

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 6 JULY 1880**

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# QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

### THIRD SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT,

#### APPOINTED TO MEET

AT BRISBANE, ON THE SIXTH DAY OF JULY, IN THE FORTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER  
MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1880.

#### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, 6 July, 1880.*

Vacancies during Recess.—Members Sworn.—Elections and Qualifications Committee.—Bill *pro forma*.—Petition.—The Opening Speech.—Address in Reply.

THE House met at 12 o'clock; a few minutes after which hour a message was conveyed by the Usher of the Black Rod that His Excellency the Administrator of the Government requested the attendance of Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly in the Council Chamber.

The SPEAKER, accompanied by Honourable Members of the Assembly, proceeded to the Legislative Council, and having heard the Address of His Excellency, returned to their own Chamber.

The House resumed at half-past 3 o'clock.

#### VACANCIES DURING RECESS.

The SPEAKER announced that since the termination of the last Session the following vacancies had occurred in the House, viz. :—

- (1.) By the resignation of Angus Mackay, Esq., one of the Members for the Electoral District of South Brisbane.
- (2.) By the death of John Macfarlane, Esq., one of the Members for the Electoral District of Leichhardt.
- (3.) By the resignation of Henry Rogers Beor, Esq., Member for the Electoral District of Bowen.

That upon the occurrence of each of the said vacancies he had issued his Writ for the election of a member to fill the same; and that of such Writs the following had been duly returned with certificates respectively endorsed thereon of the election of the following gentlemen, viz. :—

- (1.) Simon Fraser, Esq., as a Member for the Electoral District of South Brisbane.
- (2.) Albrecht Feez, Esq., as a Member for the Electoral District of Leichhardt.

#### MEMBERS SWORN.

The following Members were presented and sworn, and signed the roll :—

Simon Fraser, Esq., South Brisbane; Albrecht Feez, Esq., Leichhardt.

1880—B

#### ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE.

The SPEAKER, in accordance with the requirements of the Legislative Assembly Act, laid on the table his warrant appointing the Committee of Elections and Qualifications for the present session.

#### BILL *PRO FORMA*.

The PREMIER presented a Bill relating to the Slaughter of Animals within Cities and Towns, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed.

#### PETITION.

The HON. S. W. GRIFFITH presented a petition from William Hemmant, for many years a resident of Queensland and still engaged in business in the colony, complaining of the administration of the London business of the Queensland Government, with respect more particularly to contracts for the purchase and shipment of rails and to a certain immigration contract in connection with the ship "Scottish Hero;" complaining, further, that certain members of the Assembly were owners of shares in several vessels sailing under contract with the Queensland Government; and praying for an inquiry to be made.

On the motion of Mr. GRIFFITH, the petition was read and received.

#### THE OPENING SPEECH.

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

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

"It gives me much pleasure to meet you, and seek your counsel in maturing the legislative measures demanded by the circumstances of the colony. I regret that unavoidable circumstances have prevented your assembling until an unusu-

ally late period of the year; but I believe that you will deem the material public advantage resulting from the delay full compensation for the inconvenience it has occasioned.

"By the Divisional Boards Act of last year, the provisions of which have now been applied to all parts of the colony, an important and beneficial change in its government has been initiated with encouraging prospects. The readiness with which the people in nearly every part of the colony have undertaken the charge of their own affairs affords gratifying proof that the colonists of Queensland are not wanting in that intelligent self-reliance and public spirit which everywhere characterise British communities. A considerable time must necessarily elapse before all the difficulties attendant upon the introduction of the new system are surmounted and the full benefits derivable from its operation are realised; but my advisers entertain no doubt of its ultimate success. The questions involved in the satisfactory definition and effective maintenance of the principal roads of the colony have proved somewhat embarrassing to the Government, but a Bill will be submitted for your consideration which they trust provides for a satisfactory adjustment.

"Among other measures passed by Parliament last year, the Electoral Rolls Act and the Licensing Boards Act have also been brought into operation, and have already proved of much public advantage.

"In response to the invitations issued for tenders for the continuance of the Torres Straits Mail service, several offers were received in October last; but, all involving a subsidy largely in excess of the amount paid under the present contract, none of them was deemed eligible by my Government. Besides, it was impossible to overlook the fact that a branch mail service between Singapore and Queensland did not secure to the colony the advantages of direct through team communication with England, the absence of which at the present time is most prejudicially affecting the commerce of the colony. Advantage was therefore taken of the presence of the Premier in England to invite offers for the establishment of a first-class through service, providing for the more speedy transit of both mails and immigrants through the Suez Canal and Torres Straits. No eligible tender in reply to the advertisement issued was received; but the Premier was subsequently enabled to make an advantageous contract, a copy of which will be laid before you, and which my advisers confidently submit for your ratification.

"Under the authority conferred by the Loan Act of 1879, the Queensland National Bank invited tenders in London, in April last, for two million pounds worth of the colony's debentures. On the 8th of April a sum amounting to nearly three times that asked was offered, and at prices which, under all the circumstances, must be deemed satisfactory, and which compare favourably with the recent loans negotiated by the older Australian Colonies.

"The possibility of straining the credit of the colony by appeals to the English money market for fresh loans to complete necessary public works induced my Ministers to regard favourably the carrying out of a system of railway lines by private enterprise, stimulated by generous land grants.

"They accordingly determined to ascertain whether and on what terms the attention of British capitalists could be attracted to railway construction in Queensland. I am happy to inform you that during his recent stay in England the Premier received proposals from influential gentlemen there for connecting the eastern seaboard of the colony with the Gulf of Carpentaria by means of a through railway, starting from the termini of the trunk lines at present under construction by the Government. These proposals will shortly be laid before you, and a Bill will be introduced during the present session giving authority to the Government, under certain specified conditions, and with the requisite safeguards, to enter into a contract with responsible persons for the carrying out of this undertaking within a reasonable time.

"Notwithstanding the depressed value of agricultural and pastoral produce, as well as live stock, the demand for land continues to be maintained. As compared with the preceding twelve months there was a falling off in the area selected during the year 1879; but during the past six months the selections again show a considerable increase. There is every reason to believe that the settlement of the country is steadily progressing. The suitability of the Northern coastlands for the cultivation of sugar is attracting the attention of capitalists in the Southern colonies; while the recent discoveries of tin upon the Tate, Herbert, and Barron Rivers will, it is hoped, lead to the extension of an important mining industry in that part of the colony.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY—

"The Estimates for the Financial Year 1880-1 have been prepared on the most economical scale compatible with administrative efficiency, and will shortly be laid before you.

"I regret that the prevailing depression which so signally disappointed the revenue anticipations of the previous year has not less prejudicially affected the financial period just closed. Happily, there are at length indications that the turning-point has been passed; yet my Ministers, who had hoped to tide over the depression without additional taxation, now consider it necessary, in prudence, to adopt legislative as well as administrative measures for equalising revenue and expenditure. The general application of Local Government can give little immediate relief to the Treasury, as the ever-increasing demands for road and bridge expenditure will still be met by heavy, although *pro rata*, drafts upon Consolidated Revenue. You will therefore be invited to sanction proposals for augmenting the public income with the least possible inconvenience to the taxpayer; but I trust that returning

prosperity, and a prudent administration of the finances, will render any permanent addition to the public burdens unnecessary.

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

"The successful placing of the loan enables my Ministers to carry on without interruption various useful public works for which provision was made by Parliament last year. The several railway lines in the coast districts are approaching completion; it may therefore be hoped that the heavy expenditure incurred upon them will soon become at least partially reproductive. The contracts recently made for the continuance of the main lines into the western interior prove that important economies have been lately effected in our system of railway construction, and that the reduced estimate made by Ministers last year of the cost of future extensions will not be exceeded. The work of harbour improvement will be greatly accelerated when the dredges now building become available, and my Ministers are determined to relax no effort in their endeavour to meet the growing requirements of the shipping trade of the colony in this particular.

"Works for the water supply of the principal towns of the colony, and other undertakings of a purely local character, having been carried out or authorised by means of considerable sums of borrowed money, legislation has become imperative to provide for the accruing interest, and the ultimate repayment of the principal moneys so expended. A Bill to provide for the Construction of Local Works on Loan will therefore be found among the measures submitted for your consideration.

"Bills will also be laid before you, for the following purposes, namely,—To provide for the Construction and Management of Works for the Storage and Distribution of Water; to regulate the Introduction and Treatment of Pacific Island Labourers; to provide for the Regulation and Inspection of Mines; to prevent the Influx of Foreign and other Criminals; to amend and consolidate the Laws relating to Distillation; to amend and consolidate the Laws relating to the Insane; to provide for the Proclamation of State Forests and the Conservation of Timber; to provide for the sale of Food and Drugs in a Pure State; to amend the Marriage Laws; to provide for the issue of Post Cards and Postal Notes; and other Bills of importance.

"In submitting these measures for your consideration, and in endeavouring to pass them into law, I confidently anticipate that my advisers will secure your valuable assistance; and I trust that the wise legislation of the session now opened will be conducive in a marked degree to the progress and well-being of the colony."

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Mr. FEEZ moved—

That a Select Committee be appointed to prepare an Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Administrator

of the Government, in opening this the third session of the Eighth Parliament of Queensland. That such Committee consist of the following members, viz.:—Messrs. Palmer, Cooper, Norton, O'Sullivan, and the Mover.

Mr. COOPER seconded the motion.

Question put and passed.

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

"To His Excellency The Honourable Joshua Peter Bell, President of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Queensland, and Administrator of the Government thereof.

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

"We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in Parliament assembled, desire to assure Your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Person and Government of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the Speech with which you, as the representative of Her Majesty, have been pleased to open the Session.

"We congratulate Your Excellency on your having assumed the position of Administrator of the Government of the Colony.

"We shall give our most careful and serious consideration to the various important measures submitted by Your Excellency; and we trust that our labours may result in the passing of such laws as will promote the advancement and prosperity of all classes of the people in every part of the Colony."

Mr. FEEZ moved that the Address, as read, be adopted. He said, in the few remarks which he had to make he should take the various subjects contained in the Speech *seriatim*. The first and most important was the Divisional Boards Act. There could be no doubt that for many years the want of a measure of this kind was very much felt. Constant complaints were being made by the outlying districts of unjust treatment and unfair division of public expenditure, and therefore it must be natural that the introduction of this Act should receive the support of all portions of the community. The Act certainly required some slight amendments, and when they were made, if it were properly carried out, he was satisfied that it would have the desired effect and remedy many existing evils, and give a fair chance of expenditure on roads and bridges and other improvements in the interior being equally divided according to the revenue that could be collected in the various divisions. The next measure was the Electoral Rolls Act, which had already conferred great benefits, as it enabled persons in all parts of the colony to have their names placed on the rolls every three months, whereas formerly it was only possible to do so every year. They had all seen the beneficial effect of the Licensing Boards Act. It prevented parties who had any interest in a licensed house from exercising their influence in regard to the issue of licenses; and this was only just and right. The next most important question was the mail contract with the Eastern Navigation Company. The whole colony was in a position to benefit by this contract. It was not a contract which only benefited a portion of the coast, but the whole colony from one end to the other must benefit by it. And not only that, but there was the additional advantage which would be afforded to immigration, which would

be a great boon to the colony; and it would also be the thin end of the wedge in connection with the exportation of frozen meat. Even if it were only on a small scale at first it would prove what Australia could do in this respect, and it might lead to very extensive exportation: and they must all look upon this as one of the most important questions that could occupy their minds at present. With regard to the loan, he was happy to say, taking a retrospective view of the matter and the visit of the Premier to England, that they could not but express gratification to see that our debentures had risen from 87 to 94 and 95, the price our debentures had realised since the floating of the two-million loan. When the Premier went home our debentures were 7 per cent. lower than those of South Australia, and when the negotiations for the two-million loan were completed our debentures were only one per cent. lower. This was very gratifying, and proved that whatever the Premier did he must have brought great ability and influence to bear to raise the colony and its resources so high in the estimation of the capitalists. All they had to do now was to expend the money for the purposes for which it had been appropriated, and he sincerely trusted they would be able to do so successfully, and to the benefit of the colony. With respect to the proposed extension of railways, which might be laid before the House, if they were to be carried out by means of land grants, on the same principle that had been carried out in California and America, he was perfectly satisfied; but he certainly hoped the House would not for one moment think of going back on the decision arrived at by a large majority at the close of last session, and stop the lines now being constructed for the purpose of introducing some new system. He was perfectly willing to accept a new system, if it could be dovetailed in with the present system, and made workable at the time that the present contracts were completed. He was perfectly satisfied to support a measure for the construction of railways by way of land exchanges, but he did not think the House could introduce the new system to the exclusion of the trunk lines already passed by the House. The country must keep faith in that particular with its public creditors. When the Central and Northern lines are extended, then he would support the introduction of the new system. With regard to what was incorrectly called the Transcontinental Railway, and the capitalists who were ready to make it, our lands were very valuable, and should not be given away. They might do better by borrowing the money than allowing the lands to be alienated, only to find that by-and-by they were trebled in value. Several other matters were lightly touched upon in the Speech, and one of them—the introduction of island labour—was likely to cause more discussion than any other. It was a question that required the most serious consideration. Putting aside the protection to sugar-growers, there were many advantages taken at the present moment of Polynesian labour, not for the promotion of tropical agriculture, but simply for the saving of house servants. This was one of those measures upon which Parliament would have to be very strict, if they would supply that great want of the colony—population. It was a want that could only be satisfied by giving such inducements to Europeans as would justify them in coming amongst us.

Mr. COOPER said he had been honoured by a request to second the adoption of the Address in Reply, a request to which he cheerfully responded. He felt assured, from his knowledge of the hon. gentlemen constituting the Assembly,

that they would accord to him that forbearance which characterised them in so eminent a degree last session. He would now trespass upon their indulgence whilst he made such comments on the matters referred to in the Speech as it appeared to him they warranted, reserving to himself the right to exercise his judgment upon them when they came to be discussed in detail. He congratulated himself in having to speak after his friend the hon. member for Leichhardt, who had dealt so ably with the topics disclosed in the Speech, in an address which, coming from a new member, argued well for the able representation of the interests of his constituents, and reflected credit upon their choice. He should not go over the topics treated by his hon. friend, but simply confine himself to those portions of the Speech which had a greater prominence in the eyes of the community. The delay in calling Parliament together would be fully compensated for by the material public advantages gained to the colony, some of which were foreshadowed in His Excellency's Speech; and when the Premier went into detail upon them, he was satisfied that hon. members would come to the conclusion that, instead of the colony suffering any loss, it had received a positive gain. The action alone of proving that fresh meat could, in a frozen state, be delivered in the English market as fresh as on leaving Australia—and that, too, with a good margin of profit to the owners of sheep and cattle—had gained for him (the Premier) the lasting gratitude of Australia. The news of the arrival in London of the shipment of meat by the "Strathleven" was hailed with a sense of joy throughout the length and breadth of Australasia. Would hon. members reflect for a moment how immensely Queensland, with its almost unlimited extent of good pasture lands, would be benefited by the establishment of this trade, to the exclusion of the other colonies? Victoria and South Australia did not grow sufficient meat for themselves. New South Wales had a surplus, but Queensland could easily produce a supply of fresh meat immensely in excess of its requirements; consequently, three-fourths of the fresh meat delivered in the home market would go from Queensland. This great meat trade would cause a great rise in the rents recoverable from the lands of the colony, especially in the unsettled districts, and would go a long way towards paying the whole of the interest of working expenses of our main trunk lines—at all events, such of them as had been and were being constructed out of loan. The Divisional Boards Act, they were informed, was working satisfactorily, and the boon of local self-government was becoming very generally approved; but a short Bill would be necessary to clear up and define what were "main roads," and whether or not the cost of their maintenance was to fall wholly on the districts through which they passed. There being no complaints in connection with the working of the Electoral Rolls and Licensing Boards Acts might be taken as a fair indication of their satisfactory working. The approval of the House would be asked in ratification of a contract entered into for a first-class mail service through the Suez Canal and Torres Straits. The tenders for the continuance of the Torres Straits mail service were largely in excess of the amount now paid; and then, again, it was only a branch mail from Singapore. The price of the mail service to which the contract referred was about £55,000—so I glean from the newspapers. The Speech itself was silent on that head, and also as to the sum required for a continuance of our present mail service; and it would be for hon. members, when the details were fully before them, to say whether the advantages to be derived from having a mail ser-

vice with Brisbane for its terminus covered the increased cost. Some of the advantages would be in the matter of freights. Queensland would no longer be a milch cow to New South Wales, but would be able by this mail service to get their goods direct, thus saving transshipment at Sydney, and the extra freights between Sydney and Queensland ports. Another advantage would be in the facilities for correspondence; and, as he represented a northern constituency, and the one which would be almost the first of call and the last of departure, he took special interest in this mail service, and would on their behalf advocate the ratification of the contract. The through service would be a great inducement to immigrants, and our wool and frozen meat would be the outward freight. Another aspect of the mail service must not be overlooked, and that was that the present service branched off at Singapore and then went on to China, and each return trip of the E. and A. steamers brought more or less Chinese to Australia; thereby coming into competition not only with the labouring and artisan class but also with the merchant. No walk of life was foreign to them, and they were fast choking all the avenues to employment. So long as South Australia opened her arms to receive them, so long would our efforts to exclude them from our shores prove futile. Of what avail was our tax, or our laws to exclude them from our goldfields, when they could come over the South Australian border at any time and openly set us at defiance on our goldfields, knowing quite well that we could not and did not intend to enforce the penalties they incurred, having no goals to hold them? One great blot on our statute-book would remain so long as Chinese were allowed to become naturalized, and thence enfranchised after a residence of three years, and married. This one means of checking their settlement amongst us should commend itself to hon. members who were anxious to enoble labour amongst our fellow-colonists. The £2,000,000 loan was, as hon. members were aware, a brilliant success, despite the croakings of those who should have known better, and whose patriotism for the land of their adoption should have caused them to sink their petty jealousies in the interests of the colony. Delay, again, showed the wisdom and foresight of the Premier; and the floating of the loan in April was a means of obtaining more favourable terms than the loans of South Australia and Victoria. Three times over was the loan subscribed for, and since then offers had been made in the colony for the remaining £1,000,000 at the minimum price. And where, he would ask hon. members, could better security be found for their advances than with their own kith and kin in Australia? The money the Australians borrowed was expended on the security, thereby enhancing its value. It would be well for the British public if they held Australian bonds in lieu of those of Egypt, Honduras, Costa Rica, or even Russia. To prevent the possibility of straining our credit the Government proposed that the future construction of railways should be by private enterprise, stimulated by generous land grants. Such a scheme of railway construction must commend itself to their favourable consideration. From the proposals that would be submitted to the House, it would appear that a powerful syndicate were willing to connect our present western termini with the Gulf of Carpentaria in exchange for our waste lands. The enormous advantages that would accrue to the colony by the extension of a line of railway from Roma to the Gulf were too patent to the meanest understanding to require enlargement at his hands. The railways so constructed would immensely increase the traffic on our lines, would bring thousands of immigrants to our shores free of all cost to the

colony, and a large population would be settled on our western interior along the line of railway, who would raise produce to pay the interest and working expenses of the line. By giving alternate blocks of land, our western lands would acquire a value not even contemplated by the most sanguine well-wisher of Queensland. The lands should be given in proportion to the length of line completed, and if the line were only partially constructed it would entail no loss upon the colony; we should be the gainers by the length constructed, and the land would remain to be taxed. Again, the immigrants as soon as they landed would be contributors to the revenue, and thus lighten the general taxation. The country traversed would be through the magnificent pastoral lands of the Mitchell, North Gregory, and the Burke, which would shortly teem with many millions of sheep and cattle, and the wool of the one and the carcase of the other would produce ample freights for railway carriage. The prime feature of the contractors' prospectus would be to induce settlement along their railway line in order that they might make freight for their railway. Some honourable members had in common with himself travelled upon the railway line that spanned the country between San Francisco and New York, and they hardly needed to be reminded that that line of railway was constructed by land grants and money, and now at intervals of each twenty miles along its entire length, nearly 3,000 miles, were to be found embryo townships. We were simply asked to give our land; the Americans gave both land and money, so anxious were they to have a railway traversing the interior of their country. They did not wait for settlement but constructed the railway, and settlement on the lands followed in its wake, as it would do with us. For what other chance than settlement could the syndicate look for recouping themselves for the interest on cost of construction and maintenance of their lines? The South Sea Islanders should, he thought, be confined exclusively to the development of agricultural products, and not allowed to come in to compete with other labour.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, before making any comment on the Speech, he wished to congratulate the hon. member for the Leichhardt for the admirable manner in which he moved the adoption of the Address in Reply. He was sure that the hon. member, from his long labours as a colonist and varied experience, would be a valuable addition to the House. He believed that it had been usual on these occasions, before dealing with the proposals of the Government as set forth in the Speech, to comment upon the proceedings of the Ministry during the recess, and he (Mr. Griffith) proposed to follow that course upon the present occasion. The delay in calling Parliament together had not been explained in the Speech read by His Excellency. It was stated that the delay had been of material public advantage—how, they had not been informed. He (Mr. Griffith) thought he should be able to show that, so far from being a material advantage, great disadvantage had arisen from the delay. Of course, it was supposed that the floating of the loan was an advantage, but they did not know what contribution the presence of the Treasurer really made to the attaining of what was generally supposed to be a satisfactory price for the loan. He did not think much of the success himself, because the loan, two or three days after, was quoted in the market 2 per cent. higher than the price at which it was allotted. This might arise from his ignorance of the London market, and he was inclined to think there were many things connected with the transaction of financial matters in Great Britain of which he was ignorant. As to the administration of

affairs in Queensland, there were seldom more than two Ministers at a time managing the affairs of the country, and when one pair of Ministers were in town they did things which the other pair rescinded when they appeared. An extraordinary thing happened, for example, with respect to the importation of islanders. They found, all at once, that the restrictions imposed by previous Governments had been removed—nobody seemed to know how—and the first thing heard of it was by statements in the press that kanakas were travelling through the interior, in charge of overseers of stations. They actually heard of a township going into mourning because of the introduction of coloured labourers. When it was found that the South Sea Islanders were going to the station of the Colonial Secretary himself, no wonder public attention was called to it, and no wonder the order was rescinded. He (Mr. Griffith) had heard that even the hon gentleman's colleagues did not know anything about it until they read of what was happening in the interior; and from what he knew of the despotic character of the hon. gentleman it was very likely the thing was done entirely by himself. It was not done in a hurry by the Colonial Secretary, for people were notified that it was to be done, and the largest importer was the hon. gentleman himself. On the 18th November, 1879, a firm of commission agents, in Rockhampton—Fox and Tagg, one of the members of which firm was a member of the House, actually issued a circular to the pastoral tenants of the interior, which he would now read:—

“Rockhampton, November 18, 1879.

“Dear Sir,—We are now in a position to offer to obtain for you any number of kanakas you may require on your station. These kanakas will be brought from the Islands and forwarded to you at the rates hereafter mentioned, and will be bound to you for three years.

“We are in expectation that numbers being sufficient to avoid the vessel going to Maryborough, but coming direct to this port, thus saving 30s. a-head. The road carriage from here to station we will secure on the best terms practicable.

“On receipt of your order, stating number you require, we will send the necessary papers for your signature, with usual regulations, &c.

“Yours truly,

“FOX AND TAGG.”

Passage of each kanaka from	
Islands to Maryborough ...	£12 0 0
Bond and Agreement Stamps ...	0 12 6
Passage from Maryborough ...	1 10 0
Wages for 3 years at £6 ...	18 0 0
Agency ...	0 10 6
Total cost of each kanaka (less rations) for 3 years' service plus road passage to station...	£32 13 0

It was announced the other day that the Premier was not responsible for the action of his colleagues during the recess. Who, then, was responsible? He (Mr. Griffith) hoped that the old maxim that every member of the Government was responsible for all, and all for each, would be adhered to as a sound constitutional rule. That the other members of the Government did not agree with the Colonial Secretary was clear, when his action was rescinded. He hoped the forthcoming Bill would be one that would not allow the terms of the circular to be carried out, and if it were one of that kind he believed the House would not sanction it. Upon the kanaka question he wished to say he was not a violent anti-kanaka man, but he did believe most firmly that the introduction of these men ought to be restricted. He thought

the Government of which the hon. member for Maryborough was the head had gone far enough in favour of their employers when they only proposed to limit the employment of them to districts on the coast. He thought, however, they might go farther, and that the employment of them ought to be strictly defined by law; at least the law should not be left in such a way that any Colonial Secretary could introduce a new policy which was contrary to the opinion of the majority of that House and of the whole community. Then His Excellency in his Speech had stated that the provisions of the Divisional Boards Act had now been applied to all parts of the colony with encouraging prospects. He (Mr. Griffith) had to confess that he wished he could see them. The Bill, instead of being of great public advantage, had been found to be practically unworkable in many parts. Out of upwards of seventy districts in which the formation of Boards had been sanctioned, so far as he could ascertain not more than half-a-dozen had been elected—that is, in which there had been a contest; at any rate, the number was very small. The machinery of the Act had been said to be unworkable, and the result was that the Boards elected by the ratepayers were for the most part nominees of the Government. The passage of that Bill through the House had been very much facilitated by the understanding which prevailed, that the main roads of the colonies would not be thrown for support on the Boards. As soon as the Bill had passed, and the work of the Boards was commenced, they were called upon by the Government to undertake the support of the main roads. Why had the House not been told distinctly what the opinions of the Government were on that point when the Bill was before it? They found, also, that the rating clauses were almost impracticable, and where they were not so they would be extremely unjust. They would have the effect of stopping all improvements, for the manner in which improvements were rated was a discouragement to the carrying out of improvements. He hoped the changes to be introduced into the Bill would be radical, and such as would improve it materially. He had always maintained, and still believed, that the Act would be found unworkable in the remote parts of the colony; but he would go more fully into the consideration of the matter when the intentions of the Government in regard to it were disclosed. Then they came to the Department of Lands. They found that during the recess all what were commonly called dummied lands had been actually handed over, in some instances with a mere mockery of an inquiry, and in others with no inquiry whatever. One case was considered which had previously come up for investigation in a court of justice, in which the selector deposed that he had never paid a farthing in respect of the land, that he had never seen it or done anything to it, and, in fact, knew nothing about it. All this evidence was on record in the Supreme Court; they also had the finding of the jury that the selector had not abandoned it, but that he had never had it. Yet after that they found the Government telling the commissioner they had no evidence to offer, and the commissioner had no other alternative than to grant a certificate, and the grant was issued. It was a disgraceful scandal that such a thing should happen. The Barolin selections, forfeited years ago, had been quietly handed over, and it was no secret that the Premier represented a constituency in which the claimants were very influential electors. He (Mr. Griffith) did not understand gratitude being shown by the Government at the expense of the public, or the public

estate being the means of distributing benefactions, in Parliament or out of it. When the present Government were in opposition they used to talk about the wasteful extravagance of selling land by auction, but during the last three months they had sold more land by auction than had been sold in the previous two years, and that was the only way in which they had been able to reduce their deficit. As to the administration of the other branches of the Lands Department, he should be glad to hear the Minister for Lands give what justification he could, if he could give any, for giving away these lands, and to see a list of the gentlemen to whom they were given. Coming to the Works Department, the hon. gentleman was sorry he could not congratulate the Minister for Works upon the way he had succeeded in diminishing the receipts. Members knew how inconvenient the running of the trains had been. But throughout the Department there had been a reign of terror—in the Railway Works especially. A servant of the Government, at Maryborough, who had been nearly twenty years in the service, because he was five minutes late when wanted by the Minister for Works, was summarily dismissed the service. In the Postmaster-General's Department, the principal thing for consideration was the mail contract, or emigration contract, or frozen meat contract. Of all that and more they really knew nothing at all. He had no doubt gentlemen believed that when the Premier went to England he was to be engaged principally in floating the loan; but he found that he had been engaged in other transactions, the nature of which had been suggested by a petition laid before the House from Mr. Hemmant, a gentleman well known—yes, and favourably known in this colony. He had presented a petition which seemed to amount to an impeachment of the Premier. The hon. gentleman might laugh, but before that matter was completed he might be laughing on the other side of his mouth. They were not like the community of New York, to be governed by a ring of speculators: the people of this colony would never sanction anything of that kind. One of the most important matters in which this colony was interested at present was the purchase of rails. When the Premier went to London negotiations were in progress for the purchase of 40,000 tons of rails from Messrs. Ibbotson. Before, however, the Premier's departure, their agent here, Mr. Thomason, who he believed was a fellow-passenger of the Premier to San Francisco, was aware that the contract would not be ratified. Everyone knew that at the time of the Premier's arrival the market for rails was in an extremely unsettled state, and no sensible man would then have thought of dealing in them. None of the other colonies, or anyone else, was purchasing. The colony of New South Wales had only bought the small quantity of 1,000 tons of rails in the month of April last. Yet the Premier had at that time purchased 15,000 tons of rails. If he did not purchase them he was in England at the time of the transaction, and if he allowed it to be done he could not be absolved from the responsibility relating to the contract. Tenders had been invited, not publicly but by circular, for 15,000 tons of steel rails. He did not know who were invited to tender, but he knew some large firms of railmakers who were not invited—amongst them the Dowlais Company; the Ebbwvale Company; Bolckow, Vaughan, and Company; Wilson, Cammell, and Company; Rhymney Company; Blaenavon Company; Barrow Company; Moss Bay Company, of Workington. All these companies made rails for the Australian and other colonies, yet they were not asked to tender for these rails. As a matter of fact, however, some of them were actually

making rails for Queensland at that time. Among the companies invited to offer was the Haslam Engineering Company, who carried on the business of engineers and ironfounders at the City Road, Derby. It had a nominal capital of £100,000 in £100 shares, but its actual subscribed capital was only about £20,000, and the managing director was Mr. A. S. Haslam, who was to have a salary of £500 a-year. That company was invited to tender, and got the contract for the rails. This small and comparatively unknown company did not make rails more than he did. The contract price for these rails was £9 18s. 6d. a-ton—a higher price than had been paid for rails for many years, and nearly double what was paid for rails by the South Australian Government six months before. The Premier, perhaps, thought it was well to encourage this company: but he protested against contracts of this kind being let to brokers; they ought to be let to principals. If this matter had ended there, it might have been that the Premier had not been guilty of more than an error of judgment. But it appeared that this company got the rails from the Barrow Company, which sent the invoice to the Queensland Government Office in London, charging them at £6 per ton. Was it to be inferred from this that the difference of price had arisen suddenly? It was clear that the difference of £4 a ton fell into the hands of this engineering company at Derby, or perhaps some other persons. These facts were not kept secret, they were well-known in England, and they ought to have been the subject of a searching inquiry by the Premier. If he had inquired he would have found that before tenders were called for at all by the Queensland Government the Barrow Company were contracting with a person representing himself to be acting on behalf of the Queensland Government to supply 6,000 tons of rails at £6 per ton. They were supplied with specifications of the rails, which were quite different from those of other colonies. If further inquiries were made, it would have been found that this man's name was Cooper, a broker, living at Leeds. This man appeared to be an iron merchant, or a broker in a small way. This was evident, because he was not considered by the Barrow Company qualified to undertake a large contract. But he brought other people into it, and a contract was finally made between the Barrow Company and Mr. Cooper, and a certain Mr. McIlwraith—he presumed Mr. John or Andrew McIlwraith, who was described as an Australian merchant. That was how they were ordered. The country was to pay £10 a-ton for them when they were worth no more than £6 in the market. At the same time, this same Mr. Cooper went to the Moss Bay Company and ordered 10,000 tons also for the Queensland Government at about £6 a ton. The proprietors of this business, like the others, considered that they would not be justified in giving the contract to him, and again Mr. McIlwraith was brought in, and another contract was made nominally on behalf of the Queensland Government. The contractors who had previously asked to be allowed to make rails for this Government naturally thought that they were extending their connection in the most valuable manner. They could thus see that these rails were by some means or another ordered and made at £6 per ton, and the difference between that sum and the sum paid by the Government had disappeared into the hands of some people who stood between the two manufacturing companies and the Queensland Government. They knew the two ends of this chain—one was a small broker at Leeds named Cooper, and the other was the Haslam Company, who themselves were not rail makers at all. That was the way in which £60,000 of loan was to go. He did not



know whether the Premier had found all this out or not, but if he had wanted to know about the matter he would have had no difficulty. The whole circumstances were well known in London before he left, and if he had found it out his duty was plain, and that was to say at once to the manufacturers that, as they were making the rails for the Queensland Government, they should supply them direct and secure payment direct, and to have left the syndicate to whistle for their money. These circumstances amounted to nothing less than a fraud on the country, and he would say, for the satisfaction of the people who were receiving that money, that they were not safe yet. Everything must come out and the fullest explanations must be given. The people of the colony would not consent to be defrauded to such an extent without trying to get the money back, and endeavouring to make the recipients to disgorge their share of the spoil. These were the transactions with respect to the rail contract. He accused the Premier, if he knew these things, of very grave maladministration of his important office. It was his duty to see the colony protected, and, if he did not know, he was most culpably blind, because they were matters that could have been ascertained if he had thought fit to make the necessary enquiries. Again, these rails were not all wanted at once—not such a quantity as was required to make 200 miles of railway; the next thing was to make arrangements for the shipping of the goods from time to time. He could not see why it should be necessary to contract for the carriage of them all at once. However, tenders were invited on the 3rd February for the conveyance of 15,000 tons of rails, between March, 1880, and June, 1881—namely, 4,000 each to Rockhampton and Townsville, and 7,000 to Brisbane. The tenderers were informed that they would be shipped from Barrow, Workington, Whitehaven, or Maryport. No time was fixed for sending in tenders, and they were not advertised but called for by circulars issued to a few firms of ship-owners. On the 9th February a further communication was sent to the same gentlemen saying that the tenders would close on the 12th February, thus giving no more than three days. They were further informed that no tender would be considered except for full cargo ships,—and that meant ships loaded with nothing but rails. It was well known that shippers wanted cargo consisting both of dead weight and measurement. This was what everybody knew, and the price was regulated accordingly. In the port of London, for instance, measurement goods were most available, and, as a natural result, dead weight was wanted to make up the cargo. The result was, that several shillings per ton more would be charged if a full cargo of dead weight were shipped than if it were sent in an ordinary ship. The practice of the office had been formerly, when they were sending out rails, to ask shippers to supply freight, which seldom amounted to more than 24s. per ton. These were facts that were easily ascertainable at all the public departments, for the records were there. The notice having been given on the 9th, the tenders were opened, and the tender accepted was that of Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co., at 38s. 6d. per ton, which was actually an advance of 10s. per ton on anything ever paid before. There were some other tenders, but he believed that company's tender was the lowest. He had no doubt it was the lowest by £20 or £25 in a transaction of something like £30,000. The tenders he had not seen, only he had certain information in connection with them that he knew was trustworthy. Nearly all the dead weight that was to come to the colony for the next fifteen months was handed to one firm at a price much larger than had ever

been paid by the colony before. Among the tenderers were Messrs. Thomas Law and Co., who offered to take the rails for Brisbane at 34s. per ton, and, *via* Glasgow, for 28s. 6d., in berth ships. The circumstances connected with these tenders certainly appeared extraordinary. He had a statement written by Messrs. Thomas Law and Co., giving information on the subject. It ran as follows:—“We were asked to tender for the conveyance of rails, from Barrow, &c., to various ports in Queensland, and did so; but from information we received previous to tendering we were led to understand that, no matter what our tender was, it would not be entertained. Notwithstanding this we did send in a tender to convey rails by direct ships at 34s., and by berth ships, *via* Glasgow, at 28s. 6d. To our surprise we learned that the rails were all given to Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. at 38s. 6d. After this we arranged to get rails for our berth ships at 34s. 6d. on binding ourselves only to despatch a limited number of ships per annum. This arrangement we reluctantly agreed to, as the disposal of the rails seemed not to be so much a question of rate as of controlling the trade in other respects. We may state that the tender stipulated for rails to be shipped in quantities of 900 to 1,000 tons from Barrow, Workington, Whitehaven, or Maryport, although it was impossible to load ships with such quantities at three of these ports.” Again, “We had been in the habit of carrying mails by berth ships from Glasgow to Brisbane at rates varying from 20s. to 25s., and averaging about 22s., but the last two contracts were put past us without our having any opportunity of tendering.” Thus, they were not only made to pay 10s. more than they need do, but the tender was actually made use of to withdraw ships from the Queensland trade. The hon. Prime Minister probably thought it a good thing to get ships out of the Queensland trade, but many of them thought that competition was a good thing. Here was a contract let to secure a monopoly of the trade, which meant higher prices for everything in the colony. This threw some light upon the way in which the affairs of the London office were administered. With fair competition no doubt the rate would be lowered below 28s. 6d. Immediately the tenders were accepted four ships started carrying rails—not full cargo ships, but ordinary berth ships. Three of these did not belong to Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn and Co.'s line, but they no doubt let the rails to their owners at ordinary rates. Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. were the conductors of the “Scottish” line of ships, which comprised fourteen, and of nine of them the head of the present Government was part proprietor. He held in his hand certificates signed by the Registrar-General of Shipping of England, in which he found that in the case of the “Garnock,” one of the vessels, Thomas McIlwraith, A. H. Pamer, and Andrew McIlwraith were among the registered owners. That certificate was dated the 17th April, and no change had taken place in the register since the 17th March. The same gentlemen were also certified to be registered as part owners of the “Scottish Hero,” “Scottish Lassie,” and the “Scottish Knight,” three other ships of the same line. The hon. Premier seemed to think that this was amusing; for himself he thought it was something almost too shocking to contemplate. That members of this House and of the Government should have made a contract at all with the colony in connection with matters in which they are personally concerned he regarded with horror. He had heard that in America it had been done, but not so openly. He knew what the Tammany Ring was, and how members of the municipality of New York had behaved to their friends in the council and

legislature of New York. But in British dominions, if such things were done, he considered it monstrous. A contract of this kind, even if it were beneficial for the interest of the colony, would have been a very grave scandal, which in other parts of the world would probably have been sufficient to drive any Minister guilty of it from office instantly. The only case of the kind in the British dominions in which he knew of such a thing being done was in Canada, when Sir John McDonald, who was only suspected of being approached by the Grand Trunk Railway Company, was instantly dismissed from office. The Premier could not get over the fact of the contract, and that the ships employed under it would be ships in which two of the leading Ministers of the Government were interested. Whatever gloss or explanation was made, that fact would remain. The facts were well known in London and were common topics of conversation there. He was personally aggrieved as a public man engaged in the politics of the colony by this matter. The reputation of all the public men of the colony was regarded at home as the same, and if it went forth that Queensland was a country where rings were formed to manipulate Government contracts every public man would be tainted. He felt that his own reputation had been injured, and that of the colony. Many people might consider this a smart business transaction, but even then it would have been a scandal; but when it was one that took thousands out of the funds of the colony to put them into the hands of a ring in England, no words could be found too strong to denounce such conduct, and no explanation could clear it away. He hoped, nevertheless, that the Government had some explanation to make to show that the colony had not got into the hands of such men. This was very greatly needed. The reputation of the colony had been very fair up to the present time. He would not have spoken so strongly upon the occasion but that he felt his expressions were demanded. Every word he had said was true, as far as his means of investigation would enable him to arrive at the truth. He would not get up and make such charges unless he felt they were true. Every man who knew such things and held his tongue connived at them. He had years ago heard that the Premier was interested in the Scottish line of ships, but did not believe it. He had a higher opinion of the hon. gentleman than to believe that, while he was part owner of that line of ships, which had a contract with the Government, he would take a seat in that House. It had been suggested that he would avoid the difficulty by having trustees; but he could not believe that. He did believe the Premier had been part owner of the ships, but had cleared out in order to obtain the position he held in that House. He had believed these things to be nothing but scandal until he received intimation from a source he could rely on, and had it supplemented by official documents.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: From Hamilton?

MR. GRIFFITH: From various sources. These things are no secret; they are notorious in London.

THE PREMIER: The ships are registered here. I have sworn a declaration relating to every one of them in this port.

MR. GRIFFITH said the Premier might think himself able to brazen the matter out, but he appealed to the honesty of members of that House first, next to the honesty of that British community that would not tolerate the affairs of this colony being handed over to be made sport of by men for their own private gain; and then he would appeal to the British community throughout the world to express their opinion of

such transactions. If the contract to which he had referred were for the benefit of the colony, it would be bad enough; but when it entailed a loss of at least ten shillings a ton on every ton of rails imported, and, more than that, entailed the blocking of the shipping trade by the partial monopoly it gave, the withdrawal of valuable ships, and the consequent raising of freights, it became doubly scandalous. There could be nothing stronger than facts, and on them the Ministry would be judged. He would see that all the information procurable was procured. There was much information which could not be procured in the colony—details with respect to the rail contract. He wished to discover where the £60,000 which had been distributed had gone. That also must be investigated, and he undertook to say he would never leave the matter so long as a single fact connected with that £60,000 could be investigated, wherever the investigation might have to be made. Whether it would be necessary to send home to England or not he could not say now, but he pledged his word the investigation should be made, and the facts published, and the blame should rest upon the right shoulders. In the meantime they on that (the Opposition) side of the House, would be blameless as to transactions of that kind. That kind of transaction appeared to be not uncommon in London. He would read a letter which appeared in the *Times* of Friday, 16th April, 1880, showing thus—

“147, Leadenhall street, London, E.C.,

“April 15.

“Sir,—Some six months ago you were so good as to open your columns for the publication of certain letters, showing the irregularities in the management of the freighting business connected with the shipment to India of the material for our guaranteed Indian railways, and the prompt action taken by the Secretary of State for India in correcting these abuses as soon as the facts were established, by requiring that all freights should in future be advertised for public tender. The advantages of this system as compared with the previous one of allowing certain brokers the monopoly of their shipments were plainly shown in the first transaction which immediately followed, wherein the East Indian Railway Company contracted at 15s. 11d. per ton of 20 cwt. for the shipment of 5,000 to 5,500 tons wooden railway sleepers to Calcutta, for which their previous lowest offer was 21s. 6d.—a saving of about 30 per cent. Yet, strange to say, notwithstanding the publicity given to this at the time, within three days of this contract being concluded with the railway company, the Store Department of the Indian Council made a private contract for the conveyance of a quantity of wooden sleepers to the same port for the State railways at 16s. 6d. per ton of 40 cubic feet, being equivalent to about 21s. per ton of 20 cwt., and within two months a further private contract with the same parties for the freight of 50,000 to 70,000 tons of railway material to the various Indian ports at a price that is estimated to have left the favoured contractors a profit of about £25,000, and which is consequently a loss of this amount to India, as the guaranteed railways, under the system of public tender for freight, were at the same time shipping, in some cases, at from 5s. to 7s. 6d. per ton less freight to the same ports.

“One of the same clique of contractors, also, although shipbrokers, secured the Indian Council contract for the supply, as brewers, of a large quantity of malt liquor for India! After this I shall not be surprised to hear that the same firm has been intrusted with the contract for the manufacture of locomotives or railway iron.

“A contract is now advertised by the Store Department of the Indian Council for the con-

veyance of 63,000 tons of railway material to Bombay and Kurrachee, to be tendered for by Monday next; but the form of tender not only does not specify from which ports the cargoes are to be shipped, and the probable dates of shipment, but is also hampered by such obstructive clauses, conditions, and penalties that no person would tender except those who privately knew a great deal more of the facts than is disclosed in the form of tender, and who could depend upon the generosity of the department. Private ship-owners are entirely precluded from tendering in consequence of the quantity being so unusually large for one contract, representing as it does some forty ships' cargoes. This course of proceeding on the part of the Store Department of the Indian Council also prohibits from tendering those whose special business it is to contract for freight.

"I remain, sir, your obedient servant,

"DAVID BROWN."

There was another illustration of the loose way of doing business by which those rings were allowed to make their profit. These things had been attracting attention in England six months before the contract was let. He would read another extract from the *Times*, of May 17th. 1880:—

"The question of the business management of the India Office continues to occupy the attention of many persons in the city, and no wonder, when it is stated, among other things, that so recently as November last, while the India Council was paying 34s. to 35s. per ton for conveying rails to India, the Great Indian Peninsular Company was paying only 25s. per ton. In other cases discrepancies of from 4s. to 5s. per ton between the charges in the contracts of the Government and in those of the companies or of private companies have been almost too numerous to mention. A most vicious system seems to have prevailed for years, whereby the Government of India has been compelled to pay the highest possible price for everything that it required. To such an extent have the bad habits of the Office extended that the contract for supplying malt liquor to the Government in India has, we believe, actually been given to some firms of shipbrokers. Few, in short, of Lord Hartington's troublesome tasks promise to be more difficult than that of reforming the business arrangements of the India Office: and it is only by giving full publicity to every cause which has led to the extraordinary state of affairs that he can hope to effect lasting reforms of any description. The subject is likely to come before Parliament soon after the opening of the session."

To return to the case in point. They were paying Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. 38s. 6d.; but how much did the owners of the ships which carried the rails get? The balance went to the profits of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. That extract showed not that the transaction was the only one of the kind, but that it was a matter to which public attention had been called. Yet up to the present time they never heard of anything of the kind being done by that Government before. It was obvious it could not be done without some confidential friend in the office. Who he was in that case he (Mr. Griffith) did not know. A recent case was reported—it must have been while the Premier was at home—in the *Home News* of the 9th April, in which the Secretary of State for India sued a man named Dunn who had been party to a transaction of that kind seeking to recover the profits he had made by it. And the people of this colony were entitled to recover any profits that had been made in the same way. And he gave the Government warning that if

it came into his power to get the necessary papers he would enforce that title. The whirligig of time brought ups and downs, and they were not always in power, and the successors of the Government would be able to look up transactions of that kind, and those who had made their profits would have to disgorge. He would not refer to anything which might be called small points, which were of very little value in the conduct of the business of the country. It was to the broad facts that the people and the Parliament looked, and it was to them that he would appeal. The form of contracts for emigrant ships, which could be found in more than one volume of the "Votes and Proceedings," was a bargain between the agent, whoever he might be, for and on behalf of the owners. He had no doubt that the agreement made with respect to the vessel now on her way out with immigrants was made on those terms—that was to say, that the owners of the ship, amongst whom were two members of the Government, formally contracted by their charter-party that they would perform a certain duty for the Government of this colony. Those hon. gentlemen might say they were not direct contractors, but that they derived an advantage from the bargain was perfectly obvious. He should not say much more now, because the integrity of the Government was a matter of so much consequence that Parliament would not give its hearty attention to other matters until these things had been satisfactorily disposed of. He would, however, say something about the programme of the Government, meagre as that was. They were told of the proposal to establish a first-class direct steam service, because the old branch mail service did not secure to the colony the advantages of direct through steam communication with England, the absence of which at the present time was most prejudicially affecting the commerce of the colony. He wondered which would have the most prejudicial effect upon the commerce of the colony—the subsidy of direct steamers, or the disbanding of the sailing fleet which now came to the port. The contract they had made for the carriage of the rails would actually have the effect of choking off a number of the sailing ships which now came to the colony; and that certainly was not within the province of a Government. As to the advantages of the proposed steam communication, he would say nothing further now, being, as he was, ignorant of the terms of the agreement. Then there was a statement with respect to a proposal to construct a through railway from the eastern seaboard to the Gulf of Carpentaria. That was a railway he hoped to live to travel upon; but with respect to the proposition suggested in the Speech he did not know that he hoped to live to travel on a line constructed on that system. He was perfectly sick of the system of syndicates, or, to use a shorter word, "rings." In the history of the past there had been no more fruitful field in which those enterprising syndicates had expended their energies than the construction of railways by grants of land. He did not know who the "influential gentlemen" referred to were, but he had his suspicions, and from what was known of the past he felt sure the people would largely agree with him. He believed a satisfactory contract might be made, with proper safeguards; but they must be real and not sham safeguards. That line was to start from the termini of the trunk lines at present under construction. Which were the termini? The expression was about the most ambiguous of any he had ever seen in those models of ambiguity, Governors' speeches. What was the terminus of the Southern line—Roma or Charleville, or some place still further west? What

was the terminus of the Central line—Withersfield or Barcaldine, or some other place not yet decided upon? The same question might also be asked with regard to the Northern line. If they meant the termini of the lines at present under contract, Roma was the terminus of the Southern line, Withersfield of the Central, and Charters Towers of the Northern. If that were the case he should be disposed to agree with the Government as to the advisability of constructing a line to join them. He noticed that although the Government spoke about trunk lines, there was not a single word about branch lines; and when they bore in mind that last year the Government, at the beginning of the session, said nothing about branch lines, and that their proposals were only disclosed piecemeal as pressure was put on them by their supporters, it was a very valuable commentary on the absence of any reference to branch lines here. In another part of the Speech the colony was congratulated on the fact that several railway lines in the coast district were approaching completion, and that was the only reference to them that could be even suggested. That was very much like saying, "Thank goodness, we shall have no more bother about those small things; we are going in for trunk railways." He had not the slightest doubt that the reference to railways in the Governor's Speech meant just anything which the exigencies of party politics might require. The House was told that the possibility of straining the credit of the colony by appeals to the English money market for fresh loans to complete necessary public works had induced Ministers to regard favourably the carrying out of a system of railway lines by private enterprise. Something less than two millions of money had been borrowed, and at best there could not possibly be more than half a million available for the construction of fresh railway works, for which £1,586,000 had been voted last year. If, therefore, hon. members on the Government side who were interested in branch railways expected to get anything out of that £500,000 they would certainly be disappointed. In the present unsatisfactory state of the colony, with a deficit of a quarter of a million this year and the probability of a similar deficit next year, hon. members had a right to know how the Government proposed to raise the remainder of the sums voted, and how they proposed to pay the interest. Until that was settled it would not be wise to go into the market for the purpose of borrowing more money. Such being the circumstances of the colony, it had appeared desirable to many hon. members to suggest to the Colonial Secretary that, in view of the altered circumstances of the colony, it was not advisable that any contracts should be accepted for further extensions until the House had met and had an opportunity of hearing a statement from the Premier showing how he proposed to appropriate the half-million available and what he proposed to do with respect to the remainder of the loan still to be raised. He (Mr. Griffith) then stated that he did not consider it to be his duty to make a political demonstration or an harangue on the circumstances of the colony, but merely to suggest reasons why the acceptance of contracts should be postponed. Had they fallen into the trap so nicely laid for them and made a political demonstration he could well understand the sort of answer they would have got. The Government declined to accede to the request of the deputation with respect to one of the lines, and that matter was now past. With respect to the other lines, the House were now in a position to deal with the question on its merits. He believed, with most hon. members on the Opposition side of the House, that at least until the finances were placed in a satisfactory posi-

tion no tenders should be accepted for further extensions of the trunk lines beyond certain termini which he would name, though they were not mentioned in the Speech. Those termini would be—Roma, for the Western line; Withersfield, or some suitable place near, for the Central line; and Charters Towers, for the Northern line. If ever those lines were further extended, as he had not the slightest doubt they would be, they ought not to be extended until satisfactory provision had been made for paying interest and any deficiency in the working expenses that might accrue out of the territorial revenue of the districts particularly benefited by those lines. That was the course which the Parliament should adopt at the present time, and he believed it was one which would meet with the concurrence of the great majority of the people of the colony. In saying that he was not in the slightest degree departing from what he had said on a previous occasion, and he would take the present opportunity of vindicating himself from many charges which had been made against him at various times. When Minister for Works he had enunciated a certain policy as one which the country should bear in mind for some time to come, believing that the colony, like a prudent man who built a house or improved an estate, should know at the beginning what it intended to do, and then carry out its plans as fast as its resources would permit, so as not to over-burden itself by trying to do too much at once. He had always maintained the same principle, and, believing that the course he had now indicated was the proper one for the colony in its present circumstances to follow, he should be prepared, if necessary, to submit a resolution to that effect to the House. As to the rest of the policy disclosed in the Speech, he had been strongly tempted to violate the sound rule laid down by great statesmen, that the duty of the Opposition is to criticise and not to initiate; but notwithstanding the temptation, he would adhere to the sound rule, especially as he would have an opportunity at an early period of referring to the subject again. The reference made to the proposed augmentation of the public income might mean anything the Government liked. When they stated what their proposition was, he should be prepared to state what he thought ought to be done. The other Bills referred to were of little importance compared with other subjects which were under discussion. He most sincerely trusted that the legislation would be of advantage to the colony at large, and as one deeply interested in the country's progress and well-being, he should do all he could to forward it. In making the accusations he had against the Government he had taken a somewhat unusual course, but he had been actuated in doing so by a deep sense of duty. The facts had come to his knowledge from various sources, and he should have been wanting in duty to the House and to the community if he had refrained from saying what he had. If the Government could clear themselves he should be glad both personally and for the sake of the Government, because so long as such charges were made in other parts of the world, and here, and were believed by a large proportion of the community, all were suffering under the same imputation. If he had spoken strongly it was because he felt strongly, but he had not spoken more strongly than was consistent with his duty. He was prepared to follow up the inquiry to the full extent, and he hoped the Government would not make any use of the power they had to prevent information being given with a view to disclosing to the full extent the details of the transactions to which it had been his duty to refer.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had referred to the unusual course adopted by him in bringing the subject he had before the House.

Occupying the position he (Mr. McIlwraith) did, and being intensely interested in upholding the character of public men in the colony, he did not think that an *ex parte* statement, such as the hon. gentleman had received from some friends outside, or from old political opponents of his (Mr. McIlwraith's) should have been made as a charge against him before he had had an opportunity of placing before the House in a regular way an account of the business he had transacted for the colony in the mother country. The hon. gentleman had stated that he was actuated by a strong sense of duty; but he was sorry to state that he had the strongest reasons for believing that that statement was not correct. The gravest charges just made were made upon facts which were perfectly well known to the hon. gentleman two or three years ago, and which were communicated to the hon. gentleman by himself personally, and known to him at the time the immigration contracts were let by the Government of which he was Attorney-General. The Hon. George Thorn, at that time, in his blundering self-complacency and exuberance of speech, blurted out that they were making great preparations in London to impeach him (Mr. McIlwraith) and make him lose his seat. Mr. Griffith was in the same room, and he (Mr. McIlwraith) went to the hon. gentleman, and, referring to the correspondence going on, said, "I will save you all the trouble by giving you a list of the ships I have an interest in, and the interest I have in them; they are all registered." He (Mr. Griffith) laughed, and said there was nothing in it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The hon. member is mistaken.

The PREMIER said, not only was the hon. gentleman so informed, but all the facts he had stated in connection with his (Mr. McIlwraith's) interest in the ships were perfectly well known to his colleagues. With Mr. Macalister and the other Ministers, especially the Hon. G. Thorn, the matter was a subject of correspondence, and several conversations took place on the subject in the Thorn Cabinet he had no doubt. He could mention many hon. members now on the Government side of the House to whom he had given all the information: plain facts would go a long way, but the hon. member, in the way he had brought forward these charges, had acted very disingenuously. Even now he (Mr. McIlwraith) did not see what the hon. gentleman wished to charge him with in connection with those ships. The hon. gentleman, by reading certain articles with respect to some most outrageous charges of corruption in the case of other Governments, left an inference on the minds of hon. members that similar corruption had taken place in the present case. There was not the slightest thing he (Mr. McIlwraith) had done since he had been a member of the House with regard to which he was not prepared to give the fullest information to the House. Everything he had done had been done with the knowledge of his colleagues, and there was not a single thing to which the Agent-General was not privy if he was not the actual agent. Each of the important transactions he had carried out had the thorough approval of his colleagues, and he was prepared to stand by them. He did not shelter himself by what the Agent-General at home had done; but it was his duty whilst at home to see how the work of the office was done. He knew perfectly well that objection would be taken to his action if he had interfered in that work, and he took good care not to take the work out of the Agent-General's hands; but he saw everything, and whatever he had done he was quite prepared to take the responsibility of. He would first state what the real facts in reference to his connection with ships were. Long before he was a member of that House, and of course before he was a Minister he was a part owner

of ships. Everyone knew that ships were divided into sixty-four shares. From his family connection it was in his judgment a good way in which to invest some funds he had, and about fifteen years ago he became the owner of certain shares in certain ships, which shares were managed by people at home. As a rule it was money set aside for the purpose of investment, such as settlements and provision for his children, and as a matter of fact he had never had the slightest thing to do with the ships except to receive the accounts. His brother owned shares in ships at the same time that he did, and other persons held shares in the same ships in which he was interested. There might be two or three hundred shareholders in them, but he did not know a single one besides his brother. He might say this, that in all contracts made by his brother he had never had the slightest interest, not to the extent of one single penny, and that he would prove when he came to the particular cases. He would now give the real statement of what he had done at home in connection with the purchase of rails, as that was the first thing to which the hon. member opposite adverted, and he believed his explanation would make that hon. member's statement appear in a very different light. In the first place, he must say that it was an untruth to say that he knew the contract for conveying 40,000 tons of rails would not be taken up—

Mr. GRIFFITH: I did not say that. I said that Mr. Thomason, the agent of Ibbotson and Co., who was the Premier's fellow-passenger, knew.

The PREMIER said he had waited patiently to hear some confirmation of the statement. He arrived in London last January, and it had been calculated by the Minister for Works that in order to provide for the lines that had been sanctioned by Parliament, about 45,000 tons of steel rails would be required. At the time of his arrival the metal market was in a very excited state, and the belief was that prices would go up and remain up for a considerable time. He was aware that a certain number of rails would be required immediately almost, and he came to the decision that about 15,000 tons should be obtained. He therefore instructed the Agent-General to call for tenders in the usual way for them. It was his duty whilst at home, and he believed he had performed that duty faithfully, to see how the office was worked, and having come to the conclusion that 15,000 tons of rails would be required, he went to see Mr. Hamilton, the Secretary to the Agent-General, as he considered Mr. Hamilton was the man through whom all the work of the office went. He consulted with Mr. Hamilton as to the form in which tenders for railway plant were invited and the business generally should be done; more especially to arrange with him as to the advisability of calling for tenders by public advertisement—that was a point he reasoned with him more especially as it was a system which worked well in the colony. Mr. Hamilton, whose opinion he was bound to give some consideration to, gave him good reasons why a system so common in the colony and which led to such good results would not answer at home, but would rather be attended by bad results—namely, that such a large number of traders would respond to a public invitation to tender that the office would be blocked, and it would be very hard to ascertain who were good and responsible tenderers among so many when a money security was not required. He was advised not to call for tenders by advertisement but to select the firms in which confidence could be placed, and ask them to send in tenders, and that was decided upon. He believed besides, from his own experience, that it was the only practicable mode of asking tenders. The next point on which he

consulted Mr. Hamilton was the firms which should be invited to tender; which information should have been in the office. They discussed that, and a number of firms were mentioned, but that did not affect him (the Premier), as he did not know them. One firm was named that should not be asked to tender—the Ebbw Vale Company—as they had had contracts before which proved to be unsatisfactory. That was mentioned by Mr. Hamilton; and, after discussing the matter further, he left the office thinking the work was in Mr. Hamilton's hands. Some time afterwards he inquired how the work was going on, and Mr. Hamilton said, "Well, So-and-so is in Mr. Clay's department, and So-and-so in Mr. Ashwell's, but I will call those gentlemen in and see how the work is going on." That was his (the Premier's) first insight into the working of the London office, and he must say he was taken a little aback. However, those gentlemen were called in and asked, and Mr. Ashwell submitted a schedule of the firms which should be invited to tender. They discussed them, and Mr. Hamilton's opinion had no doubt due weight; but he (the Premier) left the selection to the office, as he considered the responsibility rested with Mr. Hamilton and the Agent-General. The invitations to tender were issued and those firms asked to tender sent in tenders. He called at the office on the day on which the tenders came in, and there were also present at the time he entered the room Mr. Macalister, Mr. Clay, and, he thought, Mr. Ashwell. Mr. Macalister proceeded to open the tenders; and, after the first was opened, he (the Premier) inquired where Mr. Hamilton was, not knowing that there was anything wrong between Mr. Macalister and Mr. Hamilton. Mr. Macalister replied that Hamilton had not done that or any other work for some months. He did not ask any more questions, but let Mr. Macalister go on with the tenders, all of which he opened. A schedule was made of them, which had been printed, and the lowest was found to be that of the Haslam Company at Derby, which was £9 18s. 6d.—a price he (the Premier) did not like to give. They had a serious consultation as to the prospects of the steel rail market, as the papers were pretty general in predicting a rise, and he advised Mr. Macalister not to accept any tender then, but to ascertain what was likely to be the prospects of the market. He promised to make what inquiries he could in the meantime, and, if he saw any ground for believing that the price of rails would fall, to communicate with Mr. Macalister at once. Not satisfied with expressing his opinion verbally to Mr. Macalister with regard to the position of the market, he wrote the following letter:—

"32, Charing Cross,  
"London, 22nd January, 1880.

"Dear Sir,—I don't at all like the price it seems we will have to give for rails. My position is this: I must have 12,000 to 15,000 tons in the next eighteen months. Before accepting any tender, thoroughly satisfy yourself that rails are not likely to fall. If they were, I could do with a much smaller quantity—say, 5,000 tons for six months. Meantime, I will make full inquiries in the city myself, and will let you know if result is against your opinion.

"Yours truly,  
"THOMAS MCILWRAITH."

In the meantime he did make inquiries. He consulted men who had transactions in the trade and who had opportunities of knowing the state of the market, and the prevalent opinion in London was that rails would rise, and rise permanently. He would prove these facts in this way: He caused his opinion, or rather the opinion of the office, as to the value of steel rails from September to January, 1880, to be scheduled

from the trade journals, and this schedule was prepared under the auspices of Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Ashwell; at all events, he gave them instructions to prepare it. The extracts were taken from journals which he considered the best authorities on the value of steel rails. He consulted them and also the men whom he came in contact with and who knew the trade, and he came to the conclusion that rails were not likely to go down but that they were likely to rise and stand for eighteen months, for reasons which would be disclosed in the Agent-General's letter to him. Four days after he received the following letter from Mr. Macalister:—

"Queensland Government Offices,  
"London, 26th, January 1880.

"Dear Sir,—I have the honour to hand you herewith a report from the Executive Engineer to the Queensland Government, on the subject of steel rails and the present position of the steel rails market. I fully endorse the views expressed therein, and there is no doubt, with the constantly increasing demand for steel for all purposes, that prices will not come down to any appreciable extent for some time.

"I also enclose a list of the tenders for 15,000 tons of steel rails, and I have no hesitation in accepting the lowest tender, it being in my opinion the lowest and most advantageous offer the Government will obtain for some time to come.

"I have, &c.,  
"A. MACALISTER,  
"Agent-General.

"To the Honourable Thos. McIlwraith."

That letter was accompanied by the following one from Mr. Ashwell, the Executive Engineer, giving his reasons why steel rails would keep up in price:—

"Queensland Government Offices,  
"32, Charing Cross,  
"24th January, 1880.

"STEEL RAILS.

"Sir,—I have the honour to report upon the present state and prospects of the steel rail market as follows:—

"For some few years the prices and demand for steel rails have been declining, owing in a great measure to the almost entire cessation of purchases on American account, and also the fact that roads laid with steel have not at present come into the market for renewals: the lowest prices for rails were undoubtedly touched in July and August of last year, when 80-lbs. single-headed steel rails were sold at £4 2s. 6d. at works. Early in September the demand from America began, and several large orders were placed at very low rates, and all the large makers were favoured with orders of considerable bulk in the aggregate, both on Canadian and American account. Just about this time, also, the demand for steel for ship building purposes received a considerable impetus. Several firms who had been competitors for steel rails had of late been altering their plans so as to roll plates and angles in lieu of rails.

"From September to the present time the prices of steel rails and Hæmatite iron have been continually but steadily advancing; several large orders, both on Home and Foreign account, have been placed at gradually increasing prices; the demand from America has taken various shapes, sometimes the finished article being in demand, then as prices rose steel blooms were taken, as also an enormous tonnage in the line of pig-iron. The present price of good brands of Hæmatite pig may be taken at £7 at makers' works, and only a small tonnage can be taken at that price.

"Nearly all the large and best houses may be said to be booked full for the year 1880; and as prices are advanced and orders worked off makers have no difficulty in keeping their order

books full for some months ahead. As prices have gone up buyers have held off in the hope that prices would rebound, and the accumulation of orders thus held back is sufficient to keep makers going for a considerable length of time. All things considered, the price of steel rails may be looked forward to have an upward tendency, and it will certainly be some considerable time before 40-lb. steel rails to the Queensland Government specification can be bought at £10 per ton.

"I append to this report a statement showing the prices paid for steel rails from April, 1873, to April, 1879.

"I may say that, with the advance in the price of steel rails, a demand has arisen for iron rails: these are now quoted at £8 to £8 10s. at works, but the quality is rather questionable.

"I have, &c.,

"WM. HY. ASHWELL.

"To the Agent-General for Queensland."

That communication he got with Mr. Macalister's letter accepting the tender. The next business that he had with the office was the shipment of the rails, and he had to take into consideration a matter in which he differed from Mr. Hamilton's ideas. He knew from official letters that Mr. Hamilton's views were that whenever the Government had freight they ought to keep it, and not let it by contract. Personally it was of considerable moment to Mr. Hamilton to have the patronage of 2,000 or 3,000 tons of rails in his own hands; he could exercise a great amount of power in shipping circles. Mr. Hamilton's argument was that if he was allowed to have the letting of the freight according to his idea he could manage to get it taken as dead weight, at 10s., 15s., and 30s. per ton, but if a contract was let the rails would not be conveyed under 40s. per ton. His (Mr. McIlwraith's) reason for differing from Mr. Hamilton was that cheap freights could only be got when ships were in want of rails for dead weight, and that when shipowners learnt that the Queensland Government had purchased 15,000 tons of rails and were bound to ship them they would not take them on lower terms than other freight. He said that the proper way to do was to let the commercial world know, as they were certain to do, that the Queensland Government had 15,000 tons of freight, and ask them their terms for carrying it; that was the straightforward way of doing business. He also said "You must get the rails shipped by contract," and he now took the full responsibility of it, knowing that he had effected a saving to the Government. This discussion was prior to any contract being let. When the contract was let he was actually not in the country, business having called him away. He was not in London from the time tenders were called, neither did he know until the dispute was raised by Mr. Hamilton, two months afterwards, who the successful tenderers were; but, as the correspondence would show, all the firms engaged in colonial shipping were asked to tender. Not one firm which was connected with the Australian trade was omitted; the people who had always been in the habit of tendering from the first were all applied to; and, any person who knew that tenders were received from Taylor, Bethel, and Roberts; Anderson, Anderson, and Co.; Thomas Law and Co.; P. Green and Co.; Houlder Brothers and Co.; and McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co., would admit that the colony ought to get sufficient competition from these firms. In order to let the House understand the action that Mr. Macalister took on this occasion he must go back a little. When he found that Mr. Hamilton was not present at the opening of the tenders for rails he had a serious conversation with Mr. Macalister, in which he pointed out that

he was not only doing wrong in allowing Mr. Hamilton to evade responsibility, but that he (Mr. McIlwraith) could not possibly leave the country before this matter was remedied, and that if Mr. Macalister was not prepared to put Mr. Hamilton in his place he would do so. He pointed out to him that the responsibility was so serious that Mr. Hamilton should be sharing it with him. Mr. Macalister then instructed Mr. Hamilton to transact all the business, and when any difficulty arose to come to him. Accordingly, when the tenders for freight came in Mr. Macalister handed them to Mr. Hamilton to deal with, with instructions to schedule the prices of the respective firms for conveying the rails to Rockhampton, Townsville, and Brisbane. Mr. Hamilton calculated how much each tender came to, and prepared a schedule showing the gross amount that each firm demanded for the conveyance of the 15,000 tons to the respective places. All this was done by Mr. Hamilton in his own handwriting, and having done it, he wrote across the lowest tender, "accepted;" and it was accepted by Mr. Macalister. That was the transaction, so far as he knew it, up to the time that he left London, and from the information given him by Mr. Macalister. Things were going on very unpleasantly after this. From the action which he took to see the office put in a proper state it was necessary that he should come in collision with Mr. Hamilton's ideas; and he saw during the time he was there that the Agent-General stayed at his post from 8 until 4 o'clock every day performing the petty details of the office, while Mr. Hamilton was taking his ease in his office, and it was one of the dirtiest offices in London. Mr. Macalister said that, if he did not do the work himself it would not be done. Not only were the details thrown upon his shoulders, but he was regularly harassed and annoyed. When Mr. Hamilton found any business that he fully understood, but that Mr. Macalister could not know anything about, he would not deal with it himself, but kept nagging at Mr. Macalister until that gentleman transacted it with his own hand. These were matters that could not be permitted, and he took steps to remedy them, and his action was so stringent that Mr. Hamilton saw perfectly well that his time in the office was about run out. Then he came to another matter. Things were in this state when Mr. Hamilton sent the following letter, marked "private and confidential," to Mr. Macalister:—

"Queensland Government Offices,

"London, 31st March, 1880.

"Sir,—There are several accounts in hand from the Haslam Engineering Company for various shipments of steel rails. There are also accounts from the Barrow Hematite Company for the same description of rails, agreeing in lengths, weights, and quantities with the above, but the name of the ship is not stated. I have written to the Barrow Company for an explanation, and in reply they state their invoices were sent in error. There are still further accounts for the freight of these rails, which are all loaded on berth ships bound for Brisbane; and as the course of official business entails on me the responsibility of passing the accounts for payment, I deem it necessary to bring before you certain facts which have been pointedly brought under my own notice.

"The rate charged by the Haslam Company for these rails, is £9 18s. 6d. per ton, the Barrow Company's invoice is £6 per ton.

"The rate charged for freight is £1 18s. 6d., a serious advance on previous rate.

"The circumstances attending the placing of these contracts were such that no reference was made to me in respect to them, and I have no instructions as to payment. The whole matter having been settled by Mr. Ashwell and yourself,

and I am not conversant with the business considerations which induced you to place them.

"As you will have observed, the difference in price, £3 18s. 6d. per ton, amounts to £59,375 on a fifteen thousand-ton contract.

"The Haslam is an Engineering Company formed in November, 1876, and consists of eight persons, of whom Mr. Ashwell is one as well as one of its first directors.

"The specifications for the rails are prepared, tenderers nominated, tenders accepted, rails inspected, and invoices certified by Mr. Ashwell.

"Since the formation of the Haslam Company, contracts to the extent of between two and three thousand pounds have been placed with it, independently of this rail contract.

"I cannot get rid of the idea that the Government would recognise some responsibility as resting on me, and it is only under a sincere sense of duty that I thus unwillingly address you specially, and I hope you will state to me in reply that you relieve me of any responsibility in connection with such transactions as have not been carried out by me.

"Both Messrs. McIlwraith and the Haslam Company are pressing for payment of their accounts.

"I have, &c.,

"THOS. HAMILTON,  
Secretary.

"The Hon. A. Macalister, C.M.G.,  
"Agent-General for Queensland."

On receipt of that letter Mr. Macalister wrote to him as follows:—

"32, Charing Cross,  
"London, S.W., 31st March, 1880.

"My Dear Sir,—In case you should not be here this afternoon, I write to say that I have just received from Mr. Hamilton a letter on the subject of the Haslam Foundry's contract for rails, which I think requires immediate consideration. Perhaps you could make it convenient to call here to-morrow forenoon, say at or near half-past ten o'clock.

"I am, &c.,

"A. MACALISTER.

"Hon. T. McIlwraith, Esquire."

He went to Mr. Macalister and asked him what he considered the charge was. Well, he put the construction on the letter he (the Premier) did, and he thought hon. members would look at it in the same way. He said he considered it was a charge against Mr. Ashwell, as a proprietor in the Haslam Company, that he had used his influence to get them the contract for the rails at £9 18s. 6d. when they were worth £6 a ton, and thereby they had made—himself and his partners—the sum of £59,000; and also that the contract for the freight with McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company was a great deal over the market price; and that, as he had nothing to do with it, he wished to free himself from responsibility. He had at once said to Mr. Macalister, "You will give me the contents of this letter, and I will tell Mr. Hamilton that it cannot be regarded as private and confidential." He said Mr. Hamilton had no right to write such a letter and mark it private and confidential. He called in Mr. Hamilton, and told him if he did not mark out the words "private and confidential" he would do so. He consented to do so: at least he thought he did, but that was not a material point. He told Mr. Hamilton he would institute an inquiry at once. He then heard, for the first time, of the freight contract. He asked Mr. Hamilton what time he would be prepared to prove the charges, and he said he was then ready to do it. He instructed Mr. Hamilton to get shorthand writers and meet him next day at 10 o'clock. He did so, and an investigation, extending over a couple of days, was held. All the

information then brought out will be laid before hon. members. Mr. Macalister wanted him to bring it with him as personal luggage, but he requested Mr. Macalister to send it out by Suez-Melbourne mail. By some error it had not been so posted, but, by telegram, he learned it was in the Torres Straits mail, and would be here to-morrow. All the rest of the correspondence was now in his hands, and would be printed at the same time. The evidence of Mr. Hamilton was to this effect:—He (the Premier) had asked him to state the charge against Mr. Ashwell, and he replied that he did not make any charge; but merely stated facts, and would let them speak for themselves. He (the Premier) had, therefore, to get up the case and try and elicit the facts accordingly. The first witness was Mr. Hamilton. How did he prove that Mr. Ashwell was a proprietor in this Haslam Company? His proof was an extract from the register books at Somerset House relating to the formation of a limited liability company in 1874, long before Mr. Ashwell was connected with the Government. He was one of the shareholders of that company. That was all the evidence. Then Mr. Ashwell was examined, and he stated that the interest he had in the company was that he was one of the original proprietors of the Haslam Company, and held ten shares of £100 each, on which about £30 were paid up. All his interest, therefore, was some £300 or £400. That interest he had ceased to hold long before the contract was entered into. Here, then, they had a gentleman with a salary of £1,000 a-year, and moving in the highest commercial circles of London, and they were asked to believe that gentleman was corrupt because he had an interest of some £300 in this company whose tender he had recommended. Could anything be more contemptible and absurd than a charge of this kind. Then he had brought the chairman of the company to be examined, and got completely snubbed, and he thought himself he deserved it. First he asked Mr. Haslam if Mr. Ashwell was ever a director in the company? No. Some years ago at the starting of the company he had put down all the shareholders as directors, and Mr. Ashwell was among them, but he had never sat as a director—in fact, he did not know the address of the office, was never in it, and took no interest in the company. Then reference was made to the invoice from the Barrow Company. An invoice came from the Barrow Company for certain rails at £6 per ton, and an invoice from the Haslam Company for rails at £9 18s. 6d. These were for the same rails—no doubt of it: the weight and lengths were the same. Mr. Hamilton had persistently for eighteen months refused to do most of his work without particular instructions from Mr. Macalister, but he wrote the following letter to the Barrow Company:—

"Queensland Government Offices,

"32, Charing Cross, 25th March, 1880.

"Gentlemen,—I am directed by the Agent-General to acknowledge receipt of your invoices, as follows:—

1. 11th March, for steel rails, 560, weighing 67 tons 10 cwt. 1 qr. 10 lbs., at £6 ... .. £405 2 0
2. 12th March, for steel rails, 776, weighing 94 tons 4 cwt. 3 qrs. 15 lbs., at £6 ... .. 565 9 4
3. 12th March, for steel rails, 270, weighing 32 tons 16 cwt. 2 qrs. 25 lbs., at £6 ... .. 197 0 4
4. 15th March, for steel rails, 107, weighing 107 tons 2 cwt. 2 qrs. 25 lbs., at £6 ... .. 642 15 3



Nos. 1 and 2 agree with a shipment made by the "Warwick," No. 3 with a shipment made by the "Garnock;" but as no previous communications have passed between this office and yourselves on the subject of this contract, I will be glad if you will explain the circumstances under which these are sent here.

"If payment has to be made to you each invoice will require to be made in quintuplicate.

"I am, &c.,

"THO. HAMILTON,

"Secretary.

"The Barrow Hæmatite Steel Co. (Limited),  
"Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire."

Instead of referring the matter to the Agent-General, Mr. Hamilton wrote at once to the Barrow Company, saying that he was instructed by the Agent-General to acknowledge the receipt of their invoices at £6 per ton; but as he had no information at the office with regard to his connection with the Queensland Government, would they explain. An answer came back to the effect that the invoices had been sent in error from the Barrow Company. That was all the information he had to deal with. The first witness he examined was Mr. Haslam, the manager of the company, and it became apparent to him that the rails which cost £9 18s. 6d. had been originally bought at £6. That was a fact, and it did not distress him. He wanted to see if Haslam would explain how it came about, and asked what prices he had paid; that was the information he required. He was answered pretty much as he expected. He was told that an engagement had been made to deliver 15,000 tons of rails at £9 18s. 6d., and that he intended to do it, as it was certain he would be made to;—if he got them at £5, that did not matter to the Government. If he required to pay £20 a ton for rails he would require to fulfil his contract. What could he (the Premier) say to that? No doubt Mr. Hamilton wished him to send to the Barrow Company and do the same as he seemed to have done, and acted as a detective or policeman. But he had no wish to be snubbed in his own office or submit himself to such another indignity as Mr. Haslam had inflicted on him. As to Mr. Haslam being a mere broker, at all events he had by his evidence carried out one transaction in the course of a few months amounting to over 40,000 tons of iron. Certainly a man who did that was competent to deal with such a contract as the one they were talking about. If the tender was not properly called for the fault lay with Mr. Hamilton. He had taken great trouble to inquire at what price steel rails had actually been sold during that month. There was then a contract for 4½-lb. rails for the English Government, which was exactly what they wanted. He had access to the specification, and it was lower than the Queensland one. The Queensland specification was more expensive. All the journals showed that for three weeks after iron and steel rails had receded, and the price was lower at the time the British contract was let than when they let the Queensland one. That would be a test whether the Queensland Government had done fairly. He was able to get the information from the Colonial Office, but it was given him on the reservation that he made no use of it. He had no time to tell the officials that the only thing he wanted it for was to use it. He had, however, found from one of the company who got the contract the information he required, and he could use that. The price at which those rails were let by the British Government was £10 2s. per ton. Could they say, after that, that he had not done well for the colony? He took the fullest responsibility for what he had done. He would not hide himself behind Mr. Macalister or anyone else. The

leader of the Opposition, with a limited amount of knowledge of business matters, and holding an extremely vague brief, had given them some very bad law. It was endeavoured to connect him, as a shipowner, with the contract to carry the rails. He had no interest whatever in the contract, direct or indirect, nor had he a single share in four out of five of the ships mentioned as carrying them. He had not the slightest interest or influence over any ship that had brought out rails. There was no way possible, directly or indirectly, by which he could have influence. Mr. Macalister and Mr. Hamilton made the contract, but he should be prepared to hold it as a good sound contract for the Government. But there was nothing in any way to connect him with it in the way that it had been tried to do. He might indicate to the members the documents that would be laid before them, and which would substantiate everything he had said: In the first place, the tenders and the names of every one who had been asked to tender; all the correspondence that was required, and a schedule drawn out to show the prices paid for rails during the last six years; invoices of rails sent from the Barrow Company in mistake to the Queensland Government. There was a list of contracts between the Haslam Foundry and Engineering Co. and the Government. Before he sat down he would say a few words on them. There was a schedule of freights, and the whole correspondence with the shipowners who tendered, and a table of freights showing the amount paid for tonnage for rails to all parts of Queensland and the various parts of Britain from 1875 to 1879 inclusive, which would give more correct information than that given by the leader of the Opposition. Extracts from the reports from the different steel-making districts, taken from the *Engineer*, from September 12th to April 9th, giving a weekly report of the steel market, which would also bear him out. He would also submit other weekly reports from various journals giving the price of steel rails which would put members in a better position to judge of the matter than the brief from which the leader of the Opposition had spoken. He might read, as having a direct bearing upon the subject, the following tenders—Campbell and Co., £9; J. Brown and Co., £12 10s., for delivering in Liverpool £12 5s.; Haslam £9 18s. 6d.; the Mersey Company, £12 5s.; the Steel Company of Scotland, £12; Ibbotson, £11 6s., and for additional quantity, £11 12s. 6d. The last three firms, he was informed by his hon. colleague (the Minister for Works), had supplied a great deal more than half the rails used in the colony. The hon. gentleman tried to leave the inference that there was some family connection between him (the Premier) and Mr. Ashwell, and had talked a good deal about what he called a syndicate, and sometimes a ring. He had not formulated the charges, but had made them as muddy as possible, fully believing, no doubt, in the saying "Throw enough dirt and some of it will stick." One of the charges against Mr. Ashwell was that he was a proprietor in the Haslam Company. They had obtained contracts at various times from the Queensland Government to the extent of many thousands of pounds, and at his investigation he found that the matter to be examined into was of two or three years ago—from July, 1878, to the present time: the Haslam Engineering Company had been tendering to the Queensland Government. The charge was that Mr. Ashwell was an unfit man on account of his connection with the company. He (the Premier) made Mr. Hamilton, after he had brought the charge, get out a list of all the contracts, but Mr. Hamilton simply got out a list of the tenders which had been accepted, which would not give a true idea of the business

with the company. He (the Premier) sent it back with instructions to produce all the tenders, whether they were accepted or not, and they would be put before the House. That company had, during two or three years, tendered thirteen times for Government works. Of those, they were successful in five, and each of the five times they were the lowest tenderers, and according to Mr. Hamilton's evidence there had never been the slightest fault found with their work in the colony. He was sorry to be obliged to put this information before the House in a rather disjointed form. It was necessarily so, because no man would expect on the first night of the session to have a discussion raised on the personal honour of the Premier on such flimsy grounds. He was prepared and would be prepared to defend his position, and while he had anything to do with the colony would be prepared to give the fullest investigation to anything which he had to do, or in connection with the Home office while he was at home. He was perfectly prepared to give the other side the opportunity of investigating everything on their own account and from their own point of view, so that they need not wait until they changed to the other side of the House, which he hoped would not be for a long time. But disjointed as his remarks were, they were not half so disjointed as the way the matter was put before them by the leader of the Opposition. Mr. Ashwell's letter in reply to the charges was as follows:—

“32, Charing Cross,  
“London, S.W., April 2, 1880.

“To the Agent-General of Queensland.

“Sir,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of copy of Mr. Hamilton's letter, dated 31st March, 1880, in which several grave charges are brought against me, and into which I most respectfully ask the fullest inquiry.

“With regard to the question of freight, this is a matter which has never been treated by me as being within my province, and beyond assisting, as far as my special knowledge was concerned, I have in no way taken any part in letting freight contracts; and in this particular case I gave Mr. Clay such information as I felt called upon to give to enable tenders to be asked, and which information I understood Mr. Hamilton referred Mr. Clay to me for; and beyond a general knowledge that tenders were being asked, I know nothing of the firms tendering. When the tenders were received they were opened by Mr. Hamilton in my presence, and a schedule made by him, the working out of his figures being checked as to correctness by me; and, beyond carrying the papers into Mr. Macalister's room, I had nothing further to do with the matter.

“Regarding the contract for the rails and my past connection with the Haslam Foundry and Engineering Co., I have to say that the whole of the papers connected with this contract are and have been in the possession of the office, and in no particular has the usual mode of dealing with such matters been deviated from. My connection with the Haslam Foundry Company (Limited) dates back beyond my connection with the Queensland Government, and being committed was compelled to take up my shares (10), or £500, or lose the amount; but though put down as a director, I have never acted in the management of the company. Any contracts obtained by the Haslam Foundry and Engineering Company have always been obtained in competition with other firms, and in no case has the rule of the office been deviated from of placing the contract under question with the lowest tenderer. The specification for the rails was the usual lithographed specification as used

1880—c

by me for some years, a copy of which I beg to hand in, and is the same as that upon which all rails made under my charge have been carried out. The tenderers nominated are firms who are and have been on the Government books for some years, and are known to be firms whose work can be relied on; and beyond a list usually submitted for your approval, no action is taken by me, the power of adding to or reducing the number of tenderers being exercised by you. In this case the usual list was submitted, and the position and standing of the various firms was fully discussed, and the position of the rail and steel market fully discussed, and the absolute necessity of asking only such firms as were in a position to supply and who were in possession of their own ore for Bessemer-making was fully deliberated upon. The tenders were opened by yourself, deliberated upon, and, in full accordance with the usual course of the office, the lowest tender was accepted—the saving to the Government in this case being a very considerable sum as between the lowest and the next offer. As regards the inspection, it is well known that I do not personally inspect a rail, the custom being always to place an inspector at the works, who personally understands the process of rail-making and is a thoroughly competent man. He tests daily from each rolling, in accordance with the specification, and makes a report weekly to this office of the position of the contract, and gives a detailed statement of all tests made by him; and I cannot help saying that, so far as this contract has gone, the results have been such as to give me every satisfaction as to the quality of the material, the tests being the most regular of any series of any contract yet executed for the Government, and the invoices are certified by me from the inspectors' reports, the whole of which reports for two years past are in this office.

“The contracts placed with the Haslam Foundry Co. have, as previously stated, been invariably obtained in competition with other firms, the list of firms being fully approved by Mr. Hamilton, as well as yourself, and the invitations to tender being signed in almost every case by Mr. Hamilton. The tenders have been opened by yourself, and in no case have I interfered with the usual course of business, and I am satisfied it will be found that the advantage is on the side of the Government in every case.

“By the provision of an Act of Parliament it is permitted that Civil Servants may hold shares in any limited liability company holding contracts with the Government, and I respectfully submit that my position has been within that scope, and I have in no way interfered with the ordinary course of business, and have in every case secured the best interests of the Government.

“I have, &c.,

“WM. HY. ASHWELL.”

The hon. gentleman described Mr. Ashwell as being his co-proprietor, but he (the Premier) heard the information then for the first time. He did not know the source of the information, nor whether it was true or untrue, nor did he know one-fifth part of his co-proprietors. The shares in ships were, as everybody knew, divided into 64ths. He held an interest in about twenty ships, but he had nothing whatever to do with the management, nor had he the slightest influence in determining whether they should go to Australia or not. Sometimes they went to Melbourne, sometimes to Adelaide, and also to China and San Francisco. Nor did he participate in the slightest degree in any of the profits made by McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. He

would now read the schedule of the tenders for freight of rails:—

FREIGHT FOR 15,000 TONS OF RAILS.			
Schedule of Tenders.			
Taylor Bethel, and Roberts—			
7,000 tons, all ports to Brisbane, 34s. 11d. ...	£12,220	16	8
8,000 tons, all ports to Rockhampton and Townsville, 42s. 5d. ...	16,963	13	4
	£29,187	10	0
F. Green and Co.—			
7,000 tons, all ports, Brisbane, 36s. 9d. ...	£12,862	10	0
8,000 tons, all ports, North, 45s. 8d. ...	18,266	13	2
	£31,129	3	2
McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co.			
15,000 tons, to and from all ports ...	£28,875	0	0
Thomas Law and Co.—			
7,000 tons, all ports to Brisbane, 34s. ...	£11,900	0	0
4,000 tons, all ports to Rockhampton, 42s. 6d. ...	8,500	0	0
4,000 tons, all ports to Townsville, 43s. 6d. ...	8,700	0	0
	£29,100	0	0
Houlder Brothers and Co.—			
7,000 tons, all ports, Brisbane, 35s. 9d. ...	£12,512	10	0
8,000 tons, all ports, 43s. 5d. ...	17,366	13	4
	£29,879	3	4
Anderson, Anderson, and Co.—			
7,000 tons, all ports, Brisbane, 34s. 6d. ...	£12,075	0	0
4,000 tons, all ports, Rockhampton, 42s. 6d. ...	8,500	0	0
4,000 tons, all ports, 45s. ...	9,000	0	0
	£29,575	0	0

That was the schedule of tenders sent in for acceptance, and the lowest tender was accepted; and that that tender had been deviated from he learned for the first time from the leader of the Opposition. No man would be more likely than himself to inquire into such a matter as constituted the charge of Mr. Hamilton. It was most amusing to see the sham pathos put into the case by the hon. gentleman opposite, knowing all the time that the whole of his information was founded from statements of men whom he (the Premier) had occasion either to dismiss or to decline to come in contact with. He had given them no information except from an old political opponent of his (Mr. Hemmant), who had disgraced himself by cowardly conduct on more than one occasion. He was a well-known political opponent, and had in the most public way showed his spite against him in London. The other information came from Mr. Hamilton whom he found it his duty to dismiss, and who, if he had not been dismissed, would never have brought information of that kind before them at all. His other informants were Thomas Law and Co., of Glasgow, men whom he never knew, who tendered for that contract and did not get it, and then had the cowardice to make statements they would never be able to prove. A great deal of the information he read never came before him (the Premier) in London at all. The story about the Leeds ironmonger,

and the Barrow iron-foundry, he heard after he left England. He would show how he heard it. When he got on board the ship at Brindisi he was handed a letter by the Captain. That was a despatch from the Colonial Office from Earl Kimberley, enclosing correspondence between him and Thomas Hamilton. The correspondence extended over thirteen days, and the grossest charges were made against him (the Premier) and his family, all of which had to-night been repeated by the leader of the Opposition. He was in the Colonial Office three or four times during that time, and saw the Secretary of State, both the Under-Secretaries, and Mr. Bramston repeatedly; his movements were known perfectly well in the Colonial Office, but he got no inkling of that correspondence until he had actually left Brindisi, and had not the slightest chance of inquiring into those extraordinary charges which the leader of the Opposition had attempted to connect him with. Mr. Hamilton ought to have given him some opportunity of inquiring into the charges he made if they were not fabricated after his dismissal. Had he possessed the information before then he would have taken one of the many opportunities he (the Premier) gave him of putting any statement he liked before him as examiner; and he would have had it printed in the evidence. The leader of the Opposition deplored that he should be forced to bring a charge of that sort, and said he felt himself degraded by sitting in a House where members were guilty of such things as he imputed to him. He (Mr. McIlwraith) thought it a disgrace to sit in a House where he had to submit to a charge which was utterly unfounded. If the hon. member had had any manliness, or any regard for the character of the public men of the colony, he would have seen that those charges were properly investigated before putting such rubbish before the public. The hon. gentleman had deliberately brought false charges, and insinuated others still worse, well knowing that the greatest harm they would do would not be to himself personally, but to public men generally, causing people to lose faith in them altogether. Instead of waiting for the proper information—knowing, as he did, that it was in process of being put before the House—and getting his case up, he had acted the part of a lawyer in the matter, and a very bad lawyer. The first thing an honourable lawyer did was to tell his client to tell him the truth. Had the hon. member acted simply as a lawyer he would have got at the truth before coming to the House with his extraordinary story. But instead of doing so he had taken an *ex parte* statement, and he had no information on which he could prove his charges. He (Mr. McIlwraith) had every part of the information before him, including the whole of the correspondence with the Home Office, in print, with the exception of the evidence for which, as he had already said, he was waiting. The hon. member had gone outside the duties of leader of the Opposition in forcing on this dirty business in an irregular manner. The hon. gentleman knew well that this was no place for an inquiry of that sort. Statements were made on either side, and he (Mr. McIlwraith) was prepared to stand by everything he had said. The hon. gentleman had cast a slur on his character which, no matter what might be the result of the inquiry, could not be altogether removed. There were some things which, when spread abroad, could never be got out of the minds of the people. The hon. gentleman must know that many of the things he had stated were downright fabrications—as he would be able to prove. Knowing that, he certainly ought not to have brought forward those grave charges to-night; and the sleek hypocrisy of the hon. mem-

ber coming forward and saying he thought it part of his public duty, and one which he did not like to have to undertake, was deplorable when—and he stated it deliberately—two years ago he volunteered to give all the information on which the grave charges now made were based.

Mr. DICKSON said he sympathised with his hon. friend in the position in which he had been placed in deeming it his duty as leader of a distinct party to give the earliest opportunity to the Government of vindicating themselves from charges which, if not disproved, would cast discredit not only upon them individually, but upon the colony. Instead of the Premier levelling such an amount of indignation against the leader of the Opposition, he might rather have expressed his satisfaction that at the very first moment practicable he was afforded an opportunity of vindicating himself from the most degrading charges which had been ventilated this evening. The people of the colony, he felt convinced, would expect nothing less than a full and most complete inquiry into those charges, and the only satisfactory portion of the Premier's remarks was when he said he would give every facility for a full inquiry. He trusted that would be done. No amount of debate here could be substituted for that inquiry: they were too remote from the scene of events. It was due from the Government, in answer to the petition which had been presented this evening by a gentleman directly interested in the prosperity of the colony, and who had occupied the honourable position of Colonial Treasurer, and who would be the last man to subscribe to a statement which he did not believe to be correct. It gave a very full and succinct account of matters that should be laid before the House. Nothing less than a thoroughly independent inquiry in England would satisfactorily dispose of the accusations made. It would have redounded more to the credit of the Premier had he given a denial in a few words, and referred the whole matter to an independent inquiry, because even those who wished to see the charges disproved—and he enrolled himself among that number—would be sorry to think that gentlemen to whom the administration of the colony was entrusted, no matter to what party in politics they belonged, should be capable of such malversation as was attributed to them. Nothing could give him greater gratification than to see those charges fully disproved. The Premier's best friends, on reading his speech in *Hansard* to-morrow, would admit that he had endeavoured to prove his integrity at the expense of his business acumen. The Premier bore the reputation of being a very able business man. At the same time, his account of what he had observed in London, and of the manner in which he had conducted his inquiry there, showed that he went into the inquiry in a manner more to put Mr. Hamilton on his trial than to assist Mr. Hamilton in finding out the laches referred to. That was where he found fault with the Premier's dealings with the matter in London. He had told them that he wanted Mr. Hamilton to prove his charges. He (Mr. Dickson) said it was the duty of the Premier to assist Mr. Hamilton in proving them by the superior means of obtaining information which he possessed, and so to trace out who pocketed the difference between £6 and £9 18s. 6d. a-ton. He wanted to know where the £60,000 had gone to. That it had gone somewhere was indisputable. Into whose pockets had it gone? The Premier being on the spot, and having Mr. Hamilton at his command to make those researches, if he had chosen he could have obtained much fuller information and been able to satisfy the House as to who were the recipients of that ill-gained money, much more clearly than he had chosen to do to-night. The

hon. gentleman admitted the main facts that the rails were purchased at £6 a-ton and charged to the Government at £9 18s. 6d. a ton. What the country wanted to know was, who pocketed the difference? There was another matter connected with the inquiry which the Premier had not stated. He had heard it mentioned that Mr. Hamilton asked for an independent inquiry, to have witnesses summoned who could contribute very valuable information as to who ordered those 15,000 tons of rails. He was also informed—and he should be very glad if the Premier would give it a distinct denial—that the Premier declined to grant that independent inquiry. At that inquiry certain manufacturers of steel rails were to have been called who could contribute very material information, not only as to the market value of the rails when ordered, but as to who Mr. Leonard Cooper was, and what position he was in when making the contract with the Barrow Company and the Moss Bay Company. The Premier's justification of himself seemed a most extraordinary one. He admitted he was part owner of those ships which carried the rails, but that that was some time ago, and that he was now in no way interested in them.

The PREMIER: I protest against being misrepresented in that way. I never urged any such excuse. I will go on as long as I like being an owner of vessels without my position being questioned in the slightest degree. I do not recede from my position. I am perfectly entitled to own as much property of that kind as I like, and in the way I am doing at the present time.

Mr. DICKSON said the hon. gentleman said it was all known long ago, and he (Mr. Dickson) inferred that he justified his position on account of his having been the owner of those ships long before he became a Minister of the Crown. But, be that so or not, the pertinent inquiry arose—Did not the hon. gentleman participate in the profits of those vessels? Perhaps the hon. gentleman might think that an impertinent question?

The PREMIER: I do.

Mr. DICKSON said that if such was the case it went very near the description of those who derived benefit from Government contracts. It was not an edifying circumstance that a leading statesman should be placed in such a suspicious position. He (Mr. Dickson) had occasion last year to refer to a circumstance the reference to which provoked the ire of the Colonial Secretary. He then pointed out that it was an invidious and improper position for a Minister of the Crown to be director of a bank, and to sit in the Council Chamber deciding whether that bank should be the favoured tenderer or not. That ambiguous position was now duplicated, as both the Premier and Colonial Secretary were shown to be registered proprietors of vessels belonging to the line which enjoyed the monopoly of Government freights. That was not a proper position for Ministers to occupy; and while he held a seat in the House he should continue to denounce it. He regretted that hon. members for whom personally he had a high esteem should set such a bad example to succeeding statesmen in this colony. The Premier, in referring to the subject of freight, had not touched upon the essence of the charge, which was that whereas McIlwraith, McEacham and Co. obtained freight at 38s. 6d. per ton on the special condition that they should carry solely by full cargo ships direct, up to the present time they had carried by berth ships notwithstanding the higher freight paid: why was the condition made? The hon. gentleman further stated that he had no knowledge of the condition; but it could not be supposed that a gentleman who set himself specially to reform the London office would not have made himself acquainted with any condition which would tend to make the carriage

of railway material higher than previously. One chief reason alleged for the higher freight was insertion of the condition that the material should be carried by full cargo direct ships, and that condition had never previously been attached to any contract. Had that condition been adhered to, the Premier would have satisfactorily established his position with the colony; but such had not been the case. He (Mr. Dickson) objected to the condition on quite different grounds. The present Government prided themselves on the particular fact of making it a principle to charge each district with a fair share of expenditure; but by the adoption of such a condition the cost of conveying railway material to the southern portion of the colony was increased, and the cost of conveying it to the northern districts proportionally decreased. Apart from that, the monopoly of Government freights by one firm tended generally to injure the importers, because other shipowners were induced to lay on a fewer number of ships, and so freights were kept up. The interests of the Government should coincide with the interests of importers to keep freights low; but in this case the Government appeared to have studied the interests of the shipowners by allowing the freights to be kept up. The Premier had also stated that he was not acquainted with the condition under which berthage ships were weighted; but the hon. gentlemen had handed over to him the letter of Mr. Hamilton marked private and confidential, the very first paragraph of which dealt with the question of berth ships direct and the points of departure. He (Mr. Dickson) therefore failed to see how the hon. gentleman could sustain his statement that he was not acquainted with the condition attached to this high price contract. After the clear and comprehensive account of the transaction by the hon. member for Brisbane it was not necessary to say more, but he felt justified in adding that, whilst he should have been very glad to have heard a refutation of the charges, the explanation which had been given was not to his mind satisfactory. He had not considered the subject from a party point of view, regarding it as too important to be so treated. Believing that the good name and faith of public men ought not to be attacked merely to promote party interests, he had expressed his unbiassed opinions on the subject. He considered that the leader of the Opposition had taken the only course open to him; and he trusted that the Premier would, as he had promised, allow the matter to be fully investigated. Until the papers were placed in the hands of hon. members it was impossible for them to deal with the reply of the Premier in a satisfactory manner. At present it was statement and counter-statement. Nothing less than an independent inquiry in England would satisfactorily test the matter, and he trusted that course would not be withheld by the Government. Up to the present the Premier had given no reason to justify his action in inviting tenders from a firm who were not manufacturers of rails, and withholding the invitation from firms who had been in the habit of supplying them extensively. The hon. gentleman ought to have instituted an inquiry, not for the purpose of putting Mr. Hamilton on his trial, but to find out who had pocketed the increased price. This subject had been an instructive commentary on the Address delivered to-day, in the first paragraph of which attention was called to the material public advantages which they were told would be a full compensation for the delay in meeting Parliament and the visit of the Premier to England. He, however, failed to see the material public advantages arising from the Premier's absence—unless, indeed, it resulted in the manipulation of rail-

way contracts being thoroughly traced. Some parts of the Speech would certainly convey a large amount of additional information to the people of the colony. They were told, for instance, that by the Divisional Boards Bill an important and beneficial change in the government of the colony had been initiated with encouraging prospects. That was news to him, and would be to a number of people in the colony, as the result of the Bill up to the present time seemed to be the ruin of the man who made the most improvements. Although he approved of local self-government in certain districts thickly populated, and believed under such circumstances it would be a great advantage, the statement that the present Act had been initiated with encouraging prospects was one the stupendous magnitude of which prevented him from accepting it. Even from a Treasurer's point of view he failed to find evidences of any advantageous result. He could not see how the Treasurer would find any relief in the large endowment he must provide under the statute—a relief not dependent on Ministerial caprice, but defined by statute. He observed that, whilst £34,000 had been saved on the expenditure on roads during the last six months, those Boards cost £30,000 out of loan; and he would ask whether anyone could say that the colony had received, up to the present time, any perceptible benefit from the expenditure of that £30,000, the interest on which the colony was now paying? That money had been frittered away in preliminary expenses, and the roads were at present in a disgracefully-neglected condition. Referring to the subject of the proposed Torres Straits mail service, he thought the colony was not justified in incurring such a large expenditure at the present time. As a mail service it would be unsatisfactory; as an immigrant service it would be equally so; and it was absurd to ask the House for a frozen meat service when there was no frozen meat to go by it. He was quite certain that a service would present itself when the cargoes were ready; and that they were to commit themselves to an expenditure of £55,000 under the semblance of mail communication, but in reality to carry frozen meat when there was no frozen meat to be carried, was a proposition he believed should not be entertained. At the present time there were considerable postal advantages to be enjoyed by the neighbouring colonies; and he failed to see the necessity of having a distinct service for this colony, being convinced it would be more in their interests to make an arrangement with the P. and O. Company, which were now carrying the Victorian mails fortnightly. He was satisfied that there was at the present time a very large proportion of the home business correspondence of this colony sent by the P. and O. Company in consequence of the convenience afforded and the saving of time. He was confident that if hon. members opposite chose to give expression to their true opinions, there would be a strong expression of disapprobation of the proposed service. It was said that a great deal would be gained by having the terminus of the new line in this colony; but he failed to see that a steamer lying for two or three weeks in the bay twenty miles from the city would prove to be of any great advantage. If the river was deepened and ships could be brought up to the wharves, there might perhaps be some small advantage; but, even then, merchandise could not be brought to this colony as cheaply as it could now be brought by the Orient steamers with freight added from Port Jackson to Moreton Bay. He had made it a point to ascertain the feeling of commercial men as to whether it would be a benefit to them, and in no one instance had the proposed line been

viewed with anything like favour or approval. In common with his hon. friend the leader of the Opposition, he was disappointed that no mention had been made in the Speech of branch railways, and he considered that the Government had acted ungenerously and unfairly towards their own supporters in that respect, as there were some lines in the agricultural districts which were much required. Judging from the omission of any mention of such lines in the Opening Speech, there was no intention on the part of the Government to construct such lines. He had been very glad to hear his hon. friend, when speaking on the subject of trunk railways, express himself in such a way that there could be no future uncertainty as to his views on the subject. He (Mr. Dickson) had always held the opinion that the construction of trunk lines should not be a charge on general taxation, but the interest should be provided by the districts benefited. That view he had impressed upon the Government last session; and had they acceded to that very equitable representation and made provision by which the extension of the trunk lines should be no charge on the general taxpayer, he believed they would have shown their desire to provide railway communication to those districts which required it. During the course of the discussion in connection with the London Office, a desire had been attributed to the Government to dispense with tenders and obtain railway material from only a few firms; and that feeling had been displayed by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Public Works Office in this colony in a small matter that had recently come under his (Mr. Dickson's) notice, but still one which was of sufficient importance to make public. The hon. gentleman had recently confided the sole carriage of goods from the railway station in Brisbane to the wharves and elsewhere to one company. He would do the hon. gentleman the justice to say that he obtained from that company a reduction of 6d. per ton on former rates, and in so far as he had done that he had benefited the community; but the hon. gentleman had entrusted that contract to one company, and had not allowed the matter to be tendered for by men who had been previously engaged in carrying between the wharves and the railway. Whilst he admitted the benefit derived by the reduction of charges, he (Mr. Dickson) contended that the matter should have been placed before the public for competition, for, however clean a Minister's hands might be, he thus rendered himself liable to charges of favouritism. With regard to the Speech they had heard that day, he must say that whilst it could not be complained of as regarded want of length, it could be in respect to material, and well deserved the character of model ambiguity which had been given to it. He hoped that a large amount of wise legislation would pass through the House during the session. There was no doubt that the finances were in a bad state, and the Government could now see the truth of what he had said last session, that to shut their eyes to the necessity of extra taxation was a mistake. However, he considered that the matters connected with the London office, to which reference had been made that evening, far eclipsed in importance anything else mentioned, and as the matter could not be cleared up until the whole of the correspondence was before hon. members, he would suggest to the Government the wisdom of adjourning the debate until hon. members had had an opportunity of considering the evidence and papers which the Premier had expressed his willingness to lay on the table of the House. The statements made this evening were sufficiently grave to justify such a course, and he thought a little deliberation over the statements and counter statements made by the Premier

would not be attended with any disadvantage to himself or the Government. He could hardly expect hon. members to go into the matter until they had had time to study the papers in connection with it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he thought the last suggestion of the hon. member for Enoggera was given with his usual modesty. Had it never suggested itself to that hon. member that the advice which he had taken upon himself to give to the Premier would have been very much better if he had given it to his colleague, the hon. member for Brisbane (Mr. Griffith)? That hon. member, instead of going on with the debate in the usual manner in which debates on the Address in Reply were conducted in that House, had chosen to degrade himself, and so far as possible to degrade the House, by making a personal attack upon the Premier without the slightest foundation whatever. If the hon. member had given his hon. colleague the advice he now gave the Premier, and waited to bring forward these charges until he had something to go upon to prove them, he would have shown some desire for carrying on the business of the House, and some desire for the good of the country and the honour of its public men. He (the Colonial Secretary) had listened to a great many debates in that House, but a more disgraceful attack than had been made upon his hon. colleague the Premier, to-night, by his unworthy colleague, the member for North Brisbane, he had never listened to. Without a shadow or rag of argument, or a single fact to go upon except the statement of a disgraced, dismissed secretary, and a petition from a political opponent and personal enemy of the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, he had chosen to make charges which he dare not make out of the House, and he had the cowardice to shelter himself under his public duty. He had, in the course of his remarks, also alluded to him (the Colonial Secretary) as a shareholder in those ships, knowing full well that he (the Colonial Secretary) had not one farthing's interest in any one of them. He believed the hon. member knew well when he made those charges that although he (the Colonial Secretary) was a registered shareholder in those ships, together with the Premier, who had held shares in them for years, that he held them as trustee, and whether the ships made £20,000 or 20,000 farthings it did not make a single farthing's difference to him, personally—not one iota; and yet he brought that forward with the view of connecting two members of the Government in the same charge. And what was the charge, after all? It was, that his hon. friend the Premier and himself, apparently, were registered holders of shares in certain ships, when he knew as a lawyer that it had no more to do with their position in that House than the Day of Judgment had to do with to-morrow. The charges the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) had seen fit to bring forward against his hon. colleague were not supported by a single fact—there was no evidence to go upon.

MR. GRIFFITH: The Premier admitted them all.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the Premier had not much to do then, for the hon. member did not state one solitary fact, or anything to support the charges, except the statement of a dismissed servant—and they all knew what charges made by dismissed servants were worth. He had no great love for Mr. Macalister, and did not pity him one bit for the mess he had got into with Mr. Hamilton. He sent Hamilton home as a spy upon a much abler man than ever he was or ever would be, and he had reaped just retribution in the way he had been treated by Mr.

Hamilton. Let them see what Mr. Macalister, who used to be a great authority with the other side of the House at one time, and he hoped was so still with some, thought about Mr. Hamilton. He said :—

“Queensland Government Offices,

“32, Charing Cross,

“London, S.W., 26th April, 1880.

“Sir,—I have the honour to refer incidentally to a conversation which we had some time after your arrival in England, in which I stated that after the three last winters which I had spent in London, I was afraid that I should not be able to stand another winter of a similar kind amongst the fogs of London. This conversation was not pursued at that time; but the circumstances connected with Mr. Hamilton's position in this office sufficiently justify me in again recurring to the matter.

“Mr. Hamilton, in his evidence on the inquiry into the working of this office, states that he was always willing to do what he was asked to do; that he never refused, and when anything was not done it was because he was not asked. This way of discharging his duty is one which is followed by *every clerk* in the office, and if this is Mr. Hamilton's view of his duty he could be of no use whatever as secretary here. It is this view of his duty that has given to me a worrying anxiety, amounting at times to serious illness.”

He (the Colonial Secretary) did not wish him the illness, but he was very glad of the worrying anxiety.

“No secretary who knew his duty would hesitate to do it without being constantly requested to do so.

“But, again, Mr. Hamilton states, with reference to the late tenders for freight of rails, that he had an objection to the accepted tender. These tenders were opened by him and Mr. Ashwell, at my special request—they were scheduled by Mr. Hamilton, in his own handwriting, showing the different prices of the tenders, and sent to me for acceptance—the lowest tender being accepted. No objection was stated by Mr. Hamilton *at any time* to any of the tenders, and, if he considers it part of his duty to come forward after a tender, which had previously passed thorough his hands for approval, has been accepted, and the contract partly completed with a pretended objection to the tender, then he is a dangerous officer for any Agent-General to have to do with.

“Since Mr. Hamilton left this office—and although, in some respects, the work has on that account been slightly increased—I feel that, with the assistance of the remaining staff, there will be no difficulty in its being performed until a secretary is appointed; while, personally, I have been relieved from all the worry and anxiety which previously existed, and which, if continued, would have found me unable to discharge the duties of Agent-General during next winter.

“I have, &c.,

“A. MACALISTER,

“Agent-General.

“The Honourable the Premier of Queensland.”

That showed Mr. Macalister's opinion of Mr. Hamilton, and he (the Colonial Secretary) was sure it would have a good deal of weight with one side of the House if it had not with the other. It had not very much weight with him, he was sorry to say. The whole of the charges were founded upon the word or the report of such a man as that; and he had no doubt, whatever, that Mr. Hemmant's information was got from the same never-failing source. The charges made against the Premier of the colony by the hon. member for North Brisbane were such as he

ought to have been ashamed to ventilate. His duty was laid down very nicely though unintentionally by his colleague, the hon. member for Enoggera—to have waited until he got certain information, to have called for the papers, which he must from previous experience know would never be refused, or even to have asked for a select committee to inquire into the matter, and have some grounds to go upon beyond the mere assertions of Mr. Hemmant and Mr. Hamilton. His hon. colleague, the Premier, had dealt so fully with this matter that it was unnecessary for him to go over the same ground; and as for following the rigmarole—he hoped “rigmarole” was a parliamentary word—of the hon. member for Enoggera, he should be very sorry to attempt it. They had got down to even cartage from the Railway Station into town on the question of the Address in Reply! He did not know to what heights they would go before they had done, but they had gone to certain depths as it was—in fact, with the exception of these little erratic embellishments, the speech of the hon. member for Enoggera was simply the speech of the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) boiled down, and a very bad Saturday's hash he made of it. As to who was leader on the other side it was extremely doubtful, and, if report was true, the member for Enoggera was aspiring—as the hon. member for Maryborough informed them at Maryborough—with regard to Mr. Griffith—to play the part of the cuckoo when he got into the Ministry. He was very much obliged to the hon. member for Maryborough for giving that information. He had been all along of opinion that Mr. Griffith was the ruling horse in the team, and was really the leader of the late Ministry, and he was glad to find that he was right. He should now return to the observations of the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith). His first observation was against himself (the Colonial Secretary), and his management of the Colonial Secretary's office. Well, all he could say to that was, that if he managed the Colonial Secretary's office so as to please Mr. Griffith, he was sure he should be heartily ashamed of himself and feel that he was going very wrong. He did not think that he had gone wrong at all. The first real charge the hon. member made against him was that he had overruled a regulation of the previous Government with regard to the employment of kanakas. In regard to that he had always maintained that the previous Government did what constitutionally they had no right or power to do. They made a regulation the effect of which was to override the law. He had stated over and over again, in that House and elsewhere, that in his opinion that regulation was so much waste paper—that the late Government did what they had no right whatever to do—and he was still of the same opinion. When he came into office he dealt with the question purely as an office matter. He acted on the belief, which he still maintained, that he was perfectly justified in granting applications for kanakas for other than thirty miles from the coast. There was nothing in the Act about thirty miles from the coast, and he thought it his duty to administer the law as he found it. The only thing in which he was wrong was in not consulting his colleagues. That he had admitted to his colleagues, and was prepared to admit now—but he considered the matter so purely departmental—that he was bound to obey the law as he found it—that he never thought of doing so. He admitted that he was an employer of kanaka labour; he had employed them for years. Everyone knew it; at the election for North Brisbane he never denied it. He had never tried to hide his light under a bushel, but when the hon. member for North Brisbane said he (the Colonial Secretary) was one of the

largest importers of kanaka labour, he again said what was not true. He never imported a man, but he had had twelve transferred to him; and if the hon. member called that importation he could only say the whole of his speech was very much of the same style. During his absence a commotion was got up on the matter, and his colleagues, not being able to communicate with him, very properly stopped the Immigration Officer from allowing any more applications until his return. He had never given up his opinion on the subject; but his colleagues were of a different opinion, and he was sorry to say that the Premier had joined them since his return; but he (the Colonial Secretary) was not going to raise a difference in a Ministry because his opinion was not carried out on every subject. From that time he had ceased to issue any licenses except for kanakas employed in purely tropical agriculture, although he must say it was extremely difficult to define what tropical or semi-tropical agriculture meant. Wherever, however, he could define it he had done so, and a Bill on the subject would shortly be laid before the House. He would, at the present time, make no comment upon this Bill, but he believed it would be the best ever laid before the House on the subject, and that it would be carried. Whatever he did, he would not do as the Douglas Ministry did about the Bill they laid upon the table—he would not allow it to be shelved. When he put a Bill upon the table and believed in its principles he would see that it was carried through; but if he did not agree with it he would state his reasons why. The hon. gentleman having dealt with that subject proceeded to attack the Divisional Boards Bill, and in doing so went on pretty much in the style adopted throughout the rest of his speech—making assertions that he could not substantiate. He said there had not been six elections under that Bill.

MR. GRIFFITH: Contested elections.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was aware that the hon. gentleman had done all he could to obstruct the operations of the Divisional Boards Bill in every possible way. In his own captious style he had objected to the forms of notice, and had objected, he believed, solely for the purpose of obstructing the action of the Bill. The facts, so far from being as stated by the hon. gentleman, were these:—There were in the colony sixty-five divisions. Out of these forty-eight had elected their own Boards, and this in spite of the statement of the hon. gentleman that only six elections had taken place. It was quite true that he (the Colonial Secretary) recommended that there should be no contested elections, and he did so for very good reasons, and was happy to say that the good sense of the colony had agreed with him. The Bill was a tentative one, as everybody knew, and there was no time for getting it into thorough working order. The number of electors who could be qualified to sit on Boards would be very few, and very sensibly the rate-payers in the divisions knew among themselves what men they would have, and in this manner forty-eight elections had taken place. Fifty-four of the divisions were now in full swing, having already passed by-laws to regulate their proceedings, and appointed valuers to obtain or to make valuations of rateable property. All the Boards, therefore, with the exception of half-a-dozen, were now at work, and yet the House was told by the hon. member for North Brisbane, and the statement was repeated by his echo, that the Divisional Boards would ruin the colony. The fact was the Bill was a great step towards self-government, and he believed that with a little amendment it would work well for the colony in every way. The next charge brought was that the Ministry had, during the recess, given titles to a great deal of land said to

have been dummied. The question was most seriously considered by the Ministry; and, with the experience they had during the leadership of the hon. gentleman of the enormous expense incurred in testing the titles of these lands, costing considerably more than the fee simple of the land itself—after the decisions that had been arrived at in the Privy Council reversing the decisions arrived at in the colony and absolutely forcing them to give the titles—the Government thought it was far better to give the lands up even if there was a little dummied than to waste money by paying other lawyers. It certainly showed the good sense of the Privy Council that they were of the same opinion as himself upon this subject. The Minister for Lands in the action which the hon. gentleman had condemned had not only done all he possibly could to proceed with caution, but, by taking up the Attorney-General to see that there was fair play, had almost even gone beyond his duty. What evidence did they find? There was a law, and the law must be obeyed. The men would get their titles if there were fifty learned members for North Brisbane trying to keep them out of them, and he believed that the country at large would be much better pleased by what had been done than by the prospect of expending enormous sums of money. Then they were told that this Government had sold more land by auction in the last three months than had been sold in the previous two years. Did the hon. gentleman forget that the Government of which he was a member sold some £150,000 worth of land at one sale? Did he know that if the line went south-west of Roma a good deal of that land would have to be bought back at twenty times the price? The hon. gentleman must surely forget all those little incidents of the previous Ministry and their sales of land. He (the Colonial Secretary) had always acted on a different principle. His idea was to sell land to pay the interest of money, and hon. gentlemen opposite tried to sell land to build their railways: that was the difference between them. The hon. gentleman then went on to say that he himself did not believe that the presence of the Premier in London had anything to do with the floating of the loan. His hon. colleague, with national modesty, could not, of course, answer a remark of that kind; but he (Mr. Palmer) might be allowed to say that he had heard from very good sources indeed—both here, at home, and in the other colonies—that the presence of the Premier and his exertions had a most material effect upon the successful raising of the loan. He had been assured by gentlemen of experience, writing from home, that had the loan been floated when it was at first intended, 85 would have been the most they could have got—in fact, the operation would have been a dead failure, and the amount the colony did obtain was entirely owing to the exertions of the Premier in making the moneyed men acquainted with the resources of the colony and the safety of the loan. He (Mr. Palmer) believed nothing could have had a better influence upon the operation than the presence of the Premier in London. The member for Enoggera wished particularly to know who got the money that represented the difference between the price of the rails? The hon. gentleman must have been employed in a good deal of business himself—did he tell everybody who got the money when he bought at one price and sold at another? Would he think it a fair question if he were asked when he bought a house for £100 and sold it for £500 who had the difference? Anyone who asked such a question would almost deserve kicking out of his office. And the same might be said of the contractors in London, men who were constantly engaged in buying and selling. And the firm of Haslam and Co. were certainly not so simple as to tel.



the Premier who had the money. The presumption was that the shareholders had the money.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Why, they do not deal in rails.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that showed the hon. gentleman's ignorance. It was especially their business to deal in rails; and like other business men they bought in the cheapest and sold in the dearest market, and no doubt made a very good thing of it. But the hon. gentleman seemed to forget that the Government were deceived by the agent of Ibbotson and Company, and that the Premier had no possible way of knowing whether that company were going to accept the tender or not until months after he left. In the meantime rails rose very rapidly indeed, and surely it was no charge against the Premier that a company which bought when the rails were cheap were enabled to realise a good price when the market had risen. On the whole, he never had heard such groundless assertions made and such preposterous charges as had been brought against the hon. the Premier this evening. And the unkindest cut of all, perhaps, was when the member for Enoggera said that he respected him in his private life. It reminded him of the old lines—

“By the shades beneath us, and by the gods above,  
Add not unto your cruel hate, your yet more cruel love.”

Mr. KINGSFORD moved the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. MOREHEAD trusted when the House met next day it would confine itself to the consideration of whether the Premier had been guilty of dereliction of duty or of fraud.

Mr. GRIFFITH, before the House adjourned, wished to call attention to the fact that not a single assertion made by him in the forenoon had been contradicted by the Premier. He had drawn distinctions upon details and sailed around them, but the serious assertions made had not been contradicted. He had maintained that the contract for rails had been made with a company which did not make them, and that had been proved to be the case. The Premier did not even know where the money made by the transaction had gone. It had not been contradicted, either, that the rails supplied had been ordered for the Queensland Government on their specification and at the lower price. They must have been ordered by some one in the confidence of the London office of the colony, and the Premier ought to have found that out. As none of the assertions he made had been contradicted, the House could draw their own inference.

The PREMIER said that if the leader of the Opposition had made his charges in different language he would have got a different reply. The Haslam Company disclosed in their tender that they were agents for or dealers in rails, and that they were offering to deliver a certain quantity made by the Barrow Company. It was well known that rails had risen £4 or £5 from September to January. Did the leader of the Opposition mean to tell him that a man who bought rails cheap in September should be debarred from selling them at a profit in January? What would have been the effect had he thrown out the tender of the Haslam Company, which professed to be dealers in rails? Simply that he would have had to give so much more to the makers, who could not supply them at the same price. He accepted, however, the lowest tender, even if it was that of the speculator, and thereby made a saving of many thousands of pounds to the colony. If the hon. gentleman had not brains enough to see that, he could not find them for him.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at ten minutes past 10 o'clock.