

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 15 JULY 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 15 July, 1880.

Questions.—Formal Motions.—First Readings.—Appropriation Bill No. 1.—Land Office Returns.—Mr. Hemmant's Petition.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTIONS.

Mr. STEVENS asked the Secretary for Public Works—

When does he propose to place the scheme of the Transcontinental Railway before the House?

The PREMIER: In the Financial Statement.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

On the motion of Mr. SCOTT, it was ordered—

1. That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the Petition of William Hobbs, presented on the 16th September last.

2. That such Committee have power to send for persons and papers, and to embody the evidence, &c., taken before former Committees on this subject, and have leave to sit during any adjournment of the House; and consist of Mr. A. H. Palmer, Mr. Griffith, Mr. Norton, Mr. Kingsford, and the Mover.

On the motion of Mr. MOREHEAD, it was ordered—

1. That the Petition of Mr. Tom Coward, presented to the House on the 14th of July, be referred for the consideration and report of a Select Committee.

2. That such Committee have power to send for persons and papers, and to sit during any adjournment of the House; and consist of Mr. Beattie, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Kingsford, Mr. Lumley Hill, Mr. McLean, Mr. Stevens, and the Mover.

On the motion of Mr. LUMLEY HILL, it was ordered—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return showing, in detail, the Expenditure of the Executive Commissioner for Queensland, and the Secretary to the Queensland Commission, at the late International Exhibition in New South Wales.

FIRST READINGS.

Mr. COOPER moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Supreme Court Acts of 1867 and 1874.

The Bill was presented, read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for the 6th August.

Mr. RUTLEDGE moved for leave to introduce a Bill to enable the Trustees of the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland to sell or lease certain Lands granted to them as a Site for the use of the said Association and for carrying out the operations thereof.

The Bill was presented and read a first time.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 1.

This Bill, on the motion of the PREMIER, was read a third time, and sent to the Legislative Council for their concurrence.

LAND OFFICE RETURNS.

Mr. KATES moved—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return of all Deeds of Grant issued, or in preparation to be issued, to persons to whom

such Deeds were refused by previous Governments on account of suspected dummyism or other fraud.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkins) said that when he called out "not formal" he did not intend to obstruct the hon. gentleman or show any disinclination to give the information he required. If the hon. member would intimate clearly what he wanted the information would be supplied. He (Mr. Perkins) desired to call the attention of the House to the vague and indefinite wording of the motion. According to its terms he might supply more than the hon. member wanted, or he might supply less. There was no record of deeds that had been refused. If the hon. member would intimate what it was that he actually did want every endeavour would be made to supply the information as quick as possible, but if the motion was passed in its present shape it would be a nullity, and the information supplied would be unsatisfactory.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said that the hon. member must see that the effect of passing a resolution of that sort would be that no return would be presented, because there was no such information. What he would recommend him to do was to move for a return of all deeds of grant issued from any time he liked, or in course of preparation.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said that he himself knew that such information existed in the Lands Office, and to his own knowledge it had been pigeon-holed since 1873. He knew that in the late Mr. Stephens' time they were there and were kept separate, and when he (Mr. Griffith) was in office the information was available and he had often consulted the Minister for Lands on the subject. Certainly, the hon. gentleman could not say that if the last eight words of the resolution were left out he could not give the information. He (Mr. Griffith) did not know that any grants were refused, except on the grounds of suspected dummyism. He knew that grants were refused by the Palmer Government in 1873 on which it became his duty to take action, and he had heard that these grants had been issued. That was the information they wanted to get. There was no necessity for a return of all grants. The information wanted was the return of grants refused by previous Governments but issued by this Government.

Mr. McLEAN said that the hon. member for Darling Downs would gain his object if instead of the word "refused" he would insert the word "withheld." It was well known that a number of grants were withheld because there were certain suspicions attached to them;—the conditions had not been fulfilled, and the land, in fact, had been taken up under misrepresentation.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said he was surprised to hear what the Minister for Lands had stated, because, from his own experience of the Lands Office, these deeds were identified by a peculiar colouring of the paper, so that they might be available at any time. They were, so to speak, ear-marked in a special manner some time before he entered the Lands Office, and they certainly were there when he left.

Mr. KATES said he had no objection to inserting the word "withheld" in place of the word objected to.

Question, as amended, put and passed.

Mr. KATES moved—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return of all Lands sold by auction during the last Financial Year, showing names of respective districts, names of purchasers, price per acre obtained, and size of area.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that from the speeches on economy that they had heard

from the hon. member from time to time, he should imagine that he did not desire to put the country to any unnecessary expense. If this motion were carried it would include town and country lands. It would be no information whatever if the return included town lands; and he would suggest to the hon. member that he should exclude town and suburban lands.

Mr. KATES said he had not the slightest objection to alter his motion as indicated by the Minister for Lands, so as to include country lands only.

Motion, as amended, put and passed.

MR. HEMMANT'S PETITION.

Mr. GRIFFITH said, in rising to move the motion standing in his name, he must state that he had no idea of the manner in which the Government proposed to meet it—whether it was to be resisted or otherwise. If it was not to be resisted, he desired to say as little as possible on the subject at the present time; but if it was to be resisted, then of course it would be his duty to go into the matter at some length, to show that these were matters that should be inquired into, and also to call the attention of the House to the information they had upon the subject at the present time, and to show, further, that that information could not be supplemented without an independent inquiry held in Great Britain by a tribunal appointed by Her Majesty the Queen, or some other independent authority having power to authorise such an inquiry to be held. He felt it his duty, last week, to bring certain matters under the notice of the House. The matters which he then referred to were several, some of them relating to transactions with respect to which they received full information in the course of the debate that followed, which information had been supplemented to some extent by the papers laid upon the table. In respect to other matters they had very little information, and the information not having been obtained by the Premier when he was in England, could not be obtained here—at least, not all of it. He fancied, however, that he had been able, since last week, to make some discovery which put him on the track as to where this £60,000 had gone to. The matters which he said they must have inquired into were two: First, the manner in which the colony had been—he would say defrauded—of the sum of nearly £60,000. He called it fraud. He used the word deliberately. He said the colony had been defrauded of about £60,000 by somebody or other, and the complaint he made against the Premier was that with the information showing that fact before him he did not make a thorough investigation into the matter to ascertain who got this money, or whether there was any means of saving the country from this enormous loss. That inquiry the Premier admitted he did not make; he said he did not conceive it to be his duty to make it. The other matter which could not be investigated here was the circumstances connected with the calling for tenders for the carriage of these rails. They had had it stated on the authority of one of the contracting firms that they knew before they tendered that they would not get the contract. Under what circumstances they knew that was a matter that well deserved investigation. They also knew that as soon as the contract was made a very stringent condition, which was only introduced into the notice calling for tenders three days before the time for tendering expired, was immediately waived—in fact, the Government admitted that four ships had since sailed with rails under that contract, none of them being full-cargo ships. How these things came to be done was a matter which they could

ascertain but by inquiry in England, unless they were prepared to send for the people who could give the information and they were prepared kindly to come to this part of the world and volunteer their evidence. Of course, that was impossible; we could not get the information in that way. Then how could they get it? It might be suggested that they should appoint a select committee of that House; but such a committee could not proceed to England, and, if they did, the period of the continuance of their powers would expire before they got there, unless the House were kept in perpetual session to enable them to sit in England. Moreover, it was perfectly clear that a select committee of that House would not, in England, command the information that was obtainable there. Another alternative course would be to allow the Government themselves to nominate the commissioners going to England, but under the peculiar circumstances of the case he did not think they would ask that they should be nominators of the commission to investigate the matter. The same objection would apply to a commission appointed by the Government in this colony which applied to a committee of that House—that they would not be able in Great Britain to command the necessary information. The witnesses they might summon might not attend, and even if they did, the inquiry would not be of such an authority as would be likely to ascertain all the facts. Now, it was admitted on all sides of the House, last week, that these matters—these two matters particularly—the manner in which this £60,000 has disappeared without the colony getting value for it, and the circumstances connected with the shipping contract, were such as demanded the fullest investigation. The Government themselves claimed the fullest investigation, and he found in a memorandum addressed by the Premier to his colleagues at the conclusion of the papers laid upon the table yesterday, this statement:—

“Notwithstanding the fact that these charges have been made by a dismissed servant, and an unsuccessful tenderer for a contract, still, for the honour of the colony, I submit to you that a full and searching inquiry ought to be made; and that immediate steps, both here and in England, be taken with that object.”

That being so, he asserted again that a searching inquiry should be made in England, and that an inquiry made by commissioners appointed here, or a committee of that House, would be vain. Their investigation would not be likely to lead to any useful result. Then what was the other alternative? In order that the inquiry might be valuable, the persons appointed to conduct it must be persons who would command the respect of the mercantile community in England, who would be recognised as persons having authority—persons whom those summoned to give evidence would recognise as occupying such a position that a refusal to give information would cast upon them a stigma they would not venture to incur because it would injure them in the prosecution of their business. He said the tribunal must be one of such weight as that. They knew that in Great Britain inquiries of this kind were occasionally made. It was not an unusual thing for the attention of the authorities in Great Britain to be called to transactions of this kind. When the honour of the mercantile community of England, or the commercial honour of England, was involved it had been the practice for the House of Commons sometimes, sometimes the Imperial Government, to appoint committees or commissions, as the case might be, to investigate the charges made. For instance, in the case of

the Honduras loan there was a large amount of money gone nobody knew where, and the present Attorney-General, Sir Henry James, moved for a select committee of the House of Commons to investigate the matter. That course was pursued even in the case of a small foreign community, which was certainly not so wealthy and not much more populous than this colony, where the commercial honour of the country was involved. Again, they found by the late papers that the Imperial Government had appointed a commission to inquire into the manner in which almost precisely similar transactions to those now in question were carried out with reference to the purchase and shipping of railway material from London to India. Those two precedents showed that where the matters were of such importance that the commercial honour of England was involved, the Imperial authorities would take the matter in hand, and endeavour to ascertain how these things were done, and to provide against a repetition of them in the future. He thought, therefore, that the proper course to adopt was to address Her Majesty the Queen. This was an unusual course, no doubt; but, as he had pointed out, there was no other course open to them. If they really desired a searching inquiry to be made, Her Majesty was the only authority to whom they could have recourse. An address to the Queen was not an unknown thing. In nearly all the colonies, except Crown colonies, the removal of a Judge of the Supreme Court was made by statute the subject of an address to Her Majesty, so that the particular mode of proceeding he asked the House to adopt was one distinctly recognised by the Constitution. It was also not an unknown course to address Her Majesty direct on other occasions—as, for instance, on the recovery of the Prince of Wales, some time ago. That this was an unusual course, he admitted, and the circumstances, he trusted, would be always unknown. But the extraordinary circumstances of the case demanded that somewhat unusual course, but one that was clearly within the limits of our Constitution. He had given reasons to show that if the House really meant to move in the matter, this was the only practical way in which it could be done. As he had said before, he had received no information as to how the motion was likely to be received by the Government; but, after what had been stated, he could not understand how there could be any opposition to it. At any rate, he would say this—that he trusted, for the honour of that House and the honour of the country, that there would be no opposition to the inquiry being made. In framing the motion he had endeavoured to confine it strictly to the two matters he had referred to. He proposed that an address should be presented to Her Majesty, setting forth:—

“That the Government of this colony are largely interested in the manufacture in Great Britain of steel rails for the purpose of railway construction, and in the shipment of such rails to this colony.”

Upon that there could be no dispute. Second—

“That in the month of January, 1880, a contract was entered into in London, on behalf of the Government of this colony, for the supply of 15,000 tons of steel rails at the price of £9 18s. 6d. per ton, and another contract for the carriage of the rails to Queensland at the price of £1 18s. 6d. per ton.”

That was also an admitted fact. Then it stated—

“That it has been represented to this House that the rails so contracted for are being made at prices much lower than the contract price, and that contracts for their manufacture for the

colony at such lower prices had been entered into before tenders for their supply were invited by the Government.”

These representations had been made to the House. Beyond a doubt it had been represented that these rails were being made at prices much below the contract price. It was proved by the papers laid upon the table of the House yesterday, and it was admitted before. The Premier admitted it himself; he could not deny it. It had also been represented that—

“Contracts for their manufacture for the colony at such low prices had been entered into before tenders for their supply were invited by the Government.”

That was a serious part of the charge, and it had scarcely been seriously contested, except in one article that he had seen. It had been suggested that it was absurd to suppose that these rails had been ordered for the Queensland Government. Now, he should briefly refer to the facts that they knew at the present time with respect to this matter. The whole thing would probably have gone into oblivion and never have been found out, and looked upon merely as a bad bargain made by the Minister for Works, had it not been for the Barrow Hæmatite Company sending into the Agent-General's office those remarkable invoices which gave rise to all this trouble, and which he trusted would give rise yet to the saving of the colony a very large proportion of this £60,000. Hon. members laughed, and that really was the most deplorable thing about the whole transaction—the low tone of morality that appeared to be exhibited by hon. members opposite, who treated a serious and most important inquiry like this as a good joke. When he called attention to one of the most gigantic frauds that had ever been perpetrated upon the Australian colonies since they had been in existence, hon. gentlemen opposite, who prided themselves upon their respectability, upon their honour, upon their superiority to hon. members on that side of the House, treated the matter as a good joke.

Mr. AMHURST: We always speak the truth.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We laugh at you.

Mr. GRIFFITH said when he was contending for honesty and morality he was content to be laughed at, and he did not care how many people laughed at him. He would appeal to any honest community in the world to judge whether matters—in fact, whether the question of defrauding the colony of a very large sum of money—was a matter to be laughed at. He would now refer briefly to the remarkable invoices that had given rise to this discovery. The first was on page 35 of the papers laid upon the table yesterday:—

“Hæmatite Iron and Steel Works,

“Barrow-in-Furness,

“11th March, 1880.

“Messrs. The Queensland Government Railway Co., 32, Charing Cross, London, S.W.

“Bought of the Barrow Hæmatite Steel Co. (Limited).”

It would be observed that the words “the Queensland Government Railway Co.” were used, but that he treated as a mistake. It simply meant the Queensland Government Offices; at least he hoped so. This invoice of rails—67 tons 10 cwt. 1 qr. 10 lbs.—was sent per rail to care of Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co., London. The next invoice was on the 12th March, headed precisely in the same manner—in fact, the only difference was in the figures. It was for 32 tons 16 cwt. 2 qrs. 25 lbs., at £6 per ton. The next was an invoice from the same people, headed in the same way, dated 13th March; but these

rails were not sent by railway, but by the "Saxon," to London, to the care of Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company—94 tons 4 cwt. 3 qrs. 15 lbs., at £6 a ton. On the 15th March there was an invoice similar in every respect, for 107 tons 2 cwt. 2 qrs. 5 lbs., at £6 per ton. These were the invoices of the Barrow Hæmatite Steel Company, who were making rails at £6 per ton—making them for the Queensland Government on the Queensland Government specification, and they sent their invoice to the Agent-General's office. It appeared, also, that on the same dates, or almost the same—at any rate, two or three days afterwards—invoices were sent for these same rails from the Haslam Engineering Company to the Agent-General. He had not had time to go through the figures to identify all the rails. However, it was admitted by the Premier, and he only called attention to the fact that the first invoice printed from the Haslam Company to the Agent-General was an exact copy of the last of the invoices from the Barrow Hæmatite Company. However, there was no dispute about the identity of the rails. Now, what did that prove? It proved that these rails were being manufactured by the Barrow Hæmatite Company under contract, and that they were being manufactured on the Queensland Government specification. An attempt had been made to say that the Queensland Government specification was the same as that of other countries—that other countries besides Queensland used 4½-lb. rails. No doubt they did; but anyone who had been in the Works Office—and he saw two or three hon. gentlemen opposite who had been Ministers for Works, and also two or three on his own side of the House—knew that the Queensland Government specification was different from any other. It was a special specification.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What is the difference?

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was not prepared to give the exact difference, but the hon. gentleman knew that there was a difference.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You were Minister for Works.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had been Minister for Works, but he did not consider it necessary to know, personally, all the details of such matters. He referred them to the Engineer-in-Chief, and took his advice. It was not necessary for him to know what the difference was, but he knew for a fact that there was a difference. All our rails were made for the colony expressly, and on a special specification. That proved that these rails were ordered on the Queensland Government specification. As there were no other buyers in the world of rails made on that specification, it followed pretty clearly that they were ordered for the Queensland Government. That also appeared from the invoices, and from other facts besides. The next thing was, when were they ordered? That they were ordered before rails were worth more than £6 per ton was clear. Rails rose above £6 per ton early in October, so that the order must have been given early in October. Those were all facts that had been represented to the House; they were represented by the Government themselves, by the documents laid upon the table; they were represented by Mr. Hemmant's petition; they were represented to the House by himself, in his place; but he need not go beyond the documents laid upon the table by the Government themselves. It was clear that those rails were ordered for the Government before the tenders were called for. He thought he had established that fact. What the result of the inquiry would be was a matter with which he was not con-

cerned now. What he wanted to know was whether these contracts were made under such circumstances that we could still save the money. Then the next representation was:—

"That it has been further represented to this House that persons connected with the service of the Government of this colony in Great Britain are concerned in this matter, and that by reason of the premises the colony has sustained a loss of upwards of £50,000."

That representation had been made in the House. Of course there must be other people in it, but they could not tell who they were; in fact, he did not care who was involved in it so long as there was an investigation. If they could clear this, so much the better. He was not going to say more on this point, except that the papers laid upon the table gave a very good surmise as to how the transaction was arranged. Then the address went on—

"That it has also been represented to this House that the circumstances attending the calling for tenders for the carriage of the same rails, and the making of the contract for such carriage, and also the circumstances attending the performance of that contract, are such as to have caused a loss of many thousands of pounds to this colony."

That representation had been made to the House, and it was really, from one point of view, the most serious charge of all, because the £60,000 did not involve the honour of the Government, except so far as it involved the charge of great dereliction of duty against the Premier for not investigating the matter. The charges with respect to the carriage of rails and calling for tenders were more serious. It appeared that the tender was altered only three days before the tenders were to be sent in; that a very onerous condition was imposed, the nature of which might be inferred from the return given in the Commissioner for Railways' report which was laid upon the table of the House last week. He had not got his copy of that report, but he saw in the papers laid on the table of the House yesterday a schedule giving the average cost of freight from Great Britain to Queensland for the last seven years. He was inclined to think that the average for the last seven years would be of very little value; but if they took the Commissioner's report for the last year they would get some valuable information. However, he had made a calculation on the matter himself, and he could give the result within a few shillings from memory. The average rate, according to this return, for 1879 was, to Brisbane, from 13s. 4d. to £1 4s. 7d. per ton; to Maryborough, under £1 15s. per ton; to Rockhampton, from £1 4s. to £2 per ton; and to Townsville, about £2 per ton. It was quite clear, considering the relative quantities going to these ports, that £1 18s. 6d. was a much higher rate than the average rate—in fact, a considerable quantity came to Brisbane last year at 13s. 4d. per ton, and the highest price paid last year for rails to Brisbane was £1 4s. 7d., according to the Commissioner for Railways' return; so that the representation that had been made in the documents upon the table by the Government fully bore out the statement that the circumstances connected with the making of that contract and calling for tenders was such as involved a serious loss to the colony. Of course they knew that the prices he had mentioned—13s. 4d. and £1 4s. 7d.—were not for full-cargo ships. There were full-cargo ships direct to the other ports—Maryborough and Bundaberg. To Maryborough they were less than £1 18s. 6d.; to Rockhampton, if his memory served him, out of eight there were only two in which more than 35s. was paid; and to Townsville it was about £2.

That contract had caused much loss to the colony. They were told that one of the tenderers knew beforehand that his tender would not be accepted—in short, all the representations made to the House had been fully borne out by the facts. As to the performance of the contract, it was evident from the invoices specified in the return that none of the vessels by which steel rails came out were full ships. The “Garnet” brought 107 tons, the “Golden Russet” 94 tons, and the “Warwick” 200 tons. In none of those instances could those vessels be said to have brought out a full cargo of rails. The “Dumbartonshire” brought out 552 tons of rails; he did not know the size of that vessel, but it did not look like a full cargo. The price for bringing out rails last year varied from 13s. 4d. to £1 4s. 7d. a ton; and the performance of the contract, it was plain, had been such as to involve great loss to the colony. Then the address went on to say—

“That the several matters and things aforesaid can only be inquired into and investigated in Great Britain, and that this House is of opinion that a full investigation into them is necessary in the interests of the good government of the colony.”

Upon that most hon. members who spoke last week were agreed, and he believed an investigation at home would not be thought undesirable. The address concluded—

“That this House will cheerfully defray the necessary costs and expenses of such investigation.”

He had said all he wished to say at present on the subject. He had pointed out the facts which appeared in the return, and which there was no getting over. If they could be explained away he, for one, should be very glad to see it done, but until a thorough investigation was made few people would believe that it could be done. He would therefore move :—

That a humble Address be presented to Her Majesty the Queen, setting forth—

That the Government of this colony are largely interested in the manufacture in Great Britain of steel rails for the purpose of railway construction, and in the shipment of such rails to this colony.

That in the month of January, 1880, a contract was entered into in London, on behalf of the Government of this colony, for the supply of 15,000 tons of steel rails at the price of £9 18s. 6d. per ton, and another contract for the carriage of the rails to Queensland at the price of £1 18s. 6d. per ton.

That it has been represented to this House that the rails so contracted for are being made at prices much lower than the contract price, and that contracts for their manufacture for the colony at such lower prices had been entered into before tenders for their supply were invited by the Government.

That it has been further represented to this House that persons connected with the service of the Government of this colony in Great Britain are concerned in this matter, and that by reason of the premises the colony has sustained a loss of upwards of £50,000.

That it has also been represented to this House that the circumstances attending the calling for tenders for the carriage of the same rails, and the making of the contract for such carriage, and also the circumstances attending the performance of that contract, are such as to have caused a loss of many thousands of pounds to this colony.

That the several matters and things aforesaid can only be inquired into and investigated in Great Britain, and that this House is of opinion

that a full investigation into them is necessary in the interests of the good government of the colony.

That this House will cheerfully defray the necessary costs and expenses of such investigation.

And praying—

1. That Her Majesty will be graciously pleased to issue Her Royal Commission directed to such person or persons as Her Majesty may think fit, empowering and requiring them to inquire into and report upon all the circumstances connected with the making of the aforesaid contracts and the supply of rails and ships in performance of such contracts respectively.

2. That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider an Address to His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to recommend to this House the necessary expenditure for defraying the cost of such Commission.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) said the hon. member for North Brisbane had continued this evening, though in a more modified tone, to play the *rôle* he had taken upon himself since the opening of the session. He had not thrown quite so much mud on this as on the former occasion, and for that he was to be complimented. He had admitted that the Government could not be concerned in the disposal of the £60,000 mentioned by Mr. Hemmant, and it was upon that petition, and the allegations of a dismissed public servant from the Agent-General's Office, that the hon. gentleman founded his charges. The hon. gentleman began by asking the House if it intended to have a full and impartial inquiry, and then told them they could not have that full inquiry without petitioning the Queen and getting Her Majesty to appoint a Royal Commission to institute an inquiry in Great Britain. The House, he was confident, and the Ministry, and the Premier, were as anxious for a full and free inquiry as the hon. gentleman himself pretended to be. They would get a full, fair, and free inquiry, but he would tell the hon. gentleman at the outset that they were not going to abrogate their privileges and ask the Queen to interfere in a matter concerning the internal administration of the Colony of Queensland. Hon. members, he hoped, were not fond of Berryism—and if the hon. member wished to assume the *rôle* of Mr. Berry, of Victoria, he might do so; but as the privileges of self-government had been conferred upon the colony, they not only had no right to petition the Queen on a question of the sort, but if they did the answer they would get would be the same as Earl Kimberley had sent to the colony in reply to an application made by that dismissed servant, Thomas Hamilton, in which he made charges still more gross than those made by the leader of the Opposition. The last paragraph in Mr. Hamilton's letter to the Colonial Office was—

“Should you deem the facts stated in this letter of sufficient importance to call for an inquiry, I venture to ask you to have the goodness to transmit a copy of it to the Government of Queensland, with whatever recommendation you may find the circumstances of the case demand.”

To that letter Earl Kimberley replied as follows :—

“Downing Street, 6th May, 1880.

“Sir,—I have the honour to transmit to you, for your information, the accompanying copies of two letters, with their enclosures, which have been addressed to this department by Mr. Thomas

Hamilton, lately acting as secretary to the agency for Queensland in this country.

"I have to observe, with reference to the last paragraph of Mr. Hamilton's letter of the 26th of April, that this is obviously a question in which it is impossible for me to interfere in any way.

"I have, &c.,

"KIMBERLEY.

"The Officer Administering the Government of Queensland."

If the House adopted the hon. gentleman's suggestion, and petitioned the Queen to institute an inquiry to do that which it was their undoubted right and duty to do for themselves, they would be placing themselves in a similar position to Mr. Hamilton, and would be told to manage their own affairs themselves. They had a perfect right to do so; and he maintained that, if they were to carry out the hon. gentleman's suggestion, they would be making a plain admission of their incapacity to manage their own affairs, and that was certainly a position which he hoped the House would not condescend to adopt. But there was another authority on the question of the internal administration of colonies having responsible Government, an authority to which they were in the habit of appealing. He would give the House the benefit of a passage at page 161 of Todd's last work, issued in 1880, on "Parliamentary Government in the Colonies," which would still further support his contention. That eminent authority wrote as follows:—

"The direct interposition of the Crown, through a Secretary of State, in matters affecting the internal administration of a self-governing colony, would, in general, be at variance with the acknowledged principle of Ministerial responsibility within the colony in all matters of local concern. Such interference could only be constitutionally invoked and properly exercised under the following circumstances: (1) In questions of an Imperial nature; (2) in the interpretation of Imperial statutes, which have assigned to the Imperial authorities certain specified duties on behalf of the colony in the performance whereof it would devolve upon a Minister of the Crown, responsible to the Imperial Parliament, to act and decide according to law; or (3) when, either at the express desire or with the concurrence of the local authorities, an appeal has been made to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for his opinion or decision upon a point whereon disagreements have arisen between members of the body politic in the colony concerning their respective rights and privileges."

The suggestion of the hon. gentleman came under neither of those three heads. The only two cases quoted by the hon. gentleman in which the Imperial Government had interfered were Honduras and India, both Crown colonies.

MR. GRIFFITH: It was not British Honduras.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS said that in that case the analogy was still more distant, for the inquiry instituted on that occasion by the British Government was simply to protect British interests which had been sacrificed to a certain extent in the money market. India, as they all knew, was immediately and directly under the control of the Imperial Government. An appeal to the Queen was virtually an appeal to her Ministers; and he hoped the colony had not yet arrived at that position of appealing to the English Ministry to do for them what they could do equally as well for themselves. The hon. gentleman stated that the invoices sent by the Barrow Company were the means of discovering what he was pleased to call the fraud that had been perpetrated on the

colony. He (Mr. Macrossan) thought otherwise, and that the reason for what he was pleased to call the fraud having been discovered was, that Mr. Hamilton had himself discovered he was about to be dismissed, and that the other gentleman who sent a petition made some discoveries with regard to himself at the same time. The hon. gentleman had appealed to the honour of the House. So did he (Mr. Macrossan), and he appealed, also, to the House as the guardians of the privileges of the people of Queensland, not to do what the hon. gentleman asked them to do; and he felt confident they would not. If they did, they would be no longer worthy of being the people's representatives. They would be doing what had been asked on many occasions by imperious Sovereigns of England—namely, betraying the trust reposed in their hands. There could be a full and free inquiry in quite a different manner from that proposed. Their duty was first to begin the inquiry here. All the documents were at hand, and any information could be obtained by wire from the Agent-General. There was also here the gentleman who said he could give evidence in proof of the allegations made. The inquiry could be proceeded with to a certain length, and if it could not be finished here it would then become the duty of the House to appoint a person or commission to take up the inquiry at the point where it was necessary to carry it on elsewhere. The great facts the hon. member had discovered were that rails had been made at prices much lower than the contract price, and that that contract had been entered into before tenders for their supply had been invited by the Government. Was it an extraordinary thing that rails were made for less than the contract price? Not at all. He could give the hon. gentleman an instance where he (Mr. Griffith) was the agent in entering into a contract for rails made very much below the contract price, and which were paid for at a very much higher price than the market price, and by which several thousands of pounds were lost to the colony. Did the hon. gentleman then ask into whose pockets the balance went? No. Why was he not then as inquisitive as he was now? The contract was made with the firm of Ibbotson Brothers for the supply of sixty-three miles of rails at £7 15s. a ton. There was no competition; no tenders were asked for, and no reference was made to the Agent-General to ascertain the current rates at home. When the Agent-General was called upon to ratify the contract he objected to it as being too high. The result was that after a considerable amount of bargaining the price was reduced by 5s. a ton, still leaving the contract price 10s. a ton above the ordinary price at that time. In addition to that, the firm to whom that contract was given were no more rail makers than any person in the House was, and not only had they their profit but the company or firm they employed to make the rails must have had their profit also. The profit they had—that was known—was £5,000 upon that contract for rails alone. Where did that money go to? Did the hon. gentleman then discover that the Government had been defrauded, that somebody was to blame, and ask the House to appeal to the Queen to cause an inquiry to be made into it? In the same contract the hon. gentleman let fish-plates to that firm at £21 a ton, when the market price in England was only £9 16s. a ton, and that would never have been discovered but for the action of the Agent-General, who wired and wrote to the Government that they were making a mistake by making contracts in the colony without reference to him in London, as by that single item alone they were losing £11 a ton. Why was not that discovery made then by the leader of the Opposi-

tion and his associate, the ex-Colonial Treasurer, who had to find the money? The colony was defrauded then as much as it had been defrauded since. The result was that through the active agency of Mr. Macalister a considerable sum was saved, but still between £5,000 and £6,000 were paid over the market price. Had the tenders been called in London that would never have happened. Further, that contract had had a most damaging effect upon the permanency of the works then under construction. Those rails were 35-lb. rails, for the Maryborough and Gympie railway; and he had the authority of the Executive Engineer for saying that had the contract been let in England for 41½-lb. rails, they could have been supplied for the whole sixty-three miles at an additional cost of only £1,600. The hon. gentleman knew well the difference between a 35-lb. rail and a 41½-lb. rail; and sixty-three miles of the latter could have been supplied for only £1,600 more than the vastly inferior article cost. As to the question of berth ships, that was a matter with which the Government were not acquainted. All they knew was, that a contract had been entered into for the carriage of rails from London to the colony at a certain price, and that the contract was varied some time after it was let. Information on that point could be obtained from the Agent-General without sending home for a Royal commission. The only fact which could not be ascertained here was as to whether a Mr. Leonard Cooper, as stated by the hon. gentleman last week, did go to the Mossvale Company and the Barrow Company, and contract for a certain number of rails on behalf of the Queensland Government and on the Queensland specifications. That was a charge which any person in his ordinary senses must see to be absurd on the very face of it. In order that the hon. gentleman should have a full inquiry, he intended to move an amendment to the motion to the effect that a select committee be appointed by the House to inquire into the matter, with power to send for persons and papers, and composed of Messrs. Douglas, Dickson, and McLean—three members of the last Government—and Messrs. Perkins, Archer, Morehead, and himself (Mr. Macrossan). The hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) might laugh, for he knew that if a commission was appointed it would take at least twelve or eighteen months to ascertain the facts, during which time those damaging charges would be hanging over the heads of the Premier and the Government, whilst the hon. member and his followers could bespatter them with mud during the whole time. That was the reason why the hon. gentleman did not wish the matter to be dealt with by a select committee. The hon. gentleman had talked about the low tone of morality on the Government side of the House, but he had observed a far lower tone of morality on the part of the hon. gentleman and his friends. As far as a low tone of morality was concerned, the hon. gentleman should not throw stones: a man who had been accused so repeatedly as he had been of having worked certain land cases to benefit himself should be the last man to talk about a low tone of morality to any member of the House. Whether the hon. gentleman had done so or not was best known to himself, but many hon. members in the House believed he had, and hundreds of people outside believed so too. Before talking about morality, therefore, he would do well to wash his own hands. The amendment he (Mr. Macrossan) had to propose was, that all the words after the word "that" at the commencement of the motion should be omitted, with a view to inserting the words, "a select committee be appointed to inquire into the following allegations, namely." He then pro-

posed to insert the allegations contained in the proposed address, adopting the words of the hon. member (Mr. Griffith), so that he could not say that anything had been altered; and to conclude the amendment with the words, "That such committee have power to send for persons and papers, and to sit during any adjournment of the House; such committee to consist of Mr. Dickson, Mr. Douglas, Mr. McLean, Mr. Archer, Mr. Morehead, Mr. Perkins, and the Mover." That was as fair a committee as could be selected. Three of the members had held the position of Ministers of the Crown; himself and his colleague (Mr. Perkins) occupied that position now, and, in addition, there would be Mr. Archer and Mr. Morehead. No one could take exception to the composition of the committee, and he believed the House would be satisfied when they sent in their report. Before sitting down he should advert to the case of Sir John Macdonald, in Canada, and he did so only because the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) referred to that case as being the only one he knew of in which a Minister of the Crown had been implicated in any transaction approaching bribery, corruption, or fraud. Upon that Minister being charged with certain malpractices, by Mr. Huntington, the course followed was to appoint a select committee, and that committee was afterwards supplemented by a Royal commission, not appointed by the Queen, but by the Governor-General, Lord Dufferin.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The transactions took place in Canada.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Some were alleged to have taken place in the United States.

Mr. GRIFFITH: But not in England.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the whole history of the transaction was detailed in the records of the Lower House in Canada and in the despatches of Lord Dufferin, who approved the course which was pursued. The Royal commission, also, was appointed, not because it was supposed that the select committee was not sufficient to do the work, but because it appeared that there was some delay in the meetings of the committee, and it was urgently desired that the matter should be inquired into. The Royal commission consisted of three Judges—two of the superior and one of the inferior court. The House had therefore a precedent to guide them in this case; and were they to make an appeal to the Queen to interfere in the internal administration of the colony—for this was purely a matter of internal administration—they would meet with the answer that they had the power and privilege of attending to their own concerns as best they could, so long as they did not interfere with Imperial interests. He begged to move the amendment he had read.

The SPEAKER said, as the words of the greater part of the amendment were identical with the words of a portion of the motion, he should first put the question—that all the words after "that" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "a select committee be appointed to inquire into the following allegations, namely."

Mr. DOUGLAS said he should endeavour to follow the remarks of the last speaker, and reply to him upon a few points. In this matter he occupied a perfectly independent position. His hon. friend the leader of the Opposition did not consult him before tabling the motion, and until it appeared on the business paper he had not considered it. Approaching the matter from a thoroughly independent standpoint, he would at once say that he saw no reason why a select committee should not be appointed here, and he saw many why one should, believing that the adoption of such a course was essential to the thorough investigation

of the points raised. He must, however, take exception to some of the remarks of the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman started by stating that by adopting such a resolution the House would be abdication its functions as an independent legislature; and he referred to the course adopted by Mr. Berry, in Victoria, as one to be avoided. He (Mr. Douglas) should never willingly allow the House to abdicate any part of their function as a legislature, and he would point out that the two cases were essentially different. Mr. Berry, having failed to legislate, proceeded to England, and in doing so announced that his object was to endeavour to secure legislation by the Imperial Government in a matter in which the local legislature was not in agreement. He (Mr. Douglas) never considered that Mr. Berry was right as a matter of policy in making any such announcement or going on such a fruitless quest. But the matter now under consideration was quite different, being one purely of administration; and it appeared to him that, as an independent legislature, the House could very well delegate their powers to the Administration in England for the purpose of undertaking an inquiry into a branch of their legislature which they, from the very fact of locality, could not control in the same way that they could control the internal affairs of the colony. The address proposed to practically delegate the undoubted powers of this House to a co-ordinate and superior power, requesting Her Majesty to cause an inquiry to be made in the mother-country which this House could not satisfactorily make on their own account. A commission appointed by Her Majesty would undoubtedly possess prestige and powers which this House could not delegate to any commission of its own having effect in the United Kingdom. The fullest and most exhaustive inquiry was desired, and the authority of this House was delegated to the Queen, in order that no question might arise as to the powers of the commission, and in order that the inquiry might be entrusted to independent and unprejudiced persons. The letter from Lord Kimberley read by the hon. gentleman was such a letter as Lord Kimberley might have been expected to write. In that case the question in dispute was between officials in a matter connected with this colony, and of course the answer of Lord Kimberley was that he could not interfere; but the reply of Lord Kimberley would not be that he could not interfere if this Parliament approached Her Majesty in the form of the proposed address. He (Mr. Douglas) conceived that, in this case, Lord Kimberley would cheerfully undertake the duties which might be most reasonably imposed upon him, just as Her Majesty, in some matters connected with her Imperial power, might with perfect justice ask this House, as the highest administrative power in this colony, to undertake matters connected with Imperial administration. There were already matters of Imperial administration which to some extent were delegated to the local powers, and he saw no objection from the highest point of view of the statesmanship and independence of this legislature—and even on the ground that in matters connected with local legislation the authority of the House is supreme—to the delegation of whatever powers we possessed to the fountain of all our authority, so long as the colony remained a part of the British Empire. It was therefore no humility to approach Her Majesty in this form. The hon. member had spoken of the “humble” petition, but it was well known that under such ancient forms of humility perfect independence of action was retained; and that the respect and affection we were always willing to bestow upon the head of the State was shown in the adoption of forms which were consecrated by the usages

of antiquity. He therefore repudiated the terms in which the hon. gentleman had referred to the phraseology in which the address was couched, holding that it was no disgrace to approach Her Majesty in terms of humble loyalty. The hon. gentleman had referred to the work of Mr. Todd, the librarian of the Canadian Legislature, as an authority on this subject. He (Mr. Douglas) had not the authority to refer to; but, taking the passage quoted by the hon. gentleman, he did not see that it in any way impugned the position taken up by the head of the Opposition. The authority quoted stated three cases from his experience and reading of history in which the Imperial power might be invoked. But whether this case came or did not come under the category, we were entitled—perfectly entitled—to make a precedent. It was within the range of the powers of the House to delegate their power, and there was nothing to justify them in refraining from doing so if the interests of the colony made it desirable. He had the highest respect for the authority quoted, but that opinion did not prevent the House from undertaking the responsibility of taking action even if the present case did not come exactly within the four corners of either of the cases described by Todd. Another very important statement made by the hon. gentleman was that the Barrow Co.'s invoice would never have been sent in, and this scandal would never have occurred, if it had not transpired that Mr. Hamilton discovered that he was about to be dismissed. Following the *rationale* of the case, he (Mr. Douglas) had arrived at a very different conclusion after considering the dates of the letter, which he had had an opportunity of perusing. The papers concerning an inquiry undertaken by the head of the Government into the working of the Agent-General's office, and including a good deal of important matter, had only reached him this morning, and he had only had time to merely glance over them. But whilst not professing to be in possession of all the papers contained, he had satisfied himself that the allegation of the hon. gentleman was not sustained by the facts contained in those papers. He found that for some eighteen months, at all events, there had been very unsatisfactory relations between the Agent-General and Mr. Hamilton. The papers also disclosed the fact that the London office was in a most disorganised condition; but he should not now express any opinion as to who was entirely to blame for the existence of such a state of things. At any rate, these unsatisfactory relations had subsisted for upwards of eighteen months. The Premier arrived in England at the latter end of December, and remained until May. From December, through the months of January, February, and March, they heard nothing of the unsatisfactory way in which the business of the office had been conducted. It was not until the invoices had been sent in by the Barrow Co. that they heard a word of complaint either from the Agent-General or the Premier. He would now refer to the dates, in order that they might have something like a succinct idea of the transaction. It appeared that the letters from the Barrow Co., enclosing the invoices, were dated March 13 and 15. Then it would appear—and it formed part of the evidence given at the inquiry—that upon receiving the invoices Mr. Hamilton considered it to be his duty to correspond direct with the Barrow Co. Their answer, intimating that the invoices had been sent to the Queensland Government in error, was dated March 27. The letter signed by Mr. Hamilton marked “private and confidential,” and directing the attention of the Agent-General to the facts, was dated March 31. Two days after the inquiry was instituted, and it extended from April 2 to April 26, the three days on which it was held being April 2, 8, and 23. Now, Mr. Hamilton

was dismissed on April 12—before the inquiry was closed, and after the evidence on the second day was taken—and here he would just ask the attention of hon. members to the correspondence which took place between Mr. Hamilton and the Premier on that occasion. Mr. Hamilton was informed on April 12 that his services would no longer be required by the Government of Queensland, and on April 13 he wrote acknowledging the receipt of the letter, and informing the Premier that he was appointed by the Governor in Council, and presumed that his dismissal had been made upon the same authority. He wrote further:—

“If this authority has been given, I must beg to be informed on what grounds I am dismissed. I respectfully ask for an independent inquiry into the grounds of such dismissal.”—

A very legitimate demand, it seemed to him (Mr. Douglas). It seemed to him to be most legitimate that an independent inquiry should be sought for, as unquestionably the form of the invoice, and, in fact, the indictment in the case, disclosed the name of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. On the following day the Premier, by way of reply, informed Mr. Hamilton—

“Sir,—In reply to yours of yesterday, reminding me that you were appointed to your present office by the Governor of Queensland in Council, and that your dismissal should be made by the same authority, I have the honour to inform you that I have acted with the direct authority of the Governor of Queensland in Council in the action I have taken. In reply to your request that I should inform you on what grounds you were dismissed, and that such dismissal should be referred for inquiry to some independent tribunal, I fail to apprehend clearly your desire. If you mean that I should state in several charges the grounds of my action, and refer them to some party here, independent of you and the Government, for arbitration, I decline the proposal.”

He might remark here that Mr. Hamilton never made any claim for arbitration. The Premier went on to say:—

“Representing the Government, I am responsible for my acts, accept the responsibility, and am neither able nor willing to delegate it to another. If, however, you desire to know my reasons for the course I have taken, which should be apparent to you from my late inquiry into the working of the office, I have no objection to state them.”

Then followed a letter from Mr. Hamilton to the Premier, dated April 17:—

“Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your communication dated the 14th instant, informing me that your action with respect to myself is with the direct authority of the Governor of Queensland in Council.

“It is not apparent to me, from your late inquiry, on what grounds you dispensed with my services, and I shall feel obliged if you will inform me of them.

“I beg respectfully to reiterate my demand for an independent inquiry, and, if denied, ask your permission to examine the records of the office, and to take extracts therefrom for the purpose of vindicating myself in the proper quarter; and I protest against your action, and reserve to myself the right to adopt such ulterior proceedings as I may be advised to take.

“I have, &c.,
“THOS. HAMILTON.”

The Premier declined to accede to the demand for an independent inquiry in the following letter, which was dated April 24:—

“Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of yours of the 17th instant.

“Your demand for what you term an independent inquiry I decline for the reasons stated in my previous letter. Your services were dispensed with by the Government because, for the last eighteen months at least, you have failed in the performance of your own duties and have obstructed the Agent-General in the performance of his.

“Your request for ‘permission to examine the records of the office and to take extracts therefrom for the purpose of vindicating yourself in the proper quarter,’ I cannot concede. I will, however, be glad to give instructions that you be supplied with any official records from the Agent-General’s office for the purpose you mention, provided it is not incompatible with the interests of the public service.

“I have, &c.,
“T. McILWRAITH.”

There the correspondence between Mr. Hamilton and the Premier closed, and, with regard to it, he would say that the accusation of the Minister for Works was not sustained. They heard of nothing against Mr. Hamilton until the invoices were forwarded to the Agent-General and after the inquiry had been partly held, and then his dismissal was not based upon *that* and the proceedings which arose out of the inquiry, but out of the substance of the inquiry and its disclosures they learnt that there was an uncomfortable feeling between the Agent-General and him. He could conceive that it would have been perfectly justifiable for the Agent-General or the Premier to have suspended Mr. Hamilton, and then to have instituted an inquiry. The disclosures made in this investigation seemed to him to justify that course, for it was clear the two men were not working harmoniously with each other—that one must go, and under the circumstances, Mr. Hamilton being the subordinate, it would certainly have been within the province of the Agent-General or the Premier to have suspended him; but he thought the Premier had done him a serious wrong by dismissing him without giving him a further inquiry than was granted. There was no evidence to show whether the Premier really possessed authority from the Governor in Council to exercise his right of dismissal. He spoke with deference upon this point. It was possible that the Governor in Council might, by telegram, have delegated authority to the hon. gentleman to act, but at any rate it was not disclosed by the papers. It did not appear that the Premier possessed any further power than being at the head of the Government, which position would, under certain circumstances, justify him taking extreme steps; but under the circumstances of this matter would not justify him in doing more than suspending Mr. Hamilton for the purpose of holding an inquiry. He had said what he thought necessary regarding Mr. Hamilton’s dismissal, because it seemed to him an unjust thing for the Minister for Works to assert on the strength of the papers that Mr. Hamilton had made the disclosures because he knew that he would be dismissed. Nothing had transpired up to the time of the dismissal to justify such a conclusion. The hon. gentleman, in moving his amendment, had said their duty was to inquire here, and that there was a second duty, which was to inquire in England. In that respect he agreed with him. It was their duty to make all the necessary inquiries here that they could; but there was nothing inconsistent in the carrying of the address and the appointment of a committee such as that proposed. He did not object to the constitution of the committee, except that he would rather not have anything to do with such a disagreeable duty; nevertheless, he should undertake it if it were imposed upon him. He would also

wish to impress upon the hon. gentleman that it could never have occurred to his hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, to dispense with the investigation here. They had not the papers, and until they were put into their hands they were not in a position to take any action. He would repeat that he was not consulted in regard to this matter, but he approved of the address. It was sufficient for the purpose—it could not be less. It was calculated to secure a thorough and impartial investigation, and he conceived that the matters disclosed were of such great importance as to justify the House in invoking the Queen's authority for the holding of an exhaustive inquiry. He did not wish to impute anything to the Premier in regard to these matters. The hon. gentleman was placed in a difficult and invidious position. Connected as he was with the Government, and connected as a firm bearing his name was with the Queensland office, the discharge of his duties were possibly difficult; but when the facts came under his notice—the important fact revealed by Barrow Company's invoice—there was nothing in the papers to show that he followed up the inquiry. The inquiry commenced on April 2, and did not close until April 26, and the hon. gentleman did not leave England until May 9. From April 2 to May 9 was more than a month, and surely some inquiry should have been made in connection with the Barrow Company. How was it, in fact, that the hon. gentleman made no inquiry regarding the one substantial circumstance, and that he had not supplied them with any information? On a previous occasion he (Mr. Douglas) had commented on the remarkable fact that the Barrow Company appeared to be in possession of the special specification of the Queensland Government. That seemed to him to be a very remarkable fact; but the Minister for Works pooh-poohed it, and said that all firms had the specification of the Queensland Government; but having regard to the fact that the Barrow Company had, previous to the calling of the tenders, entered into a contract for the supply of the very rails required, it deserved investigation. Mr. Ashwell had been referred to in connection with this very subject, and he would refer hon. members to what that gentleman said on the question of the speciality of the Queensland specification. In reply to Mr. McIlwraith, who put the question—

"You stated, in reply to an inquiry by me as to whether the rail-makers named by Mr. Hamilton were considered by you proper contractors with the Government, that they were not, 'neither for their own sakes nor ours'; what does that mean?"

Mr. Ashwell said—

"What I meant by that last sentence was that many of the firms named by Mr. Hamilton produced their rails on what is known as the direct process, and which is entirely at variance with our specifications. These makers, also, are not able to produce a light rail sufficiently satisfactory to meet the requirements of the colony, from the fact that they require to roll a light rail in a heavy metal, and they must either cause a great deal of trouble in the inspection by reason of a great number of rejections, or they must lay down a special plant for the purpose of rolling these rails, and which plant some of the firms are now laying down. I think that explains the meaning of that sentence."

He assumed from that that the Barrow Co. must have been in the position of makers of rails in the way described by Mr. Ashwell, and that the rails they were now making for the colony through the Haslam Co. were of the character described by Mr. Ashwell, because he took it for granted that the conditions applied to the Has-

lam Co. were such as Mr. Ashwell described. It followed, therefore, that an unusual specification must have been in the possession of the Barrow Co. when they took the contract, and that they knew they were undertaking it subject to the conditions laid down by Mr. Ashwell. It was consequently for this reason, chiefly, that he regretted the Premier did not follow up the inquiry as he might have done when he was at home. He had ample time, and should not have been precluded by any difficulty in his way—at any rate, he should have clearly ascertained from the Barrow and Moss Vale companies who were the principals that they were dealing with, and whether those principals had contracted for them in the name of the Queensland Government, or what was called in the invoice the Queensland Railway Company. It was a material point in connection with the whole of the evidence, and should have been investigated—in fact, in justice to Mr. Hamilton, it should have been inquired into. Mr. Hamilton's charge was that there was appearance of collusive dealing; and before the Premier could deal justly and finally with Mr. Hamilton, he was bound, it seemed to him, to ascertain either from the Barrow or Moss Vale Company who their principals were and how they came to be making Queensland rails. He hoped the hon. gentleman would be able to explain that, because it was a material element in the whole proceeding, and ought to have been disclosed in the papers presented to the House. The Minister for Works had also referred to a contract that had been made with Ibbotson and Co. by the Government with which he (Mr. Douglas) was connected. He was not acquainted with the details, but he would corroborate the hon. gentleman's statement, that the Agent-General, on hearing of the transaction, was of opinion that a better bargain might have been made. No doubt a better bargain might have been made, and in some instances it would be just as well that a bargain should be made here, especially if the conditions involved approval on delivery. As a matter of fact, most of the telegraph wire had been bought upon those terms. The contractor who supplied the wire made it his specialty, and his arrangement with the Government was that the wire should be laid down and that he should not be paid till it was approved here. Whatever might have been the rights or wrongs of the previous contract made with Ibbotson through Thomason, it was better than that made by the Minister for Works. They concluded the transaction—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Who got the money?

Mr. DOUGLAS said the contractor got the money. There was a marked difference between this and the previous transaction. In the transaction they were now speaking of it was clear there was some person who, having obtained information of the special kind of rail, which could only be obtained through some persons acquainted with our requirements, had entered into a contract; and the appearance so far was that McIlwraith and McEacharn had done so. He did not know whether they had or not; but from the invoice notes it would appear that they had. They had entered into a contract for 15,000 tons of rails, knowing the specification and possibly the number of rails that would be required. In the meantime the Government's hands were tied for three months by the fact that the Minister for Works had made a one-sided bargain here. Whatever imputations the Minister for Works might bring against the Opposition, they had never made a one-sided bargain like that. They might have been in error as to the price. The price of rails at the time they

bought them here might have been lower in England—but he was not acquainted personally with the details of the transaction. That transaction, at any rate, was similar to others which the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government had been party to, as disclosed in the correspondence before them. The hon. gentleman had called on Mr. Thomason, while in England, in reference to the price of rails, and Mr. Thomason, before the tenders were called, pointed out that rails could be obtained at a certain price—he thought £8 10s.; and at the same time he pointed out—that was, immediately after the Premier arrived in England—that he would strongly advise him to close at that price, as iron would be sure to go up, and he would lose money. The hon. gentleman did not take that advice, but placed the matter in the hands of the Agent-General. The transaction ought to have been entirely in the Premier's hands, or entirely in the hands of the Agent-General; there should be no division of responsibility in such matters. But the hon. gentleman, though inclined to close with Ibbotson then and there, declined to do so without the advice of the Agent-General. The Agent-General wrote and telegraphed to the effect that he believed still more advantageous terms could be obtained, and would not advise the acceptance of Ibbotson's offer. That was a simple error of judgment anybody might make. The hon. gentleman thought it would be wise to accept, and as it turned out it would have been wise; but the Agent-General advised that it should not be accepted. Those were simply matters of judging and nothing more. They were not departures from the true principle of business, such as the Minister for Works exhibited: and that principle, he took it, was mutuality, wherever a contract was concerned. But there was no mutuality in that contract; the Government was bound on the one side, but the contractor was not bound on the other, and that was a bad contract under any circumstances. The Minister for Works in the Government with which he was connected never made such a bargain as that. In this case the expenditure of £50 or £100 upon telegrams would have clinched the bargain; and the question was simply whether Thomason had power from Ibbotson to close. Thomason had offered to supply 42,000 tons of rails at a certain price, and the mere error in the telegram received in reply ought not to have prevented the Minister for Works following up telegraphic communication, and either closing them then and there or leaving the offer entirely. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Macrossan) in this reference had been drawing them aside from the merits of the case now before the House. That contract made with Ibbotson by a previous Government had nothing to do with this case, and it was not at all analogous, or if an analogy could be drawn it was against the hon. gentleman; and whatever errors of judgment there might have been, the error of judgment and want of discretion shown by the hon. gentleman himself had been infinitely greater. The hon. gentleman also raised the objection that Ibbotson was not a rail-maker, but only an agent. That, however, was an objection that applied to all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is the objection you raise against the Haslam Company?

Mr. DOUGLAS said it was remarkable that Mr. Macalister, the Agent-General, had recommended against Ibbotson and Co. on the ground that they were agents, and that the cheapest way would be to go to the rail-makers.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government benches: No, no.

Mr. DOUGLAS said if hon. gentlemen would refer to the correspondence, they would find that

the Agent-General said it was undesirable to accept offers of this kind—they should have recourse to the makers direct, and not to intermediate. And if that applied to Ibbotson it applied equally to the Haslam Company. He had thus followed the hon. gentleman, showing in what respect he differed from him, and where he agreed with him. He agreed that the motion made by the leader of the Opposition was not in itself sufficient. It was good for the purposes required in England; but, so far as they were concerned here, he should offer every facility by his vote and voice for the appointment of a committee also; but he would not assist the hon. gentleman in setting aside this motion by substituting for a commission the appointment of a committee. That in itself was a substantive motion as necessary as the other, and he would support it; but not for the purpose of throwing out the present motion, which he conceived to be equally necessary.

Mr. BAYNES was surprised that the hon. member for Maryborough should be one to shift his responsibility on the shoulders of that youthful legislator, the leader of the Opposition. It was not becoming of him as one of the oldest legislators in the House, and also at one time one of the legislators of the mother-colony, to shift that responsibility. He felt for that hon. youth; he felt that he was not in his proper place, and that he was very much handicapped in the company he was in. That hon. and aged politician, the member for Maryborough, should be the last, knowing as much as he did of colonial politics, to refer the washing of the colony to the Imperial Government. They undertook a lot of the duty the Imperial Government should do—the kanaka question, for instance; but, whatever their faults might be, they were quite able to clean their own linen here, and should not send it home to be purged. He could not conceive what there was in office that anyone should love it. He would rather take a basket and sell oranges than be in the best office in Queensland. He could not understand why the hon. gentleman opposite, with all his eloquence and literary attainments, should hunger for office. He might have been on the Queensland bench at the present moment, and he (Mr. Baynes) could not understand this greed for office. But why did they not let the Government go on with the business of the country? It was immaterial to him who was in office. Whatever was to be done in this matter he hoped they would do it themselves, and not spoil their good repute by taking the matter home. If the Premier had done wrong at home, if he had made one dishonest step—not if he had made one imprudent step, because there was no business man that had not made an imprudent step—but if he had made one dishonest step, he (Mr. Baynes) would be one of the first to get him out of the House. As a man of business, he could certainly give the Premier his support. He believed that hon. gentleman was honest, notwithstanding the impeachment of the members opposite, which was nothing more than mare's-nest. Let the colony manage the matter themselves, as Lord Kimberley would have them do. He trusted that no frivolous or irreverent remarks would distract the attention of the House from the matter now before it. He took it to be one of the most serious matters that could be brought before Parliament. Either the gentlemen in whom they now had confidence—the present Ministry—were guilty of a breach of honesty, and were undeserving the confidence of the colony, or they were not. He should be one of the first to open up the fullest inquiry into their conduct, but he maintained that it should be conducted within the Assembly. They were, so to speak, peers within themselves, and need not go beyond their colony: they need not, as he

had said before, take their little foibles to the Queen. He trusted that the proposition made by the hon. Minister for Works would be met with the proper feeling which it deserved by the inhabitants of the colony. There must be an inquiry, and he believed that the Ministry would come out of the inquiry as clean as he saw them at that moment. It would be most injurious to colonial institutions to have one of the brightest of the colonies going to the Queen and saying that they did not believe in their own powers of administration. Any man knew that the colony would suffer from a quarrel within itself. It was the worst thing that could occur to any colony, or to any Administration. Whatever quarrels they might have, let them fight it out among themselves; and he would be one of the first to assist in expunging from the House anything that was not pure. He would be very sorry to advocate the interest of one side of the House more than another. He was independent, but believed that the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government was free from the imputations that had been made against him by the leader of the Opposition. Any man of sense in that House who heard those imputations made, if he had any human feeling, could see that the hon. gentleman himself knew that they were not well founded, from his very manner. Anyone might have seen that they had no basis. Look, how he faltered when the charge was made against the hon. the Premier? He did not bring the charge against the Premier as he (Mr. Baynes) would have brought it, nor as a gentleman occupying the position of a learned barrister should have done. In short, the hon. gentleman failed in what he attempted to do, and a gentleman in his position should not have attempted to do what he did if he could not carry it through. He trusted that his remarks would be taken in the spirit which they had been met by both sides of the House. He was, literally speaking, standing in the centre of the House. He stood as impartial as the Speaker himself, and he hoped that the House would always be treated in the same spirit as he was then treated.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had listened with very considerable attention to the speech of the hon. member for Maryborough, in order to find out what it really meant, for once in his life. After seriously considering that speech during its delivery, and after cogitating on it since, he (Mr. Palmer) had arrived at the conclusion that the proposal of that hon. gentleman, as far as he could make out, was this:—He told them he entirely approved of a committee of the House inquiring into these questions, and he also approved of the motion made by the hon. member for North Brisbane. They were to have not only a committee of the House, but at the same time were to adopt a resolution made by the hon. member for North Brisbane, and present an address to the Queen praying that she should take the matter into consideration and appoint a Royal commission. Anything more ridiculous than to adopt both the motion and the amendment of his hon. colleague, the Minister for Works, never was heard of in this or any other House. They were to have two commissions, as it were, acting thoroughly independent of each other, trying to ascertain the merits of the same matter. Anything more absurd than that proposition he had never listened to in all his life. The hon. gentleman talked in a very high and mighty style of delegating our functions to Her Majesty, but he would like to hear the private opinion of the Secretary of State when he heard of the proposition of the hon. member. Anything more unconstitutional, or tending more to show the Home Government that we were utterly unfit for self-government, he could not conceive. He

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thought the answer Lord Kimberley had already given to the request of that—either very bad servant of the Government, or very much traduced individual, Mr. Hamilton—

Mr. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY asked what was the "hear, hear" for?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Very much traduced individual.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if the hon. member would keep his "hear, hear" until he (the Colonial Secretary) had finished the few words he intended to address to the House, perhaps he would not be quite so ready with it. He was going to say that the answer given by Lord Kimberley, which was amongst the papers laid upon the table, ought to be quite sufficient to show the hon. member for Maryborough, unless he was more obtuse than usual, that the Home Government had not the slightest intention to interfere in any way with our internal affairs. It was contrary to the whole principles of British policy, as carried out in late years, to interfere in any way with the management of the internal affairs of a colony that was under representative Government—and he believed the hon. member knew that as well as possible. He believed that the only object of the hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Griffith, in moving this address, was for the purpose of gaining time—for the purpose of delay. He believed that hon. member felt perfectly well and believed as fully as he (the Colonial Secretary) did, that the answer of Lord Kimberley, or any Secretary of State—no matter what Government might be in power—to any address such as that proposed by him would be simply "Gentlemen, mind your own affairs. You have had the power delegated to you"—that was using "delegation" in the proper sense of the term—"by the Imperial Government, and it is not to be delegated back again," in the language of the hon. member for Maryborough. That, he had no doubt, would be the answer of any Secretary of State to any such ridiculous, puerile address as that proposed by the hon. member. He (Mr. Griffith) must have felt that when he put the motion on the paper, although he was very fond indeed of requesting the House not to make a question a party question, that it was nothing more nor less than a vote of censure on the Ministry, and that any Ministry that would submit to such an address being carried and remain in office one hour longer were unworthy of the trust reposed in them by the country. They were placed there to manage their own affairs, and if they could not manage them they had better send an address to the Queen of a very different description to that proposed by the hon. member—telling Her Majesty that they were utterly unable to manage their own affairs, and surrendering their constitution back to her. That would be the proper course to take if they were obliged to send such an address as that proposed by the hon. member for North Brisbane, and which he did not believe that hon. member ever thought, even by making it a party question on his own side of the House, he would be able to carry. He believed there was more common-sense on the other side of the House than to adopt such a silly attempt to delegate their functions to Her Majesty the Queen. They were told by the hon. member for Maryborough, among other multitudinous things, that if they had no precedent for the Imperial Government interfering in a matter such as this in a colony enjoying representative government, we should make one. Well, he thought that hon. gentleman was much more likely to make a confounded mess of the whole thing than to establish a pre-

cedent. They had been told in the course of the debate that a committee sitting here could not get all the information, or any information that would be of much use in this vexed question. He held a very different opinion. He believed that any committee appointed here might get a great deal of information not only in this colony, but by using the telegraph they could get a great deal from the mother-country. As one sample of that, he proposed to read to the House a telegram he had received from the Agent-General in reply to one sent by himself consequent upon some assertions made by the hon. member for North Brisbane last week. It would show that information of this sort, which perhaps was not quite expected by some members of the House, could be got by telegram. It struck him, on hearing the speech of the hon. member who represented Mr. Hemmant in that House, that it was rather an extraordinary thing that Mr. Hemmant should have interfered so much as he had done in the internal affairs of the colony in which, although he was connected with it by business, he had ceased for years to reside. He thought there might have been some little game going on at the Agent-General's office, which the dismissal of Mr. Hamilton by the Premier might have seriously interfered with, and, acting on that assumption, he telegraphed to the Agent-General for information on the subject. He regretted that he had not got with him the telegram he (the Colonial Secretary) sent, but he could repeat the sense of it if not the words. He said—"Make inquiries in the office whether Mr. Hemmant has had any business transactions with the Government of Queensland without tenders having been called for. Inquire particularly, and report at once by telegram." He thought that was a very fair question to ask. It was not going behind the scenes at all to get information. He would read to the House the telegram he received in reply:—

"London, 13 July, '80.

"Have searched books and papers and since February seventy-eight Hemmant has supplied rugs and sheets for ship kits amounting to three thousand six hundred and thirty-nine pounds without competitive tenders being called by Hamilton. So far as records show in seventy-seven Bradbrook and Hartley and William Hartley supplied rugs at four and tenpence. In February seventy-eight Hemmant charged six shillings, and afterwards seven and four."

A very nice little game—

"In December seventy-seven Caldekott and Son supplied sheets at two and one penny Hemmant's price was two and two pence."

He went in for the honest penny, there!—

"In February seventy-eight see invoices on all these in the colony. For indent seventy-nine Hemmant tendered for ordnance rugs with no competition amount one hundred and twenty-two pounds five. For indent sixty-nine Anderson Abbott tendered eighty-two ten Hemmant was paid eighty-three pounds for ponchos."

The honest penny was not sufficient in that case; he got an extra 10s.—

"Only two firms asked. For indent sixty-four Hemmant was one hundred and seven pounds ten and threepence for canvas. Two other firms quoted lower. For indent sixty-one Hemmant was paid two thirty seven pounds eight and ten pence for canvas and other things. Two other firms quoted some sixty pounds less."

He thought this showed, amongst other things, that information could be got from home by telegraph.

Mr. GRIFFITH: When required.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said yes, when required. That telegram was signed "Macalister," the Agent-General, the late companion, bosom friend, father in politics, and colleague of the hon. gentleman opposite who now sought to cry him down to the lowest depths. That information, he was quite satisfied, was never expected by the hon. member who had raised this storm in a teapot on the petition of Mr. William Hemmant. He never expected it would come to light. He (the Colonial Secretary) believed that hon. members and the public at large would, when the information came before them, agree with him in thinking that if Mr. Hamilton had not been removed from playing this nice little game they would never have heard anything of that petition. However, the petition had been sent in, such as it was; and, as had been said by the Premier, repeated by the Minister for Works, and echoed by every member on that side of the House, even on that petition and all the information that could be got from Mr. Hemmant, or Mr. Hamilton, or from any other source, the Government were not only willing but most anxious to have the most thorough inquiry.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Why burk it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was no intention whatever on that side of the House to burk inquiry, but they were certainly not prepared to allow the hon. member for North Brisbane to be judge and jury and prosecuting counsel. That was a very different thing from a fair, open inquiry which they were willing to have and would insist upon having.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Nominate your own tribunal.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said they were not going to nominate their own tribunal. It would be a long time before they would allow the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) to be their tribunal. He hoped that sufficient common-sense would remain in the House for many generations not to allow that hon. gentleman, or any other gentleman who showed his political spite in such a determined manner, to act as a judge or jury, or nominate the tribunal at which any men of that House should be arraigned. He had shown that information could easily be got from England by telegram, and he might state that he had since sent a telegram to the Agent-General for further particulars, and he should be prepared to read his reply to the House as soon as it was received. He had telegraphed to the Agent-General—the hon. gentleman would excuse him for not putting "Mr." before his name, but it would cost a little money:—

"Griffith stated in House Leonard Cooper purchased as for this Government and on our specification rails from Barrow and Mossvale Companies at £6. Same sold this Government at £9 18s. 6d. Communicate with these companies and telegraph their replies and any information you can give. Why has McIlwraith, whose tender was for full cargo ships been allowed send berth ships?"

That information he would get in a day or two, and he should have great pleasure in reading it to the House. The Government were not afraid of any inquiry that could be made, so long as it was made fairly and openly; and he thought that when he procured the reply to the telegram he had just read that it would be convincing proof to the House and the country that they could get a vast deal of information from home without sending an humble address to the Queen to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into a matter that they could inquire into themselves. The hon. member for Maryborough dwelt at considerable length upon the Agent-General's office

and the proceedings going on there, and endeavoured so far as he could to defend the position of Mr. Hamilton. It could hardly be expected of him (the Colonial Secretary) by that House, or any portion of it, that he should stand forward as the defender of Mr. Macalister. His opinion of that gentleman had been expressed too often in that House for him to repeat it again. He never thought Mr. Macalister would make a good Agent-General. He had been of opinion for many a long day that the Agent-General's office was in a most confused state—in fact, “confusion” was not the word; it should be a worse one, for although he did not get telegrams from Royal personages or dukes or other influential persons, such as the hon. member for Northern Downs (Mr. Thorn) favoured them with sometimes, he was still able to procure a good deal of information on the subject, and he had known for a long time that the Agent-General's office was in anything but a satisfactory or happy state—in fact, the visit of the Premier to England had for one of its objects—and that not the least—to inquire into the working of the office, and to remedy it as far as possible. He would recommend hon. members to read carefully—he would not inflict upon the House the whole of the evidence taken—the report laid on the table, and judge for themselves the state of things in that office, and whether it was not absolutely necessary that some change should be made in it. With all his objection to Mr. Macalister, having read his evidence over carefully, he felt bound to say that he came out of the inquiry in a much better manner than he could have anticipated. It might be of some use if he read to the House, and by so doing make it more public than it was likely to be in the shape of papers laid on the table, what Mr. Macalister himself said as to the state of affairs in that office. Mr. Macalister was an aged, and on the other side of the House, honoured public servant, and the following was what he said on being examined by Mr. McIlwraith on the 8th April:—

“Mr. McIlwraith: Mr. Macalister, you were present when I examined Mr. Hamilton last Thursday on the management of this office, and had an opportunity of hearing that evidence. Have you any statement to make?”

“Mr. Macalister: Yes; I wish to make a few comments with regard to Mr. Hamilton's evidence on that point, which I think it might be as well for me to make now. Mr. Hamilton said that he never saw the contract for the rails, and that similar matters were done before in the Queensland office; that letters and business passed through the office scores of times (that is the expression he uses) in which he was never consulted. Now, my answer to that statement is this:—I am really very much inclined to think that Mr. Hamilton really did not know what he was saying, or the meaning of it, because it is the rule of this office that all letters addressed to the Agent-General shall go into the hands of the Secretary and be opened by him before they ever reach the hands of the Agent-General, so that no letters or communications between the Agent-General and anybody out-of-doors could possibly take place without Mr. Hamilton's knowledge. Now, the next thing that occurs to my mind is this:—Mr. Hamilton stated that his letter of the 31st March, which I received, was private and confidential, and that I had broken confidence. Now, so far from that being the case, I told Mr. Hamilton—but he seemed to forget to mention it—that I should immediately communicate the contents of that letter to the head of the Government; and I did so. I sent it by a messenger taken out of the clerk's office, and Mr. Hamilton was present at

the time I gave the young man instructions where to take it. He was perfectly cognizant that I had opened that correspondence. I also told him that it was a matter that I could not dream of going into without taking that course; that I myself, if I attempted anything of the kind, would, in my opinion, be guilty of a gross breach of trust altogether, and I also knew perfectly well what would be the consequence if I allowed the Premier to go away without having taken action on the letter as it then stood. It was a letter referring to public business, and containing two charges—one against Mr. Ashwell and, apparently, one against myself;—a charge that he was not consulted with regard to the conduct referred to in it. I conceived, and conceive still, that I was simply doing my duty, and that I was breaking no confidence in communicating a matter which Mr. Hamilton assured me was perfectly true. I told this to Mr. Hamilton, and, as he neither assented nor dissented, I treated his saying nothing about it as assenting to the course I was about to adopt. Mr. Hamilton has stated that he never saw the contract for the fifteen thousand tons of rails, that he was not present at the opening of the tenders, and that he was not consulted about them. This observation renders it necessary for me to state that Mr. Hamilton has wilfully absented himself from the attending at the opening during—as he says himself—the last eighteen months, and probably that is about the time, I think. Up to that date Mr. Hamilton was regular in his attendance with Mr. Ashwell and myself at the opening of all the tenders. It may be as well to explain that all tenders that are opened have previously passed through Mr. Hamilton's hands. They are collected in his office, and up to eighteen months ago it was his practice to bring them in—or to send them in—and afterwards to read them over. About that time, and without assigning to me any reason whatever for it, he all at once withdrew from the consideration of any tender that was sent in to him, and the result was (unless I am supposed to run after him on the subject) that Mr. Ashwell and I did the work ourselves. I would observe that the work during the last eighteen months has not been very heavy, and so long as I had Mr. Ashwell's assistance when required, and at the opening of tenders, I never felt the slightest uneasiness. I should say, too, that the bulk—the great bulk—of all the tenders, during that time, although not relating to the making of rails, had, as a rule, reference to railway work, such as wheels, axles, springs, and a variety of other things in which Mr. Ashwell would naturally expect to be consulted; and, therefore, as I have just stated, I felt no uneasiness at Mr. Hamilton's absence from the opening of those tenders. No business ever passed through this office, to my knowledge, without Mr. Hamilton knowing it and knowing everything about it; and I was sorry to hear him say that it had, because I don't believe it. Mr. Hamilton stated that some dispute arose about the ‘Ellen Godspeed.’ There was no dispute about the ‘Ellen Godspeed.’ The only thing that occurs to me is that Mr. Hamilton informed me he would refuse to correspond with Mr. Robinson, who happened at that time to be the executive engineer for the Government, payable by commission. Some dispute took place with regard to getting these goods up from Middlesboro’—I think they were made there—up to London; but, as I told Mr. Hamilton at the time, that was a matter, as I understood it, between the shipowners and the makers of the goods. It was about one of the bridges. On that occasion I recollect that Mr. Hamilton refused to correspond with the engineer on the subject, and I was compelled to take up the correspondence myself, and I think from that day until

the day that he ceased to have anything to do with our work I was the party who did correspond with him. That is the only dispute that I know of in connection with the 'Ellen Godspeed.' Mr. Hamilton also stated that he never omitted to perform voluntarily the duties—'No, not for a moment; never, never.' Now this asseveration, as Mr. Hamilton very well knows, unless there is no meaning in words or in actions, is entirely inconsistent with his own acts. He admits that he did not attend to the meetings for the consideration of the tenders, and he admits, also, that he had no instructions to do so; therefore it must have been a voluntary and wilful act on his part. Now, to go into the matter of the contract for rails, I know of nothing—notwithstanding what Mr. Hamilton may have said—I know of nothing in connection with that contract different from the other contracts entered into for rails. We have not had a contract of much importance for rails, I fancy, for the last two years and upwards; but all the tenders were treated alike. In this instance the quantity of rails amounted to fifteen thousand tons. Instructions were received from the Government to call for tenders for the making of those rails. The dates at which the making was to be completed were stated, and Mr. Ashwell was instructed to prepare the necessary specification. That was done. We called for tenders, which we got in, and those tenders took the same course as all others before them. They first reached Mr. Hamilton's hands. They were then brought into this room for examination. I have no hesitation in stating that the tenders in that instance were from tenderers of the highest respectability in the trade. I don't think there was anything about it. The Barrow Company stands very high, but the Barrow Company were full, and did not send in a tender."

Mr. GRIFFITH: They were not asked.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Perhaps the hon. gentleman will contradict Mr. Macalister, and not me. Mr. Macalister went on to say—

"The Siemens-Landor Company, also a firm of the highest respectability, did not tender. Dr. Siemens, by letter, informed me that they would not tender, and other tenderers who came in—I forget their names, but they are mentioned in the tenders—were parties to whom it was impossible personally to make the slightest objection. One tender came in which was not called for; a tender from Ibbotson and Company was also received. Mr. Hamilton objects, as I see in his statement, to my not having called upon other three firms to tender whose names are given. I gave a reason for that act at the last examination: but Mr. Ashwell, who was, of course, adviser on that point, certainly gave the reasons in full—in fact, as regards the Ebbwvale Works, we have hitherto only known the Ebbwvale Works as being the works at which Ibbotson and Company have rolled their rails, and if I am not mistaken—I am perfectly convinced, but if I am wrong Mr. Ashwell will be able to correct me—I am strongly under the conviction that the very last contract we had for rails which they got, I, in writing, protested against those rails being rolled at the Ebbwvale Works. I think Mr. Ashwell has dealt with the other two. We have never had any transaction with them that I know of. With regard to ourselves, we have had transactions with firms, a better class of tenderers than which could not, I believe, be got in Great Britain. These tenders were opened and on examination, everything being noted down. The Haslam Company's tender, as being the lowest, was accepted. Mr. Ashwell agreed in my acceptance of the tender; but, of course, I had to take the responsibility of accepting it, as

I had with regard to everything else. These tenders were certainly taken from me in order to prepare the necessary notices to be sent to the parties who had tendered—the one to the Haslam Company as being successful, the others as not being successful; and so ended that tender. As I have already stated, there was nothing in it from the beginning to the end that would induce me to hesitate about the course that was adopted. Subsequently, it would appear that Mr. Hamilton received from the Barrow Steel Company an invoice similar to the one sent by the Haslam Company, and charged at £6 a ton, making a difference between the two of £3 18s. 6d.—I think that was the amount.

"Mr. McIlwraith: Three pounds eighteen shillings and sixpence.

"Mr. Macalister: Now, although Mr. Hamilton seems to allege—I don't say so, but there is no doubt about the fact, there it is—he seems to allege that the Government through this contract will be defrauded out of fifty-nine thousand some hundred pounds. It appears to me that he has not shown anything that would lead for a second to any such conclusion. The acceptance of the tender for these rails from the Haslam Company and the subsequent invoice from the Barrow to the Haslam Company have nothing to do with the acceptance of the tender. If they prove anything at all, they simply show that there had first been a fall in the price of rails, and that subsequently there had been a rapid increase in the price; and if any inference is to be drawn from these facts it is that Haslam and Company took advantage of the low rate to purchase the rails and of the high rate to manage to sell them, or a portion of them. For all I know, they may have bought a hundred thousand tons of rails—so that the connection between the purchase of those rails and the attempt made to fix fraud as committed upon the Government seems to be perfectly absurd. There is nothing in it. Mr. Hamilton admitted himself that rails could not be bought at £6 per ton when we accepted the tender, while the whole of the tenders from undeniable people were not only gone over carefully but the lowest tender was accepted—Mr. Hamilton admitted that it was the lowest tender. I think that that is all upon this point—that is, as to the contract for rails. I wish now to come to the question of the tenders. The tenders were called for for freight for this 15,000 tons of rails. This was done, and the tenders were given in. I believe that the tenderers included not only every one of the contractors we are at present engaged with in carrying emigrants to the colony, but all our ex-contractors, and also Green and Company, and probably some others. We had a large number of tenders, all very unexceptionable, and all heartily competing with each other. Before I go further, I must here mention what took place when the notice of tenders was determined upon. After the acceptance of the tender for the making of the rails, I called in Mr. Hamilton and told him that I wished to give him instructions with regard to preparing a notice calling for tenders for the freight of those fifteen thousand tons. He came in in what I thought a rather abrupt way—I told him I wished to give him instructions with regard to the freight of the fifteen thousand tons of rails. His answer was simply this—'You had better do it yourself. I know nothing about it,'—and upon that he just as abruptly withdrew."

If he (Mr. Palmer) had been Agent-General, Mr. Hamilton would have withdrawn very quickly. The report continued—

"That was all the conversation on his part. I happened to be standing at the time, and I simply bowed to him, saying, 'I will do it my-

self.' That was all that took place between Mr. Hamilton and myself on that subject. The tenders for the freight came in at the usual time; so between that and the usual time they were, I presume, in Mr. Hamilton's possession, where all the tenders usually are kept, and they were brought into me. I think Mr. Ashwell brought them in, and I told him he had better take them into Mr. Hamilton, and tell him that they must be opened, and that if he refused to do it I should require to know the reason, and that I could not put up with this child's-play any more. Mr. Ashwell may not remember it, but those are the words I used. I heard nothing more about the tenders for some little time on the same date, when they returned to me with a sheet of paper containing a list of all the tenders and the amount they proposed to charge for the rails, which sheet has been produced. The object of considering these tenders on the part of Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Ashwell was to ascertain who was the lowest tenderer, and inform me of the fact. These tenders were certainly brought together to me, and as the writing is very distinct, and the figures very plain, of course there was no difficulty in fixing upon who was the tenderer, and I gave instructions accordingly that the lowest tender should be accepted. From that date until Mr. Hamilton's letter of the 31st March was put into my hands I had not the slightest idea that Mr. Hamilton had any objection to the acceptance of any particular tender. No communication was made to me by him or by anybody else to that effect; but it would appear that Mr. Hamilton now, after part of the rails had been put on board ships, and the accounts furnished in connection with them, takes an exception to the successful tender; and I have been endeavouring to find out, although I had not heard of it before, what really was the objection. Mr. Hamilton's objection, I understand, is that the contract for the freight of these rails should not have been taken beyond two years, that single ships would have been preferable, and that berth-ships—ships on berth for taking any description of cargo—might with advantage be employed.

"Mr. McIlwraith: Allow me to state what I understand to be the objection made to the system by Mr. Hamilton. Mr. Hamilton states that in his opinion tenders for the conveyance of the whole of the 15,000 tons of rails should not have been asked for and taken in at one time—that the better system for the Government to get these rails sent to Queensland was by watching the freight market for any particular time, employing all the berth ships that were in berth, and asking tenders for additional single ships when the Government think right from time to time. Is that correct, Mr. Hamilton?"

"Mr. Hamilton: Decidedly so.

"Mr. Macalister: Everything required to be done in connection with sending these rails to Queensland dependent on the time given for the contract for rails had been done. It was not supposed that the Barrow Company or the Haslam Company would allow the rails to be from five to six years before sending them away. They are entitled to their money when the rails are free on board, and they give notice when they are ready to ship. It is perfectly possible, as Mr. Hamilton stated, that single ships might be obtained at less; but to my mind it is as likely that we might have more to pay for single ships than under a contract that involved the passage of the whole. Having in view the fact that the whole of the rails are deliverable within twelve months, I believe, from next June, and were required in the colony immediately afterwards, that of employing berth ships—looking to the fact that one-third have got to go to Townsville, and

another third to Rockhampton—we should be able to get them to Townsville in about fifteen years—that would be about the time. Of course, you might get them there earlier if you took single ships and filled them with rails, but we had no guarantee that we could get the ships when we wanted them; because, as I say, we required proper ships to take on board as the rails are made. Looking at the fact that those rails are required to be made within a certain time, and that it was necessary to send them out after they were ready and on board and paid for, I don't see that either of the courses suggested by Mr. Hamilton would have answered the purpose, and I think that in the case of the Government they could not have done better than the course which was adopted of taking the contract. If Mr. Hamilton had any idea that the contract system was a mistake, it was his duty to inform me of it, and particularly if he had any objection to its being taken in that particular case. The contract was tendered for by a large number of firms. No objection appears to have been taken at the time they were considered, and the lowest tender was accepted. Now, Mr. Hamilton has stated that he had no opportunity of speaking to me about it. Well, his room is distant about a yard and a-half from mine; and, as I was in the office at the time, he must have made a mistake when he said so, because he could have seen me fifty times that day if he had wished to communicate with me, but he did not. Mr. Hamilton states that he never saw the contract; never knew of it till some time afterwards. Well, all I can say about that is, if he did not it was his own fault, because the office is open to him; and every paper connected with the contracts and everything else is quite at his disposal, so that nothing can be said on that point; but I can easily understand that Mr. Hamilton could not bring his mind to look at things as he ought to have done; and, if he did not see these tenders, and had an opportunity of perusing them, it is certainly because he did not do it—that is all, because there was nothing to prevent it. I think that is all that occurs to me just at this moment, but I shall be ready to answer any questions that may be put. If Mr. Hamilton knows of an objection to a tender which he has opened, and chooses to keep that information to himself concealed from the Agent-General until after one of those tenders has been accepted and part of the contract has been fulfilled, then I think he is a dangerous man for any Agent-General."

He quite agreed with Mr. Macalister for once in his life. He had been an opponent of Mr. Macalister ever since he entered the House, now many years ago, and if that gentleman were to return he had no doubt they would be found ranged on opposite sides of the House. He had never, however, once accused that gentleman of dishonesty and of telling deliberate lies, but from what he could gather from Mr. Macalister's colleagues—the men whom he had dragged into political life—it appeared that they charged him not only with dishonesty and lying, but with every other mean action that could be imagined on the part of an Agent-General. He was not a friend of Mr. Macalister, but he wished he were here now—he wished the old lion would walk into the House at this moment and confront the gentlemen who pretended to be his friends, and to support him—the men who sent him home in order to get him out of their own road to promotion;—he should dearly love to see how they would look if Mr. Macalister made his appearance amongst them. He had hopes that Mr. Macalister—who had still plenty of life in him—would yet be able to confront those hon. members, and meet the charges which had been made against him as well as against the Government. He

pitted Mr. Macalister for the condition into which he had got the London office ; but for the fever of anxiety he had suffered through Mr. Hamilton he did not pity him in the slightest degree, because he believed he richly deserved it all for having sent home Mr. Hamilton to be a spy upon a much better man than ever he himself would be. He had reaped the just fruits of that action. The hon. member for Maryborough went a little further in his discursive speech, and informed the House that, according to his high and mighty opinion, it was the duty of the Premier, if he found anything going on wrong, to suspend the secretary—implying, if not broadly stating, that the Premier had no power to dismiss him. He might inform the hon. member that the Premier was entrusted with full executive authority, not only to dismiss Mr. Hamilton, but also the Agent-General, if he thought fit. There could be little doubt about the Premier having the power in his hands. That Mr. Hamilton was justly served every action of his life since he was employed in that capacity proved ; and if this committee was granted a great deal would come out in evidence to show that Mr. Hamilton was not very particular as to truth. He (Mr. Palmer) had no doubt, notwithstanding the assertions and statements made over and over again by Mr. Hamilton that he had never received any commission from private individuals for doing private work, those statements would be contradicted over and over again by residents in this colony for whom Mr. Hamilton had done commission work. If the man had told one lie, there had been nothing to prevent him from having told a thousand : he wouldn't stick at one if it suited his purpose to tell more. Another great point made by the hon. member for Maryborough was the assertion that whoever ordered the rails must have had the Queensland specification in his hand. Of all the mare's-nests, that was about the most absurd. The Queensland Government had been calling for tenders for rails on the same specification—4½-lb. steel rails—for years, and the specification was sent to all parties asked to tender. Did the hon. member suppose that the people who got them burnt them when they had done with them? Couldn't anyone call at the Agent-General's office and get the specification from him? Anyone could get the specification, and there was not a scintilla of evidence to show that the specification in this case had been obtained improperly. What, then, became of the great bugbear about somebody having ordered rails on the Queensland specification? Anyone could do it. He did not know whether anyone had—that remained to be proved. It had been stated, he presumed with the purpose of showing that it was in the power of anyone to watch the market and seeing what was going in Queensland, to take advantage of any proposal to make extensions of railways. It was well known that the people at home very often knew a great deal more about what was going on in the colony than the inhabitants did.

Mr. GRIFFITH : Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could cry "Hear, hear," to that. It was the business of the people at home to know, and he had no doubt they knew a great deal about the business of the ex-Attorney-General in connection with those land dummymy cases. What was more likely than that speculators at home, seeing that this House during last session decided upon large extensions of our trunk lines of railway, knowing that there would be in consequence a demand for rails, and seeing that the market was rising—what was more likely than that they, having a better knowledge of the market than we had, should buy up thousands of tons of rails

on speculation? It was their business to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market, and he for one did not blame them.

Mr. GRIFFITH : You forget the contract the Minister for Works made.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he did not forget. It was quite possible that that contract was known in England, and known long before the Premier had an opportunity of knowing of it. Very likely it was well known, also, that that company would not carry out the contract, and that consequently there was a great field open for buying up rails. It was the legitimate business of those firms. What was business but speculation from beginning to end?—he could see nothing in it except that. The question, however, had been brought up in such a shape that it must be inquired into, and the fullest possible inquiry would be made that could be had in a fair manner. The hon. member (Mr. Douglas) had talked about bad bargains, but of all bad bargains by members of the Crown that hon. gentleman had made the very worst. He would venture to recall to the hon. gentleman's mind the land bought at Toowoomba. That transaction showed how capable the hon. gentleman was of conducting the business of the colony. He absolutely rushed into the market, and in a very prudent manner got, as he thought, three times the value of a piece of land. After that affair, the less the hon. gentleman said about bad bargains the better. The leader of the Opposition, in the course of his speech the other night, thundered out threats about what he was going to do as soon as he had the opportunity ; and the reason he gave last week for not then attacking the seats of the Premier and himself (Mr. Palmer) was, that the Committee of Elections and Qualifications were not sworn in. The committee were sworn in yesterday. Why did not the hon. member present his petition to-day?

Mr. GRIFFITH : No petition is necessary.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he knew why the hon. gentleman had not taken action. It was because he was going in, like Judas Iscariot, for the dirty pieces of silver. He had such a hankering after money that, wherever he thought money to be, he could not resist the opportunity of going after it. Looking round the House he found a tool in the hon. member for Darling Downs, and so Mr. Miles and he formed a joint-stock company, Mr. Miles finding the money, and Mr. Griffith the brains—the legal brains. The joint-stock company having been formed, they then served writs upon himself and the Premier, claiming the very moderate sum of £2,500 from each, with £4 4s. for costs, and intimated that if the sums were paid in eight days no further proceedings would be taken. That last part appeared to show a most polite regard ; and he (Mr. Palmer) felt inclined, when the young gentleman presented him with the writ, to write him out a cheque at once for the full amount—under the nearest pump. That was the reason why the hon. gentleman did not proceed in the legitimate manner—he preferred to do his dirty work in the Supreme Court. He (Mr. Palmer) was afraid that shares in that joint-stock company would not rise. A proceeding like that, founded on political spite, was not in the least likely to go down in the Brisbane market. If the hon. gentleman had wished to pay himself (Mr. Palmer) and his friend the Premier a compliment and do them a professional service, he could not have adopted a better plan than he had in forming this vile combination between himself and the hon. member for Darling Downs.

Mr. MILES said the public might infer from some remarks that he made last week that he sympathised with the Government. He now

wished to remove such an impression if it existed. He thoroughly concurred in the course pursued by the leader of the Opposition, who had done what was exactly right in bringing the charges before the House at the earliest opportunity. If the hon. gentleman had not taken that step he for one should not have remained in the House. The charge brought forward by the hon. gentleman was not of corruption, but of dereliction of duty in connection with the contract for steel rails, and if it was possible to recover the money it ought to be, for the country had been swindled out of it. As regarded the matter about which the Colonial Secretary had thought fit to be facetious at his (Mr. Miles') expense, the hon. gentleman ought to be thankful that proceedings had been taken in the Supreme Court. If the charges were not true, that was the proper place to disprove them, and if the Colonial Secretary and Premier succeeded in doing so, and he (Mr. Miles) lost £1,000 in consequence, the country would be benefited. It was a notorious fact, and he had his information from relatives at home, that the charges were the subject of common rumour in England—in fact, he hardly cared to repeat the remarks which were banded about at home with reference to the hon. gentlemen. He therefore considered that he was doing them and the country a service by taking the step that he had, for it gave them an opportunity of clearing themselves and of vindicating the good name of the public men of the colony. It had been said that the question ought to have been referred to the Elections and Qualifications Committee: but it would have been madness and foolishness on his part to have done such a thing. Why, the hon. member for Blackall, who was one of the committee, had already prejudged the case, as was apparent from some remarks that he had made last week! Moreover, four members of the committee had already defended the conduct of the Government, and the other three had expressed strong opinions against the Government. Would it not have been absurd to have referred the question to such a committee? The result would have been four against three. He had had too much experience of such committees. He had a case—when his seat for Darling Downs was petitioned against—but he never went near the committee, for he knew what the decision would be weeks before the matter was tried. He had been accused of wanting to make money by the proceedings he had instituted in the Supreme Court, but no one would be more gratified than he if it was proved by the Colonial Secretary and Premier that they derived no benefit from the shipping contract, and, as he had said before, he believed that he should have done the country a good service by affording the opportunity of the honour of its public men being vindicated. He did not intend, however, to let the matter rest in the Supreme Court if an adverse decision was given, and he was not going to allow the matter to be handed over for decision to the gentleman who had recently been appointed Acting Judge for six months. He did not wish to say a word against the gentleman, but he could not forget that he held his office so long only as it suited the Government. It had always been the practice to appoint their judges for life and during good behaviour, but in this case the appointment only held good until a successor was appointed. He condemned the Government for making such an appointment. As to the transaction with regard to the supply of steel rails, he believed that it was of a very "shady" character. The surroundings—the way the McIlwraith family were connected with the home office—were sufficient to raise suspicions in hon. members' minds which could not easily be got over. They had been told that the business of the home

office had been badly conducted, and that the Agent-General had complained of the conduct of Mr. Hamilton. Why did not the Agent-General dismiss Mr. Hamilton, and why were the complaints kept in the background until Mr. Hamilton made the discovery about the steel rails? Not a single word was heard previously about any disagreement between Mr. Macalister and Mr. Hamilton—nothing was heard until the transaction about the rails came to light. The Colonial Secretary had talked about charges having been made against Mr. Macalister by the Opposition. He had not heard any, and was inclined to think that members had let the Agent-General down easily. He was informed that if an inquiry were held the Agent-General would not be able to clear himself—that it would be found that he had been conspiring. They had been told that the Premier, before leaving England, had made a pledge to Mr. Macalister that, when he returned to the colony, he would introduce a Bill to give him a pension.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Douglas said that at Maryborough.

Mr. MILES said he should give that Bill his strong opposition, and if it was discovered by the inquiry that the Agent-General had been a party to the transaction which had been complained of—and he was under the apprehension that they could not have been carried out without his assistance—he should not be afraid to say what he thought about the Agent-General. However, he was not going to make any charge against him, but would merely repeat that the whole thing had a "shady" look. With reference to the contention that the inquiry should be made in the colony by a select committee of the House, he would not give a brass farthing for the report of a select committee, and was sure the public would not believe it, and, therefore, he thought the Government had made a great mistake in not accepting the motion of the leader of the Opposition. The Government ought to have endeavoured to have the matter investigated in such a way that the investigation would be complete and be accepted by the public with confidence. Hand the matter, however, over to a select committee, and no matter what the report was the public would not believe in it. The steel-rail business had occupied so much attention that hon. members had lost sight of the other "shady" transactions of the Government committed in the colony. There was a selector who was accused of acquiring land by fraud. He was put into the witness-box, and when he was examined he told the plain truth. He said he did not know anything about it. And what was the result? He or his representatives were called upon to bring forward evidence; the case was tried before a jury in the Supreme Court, and the forfeited selection was given back. Those things were done notwithstanding that the Government were so moral and pure that no accusation could be made against them. What had taken place in England had taken place under their very nose. That had happened at Dalby, and the petitioner called upon the Attorney-General asking whether he had any evidence to adduce, and the answer was "No." The solicitor for the agent was asked if he had any, and he said he had not: so that there was nothing for it but to give the certificate, notwithstanding that the selector stated in court on oath that he had never paid any money. Those transactions deserved censure. He was amused at the style assumed by the Colonial Secretary; but that hon. gentleman might be checked sooner than he expected, so that he would have no occasion to rejoice. A great deal had been said

about Mr. Hemmant; but that gentleman was not in fault. If the Colonial Secretary knew those things were going on, why did he not put a stop to them? It was all very well to bring these matters forward now. The Premier had spoken of Mr. Hemmant as an old political opponent, and said that was the reason he had presented the petition; but when those two hon. gentlemen sat together on the same side of the House they seemed to be very friendly. He did not know why Mr. Hemmant presented the petition except that he felt the country was being robbed, and he (Mr. Miles) thought Mr. Hemmant deserved the gratitude of the colony—at all events he had his—for the action he had taken. With reference to Mr. Hamilton, he knew nothing of that gentleman further than from seeing him in the Agent-General's office, when he came to the conclusion that Mr. Hamilton was a thoroughly good practical business man. He could not say whether he had been guilty of fraud; but he should rather think not. The hon. member for Northern Downs had stated that when he visited the London office he was informed that McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. had possession of the Government office, and that both Mr. Hamilton and the Agent-General were powerless. He (Mr. Miles) thought it would have been well if Mr. Hamilton had resigned. He presumed that what the hon. member for Blackall meant to convey, when he spoke on the subject, was, that Mr. Hamilton should have intimated the state of affairs to the Colonial Secretary; but Mr. Hamilton knew that the Colonial Secretary accused him of being a spy and a rogue, and what satisfaction could he have got by writing to the Colonial Secretary about the relations of the Premier, with whom the Colonial Secretary also was connected? That hon. gentleman would have carried the letter to the Premier, and said—"Hamilton is not satisfied with spying the actions of the Agent-General, but must make up charges against McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co." So that Mr. Hamilton could not be expected to communicate with either the head of the Government or the Colonial Secretary. This was why he thought it would have been better for Mr. Hamilton to have resigned. It appeared that the office was in a most disorganised state, and it was no wonder that a private firm should use their influence, as they appeared to have done, in getting contracts on exceedingly good terms. He thought the course taken by himself in laying the information, in a legal form, against the Premier and the Colonial Secretary was the correct one; and he had discharged a duty that was incumbent upon someone. That would test the matter, and if they could clear themselves the country would have confidence in them—at any rate, in lieu of taunting him they ought to be gratified. If it was found that the two Ministers did not participate in the profits made by those ships, no one would be more glad than he, for he looked upon those charges, so long as they were not proven, as damaging to the country. How could they have confidence in men placed in the position occupied by the Premier and the Colonial Secretary? If they were able to disprove the charges in a quarter beyond suspicion it would be for the good of the country. The Colonial Secretary might sneer as much as he liked, but he (Mr. Miles) would sift the matter to the bottom in a quarter where there could be no suspicion—not by a select committee. No select committees for him—he knew them too well. He was not the first one who had expressed his dislike to select committees. He had no faith in them, and that was the reason why he had gone to a tribunal which, when the matter was decided, would at all events give confidence to the public.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Beor) said the hon. member who had just sat down had offered an apology for the action he had taken in issuing out writs against the Premier and the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. MILES: I did not make an apology; I would not make an apology to any man for my action.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the hon. member had offered as his apology that it was a duty which was incumbent upon someone. There were a great many dirty things which had to be done in this world from day to day which he should be very sorry to have to do, and which most members of the House would be very sorry to do. There were numbers of objectionable things which had to be done by somebody or other; but it did not follow it was a sufficient excuse for a gentleman who was a member of that honourable Assembly taking such a duty upon himself. He had not risen to take up the time of the House in making a speech, and would only occupy a very few minutes. The speech of the hon. member, in point of fact, contained not a single argument, or scarcely anything which could be called an argument or reason. It consisted almost solely of reiterations of such expressions as "I know what a select committee would be—I know what select committees are—I have been in this House too long not to know what is the result of a select committee;"—that was the style of argument the hon. member had adopted. He (the Attorney-General) would say this much for that style of argument—that it was unanswerable. It was a style of argument to which they could not reply; and in that the hon. member had the advantage. There were one or two things in it which might be dignified, amongst such a mass of things, with the names of reason and argument. One argument which the hon. member thought worthy to be addressed to the House was that the Colonial Secretary would not have listened to Mr. Hamilton if he had made any complaints about things going on in the office, because the Colonial Secretary had stated that Mr. Hamilton was a spy sent home by Mr. Macalister. He would say, in answer, that he took it, if any officer in any position made a complaint of such a character, the Colonial Secretary would have been bound to make a full inquiry. He believed that if Mr. Hamilton had made the least complaint the Colonial Secretary would have felt bound to inquire further into it and see whether it could be substantiated or not. Why did not the Colonial Secretary find out about these things at the time they were going on? This was what the hon. gentleman had asked.

Mr. MILES: I said the Agent-General should have known.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the hon. member alluded first to the Colonial Secretary, and then, when he found he got into the wrong box, he thought it better to charge the Agent-General—a gentleman who was 16,000 miles away and who could not answer for himself. In addition to these general expressions of want of confidence in the action of a select committee and these remarks, which were not worthy of the name of argument, the hon. gentleman did something else. A few months ago sundry matters were brought up in the House. The sweepings of all the dirty scandals of the street were brought there and hurled against the present Ministry; the hon. member had repeated these to-night, and he had gone further and evidently admired that form of tactics so much that he had added to them and improved upon them. He had not only thrown about all the mean insinuations and foul scandals floating about the place, and the

sweepings of old women's tea tables—he had not only brought these into the House, and attacked the Ministry with them, but he had added to them by attacking a gentleman who was sixteen thousand miles away. He (the Attorney-General) could not say that he admired the tactics of the hon. member, or congratulated him upon them.

Mr. MILES: I did not attack him.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the hon. member indulged not only in insinuations unworthy of any member of the House, and against the Ministry, but also against the Agent-General in England.

Mr. MILES: That is not true.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said it was true, and he did not congratulate him upon what he had done, nor did he congratulate the Opposition upon having on their side a member who could adopt such a course of action—a course of action which, nevertheless, he felt sure, would not recommend itself to the House, or to the country at large, for it was not calculated to inspire confidence.

Mr. DICKSON said he thought when the Attorney-General rose to address the House that he would have given some substantial reason why they should not address the Throne concerning a grievance, which could only be set at rest by a competent tribunal. As the leader of the bar the hon. gentleman might have given them some opinion as to the unconstitutional nature of the proceeding, if it were so, but he had chosen to waste the opportunity he had of giving information by reflecting upon the speech of the member for Darling Downs. He had watched the course of the debate, and listened to the speeches of members of the Treasury benches, and it seemed that Ministers were going to allow themselves to be blamed for not having a full, thorough, and independent investigation of the matter at issue. They professed to desire this inquiry, but, when such a course was mentioned as that proposed by the leader of the Opposition, they endeavoured to burk the only satisfactory and independent inquiry which would enable the country to be satisfied. No local investigation that had been proposed—not even a Committee of the House—would give to the country so strong an assurance that the circumstances described had been satisfactorily investigated, as would be done if the Secretary of State for the Colonies recommended Her Majesty to issue a Royal commission; and he (Mr. Dickson) regretted that the hon. gentlemen who sat upon the Ministerial benches had not seen that it was the wisest course at once to express their utmost readiness to accept the course proposed by his hon. friend. If Ministers were sincere in their professions of readiness to allow an independent inquiry to be made, he could not see why they should resist the only form that could be considered satisfactory. The hon. Premier, in his memorandum to the Cabinet concerning the London office, concluded his remarks by professing to recommend that an inquiry should be made of the very character at which the leader of the Opposition aimed. The passage was as follows:—

"Notwithstanding the fact that these charges have been made by a dismissed servant, and an unsuccessful tenderer for a contract, still, for the honour of the colony, I submit to you that a full and searching inquiry ought to be made; and that immediate steps, both here and in England, be taken with that object."

How could there be a full and searching inquiry made in England by any tribunal appointed in Brisbane? They had no jurisdiction outside the colony, and the jurisdiction necessary could only be obtained by the course now proposed. It

would have redounded to the credit of the Government if they had at once readily accepted the advice tendered by the leader of the Opposition. During last session that hon. gentleman took some pains to assist the Ministry in several legislative enactments, and the Ministry would raise themselves in the estimation of the country if they showed that they were at the present time not above accepting his advice again in the present juncture of affairs, since they themselves admitted that a full and searching investigation ought to be made. Such an investigation ought to be made on these grounds alone:—The Premier went home to England, and his supporters contended that his presence there had been largely instrumental in floating the loan, and, assuming such to be the case, and that there were other advantages gained, let the House look at the *per contra*. The country had lost at any rate £50,000 or £60,000 of that very money which was raised by the successful loan. Therefore, in the interest of the public creditor alone, it was but right and proper, if they were again to attempt placing a loan on the English market, to show that a full and searching inquiry had been made, in order to prove that the funds borrowed from the English creditor were not wasted, and were economically and honestly administered. He did not intend to address the House at any length this evening, but he must say he had been amused by the manner in which the Minister for Works had attempted to divert the attention of the House from the subject at issue by showing that there were some tenders accepted a few years ago, when the present Opposition were in power, and when rails were purchased above the market price. All that, however, was beside the question. The question was, whether the purchase made by the Haslam Company was an honest business transaction in all its dealings. The Colonial Secretary had also attempted to divert the attention of the House from the question, by intimating that Mr. Hemmant, who petitioned the House concerning these grievances, had, through losing certain opportunities in the London office, taken this course, feeling himself personally injured. Nothing said by the Colonial Secretary had tended in the slightest degree to disparage Mr. Hemmant in the transactions referred to, but it only showed that the hon. the Premier missed the opportunity he had to re-organise and investigate the state of things in the London office. If it was the rule to purchase goods without tender it was a practice that ought to be discontinued at once, and should have been discontinued by the Premier when he was in England. He (Mr. Dickson) could quite understand that the transactions referred to in the telegram of the Colonial Secretary might arise in the ordinary course of business. No doubt such transactions took place in the Colonial Stores even in Brisbane, where it was sometimes necessary to purchase goods from others than tenderers. Instances occurred where tenderers ran out of stock, and then the Government must purchase in the best way they could.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They have to supply at fair cost.

Mr. DICKSON: There is nothing to show that the charges of Mr. Hemmant were excessive.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: What I say is—they are without tender.

Mr. DICKSON said what he was urging was that emergencies might arise when the Government, in the Colonial Stores, purchased goods without tender. But even this was not the question before the House at present. They had to consider, in the interests of the public, whether the investigations should not be made through the appointment of an Imperial commission, as recommended by the leader of the

Opposition, and everything indicated that that was the only way in which a full, satisfactory, and searching inquiry could be made. He had not had time to read through the papers placed upon the table of the House during the afternoon, and was placed at a disadvantage, as compared with members of the Government, who had been able to select their own extracts and put them in their speeches, that the public might read their view of the case. Still he saw quite enough in the documents to confirm his previous opinion that the Premier in London, instead of carrying out the inquiry in connection with Mr. Hamilton as an independent judge, seemed to place himself in the position of an advocate for Mr. Macalister, and to place Mr. Hamilton on his trial. The examination of Mr. Hamilton, as far as it was disclosed, led him to imagine that the Premier took up a position in regard to that gentleman of a very hostile character, shown by the fact that he declined to accede to Mr. Hamilton's request to have a full and independent inquiry, which he ought to have granted. Another peculiar circumstance was, that while the hon. the Premier contended that Mr. Hamilton's dereliction of duty was of such a character that he ought to have been summarily dismissed from the London office, yet the hon. gentleman arrived in England about Christmas, he intended to leave for the colony on the 9th April, and it was not until subsequent to the 9th April that he considered Mr. Hamilton's offences so great as to justify his dismissal. Somebody was to blame in this. Either the hon. gentleman had not observed the working of the London office or the Agent-General had not supplied him with sufficient information concerning the alleged dereliction of duty that Mr. Hamilton stood charged with. At any rate, the circumstance appeared to his mind to have very cloudy surroundings, and not at all as satisfactory as the termination of such an inquiry should have been. He trusted that the Government would accede to the resolutions in their present shape. Under ordinary circumstances a select committee of the House might be deemed a very desirable tribunal; and as the hon. the Minister for Works had done him the honour to mention his name in connection with such a committee, he would briefly state his feelings on the subject. He did not think he could accept office on that committee. He had already expressed his opinion very strongly on these transactions; he expressed that opinion with the utmost sincerity, and he felt that if he were to go on that tribunal as one of its judges, he would enter with prejudiced views, and he did not think that in the interests of the country his verdict would be likely to be a strictly impartial one. That was his feeling, and he believed it would be the feeling of the other members named by the hon. the Minister for Works. They had all expressed very decided opinions on the subject, no doubt with sincerity, and they would carry those convictions into the committee room. Therefore, no thorough and independent inquiry could be obtained in that way. He repeated that any inquiry, to be thorough and impartial, must be conducted at home in the theatre of these transactions and removed from the atmosphere of colonial politics.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS thought some hon. members who had found their way into that House had mistaken their vocation altogether, or misunderstood their constituents. It seemed that in their desire and hunger for office their constituents and the business of the country were forgotten for the greater part of the session. That had been his experience ever since the House met this session, and for about six weeks of last session. Touching the subject-matter of this discussion, the object had been to circulate a series of stories and rumours, such as, "I am

told; I am informed; I verily believe; it is rumoured; I have received a telegram;" and so on. Putting aside altogether the *prestige* that should attach to a Minister of the Crown, he would ask the youngest member of the House who had a shadow of character, was he to be put upon his trial upon the mere assertion of any member, or somebody outside the House, in the street, or on board ship, or in Sydney, that he had heard so and so about him? How many times had he (the Minister for Lands) heard statements about himself? Were there any members in the House who had not heard statements about themselves? If he were to retail to the leader of the Opposition the serious accusations he had heard uttered against him ever since he had been in the House—not one of which he was happy to say he, in his innocent and confiding way, believed—he felt sure the hon. gentleman would be somewhat alarmed. He said that if the desire of hon. members opposite was office, and they had no other means of arriving at it but over the dead bodies of the characters of their political opponents, then he did not envy them. That was what they were doing. With the varied experience he had had in the Australian colonies, he could say that there could not be a greater hot-bed of slander, and falsehood, and false report, or greater assassins of character, to be found in any part of Australia than in the city of Brisbane. He believed the majority of the rumours circulated were started in Brisbane, and though they might come from home they had been sent there first and then came back a little varnished and served up with something like the appearance of truth. He was sorry that his colleagues regarded them in such a serious light. Certain charges had been made, and there was every desire on the part of the Premier and the Colonial Secretary that they should be fully investigated, but he did not say that that was the course he should take. He should be inclined to put the weight of his character against the charges and let the accusers prove them. Two courses had been suggested with regard to this inquiry, one by the leader of the Opposition and the other by the Minister for Works; but he was of opinion that if the Ministry were to accept the motion as tabled by the leader of the Opposition it would amount to a partial admission of guilt somewhere, or that a *prima facie* case had been made out. He had heard no such admission, or that there was any shadow or prospect of it, and he did not see what could be more reasonable than that a full inquiry should be made. The hon. member for Maryborough proposed that they should surrender their rights and privileges as members of that House and refer the matter to some unknown power in some other part of the world; but he for one, so long as he continued a member of that House, would not consent to surrender those privileges. He was not inclined to confess his inability or the inability of those with whom he was associated on that side of the House to inquire into their own affairs thoroughly, and, if there was anything wrong, or spurious, or improper going on, to purge that side of the House in the earliest and in the most expeditious way possible. Those were his views of the matter, and he did not wish to occupy the time of the House, as he supposed the debate would close to-night. But he did regret this continual, eternal desire on the part of some hon. members to placard themselves as honest men—as the only honest men in the House or the country. When he heard the remarks of the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) he had a distinct recollection that during the time that hon. gentleman occupied the position of a Minister he was just as industrious in slandering his colleagues as he was in endeavouring to slander

his (the Minister for Lands') colleagues at the present time. He (the Minister for Lands) was not fond of retailing stories, and did not admire story carriers, but the hon. gentleman scarcely got outside the door to the smoking room, or wherever he could find persons willing to listen to him, before he commenced slandering the colleagues he was acting with in conducting the business of the country; and finally his statement—which he (the Minister for Lands) would like some further evidence of before he believed, and which the late Colonial Secretary contradicted on the floor of the House—was that he had been bundled or dismissed out of the Ministry. He would not refer to the matter further than to say that he did not think that hon. member had any more honesty or purity of character than the humblest member of the House. He would be quite prepared at the proper time to show, notwithstanding the hon. member's explanation and attempts to make himself notorious in connection with his trip to the west through his newspapers, that he was as hungry for the good things of this world as ever he was, and for land in particular; that he had made a gridiron of the country by closing up every road and means of escape from the people, and sold the land to himself, and then sold the reserves to himself; and that such was the selfish position he took up when Minister of the Crown that it cost the country thousands of pounds because he hindered and obstructed the making of the railway by preventing people from cutting timber for sleepers. To hear the hon. gentleman talk one would think he distributed all his goods to the poor, that he kept open house, that every tramp and poor man, the unemployed, the weary and down-trodden, could find shelter and rest there; but he (the Minister for Lands) happened to know the contrary. He warned the hon. gentleman that the sooner he threw off the mask that he had been wearing for some time the better, for if he did not it would be torn off him, and he would be held up in his true colours before the House and the country. He would say no more on that matter now, but reserve it for another occasion. He could see, young as he was in politics, that there were members in the House who were quite willing to barter away any of the privileges of the House to accommodate themselves and vent their spite upon their political opponents. It appeared to him that some members talked so much of fraud and dishonesty and swindling that he thought they must live in an atmosphere of it; that they must be continually associated with rogues and swindlers, otherwise how could they be continually using the terms "rogue," "vagabond," "thief?" In private life, to talk of a man as a rogue, or to make an insinuation to that effect, was a serious matter, and one should be prepared to substantiate; and to make in that Assembly, with the opportunity there was for scattering it broadcast through the country, such insinuations across the floor, without the slightest foundation, was mean, cowardly, and despicable. If that was to be the course of business, he could only say that his constituents did not send him there to inquire into the character of members on the other side of the House. He hoped he had better wait before him, and the sooner they returned to reason, and to the duties for which they were sent here, and threw off the look of piety and honesty to which, he was sorry to say, some of them had no claim, the sooner the prosperity of the country would return, and the sooner would they be able to get to the bottom of those transactions that had occurred in London; so that if any public servant had been guilty of fraud or collusion they might fix the blame on the proper shoulders. As much had been said on the matter as was necessary, and nothing

further that could be urged would affect the result of the debate in one way or the other. The only thing to decide was where the inquiry should begin, and where it should terminate. Every facility was offered to hon. members on both sides, and it was contemplated that if the report of the select committee showed it to be necessary a commissioner or commissioners should proceed home and sift the matter to the bottom. What more did the leader of the Opposition want? Did he want to be judge and jury, and give his verdict before the inquiry was begun? He would leave the question in the hands of the House, but he was sure that any man of common sense who had listened to the drivel that had been inflicted on them could only come to one conclusion, and that was that the whole affair was intended to cover some design or other which the leader of the Opposition had in view.

Mr. GRIMES said that, after listening to the debates that had taken place since the opening of the session, he felt compelled to ask himself, "where are our honest politicians?" There had been accusations all round. He had purposely refrained from expressing his opinion with respect to the steel rails, and was not going to do so now, preferring rather to wait until he heard the conclusions that had been arrived at by the inquiry which he hoped would be made. While listening to the debate he could not help thinking that the Premier might well say, "Save me from my friends." There had been a great deal of mud about somewhere, and if the leader of the Opposition had seen fit to stir up that mud, and some portions of it, by reason of the connection between the Premier and the successful tenderers, had happened to fall upon him, it would have been much better for his friends to have let the Premier alone, and then when the mud became dry it might have fallen off without leaving a stain behind. But instead of leaving him alone they had gone round him and thoroughly rubbed it in, until he questioned now whether the hon. gentleman would in the eyes of the public be ever able to clear himself without a most searching inquiry both here and at home. He could not understand why there should be such a strong objection to an inquiry. If the supporters of the Government had such a strong confidence in the reputation of the Premier, why did they not assist in obtaining the most full and searching inquiry? If they could not get the evidence here, let it be gathered in England by a commissioner. If the Premier was blameless and would not suffer by the inquiry, his friends were not bettering his position in trying to prevent it. The inquiry was also necessary in justice to the country and the minds of a great number of the outside public. There was a feeling of suspicion with reference to this affair, and it would be better to relieve their minds. They ought not to go on with a Ministry who did not possess the confidence of the outside public. If the debate ended with a division, he intended to vote for the motion proposed by the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. BAILEY said he had abstained from taking part in the debate hitherto, because there was an impression throughout the colony that the whole colony at present lay at the mercy of several rings—banking rings, land rings, railway rings, freight rings, and every other kind of ring. A ring, no matter for what purpose it was formed, meant a robbery of the public estate. From his reading of the conduct of American rings, where the institution was first brought into use, he had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to break those rings from the outside. No matter what the Opposition might do or say, no matter what the people of the country might think or feel, they were equally powerless to break up a ring from the outside. There was a time

in the history of every ring of which they had had experience when the plunder did not become sufficient to meet the wants of the increasing number of the ring, and then the ring would burst of itself. Either the colony was in the hands of those rings, or it was not. If not, there was no harm done; and if it was, they were powerless for good. The proposal of the leader of the Opposition was one which—if fraudulent practices had taken place or were constantly taking place at home—might do something towards destroying those rings, if such existed. He had only a faint hope that even that would be successful, but that a select committee of the House could effect such a thing was simply ridiculous. The Minister for Works had said they should be abnegating the rights and privileges of the House if they delegated the power to Her Majesty the Queen to appoint a commission to inquire into certain alleged nefarious transactions at home. What rights and privileges did they abnegate? They were the trustees of the people, and had no rights and privileges as a Parliament except those which the people had delegated to them, and it was on their behalf that they stood here—on behalf of those who were ground down by the taxation which they had to pay for the swindles, who had to pay an increased taxation this year for the sundry £60,000 that had been squandered, or lost, or mislaid. It was their rights and privileges which were in danger, and not those of the House. He hoped the statements that had been made as to frauds were not true; but at the same time, as it was acknowledged even by the Government that a searching inquiry was necessary, why not let them have it? Who tried to burk the inquiry?—not this side of the House, but the Ministers themselves. They claimed the fullest possible inquiry at the only place where such an inquiry could be made, and the Ministry proposed that it should be done by a select committee who might telegraph home for information. He should like to see the bill for the telegrams when the inquiry was finished! The Minister for Works said the House, as a House, would be satisfied with a select committee. No doubt it would. The House, as at present constituted, would be satisfied without any select committee at all, and would be quite willing to take the dictum of Ministers that there was neither fraud, robbery, plunder, nor mistakes, and that everything was going on swimmingly;—no rings, no designs upon the public estate, no robbery of the Treasury—nothing wrong, but everything smooth and sweet, and the colony going on rapidly in a career of progress. No doubt a majority of the House believed so, but he doubted whether a majority in the country believed so, and it was with the country they had to deal, and to see that the people were not unfairly treated.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he wished to refer for a moment to the assertion of the Colonial Secretary that Mr. Hemmant had contracted with the Government to supply blankets and other goods without competition, and at a rate higher than those at which other persons would have tendered. Rugs were the particular articles specified; but there were rugs and rugs; and it was a well-known fact that the blankets supplied to the aborigines during the Douglas Ministry were of much superior quality to those previously served out. For a better material it of course followed that a higher price would be charged. That should be borne in mind when talking into consideration the higher prices charged by Mr. Hemmant. He did not wish to enter into the merits of the case, but merely to defend Mr. Hemmant from the charge of unfair dealing.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had moved the motion under discussion, after very mature con-

sideration, with the desire which he still felt of having a thorough and impartial investigation in Great Britain into the matters alluded to in the proposed address. He could assure hon. members opposite, that, however they might endeavour to burk inquiry, however strong they might be this evening, such an inquiry would nevertheless be carried out in Great Britain by an impartial tribunal appointed in that country, if he and the gentlemen on his side of the House and others who were interested in the good government of the country could succeed in obtaining it. This question was not one in which the Opposition alone were interested—it was one in which the whole community were interested, and also our debenture-holders, who would not allow their money to be fooled away. However the vote might go to-night, he could assure hon. members that unless he was much mistaken about the constitution of society in Great Britain, these matters would be investigated by an impartial tribunal appointed in that country. He had already stated his reasons why he believed the inquiry should be held in Great Britain—namely, because the matters referred to happened there, the people concerned were living there, and all the people who could give information on the subject were there. With regard to the rails, they were ordered there, and were being supplied there, and all the circumstances under which they were ordered and supplied could only be discovered in Great Britain. To hold an inquiry on such a subject here would be a perfect farce—it might as well be held at the south pole. Hon. members knew very well that if an inquiry were carried out by means of the telegraph, that when a message was sent asking a question another could be sent along by the same cable telling the person to whom it would be addressed how to answer the question. The very essence of the charge was that some persons connected with the Queensland Government office had allowed the country to be plundered, and it was proposed that the inquiry should go through the London office. Such an inquiry could only be designed to prevent any information from being given. With regard to the shipping contract—he called it in plain terms the shipping ring—how could an inquiry into that be made here? Tenders were called for in England; firms were invited to tender there. How could they possibly ascertain from here how it was that a Glasgow firm obtained certain information before sending in a tender? Such an inquiry would be a mere idle form. It would be something like this:—“Telegram to the Agent-General: Have you any reason to suppose there is anything wrong?” Answer: “No.” The select committee would be expected to say they were perfectly satisfied, and wanted to know no more. The people of this colony, however, wanted more information than that, and they would get it. When he (Mr. Griffith) stated those reasons for objecting to an inquiry here as being the merest form, what answers did he receive? With the exception of one solitary argument, to which he should presently advert, the answer had been—abuse. Hon. members on that (Ministerial) side were pleased to talk a great deal about throwing mud, especially the Minister for Works, who appeared to have made it his mission ever since 1876 to follow him whenever he rose, and make personal attacks upon him. Let him tell the hon. gentleman that he served his own party very poorly by simply attacking him, because his character could stand of itself. Whatever charges he (Mr. Griffith) made depended upon the facts which he adduced in support of them, and it was no answer to his arguments to abuse him. The hon. gentleman abused him, and he abused his late colleague, the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Miles, who had occupied

the position of Minister for Works at the time when some contract was made. He (Mr. Griffith) knew nothing about that contract, except what he heard from the hon. member, Mr. Miles, as he had always relied upon his colleague. But what answer was it, when he (Mr. Griffith) complained that the country had been robbed of £60,000, to say that Mr. Miles made a mistake in letting a contract? How was that relevant to the matter—what had it to do with the subject at all? The hon. gentleman abused him, he abused Mr. Miles, and he abused Mr. Hamilton. What satisfaction was it to the people of this colony who had been robbed of £60,000, to be told that Mr. Miles was not a good Minister for Works, or that he had made a mistake in letting a contract? It was all very well to abuse Mr. Hamilton, but he (Mr. Griffith) didn't care if Mr. Hamilton was the greatest scoundrel—if he was a confederate—so long as the facts were disclosed. He had every reason to believe that Mr. Hamilton was nothing of the kind, but the main fact was that the disclosures had been made. The Minister for Works said the disclosures were not made until Mr. Hamilton knew that he was about to be dismissed. That was a very singular statement. The frauds could not have been discovered before the 15th March, shortly after which date Mr. Hamilton wrote to the persons who had sent in those invoices. By a letter dated March the 27th a request was made that the invoices should be returned, and on the 31st March, only two or three days afterwards, Mr. Hamilton gave the information to Mr. Macalister. There was no question now, however, about the truth of the charges; the question was now whether the charges should be inquired into. When he (Mr. Griffith) asked for such an inquiry the Minister for Works abused Mr. Hamilton, and said that nothing would have been found out if it had not been that Mr. Hamilton was going to be dismissed. He (Mr. Griffith) would tell the House that, if nothing had been found out, Mr. Hamilton would never have been dismissed; he was dismissed for finding out the fraud, and for daring to disclose it. An inquiry was held nominally to investigate the charges made, but the Premier, instead of saying: here is a fraud, I will help you to prove your charges—instead of taking up the position of the defender of the purse of the colony, he took up the position of the defender of those who had robbed the purse of the colony. The charge against Mr. Hamilton had, in his (Mr. Griffith) opinion, failed, and in any case it was perfectly irrelevant to the question under discussion. Then another Minister, the Colonial Secretary, referred to Lord Kimberley's despatch, and because it was obviously out of Lord Kimberley's power to take action when appealed to by Mr. Hamilton, the hon. gentleman said that, therefore, Her Majesty would not listen to an address from this House of Parliament. The two cases were totally different in their nature. The Colonial Secretary was then good enough to abuse him (Mr. Griffith) and his hon. friend, the member for Darling Downs. The hon. gentleman stated that his (Mr. Griffith's) only object was delay. That was a singular commentary on the action of the hon. gentleman's colleague who had been put up to move an amendment which would effectually secure such a delay that no information could be got this year. He (Mr. Griffith) had made a motion which would enable the House to get the information while the matter was hot and could be thoroughly investigated, and before people interested in getting the matter hushed up could do so, though he believed that some of the firms interested were too honourable to desire that the matter should be hushed up.

He had given notice and brought the matter on with that object at the earliest possible moment. If the request was granted a commission might be issued, the information obtained, and be here before the House met next session. By the other proposition a committee would be appointed here which would investigate the subject as far as they thought proper, and if they considered anything more was wanted appoint a commission to act in England. A Royal commission appointed here would have no authority in England, and people who did not want to tell anything would not tell anything. It would be, like the rest of the commissions, for the purpose of preventing the discovery of the facts of the case. He believed the way he proposed was the quickest way of getting the facts, and the only way in which the facts would be got, and he pledged his word to put forth all the perseverance in his nature, to spare neither time nor pains in his efforts to get what he desired—an impartial investigation in Great Britain. The Colonial Secretary said this was a party question—that it was, in fact, a vote of censure, but he had not attempted to show how it was so. If it was so, the Government had not discovered it last night when they insisted upon putting an important adjourned debate down for to-day. Last night at 10 o'clock they did not regard it as a vote of censure, and it was only to-day they had discovered that they could not afford to let this motion be carried. The Colonial Secretary said he (Mr. Griffith) never expected to be able to carry it. He would make a confession—he had entertained doubts, but he was assured by hon. members on the Ministerial side of the House as well as on the Opposition that there could be no objection to such a motion. He said however, that notwithstanding that fact the Government did not dare to consent to it. Hon. members would see when a division was taken whether the hon. members were right when they said there could be no objection, or whether he was right when he said the Government did not dare to allow the motion to pass. If they voted against the motion it would show that they did not dare to consent to an impartial investigation at the present time. That was the conclusion the country would draw, and it was the conclusion he should draw. Then they had really one of the most lamentable exhibitions on the part of the Colonial Secretary that he had ever seen in the House. Instead of meeting the question fairly, instead of discussing whether there should be an inquiry, he abused Mr. Hemmant. He had been telegraphing to the Agent-General to ascertain whether he could not rake up slander against Mr. Hemmant, and he had raked up one and had repeated it in the House, well knowing that it could not be refuted before Parliament had prorogued. That was the way the Colonial Secretary, who had been put up as the mouthpiece of the Government, barred investigation! He raked up a disreputable slander against a gentleman who was twelve thousand miles away, knowing it could not be refuted.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Hemmant began with lies.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that every word of Mr. Hemmant's petition had been proved by the documents laid upon the table yesterday, and had previously been established by the admissions of the Premier. Then they had the Minister for Lands, who contended himself with abusing the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles). But that was not enough—they had the hon. the learned Attorney-General making the maiden speech of his high office, and it was an attack—but a feeble attack in comparison with his colleague's—upon the same hon.

member. There had been only one argument adduced against his proposition—viz., that it was not the constitutional mode of going to work. To that objection he had referred when he opened the matter in the afternoon. He pointed out that it was recognised by the Constitution. It was unusual, no doubt, and he trusted it would be still more so. The Minister for Works had quoted from Todd a passage giving some instances where interference by the Imperial authorities would be proper. He (Mr. Griffith) strongly deprecated interference by the Imperial authorities in the internal affairs of a colony possessing representative government; but if the House of Commons might present an address to Her Majesty praying for the issue of Her Royal commission for the holding of an inquiry, was there anything unconstitutional in this Parliament doing likewise? Did not the House of Commons often present an humble address to Her Majesty in the same manner; and how, then, could it be said that the Parliament of this colony were surrendering its powers by asking that the same authority might be exercised to investigate matters which could only be investigated in England? If they were guilty of anything it was not of abnegating their powers, but of presumption in putting themselves on the same level as the House of Commons. He did not, however, think that it was presumption—it was the claiming of a right which they possessed in addressing Her Majesty in the same way as the House of Commons when they wished for information which could only be obtained by Royal commission. The Minister for Works said: "We won't have a Royal commission; we will have a select committee"—and a well nominated committee it was. The hon. gentleman put on himself and his colleague the Minister for Lands—two Ministers jointly responsible for one of the matters complained of! He also put on two strong partisans—members who had expressed strong opinions upon the subject, and from the Opposition side of the House he had selected three friends of his (Mr. Griffith). He observed that the hon. gentleman had not put him on the committee—he (Mr. Griffith) would be too much biassed—his mouth was to be shut. Not a single lawyer, not a single gentleman trained to investigate evidence, was upon the committee. He believed that he had some important information which he had obtained in an accidental manner—not from Mr. Hamilton, who knew nothing about it so far as he was aware, but from a very respectable gentleman in the city. But he was not on the committee—he was not to call witnesses or ask questions. No! The Government had a committee of seven gentlemen to carry on the investigation as far as they thought necessary in the colony, and if they were not satisfied then there was to be further inquiry in England. As they had all expressed satisfaction already it was the merest farce to say that that should be the limit of investigation. He had been asked why he had not moved for a select committee. He thought such matters as were contained in the paper and were capable of investigation here should be inquired into here; but the matters that he had referred to in the House to-day could not be investigated here, so that the Minister for Works did not meet his proposition with another way of doing the same thing. While he (Mr. Griffith) proposed to investigate certain things which could only be inquired into in England, the hon. gentleman said, "No, investigate them here." The hon. gentleman did not want them investigated properly. He should like to know how hon. members opposite, who had expressed an opinion that there should be a searching investigation, but who, he presumed, would vote upon the question as a party ques-

tion, were going to reconcile their votes with their utterances, and with the statement of the Premier, at the end of the correspondence, that there should be a most searching investigation, and that immediate steps should be taken to have one here and in England? The only means in the possession of Parliament other than the one he had proposed for holding an inquiry was to make the investigation through the Agent-General. He would not accuse the Agent-General—he had not accused him of anything. He had not accused anybody, except what was proved by the papers in his hand; but he would say that these things could not have taken place without culpable weakness on the part of the Agent-General. To make an inquiry through the Agent-General would be simply ridiculous. He challenged the Government to allow a fair and impartial investigation to be made in England; and if they refused, the inference that would be drawn by the people of this colony and elsewhere would be that they dare not allow an investigation, that disclosures would result which they could not allow. He did not know what would come out, but he believed that what he had said about Mr. Leonard Cooper would be disclosed. He cared little himself whether the motion was carried or not, but he would say again that the investigation would be made in Great Britain by an impartial tribunal. The Government might delay it, but it would be made eventually, and all the facts would come to light. What the Government would gain by delaying the inquiry he could not conceive. He had done his duty, and, if the motion was negatived, every one would draw his own inferences according to his lights. He was sorry that the Government would render themselves open to suspicion by refusing a reasonable proposition like his—a proposition which it was perfectly clear they did not intend to oppose last night. He should certainly press the matter to a division, and if he failed other steps would be taken to secure an investigation in England.

Mr. MOREHEAD moved the adjournment of the debate.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had no wish to prolong the debate, but thought it necessary to answer a few of the observations of the leader of the Opposition. As usual the hon. gentleman began with abuse, and then asserted that his opponents were continually abusing him. Every word that the hon. gentleman said in abusing his opponents was to be taken as simply the fulfilment of a patriotic duty. He had been exercised in the same patriotic manner ever since he (Mr. Macrossan) had been a member of the House. He had never heard the hon. gentleman speak on an important question without indulging in abuse of his opponents both by innuendo and insinuation. The hon. gentleman said that what was wanted was an inquiry. He said that the House should have a full, free, and impartial inquiry—that the country demanded it, and that he demanded it. The Government demanded it also, and there should be such an inquiry; but he would tell the hon. gentleman that the House and the Ministry would not consent to have an inquiry as he wished to have it. The House would not be governed by the leader of the Opposition, and did not expect to be governed by him. It would be time enough for him to govern when he changed his seat from the Opposition to the Treasury benches. Then he might expect to have Royal commissions if he chose to appoint them. But they might have a Royal commission as it was. No word that fell from him or any of his colleagues could be interpreted, even by the most malignant

imagination, to mean that they did not wish to have a full inquiry; but they would have an inquiry commencing in this colony, and immediately, and by members of the House who heard the charges read in Mr. Hemmant's petition, and who would be able to investigate, to a certain extent, from documentary evidence and evidence which he, or anyone in his behalf, might bring forward. Neither he nor any of his colleagues said it was to end with the appointment of a select committee. That committee would investigate fully and fairly, and as impartially as could possibly be done, and then when it arrived at a certain point where there were certain matters which could not be inquired into out of England, they would recommend that the House should appoint a Royal commission—they would not go to Her Majesty for one. As he had quoted from "Todd," it was not because they deprecated the interference of the Imperial Government, but because they would not invoke interference—"invoke" was the word. He would correct the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) as he had before corrected his colleague, and would read the words of "Todd" again. Mr. Todd said distinctly there were but three cases in which interference could be constitutionally invoked. Neither one of those three cases was the case at present under consideration, and the means proposed by the hon. gentleman—invoking the interference of the Imperial authorities—was unconstitutional and unknown in responsible government in the colonies. He for one would not consent, nor would his colleagues, to establish such a precedent as that asked by the hon. member for Maryborough. They would act according to constitutional rule, and to that alone. He was sorry the hon. gentleman should take so much to heart the *rôle* or mission he said he (the Minister for Works) had laid out for himself—that was, to watch him. He certainly had adopted the mission of watching him for a very long time, and had had occasion to trip him up very frequently, and correct him and bring him to the truth when he had wandered away from it. But he had never abused the hon. gentleman. When he spoke facts, however, they were called abuse. When the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) stated what he was pleased to call facts he was simply doing his duty, which urged him to speak the truth. He hoped the hon. gentleman would carry out the mission he had chalked out for himself, and pay no attention to any abuse heaped upon him. That would be better than continually calling out "abuse, abuse." If he (Mr. Macrossan) were to quote the abuse indulged in by the hon. member last week in his opening speech, would he dare deny that the words he then used were abusive, or would he say that he was impelled by a strong sense of duty to compare Ministers with Sir John Macdonald, who confessed to have received 100,000 dollars in bribery and corruption? Was it not abuse to compare the Premier to Sir John Macdonald, and then raise his hands and say that he was ashamed to sit in this House with Ministers who manipulated contracts? The hon. gentleman said he did not abuse, but simply stated facts. Was it a fact that any member of the House was equal to Sir John Macdonald? He (Mr. Macrossan) thought not. Let the hon. gentleman first prove his position as to any member of the House being in a similar position to Sir John Macdonald, and then he might be denunciatory as long as he liked, and he (Mr. Macrossan) would then assist him instead of opposing him. They simply deprecated asking Her Majesty to do that which they could do for themselves; and the hon. gentleman said, in defence of the position he took up, that the House would simply be doing what the

House of Commons frequently did in asking Her Majesty to appoint a Royal commission. But the cases were not at all parallel. The House of Commons, in asking Her Majesty to appoint a Royal commission, were simply asking the Executive Committee of the House of Commons to appoint a Royal commission, which was a very different thing from the members of this House asking Her Majesty to ask the Executive Committee of the House of Commons to do it. And in asking for a Royal commission the House of Commons did not descend from the position it occupied, but simply asked the head of the Government for the time being to do that which, as the Executive Committee of that House (of Commons), it was bound to do. The committee they wished to appoint would probably ask the Executive Committee of the House to ask His Excellency the Administrator, who stood in the position of Her Majesty, to do that which Her Majesty did for the House of Commons. That was the position they took, and the position they would stick to. It was a position parallel to that of the House of Commons with Her Majesty, and he maintained that it was one which did not require them to descend from their position as a free and independent Legislature. The hon. gentleman took exception to the committee, and said he had been left out. But he need not suppose for a moment any member was at all afraid of his being on the committee or being anywhere else. Many members besides himself (Mr. Macrossan) were quite able to face him at any time. The hon. gentleman was left off the committee because he stood in the position of prosecutor, and they did not want to place him in the position of prosecutor and judge, but they had appointed three of his colleagues, ex-Ministers of the Crown, as judges. But if he or any other member took exception to the members on the committee, he for one was willing he (Mr. Griffith) should be put on and some other member left off. There would be no advantage either way; but if he wished he could be placed on the committee, as far as the Government were concerned. They did not care what evidence he brought forward, as long as the committee had power to sift and sift till the end, and then, if necessary, go further and find out anything else that was to be found when the labours of the committee came to an end. He also talked about the Colonial Secretary abusing Mr. Hemmant. Again a statement of fact was called abuse. Was it not unworthy of the hon. gentleman to descend to such means to try and make people believe they were abusing Mr. Hemmant? If Mr. Hemmant through collusion with Mr. Hamilton had been able to obtain beneficial contracts without competition, surely it was not abuse to state those things. If that was abuse, then the statements in Mr. Hemmant's petition were also abuse in the same sense. It simply amounted to this:—It was the hon. gentlemen's *rôle* at present to defend Mr. Hemmant and at the same time to belittle Mr. Macalister. He said he did not charge Mr. Macalister with anything, but he (Mr. Macrossan) would like to ask the meaning of the words used by him when he said, "You can send a telegram by wire, but what is to prevent your sending another telegram by the same wire to instruct the person how to answer?" It was a charge against Mr. Macalister; and yet the hon. gentleman said he had not abused him. He and his colleagues had done their best to asperse Mr. Macalister's character as far as they possibly could. His colleague (the Colonial Secretary) had just informed him that he (Mr. Griffith) or any member of the Opposition could go and see any telegrams that had been sent to Mr. Macalister on business of any kind, and the hon. gentleman need not be afraid of Mr. Mac-

alister being permitted to send telegrams of any particular kind.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I did not suggest it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said, if he did not then he did not know what "suggest" meant. He had also mentioned the fact of a Mr. Thomas Law, one of the tenderers for freights, having stated that he had information that no matter what his tender was it would not be accepted. That gentleman was written to by the Premier a sufficiently long time ago to have sent an answer. The Premier wrote letters to other individuals at the same time and place and got answers. The letter, which he would read, was written by the Premier immediately upon the receipt of Earl Kimberly's despatch, which reached him at Brindisi. As the Premier did not get the information before he left London, he could not act upon it then, and it could not be supposed to be a charge against him not having written before when he took the first opportunity of doing so. Here was the letter:—

"On board the 'Ceylon,' between Brindisi and Alexandria,

"12th May, 1880.

"Gentlemen,—By direction of the Earl of Kimberley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, I have been furnished with a copy of a letter written by you to Thomas Hamilton, lately Secretary to the Agent-General of Queensland, and dated 22nd ultimo, referring to freight contracts for rails to Queensland ports.

"In that letter you say you were asked to tender for the conveyance of rails from Barrow, &c., to various ports in Queensland, and you did so; but from information you received previous to tendering, you were led to understand that no matter what your tender was it would not be entertained."

"Will you be good enough to inform me what was the nature of the information you received which led you to understand your tender would not be entertained? Was it derived from any one in the service of the Queensland Government, and if so, from whom? In other words, as the paragraph to which I am referring seems to imply that, although the Government called tenders for the freight of rails, the successful tenderer was a foregone conclusion, will you be good enough to state to me the information on which you based your conclusion, and how that information was connected with anyone in the employment of the Queensland Government?"

"I have, &c.,

"THOMAS MCILWRAITH.

"Thomas Law and Co., 123, Hope-street, Glasgow."

That letter was written on the 12th May, and letters that were written at the same time had been answered, and Mr. Law had had time to answer it. He might, of course, answer it yet. That was one more link in the chain of proof that the Premier and his colleagues, and especially the Premier, were most anxious to have inquired into. The only difference between them and the hon. gentleman at the head of the Opposition was that he wanted the inquiry to be commenced at home—they wanted it here. He maintained that if the inquiry were commenced at home it could not be finished there. It must be begun here, and the authority for holding it at home must come from here. They would not consent to invoke the Imperial authority to interfere in their internal administration. The committee might sit almost immediately, and conclude its sittings within three days after they began, as far as he knew. Of course, he could not say what documentary evidence was likely to be produced; but, as far as that was concerned, it might finish in a short time, and they need not be sending

home to England and asking the Queen to appoint a commission, and thereby probably causing delay, because he was positive in his own mind that the mode of procedure asked for by the leader of the Opposition would simply cause three or four months' delay, by having the request sent back to them to attend to their internal affairs themselves. The only difference between them was as to the mode of conducting this inquiry. They were as anxious as any member on the opposite side of the House who believed in rings, land rings, steel rings, or ship rings, could be, no matter who he was, for an inquiry—full, free, and impartial. They had nothing to fear, and could have nothing; therefore, there could be no reason for them to burk the question, as the hon. gentleman had said. He wished everything to be unveiled—not only for his own satisfaction, but for that of the whole colony. He had said enough to convince any hon. gentleman that he had no wish to burk the question, and, unless the hon. gentleman wished to do so himself, he would withdraw this suggestion and adopt the one now proposed by him.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the hon. the Minister for Works had, in pursuance of his mission, followed his usual course. He had already answered the arguments on the other side. He had not risen to follow him in the most unusual and improper course he had adopted. If the hon. gentleman wanted to have the last word and to hold him up to ridicule he was welcome to do so—he (Mr. Griffith) was used to it. There were, however, two or three things he must answer. He was told he was wrong in saying that the Colonial Secretary had abused Mr. Hemmant. The Colonial Secretary accused Mr. Hemmant of obtaining contracts in collusion with Mr. Hamilton, and yet he said that was not abuse. They must agree about the meaning of common words before they could obtain fair discussion. Their notions of abuse differed from his. He called that abuse;—the hon. gentleman did not. It had been said that the telegrams from the Colonial Secretary making inquiries at home might suggest the answer, and he (Mr. Griffith) had been accused of saying so; but what he did say was that the same wire could take the information from this colony as to how the answer was to be given. Hon. members professed to be very innocent, but if a message were sent to the effect, "Will you inquire if Smith did so-and-so," could not the same wire say to Smith "The Agent-General is going to ask so-and-so!" It was a perfect farce to talk to them as if they were babies. Everyone knew how to inquire so as not to get any information. One other thing, as to his not moving for a committee here, he was waiting until the papers were laid upon the table; but they were only laid yesterday, and he saw them this morning. How could he say until he knew how much was to be investigated? It would be idle to ask a committee to collect all the documents that were already collected. The documents were not collected before yesterday, but the facts were known, and that was the reason why a committee was not moved earlier. Whether it would have been moved by himself or his friends he did not know. They were only waiting.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the Minister for Works commenced by saying that he never abused hon. gentlemen on that side of the House. He did not understand what was meant by abuse, but spoke of the hon. gentleman's low morality, and instanced, as a sample, some transactions in which he was concerned in connection with proceedings instituted by the Government of the day to establish the existence of the land law

then in force. If that was the worst sample of low morality that he could bring, he thought he had better not have made the charge at all. He (Mr. Macrossan) was happily circumstanced so that he could look down on others from a more exalted position, and comforted himself that he was not as other men were—affected by low morality. His style of morality was a very high one indeed, and it jarred upon his mind altogether when he heard these accusations against his honourable friend. He rose chiefly because he was loth that the assertion in reference to their right to invoke Her Majesty should be allowed to pass without comment. They had just as much a direct right to appeal to Her Majesty as the House of Commons. It was true that under ordinary circumstances they addressed themselves to the Governor as her representative; but that did not shut them out from the incontestable right they possessed of addressing her directly. She was as much the sovereign of this part of her dominions as of the United Kingdom, and as long as they were connected with the United Kingdom they should not be precluded from exercising their privileges if they chose. They were important, and not likely to be exercised often; but he should be the last to admit that they should not exercise them if they pleased. The hon. gentleman fell down before Mr. Todd and set him up as a small idol—he thought they should never get beyond the four corners of Todd. Some of them, by long Parliamentary experience, considered that their opinions were as good as those of Mr. Todd, however experienced he might be; and he, for one, declined to be limited to Todd's aphorisms on this constitutional question. Circumstances of the kind had not arisen before, and if they pleased they had a right to make a precedent if necessary. The hon. gentleman took the Opposition to task because they referred to Sir John Macdonald, and said that, by some remote analogy, they hinted at a similarity between his conduct and that of the Premier. Unfortunately, they knew that transactions which could not be justified had occurred before in some Administrations famous in history which had become notorious from their connection with corruption and bribery; and Sir John Macdonald, an eminent statesman, and now Prime Minister of Canada, was proved guilty of collusive action with the great capitalists in order to obtain political ascendancy. No personal corruption was imputed to this gentleman, but it was proved that he had availed himself of large sums of money supplied by capitalists to engineer a great project through the Parliament, and he had yet to be informed that Sir John Macdonald's personal character suffered under what was a high political crime. He had now condoned that, and was now the leader of a very important party. The Opposition could not be blamed for making use of his name. The most eminent men might be dragged into these transactions in a way that did them no honour. In the United States men of high reputation had unfortunately tarnished their names in connection with land grants and railways: intellectual giants had tarnished their names in this way. Therefore, they should not refrain, if necessary, from quoting instances in order to guard against them. With regard to the constitution of the committee, if the amendment were carried, he was glad to hear that there was no objection to the appointment of the member for North Brisbane. He himself would rather not serve, and his hon. friend might very well take his place. The charge seemed to have recoiled upon the hon. member for North Brisbane now. He was not the accuser; he was the defendant. The action of the hon. gentleman opposite had really gone in that direction. At any rate, he would have an opportunity of hearing what was to be said and of cross-examining witnesses. He

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(Mr. Douglas) was rather surprised to hear the hon. gentleman consider that this, if carried out, would only lead to delay. It seemed to him that the proposition of the hon. gentleman was perfectly consistent with the appointment of a local committee, if that committee entered into its work properly. His view of committees was this—he did not place much value upon their report. As the hon. member for Darling Downs had said, "Show me your committee and I will tell you their report." That might be very true; but it must not be forgotten that, apart altogether from their report, a committee was always a useful vehicle for obtaining information and evidence; and, though admitting that the purport of their report might be arrived at in consequence of the constitution of a committee, still he had seen much good arise from investigations of that kind. He had a lively recollection of a committee, upon which he was in a minority of one—the dummy inquiry committee in 1867, but at the same time that committee succeeded in getting a valuable amount of evidence. He believed that, so far from leading to delay, the proposition of the hon. gentleman would advance the inquiry considerably. It did not prevent the appointment of a committee here; and, as the investigation could not be instituted immediately in England, in the meantime evidence might be taken in the colony. He contended that, under the circumstances of the case, Her Majesty's Ministers would not object to appoint a commission to inquire into a matter which was not only of great interest in the colony and to our bondholders, but also involved to some extent the honour of the trading and shipping community in London itself.

Mr. AMHURST congratulated the hon. member for North Brisbane, who was a barrister, and at the head of his profession, on the proud position he now occupied as prosecutor—a virulent prosecutor, judge, and also the defendant, as he had been made by the hon. member for Maryborough. He was also going to sit upon a committee which was supposed to be impartial, and it only showed the contempt of that side of the House in allowing him to occupy that position.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put, and the House divided.

AYES, 20.

Messrs. Dickson, Garrick, Griffith, McLean, Thorn, Meston, Kates, Miles, Douglas, Horwitz, Bailey, Rutledge, Macdonald-Paterson, Grimes, Macfarlane, Hendren, Fraser, Tyrel, Beattie, and Groom.

NOES, 25.

Messrs. Palmer, Beor, McIlwraith, Scott, Hill, Amhurst, Feez, Stevens, Norton, Baynes, Lalor, Morehead, Weld-Blundell, Macrossan, Perkins, H. W. Palmer, Simpson, Swanwick, Hamilton, Perse, Archer, Davenport, O'Sullivan, Cooper, and Low.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr. GRIFFITH suggested that as there was to be an inquiry it should include the whole of the allegations contained in Mr. Hemmant's petition. His own motion only referred to two particular transactions, and did not include, for instance, the allegation that two members of the Government were interested in the ships of the line conducted by the contracting firm of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co.

The PREMIER said he had no objection to accept the suggestion, as he wished the inquiry to be made as wide as possible.

The wording of the amendment was so altered as to read, "the allegations contained in Mr.

Hemmant's petition and all matters connected therewith."

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put and passed; and the motion as a substantive motion was also put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said that as next Tuesday had been proclaimed a public holiday, and it seemed rather inconsistent for members of Parliament to meet together on that day, he had consulted with hon. members on the subject, and seeing the improbability of making a House on that day, he had determined to move the adjournment till Wednesday.

After a few remarks from Mr. BAYNES, who objected to the House adjourning because of the Show, the question was put and passed, and the House adjourned at ten minutes to 11 o'clock till Wednesday next.