

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 31 AUGUST 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 31 August, 1880.

Formal Motions. — Question. — Motion for Adjournment. — Petition. — Mail Contract—resumption of committee.

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

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to :—

By Mr. ARCHER—

That the Second reading of the Rockhampton Race-course Bill stand an Order of the Day for Thursday, the 2nd of September next.

By Mr. LUMLEY HILL—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return showing the amounts paid as Fees, Salaries, or

otherwise, to the Crown Solicitor, or to the private firm of which he is a member, by the Government, for the three years ending 30th June, 1880; such return to be in detail.

QUESTION.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL asked the Attorney-General—

What is the total amount of Rent received by the Government of Queensland from Messrs. Little and Browne for the use of the Government Premises occupied by them in Queen street, from the time of Separation to the present date.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Beor) replied—

Mr. Little occupied offices in the old Supreme Court Buildings as Crown Solicitor, and his partner with him, up to the 8th (eighth) January, 1880, when the Supreme Court Offices were removed to the new buildings. Since then the firm of Little and Browne have paid rent of £2 per week for their offices in the old buildings. The amount paid to date is £58 17s. 2d.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. BAILEY said he wished to bring forward a matter of considerable public importance, and would conclude the brief remarks he had to make upon it with the usual motion. Last session an Act called the Divisional Boards Act was passed, very much, he was inclined to believe, against the consent of the people of the colony, and it was with respect to the administration of that Act that he now wished to refer. Oppressive as the Act might have been as originally passed, the administration of it had been made far more oppressive than it needed to have been. The Act was passed in spite of numerous petitions from the people against the proposed system of taxation, but after it was passed the Government took upon themselves the administration of it. They did not immediately make it a measure of local government, as it was intended to have been;—they assumed the position of administrators of an Act which they had passed nominally as a measure of local government. Shortly after the passing of the Act he had reason to know that the divisions were formed and proclaimed without the consent or without the advice of the people who were included in those divisions. More than that, after those divisions had been formed the people were invited to express an opinion as to the boundaries of the divisions; but when their petitions came down to the Government, who had decided that there should be no further subdivisions in certain of those divisions, these petitions were all contemptuously disregarded and set aside, as the previous petitions of the people had been. Up to that point the Government chose to administer the Act against the will of the people;—to go further, the boards which were to have been elected by the people were not elected by them at all. Nineteen out of every twenty were composed either of Government nominees or self-elected members who were desirous to assist the Government in carrying out that most oppressive measure. The consequence naturally followed that the boards, anxious to imitate the actions of those whom they wished to support, carried the oppression of the original Act to a far greater extent than, perhaps, the Government anticipated.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN rose to a point of order. Did the hon. member intend to move for the repeal of the Act? If not, it was irregular to talk in that way of an Act of Parliament in force.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member for Stanley is quite right on the point of order. The hon. member for Wide Bay should not censure an Act of this House unless he intends to move for its repeal.

Mr. BAILEY said he would confine himself, then, to the way in which the Act had been administered by the Government. Certain boards appealed to the various Ministers as to how the assessment was to be made upon fences. They wired to the Postmaster-General, who told them to assess fences upon runs as if they were buildings. The Attorney-General was wired to by the same board, and he declined to offer an opinion on the subject. The Minister for Works was also invited to give his opinion on the subject, and he told them that he was perfectly ignorant of the matter and could not advise them what to do.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith): You are stating what is not true. You are misquoting the telegram when you represent that answer as having been sent by the Minister for Works.

Mr. BAILEY asked whether he was not stating the truth when he said that the Minister for Works told the board of Charters Towers that he was perfectly ignorant of how fences should be assessed under the Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan): You are not stating the truth.

Mr. BAILEY said that, in that case, he had been misinformed. It had latterly been found that the boards were initiating a new system of taxation. They were taking upon themselves powers which only belonged to Parliament by initiating a new tax called the wheel tax. They were not levying that tax generally, but upon one particular class, who were already subjected to very heavy taxation—he referred to timber-getters, who at present had a very great difficulty in earning a living, who paid license fees and taxes as selectors; and yet that unfortunate class of men were now called upon to pay an extra wheel tax to carry their timber from where they got it to the neighbouring river. What he wished was, to ask the Attorney-General whether any board had a right to initiate new taxation? He called the wheel tax new taxation, because in Victoria, after the Local Government Act had been passed some time, it was found necessary to pass a Tires Act—in other words, to legalize the wheel tax. Here they had those boards assuming to themselves the power of Parliament to initiate a new tax in addition to the already very oppressive, very unjust, and most villainous system of taxation under the Divisional Boards Act. He understood that in some parts of the colony the wheel tax was to be confined to carriers; but in his own district it had as yet been confined to the timber-getters. He would accordingly ask the Attorney-General whether any board had a right to initiate a new tax which was not provided for in the Divisional Boards Act? He concluded by moving the adjournment of the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said the remarks to which they had just listened, on the working of the Divisional Boards Act, came with very bad grace from an hon. member who was a rejected candidate for the chairmanship of one of those Divisional Boards. The hon. member did not even confine himself to a true statement of facts—which made the matter considerably worse. The hon. member told them that all petitions from the inhabitants in the different districts had been utterly disregarded and set aside: that was misstatement No. 1. So far from that being the case, every petition which came in properly worded, and showing any good reason for an alteration of boundary, had been most carefully attended to and most carefully complied with. Then they were told that boards were self-elected, or appointed by the Government: that was misstatement No. 2. The electors on

the roll for the different divisions were in every case asked to appoint the members of those Divisional Boards.

Mr. BAILEY : Did they do so ?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the Government could not force them to do so. They asked them, and advised them to agree, if possible, amongst themselves, as owing to the state of the rolls it would be exceedingly difficult, in the event of a contested election, to decide as to who were the real ratepayers in the district entitled to vote. The inhabitants of the different divisions of the colony showed a great deal more common-sense than had been displayed by the hon. member. They took this advice in many instances, and did agree amongst themselves, and in many cases they elected their own members. In most other cases they recommended certain gentlemen for the position, who were appointed by the Government; and in cases where neither of these steps was taken the Government appointed a board; but that was done in comparatively few instances. If the Government did not work the Act he should like to know who were to do it ? The system was quite new in the colony, and it required a great deal of pains in the Government offices to get the Act into working order. He was glad to say that assistance had been most cheerfully given by every department in the public service. There was not a single question—and some extraordinary ones had been asked—that had not been carefully considered; and where a legal opinion was necessary the opinion of the Attorney-General had been taken, and the Boards had been informed of it. He had had no complaints from any of the boards that their complaints had not been attended to; but quite the contrary. With respect to the tires tax, to which the hon. member had alluded, if he wanted a legal opinion upon it he had better pay a lawyer to give him one: the Attorney-General was not bound to give legal opinions in the House simply because he was asked to do so by an hon. member; it was not part of his business. He was the legal adviser of the Government, and not of the members of the House.

Mr. BAILEY : Nor of the people, it seems.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said neither was he the legal adviser of the people, as had been very wisely interjected by the hon. member for Wide Bay.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH : He has to report upon the legality of the by-laws.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was quite aware of that fact, and did not need to be informed of it. The Attorney-General had reported upon the legality of the by-laws. He believed considerable doubt had been expressed as to whether the boards were entitled to levy a tires tax; but the best way to settle the point would be to appeal against the tax. Perhaps the hon. member for North Brisbane would volunteer the legal opinion asked for ?

Mr. GRIFFITH : No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member was, of course, a great deal too cunning for that. No hon. member had a right to ask the Attorney-General for a legal opinion. That opinion had been fully and freely given to the boards who had asked for it. He (Mr. Palmer) maintained, notwithstanding the assertions of the hon. member for Wide Bay, that the Divisional Boards Act, considering that it was an entirely new institution, had been, and was, working wonderfully well. He would conclude, as he had begun, by saying that the remarks on the working of the

Act came with a very bad grace from an hon. gentleman who had failed in his candidature for the chairmanship of one of those boards.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he was very sorry to have had to call the hon. member for Wide Bay to order, but he was glad he had done so, for he believed that that hon. member was out of order from the first word of his speech to the last. It might, perhaps, be considered only a trifling offence to be out of order, but the hon. member went still further by telling an untruth. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) was quite satisfied that the Minister for Works had too much knowledge of the subject to tell any Divisional Board that fences should be taxed. With regard to the wheel tax, he was aware that some of the boards had decided to put a tax on wheels, but in no instance, as far as he knew, had that tax been levied. He himself was a member of a Divisional Board, but he had been elected to it, and not nominated as the hon. member stated; and his colleague in the representation of Stanley (Mr. Kellett) was not only an elected member, but also the chairman of a Divisional Board. Those boards to which he and his colleague had the honour of belonging were thoroughly contented with the Divisional Boards Act, as far as it had gone. Before the Act was passed the ratepayers in those divisions knew that they were taxed in some way or other to mend their roads; but they were under the impression that four-fifths of the money raised went to mend roads and make carriage drives in East Moreton, particularly about Brisbane. The result of the Act was that every man in his district was aware that whatever amount of taxation was levied by the board it would be invested in his own neighbourhood, and that he himself would have the laying out of it. There were, no doubt, some faults in the Act, but those faults would in time cure themselves. The main fault was that the divisions were too small. There were three or four divisions in each district with their staff of officers where one would be enough. The people themselves were the cause of that fault, by rapping at the door of the Government every day to make the divisions smaller. One clerk, one foreman of works, and one chairman would do for two or three divisions. Taking the railway line through West Moreton, one division on the right-hand side and another on the left would be quite enough for that district, and that might be easily done by-and-bye. The hon. member (Mr. Bailey) stated that the petitions from Divisional Boards had been contemptuously thrown aside. He had never seen anything of the kind done in the House. From whatever quarter petitions came, so long as they were properly worded, they were always well received by hon. members on both sides. That part of the speech, however, had been better answered by the Colonial Secretary than he could do it. There were many parts of the world that would be very glad to have the spending of their own money. He wished that the unfortunate country he came from had the spending of its own money. If there was a fault to be found with the colony of Queensland, it was that the people had too much freedom—they had been wallowing in freedom. Great exertions had been made to make the Divisional Boards Act unpopular with the people, and the last move was to endeavour to attach it to the mail contract. The unfortunate people who were not well informed on the subject, but who knew that they were to some extent taxed by the Act, were told that the mail contract was exactly on a par with it, and that it would result in their being taxed to such an extent that by-and-bye they would have to sell out of their homes. He had mentioned a fact in connection with this matter the other night. At the Pine Mountain, recently, a

man of the name of Doolan was induced to lend the use of his house for a political meeting against the Divisional Boards Act; but he found when the meeting was held that the real purpose for which it had been called was to denounce the mail contract, and lost no time in hunting the people out of the place. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) had occasion, one day, to go to Fassifern, and the chairman of the meeting, an important little man, who could see a good deal through a gimlet hole, told the meeting that under the Divisional Boards Act a man who owned eighty acres of land would be taxed £40 a year. That unfortunate man believed it, because he knew no better. That was the way those things were done at the present moment; he knew the object of it, but the people generally didn't.

Mr. LOW said there were three Divisional Boards in operation in the district he represented. It was a pretty large one—and he had not heard one dissentient voice. From all he had seen, the people were well satisfied with the working of the measure.

Mr. DICKSON said he wished to obtain some information from the Government with regard to their intentions in the matter of assisting the various Divisional Boards, pending their assessments being submitted to the Treasurer with a view to arranging the endowments. Some of the boards, he understood, had not been able to complete their assessments, and were actually at a standstill for want of funds, the amount previously given by the Government to enable them to carry on necessary works having been expended. It had been stated that the Government had not yet decided upon any uniform plan by which assistance might be given pending the completion of the assessments; and he should be glad to hear from some member of the Government what action was to be taken. A few days ago some members of a board near Brisbane informed him—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Name the board.

Mr. DICKSON said it was the Ithaca Board he alluded to. Their funds being exhausted they made application for an advance—or temporary assistance—on account of endowment, and their request had been denied. Perhaps he should not be justified in saying that other boards had been assisted to a larger extent, but he was quite justified in saying that this was a very important board, and that it was at present actually at a standstill for want of funds. It was quite possible that other boards might be similarly situated.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was quite impossible to lay down any rule on the subject. The Government had assisted those boards who had assisted themselves and sent in a list of rates they were entitled to levy. Those who had made good rates the Government were assisting in every possible way. Difficulties had in some cases been experienced in getting in the rates, but where they had been levied and the boards had shown a disposition to help themselves assistance had always been given. How long that assistance would continue he could not say; but it could not continue much longer. An impression had gone abroad in the country that the boards were each entitled to a one-seventy-fifth part of £100,000; and the sooner that idea was dissipated the better.

Mr. ARCHER said he understood the Government to state, when the Act was passed last year, that they did not expect the rates to be collected this year—that they only expected the rates to be struck, and that advances would then be made. Many of the rates could not be collected until next year, when the endowment of double

the amount of the rates would be paid. That was undoubtedly the statement made in the House last year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he should, perhaps, have used the word "struck." He did not mean that the rates were collected. The Government had stated that where a rate had been struck advances would be made, it being impossible to levy immediately, especially in cases where the tax was appealed against. Every assistance was given in divisions where the rates had been struck.

Mr. DAVENPORT said he believed the principle of the Divisional Boards Act had the approval of the people generally, a large majority of the members returned to the House having stated that the Bill would have their support. The whole country had previously been sickened by log-rolling and road-making about the metropolis, and the Divisional Boards were introduced to secure a more even distribution of local taxation. The Act was a little imperfect at present, but when it got into thorough working order nothing would afford the House greater pleasure than to give the endowment. A great deal of clap-trap had been talked about the injustice done to the poor settler and the working man. Only last Saturday a good honest hard-working neighbour of his, among other indictments against the Government, charged them with having introduced this Act. On inquiring, it turned out that the complainant only held four acres of land, the assessment upon which amounted to one shilling a-year.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I could adduce plenty of instances like that.

Mr. SIMPSON said he was interested in no less than three boards in his district, and he had heard very little complaint. Where the people tried to work them well they had every chance of succeeding. No doubt a great many mistakes were made: for instance, a widow who held 1,200 and odd acres was in a great state of mind, thinking she would have to pay £70 or £80 a-year; when it was explained to her that the tax would only be sixpence in the pound on that sum, she laughed, and said "Oh! I can pay that out of my egg-money!" He did not think that much difficulty would be found in collecting the rates. In two of the divisions to which he had referred the rates had been struck and only two appeals had been threatened. In one case he (Mr. Simpson) was appealing simply on principle—the amount being only two shillings—because he thought the boards were not acting right, and that their proceeding should be checked until the matter was corrected. He had no intention of pushing his appeal, and he did not think the other appellant would push his. Notice had been given that rates not paid in sixty days would be sued for, so that within two months it was probable that all the payments would be completed. No doubt the tax would come hard on some people in such a season as this, which threatened to be about the worst he had ever seen; but the ratepayers would probably not be disheartened by the prospect of a bad season. The Act would, no doubt, require some amendment, and he had now in his hand a question on the subject which he intended when he entered the House to ask the Colonial Secretary, not expecting such a discussion as this to arise. He considered the Act required amendment as to assessments on improvements. The assessment should be upon the land according to its quality, and when the boards wanted more money they could raise the rate of assessment. Assessments upon improvements he did not approve of at all. When the Act passed he was not very familiar with these matters, and did not see how it would work; but having since

taken an active part in one of the subdivisions, he could see that it would have been better if the assessment had been upon land only. It was his intention when the opportunity occurred to ask the question to which he had alluded, and if the Government or some leading member of the House did not move in the matter, he should do so himself before the session ended.

Mr. BAILEY said he was glad to see that the hon. member for Dalby was a member who had the courage of his opinions. The Divisional Boards Act imposed a tax upon the improvements which people were striving to make upon small selections throughout the country, and the hon. member's action in assisting to pass it was indeed a blunder; it was worse than a blunder—it was a crime. The very point of the contention between the two parties last year was, that the one desired a Bill to tax land and the other party a Bill to tax small improvements. He (Mr. Bailey) was much obliged to the hon. member for Stanley for his opinion. He believed the hon. member was a member of the Muttapilly Board where, according to a document in his hand, the amount raised by rates was £179, of which £58 went to the valuer, £100 to the chairman, £10 for furniture, £10 for a safe, and £1 might possibly reach the roads of that district. There was no doubt that things could go on very comfortably in divisions where the rates were thus amicably divided. The Ministry had made this afternoon a most astonishing declaration. They were not, as they should be, the guardians of the public interest and of the taxpayers of the colony, when they could calmly stand by seeing what might possibly be an illegal tax imposed, and simply say to the people, "If you are imposed upon by our agents, oppressed by our nominees, and wrongly taxed, go to the Supreme Court and prove you are in the right." They told the poor selector, farmer, carrier, and timber-getter, that he must find the remedy in the law; that the Attorney-General was not their servant but their master—that the Government were not the servants of the public and the guardians of their interests, but their masters. That was the declaration made by the Ministry of the day to the taxpayers. He thanked them for it, and hoped the taxpayers under the Divisional Boards Bill would especially take notice of what had been said.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN wished to explain that what the hon. member had said was untrue. The chairman of the Muttapilly Board did not receive a shilling, and nearly £200 had been expended upon the roads.

Mr. BAILEY : Government money.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

PETITION.

Mr. GRIFFITH presented a petition from about 190 Residents of the Hodgkinson Goldfield, mostly miners, praying that the Mines Department might not be abolished nor amalgamated with the Lands Department.

Petition read and received.

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 he had hoped to hear some statement from the Premier with regard to a telegram that had appeared in the papers. The Premier had received a communication which was thought of sufficient importance to make

known to the public, and which one would have thought was of sufficient importance for him to communicate to the House. Any communication relating to the mail service should be laid before the House, so that it might appear in the records of its debates; and he should like to know whether the Premier had received or sent any other communication?

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman knew perfectly well that everything had been laid before the House; and, with reference to the telegram in question, he took the earliest opportunity to give the public all the information he had with regard to the British-India Company. The hon. gentleman was going too far when he asked whether he (the Premier) had sent a telegram—unless the hon. gentleman insisted on being a party to carrying on the Government. He would like to draw the attention of the Committee to one or two matters which had not been fairly taken into consideration by the Opposition before they came to the conclusion arrived at last week. In estimating the advantages to the colony of the mail service it would be recollected that he (the Premier) laid down that during the next eight years the average cost of carrying mail matter to England and back, by the P. and O. Company, would be £25,000 a-year, leaving the British-India Company's offer to be considered as a mercantile service for £30,000, in addition to the postal advantages it would offer. Hon. members must not forget that in taking the sum of £25,000 a-year he estimated some matters at a very low rate, and that he also took it for granted that certain very different and very possibly antagonistic interests would be working smoothly during the whole of that time. For instance, the A.S.N. Company offered certainly some considerable time since to carry the colony's mail matter to Sydney and back for £4,000 a-year. Since then, however, he found that the meaning of the offer was, that they would carry the mails only once a month; that was, if the colony availed themselves of the fortnightly service, there would probably be an additional charge made by the A.S.N. Company to the extent of £4,000. That altered the condition of matters very considerably. In the next place, a point to which the attention of the Committee had not been sufficiently directed was, that the A.S.N. Company made it a condition to performing the mail service between Queensland and Sydney that the sailing times they had had in operation for some time, and were in operation at present, should not be altered. If the Government accepted those conditions, it would be found that they were highly inconvenient for the colony. For instance, the steamer at the present time left Sydney on Friday and arrived on Sunday; the steamer going north left on Saturday, and consequently the mail matter must either wait till the following Saturday or the Government put on an additional service for the mails in the colony, which would require a large subsidy, or must alter all arrangements for a weekly service to the North. Neither of those courses was practicable without immense inconvenience. If they altered the time of sailing of the weekly vessels they would have to alter the arrangements of the whole of the internal mails, which would cause a great amount of inconvenience. Hon. members who had to do with inland districts must see the immense labour involved in such a plan. In the next place, they had settled long ago that by far the most advantageous time for the steamer to start from Brisbane to the North was Saturday, when the weekly news from the metropolis could be taken up to the northern and inland districts. It would be highly inconvenient for the Press, in disseminating news, for the mail steamers to be taking up papers a week old as would be the case if the

arrangements of the A.S.N. Company were to be carried out. So far with regard to the amount of money required to pay in order to make things work smoothly with the A.S.N. Company. But the point upon which he (the Premier) wished particularly to lay stress was this—that the interests of the colony of Victoria, the interests of New South Wales, and Queensland interests, were not at the present time identical. Nor were the interests of New South Wales identical with those of Victoria. At the present time, no doubt, with an obligingness rather praiseworthy, the New South Wales Government carried the Queensland mails at an exceedingly low price overland towards Melbourne—a price which certainly could not be remunerative to them. But they must see that the other colonies were looking out for their own interests, and that the interests of the Government of New South Wales were plainly to divert all the postal matter they possibly could by the route they themselves paid for—viz., the San Francisco. It was not very likely they would continue to offer the advantages they now offered to take mail matter to Melbourne. They might fairly anticipate the price would be increased. No doubt the Victorian Government might be fixed by this colony accepting an offer for eight years to transport the mails for the amount raised by the Post Office in England and here. No doubt they would do that, but it was very questionable whether the Victorian Government would be prepared to offer this arrangement if Queensland were without means of carrying out arrangements on its own account. He had shown the Committee plainly enough the risks they ran in making a more expensive contract than he anticipated—viz., £25,000. He was speaking of the alternative service of the P. and O. from Melbourne, which must cost £25,000, and he had shown a strong reason why it might cost £10,000 more. But there was a graver difficulty still—he had raised the argument before, but he did not think the Opposition had given it sufficient consideration. The reason was this: to work out that service they must have three contending interests—not contending interests, but parties whose interests were not identical and were in many respects antagonistic—that was the A.S.N. Company, the colony of New South Wales, and the colony of Victoria. Each of those three parties, if the arrangement were made with the Queensland Government, must do their best for this colony before they could carry out the service in the way in which he had put it—in fact, by giving up their own service they would be left entirely in the hands of parties whose interests were not identical with the colony's nor with one another. He also wished again to draw the very special attention of the Committee to the grave results which were likely to follow from the contract not being ratified. In view of the legislation which was contemplated, it was very probable that a Minister of the Crown, or, at all events, someone authorised to represent the Government, would have to proceed home to do work similar to what he had done—would have to make arrangements for carrying out some of their large public works on the land-grant principle. The course pursued by the Legislature with regard to the mail contract, taken in connection with the facts, would make it impossible for anyone appointed by the Government to conduct the negotiations to a successful issue. What were the facts? The Premier of this colony went to England and made arrangements for a mail service. He stated as one of the facts that he was supported by a majority in the Legislative Assembly, and promised the support of himself and his Government to carry the contract through. But when he returned to the colony he was met, not by the

opposition of the House, but by a determined minority who, taking advantage of the fact that the contract must be ratified by a certain time, defeated it by physical force. Looking at these facts, what position would a Minister of the Crown or anyone authorised to represent the Government, be in who went home and said to the capitalists there that he was authorised to enter into arrangements for the making of railways through the interior of the colony on the land-grant principle. The capitalists would simply laugh at him. He could not even expect any man of position to give up sufficient of his time to understand the scheme. His answer would be—"My time would be simply wasted. Your Government would not be able to ratify the contract. See what the result of the mail contract was." It would be as certain as day that such an answer would be given. Not only were the Opposition taking upon themselves the grave responsibility of defeating the Government in their Executive action—action which belonged peculiarly to the Government—but were bringing consequences upon the colony which he did not think they had perceived. Knowing the facts thoroughly, he would tell the Opposition plainly that his position would be quite helpless if he tried to interest capitalists in a scheme of making railways on the land-grant principle after it had been shown that the Government, with all their power and their majority in Parliament, with every intention that the action of the Government should be ratified, were still perfectly powerless before a small minority. To get over this difficulty they should be obliged to entrust the Government with powers that he should not like to ask for himself, and certainly should not propose to give to the Opposition. They should actually ask that the Government should have the right, without asking for the ratification of Parliament, to make a contract involving such large interests as a railway to the Gulf of Carpentaria on the land-grant principle. No Government would like to ask such large powers; but, unless they had them, no English capitalists, with the experience that was afforded by the mail contract, would look at the scheme. He had drawn the attention of the Opposition quietly, and he hoped effectually, to the grave responsibility that they were undertaking. He might also refer to one other thing. After seeing the telegram with regard to the purchase of new ships for the carrying out of the service, which he had received quite spontaneously from the managers of the British-India Company, he did not think that any sensible person in town had any doubt that the contract was really made with the British-India Company, and would have all their influence and strength. The worked-up argument that the contract was with a number of people who were perfectly unknown, who would very probably shirk their responsibility by selling out directly the contract was ratified, was completely dispelled by the telegram. He believed that the effect of the telegram, which spoke for itself, was to show the *bona fides* of the British-India Company—that it was their intention to carry out the service. He hoped that the Opposition had reconsidered the position they had taken up. It was with a view to get them to do so that he had drawn attention to the very grave position of matters. He had been represented as threatening the House with some evil consequences when he said that if before six months were over the contract did not come into existence there would be no more sorry man than the leader of the Opposition himself. That remark had been construed into a threat that he intended adopting some extraordinary course, such as introducing the "iron hand" resolution passed in Victoria. The meaning of his words were, however, perfectly plain—that

in six months no one would be more sorry at the rejection of the contract than the leader of the Opposition, because by that time the meanest capacity in the southern part of the colony would see that a gigantic mistake was made in not accepting one of the best offers that had been made to the colony.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that by the remark to which the Premier had referred he had understood him to mean that the time would come when public opinion would change regarding the contract, that the people at large would be sorry that it was not accepted, and hold that the Opposition were much to blame. He did not understand the hon. gentleman to hold out any threat of terrible consequences to the House or of change in the mode of carrying on business. The arguments of the hon. gentleman seemed to resolve themselves into three: and first, with respect to the telegram from the British-India Company, the Premier must have a very short memory; he had told the House several times that the contract was not with the British-India Company but with a new company which was to take "Queensland" as part of its name. He (Mr. Griffith) was beginning to get bewildered as to whom they were really dealing with. One day it was the British-India Company, another day it was the Netherlands Company, and again it was a new company. The Premier thought that the telegram had dispelled all doubts as to who the contractors were, but that had not been the result so far as his experience had gone. On the contrary, he had found that the telegram had had the effect of making people more doubtful as to who the contractors were. It was noticed as a singular thing that the name of Mackinnon, from whom the former communication had come, was not attached to the telegram, but of Gray, Dawes, and Co.; and it was also noticed as a curious coincidence that the telegram arrived at a time when the Government had got into serious difficulties about this contract. He heard an hon. member opposite ejaculating "insinuation." Hon. members opposite seemed to have got a sort of craze, and to think that one must not draw inferences from facts. What were they in the House for?—what did men of ordinary sense do? They did not look at one fact and shut their eyes to the others. They looked at all the surrounding facts. When two things were seen happening together, might there not be a connection between them? He remarked that it was a curious coincidence that the telegram should have arrived at a time when the Government were in difficulties. Would hon. members opposite say what inference they drew from the facts? He was going to say what he should have inferred. He did not mean for a moment that the Premier had any communication with the parties. He did not doubt his word; but he was inclined to think that, if these gentlemen in England really took an interest in the contract, they would be curious enough to know what was going on in Queensland; and he thought it probable that they had their correspondents here. The last communication that they received was nearly a month ago, and it certainly was not strange to infer that since then they had been inquiring from their agents here what course had been taken in Parliament; and from that he drew what inference he pleased. With respect to the other arguments which the hon. gentleman had used, and to which he said sufficient weight had not been given on a previous occasion, they were two. One was that the cost of carrying the mails—if the contract was not ratified—would be more than was generally anticipated. On the previous occasion the hon. gentleman said that the cost of carrying their mails by the other routes would probably amount on an average to about £25,000 a-year for the next eight years. At present it was certainly less than

£20,000, but to that had to be added the cost of bringing the mails from Sydney, and possibly from Victoria. The cost had not been exactly ascertained at present, but he would remark that the assumption that all this money would be saved by ratifying the contract involved the proposition that the people would be content to let their letters go by the slowest route. If Government were going to send all mails by the nine-knot steamers, a great many people would object, he thought; and if Government did not insist upon all mails going by that route, they were paying, not for a mail service, but for some other; so that for a mail service it involved an expenditure of all the money referred to in a previous part of the debate. Then it had been said that there might be a difficulty in arranging with the A.S.N. Company; but it must be recollected that that company had not a monopoly. He did not know what day in the week the P. and O. Company's steamer arrived at Sydney, but should not think that any difficulty arising on that account would be insuperable. And he did not know that there would be any great difficulty in arranging with the steam companies at present trading in Australian waters to carry the colony's mails arriving in Sydney by some other route until they could make some more satisfactory arrangement. New Zealand, Tasmania, and South Australia had made satisfactory arrangements, and he supposed Queensland could do the same. Why could they not do like the other colonies?

The PREMIER: That is just what we are doing.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman said that that was just what they were doing. The hon. gentleman said that if they did not accept this arrangement another must be made. Of course, they all knew that. If this were not a good arrangement, let them make a better; and if it were the best which could be made, let them accept it. It was because the Opposition believed the arrangement to be bad that they opposed it. They thought it so bad, in fact, that they believed any other arrangement would be better. He failed to see, therefore, that this additional argument of the Premier, plausible though it seemed at first sight, was entitled to very great weight. The other argument which the Premier put forward was this—that if the Opposition in the present instance were allowed to defeat the scheme of the Government it would damage future Governments—but the present Government more especially—in their negotiations with capitalists in large financial transactions. Now, for his own part, he did not think it desirable that a single Minister should go to England and there negotiate enormous transactions of the description indicated by the hon. gentleman. The proper capitalists to bargain with for the construction of a railway line from the southern part of the colony to the Gulf of Carpentaria were men who visited the colony, and who would be acquainted with its circumstances before they made their offer. If the course the Opposition were now pursuing would have the effect of preventing these negotiations being entered into in England by future Premiers, so far from that effect being an objection to the course it was rather an argument in its favour. No Minister should be entrusted with such enormous power. He was much inclined to agree with a proposition made to him not long ago by a gentleman—one of the oldest public men in Australia—at the head of a Government in a neighbouring colony, in reference to the Premier's visit to England—the proposition being to the effect that the proper place for the Premier was in the colony in which he governed.

Mr. MOREHEAD: What about Mr. Macalister's visit home?

Mr. GRIFFITH was not called upon to tell the hon. member for Mitchell what opinion he expressed in Cabinet when the then Premier proposed to go to Europe. He was not bound to tell the hon. member what his opinion was on that occasion.

Mr. MOREHEAD: But we draw an inference.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, having observed the results of Premiers' visits to England upon various occasions, he was inclined to agree with his experienced friend in a neighbouring colony that it was exceedingly undesirable for the head of a Government to be absent for such a long time from the seat of government. He did not feel at all alarmed at the prospect of difficulties being thrown in the way of contracts of the description suggested by the Premier. In the case of such contracts, made with capitalists in England, they had to pay a large sum by way of insurance or allowance for their ignorance of the colony. He observed in the recent telegram from Gray, Dawes, and Company an intimation that they were going to build steamers. He could only express his very great surprise that at the present day such a large firm should build ships for a nine-knot service, considering that the P. and O. Company were building ships for a fifteen-knot service, and that the steamers built for the nine-knot service would have to compete with the P. and O. Company. He would mention a few facts with regard to the rate of freight by other steamers, and he believed that before long steamers would be running between Brisbane and England direct. If the frozen-meat trade were of any value, it would take more than thirteen steamers a-year to carry it. If, in fact, the trade were to be of any appreciable benefit to stockowners, it would be more likely to employ one steamer a-week. He hoped sincerely that the trade would be successful. He knew that it was in good hands, and that there were many gentlemen actively interested in the matter who were prepared to subscribe a large amount of capital to carry it out. If the trade were a success it must be carried on by means of steamers, and if they took meat home they would come out with goods. These steamers would, of course, be made suitable for our ports; and he contended that, so far from the direct trade to England being discouraged if the contract were not agreed to, it would be encouraged, because in starting a trade it was not desirable to give to any one company such an enormous advantage as they would derive from the proposed subsidy. He was informed upon very good authority that the average freight by the P. and O. steamers from London to Brisbane, through rates, for the month of June of the present year, was 70s. with the usual 10 per cent. added. That was the rate at which merchants in Brisbane had actually received goods shipped in London for Brisbane by the P. and O. Company. No doubt it was a high freight; but he was certain that the proposed line of steamers *via* Torres Straits would not charge less freight—they would probably charge more. There was no reason to be alarmed, therefore, at the consequences foreshadowed by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) in the event of the contract not being accepted. The difference in the rate of freights between Sydney and Brisbane upon goods shipped from London was not more than 10s., whereas the ordinary rates from Brisbane to Sydney, including charges, exceeded 20s.; so that actually the companies were already providing for the direct trade.

Mr. FEEZ: To Brisbane only.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that trading companies were not imbued with the extraordinary craze about the North which some members seemed to think had taken possession of the people of Brisbane. They regarded the matter from a commercial point of view, and would make arrangements to carry goods anywhere, whether to Brisbane or Ipswich or to Cooktown. He would be very sorry to think that the course pursued by the Opposition would discourage direct communication with England. He did not profess to be an infallible judge; but he believed the rejection of the contract would have the effect not of diverting but of increasing the direct trade with England. He believed it would be found that none of the gloomy consequences prophesied by hon. members opposite would come to pass. Cheapness of freight and facilities of communication with other parts of the world would be brought about here as elsewhere. He saw no reason why Queensland, any more than the rest of the Australian colonies, should be put to the expense of subsidising a merchant service. If the consequences prophesied by the Premier were about to ensue there might be some reason for it; but, apart from that, he saw no reason why a rejection of the contract should be attended with such terrible consequences. Be it distinctly understood that his objection was not so much to a mail service for Queensland—he believed, for many reasons, it would be desirable to have it—as to a contract which was open to almost every objection which could possibly be urged against a contract—a contract bad in every particular—as to stipulations with regard to the size of ships, as to the terms for carrying mails, as to subsidy conditions, and as to immigration, and which contained no stipulation of any use whatever, considering it as a merchant service. Choosing between no contract of the kind for the present and that before the Committee, he would prefer to go without any. He did not profess to be an infallible judge on these matters; but he spoke upon the authority of men upon whose judgment he could rely—mercantile men of every condition—men of the greatest experience in Queensland. These men were distinctly of opinion that the proposed contract, instead of benefiting the trade of the colony, would be almost ruinous. If the proposal benefited any part of the colony it would benefit Brisbane most; and he did not think, therefore, that the merchants or representatives of Brisbane could be accused of selfishness in opposing it. It would not follow, if this contract were rejected, that there never would be a contract if such were found necessary. But they were asked to ratify a contract of the crudest character, the objections to which had been pointed out over and over again—a contract which bound the contractors to do nothing unless they liked. The Opposition would not be justified in assenting to the ratification of a contract of that description, especially when they knew perfectly well that in so doing they would be exposing themselves to the condemnation of the public opinion of the colony. He had endeavoured to reply to the new matter imported into the debate by the Premier in the spirit in which the hon. member had introduced it. He could only repeat, that he was fully aware of the responsibilities involved in the position occupied by hon. members on his own side of the House, and that they did not shrink from those responsibilities.

Mr. KING said he thought that the hon. member for North Brisbane, in some of his remarks, seemed to be endeavouring to persuade the people of Brisbane that under the arrangement between the A.S.N. Company and the Orient Company the whole of the imports from the South would come to Brisbane. At the present

time the A.S.N. Company were actually carrying goods at cheaper rates from Sydney to the North than they charged for carriage between Brisbane and the North, and therefore there was no reason to suppose that imports for the North could pass through Brisbane. If the two companies had agreed to bring goods to Brisbane for 70s. a-ton, they might be sure that the rate to Sydney was much less, and there was nothing to prevent the A.S.N. Company, if there was no competitive line, from making arrangements by which the whole of the northern trade would be diverted from Brisbane.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said they were not discussing the arrangements of the A.S.N. Company. He was as anxious as anyone to see the utmost facilities given for transit along the coast; but that was a matter which was altogether independent of the question whether they should enter into the mail contract or not. If the A.S.N. Company chose to establish differential rates which would have the effect stated by his hon. colleague, nothing which they might do with regard to such a contract as that under discussion would alter the determination of the company in that respect. The only way to meet them was by setting up a rival company to meet their local purposes. The formation of such a company had been long contemplated, and probably the discussion on the mail contract would be the means of drawing attention to the necessity for it. He did not say that in any spirit of hostility to the A.S.N. Company; but it was quite clear that if a comparatively foreign company established differential rates which affected Brisbane—he was not quite sure that the company had done so—there was a case for setting up local competition against them. With regard to the great general question, he must say he was very glad to notice the manner in which the Premier had referred to it. The hon. gentleman seemed to him to have made rather an *ad misericordiam* appeal to the Opposition to allow it to pass. The hon. gentleman pointed out matters which had not been discussed which might induce the Opposition to reconsider the decision which they had arrived at. He did not suppose that much could now be said on the merits or demerits of the proposed contract, as it had been so fully discussed on both sides; but he thought it was hardly fair for the Premier to throw the responsibility of the present situation on the Opposition. He did not accept that, and he would show them why. The argument of the hon. gentleman was, that because the Opposition had treated the contract as they had done, all future contracts would be discouraged and damaged;—a Premier or a Minister might go home, or the Agent-General might be authorised to enter into negotiations for contracts, but they would not have much chance of arranging them satisfactorily in consequence of the action of the present Opposition. That was the point which he wished to tackle, because the argument was not a fair one. Just let them look at the circumstances under which the contract was brought about. The Premier was absent from the colony for over nine months, and under any circumstances he did not think the Premier ought to be out of the colony for such a length of time;—the less the Premier was away the better. Things might happen in the youth of a colony to necessitate the absence of the leader of the Government, but the practice was one which ought not to be continued. Premiers had gone home and had made bargains, but he had noticed that there was always some trouble afterwards. He was quite sure that they would not have had all this trouble if the Premier had stayed at home to look after the affairs of the colony. The Premier was the man who was re-

sponsible for the good conduct of the affairs of the colony; and they could be much better managed in the colony than in England, no matter what pressure of circumstances there might be, financial or otherwise. He did not mean to say that there were not circumstances which would necessitate the absence of the Premier. He was aware that before the carrying into effect of the great Act which resulted in the federation of the British possessions of North America—now the Dominion of Canada—it was not only necessary for the Premier to go to England, but he was accompanied by several Ministers, who had to have lengthened interviews with Her Majesty's Ministers before the terms of the federation could be determined. For the accomplishment of such great acts as that it might be desirable that the leaders of Government should leave their countries. As the facilities for communication between one country and another were being increased, so the inconvenience of a Premier's absence might be diminished; but unless it was for grave reasons of State he held that no Premier was justified in being absent from his country for any lengthened period. However, after being absent for nine months, the Premier returned, and Parliament was called together after the longest recess yet known. When the House met on the 6th July hon. members were perfectly ignorant of the details of the proposed contract, and when it was laid on the table they learned for the first time that it must be ratified by the 6th August. That was sharp work;—as the hon. member (Mr. Thompson) said, it was too much to expect them to at once take the leap without looking at it. The Premier knew well enough that a high-couraged horse must not be rushed at a fence, as he would not take it; the horse liked to have time to see what he had to clear before he jumped. In the same way he declined to be rushed, and they were certainly being rushed when they were told that the contract must be ratified before the 6th August. Naturally it struck him, and no doubt the same thing struck other hon. members, that it was advisable, first of all, to hear something about the finances. The Premier said he could not give any explanation about the finances until the contract was passed, and he went so far as to say that he was not going to be dictated to by a minority, as the most sacred principle of all was the right of the majority to govern. The hon. gentleman said the majority would have effect given to their views. He agreed with the hon. gentleman that it was the right of the majority to govern, and they ought to assert that right. It was the right of the minority to make use of the forms of the House to exhaust the subject, and under the circumstances it was exceedingly natural that they should do so. The proposed contract was not subject to the wholesome restraint which an Act of Parliament secured; there were no distinct stages in connection with it; it could not be read a first and second time and then be discussed in committee; it could not be considered by the Upper House, and it was not necessary that the highest estate of the realm should assent to it. By one vote they were asked to agree to a contract which would be binding for eight years and which would involve a large expenditure of money. It had been considered a matter of surprise that they should spend as much time over the contract as they did over an ordinary Act of Parliament. There were many ordinary Bills over which they spent as much time as they had already spent over the proposed contract, and which did not involve such grave issues as the single one which was involved in the contract. All things considered, the Premier ought not to cast the responsibility on the Opposi-

tion. The responsibility attached to the Premier for having made a time bargain of the transaction. It was unfair to the House to say that the contract must be authorised within a certain time; it was an unnecessary way to put it. The contract would have been quite as effective if it had not come into operation for six or even twelve months hence. They could not be asked to take on trust all the Premier said; they must have time to consider the matter, and it was in consequence of their not having had proper time allowed, and of the issues not being put in the ordinary way, that the Opposition had taken steps to exhaust the resources which they had at their disposal so as to secure delay. He would say that they were thoroughly justified, under the circumstances, in taking advantage of the forms of the House; but he wished it to be distinctly understood that he did not approve of the principle of government by minorities. Let the Premier not for a moment suppose that he would allow him to fasten on to him the responsibility of the situation.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: You are fastening it on to yourself.

MR. DOUGLAS said he was not. He had no responsibilities except those that the forms of the House reserved to him. He should exhaust the subject to the best of his ability—he felt bound to do so; he should be foregoing the trust reposed in him if he did not do so. It was absurd for the Premier and hon. gentlemen opposite to suppose that they had not the power to override the Opposition if they chose; unquestionably they had. He must beg to differ from the Minister for Works, who said “No.” The way was plain and open to them. The Government could not excuse themselves on the ground that they had not the power if they chose to exercise it. Something had been said by the Premier of the exercise of the “iron hand” which was looked on as such an atrocious piece of tyranny. The Premier had asserted that he was not going to submit to the despotism of the minority, and he was quite right. He should not submit to the despotism of the minority. The Premier spoke of the

“Despotism of a minority, which was the most objectionable of all despotisms, and which he would never be the means of establishing as a precedent in the House.”

He was not sure that the Premier was not now acting in the right way to establish such a precedent: it was more than probable that he would do so. It had been said that Sir James McCulloch resorted to a desperate remedy when he had the Standing Orders suspended. That was not a desperate but a very legitimate remedy, one which the hon. gentlemen opposite would be perfectly justified in adopting if they thought the question under discussion required it. Sir James McCulloch was not a very popular man when he put in force what was somewhat opprobriously called the “iron hand.” The unpopularity of Sir James McCulloch at that time arose from an entirely different cause. It was not because he exercised what were the undoubted rights of a majority that he became unpopular. Those very rights had been exercised in South Australia for many years; they existed there now and in other legislatures—in the American and French legislatures; and if the usages of the forms of the House were abused, no doubt every legislature had the right to put such expedients in force. It was not only a right, but it was quite the legitimate course of action—he himself had no squeamishness on the point. He was there simply because he had the power to obstruct, and make use of the forms of the House as they existed, if he considered it was necessary and deemed the case sufficiently urgent to do so.

They might be set aside by suspending the Standing Orders, and it was perfectly competent to do so; and it must be, if the Government did not now choose to exercise their powers and rights, that they did not consider the contract was of sufficient importance to justify them in taking that course. If it was of sufficient importance they clearly had the right and power to do as he had pointed out. The consequences probably would now be that a bad precedent would be set, and, as it had been justly enough pointed out, that there might be a difficulty in dealing with future contracts in consequence of the hon. gentleman's own mismanagement. The Premier had asked the House to look at the matter too rapidly; they had not had time to see all the details, and when they were brought to this point the hon. gentleman was in all probability going to let the time expire and prevent the contract being carried out. They were told, first, that the time would expire on the 6th of August, and then upon the 6th of September, and probably the Premier now thought it more expedient to throw the responsibility upon the Opposition than to accept it himself. If the contract was of sufficient importance to make it a Government question and rally his followers to carry it—if it was of sufficient importance to prompt him to say that the Government would never submit to a system of despotism and tyranny—it was of sufficient importance to warrant him in setting aside the Standing Orders to give effect to it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that the hon. gentleman at the head of the Opposition had made his speech pretty much in his usual style—namely, as a lawyer, and not as a politician or member of Parliament. He began by carping at names, and that was the regular lawyer's trick. His hon. friend, the Premier, in speaking of the contract made by a number of English capitalists, spoke of them as the British-India Company, and the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) knew as well as he did that the Premier had used this term over and over again as a matter of convenience during the debate. His hon. friend had explained to the House that the gentlemen who signed the contract with him were all either members of the British-India Company or the Netherlands Company; and to carp, therefore, at the use of the description thus used by the Premier was only of a piece with the hon. member's conduct through the entire proceedings. It was done merely for carping's sake, for the leader of the Opposition knew as well as he did what the Premier meant. Then the hon. gentleman said it was very strange that Mr. Mackinnon did not telegraph, since that gentleman's was the first name among those who signed the contract; but the hon. gentleman knew very well that Gray, Dawes, and Company were the agents of this gentleman, that they had appeared all through the discussions on the mail contract in that capacity, and that they so appeared in the contract itself. The exception taken by the hon. gentleman might therefore be clearly called carping, and the hon. gentleman must be perfectly well aware that his carping had no weight, either with himself or the Committee. Then came the insinuation—for no doubt it was an insinuation, and one which had a very bad meaning—as to the extraordinary coincidence of the arrival of the telegram yesterday. He (Mr. Palmer) could not see any extraordinary coincidence at all about it. He wondered the hon. gentleman did not use the language of the hon. gentleman behind him, and call it a fortuitous concatenation of circumstances.

MR. DOUGLAS: I never made use of the expression.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman did make use of the expression not many years ago, and he could show him the passage. However, there was no fortuitous concatenation of circumstances, as far as he could see, about the arrival of this telegram. Most business men would think it was an extremely probable thing that gentlemen who had put their names to a contract of this magnitude would be anxious to know what was going on, and to telegraph what they themselves were doing, especially, as the telegram stated, when the price of iron was rising, and there would be a very probable increase in the cost of shipbuilding. He could not, therefore, understand what the hon. gentleman meant, unless he meant to utter an insinuation to the effect that some undue means had been taken to induce these gentlemen at home to telegraph to Queensland at this particular time. He (Mr. Palmer) could assure the Committee that no means whatever had been taken. All these telegrams came through his hands at the Colonial Secretary's office, and he could endorse the Premier's assertion that no telegrams had been sent to these gentlemen by the Government since the last was laid upon the table of the House.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Nor by anybody on behalf of the Government?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, here was another of the hon. gentleman's insinuations. He now insinuated that someone in the confidence of the Government might have telegraphed; and he (Mr. Palmer) could settle that by at once informing the Committee that no such communication had taken place. The leader of the Opposition then went on to express his opinion that the cost of mails would not be materially increased even in the event of this contract not being entered into, and in doing so he took a very narrow view of the subject. It was only consistent with everything they saw in the course of their experience in the world that when the neighbouring colonies found that the colony of Queensland had given up its own service, and was entirely in their hands, they would raise their terms for the conveyance of the Queensland mails. Not only would they raise the price of their assistance to this colony, but the latter would be entirely dependent upon any arrangement they chose to make, and upon a mail steam service of some sort bringing the mails up from Sydney to Brisbane and the northern ports. The hon. gentleman then went on to state that whether the steamers left Sydney on a particular day or not was a matter of very little consequence, and simply a matter of arrangement for the Queensland mails; but it was properly pointed out by the Premier that if the steamers did not arrive in Brisbane to suit the mails leaving on Saturday, it would throw out of gear not only all the arrangements for the northern ports, but for the entire postal service of the interior. It was not only that, but the company with which they were now concerned not only refused—as he understood—to alter the days of sailing of their steamers, but positively refused to wait for the mail steamer until she came in; so that a delay of an hour or two in the arrival of the mail at Sydney would necessitate the detention of the Queensland mails in the other colony for a week. The hon. gentleman, however, took very good care not to allude to that. The tenour of his argument, if argument it might be called—if it meant anything, however—was that if Queensland had no mail service of her own, and was entirely dependent upon the neighbouring colonies, and could not reciprocate with them in giving them the advantage of her service, it was only to be anticipated from the past, that they would make

their own arrangements, and that Queensland would derive no corresponding benefit similar to that she had enjoyed during the last seven years. He looked upon it as a very deplorable thing indeed for this colony if this mail service was thrown out, after all the trouble taken by the Premier, not on his own instance, as was represented by the member for Brisbane, but at the request of his colleagues. It was by the positive instructions of the Governor in Council that the Premier called for tenders for the service; and, with such instructions staring him in the face, it was monstrous in the hon. gentleman opposite to say that it was the single action of one Minister in England which had brought about the mail contract. The Premier was acting upon the instructions of the Governor in Council and on the advice of the Government, and he (Mr. Palmer) believed, from the communication he had had with the best authorities since, that the mercantile world at home was astonished at the very low price at which his hon. friend was enabled to settle the contract. The leader of the Opposition had said that in his opinion Premiers ought not to go to England, and that their proper place was in the colony where their official business lay. When the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government informed the House last year that he was going to England, the leader of the Opposition, if he objected to it, should have chosen that, which was the legitimate opportunity, for stating his objections. But what did he say? He said—

"I have no objection to offer to the projected visit of the Premier to Europe, as I believe it is very useful on many occasions that the head of the Government of a colony like this should visit Europe in that position. I simply rise to ask a question with regard to a matter of some interest—Who will act as *locum tenens* at the Treasury during the absence of the Premier?"

That was what the hon. gentleman said at the time when he ought to have objected. But now he appeared to give a very different opinion upon the subject of a Premier leaving his colony. Which was to be taken as his real opinion?

Mr. GRIFFITH: I have had good advice since then.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it would be interesting to know where the advice came from. Had he received it as the hon. member for Northern Downs did, from some Prince of the Blood; or had it come from Gladstone or Lord Beaconsfield?

Mr. DOUGLAS: The member for Rosewood.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman, however, remarked that it was extraordinary that a communication should be received that this company were building nine-knot steamers when the P. and O. Company were building fifteen-knot steamers. But where did that information come from, as there was not one word of it in the telegram which had been sent to the Premier? It was possible that the P. and O. Company were building fifteen-knot steamers whilst they intended to run only nine-knots, as it was not the expense of the engines or the wear and tear of them that made the increase of speed such an important item in a mail service, but it was the consumption of coal. It was true economy to build ships that would go at great speed if required, or at a slower speed if that was necessary. Whilst all the boats now built were built to go at a fast speed, it was not because they were intended always to go at that speed, but in order that they should be able to go, in case of emergency, nearly twice as fast as its contract time, or fourteen knots. The hon. gentleman also said that in order to carry out the contract it was the duty of the Premier, instead of making arrangements

at home, to have induced capitalists to make it their business to come here and confer with him; but what an absurd thing that was. Fancy a company of English capitalists coming to this colony, or to any of the colonies, with such an intention. The thing was absurd! Then the hon. gentleman quoted some figures to show that the through freight from London to Brisbane was only 70s., but he did not favour the Committee with the authority he had for stating that goods had been brought out at 70s. through freight by the P. and O. Company. What was the hon. member's authority?

Mr. GRIFFITH: The merchants of Brisbane.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he should like to know who were the merchants of Brisbane referred to by the hon. member; they might be merchant tailors for all he (Mr. Palmer) knew. He had never seen anything to that effect. Had the Chamber of Commerce spoken on the subject? He believed they had not, and he certainly was not going to take the opinion of two or three small traders. The Government might attach some importance to the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce, but they had not heard from them that the trade and commerce of the colony would be ruined by this service; if the Chamber of Commerce thought so they would very soon have told the Government—that he was quite certain. Hon. members opposite might talk as much as they liked about subsidizing this merchant service, as the hon. member for North Brisbane called it, but it was not subsidizing a merchant service—it was nothing of the sort; it was subsidizing a mail service which in all respects was most peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the colony. But the question, after all, at the present time was not so much that of a mail service as whether a minority should rule the country. They had heard that afternoon a lot of claptrap from the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas), who had suggested how the Government might do certain things by putting on the "iron hand." There was an old saying that "the greater the radical the greater the tyrant," and certainly, from what they had heard from the hon. member, they must conclude that he would adopt the tyrannical course if he had the power; but surely the hon. member must allow the Ministers of the day to be the best judges of their own conduct. It might no doubt suit the hon. member very well if he could, by adopting the style of argument he had made use of, induce the Government to follow a course which, if the Opposition pursued their policy of obstruction, might be forced upon them; but which he—and he believed every member of the Ministry would agree with him—did not wish to see adopted in this colony. With regard to what the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) had termed the *ad misericordiam* appeal of the Premier to abandon the contract, he had not heard anything that would justify the assertion. He (the Colonial Secretary) would repeat what he had said over and over again—that he believed the throwing out of the contract would be productive of the most serious injury to the colony; and he would repeat—and it could not be too often repeated—that the action now being taken by the minority of that Committee would have the effect of blocking any attempts—not only of the present Ministry, but of any future Government—to make arrangements with capitalists at home on behalf of the colony. When once it became known that the Premier of this colony went home, and after spending months of labour, made—acting on the advice of the Executive—what he considered an advantageous arrangement with capitalists, and that on his return to the colony, notwithstanding his Government had

a large majority, was, owing to the obstruction of a small minority, unable to carry out his agreement with those capitalists—whenever that became known it would have the effect of preventing capitalists in future from entering into any arrangement which was subject to the confirmation of Parliament. The only thing would be for the Government to be authorised by the House to enter into a contract within certain limits, as had been done in the case of the contract with the E. and A. Company. He maintained, however, in the present case that, the Premier having been authorised by the Executive to enter into the best arrangements he could, the contract made by him should in all justice be ratified, especially when the majority of the House had agreed to it. Hon. members opposite should remember that although five or six members might band themselves together and put a stop to all legislation at the present time, they themselves might suffer from the same sort of thing. They might count too much on the honour and honesty of hon. members now sitting on his (Mr. Palmer's) side of the Committee; but it would be a very sore subject to look back upon, if the Government and their supporters found that, by the persistent opposition of a small minority of the House, legislation which they believed to be very much for the benefit of the colony was blocked by a few men banding together and saying, "We will not allow this—we will block it." The hon. member for Maryborough said that the whole responsibility of the rejection of the contract would rest upon the Government; but he (Mr. Palmer) denied that such was the case. He believed, on the contrary, that in less than six months from now the united voice of the country would be very much against the Opposition for the part they had taken in the matter. Strange to say, the contract was every week growing more and more in favour with the whole colony, and with Brisbane in particular; and he was equally sure that the Opposition would feel the result of their obstruction in a manner they did not expect. The leader of the Opposition had referred to the absence of the Premier from the colony having caused unnecessary delay in the meeting of Parliament; yet, although they had been now sitting eight weeks, nothing had been done owing to the obstruction of hon. members opposite. If they had met three months earlier the Opposition might have adopted the same tactics, and business would not have been any more forward. There was no doubt that they might have done the whole business of the session by this time if hon. members had gone into it with a will. Hon. members opposite had referred to what had happened in other colonies in support of the course they were now adopting, but he believed that there was no case on record in which the opposition had been carried out in such a manner as in the present instance; and as a last word he would remind hon. members opposite that those who sow the wind must expect to reap the whirlwind.

Mr. DICKSON said they had heard two long speeches from the Government on the question that afternoon, both of which went in this direction, that if the present contract was not ratified the colony would be entirely at the mercy of New South Wales and Victoria. He, however, maintained that there was no necessity for the Committee to look at the matter in that light, but primarily to consider whether the proposed contract would be beneficial to the colony. He contended that the members of the Ministry who had spoken had not shown even a desire to try and do away with the obvious disadvantages of this mail contract so frequently referred to in the course of the debate. He could not understand the feeling of soreness displayed by the

Colonial Secretary regarding telegrams which might have been forwarded by the Government to the contractors or received by the Government from the contractors. He should rather have hoped that the Government had telegraphed extensively—that they had availed themselves of the opportunity they had had of submitting to the contractors some modifications of their present proposals. The Government themselves had not attempted to defend the contract in its entirety, and had not replied at all to the very forcible objections raised as to the one-sided character of it. If they were desirous to secure for the country a really good service, it was their duty, seeing the numerous objections which had been raised to the contract, to have communicated with the contractors with a view to getting those objections removed, or, at any rate, presented in a more acceptable form. He should have been glad if the Premier had been able to inform them that, in addition to the telegram he had received concerning the necessity of at once accepting the contract in order to enable vessels to be built to carry out the service, he had received a reply to a proposition of his agreeing to a limitation of the service to a shorter period than eight years, and making it more adapted to present demands in the shape of increased speed. He did not at all accept the opinion expressed by the Colonial Secretary that there was a strong revulsion of feeling in favour of this contract. He only wished that he could conscientiously believe that such was the case; but the more frequently he went through the contract, and the more frequently he discussed it with men moving in commercial circles competent to judge, the more fully was it denounced by them in its present form. Although they desired that there should be a Queensland service commensurate with the importance and suitable to the requirements of the colony in the shape of speed and other matters of detail—he gave way to no one in the desire to see this—still, in its present form, the contract was as strongly denounced as it was when first submitted to Parliament.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER : No.

Mr. DICKSON said he only wished he was of the same belief as the hon. member, but he denied that there was revulsion of feeling in favour of the contract. He would ask what had the Government done during the time the contract had been under consideration to render it more acceptable to the country than it was at first? They had endeavoured in no way to remove the objection to it; in fact, the House was called upon to ratify the contract, and for all the impression they had been able to make on it, or were likely to be able to make upon it, they might as well not have been asked to ratify it at all. It was more idle form to ask the ratification of a contract when its most essential details were not allowed to be modified in any respect. He hoped that the Government would be fully impressed with the importance of the present position. He quite admitted that it was not an edifying spectacle to see a minority in the House impede legislation or the conduct of public business, and he was sure that every member on the Opposition side was fully impressed with the responsibilities of the position; but, at the same time, he maintained that all good government must be a system of compromise, and that it was the duty of the Government, when serious and valid objections were made to the contract, to have submitted certain modifications which would have had the effect of removing these objections, or, at any rate, limiting the period of its duration. It had been represented by people out of doors that they did not believe that the Govern-

ment were in earnest in their intention to force upon the country this contract in its present form. They contended that the Government were open to modification, and that they intended that such modification would be moved on the Government side of the House. He would be glad to see that such belief was correct, and he was sure that the Opposition would be pleased to withdraw their opposition to the Government measure if they could honourably do so by a modification of the contract being submitted to the House by the Government themselves. The Opposition had been taunted by the Colonial Secretary with delaying public business—that the House had been nearly two months in session and had done little or nothing; but the real fact of the case was that the delay in the conduct of business had been through the mismanagement of the Government—of the Premier himself. Had the Premier done as he ought to have done—seeing that they had entered upon the new financial year when the House met—submitted his Financial Statement at once, tabled the contract, and allowed the debate to proceed upon it, he might then have taken into consideration the objections urged against it, and endeavoured to get the contractors to agree to necessary modifications;—had he done that they would now, possibly, be a long way through the Estimates, and have proceeded a good deal further with the legislation of the session. It was not yet too late to adopt that prudent course; and he would advise the Premier, if he wished the contract to be ratified, to proceed with other business on the paper, and in the meantime communicate by wire with the contractors and see what modification of the terms could be obtained. He contended it was essential that there should be an increased rate of speed—that it should not be less than a ten or eleven knot service—and that the terms of the contract should be limited to five or six years. The Government had not shown the slightest desire to attempt to obtain a modification, and hence the position that had been taken up by the Opposition was one they were quite justified in maintaining. They had been told that the action of the Opposition to-day might be the action of a future Opposition, and that government by majorities in that House would be practically impossible. The position of affairs was not, as he had said before, an edifying spectacle; but it had been forced upon the Opposition by the Government. If the Opposition exhibited a bad example, much worse had been exhibited by the Government themselves in not endeavouring to meet the reasonable objections which had been raised against this contract, which he contended the Premier might have done by placing himself in full communication with the contractors and explaining to them that in its present shape the contract was not likely to be assented to, but that certain modifications would ensure its passing through the House. That was what any prudent man of business who had a large transaction of his own to accomplish would doubtless have done, and if he failed he would have the satisfaction of knowing that he had done all that he could do in his own interests, and having done so he might be released of the responsibility of attempting to press it further. He did not intend to dwell upon the fact of the Premier's visit home, but he could not allow the observation of the Colonial Secretary on that point to pass without comment. When the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) made the speech last session respecting the Premier's intended visit home, which the Colonial Secretary had just read, he (Mr. Griffith), in common with other members of the House, doubtless believed that the Premier's visit home would have been productive of far more substantial benefits

to the colony than it had been. He would ask hon. members if this mail contract was a matter for congratulation, or one in which the Premier could pride himself as having displayed that business acumen which any man carrying on a large business should exercise? It was not such a contract as any man having regard to his own interests would willingly enter into. While he was free to admit that he regarded the Premier as an able man, yet he contended that this contract in the form in which it had been submitted to the country did not justify that belief in his ability which otherwise he (Mr. Dickson) would feel, and it certainly was not the satisfactory outcome they expected from the visit of the hon. gentleman to the mother-country. He should be sorry to think that any Minister of the Crown should go home and enter into a similar one-sided bargain with the capitalists of the mother-country for the construction of the transcontinental railway; and, whatever his views might be with regard to the construction of railways out of the territorial estate, if the scheme of the Government as to the transcontinental railway was of the same one-sided character as the mail contract, as long as he had the honour of a seat in that House he should give it his most uncompromising opposition—unless it could be shown that it was based upon much more equitable principles than were embodied in the contract under discussion. He did not intend to travel over the old ground. He repeated, that he should be glad to see a mail service established suitable to the requirements of the country, but that the contract before them was one that did not recommend itself to their acceptance, and one that he believed the Premier would be able to get a modification of had he attempted to do so. The hon. members who had spoken that evening had given a kind of negative adhesion to the contract by representing the position they would be in if they had to be dependent upon New South Wales for their mail service; but that was not a correct aspect of the case. They had not on that side of the House expressed any desire to be beholden to the P. and O. Company or the San Francisco line, but had expressed a doubt as to whether the contract was not capable of being improved upon. It had been pointed out by his hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, that it was unwise to sanction the employment of vessels merely to run a nine-knot service for eight years, while the P. and O., the Orient, and other lines were building vessels capable of running at the rate of fifteen knots. It was remarked by the Colonial Secretary that, notwithstanding the fact that it was only intended to run at nine knots, there was nothing to prevent the vessels being built so as to accomplish fifteen knots, the contention being that it would be cheaper for a company possessing boats to run them at nine knots than at the higher rate of eleven, twelve, or fifteen knots. As far as the interests of the company were concerned that might be correct, but they had primarily to consider the requirements, not of the company, but of the colony, and whether the proposed contract was good for them at present, and would be suitable for them until the eight years of the contract lapsed. He had no doubt that the gentlemen whose names were mentioned in connection with the contract were quite able to look after their own interests, and those of any company they formed themselves into; but the duty of the legislature was to consider the interests of the country, not the interests of a company, and whether they were justified in committing themselves to such a contract. The contract was entirely one-sided, and on that side of the House their objections were to the speed, to the duration

of the contract, and to the optional character of the agreement for the carrying of immigrants. There were other matters that might be very satisfactorily improved, and he very much regretted that the time which had elapsed since the question came on for discussion had not been occupied by an endeavour to obtain from the contractors some modifications that might have been for the interests of the country. The telegram that appeared in the *Courier* on Saturday last was a very significant one. It was represented to come from Messrs. Gray, Dawes, and Co., and to the following effect:—

“We have contracted for new steamers, subject to the confirmation of the Mail Contract. Prices rising. Builders require immediate decision. Are we safe in contracting? Please reply.”

When he read that, he must confess, he smiled at it. The British-India Company were known to possess one of the largest fleets in the world—perhaps larger than the Cunard or the P. and O. Company; and, if they were going to carry out the contract, he did not see why they should be in such a hurry merely to build a few vessels to put on the Queensland line. They could despatch the required number without the necessity of building specially. The Premier, when he entered into large operations, seemed surrounded with importunities to get them accepted immediately, and this only excited a smile in men acquainted with commercial proceedings. These representations appeared to be made to cause more precipitancy than would otherwise be used, and with the view to impress upon the public at large what an excellent opportunity would be missed should any delay arise in the ratification of the contract. He considered that it was a very reasonable request on the part of the leader of the Opposition to know what reply was sent to that telegram about rising prices and the possible increased cost of building steamers. He would like to know whether the Premier had advised them in reply, as he had announced in a former telegram, that no further business would be done in the House until the contract had been ratified? If the hon. gentleman wished to have the contract ratified, as he had repeatedly stated, the course was quite clear to do so, and that was by obtaining a modification of it. The thing was too good for the contractors to let it slip; and, with a slight modification as to time and other conditions, they might secure it. As to the opinions of the merchants of Brisbane on the subject, if those opinions were in favour of the contract he did not think they would be regarded by the Opposition as coming from gentlemen who were not competent to pronounce an opinion on the matter; although the same favourable reception would not, perhaps, be accorded to them by the Government if their verdict was against it. It was satisfactory to learn that it was intended to hold a meeting of the mercantile community at an early date, in order to give expression to their feelings on the subject. He would again state that, seeing the large amount of business on the paper—no less than twenty separate measures, many of which were no doubt of considerable importance, and should be passed into law with all reasonable expedition—it ought to be gone on with while the contract was allowed to remain in abeyance for modification by the contractors in some of its most important details. While the Opposition accepted the responsibility of declining to ratify the measure for reasons which their leader had so fully and explicitly set forth, the Government might set an example of moderation, and enable the Opposition to show that their supervision and vigilance in the matter was not without fruit. What was the use of criticising the contract if their criticisms were to be objected to *in toto*,

especially that they were not to be met and dispelled in fair and open argument? It could not be challenged that the weight of argument rested with the Opposition, whose objections, which were admitted to be valid, had not been raised through any party spirit, but with the sole desire to secure a contract beneficial to the colony at large. There were hon. members on the other side who would be the first to support those objections if, unfortunately, the Premier had not injudiciously made it a party question. There was ample time for the contract to be brought up in a modified form, and he would repeat that, while he would desire to see the colony with a steam service of its own, he did not think it creditable to the Legislature to accept such a service as the one now under discussion, either as to speed, duration of time, or the optional power of carrying immigrants. The Colonial Secretary had predicted that in six months' time the Opposition would be loaded with obloquy by the people of the colony for having declined to allow the contract to be ratified. He felt himself as fully justified in making a prediction, and his prediction was that in six months' time—whether they succeeded in getting the contract replaced by a better one or not—the Ministry themselves in their inner consciousness would be the first to admit that the Opposition had saved them from committing an act of the most egregious folly in burdening the country with an obligation which was the more unsatisfactory the more it was examined. He hoped the Government would show their sense of the present position by proceeding with other and urgent business, and in which, no doubt, they would receive hearty support from both sides of the House; and allow this matter to stand over until they had shown the contractors that there was no probability of its being ratified unless by resort to means of coercion. He trusted the Government would see the propriety of taking some such line of action; for if both sides adhered to the letter of their views, it could only result in a suspension of business which they must all deplore. Whatever responsibility was attached to the Opposition in resisting the contract as uncompromisingly put forth by the Government—the whole contract and nothing but the contract—he gladly accepted his individual portion of it, both here and hereafter, and was prepared to answer to his constituents for any assistance he might be able to render his leader in rejecting a contract which in its present shape was most unsatisfactory, and, he believed, most prejudicial to the best interests of the country.

MR. AMHURST said he had felt rather surprised at the speech of the hon. member (Mr. Dickson). The hon. member had told them that the contract was a one-sided one. In his (Mr. Amhurst's) opinion, it was anything but that. The Premier had obtained the best possible terms for the colony, and it was well known amongst real commercial men that Brisbane and the North would never get such another chance as the contract afforded. With reference to speed, one clause in the contract stated that the company should use their utmost endeavours to carry the mails as quickly as it could be done by any other route. The contractors were not men of straw, but men who could be thoroughly trusted, and the telegram received by the Premier showed that they were prepared to build boats specially for the trade. It did not follow that the service would be a nine-knot service all the way. The boats would run full speed to Singapore, and the P. and O. Company would give them an eleven-knot service thence to England. It was well known that a vessel travelling fourteen or fifteen knots an hour burnt twice as much coal as a vessel steaming only eleven knots—and a vessel making an

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average of nine knots must be capable of going twelve or thirteen knots on a pinch. The hon. member had talked a good deal about what he would like to do, and claimed to be the champion of the North. He congratulated both that hon. gentleman and his leader on their championship of Mackay. There was a paper at Mackay called the *Free Press*, and he challenged the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) to deny that he was a shareholder in it. He was very glad, however, that the paper had been started, for it was to the advantage of everybody that both sides of a question should be represented in the public Press. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickson) might call himself the champion of Mackay, and when he went up there as a Minister he made many promises, not one of which he fulfilled; yet he would find himself mistaken if at the next election he would go up again to contest the constituency with him (Mr. Amhurst). It was useless to talk about changing the contract when there were three parties to it—the Ministry, the Opposition, and the original contractors. The contract was made subject to ratification by Parliament, but that meant the use of fair argument, not stonewalling. If the contract was not ratified by a certain time the Opposition would have gained a great victory—they would have deprived the North of direct mail communication with England. Were they aware that the last mail by the Torres Straits route was the one starting on October 6th? If this contract was not ratified, how were the northern ports to communicate with England? As to the accusation that the Premier had not displayed a conciliatory spirit, that was a perversion of facts, for he could not have been more conciliatory, having given in to the views of the Opposition in making his Financial Statement, which he (Mr. Amhurst) fully believed in, and yet the Opposition now wanted further time. They also wanted the Premier, with the majority at his back, to alter the contract—as if the contractors would stand it—and they had the gross impertinence to say they wanted further time to consider it. They said the weight of argument was on their side: that might be so, for there were few things heavier than stone walls and stony brains. Of all the Governments in Queensland since he had been a member of the House the present one most fairly represented the North and South, and because the Opposition saw a probability that other than Queen street interests would be looked after they opposed the Government with small-minded obstinacy. There was no argument which had not been used over and over again, no fact that had not been perverted a dozen times, and no statement made that would hold water. The hon. member for North Brisbane had tried hard to pervert facts, but he was now addressing intelligent people, and not a common jury such as the hon. member had been used to talk to. He (Mr. Amhurst) would do his best to assist in carrying the contract this week, as there was every reason to suppose that the contractors would not allow any further extension of time. He had been informed that the directors of the E. and A. Company had telegraphed to say that no further steamer should leave Brisbane under the contract after the one leaving on the 6th October. If the Opposition allowed the North to be left without a mail service they should be made to know that with them would rest the entire responsibility. Their object had been to get place and pay and power. They could not go home and make such a contract. The Premier, in entering into the contract subject to the ratification of Parliament, did not arrogate anything to himself, as the Opposition had tried to make out. Knowing the large majority he had in the House who countenanced his action, he was quite justified in taking the

course he did. There might also be many hon. members on the Opposition side who in their hearts approved of the contract. Hon. members had seen how one hon. member had been treated who drew back and dared to come over. The hon. member for Maryborough might grin;—he would dare to go anywhere if they paid him.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I am not grinning.

Mr. AMHURST said the hon. member for Enoggera talked about the amount of business, but he was not aware that the hon. member had any particular knowledge of shipping business and maritime matters. The hon. member was not a shipper of goods, although he might be a great seller of goods. In his own way of business the hon. member might be a great man, but he objected to the hon. member arrogating to himself a knowledge he did not possess. It might not matter much to the hon. member whether the contract were concluded, but it mattered greatly to the colony generally, and that was what the House had to do with. The hon. member stood up as the champion of Mackay, and complained that Mackay was not named as a place of call in the contract, but he forgot that there was such a clause as clause 10 in the contract. The Premier, he could assure the hon. member, was quite capable of taking care of Mackay, and so was he (Mr. Amhurst). If the mail contract was passed the steamers would be only too glad to come to Mackay to ship sugar, and there would be no need of bolstering that port. Thanks to the House and to the sense of the Premier, money would be forthcoming to make a proper breakwater. The hon. member (Mr. Dickson) promised all sorts of things, but did nothing. Mackay had got a tangible thing now, and when the improvement was made steamers would have thirty feet of water at low tide to enable them to ship sugar—better shipping facilities than were possessed by Brisbane. What was the use of spending £100,000 in cuttings, £150,000 in a dry-dock, and voting £150,000 more, if Brisbane was not to be the terminus of the line? The Orient Company would never allow their steamers, if they came up, to be repaired or painted in Brisbane. If this contract were accepted hundreds of people in South Brisbane would be enabled to earn good wages, and the whole town would go a-head. They would have a line constructed to bring coal, and no place in Queensland would receive more benefit from the mail service. The district least benefited would be that which he represented, but Mackay was quite able to take care of its own interest and required no bolstering. He presumed the Premier was not going to delay the whole business of the colony because the Opposition chose to stonewall a measure calculated to benefit the whole of the colony. Rather than allow the business of the country to be delayed, he, as one of the members of the North—which would greatly suffer—would say: Let the contract be given up, and let the onus of its failure rest with the narrow-minded southerners, who had no stake in the colony beyond what they got by their wits.

Mr. SIMPSON said he should not have spoken on the subject at all had it not been for some observations which fell from the leader of the Opposition last Wednesday, when the hon. gentleman criticised the members of the Government who, he said, had spoken in favour of this contract. He considered it was a very great piece of impertinence on the part of the hon. gentleman to allude to hon. members in the way he did; and he took the opportunity to say so, although he was only a private member and the hon. gentleman was leader of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman said he (Mr. Simpson) had

been one of those who supported this contract, and that he had spoken in favour of it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No; I did not say that. I enumerated all who were supposed to be supporters of it.

Mr. SIMPSON said he should like to know how the hon. gentleman came to suppose him to be in favour of the contract? It was no business of the hon. gentleman to make such a statement. This was the first time he had spoken on the subject in the course of a debate which had extended over some seven weeks. He was not now going to say one word on the merits or demerits of the question, as it had been argued and argued until the thing was perfectly threadbare. If the contract was lost it would be lost entirely through the action of the Opposition, and there could not be the slightest doubt that they would be fully responsible for the consequences. He did not know what the intentions of the Government might be when the 6th of September arrived; but he hoped they would allow the contract to lapse, and throw the onus of responsibility entirely on the members sitting opposite. Seven weeks of valuable time had already been wasted, a great many measures of urgent importance were waiting to be dealt with, and he trusted, on that account alone, that no more time would be spent after this week in discussing the matter. He was not present last week, and consequently had not heard what was then said; but he thought the Opposition had made one very great mistake, and that they were beginning to find it out. The action they had taken in stonewalling this contract was a huge mistake, and one which would recoil upon themselves. It seemed that they now wished to draw back a little, feeling afraid that the contract would fall through. No doubt the hon. member for Maryborough, in making his last suggestion, had done so at the instigation of the hon. gentleman sitting before him (Mr. Griffith). The hon. gentleman was putting out a feeler for his leader, who would no doubt like to see the Premier use the iron-hand and carry the contract out. Then the Opposition would be able to flourish about in the country as the opponents of the contract, while enjoying all the benefits which would result from it. For his own part, he considered there had been too much obstruction already, and that the business of the country had been delayed in a most outrageous manner. Knowing the inconvenience which he experienced—notwithstanding the facilities of railway carriage—in attending the House, he could imagine what it must be for hon. members who resided at still greater distances from town; whereas many of the hon. members who sat on the Opposition side lived in Brisbane and Ipswich, and by attending in relays could do so without any inconvenience to themselves. Generally, the Opposition side of the House presented a beggarly array of empty benches until after tea, when the hon. members who had done their everyday work came into the House to amuse themselves. They did not strive to do the work of the country, and he hoped the people would see how their interests were neglected. The mail contract, though a matter of importance, was a mere bagatelle in comparison with other things which were required to be done in the country. The amount of money required was not such a very huge matter after all, and, if the sum which would have to be paid for carrying the mails if they went by another route were deducted, the balance would be found to be a very small matter indeed. Looking at it from that point of view, this was not a matter of such importance that the whole business of the country should be delayed, and the extremely dangerous precedent set that a few hon. members were entitled to obstruct anything

they liked. A lamentable state of things had existed in the House for the last seven weeks, and he hoped it would be soon terminated. Everything that could be said had been said a dozen times over, and further delay was a mere waste of time.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was sorry the hon. gentleman objected to being referred to last Wednesday by him (Mr. Griffith). He was enumerating the majority said to be in the House in favour of the contract—or rather who were supporting the Government in endeavouring to force the contract on the country, and he included the hon. member as one of them, although he was aware that he had not inside the House expressed any opinion on the subject. He observed also this evening that the hon. member refrained from expressing any opinion in favour of the contract. However, the hon. member could not blame him when the Government claimed a majority for enumerating him as one of them, because if he were not one they would not have a majority in favour of the contract. He did not regard the question as to whether a small minority in the House or a few members might set their will against that of the majority as the point at issue. As he had always said, a small minority would be bound to give way, and only under very extraordinary circumstances was a minority, however large, justified in opposing themselves to the will of the majority. The difference between the course of mere obstruction referred to by the hon. member who last spoke and the course pursued by the Opposition was very distinct and marked, and he was satisfied that all the colony could see the distinction. If a small knot of members were to set themselves against the wish of the majority of the House, all he could say was, that if it were his business to lead the House he should not for a moment hesitate to put into force those rules which were adopted in many parts of the world for the prevention of such tactics. But he trusted it would be many years before any such occasion would arise. In Great Britain it had never been found necessary, nor did he think it would be found necessary in this colony. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) had reminded the Government that they had a certain power in their hands; but he (Mr. Griffith) did not altogether agree with his hon. friend on that subject. It would be very unfortunate for the country if they were to attempt to use that power. It was not much use on occasions like the present to say “the responsibility is yours, or yours, or somebody else’s;” the course on such occasions must be taken deliberately with a full sense of the real character of the position, and the knowledge that whatever was done on both sides of the House those who did it were responsible. If the course the Opposition were adopting was wrong and the country condemned them they would be the sufferers, and they had to take that into consideration. Nothing would justify them in their resistance but the belief that they were bound to act as they were doing. They might be wrong, and it might turn out that the Government were correct; and if that were the case the Opposition would be condemned for the course they had taken and would suffer—suffer far more than the Government would in any case. If they defeated the contract, the Government would always be able to say that a splendid chance had been lost, and talk about the magnificent opportunity that had been thrown away. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico.* The advantages would be magnified by hon. members on the other side to an extent never dreamt of at the present time; whereas the Opposition would only be able to say against the contract what might or might not have been. On the other hand, if the Government defeated

them, they (the Opposition) would have to take the blame of allowing the contract to pass. Questions of forms of the House the public did not care much about; all they looked to was the broad merits of a matter. Several members on the Government side had carefully refrained from expressing any opinion on the merits of this question; the time was past, they said. When the matter was first brought forward, so far from there being any intention on the part of the Opposition to obstruct, they were prepared, if possible, to improve the contract.

Mr. O’SULLIVAN: Never!

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, notwithstanding the rude ejaculation of the hon. member, they had intended to modify the contract. It was now some weeks since the matter was discussed on its merits. Before the matter had been forced into its present position he (Mr. Griffith) had taken the trouble to prepare no less than five different provisos to the resolution with a view to the modification of the contract. They were prepared before the Premier proposed his amendment; but since then it had become useless to discuss the matter on its merits, because the Government insisted on the contract as it was or not at all. The Colonial Secretary suggested that he (Mr. Griffith) said the Premier was acting on his own behalf in England in making the contract. That was not what he said. He was calling attention to the difference between a Minister in England, at a distance from his colleagues, entering into large transactions, and a Minister in charge of a department in Brisbane entering into transactions of that kind with the advice and assistance of his colleagues. The Colonial Secretary pointed out that the Premier acted on the express instructions of his colleagues. He (Mr. Griffith) presumed the Colonial Secretary referred to the telegram of the 2nd February, 1880, which said—

“Ministers consider facilities for emigration, passenger, and goods traffic justify large subsidy to through steamers.”

That was the only authority they knew of at the present time. The Premier replied on the following day that he was calling tenders. He had intended to call attention to the views of the Premier before he was encumbered with the terms of the present contract as to what were the proper conditions to be observed in such a contract. In February he (the Premier) laid down certain conditions under which tenders were to be invited, and the conditions were so materially different from the terms of the contract that he proposed now to call the attention of the Committee to the fact, as it might be the last chance he would have of doing so. In the advertisement in the *Times*, under date the 17th March (it must have been the 17th February), it was stated—

“Tenders will be received by the Agent-General for Queensland, at his office, No. 32, Charing Cross, London, until the 16th day of March next, for a combined postal and emigration steam service between the United Kingdom and Queensland, upon the terms and conditions hereafter stated.”

It was to be a combined postal and immigration service; but the present contract was not an immigration service at all. Clause 2 said—

“The service to be a four-weekly one for the conveyance of mails between Singapore and Brisbane, and for the conveyance of emigrants between the United Kingdom and Brisbane, in both cases calling at the northern ports.”

The mail service was to be a service between Singapore and Brisbane only, not between London and Brisbane. There was a great deal of difference for the better in the advertisement as compared with the contract now under consideration. Clause 3 said—

“The postal service to be confined to the conveyance of the mails from Singapore to the Queensland ports,

and *vice versa*, the sailing dates being so arranged as to work with the outward and homeward sailing of the Peninsular and Oriental Mail Service at Singapore."

That condition appeared to have been forgotten in the present contract; at any rate, it was not there. Clause 4 stated—

"The distance between Brisbane and Singapore to be accomplished at an average speed of ten knots. Although the postal service thus terminates at Singapore, the steamers employed are to proceed right through from and to the United Kingdom."

Paragraph 5 said—

"The outward steamers during eight months of the year will be required to carry emigrants at the fixed rate of £15 per head. The Government will fix the number by each steamer according to rules and regulations to be mutually agreed on, the emigrants to be delivered at any of the Queensland ports as ordered by the Government. The dietary scale and system of management shall be the same as that employed in the Government sailing emigrant ships, details of which can be obtained from the Agent-General."

Paragraph 6 said—

"The steamers employed are to be of the highest class, and not less than 1,250 tons nett register."

The conditions in that advertisement were evidently prepared by the Premier after some consideration; and if a contract had been made in which those conditions had been substantially agreed to, much less difficulty would have arisen in inducing the House to ratify it. But every single condition had been departed from in the present contract. The Premier deliberately set forth certain conditions, and afterwards made a contract in which they were entirely departed from. The merits of the question had been discussed so much that he would not now go into them more fully. Under the circumstances he failed to see the force of the cries that had been persistently raised opposite. One cry was "Queen street," another "the North and northern grievances," another was "insinuation." Those were mere parrot cries, and he would recommend hon. members who used the latter cry to get a dictionary and see the difference between "insinuation" and "inference." One would think an hon. member was not allowed to mention two facts together without being accused of doing something terrible. He wondered how people were to form their opinions except by observing facts and putting them together? He had, however, listened to that kind of thing so often that he did not intend to pay any attention, but it was getting so monotonous that if they merely mentioned two facts together—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Two lies.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that an hon. member ejaculated "two lies." They took the facts as supplied by the Government, and if the hon. member thought them to be lies he was very sorry. The Opposition believed the facts supplied by the Government, but if they put two things together that was said by members opposite to be indulging in insinuation. Arguments of that sort, however, were not worthy of any British Assembly, and members who used them were only beating the air. Under the present circumstances, he certainly agreed with the member for Dalby, for once. He hoped the Government would allow the other business of the country to be proceeded with. It had been suggested that the member for Maryborough's views and his on the subject of obstruction were the same; but they were not. Would the Government be justified in stopping obstruction by resolutions preventing debate? If the circumstances were such that the Government would be justified in adopting that course and would be successful in it, then probably obstruction would be unjustifiable. That might be the test, and probably, considering it merely as an abstract question it was a true one. A minority ex-

ceeded its functions by obstructing when the circumstances were such that the majority would be justified and would be successful in preventing them doing so. So far, however, from agreeing with the member for Maryborough, he would prevent, as long as he could get any member to assist him, the Government in bringing forward such a resolution on the present occasion. If such a thing were attempted, unless under circumstances which would be justifiable, he should be inclined to use the forms of the House available for such occasions as long as he could stand and get other hon. members to help him to prevent any resolution of that kind being passed. He did not wish to suggest that the Government contemplated anything of the kind—he believed they did not. He was answering his hon. friend behind him, not agreeing with his views.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. member who had just sat down had the courtesy to apply the word "rude" to an interjection made use of by him (Mr. O'Sullivan). He did not expect that kind of "puppyism" from the hon. member. He might tell the hon. member that in one day he had taken up more time than he (Mr. O'Sullivan) had the whole session, and he did not see why the hon. member should use such an expression to him. He had never used it to the hon. member, and had always listened to his speeches with the greatest attention. He used the word "never" when the hon. member stated that it was not the intention of the Opposition, at the beginning, to obstruct the contract. And he would now assert that it was their intention to obstruct before the House opened, and that they had carried it out consistently to the present moment. What had the House done since the session began? The Premier had said that it had done nothing, but he did not agree with him. They had done something—the Upper House had passed an Insanity, and the Lower House a Rabbit, Bill! Was the mouse that was brought forth by the mountain in labour to be compared with this result? He had noticed that the leader of the Opposition assumed that every member on the Government side who had not spoken on the question must necessarily be against it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: In favour of it, I assumed.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. member had no business to assume anything of the kind. Speaking for himself, he frequently refrained from addressing the House because he did not wish to intrude upon it and take up its valuable time. He spoke seldom, and when he did it was a great labour to him, and he did not claim the attention of hon. members long. But if the leader of the Opposition thought that because he had not spoken on the subject before the Committee he had not paid the greatest attention to the debates upon it and did not see its magnitude, the hon. member was wonderfully mistaken. He had attended the House regularly, and there was scarcely a speech made upon the subject that he had not considered, and he must be a poor hand if by this time he had not formed some judgment. His judgment was very different from the hon. member for Dalby. The hon. member believed that the contract was not of wonderful interest to the colony. He, on the contrary, believed it to be one of the greatest proposals ever brought before the colony since separation; and he would add that, in his opinion, the Premier made a mistake that he did not sign the contract at once. He would rather, than have a good suit of clothes or a horse, that a gentleman had been sent home who was not now in the House—he referred to Mr. Lilley, the Chief Justice of the colony. If he had been sent home he would have

done as he did in the matter of the steamers. When Queensland wanted steamers, and was running everywhere to see how the extortions of the New South Wales steamers could be avoided, Mr. Lilley went to Sydney and bought them. When he saw the necessity of State education being free, he made it, and came to the House and said "We have done it." That was what the Premier should have done. He could not go into the minute details of the contract as the leader of the Opposition had done. There was not a flaw as big as a pin's point that the hon. member had not seen in every clause; and he was surprised that a gentleman with the immense grasp of mind that the member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) possessed should follow after such small peddling. It was well known that the hon. member could grasp an immense question like this. What was the difference between the cost of the present mail contract and the £55,000, the subsidy for the contract before the Committee? It had been shown, and it had not been contradicted, that at present the cost was about £25,000, that the freight charged by the Sydney steamers came to about £4,000, and that it was very likely another £10,000 would have to be added, making altogether £39,000. What was the difference between this amount and the subsidy to be paid for the contract under discussion compared with the advantage of having their own service, and of being able to export and import direct to and from the old country, and compared with the influx of people and men of capital? The colony was languishing for the want of people and money. Supposing a company did come out in the wake of these great capitalists to open up the country by making roads on the land-grant principle, would they not bring out millions of money and thousands of men without costing a shilling to the colony? The hon. member (Mr. Dickson) had said that if such a thing happened he would offer strenuous opposition; but his opposition to the undertaking would be like that of a fly to a wheel. He was looking at the matter from a broad view—at what it would do. The country was in a frightful state, there was no work, and no price to be had for their cattle. If the frozen-meat scheme were successful—if, in fact, dead or live stock were to be exported, every man who owned a cow or a calf would be benefited. And what were their selectors and farmers? Were they not all squatters on a small scale? Was there a selector who was not the owner of cattle, and when cattle were up a few years ago were they not flourishing? What was the tax—the little difference between the two contracts? What effect would it have on the small settler if his cow which now only brought £2 would fetch £6? At the time of Napoleon's wars a cow in England might have realised £24; but at the conclusion of the war it would not realise more than £4. That comparison in some measure represented the present state of things in this colony in comparison with the past. What was to be done to relieve the colony from its stagnation, supposing the mail contract were rejected? Would not the introduction of capital necessarily give an impetus to every interest in the colony? The hon. member for Enoggera said he would offer the most strenuous opposition to a company coming here to open up our land and construct a continental railway.

Mr. DICKSON said the hon. member was misrepresenting him. What he said was that if the agreement in reference to the continental railway were as one-sided as the contract before the Committee, he would oppose it.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that, in other words, the hon. member would carry on the Government himself. For his own part, he would not oppose

the issue of land-grants to capitalists upon almost any terms the Government might propose, because he was convinced that that arrangement would lead to the investment of money upon the land, and money being sunk in the land the capitalists could not afford to let it lie idle. If only one man were settled upon the land he would contribute through the Custom House to the cost of governing the country. His great object since he first entered the House had been to facilitate the opening up of the country. The hon. member for Blackall would remember the stand he took in reference to the free selection and homestead clauses of the Act of 1868. These clauses had tended in a very great degree to the opening up of the country. The construction of railways by means of land grants would tend in the same direction, and if that policy were adopted he had hopes that the greater part of the colony would be settled before he went elsewhere to give an account of his proceedings in this world. By the rejection of the mail contract the selectors and working classes would receive a far more severe blow than that dealt them by the bad harvests of the past four years. Hon. gentlemen opposite all professed to advocate direct communication with England; but, when the opportunity for attaining that desirable end presented itself, what did they do? They went back upon their professed opinions. In the same way, they obstructed business while most vehemently professing to object to any obstruction. When they were charged with obstructing, they said that the Government were accountable for what they were doing because it would not fall into their way of thinking. But upon this point they were inconsistent, because they found another member of the Opposition saying that they were prepared to accept the full weight of the responsibility. He believed the Premier's visit to England would be productive of very beneficial results; and that if the programme which the hon. gentleman had sketched for the employment of capital were adopted, the colony, twelve months hence, would be in as flourishing a condition as ever it was.

Mr. MOREHEAD said hon. members would remember that upon the last occasion when a minority in that House adopted stonewalling tactics, it was, although numerically weak, representative of a majority of the electors. It was upon that ground that they petitioned the Governor for a dissolution of the House. It would be well for hon. members to know what were the facts now. He had somewhat hurriedly, but he believed correctly, prepared a list showing the number of electors represented by members on either side of the House, excepting the dual constituencies of North Brisbane, South Brisbane, Toowoomba, Kennedy, and Maryborough; and, taking it for granted that the members of those constituencies would vote one on the Government and the second on the Opposition side of the House, he found that members on the Government side represented 20,637 electors, whilst hon. members sitting in Opposition represented only 16,702. This gave the Government a majority of some 4,000. It might—and probably would be—urged that, although strong in numbers, members on the Government side did not represent as large an average as members on the Opposition side. Still, viewing the matter in that light, the Government were not very far behind, the Government averaging close upon 800 per head, while the Opposition averaged 879. He might mention that he had the honour to represent the largest single electorate in the colony—in other words, he represented 2,039 electors, or a greater number than that of some of the dual electorates. He found, for instance, that Enoggera

returned two of the noisiest members of the House for 1,837 electors. Ipswich, too, which went in for a peculiar style of representation, showed only 1,244 electors for two members. Rockhampton had 1,224 for two members; while Wide Bay, which also affected a nondescript style of representation, returned two members for 1,486 electors. The Government side, therefore, was not only numerically strong in the House, but also in the country—they actually represented a large majority of the electors of this colony. He did not believe there was a single member sitting on the Government side who would not be returned to the House upon this particular question. In company with several other members, he had within the past few days visited the district of Maranoa, and he had taken particular pains to ascertain the state of public opinion there with reference to the mail contract. He found that the district was unanimously in its favour, and that no people were more favourable to it than the residents of Roma. Not a single man to whom he spoke—and he spoke to many men of every class—was opposed to it. Now, he desired to know upon what ground, and by what right the Opposition persisted in their course of obstruction? He had shown that they could not claim the public sympathy, upon which the Opposition that forced on the dead-lock some years ago grounded its action. Then, he desired to know from hon. members opposite why they took this step at all? Did they desire in hampering the Government to inflict an injury upon Brisbane, and to a certain extent upon the entire colony? He could scarcely think they would lend themselves to such a course of action. The hon. member for Enoggera desired the Government to telegraph home again. He hoped the Government would do nothing of the sort. He regretted that the Government had telegraphed at all, and that the contract was not allowed to drop on the 6th August. He was sure that had that course been adopted indignation meetings would have been held from one end of Brisbane to the other to protest against the contract being abandoned. The contract would do more good to Brisbane than to almost any other portion of the colony; and he felt sure that some hon. members representing Brisbane and the suburbs would regret, not very long hence, the course they had taken upon the present occasion. For his own part, he protested against any insinuation that if he were sitting in Opposition he would for party purposes frustrate any good and useful measures which might be brought forward by the Government. Hon. members opposite knew very well that the colony would have a direct service, and the service proposed was the best obtainable at the present time. The Premier had received but scant justice, to say the least of it, for the trouble he had undergone in his endeavours to procure a mail service suitable to the colony. All that the hon. member had received in return was abuse, and the accusation that he had been influenced by motives of personal gain. But although hon. members opposite endeavoured to impress the public with the fact that the Premier was personally and privately interested in what he had done, they did not in their hearts believe that there was any foundation for the charge. Now that they saw the change public opinion was undergoing, they began to be frightened. They could not fail to notice that the opinion of Brisbane—the centre of the Opposition—was somewhat shaken. What wonder that they were beginning to feel afraid? He trusted that they would persevere in their tactics. He trusted that the mail contract would not be granted, at any rate not at the present time, and that the hon. gentlemen opposite might reap the whirlwind as they had sown the storm.

Mr. SIMPSON thought the hon. member for Stanley had misunderstood him when he represented him as having said that he did not think the mail contract an important matter. He certainly thought it was an important matter—very important indeed to the whole interests of the colony. What he said was, that more important matters were being delayed almost indefinitely. For instance, he thought the adoption of the principle of making railways by land grants was a far more important question. The difference between the cost of the proposed contract and the cost of bringing the mails by the south was so slight, that unless some overwhelming advantage was to be derived by the latter route they would be better off if they had a direct mail. The contract might not be of the best possible nature, but it seemed to him to be the best they were likely to get for years to come. It seemed to be pretty well a foregone conclusion that the contract would be lost—that would be inevitable. There was only one Government day between that time and the 6th of September, and if nothing was done in the meantime he presumed the negotiations would be ended, and possibly they would not have direct mail communication with England for years. He had not taken the trouble to express his opinions respecting the contract, as the question had been so amply discussed on both sides. He should content himself by expressing his belief that if the contract was lost members on the Government side of the House would not share in the blame.

Mr. BAILEY said he thought the Opposition were quite prepared to take their share of any blame which might result from the loss of the contract. Some hon. members seemed to have been indulging in a voyage to dreamland when talking about the contract. They had heard about the country being flooded with capitalists, labourers, and all sorts of good things. Let any dispassionate man examine the contract, and say that that was not figurative talk—a lot of nonsense entirely beside the question. What was the contract? First of all, they were told that it was not a mail contract—they had been told that over and over again. They had been told that it was not a frozen-meat contract, and they were really puzzled to know what it was. All that he could see in it was a promoters' company's contract—a contract by which certain gentlemen could float companies and thereby enrich themselves. He could see no sign of any good which would result from it. As a mail service it would be the slowest and worst in the Australian colonies. Mere figures of speech and anticipations of immense results from a miserable paltry contract of the kind would not mislead the country, and certainly would not mislead the members of the Opposition. They were quite willing to agree to a direct mail service, but let the contract be properly framed; let it not be one-sided, so that a band of contractors of whom they had no knowledge might reap the whole of the benefits. The whole proposition was so absurd that he was astonished at so much time being taken up in discussing it.

Mr. ARCHER said he should like to make some remarks in reply to what had fallen from the hon. member (Mr. Douglas). That hon. member had wonderful powers—he had a command of words which enabled him to go round any subject. The hon. member had been trying to persuade the people that the Opposition would not be responsible for the result of the discussion; he repudiated the idea that they were to be held to be blameable because they had resorted to stonewalling tactics. The hon. member's protest would, he thought, be of little use when the

people came to look at the matter calmly, as they undoubtedly would do. The hon. member's advice to the Government to use the iron-hand was probably one of the most revolutionary suggestions made in any parliament. Let them consider what the English Constitution was! Was it not its great glory that under it no such expedient had ever been resorted to? Did not the Government of last year experience the greatest difficulty, when they were obstructed and reobstructed by several Irish members, to pass a new rule which in a slight degree put on restraint? The hon. member talked a great deal about liberty—and fancy his actually proposing to the Government that they should adopt a system whereby discussion in the House would be stopped! The hon. member for North Brisbane partly admitted his agreement with the adoption of such a plan, as he said it might be applied when the obstruction was of a kind which was not justifiable. Who was to judge whether or not obstruction was justifiable? His idea was that obstruction was not justifiable when the majority of the people and the majority of representatives were in favour of any proposal which they desired to give effect to. There might be occasion when the adoption of the plan proposed by the hon. member would be justifiable—on great constitutional questions, especially: for instance, if it were proposed to alter the rules so as to stop debate there might be some reason in stonewalling. But on a question which involved the expenditure of £20,000 or £25,000 more than they were paying for the carriage of mails, it was a mere perversion of language to say that stonewalling was justifiable. Stonewalling threw a great responsibility on those who resorted to it; and why did it do so? Simply because it brought constitutional government into contempt. In the country whence their form of constitutional government sprang—all the countries having representative Chambers having copied from England—obstruction for the sake of preventing the expenditure of a few pounds had never been heard of. The proposed contract was perhaps a mighty one for the colony to undertake; but there was no ground for stonewalling it. The action of the Opposition would assuredly rebound on their own heads. He had never assisted in stonewalling, and hoped that he should never be obliged to do so; still, he must say that he was being well taught how to do it. If history repeated itself, and they had more stonewalling by minorities, violent means would have to be adopted to stop it—he suspected that by-and-bye it would come to fisticuffs. By the action of the Opposition, he believed the country would lose ten times as much as the proposed mail service would cost. The hon. member for North Brisbane talked about stonewalling being allowable only in extraordinary circumstances; but the hon. member did not attempt to show that there was anything extraordinary in connection with the proposed contract. Suppose that a better arrangement might have been made—was that such an extraordinary thing? He was one of those who thought that Governments never made the best of bargains—they usually got less for their money than private individuals did. He did not agree with the hon. member for Enoggera that the contract was a bad one; on the contrary, he thought it was the best which could be got considering the conditions. If they wanted a service two knots faster they would have to pay double for it. A great deal had been said about the feeling of the country—about who were in favour of the contract and who were against it. The hon. member for North Brisbane had endeavoured to show the constituencies which approved of the contract and those which disapproved of it.

He could inform the leader of the Opposition that if he carried out his inquiries further that he would discover there were gentlemen sitting on the Opposition side of the House whose constituents were in favour of the mail contract. He had just received a telegram from the Mayor of Rockhampton, informing him that former electors who voted for Mr. Paterson at the last election were now calling upon him to cease his obstruction and give his assistance to the Government; so that these matters, when examined into, showed that the statement that many members were prepared to vote for the contract whose constituents did not wish them to do so was not creditable. The fact remained that all who were working with the hon. gentleman were no more in favour of his present course of action than they were of the mail contract. Considering the position that the leader of the Opposition held in Queensland, and considering that it was a matter of probability that he would some day occupy the position which was now held by the Colonial Treasurer, and seeing, at all events, that it would be to his interest that there should be no decided changes in the way in which parliamentary government was carried on; seeing all this, he (Mr. Archer) was utterly surprised that the hon. gentleman should, on a question which involved the expenditure of such a small sum of money, have run the risk of such a change. The hon. gentleman would some day suffer from the lesson he had himself taught; and it would be of infinite advantage to the leader of the Opposition, and to the colony at large, if even now, at the eleventh hour, he were to confess that he had made a mistake, and let the matter go through without further obstruction.

Mr. FEEZ said that it was quite useless to talk about the mail contract any longer, for the subject had been worn threadbare. The question which had now arisen was a constitutional one—whether a minority, however well organised, was to stand in the road of a powerful and compact majority. It was quite clear to him that the public opinion which had been so much quoted by hon. members on the other side of the House justifying their action was nothing like so strong as it was said to be by the members of the Opposition against the mail contract. The representative of North Brisbane no doubt felt flattered at the homage paid to him by a large portion of the population of Brisbane, but he had been utterly misled in supposing that their opinions were the same as his own upon this subject. It was impossible that hon. members opposite would believe for a moment that the majority which was so unanimous upon this question did not believe in the mail contract, or that they would advocate a course which they were not fully convinced was for the benefit of the country. The sincerity of hon. members on the Ministerial side was beyond question, and they believed in the contract because they felt it would be for the benefit of the country at large and not a contract for the southern section of the colony only. The fact was the Opposition were placed in a difficulty, and wanted to shift the responsibility from their own shoulders and say that the Ministry should be responsible for obstruction; but that would not do. It had been said that the mail contract was one that would have fatal consequences to the colony; but where the fatal consequences were he quite failed to see. As to the subsidy, if the whole thing were analysed, the amount of money was £30,000, and that was really a trifle when they considered the hundreds that were thrown away right and left on things that were of no earthly benefit to anybody. Besides, the colony had been spending money year after year for mail contracts. What was now asked was simply

a small addition to the amount previously paid; and a very small amount it was when they considered the prospective improvement to the commerce and general welfare of the colony, especially with regard to immigrants—for it stood to reason that if immigrants came out to this country at all they would rather come in steamers than sailing vessels. If the contract failed because of the present obstruction, the Opposition only could be made responsible for the consequences. The Opposition had contended that they were the representatives of the majority of the people. They might represent the majority of the community of Brisbane, but that did not justify them in saying that they represented the majority of the whole of the colony. It had been proved by the hon. member for the Mitchell that on the Ministerial side, not only was there an actual majority of members, but that they represented the numerical majority of the country. Under those circumstances, it would be only right for the minority gracefully to give in. He believed that if an angel from heaven came down and drew up a contract, and proposed it from that side of the House, it would be opposed by the other side. It was now no longer a question of right or conviction, it was simply a question of obstruction. Because it had been proposed by the present Ministry, and the present majority in power, therefore the contract was to be set aside. On that side, they who had been called the Conservative party had been always the representatives of the people of the whole country, while the Opposition had only been the representatives of the metropolis and its suburbs. The present Ministry was composed of men who represented every class of the community, and that in itself justified them in insisting upon resisting obstruction, seeing that they believed the contract would be for the good of the country. It was also their duty to resist the present tactics of the Opposition—to prevent such a frightful and unconditional example as would take place of a minority obstructing a powerful majority on such a question as this. For himself, he believed the Opposition had made up their minds to obstruct everything, so long as it originated from the Ministerial side. Since the hon. member for Blackall had alluded to a telegram from Rockhampton, he (Mr. Feez) might also allude to it, and express his astonishment that the representative of Rockhampton, who had also received it, had not thought proper to lay it before the House, because a telegram of that kind showing that the people of Rockhampton were not represented by their member was of considerable importance. He (Mr. Feez) trusted the Opposition would see the serious consequences that would arise by their refusing to accept the contract—a contract which had been proved by the majority to be for the good of the country.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said that, with regard to what had fallen from the last speaker, he was no doubt in possession of a telegram which the hon. member thought he should have disclosed to the House. He did receive a telegram as he was going down to tea, but since that he had received another, and, strange to say, the second telegram completely and absolutely neutralized the first. These telegrams were addressed to himself, and contained no request to make known their contents to the House, and he had yet to learn that any telegram he received from any of his constituents was to be brought before the members of the House in order that they might be made acquainted with its contents. Such a request was, to say the least, very improper. Members on the other side seemed to know all that was passing; at all events, it appeared so in this case, as members on the other side knew of these tele-

grams, and something of their contents, before they had come into his own hands. It was strange that at least one hon. member opposite knew of them, and mentioned to him that certain telegrams had been despatched to him which were actually not received, and had not been expected by him at that moment. He understood that during the few minutes he was absent from the House in the library, the hon. member for Blackall stated, in effect, that he (Mr. Paterson) was not representing his constituents by his action on the question of this mail service?

Mr. ARCHER: Just so.

Mr. PATERSON said that to that he could only reply that he had the utmost assurance that he did represent the great body of the electors of Rockhampton on this question. He repeated that this was his sincere belief, and that he had a most tangible assurance of it ever since the matter was mooted in the House by the Premier. He did not like at any time to trouble the House with the operation of any question upon his own mind anterior to its being brought before the House; but he felt bound on this occasion to say, what could be proved by his written communications with Rockhampton, that he was adverse to this mail service before the matter was brought forward for discussion, and that he now saw no reason to alter his opinion. At that time he was of opinion that his constituents generally would be in favour of this contract, and he thought it right to intimate his views on the question to them anterior to discussion in Parliament. That was on record; he gave the matter his most serious thought, and the resolutions he arrived at then he had seen no reason to disturb or alter after the discussion on the subject that had taken place. He had only to refer to what he had said on the matter on a previous occasion. His first objection was that it was an antiquated contract as to time. It did not commend itself to his common-sense as a nine-knot service. Anything he had said about the contract he had always endeavoured to state in the most respectful terms: he thought that members on either side of the House, as well as members of the Government, would surely admit the right of members on both sides to form opinions of their own. He claimed the right equally with every member of the Assembly to think and judge for himself, and if he exercised his discretion in a way antagonistic to the interests of the colony, and the interests of his own constituency in particular, he alone was answerable, and he was prepared to take the responsibility of his action, and receive either the approval or condemnation of the electors of Rockhampton at the proper time. He thought the Premier had made a great mistake in leaving Great Britain with only one proposal. The hon. gentleman should have brought alternative proposals with him—he should have brought a proposal for a nine-knot service at one sum, for a ten-knot service at another, and for an eleven-knot service at another, and so on. Had the hon. gentleman done that, it would have enabled hon. members to exercise a discretion and adopt that which they considered best for the colony. He thought it had been an error of judgment on the part of the hon. gentleman to only bring a hard-and-fast contract which, it appeared, could not be altered at all. When hon. members on his side of the Committee first addressed themselves to the question, he could assure the Government, in corroboration of what had been already stated by himself before, that very few of them approached the subject without believing that some modification of the terms of the contract would be allowed. That was his feel-

ing, at any rate, and he was sorry to learn that the contract was built upon such very hard-and-fast lines as to admit of no possibility of any modification. He would, whilst on his feet, like to make one or two remarks in reference to a statement made by the Premier as to the practice of the British Government in relation to steam subsidies. The reason he had not done so before was that he could not obtain the material with which to work out the objections he had to that statement. In order that hon. members might understand what he referred to, it would be necessary for him to read from *Hansard* of the 28th July, in which the Premier was reported to speak as follows:—

“Hon. members should bear in mind that in the case of some countries England has found it profitable to give up the practice of maintaining special mail packets. The speed and frequency of other lines of steamers had become such that England found she could do her business on better terms, and now mails were put on board any steamer at Liverpool and the other ports and were carried at a certain rate. Steamers belonging to various lines were thereby employed, and they were all subsidised at the same rate. By reference to the report of the British Postmaster-General for 1879, it would be found that, while the carriage of mails to the United States had cost £51,873, the amount received for postage had been only £30,000, leaving a loss to the British Government of over £21,000. These were mails which the British Government got carried under the best possible conditions. In the case of countries somewhat similarly situated to our own the same results were found. To the East Indies, China, and Japan, mails were carried from England by the British-India and the P. and O. Companies for subsidies of £430,000. The amount received in postages was £90,000, and the Indian Government contributed £107,500, leaving a loss of £232,500 to the English Government. An examination of the whole list of contracts”—

He wished hon. members to pay particular attention to this part of the hon. gentleman's speech—

“entered into by the British Government would show that in all cases, with the exception of those which he had mentioned, the postal services were carried on at a considerable loss to the Government. What reason was there, therefore, for the statement that there was no English precedent for this form of subsidy? There was no line of steamers coming to the Australian colonies that carried mails without subsidy, with the exception of the Orient line, and that company, as soon as it had made its service a want to the people of the colony, would get—as they deserved to get—a subsidy. He had no doubt that the speed and regularity of their steamers would eventually be recognised by the Colonial and the British Government, and that they would get what they were now working for—a subsidy. With that exception, no instance had been shown of a mail service between any country and England being carried on without a subsidy.”

As to the latter remark of the hon. gentleman, he showed that in all cases there was a subsidy; so that the latter part of his remarks was not borne out by those which preceded them. The gist of all those remarks of the hon. gentleman was to this effect, and it was one which misled him (Mr. Paterson) and other hon. members—that the British Government lost money in respect to all their postal contracts, the loss in one instance being £232,500 odd. Now hon. members were led to think that it was the policy of the British Government to make certain losses on certain mail contracts, and that, therefore, the Committee should consent to the proposed contract, notwithstanding it would cause a loss as between the cost of the contract and the cost of carrying letters by other routes. He, however, would point out the difference between the practice at home and that here. The estimated receipts for 1880-81 from the Post Office Department here were £50,000 and from the Telegraph Department £36,000, or a total gross revenue from both of £86,000. The probable expenditure of both departments was £175,000; therefore, at the present time the operations of the postal-and-telegraph department resulted in a loss of 100 per cent. of the whole revenue: that

was to say, that the gross estimated revenue was £86,000, and the expenditure was £175,000. The total revenue of the Post Office was only £50,000, every penny of which, strange to say, was absorbed by carrying the inland mails: thus everything outside of the inland mails was conducted at the public expense and out of taxation. But what were the circumstances of the British Post Office? In the year 1840, which was the first year of the penny-postage system, the gross revenue of the Post Office was £1,359,466—the net revenue and absolute profit to the Crown being £500,789; and ever since then, so far as he could gather from official records, there had always been a surplus; in fact, the policy of the British Government had always been to render the postal department a source of revenue—subject, of course, to giving the most ample facilities for postal communication with all parts of the world. They had never allowed that, however, to interfere with making the department a source of revenue. Last year, ending March 31st, the gross postal revenue of Great Britain was £6,274,450, and the cost of management £3,840,000, leaving a net revenue of £2,434,374, or more than two and a-quarter millions. Such being the case, he would ask whether it was fair that the colony should be placed in the position of paying large postal subsidies, the working of which could not be made good from their postal and telegraph revenues? The British Government were justified in making losses in certain cases, because they had a postal revenue on which to found that expenditure, and because, after all the losses they made on certain contracts, there was still left a total net revenue of two and a-quarter millions last year. He mentioned those facts as being ample grounds for supporting the stand he had taken with regard to the proposed mail service. There were several grounds for objection—the speed was not sufficient, the time was too long, and the contract contained within itself the elements of failure. The great bulk of the trade of the colony was at the southern end of it; and, as he had said on a former occasion, the commerce of the colony might be represented by a triangle, the apex of which was at the Gulf of Carpentaria, and it was therefore necessary that they should have vessels of good speed. If it was possible that the colony could afford £70,000 a-year for a nine-knot service, they should go a little further and start at ten knots; going a little further two or three years hence, and so on, as they were able to avail themselves of the improvements that were being yearly made in steam communication. Economy of fuel had been achieved to an enormous extent, and, as he saw that at Newcastle coals were only 8s. a-ton free on board steamships, the consumption of a few tons extra per day could not make much difference. Surely, in a colony like this, they should not encourage such a—he would say donkey-cart service. It was not even a one-horse service. It was not the speed of modern colliers that were being launched and worked in the old country! What he wished to see was a first-class service for the colony—that was the term the Premier had used in his telegram from England to the Cabinet—a first-class service. But he would ask how could the hon. gentleman expect any man of common-sense to accept as a first-class service, the service now under discussion? A first-class service meant fifteen or sixteen knots an hour. Surely it should at least be the policy of this colony to start at the point of speed which other colonies were forsaking! Surely they could take the cast-off garments of the other colonies, and let them start at, say, eleven knots. The reason he should like to see something of this kind done was because he was exceedingly anxious to see

a first-class mail service from the United Kingdom to Queensland. He would ask hon. members to follow up the course of trade—these were matters of detail which had not been put before the House in the way they might have been. They had had no tabulated statement of the prospective exports and imports by the proposed line, and no information as to the probable rates of freight that would be charged, or whether it was likely this line would run at as low rates as other companies. But, as he said, let them follow out the course of trade: Supposing one of these mail steamers left Brisbane this morning, and wool began arriving to-morrow in large quantities, would squatters consent to allow their wool to lie in Brisbane or Rockhampton twenty-five or twenty-six days, until the next steamer left, while they could send it down to Sydney in two or three days, and it would be half-way to England in the time it would be detained in Brisbane? Nothing they could possibly conceive could take place in the working of this contract which would induce men to reserve their shipments in that way from one month to another, more especially as it was a fifty-six days' service, as he understood from the Premier. This was one idea that occurred from following up the workings of the trade of this colony inwards and outwards; and many others like it would crop up. He had referred to the point of speed as being very unsatisfactory, but financially the contract was a great deal worse. They had not yet been shown how this service was to be paid for, or in a concrete form what were the advantages they were to derive from it; and he said if they were to have a speculation—if speculative thoughts were to incite them to go into this matter—and he was not saying that they should not to a certain extent go in that direction—then let them apply all the conditions that would be likely to bring about a satisfactory result to their speculation. Those conditions must be higher speed than was mentioned in the contract, in order to place the line as nearly as possible in a position to compete with lines which were now existing, and would shortly also exist. He was certain that within the next few years the Orient Company would despatch a weekly boat from Plymouth to the colonies. They began not long since with a boat every three months; not long after they ran one every six weeks, subsequently they ran one every month, and now they were running fortnightly. All that had been done within a few years, and he had no doubt that within a similar period in the future that company would be running a steamer weekly between Plymouth and the colonies. As to the cost of the service, his constituents would more readily understand it when he stated that it would take the whole of the Customs receipts at Rockhampton to pay the annual subsidy, direct and indirect. They were told at the beginning of the session that it would be the policy of the Ministry to rapidly carry on improvements in the harbours and rivers on the coast of Queensland. He was very glad to hear that information, but he was at a loss to understand how it would benefit Rockhampton to make these expensive improvements in the river, if these vessels were to absorb the whole trade of the port, which would be shipped in Keppel Bay—because no company would allow such large vessels to go up the rivers on the coast, the loss of time would be too great. There was therefore an inconsistency in that—the policy of the improvement of harbours and rivers was not in consonance with the hope that this line would absorb all the trade of our ports. Now, as to speed, he would conclude by reading an extract from a late paper, which said—

“A QUICK PASSAGE.—The Peninsular and Oriental Company's new steamship *Ravenna* arrived in the Thames on Sunday, having made the passage from the Clyde in

49½ hours, giving a speed of 14·6 knots per hour. This is by far the quickest passage on record, being about three hours less than that made by the *Rotomahana* last year. Both vessels are built and engined by the same firm, Messrs. Denny, of Dumbarton. The dimensions of the *Ravenna* are—length, 330 ft.; breadth, 40 ft.; and depth 29 ft. Tonnage, 3,310 gross; nominal horsepower, 700.”

He could not, of course, hope that Queensland could, at present, think of subsidising a service which had such splendid vessels as the one he had just mentioned; but he thought they ought to begin, if they began at all, with a service that would attract to it a large export and import trade on the merits of the service itself. This service he considered had not that merit, and, therefore, he thought it was most advantageous to the interests of the whole of Queensland that it should not be adopted, and if they had a service at all it should be a better one than that proposed.

Mr. STEVENSON said the hon. member who had just sat down claimed the right of having his own opinion, and evidently wished to concede to other members the right to form their opinion upon the merits of any question; but he (Mr. Stevenson) did not see how the hon. member could reconcile that with the position he had taken up of assisting in the stonewalling tactics adopted by the Opposition, and practically saying that the minority should rule the majority in regard to this question. The two things were entirely inconsistent. Then the hon. gentleman said he represented his constituents in taking the course he had adopted in regard to the question; and he (Mr. Stevenson) joined issue with him on that point. As far as he (Mr. Stevenson) knew public opinion in Rockhampton—and he knew Rockhampton pretty well and had a good deal of communication with that part of the country—he could say he was perfectly satisfied that the hon. member did not represent his constituents at the present moment. By the mail which came in that morning he (Mr. Stevenson) had received several letters from Rockhampton from gentlemen who had always supported that side of the House, and of course their opinion was in favour of the Premier pushing the contract through and condemning the conduct of the Opposition in trying to oppose it. He did not attach very much importance to that; but he had also received a business letter from a member of an influential firm in Rockhampton, who had always supported the Opposition side of the House, and done all he could to try and put the Liberal party in power, and he wound up his letter by saying he could not possibly see what justification the Opposition had for opposing this contract—that he could not see how any sensible man in Brisbane, and more especially in the northern portion of the colony, could oppose it. So much for the hon. member's statement that he represented his constituents. He might represent a few followers of his, but he did not represent public feeling in Rockhampton at the present time. The hon. gentleman had talked a great deal about his experience in Rockhampton, and as to whether squatters would allow their wool to lie there twenty-five or twenty-six days, and so forth. The hon. member was not at all inexperienced about Rockhampton trade; a good many people knew a good deal about his experience in Rockhampton trade, and he knew perfectly well that when he talked about wool lying there twenty-five or twenty-six days he talked utter nonsense. What had been the case during the last two or three years with regard to the shipment of wool from Rockhampton? Those who had the real interests of the North at heart, and who had tried to benefit it by encouraging direct shipments of wool from Rockhampton, had found that they had to abandon it simply because there was no certainty when ships would

start. He was not singular in regard to this; he knew others who had had the same experience as himself. He had had wool lying on board ships at Rockhampton for as long as five months, and he often had it two, three, and four months. He had commenced shipping his wool direct some years ago, and he never shipped a bale through Sydney until last year. After trying Brisbane and finding it no better, he was compelled with great reluctance to send his wool to Sydney. That was the experience of shippers in the North; and yet the hon. gentleman talked about squatters allowing their wool to remain there for twenty-five or twenty-six days. The hon. member knew much better than that, if he chose to tell it to the House. Any northern or central squatter, with the interests of the districts at heart, would be glad to allow his wool to remain two months for direct shipment rather than send it to Sydney. All that went to prove what had been said over and over again, and by the hon. member (Mr. King) the other night—that the trade of the colony was drifting into southern channels, simply because there was no guarantee that they could get their wool away within a reasonable time. He did not intend to assist the Opposition in their stonewalling tactics by going into the merits and demerits of the question. His object was simply to show the nonsense talked by the hon. member (Mr. Paterson) when he talked about the colony going in for a fifteen or sixteen knot service. The colony was not in a financial position to do anything of the kind, and the hon. member ought to know that such a service did not exist anywhere. The hon. member's object seemed to be to justify himself to his constituents by making a long rambling speech for the sake of having it reported in *Hansard*; but he was glad to think that it would not go down with the Rockhampton electors, and that the hon. member and his colleague (Mr. Rea) would be brought down to their proper level at the next election. The question had been discussed largely, and nothing could be said further with regard to its real merits; but he wished to say that if the southern part of the colony could only see things in their true light they would support the mail contract. Many in the South really believed that the contract would benefit the colony, but simply because it had been brought forward by that side of the House, and had been stigmatised as a frozen-meat service, they looked upon that as a sufficient justification to stonewall it. He believed that in six months' time the Opposition would regret the stand they had taken.

Mr. PATERSON said he never suggested a fifteen-knot mail service for Queensland; and so far as he was personally concerned, he might state that even if the contract had been brought forward by the Liberal party it would have met with his equally strong opposition.

Mr. SIMPSON said he sympathised with the hon. member for Rockhampton in his objection to telegrams, and held that it was an undesirable thing that every telegram from every constituent should be read in the House; but if telegrams were objectionable, so also were one-sided public meetings, of which there had been so many trying to intimidate the House and pretending to represent the public opinion of the colony. Neither the telegrams nor the one-sided meetings ought to be brought forward in the House. When a man was elected he represented his constituency until in the natural course of events Parliament was dissolved or expired by effluxion of time; and it was quite outside the question to bring influence to bear upon hon. members after they were once elected. When the hon. member (Mr. Paterson) said that because the post and telegraph departments did not pay, therefore they should have no mail service to England, it was most absurd.

It might be a sound argument for increasing the rate of inland postages—one means of doing which would be, as he had said previously, to make newspapers pay postage. Far more than a moiety of the amount referred to by the hon. member was the cost of carrying newspapers, and if the mails consisted of letters only they could be carried for perhaps one-third the money. He should not be sorry to see the inland postage increased. When the hon. member compared the receipts of a small, paltry colony like Queensland with the receipts of Great Britain he could not tell what he was thinking about. But if the hon. member had gone a little further with his figures he would have found that £55,000 of receipts for Queensland would represent nine and a-half millions, instead of the six millions collected for England; so that really the receipts in Queensland were half as much again per head of population as the receipts of England.

Mr. FRASER said he had always understood that public meetings were open to all sides. They were not restricted to one party, and certainly persons holding different opinions had an opportunity of putting them forward. He could not understand what was meant by one-sided public meetings, especially when they were held in the open air and were open to all. The argument from the other side seemed to be that, provided the Ministry of the day had decided upon a certain thing as being best for the country, the Opposition were bound to accept it, whatever their own opinions might be. But by doing so they would be abandoning one of their principal functions. He was not prepared to justify on all occasions the course the Opposition were now pursuing, but such occasions would arise, and were even anticipated by the rules of the House. From their own point of view, the Opposition were amply justified in the stand they were taking. Hon. members on the other side expressed two irreconcilable opinions on the subject of the contract. One hon. member told them that it was one of the most important questions that had occupied the attention of the legislature since Separation, and another described it as a very insignificant one. Which was the correct view? The Opposition maintained that it was very important, and they acted accordingly. To show that the Opposition were not singular in their objections, he would ask what the Colonial Secretary himself thought of the matter? Not further back than January last, when the hon. gentleman wished to renew the mail contract with the present company, he prescribed that the contract should be for five years. That was exactly what the Opposition desired—their chief objection being to the length of the term of the contract. The Colonial Secretary next prescribed that the speed should be ten knots an hour, which also coincided with the views of the Opposition. Nothing could have transpired since January last to alter the hon. gentleman's opinion, and it showed that he was fully alive to the importance of the very points which the Opposition were now urging. As to the obstruction, he felt convinced that they were justified in doing so as far as they possibly could; the responsibility for doing so had been forced upon them by the Government. He sympathised with the views taken by the hon. member for Stanley, and believed in nearly all he had said on the question. The colony was in a very depressed condition, and they ought to do all they could to revive its prosperity. He admitted, also, with the hon. member, that if they could get a stream of immigrants and capital into the country it was desirable to do so. He failed to see how the passing of the contract would effect that. According to the version of some hon. members, this was a panacea which would cure and correct all the ills from which

the country was at present suffering; but he could not see any connection between the two things. Then it was advocated as an assistance to our system of immigration; but the same means of immigration which had been successfully employed were still within reach. No Government that had held office in the colony had ever before had such golden opportunities of bringing so many people to the colony as this Government had. It was a notorious fact that during the last two or three years hundreds and thousands of men with capital had been anxious to know where to emigrate to; but not the slightest effort appeared to have been made to tempt them by offering easy access to those illimitable areas of what hon. members were told was the most magnificent land under the sun. And all the time they had been sending a quarter of a million of money out of the colony for breadstuffs. That did not evidence any great degree of earnestness on the part of the Government to promote the best and most permanent interests of the country. Again, the Opposition were told that in opposing this they were standing very much in their own light so far as the interests of Brisbane were concerned. He imagined that the merchants and shippers of Brisbane understood their interests, and he was persuaded that the great majority of them were decidedly opposed to this contract; nor could their opposition be wondered at when the effect which had followed from entering into a contract for the carriage of steel rails was taken into consideration. Any importer would testify that instead of getting goods by sailing vessel delivered for 25s. per ton as before he had now to pay 35s., because of the heavy ballast trade being all in the hands of one party who thereby obtained a monopoly. That had been the effect of one contract, and the House was justified in hesitating before entering into another. A great deal had been said about the importance of the shipping of the north, but it appeared to him that more importance had been attached to it than its magnitude warranted. According to the statistics for 1878 he found that the whole imports to the colony during that year had been £3,206,822 in value; from Rockhampton southwards the value was £2,737,636, leaving for the whole of the ports north of Rockhampton a value of only £469,166, or about one seventh of the total imports to the colony. It therefore seemed that undue importance had been attached to this service on account of the trade with the northern ports.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. member (Mr. Fraser) stated that the people of Brisbane knew their own affairs very well, and that the majority of them were in favour of rejecting this contract. Perhaps they might also be in favour of the policy of obstruction which was being adopted by the Opposition. He had never seen any such intelligence on the part of the people of Brisbane. He had always opposed the making of a railway from Rockhampton as a piece of log-rolling which would do—as he believed it had done—greater injury to Brisbane than any other thing that had been done in the colony. It would be remembered that plans had been laid on the table, and tenders called, for extending two of the main trunk lines—from Townsville, from Rockhampton—and that tenders had been called for the extension of the southern trunk-line also. The extension of the southern line would have had the effect of bringing a reasonable portion of the up-country traffic to Brisbane; but what did the Brisbane members do? They did not insist upon that line being extended, although anyone could see that the business of Brisbane was leaving that port and going to the North through the fault of the people. What was the trade of Brisbane now compared with what it was before that log-rolling railway was made from Rockhampton? The trade of the

northern ports had increased, and if it went on increasing at the same rate he should not be surprised to hear of the capital of the colony being removed to a more central position—in fact, he could tell hon. members that it was on the cards.

Mr. FRASER: It has been so for a long time.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he was a southern man, and the interests of Brisbane were as dear to him as those of Ipswich. He did not see why Ipswich should not in time become the west end of Brisbane, as Paramatta was to Sydney. The traffic which Brisbane was now losing would go to Rockhampton, and there was a probability, from the way that port was increasing, that within a few years it would be the capital of the colony. He attached great importance to the ratification of this contract on account of the farmers and small settlers of the colony. When his colleague (Mr. Kellett) brought forward a motion to encourage the meat-curing trade he supported that proposition on the principle that it would assist the poor farmers. During the past season they had not been able to grow any crops, and if the few head of cattle they possessed were much reduced in price they would be placed in a very awkward position. If the contract were agreed to the frozen-meat trade would be assisted, the price of cattle would be raised, and the prospects of the small settler would be greatly improved. The squatters could stand the bad season much better than the small settlers could, and therefore they were not so greatly interested. At a most critical time the legislation of the country was being delayed. The last contract for the construction of the railway to Roma would be completed in a short time, and Mr. Bashford had stated to him that he had on his hand about 250 men who would be out of work about the 6th of next month. What was to become of those men? Parliament had been in session eight weeks and nothing had been done. Some of the branch lines might have been at work now—plans, specifications, and books of reference of which had been laid on the table—but instead of allowing something to be done to relieve the starving people, who were leaving the colony whenever they could find the passage money, the Opposition spent night after night in stonewalling a measure which would involve an extra expenditure in excess of the present amount of mail subsidy of £20,000 to £25,000. One said the mail service was too slow, and another made some other objections. Talking like that was all rubbish: if a man had not the price of a mansion he would be very glad of a cottage; and if he had not the price of a horse he had to walk. On the same principle, a slow contract had been accepted because the colony could not afford to pay for a faster one. But the speed of the service was not, in his eyes, so important a matter as the advantages which would result from the increased price of stock. He had given his opinion in his own rough way. Seeing that to-morrow would be the last day upon which he should be able to speak on the subject, he would not allow the occasion to pass without placing on record the fact that he was so much in favour of the contract as to believe that it was the best proposition that had ever been brought before the House. He would also say that he had thorough confidence in the ability, sincerity, and wisdom of the present Ministry to carry out the contract. He had said all he could in favour of it, and should give his vote also, if the hon. members on the obstruction side of the House would be kind enough to allow it to go to a division.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he wished to say a word in consequence of certain observations made by

the hon. member for Stanley more than once during the evening. The hon. member pointed out the distress existing among the selectors, and the great advantage that would result to them from securing a market for their stock in consequence of the establishment of a frozen-meat trade; and the hon. member asked what alternative the Opposition proposed? If the establishment of this line of steamers would be the means of establishing a frozen-meat trade he (Mr. Griffith) did not believe anyone would object to it, but he saw no connection between the proposed service and the frozen-meat trade. The hon. member for Blackall clearly pointed out the other night that this contract had nothing to do with the frozen-meat trade, which, the hon. member said, would be established quite independently of this project. The hon. member for Blackall pointed out so clearly that the service would not benefit the frozen-meat industry, that he was sorry the hon. member did not hear his speech.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I did hear it. The hon. member said nothing of the kind.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. member could not have followed the hon. gentleman (Mr. Archer), or if he did he could not have comprehended him. After he had spoken he (Mr. Griffith) followed, and he remembered congratulating the hon. member on having pointed out that the mail service would not affect the frozen-meat trade. It was those misapprehensions they were anxious to dispel. If the hon. member could get it believed abroad that they were trying to prevent a contract passing which would benefit the selector—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You are doing your best to stop it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that if the statement got abroad that they wished to prevent the selectors disposing of their stock, an injurious and unjust impression would be produced against the Opposition.

The PREMIER said that when he moved the House into committee to consider the contract, he remembered perfectly well that he was congratulated upon the simplicity of the question as he put it forward. He considered the contract would be advantageous to the colony, and he spoke with the candour he was bound to use on such an occasion. In what he said he was met by the leader of the Opposition, and especially by the hon. member for Enoggera. They raised the cry, not only in the House but throughout the colony, of "The frozen-meat service," and that was constantly for three weeks the cry raised against the Government. The Opposition first tried to raise the working classes against the possessors of flocks and herds in the colony, and having succeeded in that they were content. And now, how were they brought round? The member for Blackall pointed out that if the twelve or thirteen ships that would sail under the contract took frozen meat they could not take more than one butcher in Rockhampton was working off at the present time, and he asked, therefore, how it could be that the members on the Government side of the House could be induced to band themselves in the closest bonds of self-interest for such a small object. This being said, the hon. gentleman, the leader of the Opposition, turned round and said, "I told you so all along; it is not a frozen-meat service at all!" This was the kind of argumentation the hon. gentleman had used from the first, but he had not succeeded in putting the member for Stanley in the wrong. That hon. member knew perfectly well what a sound argument was, and the people of the colony were now seeing what, but for the leader of the Opposition, they would have seen many weeks ago—namely, that nobody would benefit more

by this mail contract than the selectors of East and West Moreton. He (the Premier) had proved all this when he first brought the matter forward, and should not weary the Committee by repeating it. He had, indeed, repeated all those arguments again and again, and he was sorry to see that the member for Rockhampton, although he had sat in the House every night, had not even yet realised the common-sense aspect of the thing. He (the Premier) was sorry that hon. member was not at present in the House, because he would like to tell him of the position in which he stood with his constituents. The hon. member for Rockhampton commenced by saying that the contract was an antiquated service. This was an argument that had been used again and again—namely, that it was only a service for nine knots an hour, and that had he (the Premier) done his business properly while he was in London, he would have taken alternative tenders for eleven and nine knots. He did attend to his business properly while he was in England, and he did get alternative tenders, but he knew too much what was due to his position as Treasurer of the colony to consider the eleven-knot tender that was proposed. He found that he could not get a contract for an eleven-knot service for less than £95,000 a-year. Was he to come out with an alternative tender of that kind in his pocket merely to suit the scruples of the hon. member for Rockhampton? Let the Committee understand plainly what this service was. It was a mail service which delivered letters in Brisbane two days after the quickest time by which they could be delivered by the P. and O. Company. That was supposing everything worked smoothly in the overland service in Victoria and New South Wales, and supposing the A.S.N. Company would be ready the moment the letters arrived to tranship them, and bring them on. Suppose he had gone to the additional expense of getting an eleven-knot service at an expense of £95,000, he should have landed those mails in Brisbane just exactly three days sooner, so that he would have spent twice the money to get a service that would confer an advantage so slight that it would be inappreciable to any practical man. Some hon. members had persistently kept in the background the fact that this was a mail service which secured eleven knots an hour between London and Singapore, with a minimum of 220 miles a day after that. It would be exceeded, he believed. There was every probability that it would be exceeded, but, at any rate, they secured eleven knots from England to Singapore and back, the slow portion of the route being between Singapore and Brisbane. In order to get a quick service between Singapore and Brisbane which was to secure to Queensland three days more time (the steamers running through), they were bound to have the speed on the steamers between London and Singapore the same as between Singapore and Brisbane. In order, therefore, to secure this advantage he would have had to make an arrangement for the ships to run at the rate of eleven knots an hour; but the advantage to the colony was not so great that it would be worth the additional subsidy for either mails or cargo. It was of great importance to the colony—and this was a great point of the mail service—that the same ship that left London should come to Brisbane, but he could not get it as a nine-knot service except at a most exorbitant figure. He was bound, therefore, to the maximum speed of nine or nine and a-half knots an hour, in order to get such a subsidy as he thought the colony could afford. The result was that he got the nine-knot service. The only disadvantage, seeing that they had the advantage of an eleven-knot service between London and Singapore, was that there was

a slow portion between Singapore and Brisbane, which, as he had shown, would only amount to three days between London and Brisbane. Would any hon. member, therefore, stand up and say that he ought to have sacrificed the great amount of money required to make up the subsidy for an eleven-knot service? It certainly could not have been done for less than from £95,000 to £100,000. The leader of the Opposition said this evening that when he first began to consider the contract there was an evident disposition on his side of the House to improve it; but he (the Premier) appealed to any hon. member who liked to tell the truth, whether the slightest manifestation to study the contract on its real merits was ever exhibited on the other side of the House? Everybody knew the hon. member's ability to make improvements in Bills; they knew that his ability in manufacturing amendments was greater than that of any other member in the House. His desire to make amendments was so strong that he (Mr. McIlwraith) believed that there had never been a Bill brought before the House, however small, that did not provoke the hon. member into making some, either to make or mar. He had seen him bring in as many as 150 amendments to one Bill. The hon. gentleman now said that he was prepared to show by his notes that he was actually prepared to move amendments to this contract when it came before the House. He (the Premier) quite believed him. They had gone very little into the contract before the hon. gentleman gave himself up, body and soul, to the most rabid spirits on his own side, and he had been their tool ever since. The hon. gentleman knew now perfectly well what he had been doing, and that his punishment was coming on as surely as he stood before him. Perhaps the most astounding doctrine ever put before the House was that propounded by the member for Maryborough, who confessed that it was unaccountable that the obstruction was allowed to be carried on. He himself disclaimed any responsibility, and said the Government ought to be responsible for the position of affairs, because they had the power to use the iron-hand. In effect he said, "We are miserable sinners—you are strong men; do get us back to the paths of virtue!" The hon. gentleman said that the Government had a strong majority, and suggested that whenever he (the Premier) got the Speaker into the chair he might put down the iron-hand and prevent the recurrence of such scenes of obstruction as had been witnessed during the past few weeks. Having that power the hon. gentleman said it was the Premier's duty, as leader of the House, to put it into operation. This argument was one of the most miserable he ever heard introduced on the floor of the House;—to say nothing of the hon. gentleman completely ignoring the fundamental principles of parliamentary government, to apply an argument of that kind to the intelligence of hon. members was an insult to their common-sense. What the hon. gentleman said was, "We admit that we are doing wrong, but it is your business to restrain us and prevent us." Mr. Edward Kelly might come forward with exactly the same argument, and say to the Government of Victoria, "You are a strong Government; you can employ lots of police; you have a majority; why have you not kept me in the paths of virtue, and prevented me from becoming a criminal?" It was certainly strange that a member with the experience of the hon. member for Maryborough should beg the Government to put an end to this obstruction by using the iron-hand. He (the Premier) hoped it was not a symptom of what they were going to have when the hon. gentleman got into power. But he did not think there was much fear of that, for the man who did not know his

own mind half-an-hour together would always make the mildest of Ministers. He had a few words to say about the cry which had been repeated over and over, that he had made the ratification of the contract a party question. How did he make it? When he introduced the mail contract on July 15, he said—

"So far as he was concerned, he considered this a Government measure of the greatest importance; and, if the House had not faith enough in the Government to follow their policy in this important contract, it was time that it took steps to get other men to fill their places."

Through that announcement it had been said that he had prevented discussion on the mail contract on its merits, that he had taken illegitimate means of forcing the contract through the House, and that he had misapplied the power that he possessed as Premier to force on his own party and the House a contract in which they did not believe. Whether the words quoted amounted to making the question a party one he would not dispute, but he would tell the House the exact position in which he was placed. Having taken a very active part in making the contract, in which their ability as business men was shown as far as it could be, he felt, and the Ministry felt, that were a majority of the House to refuse the ratification of the contract he would be unfit to lead the Government, because if the House had not the confidence to trust them to make the contract they (the Government) were not fit men to lead. He would not accept a degrading position—he would not continue at the head of the Ministry had a majority refused to ratify the contract. These being his opinions, would he not have been doing a dishonest thing had he not told the House how he regarded the contract? If a majority had refused the ratification, and he had resigned, would not members of his party have said, "You have taken a serious responsibility by resigning. You should have told us beforehand, so that we might know the alternative." It was a fact that, had a majority refused to ratify the contract, he would have resigned—then why should he not tell the House? The announcement had been twisted by the Opposition to support the argument that he had "gagged" the debates and prevented the matter being fairly discussed. He believed the matter had been discussed *ad nauseam*. He would never like to see a matter debated or torn in pieces so much in the House again. They had behaved like children, when they ought to have been doing other work far in advance of that before the Committee. The reason that the Opposition had assigned, that his making it a party question had led to the acrimonious discussion and waste of time which had resulted, would not stand investigation for a minute. The member for Rockhampton was not present, but he must say what he intended to say regarding him, whether the hon. member was present or not. He ought to be in his place. The member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) used, the other evening, what he considered a very telling argument. He took the members on the Government side who had not spoken, and reasoned that he should take for granted that they did not believe in the contract, although most likely they would vote for it. If the argument were good for his side, it was certainly only fair that the hon. member for Blackall should apply the same argument to the hon. member for Rockhampton, and it would apply to that hon. member with great force. The hon. member for Rockhampton was entirely against the opinion of all classes of his constituents on the subject of the contract and on many others. The hon. member had told the House that he conscientiously believed that he was in accord with the opinion of his constitu-

ents—how had the hon. member found that out? He (the Premier) had seen a telegram from the President of the Chamber of Commerce at Rockhampton, intimating that a resolution had been carried by the Chamber, that in its opinion the proposed mail contract would be generally advantageous to the colony.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Six members were present.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman need not laugh at only six members being present. He did not know how many were really present, but he had seen meetings of the Chamber of Commerce in Brisbane when not more than six members were present, and very good business was transacted. He was quite satisfied that the gentlemen who were present at the Rockhampton meeting represented the opinions of the merchants of Rockhampton. He had also seen another telegram from the Mayor of Rockhampton, expressing a strong opinion exactly the same way. He had also seen a telegram to the effect that some of the principal supporters of the hon. member for Rockhampton the last time he was elected had telegraphed to and written to him requesting him to vote for the contract. If his late supporters—the men who contributed to put him into Parliament—the Mayor of the town and the President of the Chamber of Commerce did not represent, to some extent, the opinion of Rockhampton he should like to know where it could be gathered? All those people the hon. member had against him, and unless he “hedged” he had no chance of being again returned for Rockhampton in another Parliament. He hoped that now hon. members had had time to discuss the question upon all its points the Opposition would come to a decision on some point connected with the matter, to show, at all events, the strength of parties. He believed himself that if the Opposition could only see a decent way out of the difficulty they would be only too glad to concede the whole matter. He was perfectly sure that the leader of the Opposition must feel uncomfortable under the responsibilities which were imposed on him, because he was even forced to condemn the high-handed way in which the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) insisted on advising the Government to make members feel the iron-hand resolution. He was satisfied that there were as many members opposite in favour of the contract as there were against it. Could the matter have been considered by the Opposition, irrespective of party, he believed it would have passed by a larger majority than it was likely to get.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the arguments used by the Government that evening were not sufficient to alter the conclusions previously arrived at. He did not want to go over the whole matter again, not thinking it fair to answer the same arguments afresh. If the Premier liked to have the last word he was welcome to it. The hon. gentleman wanted to have a division now, to show the strength of parties, knowing that six members of the Opposition were absent. They would be all present to-morrow and be prepared to vote, if there was any necessity. He was not prepared to take a division that evening, in order to get a record of the numbers.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman knew very well that he was not afraid of a division being taken at any time, and that if six of his supporters were absent as many Government supporters were also away. He hoped the hon. gentleman was not asking for another week to consider the speech that he (Mr. McIlwraith) had just delivered, and frame a reply to it. He trusted the hon. gentlemen did not intend following the example of the hon. member for Rockhampton, who took a speech delivered by

him (Mr. McIlwraith) five weeks ago, and to-night made a blundering reply to it. The hon. gentleman should be prepared to answer his speech that evening.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not ask for delay in order to prepare a reply to the Premier's speech. He could reply to it at once, but did not think it was fair at that time of the evening to repeat old arguments.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said, with regard to what had fallen about the Rockhampton Chamber of Commerce, it was only fair to mention that the Chamber comprised seventy members, and that only six were present at a meeting which was most hurriedly called, and was, for that reason, designated “special.” He understood that a memorial was going round Rockhampton, which had been prepared by Ministerial supporters, requesting him to withdraw opposition to the mail contract. The Rockhampton people must be indifferently informed of what was going on if they supposed his withdrawal would affect the question. The Government had the power to carry it, and the Rockhampton people knew it. These manipulations by wire and post were done for the purpose of distracting the attention of the people of Rockhampton from the real issue. He would not follow the example of reading telegrams that he had received neutralising those to which reference had been made. As the member for Dalby had said—were members to read the communications that they received they would have enough to do. Was there no member on the Government side who had received communications adverse to his action, and who yet sat silent?

Mr. SIMPSON: I don't believe there is one.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said that he would not make any invidious distinctions. With respect to the matter before the Committee, he would say that he was quite prepared that any three or six seats on the Opposition side, including Rockhampton, should be selected to test the question with the same number of seats on the Government side. He would be glad to go before his constituents to-morrow, because he felt satisfied that he would be returned to his present position. He admitted that it was an exalted position, and hence he took care to act conscientiously. He was by no means devoid of a proper appreciation of the responsibilities attaching to his action in this matter, and to say that he did not represent Rockhampton was to give a slap in the face to the hundreds of men who voted for him. It had been said on the other side, with respect to meetings in certain electorates, that they were organized by the opponents of supporters of the Government. It was quite fair, then, for him to retort that the meetings held in his own electorate were organized by persons opposed to himself. He did not think it consistent with the duty of a representative that he should float his flag to every breeze that blew.

Mr. MOREHEAD agreed with the hon. member for Rockhampton in his conception of the duty of a representative; but he was, nevertheless, perfectly sure that the hon. member did not represent his constituents in this matter. The hon. member knew perfectly well that a majority of the inhabitants of Rockhampton were in favour of the mail contract, as proposed by the Government. The hon. member's suggestion that four or five members upon the Opposition side should resign and meet the same number of members from the Government side was beside the question. He had already pointed out that members on the Government side had a numerical majority not only in that House but also in the country. There

was not a man who was acquainted with Rockhampton who would not bear him out in what he said with reference to the action of Mr. Paterson. Most hon. members opposite knew nothing beyond the requirements of their own small electorates. What, for instance, did Mr. Macfarlane, the hon. member for Ipswich, know about Rockhampton? What did the hon. members for Oxley and South Brisbane know about it? But there were men on the Government side who knew the colony from one end to the other; and the opinion of these men was entitled to more consideration at the hands of the Committee than the opinions of hon. members opposite. No one, for instance, knew more of the colony and its wants than the hon. member for Blackall; and he sat on the Government side of the House and supported the present proposal of the Government. The hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Douglas, was also thoroughly acquainted with the colony, and he was not at all sure that he was not making a mistake in voting with the Opposition in this matter. No one doubted the great abilities of the leader of the Opposition; but would anyone say that he had a better knowledge of the wants of the colony than the Premier? What did the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) know of the wants of the colony except what he had acquired by reading? The hon. member for Balonne (Mr. Low) was perhaps the oldest colonist in the House; and yet he asked for the mail contract proposals of the Government. Would anyone dispute the assertion that the hon. member for Moreton opposed the contract from a narrow point of view—from a desire to either embarrass or eject from office the present occupants of the Treasury benches? Personally he did not care very much which side of the House was in office as long as he had honest administration; and he maintained that the administration of the present Government was honest. He thought the Government had yielded too much to the Opposition, and that they should have dealt with them with a firmer hand. He hoped there would be some finality to this question, and that in the course of a day or two it would be settled in one way or the other.

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

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