill-feeling against the man or men who recommended their being so dealt with; but it would be most unfair and unjust to those officers to expose them to the effects of that soreness and ill-feeling. He was sorry to see that the debate had not been conducted so ingenuously as it might have been, and that hard words had been bandied about, chiefly from the Opposition side of the House. There could not be a greater want of candour than had been exhibited in the terms applied to the reason given by the Premier as to his reluctance to place these papers on the table. The inference which the leader of the Opposition appeared to draw was that, according to the Premier, a large number of the dismissed men were of such a character that they would take the law into their own hands and wreak their vengeance on the man who had recommended their dismissal. But the Premier's remark meant nothing of the kind, and no candid man would take it to carry that meaning. It simply meant that amongst those 103 men there might be one or two of that character, and it was most disingenuous to say that the Premier's assertion applied to the greater number of the dismissed men. An officer's life would not be safe if even one of those men were to take such a course. At the worst, the remark was only a rather strong way of saying that it would be unfair and unjust to the overseers to put the papers on the table. The object of the speeches delivered at this particular time by honourable members of the Opposition was clear, and it would be just as well if they would conduct their electioneering outside the House instead of importing it within the walls of the Assembly. No doubt those speeches had been made with the view of producing an impression on persons outside the House, in view of a certain election which was now impending.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN had had no intention of speaking, but had been forced into it, and therefore must say something, and he was sorry that what he might say might be read because he had made no preparations for a speech. The honourable member for Moreton had referred to him, and marvelled how it was that he had become so silent of late. He could easily explain why: his rough law was generally de-

livered in a way that would certainly be very annoying to the ears of a special-pleader like the honourable member for Moreton, who occasionally would rouse himself from his lethargy to make a great effort. He gave him credit for having, at any rate, talked very loud—he had talked as ably and said as little as ever he had before—in fact, when it was looked at, it would be seen that it was a very fine electioneering speech. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) had another reason for keeping quiet—he did not care to see his name in print, and thought it would be a pity to deprive the country of the efforts of such able men as they had in the House. In addition, the brilliant speeches delivered by the younger members had entirely put him in the shade, as he was too old now to acquire habits of fluent speaking. If there were any fault to be found with the new House, it was that there was too much talking power in it. There had been six days taken up with the railway business; they had had two motions for adjournments yesterday, and two that day, and one honourable member had already spoken three times. When an honourable member addressed the House for an hour and thirty-five minutes, he (Mr. O'Sullivan) was unable to get in a word edgeways. On one occasion he had said "No;" and once he used the phrase, "It is a gross libel," and he had been lectured even for that. He had no objection that new and young members should monopolise the greater part of the talking—for the present, at any rate, but the whole of what had been said for the last five days might have been considerably reduced. He, however, appreciated some of the speeches made, one being delivered on the Address in Reply, by the leader of the Opposition, another by the honourable member for Maryborough, and a third by the honourable member for Rockhampton (Mr. Paterson). Those he considered the leading speeches of the debate on the other side; but he might mention another honourable member very eloquent and able, and he (Mr. O'Sullivan) would be pardoned if he said that that honourable member would cut a better figure by carrying a little more ballast. He liked the speech of the honourable member for Rockhampton (Mr. Paterson) because he took no side, spoke like a statesman, and put forward ideas that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) had been advocating for the past twenty years. For himself, he sat on whatever side of the House he chose, for he was bound to no party. He must say that if certain honourable members had talked less and thought more during the past six days, they would have done more business than they had up to the present time. He had refrained purposely from meddling at all with the debate which had taken place on the railway dismissals. He did

not know what had actuated him in so doing, but perhaps it was that impulse of nature that repelled people from speaking if they had nothing favourable to say. What little property he had was situated in Ipswich; and he had himself resided in that town for nearly thirty years, so that he had some interest in it. If Ipswich fell he should fall with it, and, in fact, its prosperity or its decline affected him as much as anybody. He could give an opinion about the yards as well as any honourable member in that House, except, perhaps, the honourable member for Ipswich (Mr. Macfarlane), and he should not be actuated by any motives in giving that opinion. He did not know that the honourable member for Ipswich could say as much, as that gentleman was a large storekeeper and carried on a large business there—indeed, the honourable member had told the House that he was very much interested in the dismissals; but he knew as well as he (Mr. O'Sullivan) did that the real state of the case had not been put before the House or the country. The great cry had been—how was it that fine mechanics were dismissed now, when they would have to be replaced hereafter? And at this point of his remarks, he must say that to his knowledge there were some as fine workmen in the Ipswich yards as in any part of the colony; at the same time, he had no hesitation in saying that there was as great a lot of Government drones as in any other part of the country. He knew of one instance where a man was getting 12s. a day for doing half-an-hour's work, and was assisted by another man who should have been at Dunwich fifteen years ago. He had said that there were as fine men in the yards as any who had left the United Kingdom; but really good men could not work in it—and he had found them all over the lines in New South Wales—they could not put up with the private rules in those yards. The fact was that there was a society of amalgamated engineers, a branch of the society at home, and they carried about with them rules, and no good man, either Scotch or English, could live in the yards unless he signed those rules;—the result was that good men could not work with this society, and left the colony. In reality, the Ipswich yard was a Government within a Government. It was just like a little colony of Mormons, inside the gate of which one could not get unless he embraced Mormonism. He used that expression for want of a better to illustrate what he meant—that it was a colony within itself, and one which had dictated for the last six years to the Government, and this year they had actually mastered the Government. It was to put a stop to such a state of things that he had, two years ago, brought forward a motion to disfranchise them, and he intended to bring it forward again during the present

session. He had himself no personal object to serve, but he would repeat that unless a man signed the book of these amalgamated engineers he could not get inside their gate. It had been stated several times in that House that the dismissed men would have to leave the colony and look for work elsewhere, and it was a curious thing that such statements should come from an honourable member who knew better. Why, all the men were house-owners;—many of them had rent-rolls coming in to them, and one man in particular had his station. It was rather strange that an honourable member should say in one breath that the men would have to leave the colony; and, in the next, that sixty of them had houses of their own—especially when the honourable member was aware that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) knew all about it. A statement was made by the honourable Minister for Lands that there were only four people, storekeepers, who were benefited by all the lavish expenditure of money in these yards, and he gave the honourable member for Ipswich credit for receiving that statement as lightly as water fell off a goose's back. Those men never would deal with anyone in the town but those four storekeepers. The honourable member for Ipswich has lately established a very fine store since the unfortunate burning of the old building. He had a splendid establishment, and had stated in that House that he felt very keenly the dismissals of those men. He thoroughly agreed with the honourable member, as there was no man in Ipswich would feel it more keenly, because those men would only go to four stores and nowhere else. The presence of those men in the workshops was always a drawback to the majority of the people of Ipswich, who were for that reason against them. Those four storekeepers went to the yards at the end of every month, and some of them sent in bills for thousands of pounds, and by doing such a large trade they could undersell everyone else, for the very discount they allowed for ready cash would amount to as much in a year as would keep another storekeeper whose doors these men never darkened. This monopoly was carried to such a degree that the Jews had to leave Ipswich; and from that fact alone it would be inferred that he had not exaggerated in speaking of those storekeepers, in competition with whom no one could live. That was one great reason why the people of Ipswich were against loafers being in that yard. He used the word loafer not because he liked it, but because he wanted to make himself understood. If those railway yards were thoroughly cleared out, as they should have been during the last ten years, everyone could live, and Ipswich would be much improved; and the more that went away the better Ipswich would be. Although he believed

the yard contained a good many more than were wanted, and that more would have to go, he had no doubt that a few mistakes had been made in this number of 103; but it was only natural that some mistakes should be made. Among those 103 men there were many good men, but there were none who could not be replaced, with one or two exceptions. Great stress had been laid by the honourable member for Ipswich on the fact of some good carpenters being sent away; but they could not live in the yards for the reason he had stated. He quite agreed with the honourable member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) that creed should not be introduced into the debate, and those who had known him long knew that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) never mentioned such a thing in that House; but it had been referred to a few times by honourable members, and therefore it was well to be candid. He believed there were about 330 men employed in the yards. In consequence of a cry having got about he had made inquiries, and he found that in those yards there were twenty-five Catholics; and, following up the matter, he learnt that they were employed in the meanest and lowest capacities. Most of them were only earning 6s. 6d. a day, but, as a few were getting 7s. 6d., the average was brought up to not quite 7s. a day—which would make a sum of £35 a month for those twenty-five men. Now, he could point out two men in that yard who were getting, between them, more salary than those twenty-five men. He found, also, on examination, that in all departments of the colony of Queensland the Catholics were placed in the same position—where the bread was thickly buttered they never got a taste of it, but wherever there was a dirty bit of pick-and-shovel work they were busy at it. He had now done with that subject for ever, but was prepared to prove every word he had uttered. The whole matter of the custom in that workshop was put into a nutshell by the able and eloquent speech of the honourable Minister for Works when he said that out of thirteen painters three only were tradesmen: that assertion had not been contradicted, and it was an example of the whole state of the yard. He knew one instance in which a man, who already had about eight and twenty relations in the workshops, had kept a situation open while he sent home to England for a friend to fill it. The vacancy was kept dark from the Ministry of the day until four days after the man arrived, when it was found that a man for that position could not be done without. Was it not strange that the working-men of the colony should be called upon to pay for those loafers? It had been clearly shown that there were men there who should be at Dunwich—men seventy or eighty years of age—who might be seen

going about the yard with a little hammer knocking here and there. When a favoured man came he was not sent to work for 6s. 6d. a day, like the unfortunates were, but was given a lump of cotton to oil the works or a little brush to dust them. His price was 8s. or 10s. a day, while the man who worked as hard as a labourer got only 6s. 6d. With regard to the road-parties, the men were in the same position. It was well known in Ipswich that the overseer would not employ a man who did not go to a particular store, and that no shovel purchased anywhere else was any good for picking up a shovelful of gravel. It was notorious that eighty-seven or eighty-five applications had been found from a gentleman, who had been a member of the House, to the overseer. When the word came back that there was no room, the answer was, "You must make room." Was it not a notorious fact that some men could not get employed until they got £20 or £30 into the storekeeper's debt? Then the storekeeper would say, "Come Jack, I'll try you another way. It's no use my bringing you to the court, and I don't like appearing against my customers. We'll enter into an agreement—I'll get you a situation, and you shall pay me £1 a-week and go on dealing with me." The agreement was made, and the loafer went into the yard. Such men should not be encouraged at the cost of the working-man. Who was so independent as the working-man?—he never went to the Government for a billet, but earned his living by the sweat of his brow. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) would never let any children of his go into the Government service, because it would knock all energy out of them and destroy their self-reliance: he would tell them, rather, that they were not to be pensioners and lazy lumbugs, but were to go into the country and earn their living. This was a new colony, and the object of Parliament had always been to promote settlement by throwing open the lands of the colony. Now, he believed that that yard at Ipswich had done more injury to settlement in West Moreton than anything else in the colony, because it had paid men better to give up their farms and live as pensioners inside the yard. It had produced another bad effect. The standard of wages had been raised by the Government there and at other places—though he would never wish nor consent to the reduction of wages below the level at which a man could live comfortably—and the effect was to draw settlers from their farms in order to get the 16s. and 19s. a-day which was in many cases paid. This paralyzed all other workshops in the colony. For instance, a blacksmith in the yard would get 12s. for eight hours' work; outside, a man who had to get his living could only afford to give 10s. for ten hours' work;—so that it would

be found the Government were paying 50 per cent. more than the tradesman outside. Men in Ipswich, therefore, complained bitterly that they could not compete with the Government; and he had heard that Mr. Smellie had made a similar complaint. As a general rule, he (Mr. O'Sullivan) would not wish to see a lower rate of wages in the colony; but he considered the Government standard should be lower than that of anyone else in the colony, so that the prospect of a Government billet should not be an inducement as it now was. People should be taught to earn their own living independent of the Government. The true principle was that of the contractors—namely, that wages should be proportionally lower as the work was sure and continuous. A stonemason or blacksmith got more wages than a carpenter, and outside men invariably got more than inside men, because tradesmen who worked outside could only work in dry weather, whereas those inside could work always. A stonemason might get 12s. a day, and a carpenter only 10s.; but at the end of the year it would be found that one had earned as much as the other. The less inducement there was to look for Government billets the more foundries and manufactories would be established; but how could a speculative man begin here while the Government were keeping up such a high rate of wages? That was not the way to lay the foundation of the colony. The young boy now, in the fashion of the times, could not handle a plough, and considered it a disgrace to be seen, whip in hand, driving a team of bullocks. His education was too high; he was a bigger man than his father, and thought "that old devil of a father, what's he?"—in fact, he was too big for his boots. On the Hawkesbury and the Hunter there was not a man whose children could not milk a cow, thresh, dig potatoes, wash their father's clothes; but there was nothing of that in the colony, where the children were growing up a colony of swells in consequence of the inducements held out by the Government in keeping up a high standard of wages. He thought he had said enough to let the House understand what he meant, at any rate; whether he was able to let the country know was another thing. He had given his opinion candidly. He was as deeply interested in this matter as anyone else, and before he finished he would say this—that, if the present Government did nothing else before they resigned their seats than the clearing out of the Ipswich yard, their action would never be forgotten—they had conferred a higher favour on the actual working men of the colony than any of their predecessors. Several Governments had seen the necessity of doing what they had done, but

had not the courage. It was patent all over the Australian colonies that the Civil Service was overburdened—in fact, the members of it had the command in their hands. He was reading some correspondence on the matter, and had conversations with honourable members. There was scarcely a member on either side that did not agree with him that the Civil Service should be disfranchised; but they said "Who will take the bull by the horns." He was determined to carry on the proceedings of the colony without fear or favour, and a seat in Parliament was of slight consideration to him when he believed he was doing right. When he heard these inquiries he said he would take the bull by the horns, and if he was spared again he would bring the matter of the disfranchisement of the Civil Service before the House this session. At his election for Stanley, amongst the most prominent questions put to him was this one, "Now, will you vote against the Civil Servants?" and he said, "Be Jasus, I will, the moment I get into the House." What was the consequence? Was it likely the farmers and growers of West Moreton could not see the force of his answer, and that it was wrong to put them outside the pale of the Ipswich workshops, to grow cabbages and eschalots for the garrison within, like Chinamen? They were the men who contributed mainly to pay the taxes, and the consequence was he was returned by a majority of 250, which was the largest, perhaps, with the exception of that obtained by the Minister for Works. He would conclude by saying that what he had now stated was in good faith. He deeply sympathised with these men. Anything that had taken place was not owing to their fault. They had been put in the workshops by bad management and bad administration, and Governments had been influenced by outside members. He knew a member of Parliament in Ipswich, and had known the time when that member could get a broom elected by putting a hat on it; and whenever he had a job to look after he went into Parliament, retiring when the work was done. The best administration of the Government were the steps which they had taken to clear the "Ipswich stable." He did not wish to say anything harsh to the honourable member for Toowoomba, as they were on good terms; but he had forgotten himself when he stated that he had never said anything against the Ipswich yards. He had had many conversations with him about these yards, and if they had a thorough enemy the honourable member had been one for the last six years.

Mr. MESTON said he could scarcely avoid beginning his speech with an anecdote of what happened in America at the time of the small-pox. One of the Ameri-

can papers then stated that any person taking it for twelve months would secure immunity from the epidemic. Several wrote to say they would prefer the small-pox to the paper. He believed that, if the small-pox were the alternative they had to accept to the continuance of the debate, they would vote for the epidemic. He would, in the first place, correct a remarkable arithmetical problem which had been propounded by the honourable member who had just sat down, who told them that, in the Ipswich workshops, twenty-five men were employed at 7s. per day; that altogether they were getting £35 per month, and that two men were in the same shop who were getting the same salary. According to the arithmetic he had been taught, twenty-five men at 7s. per day would receive £52 10s. per week; consequently there were two men in the workshops who were receiving £1,200 per year: if this was the case, he certainly thought their salaries should be at once reduced. In reference to the remarks of the honourable members for Clermont and Mackay, that there was land which was not fitted for pasture which was suitable for cultivation, he had to say that scrub land was the only land which would come under this description. He believed that the land which the honourable member for Clermont meant was that which was occasionally liable to be flooded. He would not refer to his speech further, believing that the honourable member would prove himself to be one of the most gentlemanly and successful speakers in the House, after he had gained a little more experience. He wished to call attention to the high-toned and dignified answers that he had received from the Minister for Lands, in reply to questions which he had put to him that day. The honourable gentleman said—

“In answer to questions Nos. 1 and 2, I have to refer the honourable member to the Estimates for 1879.”

The honourable gentleman might just as well have referred him to the archives of his office. He trusted that this divinely-gifted modern Aristides would return a similarly dignified and polite answer when he was next asked any question. These answers, however, were but on a par with the secrecy which the Government had observed in the furnishing the Opposition with information regarding the dismissals of the men in the Ipswich workshops. He could scarcely find a parallel for their conduct, except in the Council of Ten at Venice, who permitted nothing to be known of their deliberations, and carried on communication with the outside world by means of a tube. If Ministers were not prepared to give information when asked in their places in the House, he would recommend that the

best thing they could do was to fit up a telephonic apparatus between that Chamber and their offices, so that they might communicate their replies to honourable members without having to come to the House. With regard to the policy of retrenchment of the Government, he had already recognised how hopeless it was to attempt to turn the Government from their purpose in the direction of railway construction; but, with regard to their policy of retrenchment, he would not, in alluding to the dismissals from the workshops, touch upon “creeds,” not caring what a man’s creed was—whether as a Pantheist he worshipped the universe, or as a Calabar warrior he said his prayers to a calabash. He would ask, were these wholesale dismissals of the men the first step in that grand scheme of retrenchment that would make the people look with wrapt admiration upon the dazzling intellect possessed by the gentlemen who occupied the Treasury benches, who usurped them, he might say—for, if the country were polled to-morrow, the result would be to place these five gentlemen on the Opposition benches? If the Government were thoroughly in earnest, why did they swoop like an eagle upon these workshops and dismiss 130 workmen?—why did they not begin with the £500, £600, and £700 a-year men, who were receiving payment to while away their time in the Brisbane clubs, and who, when they were required in their offices, had to be sent for by messengers? If the Government went in for retrenchment there, they should have his firmest support; but he held that the dismissal of the working-men at the present time was a public calamity, when 1,200 immigrants were on their way out, and hundreds of men were walking about the country without the prospect of obtaining employment. What did John Bright do during the cotton famine?—he put the whole of his operatives on half pay; and he believed that all the men in the Ipswich workshops, including the locomotive superintendent, would agree to half-time employment until the prospects were better. But with the misguided action of the Government he could scarcely refrain from thinking that never did Rome of the Republic look back to the days of the Neros, nor the people of England to the days of Castlereagh or Praise-God Barebones and the Rump Parliament, with a more profound gratitude that those days were over, than would the people of Queensland of the future look back upon 1879 and Praise-God Perkins and the Secret Ministry.

Mr. KELLETT said that at the beginning of the debate he had not intended to speak, but as it was likely to last another evening his words would not prolong it much. The debate had been given rise to by the reading of part of a letter written by a Mr.

Hardgraves. An honourable member was anxious to know who this gentleman was, and he could tell him: Mr. Hardgraves was another of those Ipswich storekeepers who had been so well illustrated by the senior member for Stanley. He was another of those gentlemen who, for special reasons, took a great interest in the railway workshops—one of the four or five storekeepers who had been ruling the roast in Ipswich for many years past, and who, as was well known to many honourable members, had caused a great deal of trouble in that House before. They found, now, that their day was nearly gone by. It had been conclusively proved by the late elections in that district that their sun was nearly set, but they were men who liked to have a dying kick. They thought, no doubt, that they might get on their legs again, but he could tell them, and his constituents could tell the House and the country, that they would have those men no longer. There were a lot of men in Ipswich who combined storekeeping with preaching; they were great men at that sort of work, and made use of this religion as a cloak to cover a great many misdeeds; and he could say that some of them could not be relied on for any statement they made—he could positively assert that. He had asserted it before in other public places, and those men could not deny it. These were the reasons why these men took so much interest in the railway workshops. He could state for a fact that men could not get employment in those works unless they dealt in the stores of those men. That was the real grievance—it hurt their feelings to think that those railway men should be dismissed, and brought them into action because they would suffer in their pockets. There was no other reason. Both himself and his colleague (Mr. O'Sullivan) were as much grieved as any one could be for the dismissal of any good workmen. Ever since his honourable colleague had been in the House he had advocated the interests of the working-men, and he was satisfied that he would continue to do so, and that he would not sit on any side of the House unless he was convinced that their interests would be well looked after. That honourable gentleman and himself were returned by the labouring men of the district for a specific purpose, and that was to put out the late Ministry. That was the general feeling of the country, and especially of the districts they represented, and he was happy to say they succeeded in accomplishing it. Of course, honourable gentlemen opposite did not like it, because they had been in office for many years and had had a nice time of it, and wished to keep there a little longer. He could say that, apart from these few storekeepers and the workmen dismissed, there was no feeling in Ipswich except that it was right

and proper that the services of these men should be dispensed with. Yesterday he was talking to an intelligent tradesman in Ipswich, an employer of labour, and this man asked him whether these men would be dismissed, because he had heard that they would not? He (Mr. Kellett) assured him that they would, because the present Government were not men who said one thing to-day and did another thing to-morrow; and this man replied that he was very glad to hear it, because tradesmen in Ipswich had been hardly able to get a living, as the rate of wages paid in those workshops was so high that it prevented them from getting work done at a fair rate. He was sorry for any man who was dismissed who could not get work, but he was satisfied that the greater part of these men would get work. Many of them were independent of the workshops, and it would be much better for them to work upon their properties about Ipswich that were lying waste, and more profitable to the country than idling their time away in those workshops. It was evident that the speeches to-night were not so much for these men as for electioneering purposes. He had never heard stated more purely electioneering speeches on any hustings than he had heard on this occasion, and honourable gentlemen opposite could not deny it. They had also heard it stated that £1,000 had been subscribed to carry on the contest against the late member for Fortitude Valley, and that, taken in conjunction with these speeches, showed clearly what was the object in talking about the poor working-man. But what did the late Government do when they were in office, and when they could have assisted the poor man by putting him upon the lands of the colony? They did not attempt to do anything of the sort; but, on the contrary, they reduced his holdings and threw open the very worst description of land in the colony for farmers to go upon. They stopped the cultivation of the land, and the prospects of the country, in every way they possibly could. They did that for which, if it had been done by this side of the House, they would not have remained in office for twenty-four hours—they put up for sale by auction, in large blocks, some of the very best lands in the colony, and sold them to the pastoral tenants. In fact, they forced those gentlemen to buy the land that they would rather have left alone; and when they heard about the fine crops that were grown about Roma, he could say that this agriculture was confined to a few little spots, because the large holders had got all the valuable land. The late Government, by their action in this respect, had completely destroyed the rising town of Roma. The country there, which was excellent agricultural country, should have been thrown open in small lots, so that it might

be taken up by *bonâ fide* agriculturists; but now either one of two things must be done—either the town of Roma must move out towards Mitchell or somewhere else, or these large holders must be induced to cut their holdings up into small blocks and sell them at a profit to the working-men of the country. He thought, if it were possible, that some exchange should be made in the interests of selectors and the working-men about Roma, in order to try and get back that land and throw it open; or, if necessary, even make a present of it to *bonâ fide* farmers, sooner than have it lying comparatively waste, as it was at present. He believed the men of Fortitude Valley were quite intelligent enough to see what all these speeches meant, and what was the reason of this tirade to-night. With regard to his honourable colleague (Mr. O'Sullivan), he could say that every working man believed in him, because he was a *bonâ fide* working man himself—one who had raised himself by the work of his hands to the position he now held, who had been able to rear up his family and give them the best education attainable, and that at his own expense and not at the expense of the country; and he hoped other men would follow his example. He (Mr. Kellett) was in the hope that the word "liberal" would not be started again because he thought it stunk in the nostrils of the whole country. Honourable members opposite had been liberal in nothing but buying supporters in order to keep themselves in the position they occupied for five years. In order to do that they had run the country into debt, and they now quarrelled with other men who had courage to come forward and do that which was necessary to relieve the country from its present distress. The affairs of the country were such that they required in the Government sterling men—men who were not afraid to risk their seats in that House, but men of position and standing, who had been sent there by the unanimous vote of the country; and he hoped for the sake of the country they would long remain there. At the same time, he was glad to see on the Opposition benches gentlemen of considerable ability and experience, and he hoped that they would allow the business of the country to go on, passing fair criticisms upon all the actions of the Government. He thought there could be no greater danger than to have a Government too strong, or an Opposition too weak, because even the best men in the country, if they were too long in power, would every day get a little more corrupt. He hoped honourable gentlemen opposite would not indulge in anything but fair criticism, and allow the business of the country to be proceeded with.

Mr. Dickson said he thought the Ministry by this time must be convinced that

they were not taking the right course to facilitate the business of that Chamber. The debate to-night had taken a very discursive turn. It arose primarily on the disinclination of the Government to lay certain papers upon the table, and he need not say that, if the Premier had allowed those papers to be produced, the debate during the last two nights would have been prevented. He trusted that honourable gentlemen would now see the propriety of adopting moderate counsels. He (Mr. Dickson) did not wish to occupy the time of the House, and would be happy to resume his seat if the honourable gentleman would say that he was prepared to accede to the wishes of the majority of the Chamber; because he was satisfied that, if all honourable members of the House would leave party feelings aside, they would say that it was right that these papers should be laid upon the table. He regretted that the honourable gentleman still did not see his way to do what he (Mr. Dickson) thought a gentleman occupying such a high position should at once accede to. He must know very well that the withholding of the papers could only be attributed to a desire to maintain secrecy for fear of exposing their contents to the public gaze. He regretted having to make these remarks—he did not like to introduce anything like vituperation in his observations, but at the same time he felt very strongly that the privileges of that Chamber were being set at naught to a great extent by the refusal of the Premier to produce those papers. He could assure that gentleman that that was not the way in which the business of the country would be facilitated, because he was satisfied, from the determined tone of honourable members on his side of the House, that unless the papers were produced this would not by any means be the last night of the debate. The Ministry themselves were entirely to blame for maintaining a position which was wholly indefensible. It must be admitted that there were very peculiar circumstances in connection with these papers, and the position assumed by the Ministry would lead persons to consider that there must be some very strong reasons for the inconsistency of their speech and actions. This debate arose through the honourable member for Ipswich tabling a motion for the production of these papers—a very proper and reasonable proceeding on the part of that honourable member as the representative of the town where the dismissal of the workmen had been notified. In the debate on the night following, the Minister for Works alluded to the existence of certain reports forwarded to him by the superintendent of works, saying, amongst other things—

"I have a recommendation now lying in the Works Office which enables me to discharge an even larger number of subordinates than is pro-

posed, and which recommendation I have not yet acted on. And now what is all their cry about the dismissals?"

And further on the honourable gentleman said—

"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."

The Minister for Works was perfectly cognizant of the notice of motion given by the honourable member for Ipswich, and yet he did not say that he would not place the papers on the table. If the Government had at that time entertained any doubts as to the propriety of tabling those papers, the Minister for Works ought to have intimated that such was the case, on the ground that the production of the papers would be injurious to the public interests. That was not done, and the motion was allowed to remain on the notice paper, the impression being that it would be allowed to go as formal; but when the motion was called on it was objected to by the Ministry themselves. When the subject was reintroduced on the following day, by the honourable member for Maryborough, the Premier interjected, "You shall not have the papers," or words to that effect; and the Colonial Secretary endeavoured to make the House believe that there were no papers on the subject in existence worth laying on the table. The honourable gentleman did not distinctly say so, but that was the substance of his remarks. He (Mr. Dickson) would also refer to a pointed question put, last night, by the honourable member for Rockhampton to the Minister for Works, and which yet remained unanswered. That question appeared in *Hansard* as follows, although it was not exactly in the form put by the honourable member—

"He would like to ask the Minister for Works whether he was in a position to deny that he himself had asked a superintendent or superintendents of the workshops at Ipswich to send papers recommending these dismissals, or many of them, and that the superintendent had to do it? Could the honourable member explain that?"

The exact form of the question, as he had been informed by the honourable member, was this:—

"He would like to ask the Minister for Works whether he was in a position to deny that he had asked the superintendent, or superintendents, of the workshops at Ipswich to send in papers recommending these or other dismissals, and that the superintendents refused to sign them."

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Does the honourable member wish for a reply to that question?

MR. DICKSON: Certainly.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I deny it.

Mr. DICKSON said he was satisfied with the denial, and his satisfaction would be complete if the Premier would adopt a similar course, and at once say he had no objection to place these papers on the table. That would end the discussion, and enable the House to proceed with the Government business. But the Premier had made matters worse by giving as a reason for his refusal to table the papers, a statement which might imply that those Ipswich workmen were so demoralised that if they were dismissed from their situations the lives of their superior officers were unsafe. If such were really the case, he (Mr. Dickson) should recommend the dismissal of the whole lot of them. It was a very unjust imputation to be cast on the men by the Premier of the colony—an imputation which, to his mind, added insult to injury. Such a statement, coming from the Premier, must necessarily be looked upon as one of great importance, and he certainly ought to make the *amende honorable*, and explain that he did not mean to convey the impression that those men were of such a bloodthirsty character. This was not a question of the Ipswich workshops merely, but whether Ministers should or should not withhold from Parliament information which it deemed desirable to have. If they considered that State reasons compelled them to withhold the papers, they had certainly not made good that very extreme position; and without making it good their action was most unjustifiable. A good deal of extraneous matter had been introduced during the debate, and the responsibility for much of this rested with the Premier, who, instead of confining his remarks to the comments of the honourable member who introduced the motion for adjournment, insisted on giving reasons for the dismissal of the men. He could not allow the Premier's remarks on that subject to pass without comment. The old cry had been reiterated, "There is no more money in the Treasury, and the country is not in a position to stand taxation." Although the circumstances of the colony were straitened at present, he did not think they were reduced to that low position that they could not increase their revenue; or that their credit was so diminished in the money market that they could not, if necessary, obtain means to proceed with railway construction. When the Premier proposed his grand scheme for a three-million loan, he dwelt upon the construction of branch railways, for which he intended to provide £350,000. Had the honourable gentleman been true to himself, he could not then have been false to any other man. Had he been true to his professions, he would have found it necessary to maintain in office the very men he was now dismissing for the construction of these branch lines; and therefore he was visiting upon his workmen

throughout the colony the effects of his receding from the position he took up when, at the end of last session, he intimated that the circumstances of the colony were then such as to justify another loan of three millions. Instead of doing so, the Premier was merely endeavouring to make both ends meet by dismissing a number of men from Government employment. Was it the proper way to remove the present severe depression by increasing the ranks of the unemployed, and so increasing the general distress throughout the colony? The dismissal of 150 men was at the present time a very serious matter, not merely from a local but from a general point of view. The end of the financial year was approaching, and the Colonial Treasurer would shortly have to make his financial statement: would it not have been better for the Premier to have awaited that occasion, and then have given reasons for the reduction of the number of people employed in the different Government establishments, and thereupon introduced the whole question of reducing the ranks, not only of these operatives but of the Civil Service itself? After the financial statement and the indication of his general policy, there could have been no possible objection, if the House had none, to the honourable gentleman's carrying out his reforms; but when he was on the eve of making that financial statement, he might very prudently have abstained from this immediate reform, and from committing himself to such expressions as that the pruning-knife would have to go deeper yet, and thereby depriving a large number of people in the Government employ, probably, of their subsistence. However, he (Mr. Dickson) did not wish to dilate more than was necessary upon this matter, but he would again urge upon the Premier a policy of moderation. It was an inauspicious commencement of his administration and this Parliament for the Premier to take up a defiant attitude against the other side of the House when they asked for reasonable information and he withheld it. A policy of retaliation might commence. He would be sorry to see it; but so long as he was a member of the House he would, without any wish to embarrass the Government, join other members in insisting on the privileges of the Chamber being observed, and in obtaining from the Government that amount of information the House ought to possess. He did not make these remarks as a threat, and would be indeed sorry to see any party carry out a policy of that sort. At the same time, he deprecated the Government placing themselves in the position they had and refusing reasonable information which had been asked for. He would again repeat that, in the dismissal of

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the workmen throughout the colony without the production of the papers that had been asked for, the probity of the Government remained very questionable. Under these circumstances he should like to see the Ministry reconsider the propriety of complying with the request of the House. The member for Stanley made a few remarks, and he (Mr. Dickson) would say briefly that his disclosures, while they obtained a considerable amount of attention, were remarkable in one respect—it did seem singular that the honourable member should not have made these disclosures earlier. The workshops were not the creation of yesterday or to-day; yet he had been several sessions in Parliament, and it was only this evening the honourable member made known the dreadful enormities and abuses which he said had prevailed in Ipswich. Although the honourable member for Stanley might have the courage to tell his electors he would not vote for a particular policy, he evidently had not the courage to tell the House and the country formerly that these abuses existed. How could the honourable member reconcile this with the duty he owed to the House and the country? If all the charges he had made were true, he had certainly not discharged the duty which was expected of him, by not making what had taken place known to the Government of the day. The Government, however, were obdurate; and, while a determined position was at all times to be admired and commended, an obstinate position, where men like the Ministry refused to justify themselves either by their speeches or the production of documents asked for, was an equivocal and undignified position for any Ministry to maintain.

Question for adjournment put and negatived.

SUPPLY—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee of Supply.

The PREMIER said that under ordinary circumstances he could not have asked the committee to go on with the business he proposed to take at this time, had it not been that the circumstances of this case were something extraordinary. At any rate, he had not heard of anything which had formed a precedent in the Parliament of England or the colonies. At the end of last year—about November—the Estimates were voted for the whole year by the House, but afterwards an appropriation was taken for only one-half the amount voted. The House when it met again in January were therefore presented with half the Estimates, which, although they had passed the House, were not appropriated. Those same Estimates he now again brought down. They were the same as passed in November last for the whole year, and the same as

were presented by the late Government in January. Discussion could scarcely arise on them, because the understanding was so clear that the Government were authorised to carry on, at all events, on terms equal to those understood in November last. The financial year was pretty close up, and he presumed that, instead of prolonging the session by any discussion on these Estimates, honourable members would wait until the Estimates for the coming year were before them. He desired—which was consistent with the actions of the House—to ask honourable members to pass the Estimates as a matter of form, as every item in them had been already considered and passed, and every item would also be considered in the Estimates for the coming year, which would be presented to the House in a few days. He had only just made the motion that the Estimates be printed, which was necessary before they could be put into the hands of honourable members; but, as a matter of fact, they had been in the hands of honourable members of that and the other Chamber for the last six months. He did not know what the honourable leader of the Opposition would say to the course he proposed to follow—perhaps he would agree to the gross sum of £572,987 being voted?

MR. GRIFFITH: No, no.

The PREMIER would, then, take them in lump sums. He begged to move—That there be granted for the service of the latter half of the year 1878-79 the sum of £7,291 10s. for the Executive and Legislative Departments.

MR. GRIFFITH concurred with the honourable gentleman that it was not desirable to have a discussion on these Estimates, which were passed in detail by the late House and would under ordinary circumstances have been covered by an Appropriation Act; at the same time, he did not see why they should be taken in a lump sum, as honourable members might wish for information concerning some of the departments. He might remark that the Estimates were those of the late Government, and bore the signature of the honourable member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson);—the honourable Treasurer might, at least, have put his name to them.

The PREMIER said that on the copy sent to His Excellency the Governor his name appeared, but it was unnecessary to have all the Estimates reprinted for the sake of having his name appended to them.

MR. DICKSON asked whether it was the honourable gentleman's intention to cover these Estimates with an Appropriation Bill, so as to bring the account down to the end of the year, or to leave it till the Appropriation Bill for the coming financial year?

The PREMIER said he had not given the matter very mature consideration, but, so

far as he had considered it, he had come to the conclusion to ask for an Appropriation Bill for the amount of the Estimates he held in his hand that day.

Question put and passed.

On the motion that a sum of £146,103 be granted for the Colonial Secretary's Department,

MR. GRIFFITH said it was rumoured that great changes were to take place in the Agent-General's Office, and that a great many officers had been dismissed. He should like to have some information on the subject.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that none of the officers on the Estimates before the Committee had been dismissed. Some of the officers at home had been dispensed with, but they did not appear on these Estimates.

The PREMIER thought it would be more convenient not to adjust the Estimates now, but to pass them as printed, as the money would not be spent if it was not required for the purpose for which it was voted.

MR. GRIFFITH explained that he did not ask the question with the view of reducing the Estimates, but merely for information.

Question put and passed.

Question—That a sum of £11,138 be granted for the Department of the Administration of Justice—put and passed.

On the motion that a sum of £57,087 10s. be granted for the Department of Public Instruction,

MR. GRIFFITH said that a question had arisen before he left the Education Department about an orphanage at Townsville, and he should like to know how it was settled. As far as he could remember there was some misunderstanding, through correspondence conducted by telegraph. A sum of £500 had been voted, but a misunderstanding arose, and he was curious to know whether it had been settled and the orphanage had been started?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the orphanage had been started, but there had been some misunderstanding as to a vote having been for building purposes or maintenance.

Question put and passed.

On the motion—That a sum of £53,611 10s. be voted for the Department of the Colonial Treasurer—

MR. DICKSON asked the Premier if there had been any reductions made in the Treasurer's Department to a large extent, as if so he thought the Estimates should be brought down in the form of actual expenditure. Rumour said that there had been great reductions in the Customs, but perhaps they were only supernumeraries.

The PREMIER said that they were mostly supernumeraries, and it would scarcely

have been desirable to embody them in the Estimates.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he concurred with the honourable member, but it was rumoured that shortly after the acceptance of office by the present Government considerable reductions were made. Perhaps the honourable gentleman would say to what extent those reductions had been effected.

The PREMIER said there were eight or nine reductions in the Customs.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—That the sum of £42,620 10s. be granted for services in connection with the Department of Public Lands and Mines.

Mr. GARRICK thought this was a good opportunity for the honourable the Minister for Lands to give the information with regard to the Under Secretary, Mr. Tully, becoming Surveyor-General, which he had promised to give at some convenient time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He has been Surveyor-General all along.

Mr. GARRICK was quite aware of that, but wished to know whether the rumour that somebody else was to be Under Secretary was correct? Hitherto, Mr. Tully had filled the two offices at a salary of £800 a-year. It had been said that an arrangement by which Mr. Tully would cease to be Under Secretary for Lands, if not made, was in contemplation. The honourable member for Rosewood, therefore, asked the question, and got an indirect answer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS could inform the honourable member that there was no foundation for the rumour. The subject had not yet come under the notice of the Government.

Mr. MESTON asked the Secretary for Public Lands to inform him how many Commissioners there were in the Lands Office?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said, if the honourable member referred to pages 40 and 41 of the Estimates he would find the information he was so desirous of obtaining.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the honourable member was entitled to a little more courtesy. It was not usual on the part of a Minister to tell an honourable member, especially a young one, seeking information to find it out for himself.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was not aware that the Estimates were coming on for discussion. He could not answer with accuracy, but the number was somewhere about thirty or forty.

Mr. GARRICK wondered what would have been said if the late Ministers had come down with Estimates and said they did not know they were coming on for consideration? It was the business of the Minister for Lands to know when his Estimates would be brought on. If such an answer

had been made by a member of the late Ministry when the honourable gentleman sat by their side, though really working against them, they would have had a howl for an hour and a-half at least. He now said, in a roundabout way, that there were somewhere about thirty or forty.

Mr. AMHURST said honourable members ought to know perfectly well that the way the debates had been carried on by the Opposition was calculated to delay the business of the colony, and no one could foretell that the Estimates would come on now. There was no occasion for such a burst of virtuous indignation.

Mr. McLEAN pointed out that the question of the honourable member for Rosewood was asked after due notice had been given, so that the Secretary of Public Lands had plenty of time to prepare an answer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS would remind the honourable gentleman that, if he had shown as much industry in his late office as he had shown in the House during the session, he would know how many commissioners there were. All the commissioners, whether useful or not, that he had left there were there still.

Mr. GARRICK said it was not his place, on the Opposition side of the House, to say how many there were; and he looked to the busy bees on the other side to give the information.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the Estimates were those of the late Ministry, and an implied promise was given, when the vote on account was taken, that they would be passed. Probably the honourable gentleman who had just spoken did not know whether there were any commissioners when he was in office. If any had come to him he would have snapped their noses and told them to leave him alone and let him sleep in peace. When the Minister for Lands' own Estimates came on he (the Colonial Secretary) would be the first to say that he ought to know all about them. But it was quite understood that these Estimates would be passed *in globo* as a matter of form.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the honourable the Minister for Lands did not give quite so polite an answer as he might have done. It was easy to fence with any question, but in this case it would have been better to have given the information and have saved a little exhibition.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—That the sum of £85,808 be granted for service in connection with the Department of Public Works.

Mr. DICKSON said there was a difference between the position of the late Government and that of the present one, so far as related to votes for roads and bridges, as the former Government had brought in

the Estimates with the intention of spending the whole of the amounts, whereas it appeared, from the reports of deputations to the Minister for Works, that it was not the intention of the present Government to spend the whole sum. That honourable gentleman had said he intended to lapse as much money voted for roads and bridges as he could. If that were his intention, such a large vote of money for roads and bridges should not be demanded, or the House should have a promise from the honourable member that he would not lapse any of the money voted for these special services. If he could not spend it by the 30th June, he should, at all events, promise to carry on the works out of the increased revenue which it was to be hoped the Treasurer would receive during the ensuing year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the last deputation that waited on him was one headed by the honourable gentleman himself, this morning; and that honourable gentleman could inform the House that the Under Secretary was called in and stated that all the money unexpended on the roads he referred to was £55, which at the request of the honourable gentleman himself was now in course of being expended. As to the lapsing of votes, it must be left to the Government to carry out the votes in the best way they possibly could.

Mr. DICKSON said so far as the answer went it was satisfactory, but there was a large amount voted for bridges and other purposes which had not been expended. It was an invariable rule that money asked for and obtained by members for their respective constituencies should not be allowed to lapse; and honourable members were quite justified in insisting on obtaining a promise that neither large nor small votes for these services should be allowed to lapse. He did not wish to place the Treasurer in an inconvenient position, but he asked that the votes which remained unexpended on the 30th September should be carried over for expenditure during the ensuing year;—that was a reasonable request, and most honourable members would agree with him in making it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that one of the late Ministers for Works (Mr. Miles) stated, when a sum of £5,000 had been voted for roads and other purposes in the Warrego district, that he would take good care that not one penny should be spent; and yet the senior member for Enoggera now delivered a tirade against the present Government because they would not promise that no votes should be allowed to lapse.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that, notwithstanding what had fallen from the honourable member for Mitchell, he agreed with the late Colonial Treasurer that the votes should not be allowed to lapse. It would

be in the recollection of the House that, at the last moment last year, he carried a vote for £3,000 for the Stanley district, on a motion standing in the name of the late Mr. Pettigrew; and a distinct promise was then made to him, by the head of the then Government, that if he would allow the Appropriation Act to pass, the money would be expended, although not included in the Act. He did not see it in the Estimates before the Committee, but he must insist upon the money being expended;—of course, if the money was not available he could not expect this, but if it was he should be the last man to forego its expenditure.

Mr. REA said if Government would give the same a definite answer honourable members would be satisfied. There had been the same Ministerial mystery with regard to this request as had been apparent during the past week in respect to nearly all other matters.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that what was required from the Minister for Works was a candid assurance that the money granted would be expended as far as was possible. In his electorate there were many works which required to be executed to facilitate communication with the metropolis. Everybody knew of the immense amount of traffic passing over the district of Enoggera. The road leading to Nudgee, for example, was excellent as a whole, but the bridge on it was in a dilapidated condition and was almost dangerous to cross in vehicles. This was a particular case in which the money voted by the House for repairs might be expended in the way intended. They ought not to leave the matter entirely to the Minister for Works, for however inexorably just he might be disposed to be, he was only human, and the pressure brought to bear upon him might prove irresistible.

The PREMIER said the senior member for Enoggera, when he asked the Minister for Works to make the concession, had quite overlooked the objection that it was not in his colleague's power to grant it, being illegal. The 18th clause of the Audit Act provided—

“That all sums which shall be appropriated to the public service for any year shall be legally available, provided that payment on account be made during the said year or the first three months of the succeeding year.”

And then the clause went on to say that all votes which had not been so expended should lapse,

“and shall not be issued or applied in any future year, unless a contract or engagement shall have been made and entered into before the expiration of such year, by which a liability so to issue and apply shall have been incurred.”

If the honourable member had asked the Minister for Works to make such a con-

tract that would have been putting the matter in a different way, but to ask him to guarantee that the votes should not lapse was simply asking what was not in his colleague's power; the request was impracticable, and could not be carried out without a great deal of manœuvring. He (Mr. McIlwraith) also objected to it on the ground that he did not think such an application had ever been made before. The Audit Act specially provided how lapsed votes were to be dealt with. He had never known a Minister to be asked to do more than place a schedule on the table of the House giving the unexpended votes, and that would be done this session. He would not, however, give such a pledge as was asked: he would place the usual list of unexpended votes before the Committee in time for honourable members to take action.

Mr. MILES said, in reference to the remarks of the honourable member for Mitchell, that he had refused to make any appropriation of a vote passed by the House, the true explanation was that the money was voted during the previous session, but had not been placed on the Estimates, and he refused to expend it until it had been again passed. He took the opportunity of referring to what he had seen reported in the papers. His colleague, the member for Darling Downs, waited upon the Minister for Works, requesting him to appropriate some of the votes passed for his electorate, and the Minister for Works was reported to have said that there was no money in the Treasury, but that he would see what could be done. From the return that had been furnished the Committee, that statement could hardly be correct: there was a considerable balance available yet. The honourable gentleman was also reported to have stated that he would allow as much of these votes to lapse as was possible—in fact, that he did not intend to expend the money. It would be remembered that votes for £9,000 were brought forward for the district by various members, and supported by the then Opposition. He trusted that, now that the Opposition were in a position to expend the money, they would do so. If, as was stated at the time, the roads in the Darling Downs were inaccessible in 1878 after the long-continued dry weather, they were a great deal more so, now, after the recent rains; and he therefore hoped the Minister for Works would deal out even-handed justice, make the roads passable, and enable the farmers to get their produce to market. He had tabled a motion in regard to the votes, and had found it was informal: he intended withdrawing it and substituting another.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the honourable member for Darling Downs, when Minister for Works, stated distinctly he would take

good care that the £5,000 voted for the Warrego, and also the total votes of £8,000 moved for Darling Downs by different members, were never expended, and he (Mr. Morehead) believed they never were. It was passed by a vote of that House, and it became the duty of the Minister who had charge of those sums of money to dedicate them to the purposes directed by the House; but the honourable member for Darling Downs, before he left the Ministry, stated in the House, and to members outside of the House, that those sums should never be expended for the purposes for which they were voted. The honourable member ought to explain the matter if he could do so.

Mr. SIMPSON said he did not think it was fair to new members that votes for roads and bridges all over the colony that were passed by the last House should be forced down their throats. He did not think the House should be asked to endorse the Estimates of the old House.

Mr. HORWITZ did not agree with the previous speaker. Several honourable members opposite had endorsed the expenditure of these amounts, and the Government should expend the sums already voted by the House.

Mr. MACKAY said there was a sum of money voted for carrying on the operations of a Board of Inquiry, but owing to some difficulty the duties of that board were practically suspended. There would be a meeting of the board to-morrow, and he would like to know for their information whether the balance of the vote was to be placed at their disposal?

Mr. ARCHER said that, as there was a deficiency in the revenue, he did not think it would be any loss to the country if these votes were allowed to lapse, because, at present, there was no money to expend. Next year the expenditure could be apportioned in accordance with the requirements of the several districts of the colony.

Mr. SIMPSON said he could understand why the honourable member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) wished these Estimates to pass. As an old member of the House he had managed to favour some districts, and always voted against others. The district he (Mr. Simpson) represented was in the unfortunate position of being always deliberately voted against by that honourable member; and if the balances were carried over and only expended in the districts in which they were voted, he feared that his district would come very badly off, and all through the action of the honourable member for Darling Downs.

Mr. GARRICK said one of the most trenchant parts, if there could be said to be anything trenchant in the Governor's Speech, was the statement to the effect that in the financial adjustment that was to take place a great part of the deficiency in this

financial year would be put upon the shoulders of the agricultural settlers of this colony, and if that was to take place, instead of putting the burden upon the shoulders of those who were best able to make up the deficiency, the very least they could do was to expend the money voted in the past for their benefit.

Mr. AMHURST complained that, when the honourable member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) was Minister for Works, a vote of £3,000, passed on the motion of the then honourable member for Bowen, was afterwards defeated by a catch-vote by the then Government, and the people of Bowen were swindled out of it.

Mr. MILES said the honourable member for Dalby knew very little about the duties of a Minister. When the Estimates were brought down to the House, it was the duty of Ministers to oppose all votes not included in those Estimates. He warned the honourable member against making charges against him that he could not sustain. He defied him to point to a single instance where he voted against any sum on the Estimates for the interests of Dalby. He had voted against the construction of roads and bridges within the municipality of Dalby at the public expense, and he should always do so in every instance.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the charge he made against the honourable member for Darling Downs was, that he deliberately refused to expend £8,000 or £9,000 voted by the House for expenditure in the Darling Downs district, and did not expend it.

Mr. MILES said the statement was not in accordance with fact. He never refused to expend money voted by Parliament, and the records of the Works Office would show that every shilling voted for the Darling Downs was expended.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he would repeat that the honourable member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) had prevented the expenditure of money on the Darling Downs which the House had deliberately voted.

Mr. MILES would again deny the statement of the honourable member. The only votes he had opposed were those introduced by private members in view of the coming general election, and which were forced upon the then Government.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said the refusal of the request made came with a very bad grace from the Ministry, more especially when the Premier, at Bundaberg, had boasted that he had insisted on the Government of the day increasing their Estimates by £40,000. It was manifestly unfair to deprive districts of the roads and bridges to which they had a just claim.

The PREMIER said he had never made any such boast at Bundaberg as that alluded to by the honourable member for Enoggera. When a certain accusation was made against him he defended himself, but

he certainly never made any such statement as that attributed to him. The request now made to the Government was that they would break the law. Votes could only lapse in accordance with law, and no Minister, in the present state of the finances of the colony, would undertake the expenditure of money on contracts without knowing what the amount would be, and when there was a great deal less than nothing in the Treasury. He would take good care that he would enter into no contracts until he saw where the money was to come from; and instead of this refusal coming with a bad grace from him, it certainly came with a very bad grace from the Opposition, after reiterating that the present Ministry, when on the other side of the House, had encumbered the Estimates with a number of useless votes, to ask to perpetuate those votes by not allowing them to lapse.

Mr. GRIFFITH said this was a very serious matter. The Government were not asked to break the law, but merely to see that the money now asked to be voted should be expended, and not be a mere idle vote. If the money was not to be spent, why ask the Committee to vote it? Surely, Ministers had been long enough in office to know what they were about. If Government were going suddenly to throw all these districts upon their own resources—to leave them without roads and bridges for a year, and then ask them to make them themselves—it would have a disastrous effect. The large sums asked for last year were necessary, owing to its being a transition period between central and local government. What was the use of giving a man a piece of fertile land if he could not get out of it. If the making of bridges and roads were to fall suddenly on the unfortunate selectors the effect would be disastrous; and yet the present Government called themselves the friends of the selectors. Surely, the colony had suffered enough at the hands of the Ministry during the short time it had been in power.

The PREMIER thought it was some gratification to find out what had been the intentions of the late Government in putting a large amount of money on the Estimates, last year, for roads and bridges. That reason was, that they would have the Local Government Act in operation this year, and that no further money would be required. No other logical conclusion could be arrived at. But the honourable member for Enoggera demanded that the Government should guarantee the expenditure of the money in order that the votes might not lapse. Governments could give no guarantee of that sort; for how could they possibly do so when they did not even know whether they would have the money to expend? It was asking them to do a great deal too much. Last year an amount of

£62,254 had lapsed; and supposing a similar amount were to lapse this year, it amounted to asking Government to guarantee the expenditure of that amount in addition to any amount they might propose to bring forward. Was that fair to the Colonial Treasurer, when he had hardly had time to see how the finances of the colony stood, and before he had made his financial statement? He had heard of nothing so unreasonable as to ask it.

MR. GRIFFITH said there were plenty of precedents on the table of the House to show how money votes could be prevented from lapsing.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY said the fact of the matter was, that the honourable member for North Brisbane wanted to pledge the Government to spending the money whether they had it or not; but if he were so anxious the money should be spent he should have commenced a little earlier, and asked for a pledge to spend all the money voted for public instruction. There would be a large surplus to lapse under that head, and why, then, did not the honourable member, or the honourable member for Enoggera, ask Government, equally as well, to spend that money? Robbed of all verbiage, what the honourable member (Mr. Dickson) wanted was to obtain a pledge to spend money which was not in the Treasury. They might as well try to get blood from a turnip.

MR. GRIFFITH said that the Colonial Secretary knew that, as regarded the votes for public instruction, the Estimates in which they were founded were arrived at in the office on the best data procurable, by estimating the probable number of teachers employed in the service of the different grades. Their salaries were fixed by law, and the only difficulty lay in estimating the probable number of the teachers. If the amount voted were larger than was required he was very glad to hear it.

MR. DICKSON thought the Premier had made a very large statement when he talked about the lapsing of £62,000. On referring to the Auditor-General's report, he would find the total amount lapsed for roads and bridges, including a number of salaries and incidental expenses considered as properly terminable at the end of the year, was only £14,000 for the year 1877-8. Surely, then, the provision made by the last Parliament for roads and bridges might be maintained: they were not so green as to accept the statement of the Colonial Treasurer, that he must violate the law in complying with this request. The leader of the Opposition had shewn the fallacy of this assertion. When it was said that the ensuing Estimates were not likely to have nearly so large an amount for roads and bridges, it was a further reason why the provision already made and which was now asked should be maintained.

The Colonial Treasurer need not tell them that he intended to submit a statement of votes to lapse, and then obtain authority for such as he proposed to retain or for fresh votes. The position taken up by the Colonial Secretary in regard to the Education Office was entirely different to this case of the roads and bridges. The unexpended votes, there, represented salaries chiefly, which were always held to lapse at the end of the financial year, being a continuing service to be provided year by year. It had been the practice of the late Government to carry over all unexpended balances for roads and bridges.

THE PREMIER said he had made a *lapsus lingue*. Instead of saying "lapsed votes," he should have said unexpended balances.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the Colonial Treasurer were to have insisted on the votes for lands and mines, he (Mr. Macrossan) would have been under the necessity of employing more wardens on the goldfields than were required for the work, because there was money voted on the Estimates for more wardens than there were actually employed. As to the talk of the honourable member for Brisbane about the poor settlers, since he had been in office he had been round the roads of East-Moreton—in fact, he made it a practice to go round to some of them every Friday and Saturday, and without an exception they were in good condition. Indeed, he knew of no single road so bad as Gregory Terrace, within the municipality. So far from any money lapsing in this district, it would be found that most of the money had been expended, and there would not be a penny to lapse. Referring to the discussion which had taken place between the honourable member for the Mitchell and the honourable member for Darling Downs, he thought that if the last-named honourable member were to severely tax his memory he would find that not one penny of the votes for Darling Downs had been spent.

MR. REA said the Committee were anxious to know whether Government were going to give the guarantee or not? It was because he was a new member that he required the information. The whole evening had been spent in trying to get information, and it was necessary that, when there was a new House and a new Government, the fullest information on every matter should be given by the Government.

MR. SIMPSON said the honourable member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) challenged the statement that he had opposed a vote for the Dalby Hospital, but he would prove that the honourable member had done so. On referring to *Hansard*, he found that Mr. Bell moved that a sum of

£1,000 be granted in aid of the funds of that hospital, and that the honourable member for Darling Downs, who was at the time Minister for Works, said that if his colleague (the Premier) was going to give a sum per head for a number of navvies he would have to give a very large sum indeed, and he hoped he would not carry out such an arrangement any further.

Mr. GRIMES thought it would be unfair to withhold the expenditure of votes which had been passed for roads in various districts by the last House, and therefore honourable members were perfectly justified in seeking for information from the Government on the subject.

Mr. MILES admitted that he had not expended the money which had been voted for the Darling Downs, but it was because he had not had an opportunity of doing so. With regard to what had fallen from the honourable member for Dalby, he could assure him that he should always oppose any jobberies, and would promise him that if he came forward with any he would oppose them.

Mr. SIMPSON: Does the honourable member say that the application for funds for the Dalby Hospital was jobbery?

Mr. MILES: Yes; and I have said it over and over again.

Mr. DOUGLAS said it had been stated by the honourable Minister for Works that a larger amount had been asked for goldfields wardens than was required. If that was so, it was because it was necessary in the event of new goldfields being opened. But there was a distinction between the salaries put down for officers and the votes for roads. The argument that if they had not the money they could not spend it hardly held good, because if they were to be asked to make up a deficit they would also be asked to make up the additional amount which might be required, with the money already expended. He thought they had a right to demand from the Premier the information which had been sought; but perhaps the better plan would be to come to a division. All that honourable members on his side of the Committee asked for was that their opinion should be placed on record, that the moneys voted for the year 1878-79 and not expended should in future be placed to the credit of the various districts for which they were voted.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that, whilst agreeing with what had fallen from the honourable member, he thought it was not the duty of a Ministry to ask for money which was not required. As regarded the explanation of the honourable member for Darling Downs, he had not only not expended the money voted, but had said he would take good care it was not spent. He (the Minister for Works) had commenced to spend it, and already more than £800 had been expended.

Mr. GROOM thought it was unfair for honourable members opposite to make such a dead set on the honourable member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles), as it was to that gentleman that many of their constituencies were indebted for their water supply; surely, therefore, one good word should be said for the honourable member. As to the vote for the roads, he believed that the House had not been prorogued two months before it was discovered that it was for election purposes that the money was granted, and therefore the honourable member could not be blamed. If anyone was to be blamed for not spending it it was the late Minister for Works, and yet he understood that that gentleman recommended the expenditure of £1,500 on the Darling Downs. He wished to say, on behalf of the honourable member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles), that during the whole time he sat near him in the last House he never refused anything for the roads on the Darling Downs.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, as far as the vote of £3,000 for the Darling Downs was concerned, he thought the honourable Minister for Works must have found some papers left in his dispatch-box relating to it. A return had been laid on the table showing the expenditure on roads in the various districts, but, unfortunately, just when it was wanted it could not be obtained. When this information was produced they would be able to see to what extent the promise asked for would affect the Treasury. The Government, however, had not yet said whether they had put anything on the Estimates for next year for roads, except what would be expended under divisional boards. Honourable members might infer that they had put nothing on. The colony, therefore, was in this position: there was a new Bill, which, if passed, must be some time getting into operation, so that boards under it could not meet before the end of the year. Before the assessments of lands could be made, and the first moiety of the rates paid, nearly a year from now would elapse. How were the roads to be carried on meanwhile?—were the Government going to stop road-making? That was a matter which required explanation. The Government had not put in force the Act already passed, but had introduced a Bill which could not come into operation for nearly a year. In the meantime, honourable members had a right to see that money already voted by the House was expended.

The PREMIER said it was no use continuing the discussion if it was to take the form into which honourable members had forced it. The best way would be to first get a complete list of the unexpended votes on the table: the one asked for only applied to votes for the Darling Downs. He had asked that all those votes might be allowed

to go as formal, and the discussion left for its legitimate place when the Estimates-in-Chief were introduced, or at any other time when honourable members might find an opportunity. With regard to the remarks about anxiety as to the condition of the roads, and the putting into operation of the Local Government Act, they were quite uncalled for. Honourable members surely did not expect to have the Estimates now, or that a financial statement should be made: and why should they suppose that the roads of the colony would be affected? The Government had made no such statement.

Mr. DOUGLAS understood that the Government proposed to make a certain saving on these votes, and the contention on the Opposition side of the House was that all the votes should be expended—perhaps not at once, but at some time.

Mr. DICKSON said that to make a record of the debate he would move that the Chairman leave the chair—not that he wished to delay business, but in order to get an expression of opinion as to how far he was justified in asking the Government to make a very reasonable promise. His contention was that, as this was the last opportunity they would have of expressing an opinion on those particular votes for roads and bridges, they should signify that, though not desiring to embarrass the Treasury, they wished the votes for these special services to be spent as voted for the respective districts. He moved that the Chairman leave the chair.

Question put, and the Committee divided—

AYES, 18.

Messrs. Douglas, Dickson, Miles, McLean, Griffith, Rea, Price, Rutledge, Meston, Tyrel, Stubbley, Hendren, Grimes, Macfarlane (Ipswich), Kates, Horwitz, Mackay, Groom.

NOES, 22.

Messrs. Palmer, McIlwraith, Persse, Macrossan, Perkins, Baynes, Sheaffe, Lumley-Hill, Stevens, Macfarlane (Leichhardt), Morehead, O'Sullivan, Kellett, Beor, H. W. Palmer, Norton, Weld-Blundell, Amhurst, Simpson, Hamilton, Swanwick, Archer.

Question resolved in the negative; and—Original question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—That the sum of £77,507 be voted for services in connection with the Department for Railways.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—That the sum of £89,432 10s. be voted for services in connection with the Postmaster-General's Department.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—That the sum of £2,387 10s. be voted for services in connection with the Auditor-General's Department.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, a supplementary sum of £27,118 12s. 3d. was granted, for the year 1879, for the Departments of Colonial Secretary, Administration of Justice, Colonial Treasurer, Public Lands, and Public Works.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Chairman left the chair, reported to the House that the Committee had come to certain resolutions, and obtained leave to sit again.

The PREMIER moved—That the report be received at the next sitting of the House, and that the resumption of the Committee stand an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes to 11 o'clock.