

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 1 September, 1880.

Question.—Formal Business.—Mail Contract—resumption of committee.

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

QUESTION.

Mr. SIMPSON asked the Colonial Secretary—

If he intends to introduce, during the present Session, any amendment upon the Divisional Boards Act in direction of abolishing all taxation upon improvements?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer): No.

FORMAL BUSINESS.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, it was resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to authorise the construction of a Railway to connect the Burrum Coal Mines with the Maryborough and Gympie Railway.

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,

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said that last evening he was reported, and correctly reported, in *Hansard* to have said—

"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 information was put before him by the Post Office Department, and as soon as he had made the statement last night he received a correction; in fact, the correction of the mistake was on its way when he spoke. He found, now, that the statement was wrong, and that the £4,000 offered by the A.S.N. Company was for a fortnightly service. To that extent, therefore, his argument was weakened, and he should like hon. members to see that the whole gist of the argument was weakened to a very considerable extent by the lower estimate of the expense of carrying the mails by that line, to the extent of £4,000. He now hastened to correct the error.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said he would take this opportunity to apply for a little information upon the probable cost of carrying the mail matter by the Melbourne route, on the assumption that all their letters went that way. As he understood the Premier, some time since, when he first moved this matter, the estimates supplied to him by the Post Office, as to the probable average expense for the next eight years, of carrying the Queensland letters by that route, would be about £25,000; but at the present time it would amount to £16,000 a year. Of course he had not the advantage of knowing how these figures were arrived at, but he had been endeavouring, with the assistance of other hon. gentlemen, to make such calculations as they could from the data before them. He found, from a return laid on the table on his motion a week or two ago, that the total number of letters sent during the twelve months ending on the 30th of last June by that route was 17,709; and the total cost of mail matter sent that way, including newspapers and all, was £1,198. In the same proportion, the cost of carrying all the letters that way would come to considerably under £10,000. If they estimated it by the average rates paid—which average, he understood, was about sixpence a letter and a penny a newspaper—the cost would come to something very much less than that—to a very few thousands indeed. He had not the materials for making the calculations, but he should like to know what the £16,000 included; whether it included the cost of transit between Brisbane and Sydney—whether it included a subsidy to a steam company between Brisbane and Sydney—or what it did include? He should like to know how that estimate was made up, and what was likely to be added to the present expense of sending letters by that route. As there were five English mails in the month to and from Sydney at the present time, he was inclined to think that they would be able to get their letters somehow or other to Sydney before the English mail left. When they knew that the mail went every three or four days merchants would not trouble themselves about catching a particular mail; but when the intervals between the starting of the mails was as long as a month it was a matter of importance. When the interval was so short it was really

of very little consequence whether they caught a particular mail or one a week afterwards.

The PREMIER said he thought he had made it very clear how he had arrived at the £25,000. The Victorian Government offered to carry Queensland letters on certain terms. The Post Office calculated that the carriage of the amount of mail matter they had at the present time would cost so much; to that he had to add the estimated amount that would be required to carry the mail matter overland from Melbourne to Sydney; to that he added the £4,000 a-year which the A.S.N. Company offered to carry the mail matter for: those amounts made up the £16,000. To that, again, in order to arrive at a proper account, he took the average increase of mail matter during the last eight years, and calculated the average increase for the next eight years as the same, and added these amounts to that previously calculated. This gave him the total of £25,000.

Mr. MILES said that all that could be said on the subject had been said, and anything he had to say in the matter would not alter it. The subject had been thoroughly exhausted so far as argument was concerned, and he believed that to continue the discussion would be simply waste of time. They might just as well pass the time in divisions as in talking. He therefore begged to move that the Chairman leave the chair.

Question put.

The Committee divided:—Ayes, 12; Noes, 23.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Mr. DICKSON said he had been in hopes that the Government, seeing the strong opposition to the passing of the contract in its present shape, would have applied themselves seriously to obtain from the contractors an improved contract for the consideration of the country. When the contract first came on for consideration, it was impressed on the Government that in its present form it had no chance of passing. He did not intend to go over the arguments used against the contract; at the same time, he must state that a grave responsibility attached to the Government in the matter. No doubt there was a responsibility also attaching to the Opposition in objecting to the contract; but whatever that responsibility might be, it would not absolve the Government from the responsibility attaching to them for having introduced a contract which the majority of the taxpayers of the colony thought extremely undesirable. The Opposition was of opinion that it would be better to have no contract at all than such a contract as the one now proposed. He admitted, at the same time, that a contract was necessary, and the Government had an opportunity of submitting it in such a form as would commend it to the majority of members on both sides, and the majority of the people of the colony. There was a great deal of important business on the paper which it was necessary to proceed with at once. One urgent question which demanded immediate settlement was as to the collection of duties under the new tariff. It had come to his knowledge that the collection of duties at the Custom House under the tariff proposed by the Treasurer was still a matter of uncertainty. The Customs House officers appeared uncertain whether the recently proposed amendments of the Treasurer in the tariff could be accepted as expressing the total alterations that were to be made in the tariff. Therefore, it would be as well to set that certainty at rest by a Customs Duties Act. The responsibility on the shoulders of the Opposition, they had the courage to maintain whatever the consequences might be; but there was a heavier

responsibility on the Government in not endeavouring to substitute such a contract as would be acceptable to the majority of the people. If properly set about, there would be no difficulty in obtaining a modified contract in lieu of the one proposed. There was ample time to proceed with negotiations in the matter, and he trusted the Government would not allow the business of the country to be delayed through a feeling of false pride in not accepting the correct view of the contract—namely, that it was not abreast of the age. What the country wanted was an eleven-knot service for five or six years. He trusted the Premier would not persist in forcing the contract upon the House, and retarding other legislation which the country desired should be proceeded with at once. In order to give the hon. gentleman an opportunity of considering that view of the case, he would move that the Chairman leave the chair and report no progress.

Mr. NORTON said that as this might be the last opportunity he should have of speaking on the subject, he desired to say a few words upon it to the Committee. Judging from what had fallen from hon. members on the other side, he was inclined to think that the Opposition regretted the course they had taken. The hon. member (Mr. Dickson) said the responsibility for the obstruction did not rest with the Opposition; and the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) made a similar remark yesterday. In his opinion the responsibility rested upon the Opposition, and upon them alone; and he had no hesitation in saying it. There had, no doubt, been a strong feeling outside against the mail contract. He was not one of those who went against public opinion and said it was worth nothing. When a large crowd collected and passed a number of resolutions, he was not the man to say those resolutions were worthless and that the people did not know what they were talking about. He had a great respect for the public voice, and believed that when the people met and expressed their opinions in unmistakable tones those opinions ought to be respected. The people of the colony—as throughout the British dominions—were lovers of justice and fairplay, and they had great faith in those in whom they put their trust. While admitting that there had been a strong feeling against the mail service outside, he believed that that feeling had been almost entirely confined to Brisbane and its immediate neighbourhood, and that the opinion of the great mass of the people throughout the colony was in favour of the contract. The opposition that had been shown against the contract was not so much against the contract itself as against the fact that it had been brought forward by the Premier. He felt sure the people who opposed the contract would find out their mistake, repent the action they had taken, and do justice to the Premier. The leader of the Opposition was a very popular man in Brisbane, and held a high position in the colony as leader of the Bar. The hon. gentleman had had an extensive legal training, and was possessed of abilities which had enabled him to succeed beyond his fellows in the profession he had adopted. As a lawyer the hon. gentleman was an expert, and he was specially skilful in bringing out the points on the side of any question he adopted to the greatest advantage, while he concealed or passed over the points which told against his argument. It was possible that he (Mr. Norton) might make remarks more severe than he was in the habit of doing, but what he said would refer entirely to politics, and not to any hon. member's private life and affairs. If he did so he would adopt the excuse of the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) on a former occasion, and say that this was an entirely exceptional case. That hon. gentleman could not blame him

for following his example. To the speeches of the leader of the Opposition he had listened patiently—or perhaps he ought to say impatiently—for he had experienced a strong feeling of indignation every time the hon. gentleman had spoken with regard to the actions of the Government. When he (Mr. Norton) first entered the House he was unacquainted with either the Premier or the leader of the Opposition; and he decided to be guided, not by what he might hear of any hon. member, but to take them as he found them. He had listened as patiently as he could—but still impatiently—to many long speeches from the hon. member (Mr. Griffith). Although that hon. gentleman had told them that he did not wish to impute any corrupt motives to the Premier—and he (Mr. Norton) was willing to give credence to the statement as far as he could—yet he must take things as he found them, and, having considered the matter very calmly and dispassionately, he believed that the whole of the hon. gentleman's skill had been directed to blackening the character of the Premier. He believed the hon. gentleman's object had been to ruin the Premier's character both socially and politically. He believed that the hon. gentleman had done this to serve his own personal ends. The hon. gentleman thought it desirable to remove, if he could, from his path to place and power, one who was a great obstacle to his attaining that position. From all he had heard the hon. gentleman say since the opening of the session, he could not help thinking that the hon. gentleman desired to impute corrupt motives to the Premier; and many other hon. members held the same opinion. They might not have said so in plain words, but all who had heard them, or read the proceedings of the House in *Hansard*, would arrive at that conclusion. The effects produced outside have been such as to bring discredit and suspicion upon the Premier. It was that which had caused the mass of the people about Brisbane—or at least a large number of them—to regard with suspicion anything emanating from the Premier; and the suspicion had caused the feeling of antagonism which existed against the mail contract. He did not believe for one moment that the mail contract was unpopular; it was Mr. McIlwraith who was unpopular, and he was unpopular because of the imputations cast upon him in this House by the leader of the Opposition. The insinuations and imputations were not made merely in words. It was impossible to take up a particular number of *Hansard* and say there was an imputation; imputations of this kind were made quite as much in the manner of delivering a speech as in the words used, and perhaps a great deal more so. Having listened to the words and observed the manner he could come to no other conclusion. The hon. member for Gregory had pointed out that in the petition which the hon. gentleman presented at the beginning of the session Mr. Hemmant did not make one charge against the Premier, but confined himself to saying he had been informed of this, he believed that, and so on; yet that petition, from beginning to end, was a mass of the grossest imputations that could be made against any man. No one who looked over the petition could avoid that conviction, however much he might be inclined in favour of Mr. Hemmant. The leader of the Opposition had accepted the responsibility of what he called the charges made in that petition. The petition was like a great many of the hon. gentleman's speeches—there was no direct charge in any one, but imputations were in every sentence, from beginning to end. A reference to the debates which had taken place would show that such imputations had been made, and that they had been made in such a manner as to attach suspicion to every

subject brought before the House by the Premier, and in that way a suspicion had been attached to this mail contract. Suspicion was attached to it because no company was absolutely named in the contract as entering into the agreement with the Government. The gentlemen whose names were signed to the contract were spoken of as a syndicate, or a ring, and a sneer accompanied the word every time it was used. That was the way in which the question had been brought before the House, and imputations were cast upon everything introduced by the Government. Neither Mr. Hemmant, in his petition, nor Mr. Griffith, in any statement made in the House, had the manliness and honesty to make a direct charge. He had a sort of respect for any man who made a straightforward and honest charge, even if the charge was incorrect; but when a man dealt in imputation, he was like an assassin who steps up in the dark and stabs his enemy in the back. You could not meet such an attack; whereas the man who came forward and spoke a direct falsehood could be confronted and answered. Such imputations clung to a man more than any direct falsehood would; and the hon. gentleman, when he brought forward those imputations—not to say charges—knew that so long as the Premier lived some people would entertain a feeling of suspicion in consequence of those imputations having been cast upon him. Everyone with a grain of sense must know that, and it could not be supposed that the hon. member, with all his astuteness, had no other design in the action he took than to bring about an inquiry into what took place in England while the Premier was there. He held, as much as any member of the House, that such an inquiry ought to take place; but it was possible for the hon. gentleman to have brought forward such a motion in an honest, upright manner, which would have reflected credit upon himself instead of debasing himself to a lower depth than he had wished to debase the man against whom he made the charges. The hon. gentleman might have gained honour from his opponents in this matter by introducing the subject in such a way that no one could take exception; but instead of doing so he came forward with imputations which were designed to ruin the character of the Premier for ever, not only politically but socially, not only in the opinion of his own friends but also in the eyes of the whole of the people of the colony and of those who were interested in him in other colonies, in England, and elsewhere. That was the way the charge of corruption was brought forward. If it was not a charge of pocketing the money of the colony which was said to have been robbed, it was at least a charge of participating in that robbery. He, for one, would not believe that the leader of the Opposition himself thought that the Premier had participated in any such fraud, or that he ever did think so. He believed the insinuation was designed simply to ruin the Premier and displace him from the position he now occupied in order that the hon. gentleman might usurp that position. He (Mr. Norton) had witnessed more than one degrading scene in that House, but the most humiliating spectacle of all was displayed when the leader of the Opposition brought those charges against the Premier, with the design to blacken his character, on mere report, which, so far as hon. members knew, had no foundation. In doing so he degraded himself to the ten-thousandth time lower level than he wished to degrade the Premier. His (Mr. Norton's) personal knowledge of the Premier was limited to the time he had been in the House—that was to say from the beginning of last year. The charges against the hon. gentleman might be more or less true, for all he knew to the contrary; but since he had known

the hon. gentleman he had not seen the slightest reason to doubt the honour and integrity of the hon. gentleman. Even had he doubted the hon. gentleman, the effect of these gross charges having been made would have been to cause him to cling more loyally to him until those charges were proved. He was not one to desert a man when an attempt had been made to injure him, or when he was likely to have much to contend with. He took his place as a supporter of the Government; and until he was assured on more than rumour that the Premier had been acting in a dishonest and corrupt manner he should support him—more warmly now than he should have supported him before. If the reports were proved to be true, no member of the House would sooner go over to the other side than he. He did not wish to be misunderstood—he did not wink at dishonesty, or support it in any way; but where a man was only accused on rumour he would stand by him until the matter was settled one way or the other. The action taken by the leader of the Opposition he considered to be most base. The hon. gentleman had denied that he imputed anything to the leader of the Government, and he (Mr. Norton) accepted that denial for what it was worth. He would, however, tell the House, and the hon. gentleman himself, that it was impossible to believe the denial; he would tell the people of the colony, and whoever read *Hansard* or heard his words, that if the hon. gentleman took his oath in this House that he did not desire to impute anything to the Premier he (Mr. Norton) would not believe him.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I didn't say so.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You did say so.

Mr. NORTON said if the hon. gentleman did not say that he had been much misunderstood. If the hon. gentleman said he did not impute corruption—to use a strong term—or participation in fraud to the Premier, then it would be impossible to believe him. He did not wish not to believe the hon. gentleman. As far as he could, he believed every statement made by the hon. gentleman; but if he was told that the business paper was printed in white letters upon black paper, he could not believe it; and if the hon. gentleman took his oath that he did not impute corruption to the Premier he could not believe him. The language he (Mr. Norton) had used was exceedingly strong, but in some cases strong language was necessary, and this appeared to him to be one. He entertained no personal feeling against the leader of the Opposition, and he had only spoken thus because he believed that the Premier had been wronged, and deliberately wronged, for an object which was as base as any man could imagine. Very probably some hon. members might think he said too much. He could only say that in any action he performed he consulted himself first, decided upon what he considered was right, and after that what other people thought; and that he had never hesitated to say what he thought ought to be said. He never said harsh things simply because he knew them to be true; but when he considered it necessary to say a thing he said it whatever might be the consequences. It was not necessary for him to say anything about the mail contract itself. The members on the Opposition side were apparently determined at all hazards to block the question, and with them must be the responsibility of their action. Those who were now opposed to the contract would, some day or other, be able to form a juster opinion than they did now, and judge men as they really were, and not as they were represented to be. A Nemesis was waiting upon those who acted wrongly, and the day

would come when the hon. members who now supported the leader of the Opposition would bitterly repent the action they were taking. He did not make those remarks in an unfriendly spirit, but because he felt in his heart that the man who wantonly injured another was certain to reap his reward sooner or later. Whether he had acted rightly or wrongly, he was, as far as he was concerned, capable of judging; he left other hon. members to think what they might. He had been guided by his own judgment, and others might judge for themselves.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he felt bound to say something in reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Port Curtis. The hon. member had told the House that when he had a public duty to perform he considered first how it ought to be performed, and having made up his mind he then endeavoured to carry out his conviction. Might not the hon. member have given the same credit to other men who had a public duty to perform, perhaps much more painful than any the hon. member had been called upon to perform during his life as a public man? Surely the hon. member might give to other public men credit for the same integrity and desire to do what was right? Was it for him alone, immaculate in his virtue, to set up a standard and say that he acted from high and noble motives according to his convictions, and that others were actuated by the basest motives? He (Mr. Griffith) did not propose to use any strong language in the matter. He had been so long accustomed to hear unworthy motives imputed to him that he was content to leave the judgment of his motives as well as of his actions to the test of time. During the debate on the mail contract he had most scrupulously avoided mixing it up in any way with the charges that were made against the Premier by himself on the opening night of the session. On two or three occasions attempts had been made to drag that matter into the debate, but he had on each occasion declined to accept the invitation, and he declined to do so now. He thought it a pity that, on that last day for debating the mail contract, the charges made against the Premier should be alluded to, more especially as they had been referred for investigation to a tribunal which had not yet concluded its sittings. He had said before, and he was sorry he had to repeat it, that in doing what he conceived to be his duty at the opening of the session he followed the rule laid down by the hon. member (Mr. Norton). He considered the matter maturely, and arrived at a conclusion according to which he performed what he considered his duty. If he had exceeded his duty it was his fault; in exact proportion to the extent which he had exceeded his duty would he be blamed for his excess. If a man was excited by jeers and laughter from the other side of the House he was hardly to be blamed for yielding to the natural weakness of man and becoming warmer than he otherwise would be. He was not ashamed because under such circumstances he did become warm—he did not profess to be able to stand there and be insulted and jeered at when he was performing a solemn public duty. If hon. members thought that matters could be calmly debated when they were jeering and throwing out insults they were mistaken. If he made any mistake on the occasion referred to it was in consequence of the jeers and insults with which he was met. However, he did not think he did make a mistake; the words he used were very carefully chosen, and they were on record. He had never said that he had not made any charge against the Premier. He did make certain charges against the hon. gentleman, and in doing so he was performing a public duty. What he denied later

in the session was a statement which was put into his mouth by other hon. members—a statement which he had not even thought of making. So much he felt bound to say on that subject, but he declined to say any more. They were discussing the mail contract, and he sincerely hoped that the debate would not be turned into an acrimonious one respecting the characters of either the leader of the Government or the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. NORTON said he did not wish to be misunderstood. What he said was distinct enough. He should not blame the hon. member for bringing forward any charges which he thought were well founded, provided that he brought them forward in a straightforward and honest manner. What he blamed the hon. member for was for imputing corrupt motives, and by doing so leading people astray, as they would be influenced by his remarks, and would be led to display strong opposition, not only to the Premier, but to every action the Government took. He blamed no man for doing what was right, but he blamed the hon. member for imputing motives, imputations being the grossest kind of dishonesty.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he must say one word more. He did not understand the hon. member. As he had said previously, he did what he conceived to be his duty, when, at the opening of the session, he brought under the notice of the House certain representations of facts which had been made to him as to the manner in which the Premier had conducted the business of the country. Those representations of facts were founded chiefly on documents which had since been laid on the table of the House. He drew from those documents some inferences which he was responsible for; beyond that he imputed nothing.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that not only had imputations been made by the leader of the Opposition—which had been ably dealt with by the hon. member for Port Curtis—but imputations had been made by the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) which had not been taken proper notice of by the Press. That hon. member gained a little cheap popularity, and somewhat at his (Mr. Morehead's) expense. The hon. member made a dastardly attack on the Government when he said that the position of the Government in regard to the Hemmant petition was most unsatisfactory. The question of the Hemmant petition was not under discussion when the hon. member made the remark, and the hon. member ought to know that, to say the least of it, it was a piece of bad taste to make such a remark when the question was *sub judice*. The hon. member got himself into contempt by his action in regard to the inquiry into the charges made in the Hemmant petition, and repeated the offence in a grosser way by insinuating that the charges were actually proved.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I did not.

Mr. MOREHEAD: You did say so.

Mr. DOUGLAS: What I said was that the position of the Government was very unsatisfactory.

Mr. MOREHEAD said there was not an hon. member who heard the speech in question who would not say that the attack which the hon. member made on the Government was based on the assumption that the charges were true. The hon. member's remarks meant that or they meant nothing at all, and they would stand against him as a memento of an unjust, a highly indecent, and an improper attack made on the occupants of the Treasury benches.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he did not object to the terms in which the hon. member (Mr. Morehead) characterised his action; he only wished

that on all future occasions the hon. member would endeavour to make use of terms equally explicit and unobjectionable. He did, unfortunately, on the occasion referred to, take notice of some remarks of an exceedingly personal and offensive nature. Like the hon. member (Mr. Norton), he did not object to strong things being said, but there was always a way of putting them so that they would not be personally offensive.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Like the hon. member for Maryborough does, for example.

Mr. DOUGLAS said if ever he had occasion to say anything strong he endeavoured not to make it personal, and he believed that he succeeded in avoiding that objectionable element. He had a natural love of right and justice, and he never shrank from saying what he thought. In that respect his constitution was somewhat like that of the hon. member for Port Curtis. He did not hesitate to say what he thought was justified by circumstances; but he never wilfully said what was painfully offensive to any man, and he hoped he never should do so. On the occasion referred to by the hon. member for Mitchell, the hon. member (Mr. Thompson) distinctly referred to the Hemmant petition, and, entertaining a somewhat similar opinion to that which was expressed by that hon. member, he did not hesitate to state that the mail contract was affected by circumstances which had arisen out of the Hemmant petition. He should not hesitate about repeating anything he said on that occasion. He said he believed that, throughout, the conduct of the Government had been exceedingly unsatisfactory, that maladministration had arisen, and that, as shown by proceedings which had come under their notice, the public had really been defrauded. He had no doubt about that. The evidence already taken by the committee, and things which had transpired, all went to prove the truth of the statements made in Hemmant's petition. Whatever might be the position of the head of the Government with regard to the transactions, some of them were of such a scandalous nature as to justify unquestionably the course which had been adopted in instituting the inquiry. When the charges were first made he thought the House ought not to proceed with any business until they were disposed of one way or another; and he still felt that they ought not to have done so. Statements had been made of such importance that they demanded confirmation or refutation, and he really thought it desirable that they should be dealt with before anything else was done. He thought it was to be deplored that they had not the means of taking evidence before select committees whereby the inquiries could be concluded in a few days or a week or two. It would be infinitely better for the conduct of business if such matters could be finally settled one way or another without delay. The charges contained in the Hemmant petition hung over them like a cloud, which ought to be dispelled.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member frequently informed the House that he was the only man of a high standard of morality in it.

Mr. DOUGLAS: I do not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member did; but he would take the liberty of telling him that there was scarcely a single individual in the House—not even among the tipsy contingent—whose standard of morality was lower than that of the man who would stand up, accuse members of the House of being guilty of certain charges, and say that they were being proved by evidence.

Mr. DOUGLAS : I did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the hon. member before he sat down said that the charges hung over them like a cloud, and that they had been proved to be of a scandalous nature.

Mr. DOUGLAS : I said the transactions were of a scandalous nature.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : And that they were being proved ?

Mr. DOUGLAS : Yes, certainly.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was very hard to deal with a man who acted under the guise of being honest and straightforward, and so statesmanlike ; but here were the words of the hon. member—

"The accusations made unquestionably involved the honour of the Government, and they had been to a great extent supported by evidence."

He (Mr. Macrossan) would say, on the strength of the evidence which had been taken before the committee, that that was false—utterly false. He dared the hon. member, or any of his compeers in the Press, to prove otherwise. What had been the hon. member's conduct in the matter ? He did not for a single moment take the imputation of the hon. member as being personal to himself, but there were two members of the Government who had been the hon. member's political opponents ever since he entered the House, and, under the influence of an ambition to take their places, the hon. member lent himself to the leader of the Opposition, who had brought forward charges in a scandalous manner. The petition on which the inquiry was based was founded on nothing more than rumours which could have been inquired into coolly, calmly, deliberately, and judiciously, without any charges being made against any individual whatever. The hon. member surreptitiously obtained evidence which had been taken before the committee ; he took portions of it which suited himself, eliminated a word here and changed one there, and had it published in the *Courier*. That remark applied to the examination in chief of the chief tool—the witness who was sent out to the colony to prove the allegations contained in the petition—but, mark, not a single syllable of that gentleman's cross-examination was obtained by the hon. member for publication, and on his cross-examination he was proved to be a liar. He used the word advisedly. By cross-examination, by documents which had been produced, and by the evidence of other independent and honourable witnesses, that witness was proved to be a liar ; yet not a word of all that was published by the hon. member. The hon. member published exactly what suited himself, knowing full well that it would excite the minds of the people outside. How had all the agitation been brought about ? How had all the meetings which had been held in Brisbane and elsewhere been got up ? Was it not well known to hon. members that an association with which the majority of hon. members on the opposite side of the House were connected, directly or indirectly, had been the chief means of getting up the public meetings and of disseminating the scandalous falsehoods propagated in the House and elsewhere ? Was it not well known by them that the majority of men who had taken a leading part in those meetings and in propagating scandals were members of that secret association, connected intimately or directly with the leader of the Opposition, the hon. member (Mr. Douglas), and other hon. members on that side of the House ? Was it, he would ask, any wonder that the people of the colony were excited when there was a propaganda by which slander and falsehood were

issued all over Queensland ? Was it to be wondered at that people were misled by reports circulated by the leader of the Opposition and by the hon. member for Maryborough and other hon. members, in forty lodges throughout Queensland, for the purpose of accomplishing their own ends ? He considered that the speech made that evening by the hon. member for Port Curtis was true in this respect, that ill-feelings had been engendered by the falsehoods circulated by the leader of the Opposition and hon. members on that side of the Committee. It was to be hoped that in future, before the hon. member for Maryborough stated, as he had done that afternoon, that there were serious charges hanging—to use the hon. member's language—as a cloud over the Government, he would make it his duty to study well the evidence which had been taken on the subject, and take care not to publish a garbled report of evidence taken on one side whilst omitting the evidence taken on the other side. He (Mr. Macrossan) contended that, so far as the evidence taken in respect to Mr. Hemmant's petition was published, it clearly disproved anything like collusion on the part of the hon. Premier with contracting parties or their friends, and he believed that when the inquiry was terminated here there would be very little left for inquiry at home. For his part he would not be one to leave anything to be inquired into, not because he believed there was anything in the allegations or rumours which had been circulated, but because it was right that the people of the colony, who formulated their opinions through *Hansard*, should be made acquainted with the class of men who were returned to that House, and who, for purposes of their own, were opposing the Government on the present occasion. He believed that with the exception of a small section of the community—a small band of brothers—the people of the colony would by their voice unanimously express their approval of the position taken by the Premier.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that he did not rise to follow up the discussion which had taken place, but only to take notice of a mention made by the Minister for Public Works of an association or associations with which the hon. gentleman said he was connected. He wished to state at once that he was not connected with any association such as that indicated by the hon. gentleman ; and it would have been better had the hon. gentleman refrained from making such accusations, and been more guarded before making statements of which he could know nothing. He (Mr. Douglas) knew nothing of the proceedings of the associations referred to by the hon. gentleman ; in fact, he was evidently in greater ignorance of them than the hon. gentleman himself.

Mr. GARRICK said he did not wish to prolong the discussion which had taken place, because it had been a very painful one ; but he rose for the purpose of alluding to the speech which had been made by the hon. Minister for Works. At the present time there was a committee sitting which in itself was a tribunal of justice. Of that committee the hon. gentleman was a member ; but after the speech made that evening by the hon. gentleman, the public outside could have very little confidence in the verdict pronounced by it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that, according to the dictum of the hon. gentleman who had just spoken, the right of abuse was to be reserved solely to the Opposition. Much worse language had certainly been heard from the hon. gentleman's side of the Committee during the present debate than had ever been heard before from the Government side, and

with less cause for using it. He had noticed, however, that no matter how bad the language used by the Opposition which appeared in *Hansard*—and some of it was not reported—it was passed over by the Press without comment, whilst any slight departure on the part of members on his (Mr. Palmer's) side of the Committee from the ordinary course of debate was immediately severely commented on by the Press. That had been the practice of the Press since the commencement of the session—no hon. member could deny that—and when hon. members on the Government side had been actually goaded into using strong language by the conduct of the Opposition, they had been denounced and held up to contempt by the Press. That was the privilege and right which the hon. member for East Moreton (Mr. Garrick) wished to reserve for his side of the Committee. He (Mr. Palmer) quite agreed with everything that had been said by the hon. member for Port Curtis, and believed as he did, in the perfect integrity of the Premier; as to himself (Mr. Palmer), he would say nothing, because, as he was known to have as much to do with the matter as an unborn child, he looked upon all the charges which had been made against him as so much froth. As regarded any action which had been taken by the hon. gentleman in England, he (Mr. Palmer) believed he was perfectly innocent; and so far from the evidence of the committee which was already published tending in any way to criminate his hon. friend, he believed it had no such tendency whatever. All he could see up to the present time was this: that instead of the result of the inquiry being likely to damage the reputation of hon. members on the Treasury benches, it would be the reverse. The facts of the case were simply these: A contract was made in this colony with a party who reserved the right of confirmation to those people in England whom he represented. The contract was not confirmed by them, as the price of iron was rising in England; and where was the fraud? There was not a particle of fraud in the whole matter; but party hostility on the part of the leader of the Opposition, as stated by the hon. member for Port Curtis, had led to all these charges being made. A fortnight before Parliament met even, he (Mr. Palmer) was told that the leader of the Opposition had stated that he was concocting a scheme which would blow McIlwraith and Palmer from their seats, and politically ruin them. That he had been told by a friend of the hon. leader of the Opposition—

Mr. GRIFFITH: Name.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will not give it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I did not say so.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he did not believe him. The whole conduct of the hon. gentleman had proved the truth of what he (Mr. Palmer) had stated;—and, after all, what a pretty scheme the hon. gentleman had made of it. The whole thing certainly was not calculated to advance the hon. gentleman's character as a politician nor yet as a gentleman. The hon. gentleman knew well what a mistake he made in the speech he made after the first meeting of the House; he knew well that he could have attained his object in another and more proper way. What the hon. gentleman should have done was to move for all the papers and correspondence in connection with the transaction, and then if after examination of them he had seen grounds for making certain charges he could have done so. But without getting that information the hon. gentleman had made most damaging charges against the Premier, for which the hon. gentleman and those who supported him were

alone responsible. He had been rather amused at the hon. gentleman saying that his blood got warm at what he was pleased to term the jeers and insults of hon. members on the Government side of the Committee. Why he (Mr. Palmer) had never seen more than a cold-blooded sneer on that hon. gentleman yet. The way in which the hon. gentleman had brought forth such serious charges against the Government was in itself quite sufficient to warrant expressions of disapprobation from hon. members on the Government side of the committee. With regard to the mail service—and he wished to get back to that—he wanted to let the country know what the tactics of the Opposition were driving from them. Of that they could form a good opinion from the few statistics he was about to quote. He would point out by quoting the arrivals by one ship what they were likely to lose if thirteen ships in a year came out, and he quoted figures which he had obtained from the agent of the E. and A. Company with regard to the last steamer which arrived. It appeared from them that the last steamer brought 100 tons of cargo for Cooktown, 60 tons for Townsville, which the member for Fortitude Valley said never yet received more than five tons; 10 tons for Keppel Bay, for Brisbane 600 tons, 600 tons for Sydney, and 70 tons for Victoria. That one instance showed what a trade had been established by these colonies with the East, and what an enormous trade the Opposition were trying to drive, and would succeed by their action in driving, away from our ports. For the purpose of carrying out a little political spleen, and of oversetting all the principles of political government, they would absolutely turn from the shores of the colony a trade which the Government wished to increase fiftyfold.

Mr. BEATTIE said he was glad the hon. gentleman had referred to those statistics, as he (Mr. Beattie) had on a former occasion made a statement which was very different to that just made, and he would acknowledge that, so far, he was wrong. But he had been taken aback by the hon. gentleman saying that there were hundreds of tons of goods landed from every E. and A. Company's steamer at Townsville. He (Mr. Beattie) at that time referred to direct imports from England to Townsville, which he found to amount to £19,000; added to that there was some £6,000 for Government stores, so that if he was wrong the hon. member was wrong also in saying that there were hundreds of tons being carried by the E. and A. Company's steamers to Townsville. He acknowledged that Townsville was a most important place and ought to be encouraged. At the same time, the hon. gentleman had made a mistake. He did not think it fair to consider goods required by the Government as importation; and certainly he would not calculate the trade of Brisbane upon the same basis. In justice both to himself and Townsville, he had felt bound to acknowledge his error.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he hoped hon. members would not flatter themselves that, if the present contract were done away with in October, the trade now brought would still come to their shores. The time-table of the E. and A. Company was out, and, with the exception of Cooktown and Thursday Island, the steamers would not, unless sufficient inducement offered, call at a single Queensland port. The whole of the trade coming down would go on to Sydney, and would have to be brought back from Sydney to their doors. That was a sample of what would occur in the gross if the contract were not ratified.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that with reference to the explanation of the hon.

member for Fortitude Valley as to the trade of Townsville, he could not put his finger upon the statistics in the Registrar-General's report, but he could assure the hon. member that for several years past there had been three or four ships a year trading directly between Townsville and England. He could also give the names of three or four firms there who had been in the habit of importing their goods directly from England. He believed, too, that there were one or two small firms who imported a quantity of Eastern goods by the E. and A. Company.

The Hon. G. THORN said he would point out that the cargo coming from the R.M.S. "Brisbane" was mainly from China, and consisted for the most part of rice and tea. Whether the contract were ratified or not, trade would come to these shores if sufficient inducement were offered. He noticed that the Government defended their contract only as a commercial service. If he thought it would be a good commercial service he would be the first to support it; but he was certain that as a commercial service it would prove a failure, and upon that ground he had opposed it so strongly. He objected to the contract from an independent standpoint and not for party purposes; he had not thought of party in the matter. He had travelled the proposed route, and was satisfied that vessels of large size would be unable to perform the intricate navigation. The steamers would be able to take little or none of their produce; and the probability was that if they had fourteen hours' rain the whole of their wool would be brought down before Christmas. Was it likely that squatters would allow their wool to remain in Brisbane for twelve months, and be dependent for its carriage home upon the British-India Company? The steamers would be unable to take away more than a thousand bales per month, and that quantity did not sometimes represent the entire clip of a single station. If they were to have steamers like those now being built for the P. and O. Company, with a carrying capacity of 6,000 or 7,000 tons, there might be some reason for ratifying a contract upon a commercial basis. He wished it to be distinctly understood that he was an advocate of a direct service; and he had no doubt that if the Premier were to call for tenders again to-morrow he would receive a far better offer than that which he now asked the House to ratify. Had the hon. gentleman tried to make any arrangements with firms like that of Money Wigram, with such fine vessels as the "Durham" and "Northumberland," trading to Sydney?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They have been taken off.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They have been beaten off.

Mr. THORN saw no reason why an arrangement should not be made with such a firm as Money Wigram, whose ships were all of good capacity and admirably adapted for a commercial service. Why not wait a few months, and let the Premier in the meantime see the agents of the P. and O. Company, and discover what they were prepared to do? There could no longer be any doubt but that public opinion was against the proposed contract. He was informed that the Premier had either presented or was about to present a petition from residents of Bundaberg—in the hon. gentleman's own district—against the ratification of the contract. Reverting to the argument that the service was to be a commercial service, he would point out that the carriage of the frozen meat would require large and fast vessels, which did not and would not trade *via* Torres Straits. In almost every voyage by that route they heard of vessels getting aground and getting off again. He would ask the Committee to consider what

effect a change of commanders must have when the navigation was so intricate? The high rate of insurance was another matter for consideration. Would the Premier inform the Committee whether the British-India Company had not at the present time steamers running as far as Singapore, Calcutta, Madras, or Point de Galle without subsidy? If, as might possibly be the case, the company had steamers running as far as Singapore, they would be subsidising a sixteen days' service; and if that were the case, surely an improvement upon nine-knot steamers could be effected? For some reason—he did not know whether it was because the boats had to go into quarantine so often—the Torres Straits steamers brought neither passengers nor goods. He was well acquainted with the Orient and P. and O. steamers, and asserted without any hesitation that the Torres Straits steamers were better victualled. What, then, was the reason of their non-success? Another objection he had to offer to the proposed contract was that a mail service and a commercial service could not live together. He was surprised to hear that the "Brisbane" was coming down with 1,400 tons of cargo; it was the first time he had known steamers on that line to carry goods. Then, again, he desired to see the mail steamers running out of the tropics in the course of three or four days, instead of remaining in them—as would be the case if the contract were adopted—for such an abominable length of time as thirty days. He had raised a similar objection to the arrangement arrived at in 1870. He would like to see a line of fast steamers running direct from Brisbane to London, either monthly or bi-monthly. Even if a bi-monthly service were adopted, he believed it would not cost more than £70,000.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he did not think it worth his while to reply to such nonsensical arguments as those of the hon. member for the Northern Downs, when he talked of steamers occupying thirty days in the tropics, and when he maintained that the whole of the wool clip would come down in two months. He would merely remind the hon. member that shearing lasted six months in different parts of the colony. With reference to the explanation of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, he found that the hon. member had very ingeniously selected the statistics of 1879 bearing upon the trade of Townsville. If the hon. member had referred to the year 1878 he would have discovered that the imports were valued at £25,568, and that in 1877 their value was as high as £37,597. The hon. member selected 1879 because the figures for that year were exceptionally low, the reason being the stoppage of immigration.

Mr. AMHURST desired to point out that the hon. member for Northern Downs was incorrect in his assumption with reference to the insurance rate. The hon. member's general knowledge of the Torres Straits route would almost lead one to suppose that he must have been either asleep or very sick during the whole of his journey.

Mr. THORN said it must be apparent to everyone that the more they extended their railways to the westward the quicker would produce be brought to Brisbane. He believed that in New South Wales, last year, the whole wool clip was sent down to Sydney in three and a-half months. Such being the case, was it likely that squatters would keep their wool here for twelve months and send it home in dribblets? It was not likely a squatter would keep his wool waiting month after month. If owners of wool had been wise last year, all the wool would have gone by the Orient and P. and O. Companies. The Money Wigram ships would not have been knocked off if they had known their own business. Those ships were knocked off because they

were not so expeditious as the Orient or the P. and O. Company's vessels, though they had great carrying capacity. He hoped the Premier would put himself in communication with the owners of those ships, and have them put on again. But the time for sailing ships was almost gone by. Sailing vessels now very rarely went round the Cape to India, and that would soon be the case with Australia, for steamers would take their place. He was astonished when he was told by the hon. member for Mitchell that the "Northumberland" and the "Durham" had been knocked off, and regretted the fact exceedingly.

Mr. SIMPSON said the hon. member had been talking the most complete rubbish, and he knew it. The hon. member was simply carrying on tactics of obstruction, and if he thought to deceive the House he was very much mistaken.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said that as to the hon. member for Northern Downs asking the Premier for further information, it was ridiculous to think any information would alter the tactics of the Opposition. The opposition to the contract had been carried on in a treacherous manner, and was disingenuous to the last degree. He was glad to hear the hon. member for Port Curtis speak in the way he did of the action of the leader of the Opposition throughout the session. Not only did he (Mr. Griffith) make a bad start, but he had carried on ever since in a most treacherous way, pleading for more time, asking for more information, demanding the Financial Statement, and saying that he would take a fresh ground of departure if there was to be any further obstruction. He had, at one time, considerable faith in the hon. member (Mr. Griffith), but that faith was completely shattered. He would never again believe one word he heard fall from that hon. member's lips unless he knew from his own knowledge it was true. The hon. member had deliberately misled the House, and the Premier had acted in far too confiding and conciliatory a way, considering that he was opposed by such a shuffler. They were not there to listen to the drivelling of the hon. member for Northern Downs, who showed his consummate ignorance of the way wool really came down from the interior. The Opposition had put their foot down, and could defeat the contract, as it was only a matter of time; and they might as well say that was their intention. He would like to say a few words about the precedent the Opposition were establishing by their present course of action. The hon. member for Maryborough last night invited the Government, as it were, to put on the "iron-hand," and the leader of the Opposition intimated that if he were leading the Government and such obstructive tactics were resorted to he would have no hesitation in doing so.

Mr. GRIFFITH: If they were resorted to by a small minority.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he did not believe in the Premier taking upon himself the responsibility of the iron-hand. That was a system only once resorted to in the colonies, and the man who used it had lost his political character for ever in consequence. It had been the pride of England that such a course had never been resorted to there. When the leader of the Opposition came into power he (Mr. Hill) would be ready for the hon. member to experimentalise upon. The hon. member had shown his contempt by pleading the cause of the hon. member for Maryborough who was in contempt; and strange to say, by he supposed an undesigned coincidence, the hon. member for Bundamba was under censure for contempt at the same time. After the bold way in which the hon. member for Bundamba straightened the

Speaker, and the bold way in which the hon. member for North Brisbane, and the hon. member for Maryborough, straightened the Speaker and defied the House, the precedent was set for a considerable amount of contempt of the Standing Orders and rules of the House. The hon. member for Rockhampton talked last night about the exalted position of a member of this House. It might be an exalted position to a man of his character, but he (Mr. Hill) found nothing exalted about it. It was a most degrading and demoralising position to have to associate and talk with the sort of men they had to meet in the House, and witness the tactics and treachery and dodgery by which the country was governed—

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION: Hear, hear.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he meant the treachery which was brought to bear in opposing the Government. But it really came to the same thing, because the Opposition had a voice in the government of the country just as much as the Ministry had. What were the Opposition doing now? They were saying the country should not have the mail service. It was by treachery, roguery, and trickery that the Government of the country was being defeated. There was no use talking about the merits or the demerits of the question, for it was well known a fortnight before the House met that obstruction was to be the order of the day. It did not matter what subject came up, it would meet with the same vexatious opposition. The leader of the Opposition pretended to oppose the contract because it was unsatisfactory, but it would have been impossible for anyone but the hon. member himself to have drawn out a contract to his own liking. He was clever enough lawyer to pick out flaws in any contract. All he (Mr. Hill) could say in the matter was, that he hoped the Government would be thoroughly staunch to their party and to themselves. He had no doubt that the next measure brought forward by the Government would also be obstructed. But the Opposition were not at all furthering their end, which was to get possession of the Treasury benches, by the course they were pursuing, because that would only make the followers of the Premier cling more closely to him on account of the disgrace the Opposition tried to cast upon him. Base imputations and insinuations were hurled by the Opposition without even the most flimsy foundation. It made his blood boil to see such ingratitude shown to a man who had done his best for the colony. There were many instances of public men having been brought to shame by base traducers, but he would leave it to the hon. member for Rosewood to rake them up. When he reflected upon the action of the leader of the Opposition he was thoroughly ashamed. He had on one occasion taken the part of the leader of the Opposition because he considered him badly treated; but never more would he take his part. It was useless discussing the question any longer, because every word that could be said and any reason that could be given would be simply thrown to the winds.

Mr. THORN said he had already pointed out a good reason against the contract as a commercial service, and the hon. members for Gregory and Dalby knew what he said was true. Their views and his were perfectly in accord. He would repeat that what had taken place last year in New South Wales would take place in Queensland if there were twenty-four hours' rain—all the wool would come down in two months. There were hon. members on the Government side just as anxious as the Opposition that the contract should be pitched out. Those hon. members re-

minded him of some working men one often heard of as going about the bush asking for work, and at the same time praying night and day—and he believed noon—they might not get it. So it was with those hon. members. They had not advocated the contract and did not pretend to defend it. It was very significant that the hon. member for Mitchell had not given his opinion. He (Mr. Thorn) would like to draw out that hon. member, as also the hon. members for Gregory and Dalby. Then there was the hon. member for Balonne.

Mr. LOW : Speak for yourself: don't speak for me.

Mr. THORN said that hon. member had not given his opinion. To return to the contract, a nine-knot service was altogether too antiquated when vessels were running at the rate of seventeen and eighteen knots. The idea of entering into a contract for a nine-knot service in the nineteenth century—in the year 1880! He was astonished. The ships of Money Wigram and Co. had already been knocked in the head because of their slowness, and yet the Government wanted to enter into a contract for a slower service still. The idea was preposterous—it was absurd. It would be better to withdraw the contract, and advertise for fresh tenders. When he was Postmaster-General the agent of the P. and O. Company made an offer of a service making Brisbane the terminus for £13,000 a-year, and running thirteen times a-year. He believed even a better bargain could be made now, and he would do the Premier the justice to say that he believed he could make a better bargain. He hoped that the Premier would, even at the eleventh hour, withdraw the contract and get a proper mail service. He should like to be informed how far from England the British-India Company were running their line of steamers now. Were they running to Singapore, or Madras, or Calcutta, or Galle?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : To Java.

Mr. THORN said it appeared, then, that this subsidy of £55,000 was for a line of steamers from Brisbane to Java. The Company had already got a trading service to Java—almost to Australia—and it was proposed to give them £55,000 to bring it to Brisbane.

Mr. AMHURST said that the gross ignorance of the hon. member was astonishing. He had asked how far the British-India Company ran towards Australia, but he never asked how far from India they ran towards England. Some of their steamers went as far as the Persian Gulf. The line, however, with which this mail contract was concerned was a direct line to England, not calling at all the ports.

Mr. THORN said he had pointed out that this would not answer as a mail service. It would not be a passenger service, because passengers did not like to mix with the Indian and Chinese passengers who would go by these boats, and for this reason people would not travel by this route, although it was a very easy one. The water was smoother, people were seldom seasick on this route, and the table in these boats was far superior to that kept on the Orient or P. and O. boats, yet they found few if any passengers using the route. Perhaps the Premier would tell them whether this company received a subsidy to trade between London or Plymouth and Java? He believed it was a very wealthy company, and that if they now went as far as Java without any subsidy they would go this much further with a very little encouragement. He would like the Premier to inform them how far this company ran their ships this way, and how much they were getting from other Governments to run between Java and London or Plymouth?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said they had just had a sample of the style of argument used against the ratification of the mail contract. Here they had the hon. gentleman who had just sat down—the member for Northern Downs, the hon. George Thorn, who had been Premier of this colony, who resigned his position as Premier to go home and show himself through Europe—displaying this ignorance. Previous to being Premier he held the office of Postmaster-General for three years, and yet he had the barefaced ignorance to stand up in the House and say that they could get a better mail contract between Singapore and Brisbane than the one proposed for £20,000. It was hardly any use replying to such arguments. Still, as every word was taken down in the gallery just the same as if spoken by the leader of the Opposition—who was worth listening to—a few words in reply might be said. When the Government called for tenders for a ten-knot service between Singapore and Brisbane, the only eligible tender sent was from the company which carried on the present Torres Straits mail service—the E. and A. Company—and their lowest tender for a ten-knot service between Singapore and Brisbane was £35,000. And yet the hon. gentleman said he could get such a service for £20,000. One of the conditions of that service was that the terminus should be at Sydney. He had the authority of the agent of the E. and A. Company for saying that when they made that tender their marine superintendent in Sydney made a calculation as to how many steamers they would require for the service, and the actual cost to the company of working it. That gentleman's calculation was that the service could be performed with the two steamers, "Brisbane" and "Bowen," and that the actual working expenses of those two steamers would be £34,000, or within £1,000 of the amount of the tender. And yet the hon. member, who had been Premier and Postmaster-General, talked such utter nonsense as he had done, and misled people outside who had to depend largely for their information on such subjects on the speeches of hon. members. Let them imagine for a moment what would be the cost of a ten-knot service, at the same rate, between London and Brisbane. Hon. members had talked about a ten-knot service and an eleven-knot service, and one hon. member had gone so far as to say they could get a fifteen or sixteen knot service; but that was as ridiculous as the assertion of the hon. member for Northern Downs. Such a service would require five steamers, each of them much larger than the "Brisbane" and "Bowen;" but, allowing that they were only the same size, it would take £85,000 to pay the working expenses of those five steamers between Brisbane and London. But the steamers provided for in the contract were vessels of 2,000 tons minimum, and it was known for a positive fact that the company were going in for steamers of 2,500 tons. A ten-knot service, with such vessels, would cost, as the Premier had said, from £95,000 to £100,000. The colony was not in a position to go in for a service of that kind;—according to the homely saying, they must cut their coat according to their cloth. The proposed mail service would practically be a ten-knot service, or perhaps even more. They would have the benefit of the P. and O. Company from London to Singapore at eleven knots an hour, and the British-India Company—or, at least, a company to be formed from the shareholders of the British-India Company—would convey the mails from Singapore to Brisbane. To run at the rate of ten knots, including calling at the ports, meant a speed of eleven knots; and the service

would actually be a ten-knot service. In reality they would have a ten-knot service between London and Brisbane for £55,000, for an additional premium which the steamers might earn by being two days earlier of £2,600, or a total of £57,600 a-year; while, at the same time, they would have the advantage of having their goods carried direct from England without transshipment or stoppage of any kind on the way, and consequently they would be encouraging the direct trade not only of Brisbane, but of every port along the Queensland coast. If hon. members could weigh that matter carefully, and put it in that light before their constituents, public opinion would very soon veer round in favour of the contract. Certainly that would not be done so long as ridiculous assertions like those made by the hon. member (Mr. Thorn) were allowed to go forth as truth—that they could get a ten-knot service for £20,000. It had been frequently urged during the debate that the Government had displayed great haste in entering into the contract, and that they were trying to force it upon the House before hon. members had had an opportunity of understanding or discussing it, and before the people of the country had been made thoroughly acquainted with it. What were the facts of the case? This service could be looked upon as nothing more nor less than a continuation or extension of the present Torres Straits service, which expired next month. In January, 1879, the then Postmaster-General, Mr. Mein, called for a service *via* the Torres Straits at nine knots, ten knots, and ten and a-half knots. The tenders were to be sent in by October of last year, and the service was to commence in November of this year. And yet, in the face of the fact that twenty months had elapsed since the first calling for tenders, the Government were accused of forcing this contract upon the House before either the House or the country had had time to consider it. Those tenders were called for in England as well as in the colonies. One tender came in from Mr. Holt, but it was wholly ineligible; and another tender, as he had already stated, came in from the E. and A. Company, offering a ten-knot service from Singapore to Brisbane, with the terminus at Sydney, for £35,000, the working expenses of which, as he had also stated, with two steamers, had been calculated at £34,000. After careful consideration the Government determined to have a mail service with its terminus at Brisbane, and they instructed the Premier to call for tenders in England for a through service having its terminus at Brisbane. The result was the contract now under discussion. He hoped hon. gentlemen opposite would not persist in accusing the Government of undue haste, seeing that they had been twenty months in considering the service, and endeavouring to obtain one capable of carrying out the requirements in Queensland. And now a number of members on the other side said, "You shall not have this service because we do not believe in it, although you are a majority and do believe in it and represent the majority of the people of the country." It had also been said that the service would not be as beneficial to the ports along the coast as it should be, because the time of detention at each port was limited to three hours. That was not the case. The company could not be compelled to stay longer than three hours, but practically they might stay as long as they liked so long as they did the service. The E. and A. Company were limited in the same way. He held in his hand a table showing the time of detention of that company's steamers at the different ports during 1879. They stayed longer at some ports than others because they had more cargo to land or ship, or more passengers to land or ship. At some ports they stayed a very short time. The average

time spent at Thursday Island was 7 hours 48 minutes. The average detention at Cooktown—where, as was well known, the E. and A. Company had a much larger trade than at any other port along the coast—was 9 hours 51 minutes. The average time at Townsville was 5 hours 7 minutes; at Bowen 38 minutes—a short time, but sufficient for the company to transact all their business in; and at Rockhampton 59 minutes.

Mr. THORN: Keppel Bay.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that by the port of Rockhampton he meant Keppel Bay. It was not usual to speak of the port of Brisbane as Moreton Bay. The figures that he had quoted showed that the E. and A. Company, who were under exactly the same conditions as were imposed under this mail contract, stayed at the ports a longer or shorter time as it suited them, but always sufficiently long to enable them to transact their business with the people of the port. Cooktown, he might state, was not a port of call according to the E. and A. Company's contract, but the company called there because the trade with that port made it worth their while to do so; and in the same way the British-India Company would call at any port which suited their purpose, but they would have to run their steamers faster in order to make up the time they lost in calling. Hon. members on the Opposition side were repeatedly saying that they were in favour of a through steam service; but he had not heard one of them say positively that he was in favour of a through steam service *via* Torres Straits. Their idea was a service of steamers running round the whole of the south and east coasts of Australia *via* Melbourne and Sydney, and making Brisbane the terminus and the only port of call in Queensland. That was not fair. Hon. members were supposed to represent all parts of the colony. He was in the House, not to advocate any undue advantage to any part of the colony, but to secure fairplay and equal advantages to the whole people of the colony, who were equally interested and who paid equally towards the expenses of the government of the colony. It ought to be thoroughly understood by the people of the colony that the hon. members who were showing their determination to prevent the ratification of this contract by stonewalling were not in favour of any steam service which would give equal advantages to all the ports of the colony; but that they were in favour of one which would make Brisbane the terminus and the emporium of Queensland. He should have no objection to Brisbane being made the emporium of the colony if it were suitably situated in the colony for that purpose, but unfortunately it was situated at one extreme corner of the colony, within a few miles of the southern border, and occupying that position it could not possibly be made the only port of call with justice and fairplay to the other ports of the colony. In calculating the cost of a mail service *via* Melbourne it had been assumed that the A.S.N. Company would be prepared to carry the mails between Sydney and Brisbane at an additional expense of £4,000 a-year, but the condition of that estimate was that a time-table could be arranged for steamers to leave Sydney on Fridays and Brisbane on Tuesdays. If the steamers left on those days the consequence would be that the people of the northern parts of the colony, who had been accustomed to get their news by means of the weekly Press within two or three days of the publication of the weekly papers, would have to wait a week longer for their news; and the whole Press of the colony would suffer more or less through the delay in the transmission of their publications. In addition to that, such a time-table would not be as

easily carried out, nor would it be so advantageous as the one at present in existence. Besides that, if the colony were to be dependent upon the P. and O. or the Orient Company for mails the people would be entirely placed at the mercy of four different parties, so far as their mails were concerned—first, the mail company, who carried the mails as far as Melbourne; then the Victorian Government, who would carry the mails overland from Melbourne to the borders of New South Wales; then the New South Wales Government, who would carry them from their borders to Sydney; and then a company which had never shown much mercy to the people of Queensland—the A.S.N. Company—to carry them from Sydney to Brisbane. Was that the position that hon. members proposed the Government should take up, placing the colony in a dependent position, when by the payment of a very small additional sum to the present subsidy it might be placed in a position of complete independence? That was one of the disadvantages which would result to the colony through the failure to ratify this mail contract. Another would be the loss of the anticipated advantage likely to accrue through the direct service calling at all the northern ports. Great quantities of magnificent land and almost inexhaustible mineral resources were lying along the northern coast, and the sooner the ports of the North were brought into direct communication with Great Britain the better it would be for the whole colony. At the present moment Queensland possessed the greatest amount of mineral resources of any colony in Australia, not excepting Victoria, which had taken too high a position as a producer of minerals, especially gold;—and what was the position of the colony now in spite of those almost inexhaustible resources? Unless the golden reefs lying there, almost asking to be worked, could be made to yield an amount of gold sufficiently large to pay the men working them at the rate of £250 to £350 a year, they could not be worked at all; when by the introduction of capital, such as might be expected from Great Britain, those reefs could be worked at as low remunerative rates as those obtained in Victoria. What would be the consequence to the colony of such an introduction of capital? The whole of the capital employed in machinery at the present time in all the goldfields of Queensland did not amount to a quarter of a million, whilst there were natural resources enough to employ properly at least seven, eight, or even ten millions, and the employment of that capital would produce remunerative interest to the capitalist. In the colony of Victoria, which was about one-sixth or one-eighth of this colony in size, and did not possess one-tenth of the resources of this colony, the capital employed was twenty times as large, and the number of European miners employed was eight or nine times as large. Yet they were all happy and contented, although their earnings were scarcely within one-third of the average earnings of the miners in Queensland, working as they were in a haphazard way, without capital, in an almost primitive manner. Leaving aside party feeling, and the animosities engendered by the discussion of this contract, he thought the House would be acting in a suicidal manner in refusing to ratify this mail contract, regarding only the beneficial effect it would have in promoting the development of the mineral resources of the colony, and the occupation of the magnificent land suitable for sugar, coffee, rice, and every other tropical production which was to be met with along the coast. The land was now lying idle, and hon. members were taking the best means to prevent the introduction of people to occupy it, and of capital to be expended

upon it. In the interior across the Cardwell range there were also large tracts of agricultural land as good as the Darling Downs, and better watered. Within forty miles of the range, and extending over an area of one hundred miles in extent, was a magnificent tract of country two thousand feet above the sea level, well watered all the year round, and capable of maintaining a population six or seven times that of the Darling Downs in profitable agricultural employment. The proposed service, allowing it to be, for the sake of argument, in some points defective, as hon. members had stated, would be the best ocean route the colony could obtain. It would bring the colony into direct communication with England, without the necessity for calling at Adelaide, Melbourne, or Sydney, and without the loss of passengers who would naturally travel by the line if it took the route *via* Torres Straits. He maintained, also, that it would be equally as speedy as far as Brisbane was concerned, and that it would be speedier for the northern ports. The time which would be saved to the port of Cooktown would be about six days, and if the connection between Brisbane and Sydney was not well maintained there would be a difference, probably, of eleven days. The difference to Townsville in favour of the northern route would be at least four days, or eight days if the connection with Sydney proved defective. It had been urged that there would be a large expenditure connected with the northern route in providing means for the transhipment of mails and passengers. Such was not the case at present under the contract with the E. and A. Company, and the conditions were the same. The only expense incurred by the Government at present for the transhipment of mails was £250 for Keppel Bay and Rockhampton. In Moreton Bay the mails were carried by the "Kate," and at the northern ports the Customs officers carried the mails; so that the argument referred to entirely fell to the ground. The cost of transhipping the mails was only £250 independent of the expenses of the "Kate," and the cost would be the same under the new contract. The company would be bound, in the protection of their own interests, to make arrangements for the transhipment of passengers and cargo, and, of course, their arrangements would depend entirely on the traffic requirements of the port of call. Where the largest amount of cargo was shipped and the greatest number of passengers taken on or landed, there the expenditure would be the heaviest; but that was a matter which affected the company alone. It must also be borne in mind that seven years ago, when the population of the country was not more than one-half what it was at present, and when the revenue was only about one half what it was now, the Government were empowered by Parliament to enter into a contract for the carriage of mails *via* Torres Straits at an expense, he believed, of £25,000. The Government now asked Parliament to ratify a contract which would cost only £5,000 more than double the amount of the former contract, and yet they were told that it was beyond the means of the colony. The contract which was entered into seven years ago would expire next month, and the people of the northern ports, who had enjoyed the facilities afforded by that contract, would, by the action of the Opposition, be deprived of those facilities, for he did not know how long. It was impossible for anyone to predict how long it would be before they would again have the same facilities. He believed it would be a very long time, as he was confident that the Government would never be able to get another tender which would be so advantageous as the one which the Opposition were determined should not be accepted. Instead of getting an

offer at £55,000, he believed that for the same rate of speed and the same number of years they would be asked £70,000. No people except those tenderers who were in reality connected with the British-India and the Netherlands Company could enter into a contract at £55,000 a year with any expectation of making a profit out of it. It was only because they had already established a large trade with British India that the tenderers could expect to make any money out of the contract for many years after it was ratified. A party of capitalists having no prospect before them of establishing anything but a trade along the coast of Queensland could not possibly make a contract at £55,000 pay; they would require £20,000 more. The people of the North would have to thank the Opposition for the loss of the privileges which they had enjoyed for the last seven years. It had been repeatedly urged that the term of the contract was too long. The hon. member (Mr. Dickson) made a great point of that. The contract just about to expire was for seven years, and the Postmaster-General of the Government of which the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) was a member actually called for tenders for a contract of ten years. Yet that hon. member stood up and asserted that the proposed contract was for too long a term. Why did not the hon. member tell his Postmaster-General that ten years was too long? The arguments and assertions of the hon. members opposite with regard to the mail contract could scarcely be considered as reasonable—they were simply arguments for party purposes. The term of the P. and O. Company's service was eight years. He believed that no company could be got to tender for a shorter term than that. The Premier did his best in London to reduce the term to seven years, but the company refused to do so. It was not a fair ground to take in favour of the non-ratification of the contract that it was for one or two years longer than some hon. members thought it should be for. What would be their position if they had to enter into arrangements with the other colonies for the conveyance of mails by their routes? If they entered into the contract they would be in an independent position; they would be able to take a high stand and say, "We have a service of our own; we can send our letters by our own route, but if you will reciprocate we may send by your route and you may send by ours;" but if the contract were not entered into their position would be *vice versa*—they would be in the position of humble supplicants. It would be unreasonable to expect the Victorian and New South Wales Governments to give them any advantages if they could not confer corresponding advantages in return. The gentlemen composing the Governments of the other colonies were human beings the same as the members of the Opposition, and probably they were not actuated by the same unpatriotic motives as those hon. members were. Although they were subjects of the same Sovereign and spoke the same language, the other colonies would say to them, "You must pay for the privileges which we confer on you." The A.S.N. Company would do the same thing. They knew what that company had done before, and no doubt they would repeat their actions. It was a foolish thing for an independent colony like Queensland to place itself in such a position that it was compelled to go to a steamship company or the Governments of the other colonies as supplicants. The leader of the Opposition had stated recently that the Orient Company were carrying freight to Brisbane at 70s. per ton.

MR. GRIFFITH: The P. and O. Company.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the rate mentioned was 70s. per ton with the usual 10 per cent. added, but the hon. member should

have added the rates which were charged between Sydney and the northern ports. He would tell the House what the northern people had to pay. By measurement—the basis on which the statement of the leader of the Opposition was made—the people of Rockhampton had to pay 30s. per ton from Sydney; the people of Maryborough, 28s. 6d.; the people of Mackay, 40s.; the people of Bowen, 50s.; the people of Townsville, 60s.; and the people of Cardwell, 70s. per ton;—so that actually the people of Cardwell were paying as much for the carriage of their goods from Sydney as the people of Brisbane were paying the P. and O. Company for carriage from London; and yet the leader of the Opposition by his action would perpetuate such a state of things. The people of Cairns and Port Douglas also paid 70s., and those at Cooktown paid 60s. Of course, from Sydney to the northern ports meant that the people in the North who got their goods from Sydney gave Brisbane the go-by, which was a most unfortunate thing and an evil which hon. members opposite should do their best to amend. Even if those hon. members opposite could not agree to give what they considered privileges to the northern ports, they should devise some means for securing to Brisbane the northern trade. He would now tell hon. members what the people in the North had to pay for the carriage of goods from Brisbane. The people at Maryborough paid 12s. 6d. a-ton from Brisbane; the people of Mackay, 40s.; those at Bowen, 40s.; the people of Townsville paid 50s.; Cardwell, 60s.; Cairns, 60s.; Port Douglas, 60s.; Cooktown, 50s. Hon. members on both sides would admit that the port of Townsville was of some importance and was entitled to consideration, even if not so much as Brisbane was; yet the people there had to pay 50s. a-ton in addition to 70s. from England to Brisbane, or one hundred and twenty shillings per ton on every ton of goods. Would anyone say for one moment that the British-India Company would charge any such price as that per ton? The thing was so absurd that no man in his senses would dream of its being done. He maintained that the company would, in their own interest—and they would be compelled to work in their own interests against others—carry goods to the northern ports at the same charge that the P. and O. Company were carrying them to Brisbane now, and thus there would be a saving of £3 on every ton to the colony. He was afraid that all the arguments he was using would be thrown away, but he was bound to do what he considered his duty to the country. Hon. members opposite said that they were doing their duty in stonewalling this contract; perhaps they were, and he would not even say at present whether in his opinion they themselves did not believe they were. He, however, was bound to do his duty to the country on this the last night of debate on the question. He believed the position hon. members opposite had taken up, although they said it was justifiable, was one that the merest tyro in the country, and that the most ignorant man who could get into that House, could take up—namely, to stand up and stonewall. It required no intelligence to stonewall, but simply an amount of assurance on the part of members, of callousness to the interests of the country and of the people they represented, and also a certain amount of physical endurance. That was not a position to take up which any hon. member had reason to be proud of, but rather one that he should be ashamed of. It was a position he (Mr. Macrossan) believed had never been taken up in any of the Australian colonies on such a question. He could understand a party taking up the position of stonewalling where the liberties of a country were endangered, but on a question of

pure administration it was different. The Premier had, when in England, full power to ratify the contract, and therefore he (Mr. Macrossan) contended that the position now taken up by hon. members opposite was one which had never been taken by an Opposition in any part of the world. What was the position of affairs in England at the present time? They had been told by the hon. member for Maryborough what was done in France and other countries when an Opposition wished to oppose any measure of a Government; but, surely, hon. members were not going to look at countries whose arguments were more frequently bullets than logic, but would look to that free country from which they had sprung—whose constitution they lived under, and whose laws they had adopted—they would do that rather than resort to any unjust iron-hand course which could be pursued even though it were at the wish of the hon. member for Maryborough. Within the last few years a very small section in the House of Commons had taken up a position of obstruction, but not of stonewalling. That was a party acting in the interests of a nation, and not acting in the interests of only a small section of the community or of one town, and only of a very small portion of that town. The party he referred to had taken up the interests of a nation; and what had been the conduct of the Imperial Government in reference to them? Had they threatened to put on the iron-hand? No; on the contrary, they were content to let their obstructionists play their little game and wear themselves out. The hon. member for Maryborough should have told them to look to Mexico and other places where they took to the musket and bayonet instead of stonewalling—that was the country the hon. member should have referred to. He contended, however, that the country they should look to for a precedent was the country from which they had sprung, and of which they should be proud. He wished to put before the country one fact—that the Premier in not ratifying the contract whilst in England did that which he was in no way bound to do—that he was acting in good faith on behalf of the interests of the colony, believing that Parliament would have a sufficient sense of the justice of his conduct to discuss the contract on its own merits and let it be decided by the opinion of a majority of the House. He himself was sorry that the hon. Premier had acted as he had done in not ratifying the contract at home, as he had the power to do; and if he (Mr. Macrossan) had known at the time as much as he knew now, he should have raised his voice against the course pursued by his hon. colleague. He would have advised the Premier to do what the hon. member for Stanley said on the previous evening he would have done under the circumstances—namely, lay the contract on the table of the House and say, "If you do not like it turn me out." He believed that any Premier having the experience of this session before him would do that which he would not otherwise be inclined to do—he would take upon himself to ratify anything at his pleasure. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) made use of some strong expressions on the previous evening. When urging on the Premier to put on the iron-hand, the hon. member said—

"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."

What was there unfair in asking Parliament to ratify a contract within a certain time? It must be ratified some time, and it would be just as easy for the hon. member and others to stonewall it twelve months hence as now. But in the present case it was necessary that

the contract should be ratified within a certain time in order to allow the company time to build steamers and make the necessary preparations. It was doubly necessary for this reason, that the action of the late Government in giving notice of the termination of their contract to the E. and A. Company caused that company to cease its service at the end of next month. If that notice had not been given no doubt a longer time could have been allowed for the ratification of the proposed contract. He might also state that the present Government, finding themselves in a difficulty, had asked the E. and A. Company to extend their contract for twelve months to allow them time to look around for another contract, and that the company had refused to do so. The hon. member for Maryborough also said on the previous evening that—

"He wished it to be distinctly understood that he did not approve of the principle of government by minorities."

But did the hon. gentleman mean to say that the Opposition were not attempting to govern the colony by a minority at the present time? If the Government said, "We want this contract, as we consider it will be beneficial to the colony to have it," and the Opposition said, "No, you shall not have it," surely that was attempting to govern the colony by a minority? It was nothing else but government by minority. It was impossible for hon. gentlemen to shake themselves free of the responsibility. As long as they lived—as long as the responsible members—and they were not all responsible members—lived, the responsibility which they were taking upon themselves to-night would follow them like a Nemesis. Wherever they might go, as Ministers, they would be followed by the Nemesis of stonewalling. It would be brought home to them—if the people did not bring it home to them sooner—by members now on the Government side of the House. In effect, the hon. member for Maryborough said, "I do not believe in government by minority, yet I am determined to stonewall; and oh! Mr. Treasurer, please put on the iron-hand and prevent me from stonewalling! I implore you to prevent me from incurring this awful responsibility! I do not believe in stonewalling, but I must do it unless you stop me!" The hon. member reminded him very forcibly of a story he had once heard of an unfortunate person who became insane at certain periods, and who, when he felt his madness coming on, said, "Oh, for God's sake, tie me up; I am getting mad!" This was very like the hon. member for Maryborough—the gentleman who had stood up in that House as the advocate and defender of constitutional government when a small section of members on that side stonewalled for twenty-four hours. But hon. members opposite had been stonewalling for two whole months—since the 6th day of July—and if he was not much mistaken they would stonewall for six months longer. He hoped they would not; but if he was not much mistaken there were some members on the Opposition side who were determined to stonewall. But he could tell those hon. members that their stonewalling would not lead to the consequences they anticipated. They were evidently under the impression that with a sufficient length of stonewalling, and with a sufficiently strong stonewall, they would compel the Government to resign or dissolve. They never were more mistaken in their lives. As long as the Government retained the confidence of a majority of that House, even if it were a majority of only one man, so long would they continue to hold the office, in spite of all stonewalling, which the people of the colony had given them. He hoped, although he feared it was hoping against hope, that hon.

gentlemen opposite at the last moment—at the eleventh hour—would come to their senses, and allow the Government to govern the colony and take the responsibility of that Government upon their shoulders. He asked them—at the eleventh hour of two months of perpetual stonewalling—in the interests of the people of the whole colony and of constitutional government—to abandon their stonewalling, and to allow the Government of the country to be carried on constitutionally.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Minister for Works had delivered a long, and in many respects an able, speech, which, however, he ventured to think ought to have been delivered before that evening. It was a speech which should have been delivered some weeks ago.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN : Better late than never.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that that possibly might be the case; but the speech appeared to him as being addressed not so much to the House as to some parts of the colony, and to be delivered, moreover, at that particular time in the expectation that hon. members on the Opposition side of the House, knowing that the subject had been thrashed threadbare before, would not take the trouble again to reply to arguments already used in speeches made many times in the course of the debate. He would only briefly advert to some of the hon. gentleman's arguments, simply because he did not wish it to be understood that upon this occasion the hon. gentleman should have the satisfaction of thinking that he had uttered the last words in the debate unanswered. The hon. gentleman was fond of coming in at the close of a debate and recapitulating a number of arguments, trusting to the well known fact that many people did not trouble to read the whole of the debate, preferring to read the end. The hon. gentleman referred towards the close of his speech to the impropriety of obstruction. He preferred to use the term "obstruction"; it was more parliamentary than the term "stonewalling," and less associated with slang. The hon. member made a most pathetic appeal to hon. members in opposition to repent of their sins at the eleventh hour and allow that which was right to be done. The hon. gentleman compared the conduct of those hon. members—who, he said, represented only a small section of one town in the colony—with the conduct of the Home Rule party in the Imperial Parliament, who, the hon. gentleman said, instead of representing a small section of people in one town, represented a nation. If hon. members in opposition thought they represented the opinion of one part of the people of one town, or that they represented the opinion of twenty towns, and did not represent the deliberate opinion of a large majority of the colony, they would not occupy the position they then occupied. They might be wrong in their conclusion, but they were bound by it; the responsibility was theirs. They were acting upon the deliberate belief that they represented a majority of the people of the colony. That was their justification for the course they pursued. Of course, hon. members on the other side would say that they were wrong. If their opinion were wrong, then they were wrong in the course they were adopting. They had to ascertain by the best means at their disposal what were the facts and to act accordingly. They were not bound to take the opinion of the Minister for Works as to the facts which they believed justified them in their action. They had to ascertain the facts independently; and they had done so.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : What is the process?

Mr. GRIFFITH said they had the same means of ascertaining public opinion as other

people possessed—and possibly better means of ascertaining that opinion than had the other side of the House. Personally, he thought the other side were mistaken in their view of public opinion. If he thought the country disapproved of the action of the Opposition he would not be a party to the obstruction. Since he first entered the House he had taken considerable part in preventing and discouraging obstruction. In doing so he had upon more than one occasion made enemies of friends. He still held exactly the same opinion he had always held upon this subject; but upon that occasion he believed they were bound to take the course which they had deliberately adopted. He would pass to one or two other arguments of the Minister for Works. The hon. member said the Opposition were determined that the northern part of the colony should have no direct communication with Great Britain. That was, no doubt, the main thing which the hon. member rose to say, but he could not allow a statement of that kind to go uncontradicted. What earthly object could they have in preventing the northern portion of the colony from having direct communication with Great Britain? He could not conceive what the object could be. He could not understand how it could be supposed that the Opposition were such fools as to do anything of the kind. They were just as anxious as the Minister for Works to secure direct communication for the North—notwithstanding that they did not protest so loudly that their desire was to do justice to all portions of the colony, including the North. It had been pointed out over and over again that, if the contract were to be of use to any part of the colony, it would be of most benefit to Brisbane. Even in the extreme North people were sensible enough upon this subject—as they were upon most subjects—to perceive that when the people in this part of the colony were unanimous in their opposition to the proposition—

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : No.

Mr. GRIFFITH, then, would say almost unanimously opposed. The people of the North knew that they were not such fools as to oppose a tremendous boom—such as the Government were now said to be forcing upon them. He did not think the rejection of the contract would in the least degree interfere with direct communication between Great Britain and the northern portion of the colony. The mail contract which had been running for the past eight years had not brought about direct communication with Great Britain. He believed the mail service *via* Torres Straits had been of remarkably little use as a merchant service. The Opposition, therefore, could not be said to be endeavouring to deprive the North of any advantage they had enjoyed up to the present time. The hon. gentleman then proceeded to tell the House of the enormous resources of the colony—of the large field for the profitable investment of capital in mining, of the territory to the west of Cardwell—fertile, well watered, and fit to grow any quantity of agricultural produce. The hon. member left it to be inferred that in opposing the mail contract the Opposition were endeavouring to prevent the settlement of that part of the colony, and the investment of large sums of money in mining. He did not know what description of audiences the hon. gentleman was in the habit of addressing; but, for his own part, he quite failed to see—as must anyone else who examined the matter for two seconds—that there was the slightest connection between the mail proposition and the settlement of the agricultural land west of Cardwell, or the introduction of money for the development of their mining resources. Did the hon. gentle-

man want the House to suppose that capitalists contemplating the investment of money in the country would be influenced by such a sentimental question as whether they would go by a direct steamer to the North or not? Capitalists, of course, would come by the best route. Was there a capitalist desirous of investing his money in Northern Queensland who would not go there, supposing he wanted to, quite independently of there being a direct steamer? Would he not quite as soon travel by a P. and O. steamer? The idea was preposterous. Whoever heard of capitalists being induced to invest their money in a certain place because there happened to be a steamer going all the way? In the same way, who were the people who were going to settle on the lands to the west of Cardwell? He took it they would be people who, when the land was thrown open, if they saw that it was worth settling upon, would settle there. How would people get there? He supposed by the best way they could. He did not see that the fact of having a steamer from London going to a port a hundred or two hundred miles from the place would make any great difference in settling the land, as compared with the fact of a steamer going to some other place, perhaps, 500 miles from it. Capital would find its own level entirely irrespective of mail routes;—if capital sought a place for investment it would find it; and whether this service were established this year or not would have nothing to do with it. Moreover, the hon. gentleman should have pointed out, to be fair in his argument, that it was not going to be a direct mail service for the next twelve months; and he (Mr. Griffith) trusted that before twelve months expired they would see their way to obtaining a more satisfactory means of communication with Great Britain than was contained in the proposition before the Committee. The whole basis of the argument of the hon. gentleman was this: if the proposition was rejected the Opposition would be preventing direct communication with England. But that was not the question at all. If the proposition was one brought before the House asking to affirm that direct communication with Great Britain was desirable, and the result of negating that motion would prevent it being brought on again for eight years, then the arguments of the hon. gentleman would have had some little force. But the question now before the Committee was whether a particular contract ought to be ratified: a very different thing indeed. If this contract were not ratified, another might be ratified. What was the alternative? Was it between having a very bad contract or none at all for several years? He did not see how that alternative came in, but he should certainly think the alternative was between having a very bad contract and a good one. That seemed to him to be the alternative, and it appeared to him that by refusing to pass this bad contract—bad in every particular as they believed it to be—they were leaving the way open for the other alternative—not no communication, but the establishment of a proper contract for the carrying out of the mail service. That was the alternative they had been forcing upon the Government—to make proper provision for carrying out such a measure as might be necessary for the establishment of mail communication with Great Britain. That was what they were forcing on the Government, and for which he thought they ought to be grateful to the Opposition, as he was sure the country would be. These fallacies had been repeated over and over again throughout the debate, and had been pointed out several times, but he thought it right before sitting down to again show the absurdity of them. This was the position they now stood in:—Here was a contract bad in

almost every respect, not binding upon the contractors to any substantial extent, not guaranteed by any substantial penalties, very slow, behind the age even at the present time and certain to be very much more behind the age in the course of a few years, not an immigration service, bad as a mail service, and which could only be justified as a service to subsidise steam merchant vessels between Queensland and Great Britain, and even bad for that. He would ask, did the circumstances of the colony at the present time justify their entering into an extraordinary speculation of that kind? It was because the contract was of that character that the people in nearly every part of the colony had almost universally condemned it. They did not feel justified in entering into a gigantic speculation of this kind without knowing how they were going to pay for it; and it seemed to him that the people of the colony had a great deal more sense than the Government in connection with this matter. That was the real question before the Committee—not whether they were going to prevent settlement on the lands about Cardwell, or the introduction of millions of money to develop the mining resources of the colony—that was not the question: the question was whether they should leave it to the present Government or a better one, which he trusted would succeed them, to make a good bargain on behalf of the country, instead of the bad one now before them. The hon. gentleman had quoted statistics with regard to the time of the arrival of the mails and the cost of freight, and in respect to the arrival of mails his statistics did not agree with those given by the Premier in opening the debate, because the Premier was obliged to admit that from Rockhampton southward any other route would be more expeditious. It was only from Cape Palmerston northward that this line would be more expeditious; but if they considered the distance between Rockhampton or Mackay and Cooktown, they would see the difference could not be nearly as great as the hon. gentleman had stated. With respect to freight, he apprehended that freights would find their own level. He could not understand how this contract was to reduce freights to the northern ports; he did not think it would have that effect. It appeared to him that there must be several ways of bringing freight from London to, say, Townsville; and if by one of these routes freights could not be carried at less than £6 per ton, he was sure that people who had the other route would not carry at less than £5 15s. per ton. Why should they?—they had the ordinary instincts of human nature, and if no competitor could go below £5 15s. they would charge that sum, and no doubt a great deal more if they could get it. So that it seemed to him that the assumption that freights to Queensland would be reduced proceeded on the obvious fallacy that the contractors for this line, who were not bound down by any stipulation as to the rate of freight, would not endeavour to get the very best terms they could from the people whose freight they carried. He should not follow the hon. gentleman at greater length: there were a great many points in his speech to which he (Mr. Griffith) would not refer, for obvious reasons. He thought he had said enough to show that the arguments of the hon. gentleman were based, to a great extent, upon the flights of his own fancy. The Opposition were quite prepared for the Nemesis which the hon. gentleman stated was coming upon them, although he believed that that Nemesis would assume no substantial shape. However, the Opposition were quite prepared to take all the responsibility of their action; and, in reality, they were assisting the Government in getting rid of a very bad bargain.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had treated them to another speech of the same character that they had become accustomed to during the last seven weeks. He did not intend to reply to the hon. member at any considerable length, but he wished to refer simply to the manner in which he (Mr. Griffith) had met the arguments of the Minister for Works. He (the Premier) considered his hon. colleague, the Minister for Works, had made a most sensible speech—one, at all events, that was calculated to turn back any sensible member from a bad course, were that possible. Even at the last moment they thought it possible that common-sense might have come to the leader of the Opposition, in spite of the very bad advice he had received from the tail end of his party. They had seen it all through in his manner; they had heard it admitted by his friends both inside and outside that he (Mr. Griffith) thoroughly disapproved of the course he was now adopting.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

The PREMIER said there was not a member on that side of the House who had not seen right through that opposition to this question was guided by the very worst minds on the other side of the House. They had had samples of the hon. gentleman's leadership last year when the Opposition commenced stonewalling, but he withdrew from that position and was now under the impression that by so doing he had lost friends amongst his party. The hon. gentleman was forced into the position by the lower members of his party, whom he was supposed to lead, and was now simply standing on the result of his caucus meetings. They knew perfectly well that he was not following his own judgment, but that he was taking a course which he would thoroughly regret. The hon. gentleman said that their object was to try and substitute a good contract for the very bad one now before them; but if that had been their object, why did they not suggest some practical amendments by which the new contract could be improved?

Mr. GRIFFITH: So they did.

The PREMIER said they did not suggest anything of the sort. What sort of advice had they offered? The hon. member for Enoggera had spoken night after night, urging that they should get the contract for five years only. Then they had the hon. member for Rockhampton, another of the obstructionists, asking that the contract should be for at least a fifteen or sixteen knot service; then another leader of the obstructionist party came forward with the suggestion that the contract should be for £25,000 a-year. That was a sample of the advice they had received from the Opposition; and what did it amount to—that they were to have a fifteen or sixteen knot service for five years at the rate of £25,000 a year. Could anything be more absurd than to fancy that the Government were getting advice from the other side—that any *bonâ fide* attempt had been made by the Opposition at all to graft their ideas on to this mail contract? Why, it was waste of time to listen to such arguments as that, and if the leader of the Opposition did not think that he was having the last word on this mail contract he would not have had the audacity to repeat such statements again. The hon. gentleman characterised the speech of the Minister for Works as a pathetic appeal to the Opposition. He was reported in *Hansard* to have said yesterday that he (the Premier) made an appeal *ad misericordiam* to the Opposition.

Mr. GRIFFITH: It is a mistake; I did not say so.

The PREMIER said he knew perfectly well that the hon. gentleman did not say so; but he was reported so in *Hansard*. It was the hon.

member for Maryborough who stated that he (the Premier) appealed *ad misericordiam* to the Opposition. He (the Premier) explained as sensibly and explicitly as he could, yesterday, and gave his reasons why this contract should be carried out, and he did not think any member on that side of the House thought for a moment that he was appealing to the sympathies of the Opposition. And he was quite sure his hon. friend did not intend to make a pathetic appeal to them: he was well aware that it would be perfectly useless to do so, because no matter how eloquent his speech might be they knew it would not elicit the slightest sympathy from hon. members opposite. All he wished to say was that the action of the Opposition was such as to limit the power of Parliament itself. In the face of this action no Ministry would ever again delegate to one of their number authority to make a contract if there was a chance of their being met with such opposition as was now offered to this contract. He (the Premier) had the power to make this contract without the ratification of Parliament at all; and after the treatment the Ministry had received from a small minority in the House, he did not think any Ministry would ever again follow the precedent set by him and submit to the approval of Parliament work of this character. He said that the Opposition, by their action, had done one of the greatest wrongs that could possibly be done to any country governed by a Parliament—that was, that they limited the power of Parliament so as to put a larger amount of power into the hands of the Government—a power which he did not think they ought to have. He believed that a contract of this sort ought to be submitted for the ratification of Parliament. Seeing, however, the way in which the contract had been met, and that right action on the part of the Government would be met by the intrigues of a minority, as it had been in this instance, and the good object sought to be attained by the Government be defeated, he would hesitate a long time before he would submit for the approval of Parliament any matter of this kind. He laid upon the Opposition not only the responsibility of obstructing, but the stronger responsibility of having set one of the worst precedents which he had seen. He had no intention of keeping the House to listen to the idle twaddle which they should have from the member for Northern Downs and his *confrères* the moment they had the chance. He had done all he could to pass the contract through the House. He had tried all he could to keep faith with the parties to the contract. He had acted in good faith. He had done his utmost to get the views of the Government placed before the House. They had been met by misrepresentation; the whole consideration of the question had been clouded by matters foreign to it, and had influenced men's judgment outside the House, and possibly inside it, a great deal more than considerations belonging specially to the contract. The Opposition had taken this action all through for party purposes alone, and to bring about the defeat of the Government. He had acted his part, and what he might do further he would state to the House at the proper time. But he did not think from his action that he would be blamed, as he was last night, of having refused to take upon himself the responsibilities of the position. He was perfectly prepared to take those responsibilities. He did not think that the victory the Opposition had gained that evening was a great one—it had been secured by simple brute force. Whatever course the Government might take, he was sure they would not be liable to the imputation that they were not prepared to take action and that he was not prepared to take responsibilities upon himself. He would

now move that the Chairman leave the chair, report no progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. DICKSON said he would withdraw his motion that the Chairman report no progress.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : No, no !

Question put and negatived.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he wished to say a few words with respect to some remarks which had fallen from the Premier. The hon. gentleman had repeated what had been said on a previous occasion by some member of his Government, when he stated that he believed he (Mr. Griffith) was not in accord with the Opposition in the action that had been taken. He had said already, and he would repeat, that the Opposition, in the action they had taken, had acted upon his advice which he gave before hearing any suggestion, and that he was most cordially in accord with them. The hon. gentleman had also referred to a matter which had taken place last year. He was glad that he had done so, as he had given him the opportunity of correcting an illusion which still prevailed. He was accused of taking up a position last year and then withdrawing from it. Whatever fault he had, that was not one. He had a certain amount of obstinacy—perhaps too much—in his disposition. He did not rashly take up a position, but when it was once taken he did not lightly withdraw from it. The circumstances last year were these :—At midnight on a Wednesday the Government proposed a motion of great importance, involving an outlay by the country of an enormous sum of money. On the spur of the moment, and without consulting his supporters, he said that if the Premier thought he would carry the motion through before next Government sitting day he was mistaken. His friends agreed with him, and they determined that the attempt of the Government to carry the motion then should not be successful; and the House sat until midday on Friday. They thus gained the object for which they were striving. In the meantime, an impression had somehow got abroad that the Opposition intended to continue in that course indefinitely, but no such intention had been formed. Judging by the interruption which was proceeding from the opposite benches, there must be some animal in the House that Chiarini's circus had left behind. He consulted his party on the first opportunity. Everybody in Brisbane who communicated with him knew that no such intention had been formed so far as he was concerned. On the Monday he consulted with his party, and after very serious consideration they agreed with him, by a considerable majority, that it was undesirable to renew the action adopted on the previous week, which had attained the object for which it was instituted. Having attained their object they were free to consider the question on its merits; and they did so. These were the circumstances. They had been misrepresented. He had now merely repeated the statement that he made in the House on August 25 last year; and he would add that it was strange how often a false statement had to be contradicted before it was accepted as false. He wished also to refer to one other matter. The Premier said that on another occasion he would exercise the undoubted power of the Government of making a contract without consulting the House. It must not be understood that he (Mr. Griffith) conceded that the Government had such undoubted power. He thought they had not, and that if a contract was made under such circumstances the House would still have power to refuse the money, and if the Government did what the Premier himself recognised was improper—

namely, make a contract without consulting Parliament—it might be justifiable for the House—he hoped the occasion would never arise—to stop supplies in order to defeat it. If the Government made contracts which were unauthorised by Parliament the parties entered into them with their eyes open. He considered it necessary to notice the Premier's statements in order to remove the misapprehensions which apparently existed.

The PREMIER said it was not often that the Government asked the leader of the Opposition for legal advice, and they knew that he never volunteered it except when he had an object of his own to attain. Whatever course the Government did take would be upon legal advice of their own. No Ministry had power to make a contract at all, and it depended altogether upon Parliament to vote the money. It was not necessary for the hon. gentleman to tell members a trite truism like that. But they knew perfectly well how far a Ministry could bind the honour of the country and Parliament. The hon. gentleman might have gone farther, and told the House that the present Parliament had no power to bind the next, so that it was quite within the scope of the next Parliament to say that the present one had no right to bind the country to a contract for eight years. Still, it would not be honourable to do so. The hon. gentleman had favoured them for the sixth time with an account of his vacillation last year when he was in a difficulty.

Mr. GRIFFITH : For the first time.

The PREMIER said it was for the first time so fully, but he had referred to it several times. The hon. gentleman's account of the matter was the rosiest he had yet heard. He would relate the facts. The Opposition obstructed until midday on Friday, and on the Sunday following the hon. member consulted with him, his object being to get him to concede something so that he might be able to obtain some sort of victory for the Opposition. He (Mr. McIlwraith) conceded nothing; he assured the hon. gentleman that he would stand by his position, and that he had no hope of being able to supply any argument which would induce the rabid section of the hon. member's followers to yield to common-sense. On the Tuesday the party met, and then common-sense came in; the hon. member told his party that he did not believe in obstruction, and that he did not mean to carry it on. He came into the House, and after speaking for five minutes the obstruction ceased. On that occasion he acted rightly. This year, under similar circumstances, he obstructed up to a certain point—he obstructed until everyone could see by his face that he was sick of it, and could tell by his speeches what his feelings were. He then asked for time to consult his supporters. He was doubtful; he did not know whether he should allow the common-sense that he possessed to get the victory, or be ruled by the tag-rag section of his supporters. He (Mr. McIlwraith) saw the hon. member was gone completely and gave the time, but he knew that if the hon. member (Mr. Thorn), and the hon. member (Mr. Miles), and the hon. member (Mr. Dickson), whom he might call the third despot, were at the meeting, the leader of the Opposition would be ruled by them. The next day everybody knew that those three hon. members were to be at the meeting of the Opposition, and everybody knew what conclusion would be arrived at.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he must again rise to reply to the Premier. The debate had extended far enough, and was apparently to end with a discussion as to what conclusions were to be drawn from the expressions of his countenance—

as to what was passing through his mind. It was true that he had an interview with the Premier last year and asked him for a concession, but what he asked him to concede was time to consult his party. The hon. gentleman was good enough to give it to him on the Monday. The House adjourned for two or three hours to allow him to consult his party, whom he had had no opportunity of consulting previously. That was the only concession he asked. With respect to what happened last Tuesday week—when, according to the Premier, he looked sick of the affair—he was happy to think he had the confidence of his party, but he could not feel justified in announcing that they had determined to follow such a serious course as obstructing a proposition of the Government without consulting them all; neither would he have been justified in adopting such a course, unless the party were unanimously in favour of it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Do you expect us to believe that?

Mr. GRIFFITH said that was the fact. This was not a matter of sufficient consequence to occupy the time of the Committee when there was so much more serious business before it.

Mr. THORN (who rose amidst cries of "Question") said he could assure the Premier that there was no "tag-rag and bob-tail" on the Opposition side. When they did anything they did it with a purpose. He himself could play the fool when it was needful, and had made himself appear ignorant this evening for the special purpose of drawing out hon. members on the Government side; and he had succeeded. When the Minister for Works began his speech he thought something was coming—that the millennium was about to arrive. He looked upon it as a political manifesto—as a speech to the country. He thought that "coming events" were about to "cast their shadows before," and that they were going to have a general election. With regard to the mail service, he wished to deny that the North was not served at the present time. When he was in office the North always received justice. A line of steamers was already subsidised for a weekly service to the North; and if that was not sufficient it might be easily made a bi-weekly service by giving a little extra to the A.S.N. Company. He mentioned this to show that the Minister for Works was not correct in his statement that the South was not doing justice to the North. The Opposition had always done equal justice to the North, and had never attempted to set North against South as the Minister for Works had done this evening.

Mr. AMHURST rose to a point of order. What was the motion before the Committee?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The motion before the Committee is that the hon. member is playing the fool again.

The CHAIRMAN having read the motion,

Mr. AMHURST said the hon. member (Mr. Thorn) was not speaking to the point, and he would take the Chairman's ruling upon it. No member, unless with the consent of the Committee, could speak away from the motion.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not see that there is any point of order.

Mr. THORN said he had no wish to occupy the time of the Committee. The Opposition had carried their point, and the Government had caved in. Many members on the Government side were glad they had caved in, and had been praying that the Opposition would go on stonewalling to bring about that result. They no more believed in the contract than he did. They had

stated to him that they could not say a single word in favour of it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: "Name!"

Mr. THORN said that some hon. members had never spoken in favour of the contract. They, like himself, were in favour of a speedy service between here and the mother-country, but not of an antediluvian nine-knot service in the nineteenth century, in the year 1880.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the hon. member (Mr. Thorn) played the fool quite naturally—it did not require any acting. The hon. member had done it repeatedly—indeed ever since he (Mr. Hill) had been a member of the House. The hon. member ought to have taken warning from the old statute which was read to him the other night by the hon. member for Normanby, that "the king has the custody of all natural fools." The hon. member seemed to have been taking that into consideration, for he admitted that he had been playing the fool; and he did it uncommonly well. The hon. member did not deceive anyone; they all knew he was playing his own natural part. The thing that had astonished him more than anything else in that exalted position, as the hon. member for Rockhampton termed it, of member of Parliament was, that such a fool as that could ever have been Premier of the colony. The hon. member played the fool to such perfection that it was disgusting to be in the same Chamber with him. One thing he must say, and that was that the hon. member had not the same amount of malice in his misrepresentations and perversions of truth as the leader of the Opposition. That hon. gentleman did it all of malice aforethought and with a set purpose. The hon. member (Mr. Thorn) knew that nothing would ever get him again on the Ministerial benches—they could not submit to that twice. The leader of the Opposition had maliciously and of set purpose, to get himself back on the Treasury benches, sent forth false imputations and false words to the country. He had told the Committee again to-night that the decision of the Opposition had been arrived at by the party unanimously. Did the hon. member expect them to believe it? He (Mr. Hill) no more believed it than did the hon. member for Port Curtis (Mr. Norton), who would not believe a word the hon. gentleman said in the House, not even if he went on his knees and swore it on a Bible. He did not believe the party was unanimous, or that it was the hon. member's advice that prompted the decision. He believed the hon. gentleman was got at by the snarling growling men of the Darling Downs, Mr. Miles more particularly, and gave in against his own honest convictions. He had been prompted to it by the irreconcilables of his party, and he (Mr. Hill) was very sorry for the hon. gentleman's followers and for the credit of the House that he had taken the stand he did.

Mr. NORTON said he wished to set himself straight with the leader of the Opposition. In the course of his remarks that afternoon he had used exceedingly strong language towards that hon. gentleman. At that time he seemed to have been under a misapprehension. He thought the leader of the Opposition had told the Committee that he had not imputed motives of corruption to the Premier;—he wished to know if that was the case? Did he understand the hon. gentleman to say that he had not withdrawn the imputation of corruption?

Mr. GRIFFITH: I said that I had made certain charges against the Premier, and that I had not withdrawn them.

Mr. NORTON said he was sorry the hon. gentleman had not given a direct answer to the question, as he wished to set himself right on the

matter. In the course of the debate on the subject on the 7th July last, the hon. gentleman said, "The charge of fraud was one in which he did not implicate the Premier in any way." Those were his own words.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he stated on that occasion what he had said from the beginning of the debate—namely, that the charge of fraud in connection with that sum—namely, the £60,000—was one in which he did not implicate the Premier in any way. He had never accused the Premier of taking any of that money or of participating in any fraud in connection with it; but he had accused him of very grave maladministration in connection with that matter, and to every word he had said he adhered. This was the matter to which he had referred during the afternoon when he said that he had been obliged to disclaim a charge which he had never made, but which had been put into his mouth by certain hon. members. All he had said was on record, and he adhered to every word. That matter, and also the other matter with regard to which complaint had been made, were now under investigation.

Question put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN reported no progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

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