

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 8 JULY 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.*Thursday, 8 July, 1880.*

Personal Explanation.—Formal Motions.—Personal Explanation.—Unfinished Correspondence.—Address in Reply—resumption of debate.

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

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

The HON. J. DOUGLAS rose to make a personal explanation in connection with the report in *Hansard* of his speech delivered last night. It was necessary that a distinct omission which had occurred should be pointed out, as, although the error was almost transparent, the report as it stood conveyed an entirely wrong meaning to the public. He was reported to have said, "It was clear that the statements in Mr. Hemmant's petition, and as they had been put forward by the leader of the Opposition, were deliberate, if not malicious, libels or calumnies." That statement in the report was absolutely unqualified; whereas what he said was that "either it was a deliberate libel or it was a direct indictment of persons in high places under the Government;" and it was manifest from the context that that was part of his argument. He would take this opportunity of saying that if this was the sort of reports they were to have he would rather not be reported at all, because the report went abroad as a faithful reflex of what was said, while in some instances it represented directly the reverse. He would infinitely

prefer a summarised account such as appeared in the *Courier* and other papers, to an authorised edition of what he did not say. He had every confidence in the head of the *Hansard* staff; but he declared that suspicions entered his mind that hon. members might be "got at," even in the reporters' gallery. The London office was now almost in the possession of the McIlwraith family, and he was informed that there was one of the family or clan in the gallery. He should not feel confidence in any department of the Government if this sort of extension of family influence was to prevail. It was a sort of march of the Cameron men—he heard their pibroch everywhere—and the McIlwraiths were north, south, in Melbourne, and everywhere. He should feel constrained to exercise—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Order, order!

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is going beyond a personal explanation.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he felt that the nature of the grievance justified what he had said.

The HON. G. THORN said that, to be enabled to make a few remarks on the subject, he should conclude with a motion. He thought the time had arrived to abolish *Hansard*; and that the Government might now take the matter up in earnest, and do away with it altogether. Complaints had been made on both sides of the House, and if it were abolished a great deal more business would be done. There was now a large House, and a great number of members merely talked for the sake of seeing their speeches reported in *Hansard*. He should support any hon. member who took action with that object. He moved the adjournment of the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said the hon. member (Mr. Thorn) seemed to attribute to the Government a power that did not belong to them. The publication of *Hansard* was in the hands of the House, and he presumed the hon. member knew that very well when he was speaking. The remarks of the hon. member for Maryborough, who threw suspicion, in his usual style, upon the *Hansard* staff, were quite uncalled for after the explanation given yesterday, when he was informed that there were new hands on the staff unused and unaccustomed to the work, and that he must not expect them to become acquainted with the work in less than a week. The hon. member had been distinctly warned that he might expect some mistakes to occur. It would have been in far better taste had the hon. member contented himself with simply correcting the report. The hon. member was so involved and wandered so in his speeches that he (Mr. Palmer) did not wonder that the reporters were not able to report him—his sentences were like wheels within wheels. His allusion to the McIlwraith family was as uncalled for as the rest of his speech. Though there might be a gentleman of that name in the gallery, there was no relation of Mr. McIlwraith in the public service at all, and the hon. member knew that when he made the assertion.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following Resolutions were agreed to:—

By Mr. BAILEY—

That there be laid on the table of the House, an approximate Return of the number of Miles of Road in each Division under the Divisional Boards Act.

By Mr. BAILEY—

That there be laid on the table of the House, a Return showing the number of Ratepayers in each Division under the Divisional Boards Act.

By Mr. MACFARLANE—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a return showing:—

1. The total receipts from Sunday Trains from 5th October, 1879, to 20th June, 1880, both inclusive.
2. The average receipts for each Sunday.
3. The total expenditure in working Sunday Trains for same time.
4. The average expenditure for each Sunday.
5. The average receipts for Sunday, 27th June, and 4th July.
6. The average expenditure on the same two days.

By Mr. GRIFFITH—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Copy of the Charter-Party entered into by, or on behalf of, the owners of the ship "Scottish Hero," with respect to the conveyance of immigrants to this colony under contract with the Government; also, a list of the registered owners of that ship.

By Mr. DOUGLAS—

That there be laid on the table of the House, Copies of all Orders in Council, Official Notifications, and Rules or Regulations under the Polynesian Labourers Act, together with all reports not hitherto published by authority, from Polynesian inspectors or commissioners acting under instructions.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

The HON. JOHN DOUGLAS said, before proceeding with business he wished to make a personal explanation, and should conclude with a motion. The Minister for Works in the course of the debate last night made a statement in reference to him which he thought amounted to misrepresentation, and he felt bound to correct it. The hon. gentleman, referring to what he was pleased to call his (Mr. Douglas's) usual inconsistency, in regard to some statement he had made in connection with the Agent-General's office, quoted from the "Votes and Proceedings of 1876" in order to prove that inconsistency. He should now briefly supplement the information given by the hon. gentleman on that occasion. He could not acquit the hon. gentleman of disingenuousness in making that quotation. He knew that he only told half the truth about it. They were favoured last night with a quotation about the lie that is half the truth, and that was just the sort of thing the hon. gentleman had stated of him in regard to this matter of the Agent-General being assisted by a Board of Advice. The facts were just in a direct contrary direction to the statements of the hon. gentlemen. His (Mr. Douglas's) course had been clear throughout. He was the first to indicate what ought to be done in this case. The present Colonial Secretary, then member for Port Curtis, followed his lead.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That he has never done.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he did follow his lead.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Never.

Mr. DOUGLAS repeated that he did, he (Mr. Douglas) having indicated what was desirable in the previous year, 1875.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Never.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he should not trouble the House with lengthy quotations from *Hansard*, but would refer for proof any gentleman who chose to satisfy himself upon this point. He indicated, upon the debate upon Mr. Wheeler's position at that time, that the proper position of the Agent-General was to be fortified in the way he had described. The hon. member for Port Curtis, the following year, took that up and

brought under the notice of the House a motion to this effect :—

“That it is desirable that a Board of Advice, consisting of not less than three persons, connected with Queensland, and who shall be resident in England, shall be appointed to advise with the Agent-General on all matters connected with his duties; and that no tenders for supplies of stores, or charters of ships, shall be accepted without the concurrence and consent of the majority of such Board.”

He (Mr. Douglas) supported that resolution, not certainly in its integrity in every respect, but he supported it in its main features.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You did not.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the hon. gentleman had no business to contradict him when he made a statement of that kind. The hon. gentleman would have an opportunity of contradicting him in form, if he would be pleased to reserve it until he could have an opportunity of rising in his place to do so. He supported the first part of that resolution by argument, and pointed out, at the same time, that it was undesirable that the latter portion should pass—that it was relieving the Agent-General of a responsibility which attached to him, and conferred upon others who were not our officers a responsibility which it would be very improper to attach to them. That was the only distinction he drew between the hon. gentleman's idea and his own. True, it was a very important distinction, but he was willing to support the resolution if the hon. gentleman had agreed to accept an amendment which was moved by his hon. friend, Mr. Griffith, to the effect that all the words after “duties” be omitted. That amendment was carried by 20 to 10, Mr. Palmer voting against it. That gentleman was not content with the resolution as amended, which would have been amply sufficient; it was, he felt bound to say, a much safer expression of the opinion of Parliament, and he was quite confident that if the question did arise Parliament would adopt that conclusion: it would be the only safe course to adopt. But instead of accepting the amendment, the hon. gentleman turned round and voted against his own original resolution.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did not.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the record in the “Votes and Proceedings” showed that after debate the House divided on the amended resolution with this result:—“Ayes, 13; Noes, 16.” Mr. Palmer coalescing with some of the previous opponents of the resolution and throwing it out altogether. The hon. gentleman, because he could not get what he wanted, refused to adopt the practical course which, it was clear to his (Mr. Douglas') mind, was the one that ought to have been adopted. These being the facts of the case, he thought the hon. the Minister for Works had been very disingenuous. The hon. gentleman might speak of his (Mr. Douglas') consistency: he was not afraid of his consistency. The hon. gentleman was very welcome to follow up his inconsistencies, if he pleased; but he could assure him that when he did so he (Mr. Douglas) would be able there to meet him. He was satisfied that his life as a politician would stand investigation throughout a lengthened career to a far better extent than the life of the hon. gentleman himself would; and he had not the slightest doubt that, isolated as the hon. gentleman asserted he (Mr. Douglas) stood there, he had a far better and more influential following in the country at-large than the hon. gentleman had or was ever likely to have. He would say that the very perverse and malicious representation, or rather misrepresentation, of the position he (Mr. Douglas) took

1880—E

on the occasion referred to should not have been made, and he could assure the hon. gentleman that if he was pleased to follow up what he was pleased to call his inconsistencies, he would make it his particular duty to follow up that hon. gentleman's perversions of truth whenever he misrepresented the truth in the manner that he did last night. He should make it his care, and would adopt as his motto in this respect that of his country, “*Nemo me impune lacessit.*” He warned the hon. gentleman. He was a man of peace if he was let alone, and as long as he had a seat in that House he would do his duty to his constituents, and he would not be maligned and libelled in this way. He could tell the hon. gentleman that he would find that he had better not touch the cat but the glove. He moved the adjournment of the House.

Mr. THOMPSON hoped the House would not be detained over this matter, which was really a question of who began it.

Mr. MOREHEAD trusted the hon. member for Maryborough would change his motto and make it—

We don't want to fight,
But, by jingo, if we do—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said they had heard a good deal about American spread-eagleism, but now they had an illustration of individual spread-eagleism from the hon. member for Maryborough. He thought that hon. gentleman ought to consider well before he challenged that side of the House. The hon. member was much more distinguished in bullying reporters, who had no opportunity of defending themselves, than in bullying any member of the House.

UNFINISHED CORRESPONDENCE.

Mr. GRIFFITH would take advantage of the motion to point out that at the end of last session there was an unfinished correspondence between the Treasury and the Auditor-General, which was promised to be laid upon the table. He wished to know if it would be laid upon the table, as many members would like to see it.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman would very soon have the correspondence;—he knew that well enough.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I never heard it before.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he did not know how the hon. gentleman could know very well he would get the correspondence. At any rate, they were entitled to civility, and would secure it. He would not submit to be bullied any more by any member of the Ministry. He had never yet submitted to be bullied, and he—[the end of the sentence was lost in loud laughter from the Ministerial side of the House, which was kept up during the hon. member's remarks.] The return was not made last session, and he supposed that he had good reasons for not producing the correspondence; but he (Mr. Douglas) held it should now be produced.

The PREMIER said he had a very good reason for not producing the correspondence last year, and that was that it was not completed when the House rose. He could not produce letters that had no existence.

Question—That the House do now adjourn—put and negatived.

ADDRESS IN REPLY—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. MACFARLANE, in resuming the debate, said that he had no intention of prolonging a discussion which had now lasted for over two nights, and beyond reasonable limits. The Speech of the Acting-Governor acknowledged that it gave

him much pleasure to meet Parliament; but it could not be denied that the colony was not in such a prosperous condition as could be wished for. He, however, looked in vain in the Speech for a promise of measures that would in any way improve the circumstances of the colony. The Ministry made great professions of devotion to the interests of the colony, but it would be found on examination that they amounted to nothing. They looked after number one first, after their supporters second, and the general interests of the colony third. As an instance of the care the Ministry had for the interests of the people, it would be remembered that a large number of kanakas were found travelling to one of the stations of the Colonial Secretary, whilst at the very same time there were a large number of whitemen travelling throughout the colony looking for work. It would also be remembered that promises were made by the Ministry that some means would be devised of giving employment to those people, but Ministers had in reality taken employment out of the hands of white men and given it to kanakas. This, of course, he must consider to be one of the modes mentioned as tending to improve the condition of the colony. Then let them take in review the conduct of the Minister for Lands. The profession of the Government was that the lands of the country should be kept for the people; but it was for the House to say whether any faith had been kept with it in this respect. The truth was that there was a greater crowd of dummies now occupying the public lands than had ever been the case before. This, of course, was another of the ways designed for the improvement of the colony. But until the country was appealed to they could hardly expect anything else. Referring to the conduct of the Minister for Works, what did he do? It was at one time said that when the public works which had been left off were taken up again, all the old hands that had been disemployed would have the first chance of re-employment. This was a principle with which he perfectly agreed. But what did they find? That although thirty old hands were dismissed from the Railway Department, they were replaced by twenty new hands who were all young men. He did not complain of the dismissal of the men if it were necessary, but he thought that the same rule which applied to higher officials in the service should be applied to the working men. But in this case the old and true men were discharged, and new men, who no doubt were political supporters of the Minister for Works and his colleagues, were taken on in their place. This was another mode in which the Government wished to improve the condition of the country, though it was questionable whether it would add to the prosperity or welfare of the country to take the bread out of one man's mouth with the object of putting it into that of another. The men who were discharged were good sober, intelligent, and honest men, and, all things being equal, should have received the treatment which the hon. the Minister for Works had promised. A great deal had been said about other things in connection with the doings of the Ministry, and considerable reference had been made to the dismissal from office of Mr. Hamilton. He had in his possession a letter from that gentleman which, with the permission of the House, he would read, in order that the other side of the question might be given. This was the letter:—

"Brisbane, 8th July, 1880.

"Sir,—Several statements having been made in the Legislative Assembly evidently intended to damage me, and which if uncontradicted might, temporarily at least, have that effect, I beg to request that you will in the same place read this letter in reply to them.

"These statements I take from *Hansard*:—

"1. The Premier says: 'He consulted with Mr. Hamilton as to the form in which tenders for railway plant were invited and the business generally should be done.' The only remark I ever remember the Premier making was a casual one, on his first arrival in England, when he said he wanted 15,000 tons of rails if he could get the money. I replied there would be no difficulty in getting the money; but, before placing the order for the rails, I advised him to read two letters, signed "Iron," which had appeared in and had been noticed at length by the *Times*, and which gave a very reasonable account of the prospects of the iron market. A casual remark was made in reply, and I never heard of the subject in any form again till after the contract was settled.

"2. The Premier states that '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 by Mr. Ashwell and Mr. Hamilton.' I never heard a thing of this till the Premier stated it in his place in the House on Tuesday evening.

"3. The Premier also states: 'Personally it was of considerable moment to Mr. Hamilton to have the patronage of 2,000 to 3,000 tons of rails in his own hands;' and the hon. the Minister for Works improves on the insinuation by saying 'that I was in the habit of looking for presents,' and that 'within the last twelve months I asked for presents and commission.' I repel with scorn the base insinuation and baser statement, and challenge my detractor to the fullest inquiry. I never asked for or received a single sixpence in the way of present or commission, or in any other form, either in the service of the Government or in any other service in which I have been engaged.

"4. The Premier makes it appear, though he does not state the fact in precise terms, that he had a discussion with me on the subject of freight. No discussion of any kind ever took place between him and me on this subject.

"5. The Premier again states: '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.' No dispute between Mr. Macalister and myself ever arose except in connection with matters of a similar but less important kind to those now engaging the attention of the Assembly; and I wish to have an opportunity of showing that my actions were of a *bona fide* character, and justified by the circumstances of the case.

"6. It is stated that the word 'accepted' is written in my handwriting across Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co.'s name in the schedule of tenders for freight. I never so wrote it. I positively declined to do so, as it was simply throwing away many thousand pounds.

"7. I now refer to Mr. Thomason's letter—apparently a spontaneous one—in which he charges me with having made overtures, and to his having rejected them, about presents and commission. My personal knowledge of Mr. Thomason extends this far only:—Some two years or more ago he brought home an order for about 3,000 tons of steel rails. One of the conditions of that contract was that if the contract price exceeded the market price the difference should be divided equally between the Government and Messrs. Ibbotson Bros. and Co. The rails were made by the Fbhwaile Co., and, as was well known, at a price much under that named in the contract. During the negotiation to fix the profit Mr. Thomason did offer

to me a commission on the order he had already received if I would recommend the payment of the full price. I ordered him about his business, and never spoke to him again alone until last Christmas, when he came into my office, uninvited and unannounced, *once only*.

"Respecting Mr. Thomason's offer of 5,000 tons of steel rails at £8 10s. per ton, to which he refers in his letter, I never made a remark or was asked for an observation on the subject—in fact, I did not know the particulars of it.

"I am quite sure that if Messrs. Ibbotsons are questioned on the subject they will not endorse Mr. Thomason's letter. In any case I never heard a whisper of a complaint from them.

"I distinctly and emphatically deny ever having asked, or received, or made a proposal in any shape or form for a present, commission, or for a consideration of any kind which would imperil my independence in conducting the office: and surely there should be no difficulty in establishing the truth or otherwise of this. Almost the entire expenditure of the office passes through Mr. Ashwell's hands. All goods have for some time been purchased exclusively by him, and it seems strange that my condemnation is to be accomplished at the instance of a gentleman whom I have not seen for years, instead of the gentleman who should commit himself to the statements.

"Trusting you will read this letter to the House, and thanking you in anticipation,

"I am,

"Yours most obediently,

"THO. HAMILTON.

"The Hon. John Macfarlane, M.L.A.,
"Brisbane."

He had read this letter because he thought it was only fair to Mr. Hamilton, whom he had known for sixteen or seventeen years as a good citizen and an estimable member of society. He had known him long as a citizen of Ipswich, and had never heard anything but the highest estimate of his character. He would make no comments upon the discussion that had taken place regarding his conduct, nor would he form any opinion on the subject until the matter had been thoroughly investigated, as had been promised by the Premier. He could hardly imagine that any such charges could be true regarding persons so eminently respectable as Mr. Macalister or Mr. Hamilton. To revert again to the subjects mentioned in the Speech, he found that reference was made to two or three Bills which were passed during the last session. It was said that the Divisional Boards Bill was working in a very encouraging way. He did not, however, give full credence to this statement. No doubt it had been taken up by a number of districts, but he did not think that during next year, when the elections took place, the people would have the same disposition to place the same members on the Board. He believed there were a great number of complaints already. In one of the Ipswich districts he was given to understand that the whole of the receipts for the entire district would be taken up by collectors' rates and other expenses, so that the only money the district would have would be the bonus from the Government. The only fault he had to find with this Act was that it was too expensive; the expenses of working it were too great. They paid too much for the privilege of managing their own affairs, and half of the money was swamped by taxes. Had the land been taxed it would have been very much simpler, and there would have been much more money to spend on improvements. The clerical labour in the Lands Office would be quite sufficient to collect in all the moneys from the different parts of the colony, and there would have been a larger

amount of money to spend in each district. He hoped the Government would see it was their duty to improve this Act so as to make it work with more benefit to the districts. Reference had also been made to the Electoral Rolls Act. This Act was doing good work, but an improvement should be made. An attempt was made when the Bill was passing through to have a clause put in it to fix a place at which persons who chose to vote might do so. If this were done it would be a great improvement, and purity of election would be maintained. If persons were compelled to select the places at which they would vote it would not be safe. The Licensing Boards Act was also mentioned, and he believed that also was a great improvement on the previous system, but even in this there was a defect which the Colonial Secretary must have observed. If the Colonial Secretary had Licensing Boards in every district such scenes as that at Murphy's Creek would not take place. He did not blame anyone for this, but he hoped that the Act would be improved so that such scenes could not happen again. As to the new mail service, taking into consideration the present circumstances of the colony and their real requirements, he did not think they would derive any great benefit from it when it came into operation. They did not require immigrants at the present time, in his opinion, and the only service it would be to the colony would be an extra means of bringing their letters; but they must even then consider that they had at present another mail service that was speedier than the proposed one. In his opinion the present services were amply sufficient for the requirements of the colony. A good deal had been said regarding the carrying out of branch lines, and he thought that a vote would show that a majority on both sides of the House were anxious to see certain branch lines carried out. He hoped to see a line to deep water carried out within a very short time either to Bulimba or South Brisbane—whatever route might be chosen. There were many other subjects in the Speech deserving notice, but as he knew that several other members desired to speak he would not refer to them at present.

Mr. KATES said he had a few words to offer in reply to the Address. In the first paragraph it was said, in connection with the Divisional Boards Act, that it had been initiated with encouraging prospects. He was sure the hon. Colonial Secretary was willing and anxious to see it a success. He had always been an advocate of local Government, but in this colony he believed the population was too small and too thinly scattered for it. The leader of the Opposition was not wrong when he stated that there had not been more than half-a-dozen contested elections. The people seemed quite indifferent to the measure, and they were as much so now as they were in the beginning, for they did not like to see the tax-gatherer coming round, and the valuator going about taking the value of their houses, barns, and other improvements. They had many of them come from other countries to get away from the rate-collector, but here they found him again. Whenever the £500 granted by the Government was done, they would find in many instances that farther progress would be stopped; and as long as the Government gave two pounds for one for local expenditure things would go on, but when that stopped the measure would not work satisfactorily. The Colonial Secretary, in the course of the debate on the Bill last session, had said the Government would support the main roads.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I never said so.

Mr. KATES appealed to hon. members if the hon. gentleman had not done so. He remembered him saying so, and it was the general

opinion of the country that he had, and the sooner the Colonial Secretary took over the main roads the better. It was necessary that they should be sure what were main roads, for in his district there were six main roads, and if the Government took charge of them they might as well take charge of all the roads in the district. He hoped the Act would prove a success, but they would know more about it in another twelve months. With regard to the Electoral Rolls Act, he agreed with the member for Ipswich that it was a good measure, and, after some amendments, would answer well. The Licensing Boards Act had so far worked well, but the Colonial Secretary had made a mistake in ignoring the Mayor of Allora, who ought to have been on the Board for Warwick. As to the new mail service, he believed in a direct mail service between the colony and the old country, and did not wish that they should always be tied to the tail of Melbourne and Sydney. The Premier had made an advantageous contract for a mail service, they were told, but he had also been informed that it could have been obtained for half the money. If that were the case he should be very cautious about supporting it. The loan had been floated very successfully, it was true—it had been floated beyond his anticipations; but he was of opinion it would have been better not to have floated such a large loan at all, for what was the use of the money if it was to be expended on non-productive works? He had protested against the construction of the trunk lines, last year, and maintained that these costly railways had been the ruin of the colony and were drawing the lifeblood out of it. Previous Governments were, however, much to blame for the manner in which they forced on unproductive works quite out of proportion to the population of the colony. They had to force prosperity on the colony, but they must allow it to develop itself, and population to come in naturally. The Minister for Works had talked about the railways being paying, but he (Mr. Kates) did not think they were paying, and they would not pay so long as such high rates were charged for transmission from the inland districts to Brisbane of agricultural produce: bullock-teams would take the traffic cheaper. They were told in the Speech that it was proposed to form the lines in the interior by a system of land grants to a syndicate who would undertake their construction. Who the gentlemen were composing this syndicate he did not know, but he did not believe that wealthy men would spend money on railways in the interior of Queensland and take land in exchange. He did not think if the Colonial Secretary had two millions of money he would expend it in such a scheme. He should like to see the lines made, but did not believe they would be done in this way. If the arrangement was that this syndicate was to get a guarantee of 4 or 5 per cent. on their money, he should oppose the scheme. They were further told in the Speech that within the last half-year the land selections showed a considerable increase, and that the settlement of the colony was steadily progressing. They had come to a point of considerable importance, and must consider whether the recent grants, which were encouraging dummying, had given a stimulus to selection. The Colonial Secretary made a mistake in publicly stating that it was better to look over a little dummying and give the deeds than go to law. The remark would encourage dummying throughout the colony, and prove very mischievous. Nothing was said in the Speech about paying up the deficiency. How was it to be met? He hoped not by additional taxation through the Customs. The deficiency would have been much larger than it was had it not been that the Minister for Lands

came to the rescue of the Treasurer, and sold large portions of land at a low price. In spite of the violent measures of retrenchment adopted by the Government, the administration of affairs had been bad. They had dismissed a large number of working men, cut down the subsidies to agricultural societies, dismissed policemen, reduced the volunteers, and made a considerable reduction in the works estimates; yet they found that at the end of the year only £3,000 less had been spent than on the previous year. The only department that had kept faith with them was that of the Postmaster-General; all the others had been extravagant in their expenditure. And what about the means to wipe out this deficiency? Nothing was mentioned about that in the Speech. He suggested the re-assessment of runs, better leases, and a small tax on wool. He reminded the Government that they had forgotten the Exchange Land Act, and pointed to the flourishing condition of the land near Allora as a proof of the success of the system of dealing in the land that had been followed there. He repeated, that until the financial position of the colony was improved they should not enter on railway or other non-productive works. A great deal of time had been taken up during the last two nights in hearing allegations and statements connected with the petition of Mr. Hemmant, and he (Mr. Kates) would, respecting it, use the Latin quotation, the effect of which was—"Never condemn a man on suspicion: it is much better that a guilty man go free than that an innocent man should suffer." There were two or three points he should like to notice, as to which he should blame the Colonial Treasurer. First, they all looked upon him as a shrewd business man, and he believed the first financier in Queensland or in the colonies. He (Mr. Kates) did not see the reason why he did not advertise for tenders and give every iron firm in Great Britain a chance to participate in the profits. Instead of that the hon. gentleman invited the tenders, by circular, from about a dozen firms, which was a mistake. The second thing was, that when the hon. gentleman saw the excited state of the metal market, he should have said—"I shall not purchase a large quantity because, as a general rule, after a sudden rise comes a collapse, and I will only secure enough for immediate wants." He would also like to say a few words about Mr. Macalister, who stated in his letter that Mr. Hamilton had been constantly harassing and worrying him for the last eighteen months. It would have been much better if Mr. Macalister had discharged Mr. Hamilton when he first found he would not suit him. The Premier deserved great credit for the success of the "Strathleven" experiment, and he hoped it would be a success, because it would benefit everybody, especially farmers, selectors, and squatters. There were other Bills proposed to be brought before the House, most of which he would support, in particular the one relating to State forests and conservation of timber. These should have his hearty support. He could not agree with the Speech of the Acting-Governor, that part where he said that the time of prosperity was returning, and that there was every reason to believe the settlement of the country was progressing. He hoped it was, but where? Certainly not in the southern part of the colony. In conclusion, although he was a new member, he wished to give the Government an advice, which if acted upon, may be of benefit to the colony, and it was: firstly, a thorough retrenchment, not on paper, like last year, but genuine retrenchment; secondly, the immediate stoppage of all non-reproductive works; thirdly, the completion of works to which the colony was pledged out of the two-million loan, and without borrowing the third million, if it could be

avoided; fourthly, the balance of that two millions to be laid out on improvements of harbours and rivers; and, fifthly, no more borrowing, until our population had increased and our Treasurer could show us a substantial surplus instead of a deficiency.

The Hon. J. M. THOMPSON said that last year he supported the Government when a vote of want of confidence was proposed, not that they wanted it, but because he conceived they had done something for the district, in regard to branch lines, he represented, and more than had been done before. They had done more than promise, and he looked on what had been done as something towards performance. A whole recess had passed, and it did not appear to him they had got any nearer those branch lines. Last session he had gone into some little dissertation on the advantage of getting a railway to deep water, and he had put it as an additional ground why he wished the Government to stay in till that was carried out. But he found the Governor's Speech was quite silent on the subject. The speech of the Minister for Works informed them that the branch lines would not be gone on with while the proprietors of land on the line were asking so much for it. He (Mr. Thompson) could not say whether this was the case generally, but in the district he represented he knew of many people who were willing to give the land for nothing. But suppose people did ask a price for the land that was not reasonable, they had in the colony exceptional machinery for dealing with such cases, and by referring them to the official arbitrator the people and the Government would be sufficiently protected as to the value of the land. He was sorry to oppose old friends; he believed gentlemen on both sides of the House had the interests of the colony at heart; but, as had been said the previous evening, it was an admirable thing to have an independent party. He should take his stand on that position. It was well-known that the Colonial Secretary differed from his colleagues on the kanaka question and others, and that, in fact, it was a mixed Government formed of sections of both sides of the House. That would allow him to retain his seat on the Government side, and be an independent member. But that was not all. He represented an important district, which produced agricultural produce and minerals, and he found the attitude of the Government to his constituency was anything but friendly. They had attempted to dictate to them in a manner that was insulting, and the works which had been carried on at Ipswich were being gradually shifted to Toowoomba. Then, when they tried to get a loan, they were met by a series of stipulations that were most annoying. He referred to the loan of £3,000 for the waterworks. After considerable annoyance and delay the Corporation were told that they should receive it on consenting to be tenants of the Waterworks from month to month. The agreement stipulated that the Corporation should not only be tenants of the works from month to month, but subject themselves to special legislation. The clause in the agreement was—"That, subject to the special legislation aforesaid, the said Municipal Council shall, at the expiration of one month's notice to that effect, deliver over all the said waterworks, with the appurtenances, to the Colonial Treasurer of the said colony." The Mayor and municipality declined to enter into any such disastrous bargain. The Government, in some way he could not understand, had handed over the waterworks without any understanding or bargain whatever; that was their own fault. The Government had no right to ask the Mayor and Corporation to enter into any such a bargain. They had charged the Corporation with repudiating their bargain, and

on that ground declined to lend them the £3,000. But he was glad to say the municipality did not need the £3,000. The waterworks were paying, and the alarm of the Government was quite unnecessary. They had no intention or desire to repudiate. What was more, the attempt to put on the screw by stopping the £3,000 came to signal grief. They had been able to carry on till now without it, and they would be able to carry on longer. The expenditure of it would have been most advantageous to his constituents, but not so much so as to make them sign a monthly agreement for the waterworks. These would be sufficient reasons why his constituents did not look with a favourable eye upon the Government, and he felt bound to reflect their opinions to a certain extent, and the Government must not expect from him the support that would keep them in office, unless his constituents took a different ground with him. He felt bound to pay more than ordinary attention to the feelings of his constituents. They might not have treated him very well, but that had nothing to do with it; as to his sitting on that side, it did not follow that he would leave unless something really disagreeable happened. He knew them all, and he could assure them that he would not be a traitor in the camp, or pick up their little secrets. It would have been well if they had devoted themselves to the business which the motion before them indicated, namely, the Governor's Speech; but the whole matter had been painfully overshadowed by a still more important matter. With respect to the Divisional Boards Bill, he had always been in favour of some such measure, and had been one of the first to advocate it at a meeting of his constituents held at the Rosewood Scrub some time ago. He was delighted to find that it was begun, but it must be admitted that the system required maturing. Perfection was not to be expected at first. Everything must be born and undergo the process of development, and this would no doubt develop into a proper system of local Government, which was what they wanted. This House did not want to be fighting about town clocks and so on, and such things only showed what legislatures were called upon to do under the old system. With regard to the mail service, he was not in a condition to go into the matter. He did not mean that they were not going to have one at all, but they did not know what the bargain was and what it implied, and it was therefore useless to discuss it at present. It was clear that they were racing with other colonies in the matter of shipping, and it would be to their advantage to secure a certain amount of commerce with the Old World. To do that the Government must assist them to some extent. In a new colony, matters would not right themselves without being fostered. In regard to the transcontinental railway in exchange for generous land grants, he believed in that thoroughly, if they could obtain it in any form not implying getting into debt or increasing the taxation of the colony. He held this several years ago, and when he was in the Palmer Government initiated, as part of their policy, that they considered land grants to be the proper system on which to construct railways; and, if they had begun carrying it out then, they would not have had financial difficulties of the magnitude it was sometimes predicted they would have now. The lateness of the meeting of Parliament need not distress them very much. It was pretty generally admitted that the Premier's visit to England had done incalculable good to the colony, not only as regarded the floating of the loan, but in introducing to the capitalists of the mother country the various means by which they could profitably invest their money, which he believed would come much in excess of

what they had previously had. If only they succeeded in getting the meat they were able to send away forwarded to the old country for the support of the starving populations, the lateness of the meeting of Parliament would be of very little consequence. Touching the matter of the impeachment of the Premier—for that was what it was in fact, though it had not taken that shape—and the duty of the leader of the Opposition, he must say that the latter gentleman was supported by authorities. Todd said—

“It is the function of the Opposition to state the case against the Administration; to say everything that may be plausibly said against every measure, act, or word of every member of the Ministry; in short, to constitute a standing censorship of the Government, subjecting all its acts and measures to a close and jealous scrutiny. But while Parliamentary Opposition affords a valuable security against the misconduct of a Government, it is liable to abuse, and may easily be perverted to factious and unpatriotic uses.”

He did not, therefore, charge the hon. gentleman with any undue action in the matter. It was his duty to mention it, and, so far, he must have every credit from both sides, enemies as well as friends. He must either do that or resign, for he was the mouthpiece of those who sat behind him, and it was absolutely necessary for him in his position to bring this forward in some shape. When a man had a burning topic to bring forward it was perhaps natural that he should not be very discreet in the language he used. Where the hon. gentleman went wrong was in not laying a foundation of facts before he began to be oratorical and denunciatory. In reading the hon. gentleman's speech, the whole matter was so mixed up between argument, facts, and denunciations of imaginary wrongs, that he hardly knew where to pick out the charge from the mass of language. This, at the outset of a session, might have a damping effect on either side, and it was so far unfair that the accused could not be prepared with a reply. It would have been far better if the whole matter had been merely mentioned and in some way investigated, before any denunciation took place. Giving the matter such attention as he had been able to pay, and not being much of a commercial man, he imagined that the chief question to be attended to was that of the rails. For more than one reason the freight might be left out of consideration. If the hon. Premier was connected with Government contracts, the way to attack him was to attack his seat under the Constitution Act. Not only so, but he saw very well that that part of the charge would come to nothing. It was perfectly plain that Messrs. McLlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. were merely shipbrokers making contracts all over the world, and it might or might not be that they employed ships here or there whose owners knew nothing whatever about it. He was not at all clear about the rails. The Premier could not have had any profit out of the matter. It was never charged that he had dirtied his fingers in this affair; but there was the fact that £60,000 had been lost which might have been saved, and that somebody by some strange provision had so laid his plans as to be able to make that sum out of the Government as clear profit. It was more than a third of the price that had been tendered for. That man must have been somebody in the Agent-General's office, and his position was a serious one. If a man who had exceptional opportunities of information from his employment used them for his and his partner's benefit against his employers it was fraud. Whether it could be brought home in such a manner as to get the money he could not say, but he was sure the exposure should take place. They

might signally fail in their legal proceedings, but they would be satisfied that it had been done and that the evil was discovered. Here he did not altogether acquit the Premier from blame. He had said that he was not a detective or a policeman, and did not choose to do that work. He (Mr. Thompson) was aware of that, and it would not have been required of him; but there were people whose business it was to do these things. There were policemen and detectives, and why was not the usual machinery put in force to find it out. If that money had not been paid, they ought not to pay it. Let the whole thing be brought into the courts and ripped up, and let them find out whether there was anything behind it or not. It was quite possible that the rails were ordered on the strength of some information received from the colony privately. At present he did not know who Mr. Ashwell was, nor did he wish to. He understood that gentleman had resigned;—no wonder. What was the conclusion any man would come to as to who had the lion's share of this money? If there were any other reasons for his resignation, why were they not told? He had no sympathy with the sources from which this rumpus had arisen, and would say nothing about Mr. Hamilton, except that he knew that he was a vindictive man—he knew that thoroughly. The facts as laid before them disclosed a case for inquiry as to the money, and he believed the Government were as anxious as anyone that the whole matter should be looked into, and that they would render every assistance, and, if the transaction was a fraudulent one, expose and punish the perpetrators. Before he sat down he wished to urge upon the Government the necessity of connecting the Southern and Western Railway with deep water. A meeting took place lately at Ipswich which was attended by the whole of the wealth, intelligence, and respectability of the town, in which the persons present were unanimously of opinion that it would be of enormous advantage if such a connection were made. It was perfectly well known that they had large deposits of coal in West Moreton, and some of it was shipping coal, and it would not be going outside the province of Government to assist such an industry in an infant state. Even at Newcastle the Government of New South Wales afforded every assistance, and did not hesitate to spend money in the matter. This was not of importance to this district alone, but it concerned the whole of the interior. He was afraid he would have to give the branch lines up, because the Minister for Works last night gave them no encouragement, and they did not appear in the Speech. He had no apprehension as to the future prosperity of the colony. He remembered in 1866 an old gentleman of his acquaintance, who witnessed the distress then prevalent, spoke to this effect—“My dear sir, the country is the same as it was—nothing has gone away. You have the same producing power as ever, and must come right shortly.” He fully believed that there would soon commence a career of prosperity.

The HON. G. THORN wished, at the outset, to deny that he had ever said that the Premier was a contractor for ships. He was not likely to have made such a statement. He should greatly have preferred to remain silent, but he could not, because he knew a little in connection with the charge brought forward, and might be able to enlighten the House and the people as to what was going on in England with regard to Mr. Hamilton. He had known that gentleman a considerable time, and had found him to be as straightforward and honest a man as any in the colony, and that was saying a good deal. He had yet to learn that his opinion was wrong. He denied that he had been taken out of the gutter, for he was fitted for a much higher

position than he had held in England, and it was quite a question whether he could not have got a situation under the Imperial Government at four times the salary he received from the Queensland Government. He was quite sure, when the inquiry took place, that Mr. Hamilton would come out of it with as clean hands as when he went into office. When he (Mr. Thorn) went home he found a coolness between Mr. Macalister and Mr. Hamilton. The latter wanted to resign because he said there was so much "tiddly-winking" going on in the office by the firm of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co., who were more masters of the office than he was. He (Mr. Thorn) repeated the statement to several members when he arrived from England, and before he was a member of the House, and he little thought things would have gone on so crooked as they had since. With regard to the shipping question, there was no doubt in his mind that the two gentlemen at the head of the Government had forfeited their seats, and it was their duty now to go to the country. They would have no great difficulty in getting themselves returned. They had only to send for two or three of their agents in the North and work the business as they had done before. He could affirm that out of every two votes polled at a recent election one was bad, and the same wonderful resurrection that took place on the field of Inkerman would, no doubt, take place again. He would suggest the propriety of doing that at once, in order to get out of the difficulty. There was no doubt that the colony had lost this £60,000. He heard about it some time ago. He had it wired to him, not by anyone in the colony, but by gentlemen of position in the old country. He had also received letters on the subject from gentlemen there, stating, in substance, that there was a ring in London, and that the colony was being diddled out of this amount. They also implicated the Premier in the transaction. That was the opinion in London—in the clubs, Conservative as well as Liberal—it was the talk morning, noon, and night; and for the credit of the colony he was anxious that the Premier should clear himself of these allegations. It was a very serious matter indeed. And who was this Mr. Ashwell? He would tell the House before he sat down, and instead of hon. members opposite laughing, he believed some of them would hold their heads down. The hon. member for Enoggera said the other night that Mr. Ashwell was connected with the Premier, and there was no doubt he was a relation of the Premier. He believed he was appointed by Mr. McIlwraith when he was a member of the Macalister Government; or, if he was not appointed, he was recommended by him. He had been drawing a big salary—something like £3,000 or £4,000 a year; and when he (Mr. Thorn) became Minister for Works, one of the first acts he did was to bring before the Cabinet the question of the enormous salary drawn by Mr. Ashwell; and he reduced his commission to about the same as the salary of the Agent-General—£1,000 or £800 a year. In fact, at the present time a great many clerks in the London office were connected by marriage or in some other way with the Premier or Mr. Ashwell. He might also state, that officers were dismissed from that office to make way for these men since the present Government came into office. They were dismissed on the score of economy—so he was informed by letters from England. He could mention the name of one officer who was treated in this way—Mr. Clare, secretary to the Paris Exhibition Commission. That gentleman, who had been for a long time supporting his aged mother, and could speak four or five languages and was a valuable officer, wrote him stating that he was dismissed

to make room for friends of the Premier or the Premier's brother. Why, when vacancies occurred, was not this gentleman taken on again instead of sending people home from here? When officers were dispensed with through no fault of their own they should have meted out to them the same justice that was extended to the officers recently dismissed from the Roads Department, and get the first vacancy that arose; and the same should be done with the men dismissed from the railway works. Mr. Clare did the work of Executive Commissioner at the Paris Exhibition for Queensland, and when it was finished he was dismissed. He was drawing a very small salary, and he was capable of filling any position in the Department, and the Premier knew it too. And why was he not put in the first vacancy? And why was Mr. Dick sent to England? He was informed and believed that Mr. Dick was also a connection of the Premier. He knew Mr. Dick was a very estimable gentleman, and he was informed that he was connected by marriage, or in some other way, with the Premier or the Premier's brother, or with Mr. Ashwell. Then there was Mr. G. S. Campbell. He was in the office of the Agent-General and was a brother-in-law of Mr. Andrew McIlwraith and Mr. Ashwell.

The PREMIER: I never heard of him in my life.

Mr. THORN said he was told that Mr. Campbell was brother-in-law of Mr. Andrew McIlwraith. Could the Premier deny that?

The PREMIER: I do not know whether Mr. Campbell is in the office or not.

Mr. THORN said he was in the office now, and he was brother-in-law of Mr. Andrew McIlwraith, and connected, indirectly, with the Premier. He would also ask the Premier did he know who were the iron inspectors under Mr. Ashwell? Would he say they were not relatives of his, or of Mr. Ashwell, or of his brother? Their names were Mr. Herbert and Mr. Scopes, and they were also connected with the McIlwraith family.

The PREMIER said the hon. member was making the most outrageous statements ever he had heard in his life. He (the Premier) did not know a single gentleman he had named, or whether they were in the London office. The names the hon. member had just mentioned he had never heard in his life. And as to the dismissals, he had nothing whatever to do with them. They were made by his hon. colleague when immigration was stopped.

Mr. THORN said all the men he had mentioned were related or connected by marriage with the Premier or his brother, or Mr. Ashwell. There was a link between them, which could be proved. Whether the Premier knew it was another matter; but still it looked very suspicious that the whole of the London office, from top to bottom, should be connected with the McIlwraith family. He could prove it, and he thought the Premier must know something about it. He said it looked suspicious. There they were there in the London office, and he held that they had no right to be there. The office of the Agent-General for Queensland ought to be put upon the same footing as the other colonial offices, and have a board of advice. He had always advocated a board of advice, but he remembered that when he advocated it he was opposed strongly by the present Premier. Perhaps at that time he had his eye to business. Mr. Palmer wanted a board of control, but he (Mr. Thorn) thought that was going too far, and advocated a board of advice; but Mr. McIlwraith did not want any board of advice—that did not suit him, and he so influenced his (Mr. Thorn's) supporters that the result was that no board

was appointed. With regard to steel rails he could say that the colony had been swindled. He did not say that the Premier had pocketed the money, but, taken in connection with Mr. Ashwell, who had resigned, it had a very funny look, to say the least of it. That was the opinion formed by people outside the House. He only hoped the Premier would clear himself of these charges, and the sooner the House went earnestly to work to reorganise the office of the Agent-General the better. He thought the whole of the relations of this clan McIlwraith should be wiped out of the office. He had given their names, and if they were not connected with the Premier they were connected with his brother or Mr. Ashwell, and the sooner the office was cleared out and they had new men in the better it would be for the colony. The colony would not have confidence in the Government unless they set to work at once to clear out these objectionable people. With regard to the Premier's trip to England, he objected altogether to such a trip being made at the public expense. Did the hon. gentleman go on a wedding tour?

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: You went once.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: He was not stopped on the gangway in Sydney, at any rate!

MR. THORN said that the Premier stated that he was going to England to discover how to make cheap railways. Did he go for that purpose or to make arrangements with regard to meat-curing, or to float companies? All these allegations he (Mr. Thorn) had heard from London. What took the Premier down to Colorado and Texas? He evidently went there in connection with his own private interests. Were there any cheap railways to be constructed there? Did he not go to those places to find out how meat-curing was being carried on? That was his mission there. In London he (Mr. Thorn) heard, also, that one object of his visit was to float companies, and one big pastoral company failed at first. He had received letters and telegrams on the subject, and it appeared that the Jimbour Company failed because they would not allow the brokers' commission, and they ran it down to the very lowest on the Exchange and other places among capitalists in England because the brokers could not get their share of spoil. The Premier wanted the whole of the plunder, or nearly all of it. He maintained it was a most dangerous precedent for the Premier to go out of the colony in this way, and he deprecated very much the House being kept from meeting until after the end of the financial year. The Premier should certainly have gone at his own expense, and then it would have been all right. He gave the hon. gentleman credit for his ability as a meat-curer, but at the same time he should not saddle the country with the cost of it. By-and-by they would have particulars of the cost and expenses of the trip laid on the table, and he would then be able to say more on this point. The Premier went home ostensibly to float the loan, but really in his own interests. When he (Mr. Thorn) went to Europe he was Commissioner at the Paris Exhibition, and did not benefit in any way from holding that office. And, after all, what was there in floating the loan successfully? At the time the loan was floated any ass could have floated it as well as the Premier had, and there was no excuse for him to remain in England so long. He was wanted in the colony, and his presence would have been a gain to the Works Department, which had been greatly mismanaged during his absence. When he told the Premier, in connection with the Works Department, that he could not get a few miles beyond Ipswich and back in the same day

he thought he had said a great deal. During the recess the receipts for carriage and passengers had been lower than he had ever known them, and the arrangement for the running of trains was so inconvenient that many people preferred to travel in their own private traps between Ipswich and Brisbane—in fact, they were no better off with a railway worked in that manner than people were in the days of coaches. But there was some excuse for the Minister for Works, as he had not seen the world, and did not know how to manage a department on business principles. He did not wonder at the decrease in the receipts after seeing fourteen wool trains going to Toowoomba. Such mismanagement would not have occurred had the Premier been in the colony. One of the biggest swindles—in fact, the swindle of the day—was the mail contract, or the syndicate in connection with the mail contract. He was astonished that in the nineteenth century, a time of fast steamers, a nine-knot service should go down the throats of hon. members. The present service *via* Torres Straits was an eleven-and-a-half-knot service from London to Colombo, and eleven knots as far as the Straits Settlements. The Government must think the colony and public mad to ask them to agree to a resolution in favour of a service in which it would take sixty or seventy days to reach England. He had heard privately that there was an arrangement by which the company would get £55,000 a-year for ten years—over half a million of money; and he would like to know whether that money was going into the hands of "rings," or what was to become of it? And what were they to get for it? He had never opposed anything so sturdily as he intended to oppose this proposal of the Premier. The P. and O. Company were running steamers at twelve knots an hour, and he had travelled by steamers at the rate of eighteen or nineteen knots; and why should they subsidise a nine-knot service at the rate of £55,000 a-year? The time for subsidies had gone by: they did not give subsidies in America, and he did not see why they should do so here. The unsubsidised steamers of the Orient line travelled over 300 miles a day, and were paying a better dividend than some of the subsidised companies. This proposal to give some ring or syndicate £55,000 a year for a service between Singapore and Brisbane—for that was what it amounted to—was monstrous. The Torres Straits boats would still go on running without the subsidy, and he would be bound they would run faster. This service was altogether unnecessary. There were already five services, by each of which letters reached England in from 42 to 45 days. There was a fortnightly service by the P. and O. Company, a fortnightly service by the Orient line, and a monthly service by the San Francisco line. The system was not up to the present age, and, if he had to stop in the House till Christmas, he would be no party to see the colony robbed of £55,000 a year, with a falling revenue and a deficit of nearly a quarter of a million. The people would be mad to put up with such a monstrous swindle. The boats themselves were too small for the trade—vessels of 1,000 tons like the "Normanby" and others now running. They could not take preserved meat; indeed, it would be as much as they could do to carry coal. As to bringing out immigrants by that line, hon. members must remember that for the greater part of the voyage, and until within thirty-six hours of Brisbane, they were within the tropics, whereas either of the other routes cut the Equator at right angles. To bring out immigrants by that route would be simply to decimate them, and there might be times when half the number on board would be lost. Since the present Government came into office the receipts in nearly every department of the ser-

vice had fallen off. In the other colonies there had been no falling off in the customs, while here the decline had been most marked. This colony had been losing its population, and it had lost it by the maladministration of the Government. Since his return from England from 15,000 to 20,000 people, including women and children, had left the colony. Whether that was part of the Government policy or not he could not say, but it looked very suspicious, and very much like other things which had been charged against McIlwraith and Co. He would be no party to saddling the country with such a piece of wasteful expenditure. It was useless either for a meat service, an immigrant service, or a postal service, and he trusted the House would not on any account commit itself to such a job. The northern ports were already supplied with mail accommodation. When he was in office he never favoured one place more than another, and that was more than he could say of the present Government. The Government had failed even in the matter of retrenchment, for where certain districts were concerned they were the most extravagant Government that ever sat on the Treasury benches, while with regard to other districts they were parsimonious and niggardly in the extreme. He was astonished at the simplicity of some of the hon. members who supported the Government; they seemed to be mere children—automatons worked by the hand of the Premier. The branch lines were kept before them to smell at, and when they had served their purpose they were put out of sight. He did not believe the Government were sincere in their desire to make branch lines; if they were they would not leave it till the end of the session. If some of their supporters—especially those for West Moreton, of whom they had four out of seven—did their duty now, they could force the Government to make them. With regard to the trunk lines, with all due deference to this side of the House, he was still in favour of them. He believed in the extension of trunk lines into the interior—it was the Thorn railway policy. He was not ashamed of any of these railways, not even of the Bundaberg line, and that was the only one which he did not take credit for. The present Premier was the means of getting that line inserted, and no doubt it would at some day become profitable. When it was mooted copper was bringing in £100 a ton, and when that state of things returned it would be one of the best paying lines in the colony. If the Maryborough and Gympie line were brought on to Brisbane it would pay handsomely, and he hoped to see those towns connected before very long. Touching the trunk lines, it was strange that tenders had been accepted for the Northern and Central lines and not for the Southern. Were the Government going to ignore the southern part of the colony altogether? The hon. member for Maranoa told him that a telegram had been sent to Roma saying that it was not intended to carry on that line any further. Did the Premier intend to adhere to that decision?

Mr. LALOR: I beg the hon. member's pardon: I did not say anything of the kind. What I said was that a telegram had been received saying that no tender had been accepted.

Mr. THORN said that came to nearly the same thing—in fact, it was the same in substance. He wanted to know why the tenders had not been accepted. Did the Premier want the trade of the colony to go from the South to the North? What were the constituents of the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Palmer) thinking about when they saw the glory departing from Brisbane and going to the other ports

in the North? The money for the southern line was voted, and the plans approved, and it ought to be gone on with the same as the others. All the lines would be payable some day, and they would pay now if there was a proper Minister of Works. In that case they would pay, not only working expenses, but interest on the cost of construction. He had been pleased to note that the Government had passed a minute that the men dismissed from the Roads Department should be taken on again at the first vacancy. Why was not that plan followed with regard to the dismissals at Ipswich? Instead of that, other men had been put on in their places. Those men ought never to have been dismissed, but, on the other hand, their numbers ought to have been considerably increased. That brought him to the question of protection, and he might inform the House that he was a very strong protectionist, and had always been, although the present was not the time to enter into that subject. At any rate, he believed that before long—perhaps in the course of the next ten years—Great Britain would become a protectionist country. About fifteen or sixteen years ago he assisted in forming a protectionist tariff, which, however, was altered when the Palmer Administration came into power; and undoubtedly that tariff considerably assisted towards settling the large agricultural districts of East and West Moreton. He believed the time would very soon arrive when the colonies would adopt a protective policy. When he was in the manufacturing districts of England he had seen machines at a standstill, whilst on the Continent the mills were working day and night. It was no wonder that there were so many thousand starving mechanics in Great Britain—men who would go on starving until there was a change in the policy of that country. There was one matter in regard to the Divisional Boards to which he would draw attention, and hon. members would remember that he had always opposed those Boards, as he did not consider the colony was ripe for them. In his own district of West Moreton there were eight subdivisions which would cost, for valuers and clerks, £4,000 a year, whilst up to the present time the whole district was worked by one overseer and one clerk. It would thus be far more economical if those eight subdivisions were grouped together, and if the Government brought in a Bill to remedy such a state of things it would receive his support: at the same time, he was altogether opposed to the system of Divisional Boards. With regard to the transcontinental railway, he could not agree with the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas), as he was opposed to land grants and to syndicates, being of opinion that if there were any profits to be made the colony should have the benefit of them. He was, however, in favour of railway extension, and they might just as well attempt to stop the sun as to stop that. He would say one word more in regard to the Agent-General's office before sitting down. He had already made serious charges against that office, and had given the names of the persons employed in it, and he would now repeat that the sooner the whole office was cleared out the better it would be for the country. Almost the first words spoken to him by Mr. Hamilton, when visiting England, were, "McIlwraith and Co. are more masters in that office than I am." If that was the case at that time, when the Douglas Administration was in power, what control must they exercise now that Mr. McIlwraith was Premier? A great many of the employes in that office were connections of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co., and of the Premier or his brother, by marriage or blood.

Mr. FRASER said that the hon. member who had just sat down was always worth listening to

in that House. Some of the hon. member's remarks reminded him of an anecdote told of a benighted wanderer on Ben Nevis, who, on coming to the hut of a shepherd, inquired if there were any Christians there, and the reply he received was "No, we are all Camerons here." He (Mr. Fraser) thought the same remark might be applied to the Queensland Agency in London, that they were all McIlwraiths in that office—at least, judging from the hon. member's representations. He had, however, no intention to follow that line of argument, and indeed he would not have addressed the House had it not been for the somewhat remarkable speech of his hon. colleague (Mr. Kingsford) on the previous evening. He quite agreed with what had been said by the hon. member for Ipswich (Mr. Thompson), that, although they were not returned to that House as delegates, they were still expected to be a reflex of the opinions of those who returned them; and although he held the present Government in as high estimation as his hon. colleague did, he should be sorry to think that it should go forth to the colony that the statements of his colleague were a reflex of the opinions of the people of South Brisbane. His colleague had referred to both the policy of the Government from the past and the programme for the future, as put forward in the Speech. So far as the past was concerned, the policy of the Government had been one of inactivity, and he was at a loss to see where they had made any effort to retrieve the country from its depressed state. In the Speech it was admitted that the country was in a depressed state. That there were indications of improvement he (Mr. Fraser) would not deny, but where they were he failed to see. Looking at the Bills promised by the Government, there were certainly some that might be serviceable; but he maintained that, so far as promoting the prosperity of the country was concerned, it would matter very little whether one or all of them became law. With respect to the matter which had occupied such a large share of attention during the present debate from hon. members and, no doubt, from the country, all he could say was that those rumours, affecting the character of the Government and the Premier, had been circulated in the colony for a very considerable time; and therefore he maintained that the leader of the Opposition was justified, not only in the interests of the colony in bringing them forward at the very earliest opportunity, but also in justice to the Premier. He was quite sure that there was not a member in that House who was more anxious to see the whole matter sifted to the bottom than the Premier himself, and he (Mr. Fraser), for one, could never entertain the idea that the hon. gentleman was a participator in any way in, or derived any benefit from, the malversations which had been made. Only that very day, when walking in the town, he was met by a gentleman from the country—who had not had an opportunity of knowing what had taken place in the House—who said "Has not McIlwraith been feathering his nest while in England?" That was the sort of thing that was circulated in the colony, and therefore he said that, in the interest of the Premier himself, the sooner those things were cleared up the better. As to the aspersions thrown on the character of Mr. Hamilton, admitting that he was a disgraced and dismissed officer, and that none of these things had otherwise come to light, did not in the slightest degree do away with the necessity of having the whole thing investigated. Before glancing at His Excellency's Speech, he might be permitted to say that there seemed to be a growing symptom of independence amongst the members of the House. Of course, it was a fine thing to be independent, but he must avow himself as a party man, and he was justified

upon the very highest authority in believing that in order to carry on good constitutional government successfully there must be distinct parties. He could be a party man without being a partisan. He could hold himself as free and independent, and as ready to support any measure which he considered conducive to the best interests of the country, as any independent member; and during his career in the House he had never hesitated to do so. A good deal had been said with respect to the Divisional Boards Act. He had always approved of the principle which underlay this measure; but he heard complaints from those who were immediately interested and engaged in connection with it, and it was very desirable that these complaints should be made known and a remedy applied. One of the main complaints was as to the mode of assessment, and especially as to the tax that was imposed upon improvements. That was a radical defect in the Act, and no amendment which would allow it to remain would give satisfaction to the country, and the defect would always be a bar to the successful working of the system. The next matter to which he should like to allude was the proposal to construct, in future, their main trunk lines by land grants. He had always had an idea that this would be to the advantage of the country, and he was persuaded that it would be if it was carried out in such a manner as to guard against reckless speculation, similar to what had taken place in America a few years ago in connection with the same system. At the same time, he did not see that the time had arrived that the country required an extension of the trunk lines, and he believed, notwithstanding what had been said to the contrary, that the extension of the trunk lines was a great mistake. That they would not pay required no argument—it was self evident; and they knew that in countries with larger populations and larger developed resources than this, main lines did not pay for a very considerable time. America had been adduced as a pattern for them, but it must be admitted that there was not the slightest analogy between the circumstances of the two countries. In the case of America they had a country largely peopled, and main trunk lines extended from one centre of population to the other. In Queensland, on the other hand, they extended their trunk lines into a wilderness. And if they took the experience of the old countries they would find, as was well-known, that just in proportion as the trunk lines receded from the centres of population the receipts diminished, evidently showing that population was one of the essential conditions to make a railway pay. He did not complain so much of what was stated in the Speech as of what was omitted. Branch railways, land laws, and immigration, which he considered the principal factors in the colony's future prosperity, were entirely omitted from the Speech. With respect to branch lines, it seemed to him that the excuse made by the Minister for Works for ignoring them was untenable. It was immaterial what landowners might demand for their property, as the Minister for Works had the matter practically in his hands; he could compel the owners to give up the land at a certain fair price, and consequently his excuse was untenable. Besides, there was this to be said—that the branch lines would traverse districts which were settled and had resources which were being developed, and he was persuaded that in a very short time such lines would pay both interest and working expenses. More especially would he allude to the branch line which had been so often urged upon the attention of the present and former Government—namely, the line to connect the Southern and Western Railway with deep water. The connection should be in such a locality

as would concentrate the shipping as much as possible, and save expense; and the result would be that the coal trade, an important industry, which was now languishing, but which could support a large population, would be rapidly increased. It had been said that Queensland had no coal fit for an export trade; but it had been demonstrated that this was a fallacy, and that they had coal in every respect suited, not only for an export trade, but almost every purpose for which coal was used. Then, again, supposing they got the new Torres Straits service, and made Moreton Bay the terminus, how were they to supply the ships with coal? Under the present system we should require one of those large ships to remain something like a month to get coal. Next he came to their land laws, which were in a most unsatisfactory state. Any Government sincerely desirous and anxious of seeing population settled upon the lands of the colony would take the very earliest opportunity of reforming those laws: and here he would express his very great surprise at the course pursued by the Minister for Lands. He was prepared to give him full credit for the promptness with which he attended to matters brought under his notice; but when he remembered that on every conceivable occasion formerly on which the hon. gentleman got up to speak he scarcely ever sat down without denouncing the system of his predecessor in connection with the sale of land by auction, and when he observed that the hon. gentleman himself had pursued the same course to even a greater extent than his predecessor, he could not help expressing his astonishment, and, as the hon. gentleman had not yet spoken, he would hope that he would give a satisfactory explanation for his action. They had heard that a considerable quantity of land had been taken up in the North for sugar cultivation, but beyond the land at Allora he believed that, so far as other agricultural pursuits were concerned, very little land indeed had been selected—in fact, there had not been the opportunity to people to do so; and he had been told lately that certain lands which people were expecting to be thrown open were suddenly submitted to auction and described in such a way that no one knew their situation.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Where?

Mr. FRASER said he had been told that the lands were at Mount Brisbane, and that before they were submitted to auction a number of intending selectors were wanting to see them thrown open.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not one.

Mr. FRASER said one of the most important questions affecting the prosperity of the country was that of immigration. No country could be great or prosperous without population, and of the right kind. They had had this laid down by some of the gentlemen now occupying the Treasury benches, and more particularly by the Minister for Works. He remembered the glowing picture that the hon. gentleman drew when the contingent motion for a three-million loan was brought forward, and that he pointed out that by borrowing and carrying on a vigorous system of public works and of immigration they should, in the course of a short time, notwithstanding the borrowing of so large a sum and the increasing of the annual charge for interest, be less per head in debt than they were three years ago. The money was already borrowed, and works were being carried on; but where was the immigration? The first step taken by the present Government was to stop immigration, and one of the most useful sort—namely, the German. He was much surprised that the mover of the Address did not in his speech allude to the stoppage of the immigration to this colony of his own countrymen, who made some of the

most useful settlers that could be introduced. He knew that there were amongst them those who said they had sufficient population here already—in fact, he believed there were some who thought we had too many. He read a speech delivered in Maryborough not long ago depicting the deplorable condition of our agriculturists—that the price they got for produce was not sufficient to keep body and soul together, yet body and soul was kept together; and he ventured to say that, notwithstanding the low price of produce, take them as a whole they were at the present time the most comfortable and most independent section of the community. But apart from that, how could it be said that we had sufficient population, or that there was no scope for agricultural industry, when we were actually sending out of the country at the present time something like £250,000 or £300,000 every year for breadstuffs and other agricultural produce, every ounce of which could be produced in the colony? He maintained that there was ample scope, and that this country would never be thoroughly prosperous until they had these industries more fully and more satisfactorily developed. Although there was no allusion to these questions—either branch railways or the land laws, or immigration, in His Excellency's Speech—he hoped that the Government would show that they were sincerely anxious to promote the best interests of the colony, and that they would deal fairly and satisfactorily with those questions before the end of the session. If they looked at the members of the Government it must be admitted that they comprised some of the ablest men in that House, or in the colony. It must be admitted that they had the capacity if they had the will, and if they showed the will to meet the requirements of the country in the direction he had indicated—and he did not think any member would dispute the soundness of the views he had enunciated—they could depend upon receiving the cordial and hearty support of the members of that House, without distinction of party.

Mr. SIMPSON said they had had two or three quotations or mottoes to-night, and he thought the motto that ought to be put over the Agent-General's office in London—if all said was true—should be

“So say our sisters and our cousins and our aunts.”

It seemed to him, if they were to believe the hon. member for Northern Downs, that the whole of the clerks in that office were of the McIlwraith family. Some ridicule had been made on the other side of the House because the Premier could not carry some shorthand notes, as they were too voluminous; but he was inclined to think, from what the hon. member for Northern Downs said to-night, that the telegrams he had received from England must be so voluminous that they would fill a ship. He said this matter was the common talk of all the London clubs at all hours—morning, noon, and night—and he presumed the hon. gentleman got that information by telegram. He thought it would be much more honest and consistent on the part of that hon. member, instead of giving them mere rumours, to give them some of the letters and telegrams he spoke of. He considered that one honest telegram or letter produced was worth a great many bushels of such talk as they had heard. At this time of night he should not say nearly so much as he had at one time intended, and he hoped that this debate would close to-night. He might say that the present Government could count upon his support so long as they did what was right. He did not proclaim himself a party man; but so long as he thought their measures were the best that they were likely to get, and that they were the best

men to carry them out, they should have his support. He had seen no reason to alter his opinion in that respect, and as far as the discussion had gone he still saw no reason to do so. He thought the Speech should have been much more considered than it had been, and that the other matters introduced into the debate should have been left over until the proper time. He would not go over the various clauses of the Speech. He saw nothing to object to in it, and hoped that the omissions, of which there were several, were simply matters that were waiting to be brought up at their proper time. He would not sit down without saying a few words about the petition laid upon the table by the hon. the leader of the Opposition. He certainly thought that that petition was a disgrace to the gentleman who sent it out. He professed to know a great deal that had been done in London that was very injurious to the colony and to its Premier; he made an immense number of allegations upon information received, but he did not attempt to bring forward a single proof or fact. He (Mr. Simpson) said it was perfectly disgraceful for a gentleman in London to send out such a petition as that. If he had collected facts, it was his duty to have given those facts and to have given them without fear or favour; but he said nothing but a lot of rumours that could be heard anywhere and everywhere. There had been a great deal said about the rail contract, and on this point he wished to read a few extracts from a London journal, published weekly, dealing with all trades, and very largely with the important iron industry, and called the *Ironmonger*. In the number dated January 3, an article on the American metal markets, said—

"Steel rails are still in active demand, and a good business is being done at prices which show no symptoms of going back. Bessemer rails are to-day ruling at 72'50 dollars"—

or £14 10s. In the same paper, in a column devoted to the "metal market," it said—

"Steel rails are quite firm in all directions, and present indications lead to the inference that the majority of the mills will be unusually busy during the greater part, or the whole of the year 1880. The production at this time is very considerable, much of it being destined for spring shipment to Russia, Canada, &c. The Midland and other home lines have also given out considerable contracts—in some cases for deliveries over the present year."

In the issue of the next week, under the head of "American markets," there was the same thing—

"There has been heavy business in steel rails, with a brisk current demand, and prices which have ruled have been proportionately high. Bessemer steel rails, U.S., are now quoted at 77 dollars"—

or £15 8s. Then, under the head of "metal market," it said—

"Steel rails are very firm and likely to remain so, in view of the encouraging advices from America."

Then followed a long list of prices, with which he need not trouble the House. In the number dated January 17th, 1880, which he wished hon. members to bear in mind was the very time these tenders were called for, it was stated, in reference to the American markets—

"The steel mills are all working at high pressure, and have already contracted for their entire production for several months ahead."

Under "metal market" it said:—

"There is an impression that quotations for average sections of steel rails will be £10 in the course of the next two or three months."

Then, in the issue of January 24, under a special heading, "Editorial notes," the following appeared—

"All things considered, then, the steel rail manufacturers may be considered to have excellent prospects in the near future, the expectation of which is well indicated by the extreme firmness with which these rails are held and quoted at the present time. Last midsummer—say seven months ago—we were recording sales of steel rails at £4 and £4 6s. per ton; now the quotations have reached £8 10s. to £9 5s., and some houses are naming as high as £10 10s. Even at these relatively high rates makers are reported to be shy of booking themselves forward, many of them being already in possession of contracts which will last until the advent of spring. In adopting this attitude it cannot be denied that they are largely justified by their surroundings."

In the same paper, under "metal market," it said—

"Steel rails are exceedingly firm, and each succeeding week brings higher prices."

He thought these extracts showed very clearly that the price given at that time for rails was a fair one, and that those justified in giving an opinion considered that prices were not likely to go down, but that the market was a rising one and likely to continue so for the whole year 1880. The leader of the Opposition, last night, evidently wished to withdraw out of the position that he had taken up the previous day.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes.

Mr. SIMPSON said, "yes," most decidedly, and in support of his statement he should quote from the hon. gentleman's speech of last night:—

"Mr. Griffith would take the opportunity to protest against the turn given to the discussion of the question by hon. gentlemen opposite. He had made certain charges, and he asserted certain definite and distinct facts, every one of which had been admitted by the Government." Again, in defence of the position he had taken up, the hon. gentleman said, "It never had occurred to him to suggest, nor had it been suggested by anybody except by persons on the other side, that the Premier himself had anything to do with that sum." Speaking of the £60,000, "the charge of fraud was one which he did not undertake to affirm in any way—it had never occurred to him that the Premier did not know of the matter." Those were quotations from the hon. gentleman's speech of last night, and what did he say the day before? If he had only made use of those words and quotations in one part of his speech, he might then have fallen back upon the ordinary course under the circumstances, and blame *Hansard*. But it was all through his speech—every other sentence bristled with personal accusations against the Premier's honesty.

He commenced, early in his speech, by saying—

"He had no doubt gentlemen believed that when the Premier went to England he was to have been engaged principally in floating a loan; but he found that he had been engaged in another transaction, 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 presented the petition which seemed to amount to an impeachment of the Premier." Mr. Hemmant, no doubt, was a gentleman well known in this country. He (Mr. Simpson) had been told that Mr. Hemmant was one of the most corrupt Ministers that ever was in Queensland, and that his followers were to be found in every office. He had no doubt that it was

something that he could not obtain to his personal advantage at home that made him write out, in that underhand manner, to try and take away the Premier's character. The hon. member went on to say, a considerable distance down, "For himself he thought it was something almost too shocking to contemplate." Yet, he says, he does not blame the Premier at all—that he merely was guilty of some dereliction of duty. Was dereliction of duty sufficient to make him so horrified he scarcely liked to sit in the same chamber as the hon. gentleman? Then, again, the hon. gentleman said, "that 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 Macdonald, who was only suspected of being approached by the Grand Trunk Railway Company, was instantly dismissed from office." What Sir John Macdonald did had been well told by the Minister for Works; yet the hon. gentleman opposite accused the Premier of the same misdoings; and he went on to say that he felt his own reputation and the reputation of the colony were at stake; yet, last night, he said that the Premier had only been guilty of a dereliction of duty. All he (Mr. Simpson) could say was, that if he thought the Premier guilty of one-twentieth part of what the hon. member for North Brisbane said he was guilty of, he should certainly walk over to the other side of the House. He should not sit behind him as a supporter; and he thought it perfectly disgraceful that this matter had been brought up in the way it had. There ought to have been documents and papers laid upon the table. The charges should have been made on some better foundation than they had been. He was sorry to say that the action taken by the hon. leader of the Opposition had given him (Mr. Simpson) a very much worse opinion of hon. gentlemen opposite than he had ever had before, and that was saying a good deal.

Mr. GARRICK said the wish of speaking to this Address was far from being an agreeable one, but it came within his sphere to do so, and therefore he had undertaken it. The Governor's Speech dealt with two things—it dealt with the Administration during the recess, and it dealt with the promised legislation during the ensuing session. The Administration during the recess had been, with respect to some matters, so important as almost to overshadow the promises with respect to legislation during the ensuing session. Inasmuch as the Governor's Speech took that method of administration and of promised legislation, the criticisms of his hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, and other members on this side had followed the same lines. As it was the duty of the Government to refer to administration, it was part of the duty of the leader of the Opposition and other members, as far as the information at their command allowed them, to criticise that administration. It might be said that generally throughout this colony, and, he believed, in the minds of a large majority of the electors, there had been during the last year a want of that confidence which should exist with reference to those who had been charged with the administration of the affairs of the country. There was more than one reason for this. They had at the head of the Government a gentleman who described himself last night as an active speculator, and who said that he found a ready means of employing all the money he was capable of getting. He thoroughly believed that; and when they saw that the means of speculation were largely in the hands of the Crown—that the Crown not only possessed all the waste lands, but was also the owner of all the railways in the country—seeing that it was constantly giving large contracts for freight and for rail material—they arrived at once at the conclusion that the great part of the

field which was open for speculation was in their hands, with the means for carrying it on; and the head of the Government, who was, according to his own description, an active speculator, seeing that he was in charge in the great field in which such speculations occurred, should keep his hands very clean. There was such a thing as abiding by the letter of the law and breaking it in the spirit. He contended that it was not sufficient for gentlemen placed in the exalted positions occupied by the Premier and his colleagues that they should simply keep the letter of the law. These gentlemen should be entirely above suspicion. He asked if they had put themselves in that unambiguous position which resulted in entire confidence. With reference to what was almost their first act of administration—an act very much referred to last session, but which he had never said a word about—one of their first acts of administration was illustrated in the ambiguous position which they were very likely to take up with reference to the affairs of the country. They knew that the Premier was then one of the directors of the Bank of Queensland. They knew that the contract between the Government and the Union Bank was at that time about shortly to expire, and they knew very well that the Bank of Queensland was then entering into active competition for the Government account; and he said that, although the Premier in that case was in the letter of the law, from his exalted position he should have kept within its spirit, and should not have remained in the conflicting position of the person giving the contract and also the person to receive it. When the Premier retired from his position in the bank, his colleague, who was Vice-President of the Executive Council, succeeded him on the board of the bank, and it was known that even some of the strongest friends of the Government were loudest in their rebuke of the conduct of the Government in that transaction. He now came to the Polynesian Act. The Colonial Secretary had said the hon. member for Maryborough had passed a resolution, or got a minute which was outside the letter of the Polynesian Act. His hon. friend the member for Maryborough pointed out clearly enough that the Colonial Secretary himself had passed resolutions, or at any rate adopted a course of conduct which was equally outside the letter of the statute. Now, under his friend's administration of the Polynesian Act there had grown up a course of practice which amounted to a course of policy with reference to that statute; and that was that Polynesian labourers should not be taken into the distant interior to be engaged upon runs there. The Colonial Secretary said that this was a resolution which was *ultra vires*, therefore he would pay no attention to it; so he at once altered the practice which had become the policy of the statute, and which, as such, had met with a favourable reception from a majority of the people, and he introduced Polynesian labourers into the interior. There were only three Crown tenants, or at most four, to whom those Polynesians went—the one most favoured was one of the strongest supporters of the Government, Mr. Stevenson, and another was the Colonial Secretary himself. Was not that another case of taking up an ambiguous position, which must result in creating a distrust in the minds of the people of the colony with reference to the administration of public affairs? The next case had reference to one of the fields of speculation in connection with the colonies—namely, the freighting of ships from the home country to the colony—and here it was found that contracts had been given to certain persons for carrying large quantities of material, the freight of which amounted to £28,000 or

£29,000, and that the ships which might, and in some cases did, carry this material were part owned by the Premier and part owned by the Colonial Secretary. In those three cases Ministers of the Crown were placed in an ambiguous position—because a position in which they could profit by the contracts given; and a distrust had been created which was common to the great majority of the people of this country. The leader of the Opposition had been blamed by hon. members on the Ministerial side of the House for having stated certain facts; but he (Mr. Garrick) maintained that the hon. member's first duty, having the knowledge he had, was to lay those facts before that House in the manner he did. It had been stated that the evidence upon which those facts were based was the evidence of an old political opponent of the Premier and a dismissed civil servant. He would ask, in the first place, what objection there could be to a political opponent giving such information as had been given by Mr. Hemmant? No one could have been more bitter against Mr. Hemmant than the Minister for Works had shown himself to be; and yet he (Mr. Garrick) ventured to say that there was no grain of truth in the charges made by the Minister for Works. Mr. Hemmant was a man who had filled a high position with credit to himself and to the colony he served. Again, it had been said that Thomas Hamilton was a dismissed and disgraced public servant. It was true that he was dismissed, but it was questionable whether the dismissal could be justified, and he had not been disgraced. It was all very well for Mr. Macalister to say that he had been worried by Mr. Hamilton; but Mr. Macalister had the power to correct that at any time, and it was known that Mr. Hamilton continued in the office for eighteen months without a single report being made against him. And when the Premier went home, although he said that Mr. Hamilton's office was one of the dirtiest he had seen, yet he thought enough of Mr. Hamilton to consult him about important public matters and to act upon the advice he received. That did not look like disgrace, and the dismissal was yet to be justified. Of all the facts stated in the petition and alleged by the leader of the Opposition, the only one which the gentlemen on the Treasury benches had ventured to dispute was the statement that 15,000 tons of rails had been ordered by Mr. Leonard Cooper for the Queensland Government; and the question now was whether those facts were sufficient to justify the inquiry which the leader of the Opposition and the petitioner sought: he contended that they were. The two principal matters contained in those facts were—the 15,000 tons of rails and the question of freight. He would first endeavour to point out some facts of importance in connection with the speech delivered by the Minister for Works last night. That hon. gentleman said that he commenced to negotiate with Mr. Thomason, as agent for Ibbotson and Co., for the purchase of 42,000 tons of rails, somewhere about August, 1879. Thomason seemed to have led the Minister for Works a very pretty dance during the whole of those negotiations. Thomason entered into an arrangement then for the supply of 42,000 tons of rails, and all the time the negotiations were going on, and at the very time when the contract was made on the 7th October, 1879, steel rails were not ruling at a much higher price than £5 or £6 per ton. When the time came that the contract was to be signed, Thomason told the Secretary for Works that he had no authority to bind his company, and he induced the Minister to allow him three months from the signing of the contract, during which his company had the right to ratify the contract

or refuse—in other words, the contract was binding on the Minister for Works and not binding on Ibbotson and Co. During that interval was the time when the Government ought to have made their contract for rails. But the Minister for Works was as green as a leek. He allowed Thomason to lock the Government up for that period, so that when they made a contract afterwards they had to give £9 18s. 6d. per ton. The Minister for Works in a long rigmarole said he did not like to make a contract because he was not sure that the loan would be floated, affairs being so unsettled; but though the hon. member was now excusing himself for not making a contract at that particular time he actually had made a contract then. He made a contract on the 7th October for the whole quantity required for three years—namely, 42,000 tons, or sufficient for 600 miles of railway. While rails were cheap he prevented the colony from going into the market, and thereby compelled them to make a contract in January at £9 18s. 6d. During the interval he might have got contracts for the whole 42,000 tons at £5 or £6, and have saved the country the difference between £6 and £9 18s. 6d. per ton—not upon 15,000 tons, but on 42,000 tons. In other words, £160,000 was lost to the country through the bad business of the Minister for Works. Where was their cheese-paring—their turning off men from the Railway Workshops, their dismissing of policemen, and all that sort of thing—when they found that their management had lost to the country £160,000? This was one strong argument that the Premier himself ought to have been here. The Secretary for Works said that the contract was not signed till after the Premier had sailed. The Premier would never have allowed the Minister for Works to sign a contract for 42,000 tons of rails, which allowed Messrs. Ibbotson in three months to say quietly that they would have nothing to do with that contract. The Agent-General would have been advised to have made a contract for the rails—not at £9 18s., but at £6. The Premier's presence here would have saved this money. It was singular that a letter should have been received from a person whom the Minister for Works called an independent witness. Did the Minister for Works know what an independent witness was? He certainly could not, when he undertook to call Mr. Thomason one. The letter spoke of Mr. Hamilton as being the writer's enemy, of his having laid charges against him, and also stating that he had been in collusion with somebody. Was that an independent witness? It showed animus and malice against Mr. Hamilton; and yet the Minister for Works, to bolster up his case, called him independent. What did Thomason himself say about what the Premier might have done in December at home? He ventured to doubt whether the Premier had that astuteness with which he had been credited here, as the gentleman to whom the Minister for Works was so fond of alluding pointed out that the Premier could have made a contract when he was in London for rails, for which £9 18s. 6d. had been allowed, at £8 5s.—thus showing that when the astute Premier got upon the ground himself, at any rate in the short period of one month, he managed to give a great deal more for 15,000 tons of rails than he could have bought them for in the previous month of December—a difference, in fact, of £25,000. Now he came to the question of the tenders. There was one thing that the Minister for Works was fond of pointing out, and that was that it was the lowest tender. Who said it was not? He thought there was something in its being the lowest tender. It seemed to be a few shillings under the market price for steel rails at that time. He had no doubt its being so was a known fact by

the company whose contract it was, in order that it might be accepted by the Government. When those rails were tendered for, they had the making of those rails, and could afford a few shillings under the market price. £6 was paid and £918s. 6d. was obtained for them. Part of the facts mentioned by the leader of the Opposition had not been very specially mentioned or prominently dealt with by the members of the Treasury benches—that was that there was a contract made with the Moss Vale Company in the name of the Queensland Government for £6 per ton. The Minister for Works said, was it anything that the Haslam Company were not manufacturers? Was it a surprising thing that they were buying rails all that time similar to what the Queensland Government wanted? And then he went on to say, was it not well known that the Government were buyers of rails? It was wanted to be put forward that it was a mere matter of ordinary speculation—that during the cheap times they had been buying up rails from the Moss Vale and Barrow Company, in order that they might be prepared, by-and-by, to sell them to the Queensland Government. It was an insult to one's common-sense to have such a proposition stated. The fact was, the Queensland Government were not buyers, and could not be. If it was a fact that Thomason had entered into the contract with Ibbotson and Co. in good faith, the Queensland Government could not be buyers for three months. They had from the 7th of October to the 7th January for all the rails that the Queensland Government wanted, and the Government could not come into the market as buyers of rails at all until it was announced by Messrs. Ibbotson and Co. that they did not intend to carry on the contract. Yet they were told that persons were speculating for a rise on the strength of the Queensland requirements. It was utterly absurd to any thoughtful business man. The Minister for Works said there were other countries requiring rails of the same kind, but he was informed that that particular kind was wanted only for Queensland. What was this Haslam Company? They found it was a company whose paid-up capital was something less than £20,000. It was a limited liability company, and there remained to be called on allotted shares three or four thousand pounds. It was a curious thing that the invoices for the rails at £6 per ton were not to the Haslam Company but to the Queensland Government. Here they found a contract given to a company with less than £20,000 capital, out of which they made £60,000, or three times their capital. The shareholders were lucky to have such a dividend on one transaction. He understood that there was no security given for the carrying out of the contract. It was just as likely they would have lost as the Government. Where was the security in the event of the company not being able to carry out the contract? Supposing prices had gone up what would have been the consequence?—why, the loss of the money. He hoped the Government would give information as to when Mr. Ashwell resigned, and why?—whether he resigned about the time the Haslam contract was made or not.

The PREMIER: I may inform the hon. gentleman that Mr. Ashwell sent in his resignation before he knew we were going to call for any tenders whatever.

Mr. GARRICK said that did not agree with what the Premier said the other night. If Mr. Ashwell did send in his resignation, he must have known what was coming on, for he wrote a letter on the 26th January to the Agent-General—which letter was handed to the Premier—advising that the contract should be made. If he had sent in his resignation a month before, how

was it that upon his advice of the 26th January the contract was completed? There were two letters which hon. members would find at length in *Hansard*. The Premier was to sound the metal market in the city; and the Agent-General was, perhaps, to use his influence in the West End; or probably that gentleman, moving in distinguished circles, and drawing a thousand a year, was to sound the West End, having perhaps greater facilities in that quarter than the Premier himself. At any rate, it was on his representation of the 26th January that the contract was made with the Haslam Company. Mr. Ashwell himself had said he possessed an interest of £500 in the company. The Premier, however, put it down at one or two hundred less, and then said with a grand flourish of trumpets—would this gentleman soil his fingers for such a trumpery amount? But was it such a small thing? With a profit of 300 per cent. on £500 his share was £1,500—a year and a-half's salary. But were gentlemen occupying those positions free from suspicion? They had all heard of the Emma Silver Mine fraud. A man who occupied a higher and more distinguished position than Ashwell did, or ever would, was got at by the successful speculator, Albert Grant, and by writing fictitious and false articles in the commercial columns of the *Times*. The city editor of that paper brought about his own ruin, and that of a more distinguished man still—a gentleman representing not 200,000 people, but an ambassador representing 40,000,000 at the court of St. James', who fell under the influence of cunning speculators and was politically ruined. They knew that these transactions led to the dismissal of the commercial editor of the *Times* and the enforced resignation of the United States ambassador at the Court of St. James'. The Haslam Company had pocketed this £60,000, for it had been stated that a contract was made with the Mossvale Company and the Barrow Company at £6 per ton. All the facts stated by the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Griffith), and the facts in the petition of William Hemmant, had been admitted. He had thought over the matter seriously, and conscientiously considered there were facts stated by his hon. friend which demanded a most searching inquiry. He did not attribute anything to the Premier personally, and he thought the Premier ought to rejoice that the earliest opportunity was given him to purge himself, if necessary, from contact with anything stated by his hon. friend. It had been stated by members on the other side that the leader of the Opposition had spoken in terms of warmth; but he had not spoken in terms of warmth as if the Premier were implicated, but as if an inquiry upon those admitted facts should be made. And that was all he asked—that there should be an inquiry. So much with reference to the rails. Now he came to the question of freight. With a great flourish the Colonial Secretary stated that he was a partowner in some of these ships; and the Premier stated that he was part owner in twenty of these ships. They seemed to think it was a small matter, but he (Mr. Garrick) thought it was a great deal. If those ships belonging to the firm of McIlwraith, McEachern, and Co. got the contract for carrying £28,000 or £29,000 worth of freight, hon. members would see at once they would be able to almost command the shipping market of the colony. And according to the way in which those ships were engaged so would be the profits received by the Premier and the Colonial Secretary, for, according to law, the registered owners of shares received profits according to the earnings of the ships. If those ships got increased employment in carrying freight for the Government, those hon. gentlemen, as part owners, must get increased profits; and by having that contract

those ships would get more employment. If those hon. gentlemen were not within the letter, they were within the spirit of the law, which prevented members receiving profits directly or indirectly from the Crown continuing to hold their seats in the House. There had been one point missed with reference to the freight, because it had been glossed over or hidden, a point which should be brought out to the sun, that they might see it. The point was not that they did not get people to tender, and it was not that the lowest tender was not accepted; but it was that a condition was annexed to the contract which increased the price for which tenderers could carry, viz., that they should be full-cargo ships and not berth ships. What was the result of annexing that condition when calling for tenders? It had been pointed out, and it had not been denied, that full cargo ships could not be got to tender for less than from 38s. to 40s. a ton, but that berth ships would tender for 24s. a ton—making a difference of 14s. or 16s. per ton. Of course, the tenderers tendered according to the condition of full-cargo ships and not berth ships, and the contract was given to McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. Who had not heard of little dodges practised in cases of this kind? Even in a place like this they were not unknown, and in a place like London they must be as thick as blackberries. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. must have been as familiar with them as with the Strand; and when the tenders were sent in, their tender of 38s. 6d., which was certainly the lowest, was accepted. But McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. were afterwards released from the condition as to full-cargo ships, and now they found the "Warwick" here with cargo for which they had paid 38s. 6d., which was not a full-cargo ship, but a berth ship, and which, according to the market at the time the contract was made, should have been freighted for 24s. Those points had not been clearly and unmistakably brought out, and he considered that they and the facts before stated demanded, as he was confident the Premier would give them, full and perfect inquiry. There had been some sort of inquiry, but was it a perfect one? He would not repeat now what had been said by his hon. friend (Mr. Dickson) as to the inquiry. The Premier stopped at the very place where he would be asked by the House to resume it. What was the good of the Premier going to the Haslam Company? Was it not a perfect farce to call the manager of that company and put certain questions to him? Those persons ought to have been sent for who could have told the Premier how it was that the contract was made in the name of the Queensland Government by one Mr. Leonard Cooper, sometime about September or October, when rails were sold at £5 or £6 a ton, and by which the colony was swindled out of £60,000. That information could have been given by persons from the Barrow Company and the Moss Vale Company. To them the Premier ought to have gone, as pointed out by Mr. Hamilton. But that was the very point at which he stopped the inquiry: when he was laid upon the scent a red-herring was drawn across the trail, and if the House took up the matter they would take it up exactly at that point. He had now said all he meant to say on those two heads of the steel rails and the freight, and thought he had said enough to justify an inquiry being made: and he only felt too glad to hear the Premier say he was ready and willing to institute one. As to the Governor's Speech there was absolutely nothing in it—it was the shadow of a shade. He had been at the making of one Speech and had read several, but he never read a Speech like that. It was a bare enumeration of some things the Government intended to do, without a single word as to the

principles by which they would be guided. Something was said in it about taxation—he hoped they would saddle the right horse, this time. He hoped that if they went to the Custom House again it would be only to alter the incidence of taxation without increasing it; but he could promise the Premier his most strenuous opposition to any attempt to increase the burdens of the people of the colony from Customs. If they were going to pay £35,000 a year for steam communication to carry their frozen meat, he hoped they would see the way to pay for it out of their own pockets. In the event of their pushing on their trunk railways, with the loss that had been incurred on some of them, he hoped they would lay the burden on the proper shoulders, and either increase the pastoral tenants' rent, or follow the example of the New South Wales Government and have the courage to tax their stock. He had no objection to extending the trunk lines so long as those whom they benefited paid the difference between the working expenses and the interest on cost of construction. The settlers in the settled districts had had to pay for their own roads, and he hoped the Government would make the pastoral tenants, who reaped all the benefit, and who were, besides, favored with costly postal and telegraph facilities, pay the loss incurred on those lines. It was said in the Speech that the Divisional Boards Act had been received with readiness. He did not think the Government knew the way in which that Act had been received in the settled districts, but he might tell them that it had been received with anything but readiness—far from it. With respect to the taxing of improvements, no measure could be more unpopular; and he trusted that any amending Bill which might be introduced would include among its provisions one for removing improvements from the assessable value of property. He would refer no further to the Speech, but would conclude by saying that he thought his learned and hon. friend (Mr. Griffith) was perfectly justified in everything he said the other night; that it was a matter the Premier ought rather to rejoice over than object to; and that any offences with which he was charged were only contingent upon their being proved.

Mr. SWANWICK said there had been so much said on both sides that he felt he could scarcely be doing his duty to his constituents if he did not add a few words. He regretted that the leader of the Opposition had seen fit to go out of the House, although he could quite understand and appreciate his reasons for doing so. No man liked to hear himself attacked, least of all the man who was constantly in the habit of attacking others. It was quite in accordance with the hon. member's character that he should leave the House, more especially as of all the hon. members who had spoken during the debate he had been *facile princeps* in throwing dirt. Nothing could be expected of a pig but a grunt and dirt, and nothing could be expected from that hon.—he was going to say gentleman—member but inuendoes. Of all the men he had ever met that hon. member was certainly first master of inuendoes. That hon. member said the other night that he had had his reputation injured;—it was the first time he (Mr. Swanwick) ever knew he had a reputation, except for inuendoes. In the *Hansard* report of last night's debate certain remarks made respecting that hon. member by the Minister for Works were omitted. Those words were to this effect:—"I say, if his character would stand the searching investigation which my colleague (the Premier's) can, he would stand better in the estimation of others than he does. I can tell him that his name is connected with slander." There was no doubt whatever those words were said, and there was equally as little doubt that

they were richly deserved. He had been a diligent reader of *Hansard* for many years, and he could say that a more slanderous and uncalled-for attack had never been made upon anybody in the House than that made by the hon. member—he used the words in a Parliamentary sense—upon the Premier. At considerable inconvenience to himself the Premier went home, and they were asked to believe that it was his duty to interfere in all the petty details of the London office. They all knew that the Premier's main object in going home was to successfully float the loan, which he did. Because he did not interfere in those details he had been attacked in such a way as brought disgrace upon the House, and more especially upon the head of the hon. member who made the attack. Last night, as they all heard, the hon. member had not the courage—not of his convictions, because he did not think he had any—of his opinions, because he retreated in a most cowardly manner—retreated from the position he had taken up. A man who showed himself on a false basis was a hypocrite, and, as the old proverb said, a liar needs to have a good memory. It was all very well for hon. members to speak, and then, when things were brought against them they did not like to say they had been wrongly reported. They had all heard on the previous night how distinctly the hon. member went back until he was pinned by the hon. member for Blackall. He (Mr. Swanwick) thought, perhaps, that it might be rather a good thing to trace the history, not at too great length, of the hon. member, because there was no better means of arriving at the character of a man than by going into his past history, and by seeing what he had done and what he had left undone. Most of the early years of that hon. member were passed in Myrthyr Tydvil, and about the age of nine he came out to Australia and remained for some time in Maitland—he wished Maitland had him now, as it might be proud of him, which he did not think this colony was. By-and-by the hon. member came up here, and unfortunately he did not come unaccompanied, but with a venerable parent who, through the action he took in politics and in a secret society which was continually doing great harm, had done great mischief. It would have been far better if that gentleman had attended to his own duties as a minister of the Gospel and to the training of his son, who was at that time an ingenuous boy. But there was a kind of legend that it pleased a higher Power to take from the hon. member a heart of flesh and to give him nothing in exchange. It was to be presumed that in his early days the hon. member had a conscience, but any he had had long since left him, and he was now in that position that it was like a diamond, as brittle and as hard. The hon. member had plenty of ability and, as he (Mr. Swanwick) thought, very little conscientiousness. He had plenty of generosity for himself, and he had plenty of largeheartedness, but he took very good care that it all went back to himself. It was reported that the hon. member's party intended to make the Government side of the House a present of the hon. member, but he (Mr. Swanwick) hoped not, and with all his heart trusted they would keep him. Still, it had been said on very good authority that the hon. member's own side were so disgusted with the way in which he conducted affairs that they meant, if they had not already done so, to elect someone to take his place. He (Mr. Swanwick) trusted that the gentleman elected to take his place would be the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson), as, whatever his faults might be, they knew that he was a man, had a great deal of bonhomie, and was kind-hearted, which was more than could be said of the hon. member about whom

1880—F

he was now addressing the House. After spending his boyhood among a lot of boys, in an evil hour it happened that the hon. member was sent to the Sydney University. There were many members in that House who had been members of that educational establishment, which had turned out several good men; but there were one or two matters in which it was wanting which were not wanting in the old universities of Europe—there were only a few pupils, and in the hon. member's day there were still fewer attending the one or two colleges in that University; and thus they were very seldom brought into that contact which was the chief benefit of a university. The hon. member went through his university career with credit, and then he went home and travelled. It was usually supposed that when a gentleman travelled, it knocked off a great many angularities; but in the hon. member's case there was a lamentable failure in this respect, as he returned to this colony more angular than ever. He was then taken by the hand by a gentleman who now occupied a most distinguished position in the colony, and was petted, spoiled, and, to use an old English word, he was marred. Finally, by the influence of that gentleman, the hon. member was brought into Parliament. For some time things went well, until, finding he was firm in the stirrups, the hon. member began to ride hard, and, like the dog which bit the hand that fed him, he turned on the man who had stuck to him for so many years. As a proof of that he (Mr. Swanwick) would refer hon. members to *Hansard*. In Vol. 14, 1872, Mr. Lilley was speaking of the two members—Mr. Hemmant and Mr. Griffith—and this is what he said—

“They were returned to that House under the ægis of the Liberal party, and were now broaching doctrines in the contrary direction.

“They were sent under his shield to advocate the very policy they were now opposing.

“He knew at the commencement of the session that there were among them hon. members who were treating with members opposite, whilst they affected to be following him.

“He would say again that when men in a great political struggle, without consulting their avowed leader, made overtures to members opposite, they were not behaving properly to that leader, and the hon. member and others had done so. That had justified his mistrust of the hon. member.

“Why had not the hon. member for East Moreton (Mr. Hemmant), or his hon. colleague, done that instead of seeking secretly to defeat the resolution?”

Thus, at the very time the hon. member was swearing allegiance to his political leader, he was endeavouring to traffic with the opposite side. Soon after that Mr. McDevitt became Attorney-General, and although a member of the same party, they found the hon. member sitting on the cross-benches, and doing all in his power to block Mr. McDevitt, with the view to get into his shoes. They also found from a speech made by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas), that the same thing had been carried on, and that instead of adhering to his allegiance to that gentleman, the hon. member was endeavouring to form a third party. The whole thing from beginning to end had been a perfect tissue of treachery, and if there was one man in the colony who could be branded with the name of traitor it was the hon. member the leader of the Opposition, who had been a consistent traitor in his treachery. Hon. members opposite would find that, if ever the hon. member got the opportunity, he would throw them over.

Mr. GARRICK; We can trust him.

Mr. SWANWICK said he was glad to hear that, and hoped they would never find their confidence misplaced. There were men in this world who thought nothing of turning round like dogs and biting the hand that fed them, and that hon. member was one. They had seen him within the last few days turn and turn, saying one thing one day and denying it the next, until he was pinned to it. There was no doubt that in a certain line the hon. member was one of the ablest men in the colony, but he (Mr. Swanwick) wished with all his heart, for the sake of his party and the colony at large, that he would be more honest. The hon. member had been called after a good and holy man, "Samuel," which meant a child of promise. But by an extraordinary coincidence he added the name of Walker, who must have been a descendant of the celebrated "Hookey Walker," which name had been handed down as an emblem of deceit. He would, with all good feeling, warn the members of the Opposition to beware of the hon. member, for they would find that although his name was "Samuel" he would certainly prove to them a Hookey Walker.

Mr. BEATTIE said he did not intend to discuss the questions which had been so ably debated during the past few days, but he wanted to draw the attention of the member for Dalby to the fact that the magazines from which he quoted as to the price of iron in January had been American and not English ones. He found that the English price of steel rails from the 2nd to the 19th January was from £8 to £8 10s.; and to the figures quoted by the hon. member had probably been added the freight from England and the heavy import duty of America.

Mr. SIMPSON said he had quoted from well-known London journals, and had given both the American and English prices.

Mr. BEATTIE said he must apologise to the hon. member: he did not hear him refer to the English prices. With reference to the contract with the Haslam Company, he did not intend to make any reflection upon any member of the Government, but he desired to remark that it was very singular that the information was only obtained by the Queensland authorities when the invoices from the Barrow Company were sent in. It brought very vividly to his mind what took place in Sydney many years ago. A gentleman tried to get into the Municipal Council several times, and at last succeeded in the same manner that these gentlemen had at length succeeded in making some rails for the Queensland Government, and on the day that he took his seat he addressed the mayor thus: "Mr. Mayor, I have tried two or three times to get a seat in this council and have at last succeeded, and I have only this to say, that if there is any roguery and I am not in it I will split." It was very evident to him that they would never have heard anything about the rail business if the gentlemen to whom he had referred had been in it. They sent the invoices to the Queensland Government and disclosed the transaction because they were not in it. He was very sorry indeed to hear the Minister for Works, for whom he had a great respect, make the remarks that he did regarding Mr. Hamilton. He had never seen Mr. Hamilton until the other day, and consequently did not know him; but he did think that the Minister for Works, before accusing that gentleman of detaining material on many occasions by not sending it out when there was the opportunity, might fairly have given hon. members to understand what sort of material it was, because if it was bridge material he knew that, if it was large packages in the shape of girders, it was not every ship that would carry it, more especially ships going to Maryborough.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Cylinders.

Mr. BEATTIE said that some of the large cylinders, unless shipped in segments, would not be taken. However, if the Minister for Works had a complaint from the engineer that he had been compelled to stop the works for four or five months it was his duty to bring the complaint under the notice of the Premier and it would have been remedied. It was not fair to jump on a man because he was a discharged civil servant. If Mr. Hamilton was the bad servant that they had heard he should have been dismissed two years ago; but no fault was found with him until a certain occurrence of recent date. He did not think that members of the Government had been fair to this discharged servant by referring to him in the manner that they had. As to the railway question, he was as anxious for the construction of railways as anyone, but it must be in populous localities, and where they would pay; and he certainly thought that the time had arrived when the construction of railways into the interior should be stopped, unless they could be carried out on some other principle than that of borrowing money. He could not agree with the opinion expressed in the Speech with reference to the Divisional Boards Act, because he knew that in some of the outlying districts the Act would not be successful, as the whole revenue of the Boards would be required to pay expenses. He was glad that the Government intended to introduce a Bill on the main roads question, for it was one that would be very difficult for many of the Boards to deal with. He hoped that the inquiry which had been demanded would be given, and was sure that no member would accuse the Government of having benefited personally by the transaction; but it was the duty of the Government to have a searching inquiry, in order to ascertain who handled the money. To give an opportunity to others to speak, he would move the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER said he had no intention of obstructing the debate, seeing that it had been so personal to himself. At the same time, he should like to have some intimation from the leader of the Opposition when his supporters would bring it to a close. He intended bringing on immediately most important business which would admit of no delay. If the contract for the steam service from London to Brisbane was not ratified in a short time it would fall through. He had also to submit a Bill with reference to the Supreme Court, and upon this matter action must be taken next week.

Mr. GRIFFITH said his party preferred to close that evening unless members on the Ministerial Benches were anxious to speak.

The PREMIER: Does the leader of the Opposition propose to close without a division?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Certainly.

The PREMIER: I wish to close to-night.

Mr. MILES said that with one exception he was the oldest member in the House, and during the whole course of his parliamentary experience he had never heard a more painful debate than the present. The leader of the Opposition had stated that he was prepared to prove his charges, and the Government had promised to render every assistance in their power to obtain a thorough investigation of the matter. There must be such an investigation into the statements that had been made; and, as the Government were willing to afford every facility for its taking place, he should not be justified in detaining the House any longer. He was desirous of saying a few words on the Speech, but would not do so as there was a wish to close the debate.

Mr. DAVENPORT thoroughly agreed with the remarks of the hon. member for Darling

Downs (Mr. Miles). As a new member of the House, he must say the party faction fight that had been going on had been to him a most painful one, and so long as he sat in that House he hoped not to see a repetition of it. When the House met together, the leader of the Opposition presented a petition signed by William Hemmant, but which, so far as his lights enabled him to judge, was mere words, in a legal and moral sense. It was much the same as if he said to a man "You're another"—where was the proof? If that hon. gentleman had simply laid the petition on the table, and asked for an investigation into the allegations it contained, he was sure it would have given great pleasure to all parties to have agreed to it, and that that course would have met with the approbation of the public outside. He had listened attentively to the speeches that had been made, and although he had often heard of the character of the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Kingsford) for independence and straightforwardness, he must say that the manly, candid, dignified manner in which the hon. member spoke last night completely "fetched" him: and, whatever came out of this, whenever that hon. gentleman's proposition was carried out nothing would give him greater pleasure than supporting it. A great deal of obloquy had been attempted to be thrown on the Premier, and in connection with that he felt it due to the Premier to say that during his absence from the colony he had done more towards advancing its interests than all the other people who had ever left Queensland put together. He (Mr. Davenport) was thoroughly convinced, from what he saw when he was in London, that when the Premier arrived at Charing Cross he found a great state of chaos. He (Mr. Davenport) was a witness of that, and he came to the conclusion that, comparatively speaking, the London office was, as far as he was able to judge, a farce. He would also remind the House that when the Estimates came on provision would have to be made for carrying on that office, and in his opinion they should do one of two things—either do away with the office altogether, or else allow that the man running that office—and he should be a responsible man to "boss" that concern—was worth a salary far above anything that had been voted here yet. Other little matters having been agreed upon, he would not occupy the time of the House longer, but he certainly approved of the proposition made by the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Kingsford.

Mr. GRIFFITH (some of whose remarks were very indistinctly heard in the gallery) said if the debate was to close to-night he could not allow it to pass without saying a few words in vindication of his old and honoured friend, Mr. Hemmant, who had been accused on the other side of the House in the foulest language, as if he were a man of the worst possible character whose statements were unworthy of a moment's credence. He had been denounced as if, in presenting the petition to the House, he had circulated a number of calumnies of the most injurious character to members of that House. He (Mr. Griffith) would now point out in very few words that every statement made in that petition had been already proved or admitted. He began by stating that he was interested in the good government of the colony. No one disputed that. Then, after stating that various circumstances had recently come to his knowledge connected with the London office which, in his opinion, deserved investigation, he said:—

"Your petitioner has learnt that tenders were invited in January last by the Government of Queensland for the supply of 15,000 tons of steel rails, and for their conveyance from Barrow, Whitehaven, Maryport, or Workington, to various ports in the colony of Queensland."

They had received full particulars from the Government, showing that to be strictly true.

"Your petitioner believes it to be the duty of the engineer to the Government of Queensland in London (at the time referred to, Mr. W. H. Ashwell) to invite tenders for rails, advise as to their acceptance, and inspect the rails made before shipment."

That was not denied—in fact, it was stated by the Premier himself.

"That your petitioner is informed that no invitation to tender was addressed to the Barrow Haematite Iron Company, or to the Moss Bay Company, or to many other makers of rails of equally high standing."

That was admitted by the Premier.

The PREMIER: Where?

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman gave a list of those who were invited to tender, and these were not included.

"That your petitioner is informed that the tender of the Haslam Engineering Company (Limited) at £9 18s. 6d. per ton was accepted, and your petitioner has ascertained, by a recent inspection of the articles of association of that company at Somerset House, that it then consisted of eight persons, that its paid-up capital was £19,200, and that Mr. W. H. Ashwell was one of the eight shareholders, and one of the original directors—the company having been registered in 1876."

That was not attempted to be disputed.

The PREMIER said he never admitted anything of the sort. He never heard anything about it before. What he did admit was that William Ashwell was one of the stockholders of the company.

Mr. GRIFFITH said there was no doubt of the fact. The hon. gentleman said in his speech—

"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 another company in 1854, long before Mr. Ashwell was connected with this company. He was one of the shareholders of that company. That was all the evidence."

That was an incorrect report. The hon. gentleman really said "the formation of the company in 1876, long before Mr. Ashwell was connected with the Government." He did not know that there could be any better evidence; it was conclusive evidence.

"Your petitioner is informed that the Haslam Engineering Company are not rail makers, and your petitioner believes that the rails in question are being made for about £6 per ton by firms who were not invited to tender, and that there are others interested in this transaction whose connection therewith it would be highly advantageous to the colony to ascertain."

The facts that this company were not rail-makers, and that the rails were being made for £6 per ton, were admitted. That other persons were interested was, perhaps, inference, and, of course, there must be some persons interested.

"Your petitioner is informed that at the time the Loan Bill of 1879 was passed the price of steel rails was about £5 per ton, and that in the month of September, 1879, the Government of South Australia concluded contracts at that price; and your petitioner believes that a contract on behalf of the Queensland Government could have been made at that time upon equally favourable terms."

"That your petitioner believes that the Government of Queensland was aware at that time of

the state of the iron market, and that their neglect to avail themselves of the low prices then ruling has already cost the country over seventy thousand pounds."

That had been proved.

"That your petitioner has learnt from one of the ship-owning firms who was invited to tender for the conveyance of the 15,000 tons of rails before referred to, that shipowners were expressly informed that 'no tenders would be considered except for full ships direct.'"

That was also correct.

"That your petitioner is informed that rails can be carried by ships taking other cargo at considerably less price than they can be taken by 'full ships direct,' and that this condition was therefore an important one."

That had been admitted by the Minister for Works and by the Premier.

"That your petitioner is informed that the tender of Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn and Co., 38s. 6d. per ton, was anticipated, and that rails have been shipped by the following vessels under the provisions of their contract, viz., the 'Dumbar-tonshire,' 'Golden Russet,' 'Warwick,' and 'Garnock,'"

That had not been attempted to be denied.

"That your petitioner knows that none of these vessels are 'full ships direct' as required by the terms of the letter in which shipowners were required to tender, and your petitioner is informed that three out of the four vessels referred to do not belong to the line conducted by Messrs. McIlwraith and Co., and your petitioner believes that freights could have been arranged by the Government direct with the shipowners upon terms much more advantageous to the colony."

This was not denied.

"That your petitioner has learnt that Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. are also contractors with the Government of Queensland for the conveyance of emigrants from this country to certain ports in Queensland, and that under the provisions of their contract the 'Scottish Hero' sailed from this country in the month of March, 1880."

Who would think of disputing that?—every-body knew it.

"That your petitioner is informed that in all contracts for the conveyance of emigrants the contractor signs the charter-party 'for and on behalf of the owners of the ship.'"

That was also correct. The form of charter-party was on the records of the House. The statement—

"That your petitioner has learnt that at the time the 'Scottish Hero' sailed under contract with the Queensland Government, Messrs. Arthur Hunter Palmer and Thomas McIlwraith, both described as graziers, Queensland, were registered as joint owners of certain shares in that vessel,"—

had been proved by the production of the register, and admitted by the Government.

"That your petitioner is informed that Messrs. A. H. Palmer, Thomas McIlwraith, and W. H. Ashwell are registered as owners or joint owners of shares in several of the vessels sailing under contract with the Government of Queensland."

That fact was also proved by the registers and the admission of the Premier as well. Those were all the allegations in the petition. Where was the calumny?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: In your speech,

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not rise to say anything about himself, but merely to defend

Mr. Hemmant, and he had shown that every allegation in his petition had been proved or admitted.

Mr. KINGSFORD said he could not allow the debate to close without making a remark or two. They had listened to a few specimens of special pleading, and endeavours had been made to show that black was white, until he was afraid the House was in danger of being hoodwinked. The speech of the hon. member who had just sat down, was evidently intended to draw the House from the right track. He (Mr. Kingsford) wished, however, to say that there was one subject, and one only, for their consideration. Not Mr. Hamilton, not Mr. Hemmant, not Mr. Ashwell, not iron manufactories, not iron manufacturers, not ships, not freight was the subject for their consideration. There was but one subject before the House, and to that he adhered, and he hoped the Government would take their stand upon it. If there was any meaning at all in words; if there was any force at all in the English language; if any weight was to be given to the construction of sentences uttered by an educated gentleman who knew what he said and who could put the most caustic and cutting utterances into words, then the whole gist of the matter was this—that the charge brought by the leader of the Opposition was that the colony had been swindled out of £60,000, and that the Premier and the Government had pocketed it. There had been arguments and statements made "wide as the poles asunder" from the subject before the House. He (Mr. Kingsford) did not suppose that Mr. Hemmant's character required defence, but it appeared that a debate that had extended over three nights was to close with a defence of Mr. Hemmant's character. He (Mr. Kingsford) did not care for ten thousand documents coming from gentlemen as honourable and true as Mr. Hemmant; he did not care if there were ten thousand million statements from Mr. Hemmant, true as they might be. They did not touch the question at all. The leader of the Opposition had charged the Premier with stealing, and to that he (Mr. Kingsford) would pin him, and if he could not be free to state it in the House, he would state it outside of the House until the matter was settled. He was not defending the Government. All he was asking for was that there should be a full and searching investigation into the charges that had been brought. He, for one, would not stand upon the floor of the House and allow a leading member of it to be slandered without proof, and he hoped that not a member of the House would rest until the whole matter had been fully and fairly investigated. This was his standing, and to this he should adhere—namely, that the charge brought by the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) against the Government in general, and the Premier in particular, was that £60,000 had been taken for private purposes by private hands—filched from the Government—and that the Premier (Mr. McIlwraith) had appropriated more or less of that amount to his own purposes. He (Mr. Kingsford) had but one more remark to make, and it was probably a personal one, but if this matter had pained him very much to-night he had acted according to the lights within him, and fairly and impartially; he blamed no one, but he thought he had a right to act as his conscience dictated, and in this connection he could not help referring to the attempt made by his colleague the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Fraser) to damage him in the eyes of his constituents. To-morrow morning they would read the hon. member's remarks, passing strictures on what he had said. He felt bound to say this—all he would do would be to treat these remarks with the contempt they deserved.

Mr. DICKSON said he protested most strongly against any hon. gentleman assigning to the leader of the Opposition words which he never expressed. His hon. friend never said that the Premier had filched and pocketed this £60,000 in any shape, form, or insinuation. However, he (Mr. Dickson) did not intend to reopen the discussion. Hon. members could draw their own conclusions and no amount of statement on his part would of course convince or appear to satisfy hon. gentlemen opposite. But he rose to say that during the course of this debate he had deeply revolved the position of matters in his mind, and that the admissions of the members of the Government concerning their proprietorship in property which was under tender to the Government on which remuneration was paid showed that they occupied a most ambiguous position, and one that it was undesirable that members of the Administration should occupy. It was a scandal to the colony, a deep scandal, and he, as a member of the Legislature, and he hoped other hon. members would agree with him—could not bear, even in Opposition, to see members of the Administration of the colony occupying such a position as they had placed themselves in. It was on those grounds he rose to enter a protest against such a great scandal being perpetrated in the Legislature: and he felt convinced that the mass of people outside who read through the debates that had taken place during the last three nights would agree with him that the Premier and the Colonial Secretary had by their own admissions only fixed themselves further in that very undesirable situation. If the House—and he said it with all respect—represented the country at the present time, a resolution, he had no doubt, would be carried which would very speedily set the matter at rest; but he was convinced there were several individuals in the House who did not represent their constituents, and therefore it was impossible to obtain, in the present constitution of the House, an impartial verdict upon any resolution which might be brought forward of this character. The country, however, ought to be invited to express an opinion as to the position occupied by those two members of the Ministry, and he himself believed that the Opposition would be justified in insisting upon the country expressing that opinion before proceeding with the public business. But he would be sorry, at the present juncture of affairs, to see such an extreme course resorted to. The finances of the country were so embarrassed that it was highly desirable that they should on both sides of the House set to work to restore affairs to a healthy condition. His opinion was that there should be a test case submitted to some constituency. He had somewhat of a novel proposition to make, and he did it to give the public an opportunity of expressing an opinion on the subject. On such a question he thought the people of the metropolis might very fairly be consulted as to the position their representative held, being a member of the Legislature, a Minister, and a registered proprietor of vessels trading under Government contract to the colony. What he was prepared to submit to the junior member for North Brisbane, who happened to be one of the gentlemen implicated, was that he should place his resignation in the hands of the Speaker, in which case he (Mr. Dickson) would place his resignation in the hands of the Speaker also. He would then go before the constituency and abide by the verdict of the metropolis as to the position occupied by that gentleman in being a member of the Government and a direct owner of vessels which made profits out of a Government contract.

The PREMIER: That is a lie.

Mr. DICKSON: I think that expression extremely unparliamentary.

The PREMIER: Aye, but it is true.

Mr. DICKSON said it was not true in this respect, that his hon. friend the leader of the Opposition had produced certificates of registration under the hand and seal of the registrar of British shipping, certifying that the junior member for North Brisbane, the Colonial Secretary, and the Premier, were registered proprietors of certain ships trading to this colony under contract with the Government. Was that true, or was it not?

The PREMIER: It is not true.

Mr. DICKSON said he had had the documents in his own hands, and those hon. gentlemen were registered in the manner he had described. The hon. gentleman, the junior member for North Brisbane, might say this challenge was not a fair one because he was a member of the Government and he (Mr. Dickson) a private member of the House, and he might urge that his retirement might embarrass it; but he (Mr. Dickson) was prepared to allow him to name a time convenient to himself for his resignation, to test the feelings of his own constituency. He (Mr. Dickson) had nothing to gain by this, but might possibly lose the confidence of the electorate with which he had been so long associated. He did, however, desire as a member of the Legislature to see the administration of the colony held in the hands of gentlemen who had not even the semblance of being placed in a suspicious position. This proposition he was aware might take the hon. gentleman by surprise, and he was quite willing to give him till Tuesday next to consider it. He had no other desire than to test the feeling of the people of the colony through the metropolis, who for this purpose might be held to possess an average amount of intelligence and public spirit. In making this proposition he could not conceal from himself that the hon. gentleman, the Colonial Secretary, was, personally, much respected, and enjoyed large influence in his own electorate; and was therefore much more likely to secure his return than he (Mr. Dickson) was. He was quite willing to go into a strange electorate to test the matter.

The PREMIER: Come with me to Mulgrave.

Mr. DICKSON said if the Premier had represented the metropolis his challenge would have been to him, but his object was to test the feeling of the metropolis. He felt that these matters should be treated with more seriousness than they had been, because hon. members who wished to see the business of the country conducted by gentlemen who would set the example of having clean hands, ought to recognise the desirability of some such test being carried out. He did not make the offer in a spirit of bombast, and in case the Colonial Secretary should desire to consult his colleague, he would leave the matter open until Tuesday next.

Mr. AMHURST: Brisbane is not the whole colony.

Mr. ARCHER said the House had seen an example in this debate of what was likely to result from making a bad start. He had not hitherto taken part in it because it had been one of a character which he thoroughly abominated, and he would now ask the leader of the Opposition whether he considered that making personal charges was the correct way of conducting public business? If certain facts had come under the notice of that hon. gentleman it was certainly his duty to bring them under the notice of the House; but it was his duty to ask for all the information to be laid on the table of the House and then have brought forward the matter in a calm manner, which would have been more likely to carry conviction to hon. members. But he had

taken the opinion of men one of whom at least, according to his own supporters, was utterly unworthy of belief.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Who are they?

Mr. ARCHER said that the hon. gentleman's supporters had stated that at least one of the persons referred to was not to be believed, and if there was any meaning in the English language the hon. gentlemen had, on their evidence, actually imputed dishonesty to members of the Government. If not, why did he express horror at sitting in the same Chamber with them, and make reference to a Canadian Minister who had been proved to have taken bribes? That showed that the evidence received had been sufficient to satisfy his legal mind. It was the misfortune of the hon. gentleman that he had as yet only been an advocate and not a judge—he saw only one side of the question, and upon the strength of that evidence he denounced the Ministry and brought charges against members of the Ministry, which, if they meant anything, meant that those hon. gentlemen had pocketed public money in a most scandalous manner. Had he taken time to obtain all information obtainable before making any charges he would have shown himself to be not only a politician but one fit to lead the House; but he had actually gone out of his way to drag the House through a lot of mud by making this a personal instead of a political question. He (Mr. Archer) had sat in the House with the present Agent-General for some couple of years; and, although they sat on opposite sides of the House, and held different opinions on many subjects, he had always entertained an opinion of that gentleman very much higher than that expressed with regard to him by an hon. member who had been his friend or supporter. The hon. member for Northern Downs had stated that when he arrived in England the very first words addressed to him by Mr. Hamilton were, "I have no power in the office; I am completely under the thumb of Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co." Here was an hon. gentleman who had been quick enough to spy out rogueries that had been going on in that office when under the management of a most honourable and upright man—for Mr. Daintree was a man who must stand high in the estimation of the people of this colony, but he was sent, not to keep books, but to conduct general business, and men who were skilled in the manipulation of figures were able to cheat the Government without being detected. What were the first words of this astute gentleman (Mr. Hamilton) to Mr. Thorn?—"I have not a word to say; we are in the hands of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co." Did he think of what he was saying about his chief (Mr. Macalister)—simply that he was so lost to all sense of honour that he was taking bribes to perform the dirty work of a firm? That was the account given by a former colleague of Mr. Macalister—a gentleman who got Mr. Macalister to go home in order that he might get his seat in the Government. He (Mr. Archer) was not, however, prepared to accept the statement of the hon. member in full. Mr. Hamilton might have said something like it, and the hon. member for the Northern Downs who, judging by his speech, was not very clear on the subject, might have forgotten exactly the words. He (Mr. Archer) did not believe either Mr. Macalister or Mr. Hamilton were the utter scoundrels the hon. member had represented them to be. If Mr. Macalister had submitted to be dictated to he had done so in order to put money in his pocket, and if he had done that there were no terms sufficiently strong to express the contempt he felt for him. He would recall to the hon. member for Maryborough that, when he (Mr. Archer) took the office of Agent-General, he said—"You will find that people will give you

inducements to do certain things. Take my advice—do not show any anger; seem not to notice the matter." It was the best advice he could have given to a young man perhaps ignorant of what was going on. Did the hon. member recollect that?

Mr. DOUGLAS: I do not recollect it.

Mr. ARCHER: I remember that was the advice you gave me. I have no doubt Agents-General are exposed to that sort of thing. I am sure you will admit they are.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that they were.

Mr. ARCHER said it was therefore possible that Mr. Macalister was exposed to these temptations. From what the hon. member for the Northern Downs had said there was something wrong in the Agent-General's office, but he had not reported it to the Colonial Secretary although he was quick enough at reporting other things. Therefore he was utterly untrue to the country which paid him his wages. The character of the debate was simply through the leader of the Opposition taking it in the wrong direction. Instead of obtaining and giving every information he rushed to the charge and imputed to the Government that which, if they were guilty, would make them unfit not only to be members of the Government, but for honourable men to associate with. It resulted in the exceedingly silly challenge made to-night by the hon. member for Enoggera—he must be excused for using the expression—to test the feeling of the country. That was impossible. The latest test of the country was the recent election at the Leichhardt. Their opponents took a good deal of trouble to get someone to oppose the hon. member who now sat for that electorate, but it was said that it was not of the slightest use, as the candidate was supporting the Government which the people of the Leichhardt, at all events, wanted to support. Then came the Attorney-General, who as they knew resigned his seat, and went up and tested his constituency, and the people expressed their opinion. Did the hon. member for Enoggera suppose that Brisbane was to become the Paris of Queensland? They were not living in a country where the capital was to govern the country, but where the country governed the capital. It was only in France where a metropolis like Paris could overcome the Government, not in an independent country governed by representatives from every part. Paris was France, but they were not prepared to take even the sense of Brisbane, the capital, as the sense of Queensland. They were prepared to meet the members for Brisbane on equal terms. When the hon. gentleman made that challenge he knew perfectly well there was nothing in it. The Colonial Secretary simply acted as a trustee in the ship business and never got one penny. It might be said of the Premier that he held the property in trust for his wife and children, but in either case there was no substantial ground for the charges brought. According to the laws of the House it was a tribunal sufficient to deal with the matter. It was a childish thing to ask that the people of Brisbane should be allowed to decide whether he was Colonial Secretary or not. Brisbane would have its proper and legitimate share in the government of the country. He had listened to the debates, and read the speeches, and he saw that the leader of the Opposition had made one of the greatest blunders that a leader of party could make. Instead of bringing the matter before the House and saying that he would take proper steps to put every information before it, he rushed into the fray, threw the foulest imputations on the present Government, and attempted to prejudice the country against them in the hope that a wave of public displeasure

might displace them. He had judged very badly, for, on the contrary, the public, although for the moment led astray by personal and violent attacks, when brought to their cooler senses would see that these things had not been proved, and there would probably be a revulsion of feeling. He hoped the debate would now finish, because the longer it lasted the more discreditable it would be to those who began it.

Mr. FRASER said that he wished to disavow the motives attributed to him by his colleague, who inferred that he wished to damage that hon. gentleman with his constituents. He begged distinctly to state that he was not in the remotest degree animated by such a motive.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that the hon. member for Blackall had illustrated what he was pleased to call the want of judicial faculty on the part of his hon. friend the leader of the Opposition. He also illustrated what his own idea of the judicial faculty was. That hon. member, he understood, was a member of the Committee of Elections and Qualifications, and he would probably be called upon to decide in a judicial capacity on the question of whether the hon. gentlemen on the Ministerial benches had forfeited their seats. It was certain the question would be tried, and he had announced thus precipitately on a case which he would be called upon to judge.

Mr. ARCHER said that he had not stated anything as to what effect the laws of the House might have in guiding him in any decision. It might so happen that they would compel him to declare that both the hon. gentlemen were no longer members. He never intimated that he had made up his mind on the question at all.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he could only leave the House to express their opinion as to whether in his judicial capacity a member whose seat was at stake would be satisfied of his judgment. He had precipitately expressed an opinion on a case likely to be raised before the Committee. He regretted that they were raised at all before the Committee. It was far better that it should be tried by an impartial tribunal removed altogether from the arena of party politics. However much they might desire to do justice, a man was more or less warped by his position. He therefore desired, and had for some time to see the duties of the Committee of Elections and Qualifications transferred to the Supreme Court or to some tribunal independent of the functions they discharged there. Before he began to lecture the Opposition on the faculties of reticence on important occasions, he should have applied it to himself. He understood that the chief objection taken to the action of his hon. friend was that he had accused the Ministers of pocketing money in a scandalous manner. They were certainly not accused of that. The leader of the Opposition accused them of this—that during their tenure of office, and while the head of the Government was in London on the scene of action, a portion of the Government money was pocketed by someone. He was satisfied that it would be still further substantiated. An unnecessary construction had been put upon the inference of the member for the Northern Downs in reference to the influences which surrounded Mr. Macalister. He had no recollection of the conversation mentioned by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Archer), but he had no wish to say that what the hon. gentleman said of him was not right. It was what he would naturally say on such an occasion. He ought perhaps to have said more; but what he did say was, no doubt, in consequence of matters that had come under his own notice. If those offers were made, they were made in such a covert manner that they

did not admit of a direct interpretation; but they might be interpreted by those who chose to do so, and it was necessary to treat such offers in the way the hon. gentleman had described. It was rather hard to infer, as the hon. member for Blackall did, that the hon. member for Northern Downs cast imputations on the present Agent-General. Mr. Macalister suffered to some extent in his position at present in the same way that Mr. Daintree did. Mr. Daintree, a younger man than Mr. Macalister, was in failing health, and it was notorious that at that time he had to remain away from the office for considerable periods of time, and was not in a state of health to take an active superintendence of affairs. From what he had heard, Mr. Macalister was in a somewhat similar condition.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he was very happy to hear it, and it was perhaps just as well that that statement should be thoroughly understood. If in sound health, he hoped it would be satisfactorily proved that in no respect could he be charged with the imputations that had been made against the administration of the London office. He was satisfied in his own mind, from what he had heard, that the contracting firm of McIlwraith and McEacharn had an undue weight in the administration of the London office. If Mr. Macalister had not resisted that, and had not made it known to the Premier, he must admit that the Agent-General was in the wrong; but his position had been a very difficult and delicate one. He was surrounded by men whom he did not think he was entitled to trust, feeling that they were as much under the control of the Premier as they were under his own, and allowance must be made for the difficult position in which he was placed. He did not judge the Agent-General guilty of any of those scandalous acts, any more than he judged the Premier to be guilty of them, until they saw what the result of the inquiry might be when it was instituted. He hoped they would have some intimation from the Premier at a very early date as to what form the inquiry should take. The tribunal should, to as large an extent as possible, be one agreed to by both sides of the House. It would not do at all that the Opposition should alone undertake the inquiry, as suggested by some hon. members opposite: it ought to be composed of men in whom the House as a whole had the highest confidence. He hoped the Premier would be in a position shortly to indicate the form the inquiry should take. That inquiry must extend to England, for there must be the final proof as to how far those scandalous transactions had permeated the London office. To turn to other matters, it was a very sporting offer made by the hon. member (Mr. Dickson), and he should be glad to see it accepted, for there could be no doubt about the appeal to a metropolitan constituency if the offer were by a remote chance accepted. He also felt quite disposed to make a similar offer to the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, so that if objection was taken to an appeal to a metropolitan constituency he would go with him to his own constituency where he (Mr. Douglas) possessed far less influence, and was personally quite unknown. But it was unnecessary to make those offers, for there was no likelihood of their being accepted, but if they were he would accept the result whatever it might be. As to the Premier, he had serious work before him, and the House would not be willing to adjourn for three weeks or a month to gratify their caprice. He would conclude by expressing a hope that the inquiry would be begun as soon as possible, and disposed of, as far as they were concerned, as soon as possible, for until that was done it would hang

like a cloud over their heads ; and he wished the cloud to be dispelled in some way or other so that they might get on with the real business of the country. That they would be unable to do until they had searched to the bottom the imputations which had been laid at the door of the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government.

Mr. BEATTIE, by permission of the House, withdrew his motion for the adjournment of the debate.

Question—That the Address in Reply, as read by The Clerk, be adopted—put and passed.

The PREMIER stated that His Excellency the Acting-Governor would receive the Address in Reply at Government House, at 3 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, and he would therefore move the adjournment of the House till that time.

Question put and passed, and the House adjourned at ten minutes past 11 o'clock.