

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 25 AUGUST 1880

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 25 August, 1880.

Petitions.—Correction.—Question.—Mail Contract—resumption of committee.

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

PETITIONS.

Mr. ARCHER presented a petition from Graziers and others in the marsupial district of Rockhampton, praying that some change might be made in the Marsupial Act.

Petition read and received.

Mr. RUTLEDGE presented a petition from over 200 Electors of Enoggera, praying for such a revision of tariff as would result in fostering native industries.

Petition read and received.

Mr. HORWITZ presented a petition from the Inhabitants of Warwick and the surrounding District, in favour of a Protective Policy.

Petition read and received.

CORRECTION.

The HON. S. W. GRIFFITH rose to make a correction in the report of a speech he delivered last night, published in this morning's *Hansard*. As it was a matter about which there was a great deal of misrepresentation very often, he thought it necessary to correct it. He was reported to have said that "he was certain the people of the North, notwithstanding the continual efforts made to induce them to believe that there was an antagonism in this part of the colony against them, were not so unreasonable as to desire the colony at large to be taxed for a service which would be of little use to *him* and of no use whatever to anybody else." What he did say was that it would be of comparatively little use to "them;" not "him." Again, shortly afterwards, he was made to say, "It was not likely that Bowen or Townsville could ever compete with Brisbane for the trade of the interior." What he did say was, that "it was not likely Bowen or Townsville could ever compete with Brisbane for the trade of the interior of the southern part of the colony."

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : No.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he used the words "southern portion of the colony," or "this portion of the colony."

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : No.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was certain he used the words, because he wished to be very correct upon the point to which he was addressing himself.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said he had not the slightest objection to the hon. member making the correction; but, in justice to the *Hansard* staff, he was bound to say that the words were reported, as nearly as could be, *verbatim*. He (Mr. McIlwraith) noticed at the time that the hon. gentleman said exactly what was reported, and wondered why he said it.

QUESTION.

Mr. DICKSON asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

Is the Inspector of Road Surveys at the present time engaged in having Road Surveys marked in advance of Settlement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkins) replied—

Not at present.

MAIL CONTRACT—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The House having resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to further consider the proposed through Steam Service between London and Brisbane,

Mr. GRIFFITH said that when he addressed the House, last night, he promised that he would, this afternoon, state definitely what the Opposition proposed to do with reference to the question now before the Committee. He had had an opportunity of consulting the members of his party, and what he had now to say was the unanimous opinion of all. The Opposition were fully aware of the great responsibility involved in the course they proposed to take, and were deeply impressed with the sense that nothing but very extraordinary circumstances could justify them, being a minority in the House, in opposing themselves to what was supposed to be a majority of the House. In considering the matter in all its bearings, they had considered the state of public business, much of which they knew was very urgent, and should be proceeded with as soon as possible. They had also considered the matter from the point of view which existed before the Financial Statement was delivered, when they promised that if, after the discussion of the Financial Statement, there were grounds for withdrawing opposition, they would do so. They had considered all these matters. So far as any alteration in the position had been brought about by the delivery of the Financial Statement, it seemed to them that, if anything, it was for the worse. It might have been, and the anticipation was that it would have been, that the Treasurer would have made some proposals which would, perhaps, have enabled the country to bear the additional cost of this proposed experiment without entailing any serious additional burden upon those people of the colony who were least able to bear it; but no such proposal had been made. The matter, therefore, was in this position: whereas before they did not know what proposals the Government intended to make as to the bearing of this burden, they now knew that the Government proposed to make no definite or distinct proposals by way of additional taxation, or for raising additional revenue. They were therefore left to consider the matter upon other grounds. Upon an occasion last year, when he had the misfortune to differ from a number of his friends in the House and a number of gentleman out of it, he took the opportunity to state what he considered were some of the circumstances which would justify a parliamentary minority in having recourse to a policy of obstruction. Further reflection had not induced him to modify those views, and he could not do better than repeat them now, because an opinion arrived at when his sentiments were opposed to those who usually agreed with him were, perhaps, more dispassionate than those which he might utter in the heat of controversies, like those which had recently taken place. On the 25th August, exactly twelve months ago—a strange coincidence, which he was not aware of till this moment—he was reported in *Hansard*, page 1425, to have said—

"He regarded the right of obstruction—which was, in fact, the right to take advantage of the forms of the House—as a most valuable parliamentary weapon. It was provided by the Standing Orders, and had been provided by the wisdom of centuries, for certain purposes. Tactics of that kind might properly be applied for the purpose of securing freedom of debate and preventing any attempt of the majority to coerce a minority without full discussion. As to the circumstances which might justify the exercise of these tactics, that was a matter of opinion for which those who adopted them must be responsible. If they were wrong they would be condemned by public opinion; if they were right they would

not be. He—expressing his own private opinion—thought, therefore, the tactics of obstruction might be applied to answer temporary purposes. He did not wish to be understood to say that there were not other circumstances in which they might not be applied. He would give instances. Suppose, for instance, a project was formed by a small majority in the House to carry out which would involve the country in irretrievable ruin, which there would be no opportunity of correcting afterwards—as, for example, voting a large sum of money the destination of which could not afterwards be controlled; or, if it was proposed to subsidise some particular person, respecting which he might instance the case of a Governor in Victoria. Another case might be that in which the Government brought forward revolutionary proposals to alter the Constitution—or something of that kind. Another case would be where the Government brought forward a matter which was clearly against the plainly expressed public opinion of the colony, and which an appeal to the constituencies would reverse.”

He found in the case now before the Committee two of the circumstances which he then thought justified obstruction, the first being the voting of a large sum of money the destination of which could not afterwards be controlled; the second being that this was possibly a matter against the plainly expressed public opinion of the colony, and which an appeal to the constituents would reverse. That this contract fell within the first was clear, because if this proposal was carried the country would be committed, for a period of eight years, to a very large expenditure of money which the House would not be able, practically, to control. The country would be pledged to the performance of the contract, however disadvantageous it might be, and however ruinous to our trade and commerce. That, however, if it stood alone would probably be only a matter upon which the opinion of a majority of the House would be competent to decide. But there remained the other question—whether it was against the plainly expressed opinion of the majority of the people? The Opposition believed that the plainly expressed opinion of the large majority of the people of the colony was distinctly adverse to the scheme now before the Committee. Public meetings had been held in nearly every part of the colony where there were people enough to form a public meeting, and they had almost unanimously condemned the proposition. True, there had been one or two meetings here and there in favour of it; but it was well known that those meetings were originated by means of telegrams, with the words “on Her Majesty’s service” attached to them, sent by private members who supported the Government. That the public opinion of the colony was against the proposition could not, he thought, be denied. Then came the question—was there really a majority of the House in favour of it? It was only under very extraordinary circumstances that a minority would be justified in imposing its wishes on a majority of the House; and he felt bound, before the Opposition committed itself to any such course, to give good reasons for doing so. If he could not do so, they had no right to adopt such a course. As to public opinion, he had already stated his sincere belief that it was largely opposed to the scheme, and that if the public had an opportunity of expressing an opinion upon it in the House they would do so in a most unmistakable manner. Was there a majority in the House in favour of it; and if so, how was it composed? It might be unpleasant to refer to the matter, but they could not justify their position without doing so. He had carefully considered the list of members, and the greatest number who could be supposed to be in favour of the proposition was twenty-seven. He would enumerate them that there might be no mistake. They were the hon. members for Mackay (Mr. Amhurst), Blackall (Mr. Archer), Burnett (Mr. Baynes), the Attorney-

General, the hon. members for Cook (Mr. Cooper), Leichhardt (Mr. Feez), Gympie (Mr. Hamilton), Gregory (Mr. Hill), South Brisbane (Mr. Kingsford), Maranoa (Mr. Lalor), Balonne (Mr. Low), the Minister for Works, the Minister for Lands, the Premier, the hon. members for Mitchell (Mr. Morehead), Port Curtis (Mr. Norton), Stanley (Mr. O’Sullivan), Kennedy (Mr. H. Palmer), Fassifern (Mr. Perse), the Colonial Secretary, and either the Chairman of Committees or the Speaker—one, but not both—the hon. members for Burke (Mr. Sheaffe), Dalby (Mr. Simpson), Warrego (Mr. Stevens), Normanby (Mr. Stevenson), Cook (Mr. Walsh), and Clermont (Mr. Weld-Blundell). Those were all the members who could be supposed to be in favour of the contract—and they numbered exactly one-half of the House. Two hon. members who sat on the Government side of the House he had not mentioned—the hon. members for Toowoomba (Mr. Davenport), and for Stanley (Mr. Kellett). One of those gentlemen had spoken against the proposition, and the other had not spoken upon it at all; and they could not be properly reckoned as supporters of it. It was no secret that several of those twenty-seven members were not in favour of the proposition, except as a party question; the only obligation they felt to vote for it was to support the Government on a party question. Under those circumstances, the proposition did not come before the House as one commanding the unbiassed, deliberate support of the majority of the House. All the other members, he had a right to assume, were opposed to it. He had omitted from his enumeration the hon. member for Bulimba (Mr. Swanwick), who made the total number presumably in favour of the proposition twenty-eight. There were four hon. members who had been absent from the House during the session—the hon. members for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea), Burke (Mr. Sheaffe), Kennedy (Mr. Stubley), and Cook (Mr. Walsh); and he had assumed that the hon. members for Burke and Cook were in favour of the scheme—though he did not think they were, and there was no reason for supposing that they were; but he was willing to give the Government the benefit of the doubt. As to the other absent members, Mr. Rea and Mr. Stubley, he had every reason to say that they were opposed to it. It was necessary to go a step further, and consider how the majority was made up. Was it a majority which really expressed the opinion of the country? He would not for a moment contend that hon. members ought to be delegates, or that they ought to obey every word of public opinion; but there were remarkable circumstances in connection with the present Parliament which he would refer to in justification of the course the Opposition proposed to take. There were at least three hon. members who did not represent their constituencies on this subject. His colleague, the Colonial Secretary, did not represent his constituency.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He does not represent your party.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he meant that the hon. gentleman would not have any chance of reelection. The hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Kingsford), as plainly as things could be proved, did not represent his constituents, and the hon. member for Bulimba (Mr. Swanwick) did not represent his. There were three members who, if their constituencies were appealed to, would turn the majority into a minority. As to doubtful seats, he would simply refer to the hon. members for Kennedy (Mr. H. Palmer), Stanley (Mr. O’Sullivan), and Gympie (Mr. Hamilton). It was doubtful, indeed, whether those were hon. members who represented their constituencies. That

on this point they were opposed to their constituents there was no doubt—assuming that they were in favour of the contract. As to the other two hon. members, Messrs. Davenport and Kellett, either they did not represent their constituents on this point, or they ought not to be reckoned supporters of the scheme. So that the majority, against whom the minority was opposing itself, was one constituted under very peculiar circumstances—circumstances which justified the minority in opposing itself to the wishes of the majority. Considering all the circumstances, it was perfectly clear that a course of action which would have the effect of sending the scheme to oblivion would be generally acceptable to the country. Considering how the majority of the House was made up, and that the plainly expressed public opinion of the colony was against the scheme, the Opposition felt that, great as the responsibility was, they ought not to shirk their duty of opposing it by every means in their power. It was a grave responsibility, which they accepted with the greatest reluctance; but they felt they would be wanting in their duty to the colony if they were not to take up that position. Of course, they had not forgotten that it was a scheme of considerable importance. If it were only a trifling matter they would not be justified in putting so great a strain on the parliamentary machinery. Instead of benefiting the colony and developing its resources, he believed the contract would seriously interfere with its prosperity. So important were the circumstances that there was left to them no alternative but to oppose the scheme by every means in their power. There was one thing more he wished to say, and that was that in this matter the Opposition had no desire whatever to achieve a party victory; they had no desire whatever to embarrass the Government by defeating the proposition; they had no wish that, if successful, it should be considered a Ministerial defeat. On the contrary, they would much prefer that the Chairman should be moved out of the chair by some hon. member who was in the confidence of the Government, without making any report, so that the effect of an adverse resolution from the Opposition side being carried might be avoided. The Opposition did not wish to achieve a party triumph, and they had no desire to take possession of the Treasury benches at the present time. They considered, however, that it was their plain duty, under the circumstances, to accept the responsibility of endeavouring, by such means as the usages of the House would allow, to prevent the contract being ratified.

The PREMIER said the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) had lost sight of the words he used when the consideration of the contract was last before the Committee. On the 4th August, while trying to negotiate terms with the Government on the subject, the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) said:—

“If the Premier would—as he had been requested to do from this side, and as several hon. members on the other side sincerely desired—postpone the consideration of the contract until after the Financial Statement had been entered upon, he would afford additional opportunities for discussing it impartially and dispassionately, and would withdraw from the Opposition the basis of their reason for declining to consider the contract now. If ever there was a necessity for the financial affairs of the colony to precede all other subjects of debate, it was at the present period; and if the hon. gentleman would adopt the course he indicated last evening, and postpone for a short time the consideration of the mail service, and proceed to consider the most urgent matter of removing the embarrassment which at present hung over their finances, he would greatly facilitate the consideration of the mail service contract, and would enable them to do so without their having recourse to those tactics which they had hitherto been reluctantly compelled to adopt. He had no desire

to prolong the discussion, but confidently hoped that the Premier would, in the interests of the colony, see that it was unwise to insist upon the present consideration of the subject. By introducing the Financial Statement first the mail service would be considered in an impartial spirit, and without the slightest wish on the part of the Opposition to obstruct the further deliberations of the House in connection with that matter.”

And the leader of the Opposition went on to say:—

“He wished to say another word before the matter was finally settled. Although he could not give an unconditional pledge on the part of the Opposition, he could go so far as to say that anything that might occur afterwards would arise from an entirely different point of view from anything that had taken place up to the present time. It was, of course, impossible to say what might happen, and they might be free to discuss everything in the proper way. He was not anticipating that anything would arise; on the contrary, he saw no reason to anticipate any difficulty; but if any did arise it would arise from an entirely new point of departure. Further than that he could not say.

He (the Premier) took those statements in good faith, and did not think the Opposition deliberately intended to lead the Government into a trap to prevent their having time to discuss the subject. The hon. gentleman had now disclosed, though in very guarded words, that he intended to obstruct the motion in every possible way. He (the Premier) would appeal to hon. members whether all the reasons now given for that course—with one exception to which he would specially refer—were not exactly the same as those which existed on the previous occasion. It was no new matter in the Financial Statement which had led the hon. gentleman to give his list of objections against it, but that he was justified in his action by public opinion. As to the composition of the House, of which the hon. gentleman had given an analysis, that was known long before the Financial Statement was delivered; and he (the Premier) had good grounds for accusing the Opposition of a breach of faith when they came forward now to carry on obstruction with exactly the same reason as they had given before. What was the only argument that he had said was an exception? He contended that all the arguments just used by the hon. gentleman were equally applicable before the Financial Statement was delivered, and that the hon. member had not brought forward anything new to support the opposition to the contract. The hon. gentleman was fair enough when he said that there should be good grounds shown from the Financial Statement why this contract should not be stonewalled; but what was the only objection given by him? That the hon. gentleman had heard the Financial Statement, and that he did not consider that proper provision was made for the payment of the cost of the proposed service. Surely that was not an argument for stonewalling any part of the policy of the Government, as the Government took the whole responsibility of finding the revenue to meet the expenditure they recommended. It was not for the Opposition to take upon themselves that responsibility. If they did take it upon themselves it would be simply a nominal responsibility, as it could never be fixed upon them. If there was any attempt to do that they would be the first to shift it off at once. He would ask the Committee to consider the hon. gentleman's position. The hon. gentleman took up the position that he would be responsible for the consequences of this mail contract not passing, but he (the Premier) contended that the responsibility would rest with the Government, if they did not do all in their power to see that their business was actually carried out. As to proper provision not having been made for the proposed service, the hon. gentleman had devoted no time whatever to the consideration of that part of the question. He had referred to it, cer-

tainly, on the previous evening, and he (the Premier) then showed that there was ample provision made for it in the revenue, and thus that ground of objection had been taken from under the hon. member altogether, and could not be used as an argument for obstructing the contract. The question of revenue had already been decided when, after the Financial Statement was made, the hon. member moved an amendment in these words :—

“That in the opinion of this Committee it is necessary to make further and better provision for equalising the public revenue and expenditure by additional taxation, and that no proposition for that purpose will be satisfactory to the country which does not provide for raising an increased revenue from Crown lands held under pastoral lease by an assessment on stock or otherwise.”

That was just the point put to the Committee by the hon. member, and it was decided by a majority of 27 to 18 against him. How, then, could the hon. member now come forward and say that the absence of proper provision being made was a reason why the contract should be stonewalled? Still, the hon. member, knowing that that had been decided by the Committee, now came forward and said that he did not believe it himself—that the matter was in a worse position than before, and that there was a justification for stonewalling. The only argument, out of all those used by the hon. member, that he was entitled to use was that the Financial Statement was inadequate; but he (the Premier) had shown that that question, after long discussion on a motion amounting to one of want of confidence, had been decided against the Opposition, so that the only argument fell to the ground. Then the hon. member referred to public opinion, and said that it was generally against the contract; but how did the hon. member know what public opinion was? He believed the hon. gentleman had had more to do in an underhanded way to form what he called public opinion during the last month than any other man in the colony. He (the Premier) cared very little for public opinion in a time of excitement worked up as it had been by the Opposition. He believed that the colony would by-and-bye come to its senses and recognize honesty of purpose in its public men when it existed, notwithstanding any schemes of designing men in that House; and, however disagreeable it might be, and however hard it might be for a man to maintain his temper and sit under the calumnies so industriously spread, he should not shrink from his duty but stand by his post as leader of the House while he had a majority. He had a contempt for the way in which the present warfare had been conducted, and he believed that before long the people of Queensland who now opposed the contract would come to their senses, and would arrive at the conclusion that they could not expect their public men to conduct their affairs faithfully unless they were properly and fairly treated. The hon. member had referred to a dissolution; but he (the Premier) would not advise one, although if a dissolution was to take place now, he questioned very much whether the position of members of the House would be much altered from what it was, notwithstanding what the hon. gentleman had said to the contrary. The hon. gentleman adduced as a proof that the contract was not in accordance with public opinion the number of public meetings that had been held in connection with it, and stated that with the exception of two or three in the north there had been none in favour of the contract. He would ask if the hon. member had been reading the papers lately, because if he had he must have seen that within the last three weeks there was scarcely a northern paper

which did not contain reports of meetings at which resolutions were passed in favour of the contract. He did not know a single town north of Maryborough where the general feeling was not in favour of it, and he believed that in the South, if the question was divested of all the foul slander that had been circulated concerning it, the majority of the people would be found in favour of the contract. In analysing the position of hon. members on the Government side of the Committee, the hon. member, after going over all the names, made out that twenty-seven would vote for the contract. He picked out two hon. members—namely, Mr. Davenport and Mr. Kellett—who, he said, were doubtful, as the first-named had not expressed any opinion, and as the other had expressed his disapproval of one of the clauses of the contract, but said that owing to its having been made a party question the Government would no doubt get twenty-seven. And then the hon. gentleman went on to say that members on his own side of the Committee were all of one opinion, which was against the contract. If that was the case, had there not been strong coercion used or party feeling excited to obtain such an unanimous expression of opinion? It was absurd to pretend that there was not a strong feeling in favour of the contract, and he (the Premier) believed that on his side of the Committee there was not a member who would vote for it who did not really believe that it was the best thing which could be done for the country at the present time. He should have no objection whatever to having the question put on its merits, and he could tell what the result would be—namely, that every member opposite would be against it, whilst members on his side would be pretty much as they now were—he did not believe that one would go over to the other side. He had sound reasons for making the question a party question. It had certainly given the Opposition a handle to cavil at, but he considered the question was one of the most important which had been brought before Parliament, and he thought it would have been a personal reflection on himself if, after having spent so much time and trouble in England in connection with this mail service, he had on his return allowed the work to be thrown in his face as useless. Had he not made it a party question, he had not the slightest doubt that members of the Opposition would have rallied at once, got as many recruits as possible, and have tried to throw the whole thing overboard and claimed a party triumph. The leader of the Opposition had twitted the hon. Colonial Secretary time after time with having said that when a man was hard up he should speculate in order to retrieve his position, and the hon. member and others had twisted that remark in every possible way. He (the Premier), however, believed that when a man found himself getting low in the world he should try and get together as much available capital as he could command, with the object of using it judiciously and improving his position: that he believed to be the duty of every business man in times of depression. When a man saw that reverses were coming on him it was his duty to try and retrieve his position; and that was just what the Government were trying to do in this colony. The hon. member might think it was a popular thing to oppose this contract at the present time as there were so many newspapers opposing it, but if before six months were over the contract did not come into existence there would be no more sorry man in Brisbane than the hon. member himself. If the hon. member did not accept this contract, should he ever be in a position to make another he would find out the mistake he had made. He was as sure as that he stood on the floor of that

Chamber that there would be no more popular policy in Brisbane six months hence than this contract. He knew that there was a number of greedy men in Brisbane who, because they did not get a good thing themselves, would like the Orient steamers to come to Moreton Bay so as to give employment to small steamers, and he quite believed that a lot of selfish people in Brisbane would like to see the Orient steamers come here so as to make Brisbane a big centre and thus spite the North; but so long as he was a member of the House he should oppose such a thing, and he did not believe that it would be in accordance with the wishes of the sensible people of Brisbane. Every reason given by the hon. leader of the Opposition last year in justification of obstruction, the hon. gentleman said he was prepared to support this year. It was, of course, no use combatting those opinions, as it was always very easy to give reasons for obstructing when people had made up their minds to obstruct, and he (the Premier) did not intend to go into them. But he did not believe the hon. member was sincere in saying that his party were unanimous in the determination to obstruct, because the hon. member must be aware that obstruction was a weapon he might himself suffer from if ever he came into power. When the hon. gentleman and the member for Enoggera were in power there were no two men who looked so uncomfortable if there was any obstruction, but with the tactics the hon. gentleman had now adopted he would feel his seat more uncomfortable still. The Opposition had exactly the same right to obstruct any other Order of the Day, and if the Government submitted to such tyranny they would be unworthy to conduct the business of the House and the country. He was perfectly aware that there was no party opposite able to conduct the public business at the present time. The hon. gentleman was quite right when he said he was not anxious for office, and he might rest assured that he was not likely to get it. The Government had not the slightest intention of giving to the Opposition that chance; saying this, he would leave hon. members opposite to develop their opposition in any manner they chose.

Mr. KELLETT said that as the leader of the Opposition had thought fit to mention his name especially as one whose vote might be doubtful, he wished to make a few remarks in reply. When this question was before the Committee on a former occasion he expressed the objection he had to a portion of the proposed contract, but there was no need for the insinuation of the hon. gentleman that if he (Mr. Kellett) voted for the contract he would act contrary to the wishes of his constituents and against the opinions he had expressed. So far as he knew, his constituents did not object to the proposed mail service. There had been several meetings in his district, and on looking at the names of the movers and seconders of the resolutions at those meetings he found there was not one who was not an opponent of his at the last election. He could answer for his district that there was generally a feeling in favour of the present Government. There was no Government, however good it might be, but exception might be taken to some of their acts, and exception had been taken to some of the present Government; but he had no hesitation in saying that they possessed the confidence of the country, and had the voice of the country with them. He was satisfied that the longer the Government lived the more they would have the country with them. There was a measure brought in last session—the Divisional Boards Bill—which was a very unpopular measure for any Ministry to take in hand. It was found necessary to

force the measure on the country, or else the Act would never have been carried out. Any boards which had taken the trouble to understand their position were satisfied that the measure was for the interests of their districts. There were some matters, however, which it would be necessary to amend, because there were too many boards, and there was great difficulty in getting the proper men to act. But wherever the work was done by sensible men the Act was working well. He would say that the leader of the Opposition need not trouble himself about the junior member for Stanley. If he looked a little nearer home he would find enough to talk about. It would be better to stick to what he said he would do, viz., that if the financial question were taken he would give up obstruction to the mail contract. That was the hon. member's statement, but his action was diametrically opposed to it. Whenever he found him (Mr. Kellett) acting in the same way, he might call his conduct in question. He had made up his mind long ago that if the question came to a vote he would vote against it; but when he found the Opposition determined to adopt stonewalling tactics, he made up his mind to take no part in such actions. He had his own ideas on the question—he did not say they were right—and he had intended to vote against the contract; but when he found the Opposition obstructing, he would not assist them in any way. He need not give his reasons for his view of the question, because the arguments used had been worn threadbare; but he would state that no majority of his constituents had ever asked him to vote against the contract, nor had they in any way told him that they did not believe in the men in power at the present time. He was perfectly satisfied that if Stanley were polled to-morrow a majority would be found in favour of the present Government. They had had enough of the late Ministry, and he was fully satisfied that it would take some years before they forgot them.

Mr. HAMILTON said the member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith), in adducing various reasons to justify the course he intended to pursue, gave as one reason that various constituencies were not properly represented in the House, and, among others, mentioned Gympie. This was untrue; and, if he could show this to be so, it would enable members to appreciate the value of the statements made by Mr. Griffith regarding other constituencies. The only expression of feeling regarding the matter which had taken place in Gympie was at a meeting which was called under the auspices of the Liberal Association there. This association was not very strong in Gympie, if the following tale were true:—When the Liberal Association in Brisbane were hawking a subscription list about the town to collect funds to assist Mr. O'Kane against the Attorney-General for the Bowen election—a list to which the name of the present leader of the Opposition was attached to the amount of £10—action was also taken by the association at Gympie; and they also assisted Mr. O'Kane. The amount of their contribution consisted of a telegram assuring him of their sympathy and support; this telegram was marked "collect." The same association instigated a meeting at Gympie regarding the mail contract. The chairman of that meeting was a man who had been politically opposed to him ever since his election. The principal speaker was Mr. Kidgell, who ran against him in the interests of the present Opposition at the last general election, and was received at the meeting with hooting and jeers. The second speaker, he believed, was a dismissed Government servant, and was so drunk that he could hardly articulate, and formed a great

source of amusement to those present. Then followed two men rejoicing in the ancient names of Abraham and Isaac; but they did not belong to his constituency; they had been scared up from the adjoining one, which was represented by a member who occasionally attempted to tinker with his electorate. The meeting was a fiasco; it was held on a night when it was known the miners could not be present—for Saturday was the only day a good meeting of miners could be got on a goldfield—and it was held at the tail end of the field where business men were plentiful but miners scarce, and at a spot where thousands of pounds were squandered away by the previous Government, not in the interest of the miners; but Mr. Kidgell, the late representative of Gympie, and a supporter of the Opposition, lived at that spot, which might account for it. During last session, by means of the *Gympie Times*, it was attempted to show, as it had now been attempted, that he did not represent the feelings of his constituency in supporting the Government. He went to Gympie during the session and stated that, though he would not go against his convictions and support the Opposition, he would resign if they wished him to do so and let them put another in his place. What was the verdict of the miners? At a large meeting on the most popular part of the field they not only approved of his conduct, but unanimously thanked him for having supported the Government, only one hand being held up against a resolution to that effect. He believed the miners in his district had the same confidence in the Government now that they had then; and he felt sure that the dastardly and cowardly manner in which the present Government had been attacked by the Opposition, alone, would tend to make them side with the Government; for his experience of miners was that they were distinguished as a class, above all others, with a love of fairplay.

Mr. GRIFFITH begged to move that the Chairman leave the chair for the reasons he had already given. He did not think it necessary to reply to the speech of the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government. The Opposition had fully considered the matter, and were quite aware of the responsibility they incurred. If public opinion should change and consider the Opposition were taking the wrong course, it would prove that they were not justified in their determination; nothing would justify the course they were taking except public approval. The hon. member for Stanley appeared to be somewhat aggrieved by something he (Mr. Griffith) had said. But he had not intended to aggrieve that hon. member: he heard him speak against the mail contract, and therefore assumed that he was opposed to it. If the hon. member had changed his opinions, that was another matter. He did not know that there was anything more to be said on the question, and he would therefore move that the Chairman leave the chair.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said he would say a very few words on the speech made by the hon. member for North Brisbane. In the course of his remarks—he could hardly call them arguments—he advanced the statement that, although members on the Opposition side did not represent the majority of the House, they represented the majority of the people. He (Mr. Palmer) entirely denied that the Opposition side of the House represented the majority of the people, and the hon. member brought forward no proof whatever to show that they did represent the majority of the people. That hon. gentleman was pleased to bring forward his (Mr. Palmer's) name along with the names of other hon. members who, he said, did not represent their constituencies. For the hon. gentleman's opinion on that subject he did not

care the infinitesimal part of a brass farthing; which was, he believed, typical of the most insignificant of coins. The hon. gentleman's opinion about him (Mr. Palmer) when he contested the electorate of Brisbane—for which the hon. member was also a candidate—ought to have led him to believe that he knew very little about the feelings of the great majority of that constituency. He believed nothing ever struck the hon. gentleman with more astonishment than to find that he was second on the poll on that occasion, and anybody who saw him on that memorable occasion, and saw the state of blue funk he was in as 4 o'clock approached, would never forget the figure he cut and the anxiety he evinced for fear he should be last on the poll. He (Mr. Palmer) believed now, as he believed then, that if he had chosen to trim slightly one or two of the opinions he then expressed he would have headed the poll a considerable number ahead of the hon. gentleman; he had been told so over and over. And he might have trimmed without any sacrifice whatever of principle; but he had always ruled his conduct so that he spoke out what he thought and did not care for the consequences. He thought the hon. member would be very likely to be deceived again when the time came for a trial; at all events, he could assure the hon. member of this—that what his opinion was, or the opinion of the clique he belonged to and principally represented, he (Mr. Palmer) did not care twopence. But, suppose they granted that the Opposition represented a majority of the people, what then? What was the argument good for? Less than nothing! That argument had been used before by a statesman of very considerable experience of a minority of the members of the House in Queensland. In a memorable address presented to the Marquis of Normanby in 1872, that argument was brought forward as the 25th reason why the Governor should comply with the address of the parties who signed it. He was sorry to see that his hon. friend the Premier figured in the address, but then he was a young politician at that time and he would forgive him, for he was sure he had seen the error of his ways long before now. That 25th reason asserted—

"That the Opposition are supported by the great majority of the people, and have resolved to assert their right to continue their deliberations, and to refuse the supply to your Excellency's present advisers."

The question at the present time was not exactly one of granting supplies, but was still a question of the same importance—the question of going on with the business of the country. He saw among those who signed the address the names of Mr. William Miles and Mr. Groom; and it was very strange, but nearly without exception they were all gone; they were not in the House, and some of them were not in the world. The answer they got from Lord Normanby, who was a statesman of very great experience, on the point, was this—

"I trust that after an experience extending over a period of nearly eighteen years in the British Parliament, and six years as the Governor of a colony, I shall ever be found ready to uphold the dignity and privileges of Parliament, and to admit to the fullest extent the right of the people of this colony to direct the government of the country according to their own wishes, as indicated by their representatives in Parliament. I must, however, at the same time, point out that the undoubted right of the representatives of the people to direct the manner in which the affairs of the country shall be conducted appertains to them, not in their individual, but in their collective capacity; and I must, therefore, decline to accept the opinion of twelve members as the decision of a House constituted of thirty-two representatives of the people of this colony."

He need not read the whole of the reply, because any hon. member could read it who liked;

but the reply to the argument he had quoted to the members who stated that they represented the majority of the people outside was disposed of as follows :—

"The argument, therefore, that the Opposition represents a majority of the population does not appear to me to bear any force, especially as the number given includes women and children who have no votes, and who are always more numerous in this country in the town constituencies than they are in the country districts."

That was a good and sufficient answer, and one worthy of more respect than the assertion of the hon. member for North Brisbane was likely to meet with. He denied entirely that the Opposition represented the majority of the people of the colony. No proof had been given that such was the case. There had been hole-and-corner meetings, but hon. members knew who got them up. No one had come forward at them who were not opponents of the present Ministry from the jump, disappointed applicants for place, or dismissed public servants. Those were the men who got the meetings together, and the great majority of those who attended did not care a rap about the matter. He had seen meetings take place at which the opinion of the people was really and enthusiastically expressed, and anything more unlike them than the meetings endeavoured to be got up here by the hon. gentleman who was at the head—at least, nominally—of the Opposition benches, it was utterly impossible to imagine. He was quite certain that the more the people understood the question now under consideration the more decided would be their opinion in favour of the Government. As to the opinions of the leader of the Opposition with regard to which hon. members would be returned and which would not, they were not worth the breath he wasted in uttering them; but he announced his belief not as a matter of opinion but as a matter of fact. The facts were very like his usual facts, and hon. members knew what they were. The hon. member did not even represent the party which he was supposed to lead. If the hon. member had used his own judgment and had his own way to-day, he (Mr. Palmer) was as certain that the hon. member would not have gone into stonewalling as he was that he was standing in the House. The hon. member was not leading; he was forced on by the tail of that party. The Government knew pretty well what was going on, and it was useless for the hon. member (Mr. Miles) to shake his gory locks. That hon. member was the real leader at present, and the hon. member for Northern Downs was his lieutenant. The nominal leader was not even a good mouth-piece to his party, for it was quite patent to every member of the House that he was saying one thing and thinking another. It must be quite evident to the hon. member that government in these colonies could only be carried on by majorities; but he presumed the hon. member and other hon. members of the Opposition had taken into consideration the responsibilities they assumed in blocking the whole course of business in the colony. It was a very serious matter, and worthy of the gravest consideration. In his (Mr. Palmer's) opinion, the adoption of the course of action proposed stopped all business in the House and the whole business of the colony. With a minority stonewalling in the manner which the leader of the Opposition had expressed his intention of adopting, he did not see how the Government could carry on business. How differently did the present Government behave when in opposition on a question of very much greater importance! They decided deliberately against an attempt on the part of the Government of the day to bunch six railways, but when they found that they were outnumbered and that a moderate obstruction would

not answer their purpose, the Government being determined to use the majority at their back, they said—"We don't believe this will be for the good of the country; we believe it will be very much against its interests; but rather than stop the whole of the business, we will allow you to take your own way and incur the consequences of your action." That was taking a constitutional view of the question, and it was the view which he should recommend to the acceptance of a party in so hopeless a minority as the present Opposition were. They had, however, taken upon themselves to block the whole business of the country—the country would no doubt have to suffer for it—and the Opposition would soon find that the majority of the country was not with them on this or any other subject.

Mr. FEEZ said he did not intend to speak on the merits or demerits of the mail contract, as that subject was already quite exhausted, but he wished to impress upon the leader of the Opposition and his followers that the tactics which the hon. member had expressed his intention of adopting were very plainly seen. That hon. gentleman's plan evidently was to wear out those hon. members who came from a long distance, sacrificing their time for their duty to their constituencies, and then, when they had gone home, secure a majority and carry out his intention. But he believed that the members on the Ministerial side would show just as much determination and stability as the Opposition. There could be no stronger argument brought forward against a system of centralisation than the tactics of stonewalling, and that fact would be brought before the attention of the constituencies of hon. members whose time was being wasted. It was an easy matter for hon. members on the Opposition side, whose businesses were in town, to attend the House. Generally, the benches on that side were almost empty until a late hour in the evening, this being the first occasion upon which he had seen a fair attendance in the afternoon. Gentlemen living in Brisbane, Ipswich, and the Darling Downs could live comfortably at home and come to the House when it suited them. They could attend to their courts, mercantile or legal business, whilst the House was sitting, and be placed under no disadvantage. The present course of obstruction must tend to deprive the country constituencies of being fairly represented in the House, and such a tendency would bring about its natural results. But the Opposition might find that they had been counting their chickens too soon, and that the attempt to stonewall a measure which the minority considered would be good for the country would be attended with different consequences from those anticipated. If he could get the support of hon. members on the Ministerial side, he should propose that the House should meet every day at 10 o'clock, and it would then be seen how the Opposition would like that arrangement. It was not fairplay that a small minority, whose business, meantime, went on undisturbed, should be able to stonewall. Estimates and valuable measures which the country demanded were being obstructed, and the country would perhaps lose by the stoppage of public business more than the amount of the contract which was being opposed. The railway to Roma would be finished directly, and legislative action would be necessary before the line could be further extended. He very much doubted the popularity which the Opposition claimed to have. There were two parties in the place, and a strong movement could be got up in favour of the Government. He firmly believed that the popularity of the Opposition was a delusion and a snare, and that the character and stability of the Government had gained for them the respect of the whole country. The policy of retrenchment

which they had been compelled to adopt caused a falling off among their followers at first, but that was remedied as soon as the country saw that the policy pursued was for the best. Before six months had passed he believed the Ministry would be more popular than before, and he protested most strongly against the inconsiderate way in which the representatives of outside constituencies were treated. Not only the mail contract but also railway and other measures might be stonewalled, because it was evidently the policy of the Opposition to wear out hon. members and send them home and form a Government from their side of the House. He hoped hon. members would join with him in a determined resistance to such an act of injustice.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he wished to make a remark in reference to the statement of the Colonial Secretary, that in his opinion he (Mr. Griffith) did not agree with the Opposition members of the House in the course which they were now adopting. The hon. gentleman, in making that statement, knew very well that if he could induce the country to believe it, he would succeed in doing him a great deal of harm. The fact was that he thoroughly concurred in the course which had been agreed upon, and, more than that, he could tell the hon. gentleman that the Opposition had taken that course on his (Mr. Griffith's) advice. He had tendered that advice to them and they had cordially accepted it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the last solemn asseveration of the leader of the Opposition had very much surprised him. Of course, he could not say that he disbelieved the statement of the hon. member, but it was certainly contrary to his idea of the meaning of what had taken place. He had been rather amused at the way in which the hon. member quoted from his speech on the 25th August, 1879, as though he were a second edition of "May;" and he should have liked to see how, with his legal acumen, the hon. gentleman might, had he chosen, have criticised his own remarks. In this matter of the mail contract, he was not at first one of the most fervent supporters of the Government, but since the question had been discussed in its integrity he had come to believe in the project. He fully believed that if an arrangement of the financial divisions of the colony could be made so that the service could be run at the expense of the northern and central parts of the colony, having the port of Rockhampton or even Maryborough for a terminus, the people of the Northern and Central parts of the colony would be glad to adopt it, leaving Brisbane to make any other arrangements it chose. The people of Brisbane would probably then come to their senses. If the course proposed to be adopted by the leader of the Opposition were successful, constitutional government as at present understood might as well be done away with. That hon. gentleman had shown how he was prepared to back up his former leader (Mr. Douglas), in contempt for the Standing Orders of the House, by setting the majority of the House at defiance. The force of argument had been entirely with the Government on the main question, and the action of the Opposition was an exhibition of mere stolid obstinacy. The present Government thoroughly represented the length and breadth of the land; they were connected with all the reproductive interests of the colony; and it was for the people to judge whether they were not better able to carry on the government of the country than any other party. Exception had been taken against them on the ground that the Government party was largely composed of squatters; but if the squatters had no right to take part in the legislation of the colony he should like to know who had a right? What

had the lawyers done for the colony that they should have a monopoly? Squatters and miners should go hand-in-hand; they were the only reproductive industries in the colony, and combined, they should have more voice in the general business of the country than Queen street and the lawyers combined. He gave all due importance to the farmers, but he looked upon the farming interest as being at present a merely subsidiary interest—one living upon the pastoral and mining interests, which brought to the colony the money which was so much needed. He looked upon the farmers as a very worthy class indeed, whose interests should be advanced in every way possible, but they could no more live without the squatters and miners to live upon than Queen street could exist without them. When hon. members talked about the squatters not paying a fair share of taxes, they should remember that the whole of the townspeople, and the farmers as well, lived upon the pastoral and mining interests. He agreed with the hon. member for Leichhardt that this was a question of towns *versus* the country—members representing towns were endeavouring to wear out members representing the country districts, with the hope that when the avocations of those hon. members took them away from Brisbane the Opposition would be able to snatch a victory. He also agreed with the hon. member for Leichhardt that members on the Government side of the House should show a determined front. For his own part they would always find him at his post when he was wanted; and rather than give way he would continue sitting till the next Parliament. The action of the leader of the Opposition in this matter had not only failed to do his party any good, but it had riveted together more firmly than ever the following of the Premier. They would see whether they could not subject the members for Brisbane to some inconvenience in attending to their parliamentary duties.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he would say a few words in reference to the last exciting speech of the hon. member for North Brisbane. If he were to take what the hon. member had just asserted as being strictly and literally true—and he was bound, in a parliamentary sense, to adopt that course, however much his own ideas might differ—he had deliberately and of malice aforethought misled the House and the country. The whole of the hon. member's recent speeches on this subject had shown a decided feeling upon his part that obstruction had gone quite far enough. If, then, the hon. member had made up his mind to pursue that course which he now said he had recommended his party to pursue to-day, and if he were really the leader of the party, why did he not take action last night? What had he to consult his party about? Why did he not say to them, last night, "My advice is to go on to the bitter end and see it out?" But the hon. member did not choose to pursue that course; and, putting it any way one liked, he was on the horns of a dilemma—he had either deliberately misled the Committee as to his views, or he had run counter to the opinions he expressed no later than last night as well as upon previous occasions, for he certainly led the House to believe that he thought obstruction had gone quite far enough. He was exceedingly sorry that the hon. member's better thoughts had not prevailed; but, viewing his conduct in either light, he was entirely in the wrong.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not think the question under discussion was his conduct or the manner in which the Colonial Secretary chose to interpret his actions. He had asserted what was perfectly accurate; and the Colonial Secretary, in effect, contradicted him without being possessed of the necessary information. The hon.

member was far too certain of things which had never happened. The hon. member professed to know how meetings were got up, and laid claim to a knowledge of the tempers of audiences he had never seen. For his own part, he spoke of these things because he had seen them. If the hon. member only knew it, the meeting recently held in the Brisbane Town Hall was one of the most enthusiastic of any which had ever been held in Brisbane; and there were many hundreds of persons present who knew perfectly well what they were doing. The hon. member said that what he had asserted that afternoon was inconsistent with what he had said on a previous occasion.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: On several occasions.

MR. GRIFFITH did not think he was inconsistent. He had always had exactly the same opinion upon this subject, and had always expressed it. All he would ask the Colonial Secretary to do was to place what he was reported to have said in juxtaposition with what the hon. member said he said. That course would answer the whole of the attacks of this kind which had been made during the present session. When he said, a fortnight ago, that he hoped there would be no further obstruction, he certainly hoped that that would be the case. But he did not dream—any more than anyone else in the community dreamt—that the Financial Statement would be what it was. If he had such an idea he did not think he would have been foolish enough even to care to know what it was. People believed there would have been extraordinary propositions.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: But they were disappointed.

MR. GRIFFITH would not say the Premier led people to believe that that would be the case; but everyone anticipated it. The Premier said last night that hon. members appeared to have founded their expectations upon the rumour that he had been employed in tariff revisions. Personally he had heard no rumour of the kind, and was surprised to hear the hon. gentleman say what he did. But that matter, together with the inferences the Colonial Secretary was pleased to draw from what he had said, were beside the question. He was quite willing to abide by what he had said, and to allow the general public to draw their own inference.

THE HON. G. THORN said he would be perfectly willing to withdraw his motion in reference to public works, which was on the paper for the following day, if the Government would come down without further delay and ask the House to approve of the plans for the branch railways.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government will not promise you one solitary thing.

MR. THORN said that in that case the Government could not accuse the Opposition of obstructing public works. The money for the branch railways was voted last session; and he believed the House would approve of the plans to-morrow if the Government were to ask it. If the Government would not do so the responsibility of obstructing public works would lay with themselves, and not with the Opposition. For his own part, he would be perfectly willing to give the Government three months' Supply and allow them to go to the country. Nothing would please him better than a declaration of the opinion of the country. The hon. member for Stanley would be sure to lose his seat—the betting was £1,000 to one farthing against his return.

MR. AMHURST thought the electors of Fasisfern showed good taste when they preferred

Mr. Persse to Mr. Thorn. It was only through bribery and corruption that that gentleman was afterwards returned for the Northern Downs. He was inclined to doubt whether the hon. member really did go to Europe after all, seeing the conglomeration of rubbish he had talked upon his return to the colony. The hon. member would have been a greater success at Madame Tussaud's, where he would be a silent waxen image, than at the Paris Exhibition, where he had a field for bringing some of his mean dodges into play and disgrace the colony.

MR. RUTLEDGE said it was new to him to hear the gentlemen who had taken part in public meetings held in the metropolis in reference to the mail contract stigmatised as they had been in that House. We were told in one speech that they were loafers; in another, that the meetings comprised persons of no influence; and in another, that the people who attended the meetings were chiefly disappointed place-hunters, and persons who had been dismissed from the Civil service and other occupations. The names of the gentlemen who moved the resolutions at the recent enthusiastic meeting at the Town Hall were known to and esteemed by himself. He believed the Colonial Secretary also knew and esteemed some of them. One of the gentlemen in question was a leading merchant of the city—Mr. Ummack. It could not be said that Mr. Ummack was a disappointed place-hunter or a loafer. Then there was Mr. Paul, of the firm of Scott, Dawson, and Stewart—a gentleman of the highest character and ability—could he be designated a loafer? What of Mr. Edwards, of the firm of Edwards and Chapman, one of the largest firms of drapers in the city?—could he be called a loafer? Then there was Mr. Pietzcker, an agent for one of the insurance companies—did any of these abusive epithets apply to him? We had heard, too, that the *Evangelical* stormy petrel was skimming from wave to wave; and it had also been said that the so-called *Evangelical* party were at the top, bottom, and middle of the mail contract agitation. Perhaps it would surprise the Colonial Secretary to learn that some of those who had been most vehement in their denunciations of the mail contract—some of those who had taken prominent parts at some of the meetings to which allusion had been made—who had, in fact, got up the meetings—were at the very opposite pole to that occupied by the evangelicals—gentlemen who professed to be leaders of free-thought in this city. These were facts within his own knowledge. It was not fair, then, to say that the meetings were got up by stupid, illiterate, and interested agitators. The men who took part in the meetings were representative men, and it was a pity that the Colonial Secretary did not pay closer attention to what was said at the meetings and to the persons who spoke. He was also fortunate enough to enjoy the acquaintance of some of those who had taken part in the workmen's demonstration; and if the names of some of those who had helped to get up the demonstration, and who had spoken to the resolutions, were not known to the Colonial Secretary, he could assure him they were in everything but the power of the purse perfect gentlemen, and of character as high as that of any member of the House. It was going rather too far to class these men—who obtained their living honestly, at whom the finger of scorn could not be pointed, and who were respectable in every sense of the word—with loafers and disappointed place-hunters. He was sorry that the necessity for obstruction had been forced upon him in conjunction with other members of the Opposition. He might mention that he had been waited upon

that day by men who had assisted to secure his election—men whose opinion he valued; and without any solicitation or request for an expression of opinion on their part, they urged him to do his duty in this matter, and intimated that if the Opposition failed they would render themselves unworthy the confidence of those who had elected them. He was not there to give effect to his individual opinion, and to set it above that of his constituents. He held that a representative had no right to be a mere delegate, or to be at the beck and call of a clique in his constituency, but he gave the gentlemen who had waited upon him credit for sufficient common-sense to know the general feeling of his constituency. He believed as conscientiously as he believed anything in the world that, in endeavouring to prevent the adoption of the mail contract, he was acting in harmony with the opinions of those who sent him there, and who had a right to require that when he ceased to represent them upon a question of public policy he should resign the trust with which they had honoured him.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) had put words into his mouth which he had never used. This was a common trick of the hon. member. He had never used the word "loafers" in reference to—

Mr. RUTLEDGE: I never said you did.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member had not only made the assertion, but had repeated it over and over again. He (Mr. Palmer) had divided the gentlemen who composed the meetings into three parts every time he had spoken of them. He said the first party were men who had always opposed the Government in politics; that the second party were disappointed applicants for places; and that the third party were dismissed Civil servants. He was responsible for what he said, and not for what the hon. member for Enoggera chose to think he had said. He was very happy to find that his allusion to the stormy petrel of the *Evangelical Standard* had gone home. The allusion was perfectly true. They knew the signs of the times very well; they knew that bad weather was coming when the stormy petrel was seen up and down on the wing. The hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) need not imagine that he alluded to him as the stormy petrel, for the hon. member had not enough activity or energy for that.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was gratifying to hear that the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) had been asked by his constituents to do his duty. He did not know whether the hon. member had been urged to do his duty in another profession—at any rate, if he had been he had not been properly urged because he did not stick to it. He did not care two straws for public meetings, so long as he did what he considered was his duty. It was absurd to suppose that Parliament should be governed by such an element—it would be reducing parliamentary government to a farce if they were to be ruled by meetings got up by noisy demagogues who had not a sixpence in their pockets. The meetings to which so much reference had been made had been held in Brisbane and in the pocket boroughs surrounding. He denied that there had been any indignation shown against the Government elsewhere. Was the whole colony to be ruled by Brisbane and the satellite electorates working around it? Enoggera, no doubt, was a great electorate.

Mr. RUTLEDGE: You are a constituent of mine.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he would not vote for the hon. member if a blackfellow were opposing

him. He would rather cut off his right hand than vote for a man who had been a renegade, and who—

Mr. DOUGLAS: Order! order!

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member could bellow "Order!" as long as he liked, but that would not prevent him, as one of the hon. member's constituents, from saying what he thought of him. Too much had been said by the Opposition about what they represented. They represented Brisbane, East and West Moreton, and a certain section of the Darling Downs. They were supported by the two members for Rockhampton—who would not be re-elected for that constituency; by one of the members for Maryborough, and by the representatives of Ipswich, and one or two surrounding electorates. These few men claimed to be representatives of the majority of the people. His opinion was that the mass of the people were represented by members on the Ministerial side of the House—they represented not only the majority of the people, but the largest extent of territory; they represented the colony from north to south, with the exception of an insignificant faction in the south-east; and they represented the great producing interests of the colony. The Opposition had decided on the adoption of a policy of obstruction; but time would bring round a period of revenge. The hon. member for North Brisbane was now adopting a policy which had never been adopted by any Opposition since parliamentary institutions had existed in this colony or in any other colony. He would have credited the hon. member with being sufficiently astute to see the evil which would result from such a line of action. He should say nothing about the gross repudiation of the hon. member. There was not a promise which the hon. member had made during the present session which he had not broken; but that was a matter of everyday occurrence. The boy of the Opposition party was leading the grey-headed men, and he (Mr. Morehead) thought to destruction. The hon. member might get into power some day, and if he did he would find that, like the boomerang, the action he was taking would rebound on himself. In the future the hon. member might find that such action was not conducive to good parliamentary government. He believed that the hon. member had been urged on by his followers; he was perfectly certain that the position which the hon. member now occupied was not one of his own seeking. Stonewalling must come to an end eventually, and the result must be in favour of the majority. Suppose the minority gained an apparent victory, and the mail contract were not ratified, Brisbane would suffer more than any other town in the colony. He should like to see Queen street get a touch. Although he was a resident of Brisbane he had no love for the way in which the people of Brisbane ran politics. The men of Brisbane were so utterly selfish that they could not see beyond to-day. If the contract were not ratified they would find in a year or two that the men who now protested against it would come to the House wailing and begging for a direct service with England, otherwise the whole trade of Brisbane would be diverted to Sydney. He had a considerable knowledge about the export trade of Brisbane, and he would say that the most of it would go to Sydney this year, and the whole of it would go there next year if they had not a direct service. Without claiming the prophetic powers of Cassandra, he would say that before eighteen months were passed his words would be found to be absolutely true. As a consequence of the diversion of the export trade to Sydney, the import trade would go there. It stood to reason that ships would

not come to Queensland if they could not get return freights. If the contract were not ratified, he hoped the electors for North Brisbane would remember the actions of the leader of the Opposition, and, by their decision at the ballot-box, send him elsewhere in quest of a seat.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had never felt himself placed in a position of more serious responsibility than that which he was about to take. He was there to do his duty—to do what he considered the best for the interests of his constituency and for the colony generally. He objected to their being called upon by a single vote to commit the country to a large outlay extending over several years. They were asked to commit themselves to the contract before the Financial Statement was made, and he thought that that was hardly fair. The Financial Statement had been made, and seeing the position in which they stood he could not consent to the proposal under consideration. He acknowledged that it was a disagreeable thing to do; but he thought, in the circumstances of the case, the Opposition were justified in resisting the proposal as far as the forms of the House would allow. The subject had been discussed until it was threadbare, and as the Opposition had distinctly stated what they intended to do he thought it would be well for the Premier to move the adjournment of the House and call his party together to consider what ought to be done. It was very undesirable that they should spend days and nights talking nonsense. The Opposition would not abandon the course they had indicated, because they conscientiously believed that they were doing their duty. The majority should consider what measures they ought to adopt to secure their undoubted rights, and avoid trying to secure them by tiring their opponents out. He should not surrender until he was compelled to do so, and it was not likely that he should give way because of his being kept there day and night. He had expected that the Treasurer would have grappled with the difficulties of the financial position, but he had failed to do so. He (Mr. Douglas) felt that he would not be justified in submitting to a proposal to further burden the people for the next eight years in the face of the certainty that they would have to meet large deficits for which no provision was proposed to be made.

Question—That the Chairman leave the chair—put.

The Committee divided :—Ayes, 15; noes, 23.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Mr. MILES said the course taken by the Opposition in obstructing business was a serious one, but, in the present financial position of the colony, he thought they had right on their side. The colony could do very well without the mail contract for the present, and it was not in a condition to undertake further responsibilities. For some time past the Government had been carrying on on money obtained for another purpose, and they had now got to the end of their tether, and could not fall back on any further sums from that quarter. Before ratifying the contract they ought to be informed where the money was to come from to meet the increased expenditure. The course taken by the Premier, in appropriating money which had already been expended on public works and putting it to the Consolidated Revenue, would have the effect of preventing capitalists from lending the colony more money in the future. In the present financial position of the colony, to saddle the country with an additional burden was uncalled for. Whatever the consequences of obstruction might be, he was prepared to take his share of the responsibility; and he had not adopted the course without serious consideration. At the

caucus meeting of the party to-day all the members were unanimous, and he believed their action would be backed up by the country. It was all very well for the Government to disregard public opinion, for if they appealed to the country upon it their seats would not be worth many days' purchase. He hoped the Government would see their way to withdraw the contract. He moved that the Chairman leave the chair, and report no progress.

Question put, and the Committee divided :—Ayes, 15; Noes, 22.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Mr. THORN said he would give the Committee some little information with regard to an expression of opinion on the subject which had taken place lately in the Stanley electorate. From one end to the other of that electorate the members were publicly asked to support the Opposition. The hon. member then read, from the *Queensland Times*, a report of a public meeting which had been held at the house of a Mr. Michael Doolan, a well-known supporter of the members for the district, and convened by supporters of the present Government. That report plainly showed that the two members for Stanley did not possess the confidence of that constituency, and, if the hon. members disputed that, he would be prepared to resign his seat for Northern Downs to-morrow provided those two hon. members would resign their seats and contest the electorate of Stanley with him. At the meeting he referred to a resolution was passed calling on the hon. members for Stanley to resign their seats; yet those hon. members sat there in defiance of the voice of the people. But they had not yet received an answer to the questions put to the Government. If hon. members liked to ask him, he (Mr. Thorn) would answer any question they liked to ask—he could throw lots of light on the subject. [The hon. gentleman read a number of extracts and a leading article from the *Queensland Times* condemnatory of the policy of the Government.] He should like to see the Minister for Works come down and ask the House to approve the plans for the construction of the various branch lines proposed. The junior member for Stanley had been fooled by the Minister for Works last session, and he would be fooled again this session. [The hon. member then read the speech made by the hon. member (Mr. Kellett) at the end of last session, expressing his disapproval of the breach of faith on the part of the Minister for Works in not going on with the branch lines promised.] He (Mr. Thorn) knew very well the Government never intended to go on with those lines. Men were coming down from Roma in droves; they could obtain no employment from the Divisional Boards, and, consequently, left the colony. He was informed that ninety or a hundred men left the colony in a batch a short time ago; although a morning paper stated that only thirty men had left. It was rather hard that men should be allowed to leave the colony in such numbers when they paid so many thousands to bring them here. When he dealt with the motion in reference to public works of which he had given notice, he would expose at greater length the unsatisfactory character of the public works policy of the Government, and endeavour to rouse the Minister for Works from his inaction. He did not bring his motion forward as a vote of want of confidence, nor did he desire that it should be treated as such. Last session, the Government alleged as a reason for delaying the branch railways that the loan had not been floated; but did want of funds debar the Government from investing in steel rails when the pockets of certain people were concerned? It had been said that the Government were favour-

ing the North, but he believed the North was sick of them, and would be only too glad to reverse its former verdict to-morrow if it had the chance. He, for one, would not be afraid to meet the Minister for Works at Townsville. The Attorney-General, too, had obtained his seat upon the distinct understanding that the Government would proceed with the branch railway between Bowen and Haughton; but it so happened that the Government had no more intention of constructing that line than they contemplated flying to the moon. Last session the Minister for Works said that the plans for the Sandgate line were ready, but the work could not be proceeded with as there were no funds in the Treasury. The Minister had not the same excuse this session, and the only reason he could see for the Government not bringing the plans forward for approval was that the hon. member for the district sat in opposition to them. He required £100,000 for his district. There was in his electorate first-class land, which was unalienated simply because there were no means for bringing produce to market. Last session the Minister for Works said that works should be kept in progress so as to keep the people employed; but this session the hon. member was adopting a policy quite in antagonism to that expression of opinion. People outside were so irate at the actions of the Government that they went so far as to say that it was the desire of the Government to drive the people out of the colony so that the vessels of a certain firm might be employed to bring them back again. The Minister for Works intended to construct the Oxley and South Brisbane line along the main road. His opinion was, that it would cost twice as much to construct the line along the main road as it would to take it through private property. There would be very heavy earthworks if the main road were made the route, whereas to his knowledge two surveys had been made through private property on which the earthworks would be light. Reverting to the proposed mail service, he should like to know of what value it would be from a commercial point of view? It would not command the wool trade, because the great bulk of the wool was brought to the seaboard within two months. It was not likely that the producers would be willing to store their wool for three or four months waiting for vessels to leave Queensland ports. They would send their wool to Sydney, whence it would be transhipped to vessels carrying at cheap freights and running over routes which were much safer than the route which would be taken by the vessels leaving Queensland under the proposed contract. He moved that the Chairman leave the chair, and report no progress.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that he had never listened to such a blustering speech as that which had been made by the hon. member, since he had been a member of the House; and he had only picked up a few points in the hon. member's speech, and had not followed him in all his wanderings. The hon. member had never been replied to by anybody in the House, as they all looked upon him as a good-natured buffoon; but he occasionally said a few good things—a grain of wheat in a bushel of chaff. The hon. member had attempted to make a great deal of capital out of the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. Kellett), who was not now in the House, and had accused him of being a blind follower of the Government; but the hon. member had never been guilty of such jobbery as the hon. member himself had been. He had no objection to the hon. member being the spy of the Opposition, so long as he did not hold up him (Mr. O'Sullivan) and his colleague, Mr. Kellett, to public contempt by speaking of them in such a mannerless

1880—2 K

way. The facts in connection with one of the meetings referred to by the hon. member were, that five of the people who got it up were hired to do so. Many people had gone to that meeting thinking it was about the Divisional Board, and they were actually turned out by Mr. Doolan—and he objected to six men from the Pine Mountain meeting, like the three tailors of Tooley Street, with the sole object of doing all they could to counteract the action of the Government. He should not follow the example of the hon. member by detaining the House with a long speech, and should not have risen had it not been for the attack made on him and his colleague by the hon. member. All he could say was, that if talking against time was to be the rule henceforth, he should prefer beginning at 9 or 10 in the morning. There were many hon. members who found it extremely inconvenient to attend night after night, especially when there was no prospect of doing any business or of reaping any benefit. He knew that for the twenty years during which he had been a member there was not one day on which attending to his duties had not cost him money out of his own pocket. He thought that all members of the House should be on a level, and with that view they ought to meet at, say, 10 in the morning, and leave off at sundown as all working men did.

Mr. THORN, after replying to some remarks of the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan), warned him that if he (Mr. Thorn) was about he would never be returned for that constituency again. The hon. member had told his friends that he had kept him out for seven years, and he would do the same again.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he had been the means of getting the hon. member into the House on the first occasion, and in doing so incurred an expense of £30, which the hon. member had never repaid him.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House resumed, the Chairman reported no progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty-nine minutes past 9 o'clock.