

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 20 JULY 1881

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 20 July, 1881.

New Bills.—Questions.—Address in Reply—resumption of debate.—Adjournment.

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

NEW BILLS.

The SPEAKER read messages from His Excellency the Governor, forwarding the following new Bills for the consideration of the House:—

A Bill to regulate the Pearl-shell and Béche-de-mer Fisheries.

A Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the Distillation of Spirits and Brewing of Beer.

A Bill to provide against the Influx of Foreign and other Criminals.

A Bill to provide for the Destruction of Marsupials.

It was ordered that the several messages be taken into consideration on Tuesday next.

QUESTIONS.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH asked the Premier—

1. What amount was agreed to be paid to Mr. F. A. Cooper, a member of this House, for revising, compiling, indexing, and digesting the Statute Laws of Queensland?

2. When was such agreement made?

3. Did any communication in writing pass between that gentleman and the Government on the subject?

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said the reply to the first and second questions was "No." In explanation of the answer he had given yesterday, he would read a letter he had received from the Under Secretary to the Treasurer. He gave the answer as it came from the Treasury, but it seemed the Secretary had omitted some matters, and he explained them in this letter, which was handed to him (the Premier) yesterday, after the Orders of the Day had been called:—

"The Treasury,
"Brisbane.

"Please amend the answer to Mr. Griffith's question No. 2, by adding £31 10s. to Mr. F. A. Cooper for drafting Bill to Amend the Constitution Act of 1867, and Legislative Assembly Act of 1867; £10 10s. to Mr. F. A. Cooper for revising and amending tables of Acts for 1880.

"E. B. CULLEN."

Mr. F. A. COOPER asked the Premier—

1. Within what time will the dredging be sufficiently completed at Port Douglas to admit of the coasting steamers discharging cargo at the Port Douglas Wharf?

2. Is it the intention of the Government to cause a survey to be made from Cooktown, *via* the Palmer Gold Fields, to connect with the projected Transcontinental Line between Roma and Point Parker?

3. What steps, if any, are being taken to facilitate the discharge of ocean-going steamers at the wharf at Cooktown?

The PREMIER replied as follows:—

1. I am informed by the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers that an officer of his department has been sent to Port Douglas for the purpose of ascertaining the state of the dredging operations now being carried out there. When his report is received, which will be in about a fortnight, full particulars will be furnished.

2. The Government are not in a position to give the House definite information as to railway surveys at present.

3. The wharf and shed accommodation at Cooktown are now being extended, but a certain amount of dredging is required before the port will be available for the largest class of ocean-going steamers.

ADDRESS IN REPLY—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

On the Order of the Day for the resumption of the adjourned debate on Mr. Black's motion—

"That the Address in Reply to the Opening Speech of his Excellency the Governor, as read by the Clerk, be now adopted by the House"—

upon which Mr. Griffith had moved, by way of amendment—

"That the following words be inserted after the second paragraph of the proposed Address, viz.:—We have had under our consideration the evidence given before the Commissioners appointed to take evidence in England on the matters referred to in Mr. Himmant's Petition, 'and' are of opinion that, in the making of the contracts for the supply and carriage of rails, specially referred to in that Petition, the interests of the colony were subordinated to the interests of private persons"—

and upon which Mr. Archer had moved by way of further amendment—

"That the words proposed to be inserted be amended by the omission therefrom of all the words following the word 'and' in the third line, with a view to the insertion, in their place, of the following words, viz.:—'whilst deeming it inadvisable to express any opinion upon the working of the London office, pending the further inquiry now being held by the Commissioners in London, we are able to congratulate Your Excellency on the fact that the charges brought against the Premier have been proved to be completely unfounded'"—

being read,

Mr. SHEAFFE said in resuming the debate on this subject he would not detain hon. members very long by going through the evidence, or by commenting at length on the Report. He thought the evidence as taken before the Royal Commission had been sufficiently analysed by hon. members on both sides to render any further remarks on that subject almost superfluous—at all events, to men who had read the concluding paragraph of the Report. He trusted that with hon. members who had read that Report it would have some weight, because it appeared to him, as the Attorney-General had pointed out a few days ago, that gentlemen who were in the position the Commissioners were were very much better able to get at the bottom—at the gist—of the matter than those who had had no opportunity of investigating it beyond reading the evidence. He would read the concluding paragraph of the Report:—

"41. Lastly, we come to the charge against the Premier contained in the remarks to which we have been instructed to direct our attention by Mr. Palmer's letter, mentioned in the first paragraph of our Report. As we have already gone into all the circumstances of the contracts for rails and freight in detail, it becomes unnecessary for us to do more than record our finding on this charge. We beg to report that, having carefully considered all the evidence taken before us, we find that there was no preconceived arrangement in the matter, as alleged in the remarks aforesaid; that the colony has not been shamefully plundered by a ring of speculators in the London office; and that there was no such ring of speculators; and that the charge of connivance brought against the Premier is without foundation."

That was what he wanted hon. members to pay attention to—that there was "no preconceived arrangement in the matter, that the colony had not been shamefully plundered, that there was no ring of speculators, and that the charge of connivance brought against the Premier was without foundation." If any hon. member on the other side wanted to have that conclusion set aside he should certainly have brought forward reasons in support of his view. Last session when this matter was opened up, he (Mr. Sheaffe) was not present, so that he was not carried away as, perhaps, he would have been had he heard the fiery onslaught made upon the Premier by the leader of the Opposition. When he arrived at the House some weeks afterwards, public feeling was slightly allayed—public indignation was not quite so violent as it had been—and he was thus placed in a position to be capable of forming a fair and just conclusion both as to what the Premier was reported to have done and the manner in which the matter was brought forward by the leader of the Opposition. At that time, looking at the matter very dispassionately, as he did, he came to the conclusion that the Premier was perfectly free from all connivance; and he had seen no reason to alter that opinion. He had heard nothing in the debate, nothing in the evidence, and certainly nothing in the Report, to alter his opinion. Had any hon. gentleman wished to prove to him that he was wrong, and had done so in a logical and a reasoning manner, he might possibly have been convinced; but, as he had said, no one had given any the slightest reason to make him alter his opinion. Their remarks had been in many instances very exhaustive, and in some rather abusive, but in none had they been convincing. In the remarks that fell from the hon. and learned leader of the Opposition one would have expected a certain amount of logical sequence, he being a trained public speaker; but he (Mr. Sheaffe) failed to discover anything of the kind. The hon. gentleman had brought a charge—that charge had been unsupported, and he had retracted it; but he then formulated another charge behind which he was enabled to cast suspicion all round the members of the Government. He had imputed malpractices, and tried to take away a man's character by imputation which it was hard to rebut; and then, going down in a descending scale from the leader of the Opposition to his followers, they all did the same. There had been statements upon statements, and abuse upon abuse, but no logical statement had ever been made to try and make people who ought to be guided by reason be so guided. They had heard a great deal from hon. members opposite with reference to the position occupied by the hon. Minister for Works, and if they were to believe all they had heard from that quarter they would believe that he was utterly incapable of managing the smallest matter in life. Hon. members on that side, at any rate, did not think so, and the able manner in which this matter had been treated by the hon. member for Blackall (Mr. Archer) took away the necessity of anybody else saying another word upon it. But there was one other point he would like to draw the attention of hon. members to—a point that he did not think had been touched upon before. One of the accusations against his hon. friend the Minister for Works, made by the junior member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge), was that he had, without the advice of the legal adviser of the Crown, entered into this contract with Mr. Thomassen to purchase steel rails. That was a crime, no doubt, especially in the eyes of the hon. member who was expatiating on the subject. With a very great deal of self-complacency that

hon. member strongly animadverted upon the Minister for Works' conduct. He dared say that, according to that hon. member's idea, the Minister for Works was utterly annihilated for ever and ever by his trenchant remarks; but in less than a few minutes after, that honourable, learned, and logical member turned round with his argument, and found fault with the Premier for doing—what? Because, when he landed in Liverpool, instead of rushing into the purchase of steel rails without the advice of properly constituted authority, he wired to the Agent-General and went to his home in Scotland. In one case it was a crime to take upon himself the responsibility without advice, and in another not to take upon himself the responsibility without advice. With these few remarks he would say that he had not altered his opinion in any way, and, as he said before, he believed from the first in the integrity of the Premier, and believed in it now.

Mr. KINGSFORD said, like the last speaker, he would not detain the House long. Hon. members were beginning to feel, and he felt himself, that it was time this discussion was over. He had very much before his mind at the present time the junior member for Enoggera, who appeared to have constituted himself the castigator of the House; and he should, therefore, be very careful what he said, because he did not know what the powers of that hon. gentleman were, and could not tell what to expect. He hoped, at any rate, that the hon. member's influence would be good, and that he would keep hon. members on the Ministerial side of the House in proper order and trim, and make them behave themselves in future. One privilege he should like to be entitled to, however, and it was this—that, whatever garments they might be compelled to strip off by the hon. member, when administering castigation, that they might be allowed to keep their boots on. There was an old saying that was often quoted, which came from Shakespeare—

"There is a tide in the affairs of men, when taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

He never knew a better illustration of that than the action of the hon. member the leader of the Opposition. His action in this case had been the converse of that described in the adage he had just quoted. That hon. gentleman had just to wait for the tide, to watch the tide and go with it; but he had been in too great a hurry for the tide. Unlike the celebrated Mrs. Partington, who tried to shove the tide back with her broom, that hon. gentleman had tried to hurry it. Time and tide waited for no man; and time and tide would be hurried by no man; and he was thoroughly convinced that the hon. gentleman had failed in his purpose. He was certain that no man in the colony had been in a fairer way for fortune than the hon. gentleman. He was not speaking so much of monetary matters as political fortune. He (Mr. Kingsford) believed the hon. gentleman was on the high road to fame and fortune as a politician, as a member of the legal profession, and in every other respect; but he was only sorry to think—and to him it was a serious matter for regret—that the hon. gentleman, by his overweening ambition, for it was nothing else—it was certainly nothing innate in him—should have sought, by means unworthy of a gentleman like himself, to obtain a certain position which it was clear enough it was not time he should attain. He was not going into the evidence at all that had been placed before that House; it had been evidence, evidence, evidence, all through until one's brain became muddled. He could scarcely tell now which was the beginning and which was the end of the evidence. He thought when he

read it that he knew something about it; it seemed then to be tolerably clear; but he should be very sorry to touch it now, or even look at it. It had been so much mixed up and turned and twisted; there were so many shades of opinion expressed, so many twistings and turnings and mutilations in some of the evidence, that he thought it would be very much better to let it alone, and he should not trouble himself again. But having read it, he thoroughly agreed with it. From the beginning of the debate last year until now, as far as his limited amount of intellect allowed him, he had looked at the question in all its bearings, and he was sorry to say that the conclusion he had come to was that there never had been a greater mistake made in any part of the world than had been made by the hon. leader of the Opposition. He gave it as his firm conviction, without caring anything for the consequences, that there was not to any impartial mind without bias—without partiality or favour—a tittle of proof to show that the hon. the Premier was tainted in the smallest degree with anything but honesty. There was no doubt the Government had had their work cut out, through the action of the hon. leader of the Opposition, ever since they came into power. They had had in opposition to them an antagonist of no mean ability; no stone had been left unturned by the leader of the Opposition to oust the Government from their places, from the commencement until now. He had searched his armoury for every kind of weapon, and he had used them dexterously and sometimes effectively. Whether the Government had introduced new measures or motions, or whether regarding their conduct as individuals during the session of Parliament or during the recess, those journeys of the Premier to England—anything and everything, had been thoroughly sifted, thoroughly criticised, and put into the scale for the purpose of condemning the Government in the eyes of the people. The hon. gentleman had a right to do that; he did not blame him for it. To him it was a source of pleasure to listen to the hon. gentleman when he was debating or criticising the actions and measures of the Government; and, so long as he confined himself to fair criticism, to honourable and open and undisguised criticism of the actions of the Government, however keen his steel might be, he (Mr. Kingsford) was not at all concerned about it; and, if he succeeded in a fair way in putting the Government out of office, he could not blame him for doing so;—not that he wanted the Government to go out of office, but he liked to look upon the best man in that position. He could not refrain from expressing himself with reference to the action of the leader of the Opposition in this matter. That hon. gentleman was at liberty to use what weapons he liked so long as they were fair and true—fair to both parties—to himself and to his opponents; but it was a question with him (Mr. Kingsford) whether he was entitled to ransack his arsenal for a weapon—a missile—not of ordinary use, and which he was sure he (Mr. Griffith) would never have used himself had it not been for the intense pressure that was within him and the intense pressure that was behind him. He (Mr. Kingsford) scarcely knew how to describe his meaning; he did not wish to say anything hard, or anything that he should regret, but he could find no weapon in modern armouries—no missile that was used in modern warfare that would compare with that which was used by that hon. member sitting opposite. It was not an 80-ton gun—it was not a grenade—it was not a bomb-shell—it was not a torpedo; there was nothing that he could compare with that sort of Chinese warfare but that of Chinese pirates in attacking a peaceful trading ship pursuing its way; they

hurled on its decks a stinkpot that would kill, smother, and destroy with insufferable stench all that came within its influence. He knew this was hard, but it would express his meaning. In order to accomplish his purpose, the hon. gentleman had attempted to cast into that House a stinkpot, and intended that those who came within its reach, and against whom it was hurled, should be sent—politically speaking, of course—into limbo. In other words—to put it in plain language—the hon. member had sought to accomplish his purpose by defaming the character of the Premier, and, through the Premier, the Government, and thus improve his own position. He (Mr. Kingsford) happened to know before the debate came on—before Mr. Hemmant's petition was brought on for discussion by the hon. member (Mr. Griffith)—from correspondence that was put into his hands, that it was a prearranged scheme, a preconcerted affair—that charges had been raked up against the Premier, and that they were to be hurled against him on the opening of Parliament, and that, through the Premier, the Government should be thrust out of office by the voice of the people. All that was to be done, it was expected, within three weeks or a month. The hon. gentleman would no doubt give him credit for that, but he should not mention names. What he stated was borne out by the remarks he made at the commencement of last session, to a certain extent. If he was right in his conclusions—and he believed he was right, not only from that little circumstance, which prepared him for what was to follow to some extent, but also from the memorable speech delivered by the hon. leader of the Opposition on the first occasion on which he accepted the responsibility of making the charges against the Premier, and substantiating those charges—then he said it was a cowardly thing for that hon. gentleman to do. He did not know anything more terrible than to be brought under such condemnation as was uttered by the hon. gentleman. He said “condemnation” because it was not the result of a trial. It was not a sort of inuendo: there was not—“There is a possibility of the hon. the Premier being guilty;” it was a plain outspoken charge, and that charge was made without the smallest tittle of evidence being placed before that House when the charge was made. With regard to the petition, he said that a more courteous or fitly-worded petition was never placed upon the table of the House. There was no name mentioned; the only name mentioned was that of the writer and signer of the petition, Mr. Hemmant; but the hon. the leader of the Opposition had dragged into the debate names that they knew nothing of, and circumstances to which they were utter strangers, and upon his own affidavit—his own statement of matters that he professed to know, and no doubt did know—he condemned the Premier and asked for the assent of the House to what he had stated. That was a very serious thing; it did not come within the category of ordinary debates on subjects that were generally debated in that House. To quote again what had become a somewhat hackneyed phrase—

“Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed.”

He never in all his life felt as he did when that charge was brought against the Premier and his character almost defamed. It was a very serious thing to impute motives, and he had searched high and low and had put the most favourable constructions possible upon the reasons the hon. leader of the Opposition

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had for acting as he did, and he could find one—only one—that could have instigated him to do what he did. He was certain that under ordinary circumstances the hon. gentleman would scorn to do what he had done, or say what he had said, and that it was through some promptings—and not very good promptings either—that he was urged to it; and he (Mr. Kingsford) believed now from his heart that, if he had been left to his own judgment, to his own kindly feeling, with that nobility of character for which he was characterised, he would ever have taken the part he did in that business. The result had been unusual depression over the whole commercial portion of the colony; the minds of people had been diverted from matters that concerned them intensely and most immediately. The one object before the people had been the Premier. Go where they might, for the last twelve months, instead of discussing those matters that appertained to the welfare of the whole community, there was nothing heard of but steel rails and the rascality of the Premier. He was standing in Queen street not very long ago—he merely said this as an instance, to show how excited were the feelings of the people, so unnaturally excited, as to give expression to their feelings in no very measured terms;—the hon. the Premier was driving in his buggy through Queen street, accompanied by Mrs. McIlwraith—and he hoped the Premier would pardon him if he had done wrong in mentioning her name—when a man who was standing close to him, on seeing the Premier, raised up his finger and, in a voice loud enough to have been heard by himself and by the Premier, said—“There goes the man that has robbed the country of £60,000.” That was a serious matter, and he felt as if he could take himself away somewhere where he should have no connection at all either with the accused or with the accuser. He came to this conclusion, that in order to raise himself to the summit of that pedestal, which for years the hon. leader of the Opposition had been trying to rear, and which to a certain extent he had reared—to enable him to step up to the summit of it, and sit there, that he might be the admired of all admirers round about—he felt that there was an obstacle in the way which must be removed, but which he could not surmount, which was beyond his prowess, and was more than a match for him. But this obstacle must be removed out of the way, and in order to effect this he would take the means he (Mr. Kingsford) had referred to. He would defame the Premier's character, hurl him down in the mud of the gutter, and put his foot upon him, as a stepping-stone to this pedestal, and raise himself up, and receive the plaudits of the populace—“Great is the leader of the Opposition!” He was certain that hon. gentleman would never have done what he had done if he for a moment thought what would be the consequence. Had he put himself in the Premier's place and said for a moment, “Am I doing that which is right?”—had he turned over in his own mind what might possibly have been the result—would he have done it? In his sober moments, even if he had the clearest conviction from the most indisputable evidence—evidence so comprehensive that no one could question it—had he seen the transaction himself he had charged the Premier with—would he have made himself the broom to sweep all this together and refer to it? He would have scorned to do it; it was not his work. He would have scorned to do it, as degrading to him. He would have informed the House of the matter, not by opening out as he did, but by calling for a special committee to investigate the matter, and call for papers, and so on, and

have relieved himself of the responsibility of being the immediate accuser of the guilty one. But he had no evidence, and the information he had was third-hand—from Mr. Thomas Hamilton to Mr. Hemmant, and from Mr. Hemmant to Mr. Griffith—and that was the groundwork of his action. Had he put himself in the Premier's place, he (Mr. Kingsford) thought he would have hesitated. He would have said to himself—"I am about to make a serious charge, which I believe to be right, but there is a possibility of my being wrong; and, supposing I should be mistaken after I have made the charge, what would be the result? A gentleman who has all his lifetime, by his own industry, intellect, purity of conduct, and irreproachable character, been seeking to raise himself to a certain position, and I shall knock it all away from his feet and send him into the world as a rogue and a vagabond." There was nothing in the world which would stick to a man so much as a bad character—"Give a dog a bad name and hang him." His reputation in social matters, in money matters, and in every department in which he excelled and shone, and all by the result of his own indomitable energy and his own persistent endeavours to effect what he had so nearly accomplished—all would be taken away, and he would be pointed at as a man who had been accused of theft. He (Mr. Kingsford) quite sympathised with the pathetic remarks of the hon. member for Port Curtis, last night, with reference to the effect of the conduct of the leader of the Opposition on the home of the Premier. He wondered whether, at the time, it entered the hon. member's mind that the home, wife, children, friends, and relatives, and the wide circle of acquaintances would all have been affected by this; that in bringing the charge he did against the Premier he might have torn asunder, even if the Premier was innocent—might have riven asunder into a thousand pieces that heart that was bound to him—his wife's. Would that have been nothing?—Would it have been nothing that in after years the hon. gentleman's children should have it said to them that their father was accused of—robbery, should he say?—of fraud or of conniving at fraud? He thought these things must be taken into the category. These matters must be considered, and, to put the best possible construction upon the effects that had followed the conduct of the hon. the leader of the Opposition, he said they had been disastrous in the extreme. And then there was another aspect of the thing. He did not think that the leader of the Opposition for a moment thought that in charging the Premier he was charging the colleagues and supporters of the Premier—that he was not only accusing the Government, but every hon. member on that side of the House who supported the Premier and the Government. He (Mr. Kingsford) had taken it home to himself, and when the hon. gentleman said "he felt a horror at being compelled to sit in the House with such men," he (Mr. Kingsford), too, felt that he was included as part and parcel of these men, and shared in the charge, and that in bringing his accusations against the Premier the hon. gentleman brought them against him (Mr. Kingsford). He was very glad they had gone no further; to him it was serious gratification, and he was quite sure it was a serious gratification to the leader of the Opposition himself, that there was nothing proved against the Premier. He could truly say it was a time of pleasure to him when the Report of the Royal Commission was read here. He felt as though an insufferable load had been taken off his mind, knowing well the combination of circum-

stances, the character of evidence, and the difficulty of proving one's innocence, often resulted in bringing about the condemnation of an innocent man. But here they had, after the Select Committee in Brisbane, and the sitting of the Royal Commission in London, the result of the whole was that the Premier came out of his ordeal unscorched, unsinged, and without a stain upon his character, and he thought that was a matter for the congratulation of that House. He had one word more to say, and it was this: he heartily coincided with the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall. He thought it comprehended all that need be done, that it showed wisdom in declining to refer to the matters connected with the Home Office, and was also the very height of wisdom in including the simple fact that the Premier was blameless. He should support that amendment most assuredly; and if he might presume to say a word to the leader of the Opposition, he would say, if he was desirous of standing well, not only with that House as a whole, but with the people outside; if he was desirous of retaining and increasing the popularity he now held; if he was anxious that the good-will of the people outside should not be as evanescent and as easily snuffed out and lead to as unpleasant results as the torches in the torchlight procession which was given in honour of his return; if he wished to occupy the place which the Premier now occupied, when his turn came; if he wished to expunge the ill-feeling that had been engendered between parties over this question in the House and out of it; and if he wished to make the reparation which, as a gentleman, he (Mr. Kingsford) knew he would make to the Premier and those connected with him, he would at once, without discussion, without dissent, and without murmur, accept this amendment and allow it to pass without one dissenting word.

Mr. FEEZ said it might almost appear presumption on his part to speak upon a question which had been so well debated as this had been on the past few evenings, when he was absent from the House, and after the eloquence displayed by the hon. member who had just sat down, and the ability displayed in analysing the whole question by the hon. members for Blackall and Port Curtis last night. Still, he considered it his duty, as the representative of a very large constituency in this colony, not to allow the matter to pass with a silent vote. He should not attempt for one moment to enter into the minutiae of evidence given at the inquiry, which had been gone over and analysed at such length that some hon. members did not know half as much as they did before the debate commenced. He should simply look to the cause which had resulted in so much ill-feeling and heart-burning, and he should go further back than some of the former speakers had done in doing so. The first act which the present Government had undertaken, and which, to a great extent, was the cause of their unpopularity, was their public dismissals in connection with their policy of retrenchment. That system of retrenchment was by them then considered necessary for the well-being of the colony—which was at the time in great depression—and naturally caused ill-feeling over the length and breadth of the colony. That led to serious results, and persons all over the colony were complaining of that retrenchment and of those dismissals, and all that was turned against the Government, who were induced to do such things in the belief that it was right for the colony and for the people of the colony. It required a very little to raise that ill-feeling to a pedestal of immense height; and the hon. leader of the Opposition, knowing and feeling how that had been worked up by the

assistance of the public prints in all parts of the colony, knew that it would take but a very little spark to raise from this an immense fire and cause the annihilation of the present Government. These results had been caused by what was known as the steel rail petition. Mr. Hemmant, with a desire to support a party in the House which he had supported formerly and which he wished to see again in power, made himself acquainted with Mr. Hamilton at home, and by different ways and means they made up what they considered a case against the Premier and everyone connected with him, which they thought to bring before the House, and have the result of ousting the present Ministry and placing the Opposition in their position. That case was eagerly grasped by the leader of the Opposition. At the beginning of last session the first thing that was done was to present Mr. Hemmant's petition to the House in all its bearings. It was not brought before the House as a statement not proved, but as a charge against the Premier, and everything was done to influence the public mind against that hon. gentleman. The question was mooted and discussed at every street corner in every town of the colony, and the consequence was that the feeling of the country became strong against the present party and the Premier. The leader of the Opposition had an immense advantage in eliciting evidence before the Select Committee appointed last year on account of his legal knowledge, and trained as he was in sifting evidence and going into minutiae. But the hon. gentleman found that there was nothing in the colony to support a charge against the Premier; and, not satisfied with having found that out, he asked for a Royal Commission, and not only so, but he considered it necessary to go home; yet he was amazed that the Premier should follow the same course. Accused as he was at the hands of a crafty and able lawyer, he was expected to stay behind and allow the leader of the Opposition to go home and deal as mercilessly with him as he pleased. The Premier was quite right in the course he took; he would have been a fool had he stopped in the colony instead of going home to look after his interests. He was accused, and it was quite possible that the leader of the Opposition, with his great ability, might rake up evidence which would have the effect of making people believe the charges even though they were not true, and it was his duty to defend himself, and those who had been connected with him. The result of the Royal Commission was to acquit the Premier entirely of every charge brought against him; and, when the leader of the Opposition heard this declaration, the matter should have dropped there and then. But they were not satisfied with removing the saddle from one horse; they wanted to put it down on another horse—the unfortunate Minister for Works. That hon. gentleman admitted last year having made a mistake, but nobody could now look at him and say that he was anything but an honourable man; and surely they were not so infallible in this world that they could expect even a man like the Minister for Works to be faultless. But if that hon. gentleman had made a mistake, no one could say that he had made it intentionally, or that he had profited by it. Could anyone accuse him of having gained even one farthing by the transaction? If he had made a mistake it was merely an error of judgment, and should be overlooked. But not satisfied with this accusation, all sorts of accusations were hurled at the Government, and the steel rail question was kept constantly before the public; and the consequence was that people said, "Yes, the Premier is a swindler after all." Everybody in Brisbane was worked up to that pitch that nothing would convince them that the charges had been removed, and that nothing remained

against the Premier. With regard to the speculation of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company, they were perfectly justified in what they did as long as it could not be proved that they had the assistance of anyone connected with the Government or the London office in obtaining information. The transaction was perfectly legitimate—as much so as any speculation he (Mr. Feez) or any other mercantile man might make; and it might have turned out a bad one, just as it had turned out well. He wished to say a few words about the remarks that fell from the hon. member for Wide Bay. Of all the accusations that had been made, that gentleman had made the worst when he acquitted the Premier of any guilt, and in the same breath said that he had sheltered rogues and thieves. That hon. gentleman's speech was of such a nature as to require an apology to the House.

Mr. BEATTIE said it was not his intention to weary the House by referring to the evidence as to the rails. Like the hon. member for Mitchell, he did not intend to express his opinion; the money was lost, and the less said about it the better. He would not have spoken if it had not been mentioned that the working of the London office had still to be considered. He would, however, refer to one or two portions of the evidence with reference to the contract for freight. The Commissioners stated in their Report—

"38. The recommendation for further investigation in paragraph 17 of the Report of the Select Committee is made on the ground that the impartiality of the office of the Agent-General in conducting the Government business is of vital importance. The specific charges of alleged partiality brought under our attention have, as we have already shown, broken down."

Then they went on to give the opinion of Mr. Bethell, who was considered by the Commissioners as an authority on freight, as follows:—

"He wrote in this sense to Messrs. Law on the 9th of February, 1880, when the brokers were discussing among themselves the condition of full-cargo ships, before sending in their tenders, saying, 'McIlwraith is putting all his influence to work to get only direct ships entertained.' This statement, he expressly told us, was merely supposition founded upon conversations with Mr. Hamilton, and he had no knowledge whatever beyond that."

Now, though the Commissioners alluded to the letter of the 9th February—a letter marked private and confidential, which was sought to be kept out of evidence, but which was afterwards produced—they did not allude to the letter of the 11th February, of which he would read a portion, to show that the effect of the combination of brokers was injurious to the colony;—he wished the House to understand what he meant, and that the brokers themselves were the individuals who got the profit, and not the shipowners. He thought he could make that clear when he explained what he believed was the general custom of brokers who had the same opportunity of combining as those who obtained the freight of 15,000 tons of rails. It was customary when a broker made a bargain with any individual who had a large quantity of freight to apply to shipowners who had ships for charter; but, if he gave the shipowner the amount he received, it would be impossible for him to carry on business. So these men combined with the distinct understanding that McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company were to send in the lowest tender, quite satisfied, as Mr. Anderson said, that they would get the contract, and therefore he was quite satisfied to fall in with the arrangement entered into by the combined brokers. The custom was to make application to a shipowner, who had a ship for charter, and to charter that ship of, say, \$50 tons register. It would pay them to charter that ship, giving the owner 38s. 6d., the price of the present

contract for delivering rails in Brisbane, because they only paid the owner according to the registered tonnage of the ship; but there was no difficulty in putting 1,250 tons on plenty of vessels registering 850 tons, and the consequence was that the 400 tons which came out at 38s. 6d. was the brokers' profit. Why did not the colony have that money instead of the brokers? If the transaction had been conducted in the same manner as previously—if tenders had been called by the Agent-General, and the contract had been made with shipowners direct, as had been the custom for years, and was now the custom in New South Wales and Victoria—then the colony would have got the advantage of the cheap freights. On the other hand, the broker was the individual who got the profit—not the shipowner. It would have paid McIlwraith and McEacharn very well if the amount had been 45s. per ton; they would then have received a profit. We were given to understand that this had been a losing contract for the brokers; he did not believe it. He knew one man who had paid full-cargo ships to come to Brisbane with rails at 30s. per ton, the contract being with McIlwraith and McEacharn, and he pocketed 8s. 6d. No sane man believed for one moment that this combination of brokers were losing money on the contracts entered into with the Government; nobody was so unsophisticated as to believe it.

The PREMIER: The charter-parties were all put in.

Mr. BEATTIE: The hon. gentleman said the charter-parties were all put in; but the charter-parties in these ships were never visible except on one occasion when a mistake arose, and the payment under the charter-party was 30s. per ton. The freight was paid in London and not here. Had the freight been paid here, and the papers been at the Works Office, then we should have been able to ascertain about the rate paid for large ships. The hon. member for Port Curtis, speaking last night on this matter in reference to the amount of money expended by those ships which came to Brisbane, left the House to infer from his remarks that every ship that brought rails to Brisbane had to lighter. But that was only so with large ships. It was only such ships as the "Windsor Castle," that had to lighter perhaps 50 or 100 tons; and if it happened to be the "Windsor Castle," the brokers could scarcely suffer a great deal of loss if they were bringing 800 tons and were getting 38s. 6d. per ton, when there were owners who were glad to get 20s.; the lighterage could simply be about 100 tons at 6s. 6d. It would be a loss to the colony, but it would be a gain to the brokers. Some of them would take ships and charter them at their registered tonnage, and pocket the difference in the carriage and the difference in freight between 38s. 6d. and 30s. The Commissioners had laid great stress on that clause in their report—that no particular advantage was given to McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company in the London office in obtaining employment. He thought that it was a great pity, indeed, that the Premier was in any way connected with those who had business with the London office. The Premier had suffered for it, and he (Mr. Beattie) was sorry. He never believed that the hon. gentleman had anything to do with steel rails. That was all he intended to say on that matter. He said that last session, and he said it now again. But it was peculiarly disadvantageous to the Premier that the firm of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company had so much intimate association with the London office. And who was to blame for a good deal of it? He believed that a very great deal of the anxiety and heart-burning had been caused by Mr. McEacharn, one of the firm.

In the month of January he went up and down Queen street with a telegram from London in his hand, flaunting it in the face of everybody and telling them, "That's the way we make profit." It was £46,000. He (Mr. Beattie) knew a gentleman who saw the telegram, and Mr. McEacharn said to him, "That's the way we make money out of the Queensland Government." When such information as that was given to the public they were bound to feel sore on the subject, and the Premier had suffered by those injudicious steps, and those injudicious statements, made not only here, but in other places. The Commissioners had laid a great deal of stress on Mr. Bethell's letter of the 9th February, 1880, and they had made use of the letter marked "private and confidential" which was put in as evidence, having been written to Mr. Law on the 11th February. Now Mr. Bethell, in his evidence, referring to the evidence given by Mr. Hamilton, said that through statements made by Mr. Hamilton, he was led to believe that McIlwraith and McEacharn had influence in the London office, and, therefore, that there was no chance of anyone going in to compete, unless they went into the affair with them. The Commissioners said they did not believe that; there was no evidence to that effect; they were perfectly satisfied, from the explanation given on the 9th February, that no such thing took place. But what did Mr. Bethell say in his letter, written to Mr. Law, of Glasgow:—

"To this last telegram I am without a reply from you. "Knowing as I do exactly what you want and what your views are, and seeing we are now in a position to carry them out, I cannot imagine there can be any hitch or alteration in your wishes that I could not put right in a minute if I knew what it was. No other firms but those now agreed, save yourself, have been asked to tender, no others know of this—none in the Australian trade could touch it by other arrangements we have with them. If by inconceivable means any tender but our own came in, we should know all about it and take steps accordingly."

Now, according to this, Mr. Bethell would know all about it. If a tender went in from an outside shipowner, this firm would know all about it. Was not this proof in itself that he had some opportunity—because he was the mouth-piece of the combination—he was the chairman, and had made all arrangements whereby if any tender was sent in to the London office he would know it, and would take steps accordingly? He implored Mr. Law to enter into the arrangement and not throw away a lot of money which they had every probability of making. At the latter end of last session he (Mr. Beattie) made some remarks with regard to some works done in London, and said that from information he had received he was perfectly satisfied—in saying this he was not reflecting either on the Ministry or anybody, except those in connection with the London office—that McIlwraith and McEacharn had extreme power there. One gentleman had said to him that he thought Mr. Andrew McIlwraith was Agent-General, for every time he went to the London office he saw nobody else. No doubt Mr. Andrew McIlwraith was a smart business man, which the Agent-General himself was not. And that he had a great deal to do with the London office there was no doubt. In alluding to this again, he (Mr. Beattie) thought he might say—because hon. members were not perfectly satisfied with the statements he had made, as he had not the papers in reference to the matter in his possession at the time—that he had looked upon the affair with some suspicion. He referred to the building of the pilot schooner for the Queensland Government. That vessel was ordered by the Hemmant Government—by Mr. Hemmant when he was Colonial Treasurer. Instructions were sent to

the Agent-General to have it constructed for the pilot service of Moreton Bay. A contract was entered into with a ship-builder in the West of England, but before the contract was finished the builder failed. To his (Mr. Beattie's) great astonishment, on making inquiries with reference to the vessel—as he had observed a reference to it in the English papers, and he was anxious to know who the builder was—he found that as soon as the builder failed, Mr. Andrew McIlwraith was called in by the Agent-General to complete the vessel; and every payment on that small vessel of sixty tons was made to Mr. Andrew McIlwraith, who had the contract for the building of the vessel. The reason was the large amount of money that they unfortunately had to pay for work done outside the colony which might have been done inside the colony. The first instalment was £300, the second £300, the third £300, and the balance of the contract was £1,650; the final instalment, and as he presumed the amount of money kept back from the original contract, was £252 7s. 2d. The expenses for bringing her out had nothing to do with it, but the whole amount given was something like £2,800. He would not complain of that if the work had been properly completed, but what did they find? They found that there was paid for supervision during the construction of a vessel that cost £2,700 the following amounts:—Mr. D. R. Bold, who was then shipping inspector, received £11 1s. on one occasion; on a second occasion £11 18s. 10d.—he (Mr. Beattie) could not say how they got the odd pence—and on a third, £8 7s. 2d. The next item was a stinger to him, “the Agent-General, £8 5s.” Now, he wanted to know what he knew about vessels? What on earth did he want to go to look at that vessel for? Mr. D. R. Bold again got £7 12s., and Mr. Tichborne, who looked after the construction of that vessel, got £134 16s. Altogether there was paid by the Colony of Queensland, for the supervision of the construction of the “Governor Cairns,” £182. If that was the way they were to be treated, he said it was time there was some inquiry into the London office, and he was very glad that the Government had made up their minds that an inquiry should be held, and that the whole of the individuals connected with the London office should be swept clean out of it. He thought the time had arrived when this should take place. But the amount paid for construction was not the worst feature of it. Although they paid very high for their supervision of the building of that vessel, what took place afterwards? The hon. the Colonial Secretary knew very well that she was a scamped job; he would not say more about her than that she was the most villainous job that ever came to the colony; he had no hesitation in saying this. He believed she cost the colony nearly £800 more for repairs—for refastening and putting in new decks—in fact, to make her what she ought to have been after building in England, and this after paying £182 for supervision of her construction. The most singular thing was that she was entered in Lloyds' list as “A1 at Lloyds'” for twelve years. How on earth could any Lloyds' surveyor go down and see that vessel open, and then issue a certificate that she was entitled to a twelve years' class, “A1 at Lloyds'”? He would let any ship-builder in the place, or anyone—even the hon. the Premier himself examine her—and he knew he would condemn that vessel at once if he saw the inside of her. He was perfectly satisfied of that, and he just mentioned this matter in hopes that whoever was responsible would see that the colony should not suffer by the manipulation of individuals, who made an immense profit out of the colony. This was one reason why he pointed out

that McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company had undue influence in the London office, or why should the Agent-General have given Mr. McIlwraith that contract?—he was not going to say without competition. There was no doubt that he completed the work; but whether it was done by competition or not, he was not going to say. He thought enough had been said about that celebrated vessel. He hoped either that she was not going to cost the colony any more, or that, if they went into the building of vessels, that they would take the bull by the horns and build them in the colony. This, he thought, would be a benefit to the taxpayers and to the colony generally. He thought he had shown that Mr. Bethell, on whom the Commissioners relied as an authority on shipping matters, because he was chairman of the combination of brokers, was one of those individuals who received some profit from the contract entered into for the shipping of 15,000 tons of rails. But Mr. Bethell was not satisfied with the profits that he made out of the contract; he complained, and gave as his excuse—“Why, the freights to Brisbane are all so high compared with other ports.” He did not take a port similarly constituted from its position to that of Brisbane, but he made a comparison between Sydney and Brisbane. Now, no one, even the members of the Ministry themselves, and the Premier, who had heard the evidence, must be displeased with it. He (Mr. Beattie) was perfectly satisfied that Mr. Bethell was not justified in drawing a comparison between Sydney and Moreton Bay, and saying that shipowners were afraid to send their ships to Brisbane in consequence of the port expenses being so high. And then this witness's evidence was commented on as showing the extraordinary expenses that a ship was to be put to in Brisbane as compared with Sydney. He (Mr. Beattie) would read the amounts:—A ship came to Brisbane with cargo, and on entering she had to pay—light dues, £8 6s. 9d.; pilotage rates, £16 13s. 6d.; towage, £33 6s.; entry at Customs, £6 6s. On leaving, she had to pay for pilotage and removals, £18 18s.; lights, £8 6s. 9d.; shipping office fees, £4 16s. 6d.; and towage, £38 6s. That made £71 12s. towage into the port of Brisbane; but Mr. Bethell ought to have qualified that statement by saying that the pilot-water of Brisbane was something like fifty miles, while in Sydney it was something like one. A ship coming from the eastward was never boarded by the Sydney pilot until she was within a mile of the Heads, and very often not until after she was within the Heads, and therefore it was unfair to this port to make that an analogous case. If he had been just to the Colony of Queensland and to himself, he would have taken Melbourne in juxtaposition with Brisbane in regard to expenses, and he would then have found a very different state of affairs. He would have found that the fees at Melbourne were much higher than at Brisbane. The towage was probably cheaper on account of the competition; but here there was only one steam-tug, and consequently that made a very great difference in the expenses of the two ports. In Brisbane the expenses inwards and outwards amounted to £140 5s., while in Sydney they amounted to £60 8s.; but there was the great difference in towage—Sydney being £14 9s., and Brisbane £71 12s. Now, he maintained that it was unfair to the port of Brisbane, because Mr. Bethell was a shipowner in the trade before and must have known that that port had more lights in the Bay and at its entrance than the coast of New South Wales had altogether. Therefore, he said it was unfair and ungenerous to the Colony of Queensland to make the ports of Sydney and Brisbane analogous ones in respect of charges. They knew very well that when a ship was signalled at Cape Moreton the tug

often went half-way across to the Cowan-Cowan and towed the ship 35 or 40 miles, and yet he (Mr. Bethell) expected the owners of the tug to deliver her as cheaply as at Sydney, where she was landed half-an-hour after she was taken in tow at the Sow and Pigs. If the rate in both cases was a mileage rate, then he said the steam-boat proprietors here, although the amount looked very large, would certainly be running their tug cheaper than the proprietors in Sydney. He had no doubt that the firm of Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company had had undue influence in the London office. So far as the freight contracts were concerned, Mr. Anderson had incontestably proved that. He acknowledged that it was an arranged matter between the brokers that Messrs. McIlwraith and McEacharn were to take the lowest tender. He knew that they would get the contract and, of course, he sent in a higher tender. Now, Mr. Law complained very justly that he was left outside in the cold. They gave him work; the very first ship they gave him was at 38s. 6d., and the next was 30s. Now, they did not employ those ships, he was sure, at a loss. They had evidence of a full-cargo ship that went to Rockhampton called the "Glencoe," and it was stated that the charterers of that vessel lost very largely. There was no doubt that the owners lost very largely. The ship had a long passage, and was detained in consequence of want of lighterage in Rockhampton, and therefore she would not be able to carry out the charter that was entered into. But Mr. Law was asked the question whether he had chartered a vessel for the Queensland Government to go to Rockhampton, and if he had made any money by the transaction, because they were so certain that he was going to answer that he had lost a lot by doing so; but his answer was that he had made a sum of £180 by the transaction, and would be glad to take another charter of the same description. He was a broker, and it was the brokers who made the money, and were in a better position than the unfortunate shipowners, who ought to be in a position to come to the Government and obtain the carrying of rails to Queensland as freight. Why could not these things be managed as they were in New South Wales or Victoria, where the carriage was obtained at such a much cheaper rate? Why should they in the southern portion of this colony pay 38s. 6d. for the carriage of rails when they could have them brought out for £1 per ton, or something less than that? He said that a serious injury was thereby inflicted on this portion of the colony. He believed that better arrangements could have been made with the shipowners thus to supply ships to go to the Northern ports, because it was not the shipowner who got the benefit now, but the brokers, who took upon themselves to dictate to the London office to their own advantage, but to the disadvantage of the colony at any rate.

Mr. MILES supposed that nothing he could say upon the subject now under discussion would be very fresh to it. They had the Commissioners' Report and evidence before them, and he dared say it would be satisfactory to the House when he said that he had not the slightest intention to refer to either of them. He thought that the evidence had been pretty well referred to already and discussed, and therefore he felt that he should only be wearying the House by travelling over the same ground again; but he would say that he had looked through the whole of the evidence very carefully, and, to his mind, if it were taken as it stood fairly, it did not bear out the Commissioners' Report. The part of the Report which he considered most objectionable was that portion which contained the censure which was heaped upon the Minister for Works.

Now, admitting that the hon. gentleman had muddled the negotiations, that the contract was a blunder, that he had made a great mistake, it would be very interesting for members of the House if they could only get at the conversations which took place between that hon. gentleman and his colleagues in connection with this contract. He did not suppose that there was one single member of the House that would believe for one moment that the Minister for Works entered into this negotiation and signed this agreement without consulting his colleagues. They might, therefore, call the hon. gentleman a bad business man, who did not understand financial matters, and so on; but he (Mr. Miles) knew that he had strong common sense which would not allow him to take the responsibility upon himself of entering into any such one-sided arrangement without the advice, and the sanction also, of his colleagues in the Ministry. Again, it was a most extraordinary thing that the Premier did not, on the eve of his departure for England on this rails commission business, urge upon the Minister for Works that he should come to some final conclusion about this contract, so that he might have known exactly how the matter stood before he left the colony. Now, in respect to this matter, they had to consider all the circumstances of its surroundings, and after doing this it was very clear to his mind that there was, from the beginning to the end, such a strong chain of circumstantial evidence that almost bore out every allegation which was contained in Mr. Hemmant's petition. At the time these negotiations with respect to the supply of rails were going on, they knew that Mr. McEacharn, of the firm of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company, was very busy and active. He had many interviews with the Works Department, and also was in constant communication by wire—by telegram—with his partner in London. Somehow or other it appeared that, by a blunder in the Telegraph Department, the special telegram reached the London partner in a mutilated form, and from this he gathered the impression that Mr. McEacharn had entered into a contract to supply a quantity of steel rails to the Government, although, as they now knew, Mr. McEacharn was negotiating with Mr. Thomassen, of Ibbotson Brothers, for the freight only. He took all this for what it was worth, for it appeared plainly enough to his mind that all this blundering and plundering was done simply to obtain further delay and to afford opportunity to Mr. Andrew McIlwraith to complete his arrangements with the Queensland Government. Then they found, as the case proceeded on, that at the very last moment, when the Minister for Works signed this contract, Mr. Thomassen said that he could not sign it without the consent of his partner, for he (Mr. Miles) believed he pretended to be a partner.

Mr. GRIFFITH: A director.

Mr. MILES: Well, a director. Now, at the time when he (Mr. Miles) was in the Works Office, negotiations were going on for the supply of rails of a lighter kind than these, for the Maryborough and Gympie Railway, and he must confess that he did not like the transaction at all and felt reluctant to have anything to do with it, because he was under the impression that the Agent-General, being on the spot, would be in a better position to make a fair bargain for the Government than anyone could do in the colony. However, he called in the Chief Engineer, who impressed on his mind that the arrangement was a satisfactory one for the Government, and urged upon him to close with Mr. Thomassen. This was done, and the bargain turned out to be a fair one; but the opinion he held then he held now, namely, that it was not wise or discreet of the

Queensland Government to deal with middlemen in this way. They should rather, he was convinced, go to the fountain-head, and surely in that way they would be able to make better arrangements. The Agent-General complained then of the action which was taken, and in this expression of opinion he (Mr. Miles) fully concurred, and hoped that it would be the means of preventing any transaction of the kind occurring again. They must look upon this other matter with all its surroundings, and there could not be the slightest doubt but that when the negotiations were going on between Mr. McEacharn and the Minister for Works for freight, it would have been to the former gentleman's interest that the contract between Mr. Thomassen and the Government should be withdrawn. There was no money in it, and it would be far better for it to be abandoned; and he dared say, if they knew all, they would find that Mr. McEacharn offered Mr. Thomassen a sum of money to draw out of his arrangement with the Government, knowing that he himself had instructed his partner to go into the market for steel rails for this very contract. It appeared to him (Mr. Miles) that, by the whole of the circumstances of the case, the weight of evidence was complete. They would next take the meeting of the Premier and his brother at Cork, when, of course, the old question of steel rails came up again, and the brother said, "I have made a good thing in steel rails." It would be a good thing if they could know what more took place: but they could not know, and could only suppose that he continued by saying that he had heard that the Queensland Government were going in largely for rails, and that he should be very happy to supply them with his. That was the only conclusion that he (Mr. Miles) could come to on the matter. From the correspondence and evidence they knew that the Premier very leisurely continued his journey, and during the holidays paid a visit to his family and friends at Ayr. But, before he went, Mr. Thomassen met him again with an offer of 5,000 tons of rails at 5s. under the market price. The Premier did not see his way to accept this, but went to the Agent-General; and they knew his reply to it. Now, he (Mr. Miles) must go back to 1879, to point out the opinion that he had from the Immigration Agent at that time. In 1879 the contract for the conveyance of immigrants to the colony was about expiring, and the Immigration Agent (Mr. Gray) had brought the matter under the notice of the Agent-General, and he (Mr. Miles) instructed him, when he heard of it, to call for tenders almost directly. The Immigration Agent inquired in what way the tenders were to be called for, and he believed that his reply was that they should be solicited in the usual way, not being aware of the discontent which existed among the shipbrokers in London. Mr. Gray told him that if the usual system was to be adopted they might just as well let the contract without calling for tenders at all. He (Mr. Miles) was very sorry to hear such a thing, and said that he would give instructions to the Agent-General to have the tenders opened in the presence of the tenderers or such of them as chose to attend. Mr. Gray said that the Agent-General would object. Finally, he gave him a very good selection, which was acted upon—namely, that tenders should be called for in duplicate, one copy of the tender to be received at the Colonial Secretary's Office and the other at the London office, both to be opened on the same day. That was done; whether it had ever been done before or since he could not say, but the records of the office would prove that was the course taken on that occasion. He was always anxious that the public business

should be so transacted as to command the confidence of the people. It was a most extraordinary thing that the Premier should telegraph to the Agent-General asking his opinion about Thomassen's offer of the 5,000 tons of steel rails. The Premier was not a fool; anyone who took him for a fool would be very much mistaken. It was not for not knowing how to do business; the hon. gentleman was thoroughly up to it, and ought to be. Hon. members must consider how tenders were called for, both for steel rails and freight; also who they were scheduled by, and in whose presence they were opened in; and then the chain of evidence was complete to prove that there had been collusion. He had no desire to take up the time of the House on the subject, for both hon. members and the country were sick and tired of it; and, whatever the result might be, he was quite prepared to take his share of it. At some future time every member of the House would be called to account for the way he had discharged his duties here; and if by his vote on this occasion he should forfeit the confidence of his constituents, he was willing to put up with the consequences. They had had a long sermon—he could call it by no other name—from the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Kingsford), who deplored the position the leader of the Opposition had placed himself in. Whatever the leader of the Opposition had done he had done it conscientiously, and he was prepared to take the responsibility for it, and he certainly would not go to the hon. member for a testimonial as to his character. He (Mr. Miles) was not in the House last night when the hon. member for Port Curtis asked a question with regard to the case of Miles v. Mollivraith. He would give the information now. Mr. Griffith had not received one single sixpence in connection with the matter; in fact, he (Mr. Miles) believed that all the evidence in the case would have been taken before the hon. gentleman reached London. As hon. members must be aware, if he had begun to talk to him on that subject he would have been told to consult him through a solicitor. He had no conversation with the hon. gentleman on that particular question, and he appeared in it entirely without his (Mr. Miles') knowledge. To satisfy the hon. member (Mr. Norton), if he wished it, he would produce the accounts of the solicitor who conducted the case. He hoped the hon. member would accept his statement.

Mr. NORTON: I accept it.

Mr. MILES said it was unnecessary to speak longer on the subject, for if they talked for six months it would not affect a single vote or opinion either inside or outside of the House. All had arrived at a conclusion, whether right or wrong, and they would have an opportunity of expressing it some day to the Government. Then, and not till then, would this matter be settled. No division to-night would settle the question. The Government had supporters who would, no doubt, be able to carry the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall; but even that would not settle it. It would crop up day after day, and he would strongly advise the Premier to take some favourable opportunity of appealing to the country, and have the wretched matter settled for good and all; and it would never be settled until that was done.

Mr. REA said that, as no one seemed willing to take up the debate on the part of Ministers, he himself would say a few words on the subject. He should first of all refer to the discussion of last night, and to the speeches of the hon. members for Blackall and Port Curtis. Those speeches must have been of great assistance to the Ministerial supporters, and their minds would, no doubt, now be quite clear as to the connection between the Premier and his relations. Surely

the country would be satisfied with what those hon. gentlemen said—that was, if they could only believe that their statements were true. The hon. member for Blackall began with some reflections on the bad language used on the Opposition side, and spoke lightly of what he (Mr. Rea) must call blackguardism on the other side, referring to members who ought to be excused on account of their youth—namely, the Colonial Secretary and the Minister for Works. They were the young men who were to be excused for blackguarding the leader of the Opposition, for it was they who began the accusations this session. What did their own champion, the *Courier*—an authority which ought to be eminently satisfactory to the other side—say of the speech of the Minister for Works in its issue of the 13th July? This was what it said:—

“In resuming the debate on Mr. Griffith’s amendment upon the Address, yesterday, Mr. Macrossan exhibited a degree of warmth in striking contrast to the calm, argumentative demeanour of the previous evening.”

That was the opinion of the gentleman who bolstered up the Ministry whenever he could.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Who is he?

Mr. REA said it was the editor of the *Courier*, the hon. gentleman’s late colleague.

“On the whole, Mr. Macrossan’s speech was an effective one, despite occasional blemishes in rhetorical expression, and a too free use of potential expletives.”

That was a new term for the blackguardism which was used by the young men on the other side of the House, and for which, according to the hon. member for Blackall, they ought to be excused. The writer—their own editor—also said:—

“He denounced Messrs. Hemmant and Hamilton as conspirators, and read from the evidence to prove the latter a ‘convicted perjurer,’ entirely unworthy of credit.”

and talked about Mr. Griffith being an accomplice and a tool. Last night the hon. member for Blackall started a new theory—that he believed the Opposition were under a delusion, that hon. members who sat on the Ministerial side were a different caste altogether. There was no delusion at all about it: their characters were absolutely different. The Ministerial members of the present Parliament enter upon a contract with the Premier on the following terms:—If you will make us freeholders of our runs instead of leaseholders, we will vote for any atrocity you may commit for fattening your friends on the colony. That was the difference between the two sides of the House. If the squatters on the Ministerial side would follow the manly example of the squatters—there were only two of them—on the Opposition side, the public would have a more favourable opinion of that branch of the community. Before long that class would be the ruin of the *bona fide* squatters of the colony. The existence of the run-dummer was an evil fraught with the greatest danger. He would show that by reading the following extract from last Saturday’s *Telegraph*:—

“THE NEW LAND COMPANY.—There is a brass plate on the door-post of No. 23, Queen street, bearing the inscription—‘The Darling Downs and Western Country Land Company.’ As some of our readers are possibly curious to know something about this company and its objects, we may mention that it was formed in London during the Premier’s first visit to England.”

That was when the Premier first went home to attend to the requirements of the colony—the trip for which he had charged the colony £1,000, according to the election address of the hon. member who was favoured with that exquisite telegram from the Colonial Secretary.

“It has a nominal capital of a million, and its first transactions were the purchasing, at a satisfactory price to the sellers, of the Hon. J. P. Bell’s stations—Jimbour, Westlands, and Buaraba; and of the Hon. T. McIlwraith’s

stations—Cork, Ayrshire Downs, and Merivale. Messrs. J. P. Bell, T. McIlwraith, and Smyth are the local directors, and Mr. Grinley the secretary.”

That was the outcome of the legislation of the last two sessions, for without that legislation, passed by a coercive vote, those runs could never have been sold. Without the transcontinental line which was about to be forced upon the country, and also the mail contract, those properties could not have been sold, as he would show by an extract from the *Courier* of Saturday last. In the summary for Europe the *Courier* said, in reference to stock and station business:—

“The actual prices paid are not often made public, but the exceptions to the rule indicate the high figures ruling. Such an exception has been the sale of Avington Station, on the Barcoo River, Mitchell district, comprising 500 square miles of country, with 7,000 head of cattle and improvements, for a lump sum of £70,000 cash. The seller in this case, Mr. C. L. Hill, M.L.A., and the buyer, Mr. Govett, are both old Queensland pioneers, and were among the earliest occupants of country in the Mitchell district. The conditions of pastoral occupation are fast changing. Hardly any portion of the colony can be regarded as too remote for profitable occupation.”

That was under the present Ministry.

“Even from such a distant locality as the Hamilton River, Gregory North, it is reported that wool can now be sent to Normanton by dray for £10 per ton, thence to Thursday Island at 7s. 6d. per bale, and from there the mail steamers carry it to London at Brisbane rates. This general reduction in the cost of transit enables all the west and north-west to be used for sheep-grazing, and the fact is one main cause of the general demand for sheep country by moneyed men.”

He hoped the people of Brisbane and Rockhampton would now see that the result of the new mail service would be, as he predicted last year, that all the back country produce would in future go to Thursday Island. That would be the effect of the mail service, which had been introduced on the signatures of hon. members on the Ministerial side and not on a vote of the House, and that was what had enabled the sale of those runs to which he had referred. He hoped the hon. members for Blackall and Leichhardt would bear that in mind. That was the result of the votes of men whom the hon. member for Blackall had said were regarded as a race distinct from those on the opposite side of the House. People out-of-doors had long been of that opinion, and they were now having their eyes open to see what sort of a race of men were in power. They now saw the strong arguments which the Premier was able to use to the members of the land company in England. He could point out to them that the Divisional Boards Bill had been passed, relieving the squatters of all expense for road-making at the cost of the selectors, and that a mail contract had been forced on the colony, against the unanimous voice of the people, in order that Thursday Island might be made a dépôt for the whole of the western and northern country. That was the whole secret of the different race of men, and the people outside would be prepared to take their own definition. The hon. member for Blackall, in the course of his speech, spoke about the atrocity of throwing imputations without foundation, and said that it was infamous for hon. members on this side to deal in suspicions—question the correctness of what had taken place in London; but what did the hon. member himself say in the report of the Select Committee of last session, written and signed by himself?—

“In the opinion of your committee, there are many matters in connection with the inquiry, so far as the rails and freight contracts are concerned, which have not been satisfactorily explained.”

Yet the hon. member last night was prepared to whitewash all the parties who had been mixed up in the affair. Was that the sort of logic the

House had to expect from the hon. member? Last year the hon. member (Mr. Archer), as Chairman of the Select Committee, asked the Premier this question—

“Then you think the circumstances of the case justified the Minister for Works in signing a conditional contract giving three months for ratification?”

And Mr. McIlwraith replied—

“I do not think you should ask that, Mr. Archer. It is asking me to express an opinion upon the action of my colleague.”

This was a case of the pure merino answering to his own question. He was the man who was throwing an imputation, by surmise, upon the hon. member. After that, was the hon. member the man to throw upon the Opposition side of the House the odium of having cast suspicion on the conduct of the Premier? With regard to the Report, the first matter was the thing called the evidence. He would like to submit that to the Chief Justice of Queensland, and ask him whether, if a witness behaved as any one of the witnesses connected with the McIlwraith gang behaved, he would not have ordered him to prison for contempt of court. Then there was the thing which in print was called a report. It was, however, nothing of the sort, but was more like a specimen of a trade circular. He should prefer to describe it as—“The London Official and Mercantile Deodorising Company, Limited, for bleaching out the blackest of spots from the dirtiest of characters; limited to highly paid officials and Government mercantile pets; under the distinguished patronage of the Hon. the Premier of Queensland, his numerous relatives, and the rest of the disloyal family.” The Commission should be called a commission for stifling evidence, and not for getting evidence. He would undertake to say that if the evidence were handed to the first cabman on the stand, and he read it carefully through, he would give a result which would be more correct, more logical, and more manly than the present Report was. Such a pretended specimen of result of examination had never before disgraced any Australian colony. The only possible explanation that he could suggest of such a report was that one Commissioner had lost his voice and the other his senses. His real opinion, however, was that they never penned a word of it, and he had formed that opinion upon several grounds. He had at first been very much puzzled to find out two things. First, why should the Minister for Works and his colleagues in July last denounce the proposition to send to England to make inquiries there? They said then that it would be an outrage for the colony to submit the matter to the examination of men out of the colony—and yet, four months later, the Ministry were all eagerness to send to London. What was the reason of the change—why was the proposition an atrocity in July and a non-atrocity in October? He had come to the conclusion that the reason was that time was necessary to enable them to square the evidence in London, and that in the present Report hon. members saw the squared evidence of every man who had been brought forward. Secondly, he had been puzzled to find out why only two Commissioners were appointed; but some experience which he had gained in an arbitration case in New Zealand thirty years ago enabled him to form an opinion. The clerk of the court in that case, he might mention, was a very big man. Instead of being drawn up according to the ordering of the court, the paper when drawn up referred to different matters altogether. There were two arbitrators appointed, and no authority was given to appoint a third. The consequence was that one would suggest a thing which the other would not agree to, and that

would be left out altogether; and then what the second suggested would be objected to by the first, and that also would be left out. It never was intended in this case that there should be a third party. There being only two parties, wherever there was a difference between them and neither would give way the matter in dispute had to be left out altogether. He was going to refer to the reason he had for considering that the two Commissioners who had signed the Report had not drawn it out; but he would leave that alone for the present, and come to the consideration of some of the arguments used last night to show that the position taken up by the leader of the Opposition at the London inquiry was totally unjustifiable, and to the statements made by the Minister for Works and other hon. members opposite that the leader of the Opposition did nothing whatever but act on suspicion. Now, he maintained that it was the duty of every member on that side of the House to watch public expenditure, and more especially the duty of the leader of the Opposition, who would not be there, and ought not to occupy that position if it were not to act as the watch-dog of the country in guarding the money-bags of the country and all contracts that led to money expenditure. The whole principle of the English constitution, as contrasted with the constitution of continental countries, distinctly and especially made it the bounden duty of the leader of the Opposition, if he saw anything that was cloudy or looked offensive in the action of the Ministry, it was his bounden duty—and the duty of every member on that side of the House—not to rest satisfied till everything had been cleared up and a satisfactory explanation had been given as to the way the money had been spent. There was nothing more clearly established in the law of the English nation than that. He remembered quoting some late memoirs of a man who had occupied a position in public life, in which it was related that when the sovereigns of Europe came to England in 1814, the Emperor of Russia, while talking to some leading politicians who were endeavouring to explain to him the distinction between the Opposition and the Ministerial side of the House, said would it not be very desirable for the leaders of the Opposition to go to the leaders of the Ministry and tell them what they ought to do, and then they could both agree on a definite arrangement. The leaders of the Opposition did not like to explain to the Emperor that that very function was what distinguished the one from the other. One was to be the watch-dog over the conduct of the other; and hon. members should not allow themselves to be led away by the ignorance on constitutional matters of the Minister for Works or the member for Blackall. No later than yesterday the leader of the Opposition had put on the paper notice of questions to the Premier as to what money had been paid to Mr. Cooper and what was due to him. The Premier informed him what was paid, and purposely kept back the statement of what was due. He held that this was another instance of the despotism that had been exercised by the hon. member who was at the head of the Parliament of the country. There might be reasons of public policy for concealing some State information, but never as to the expenditure of money. To obtain that was the special function of those men who were denominated Her Majesty's Opposition. That seemed never to have entered the heads of those hon. gentlemen he had referred to who had lectured members on that side of the House on their functions. He held that the leader of the Opposition would have been wanting in his duty had he not followed up the statement penned by Mr. Archer, the Chairman of the Committee, and adopted by

the Committee, that further evidence was required. In the face of that intimation on the part of the Committee, the leader of the Opposition would have been wanting in his duty if he had not, so far as his engagements would permit, followed up this subject. If the leader of the Opposition had not been present at the inquiry what state of affairs would they have got into? The proceedings would then have deserved the designation given it in the telegram of the Premier of the colony—namely, that it was nothing but rubbish. It was rubbish enough as it was; but what would it have been if the whole of these examinations and cross-examinations had not been gone into? As it was, it was a disgrace to the colony that they were obliged to put up with such a thing. If copies of it were sent to the other colonies they would wonder that grown-up men in Queensland would put up with such rubbish. The hon. members who had spoken on the other side, and especially Mr. Norton, had exceeded all others in pleading for the feelings of the hon. Premier. He (Mr. Rea) expected to see the hon. gentleman come back a skeleton, because he did not know, or ought not to have known, anything of the nature of the Report; and perhaps that accounted for the fact that nobody could see him when he landed. Of all men in the colony the Premier had taken the best care of his family. Why did the Premier, as he said last session, shelter himself behind the petticoat of a female relation, and say that the money from the freight contracts did not go into his pocket, but upstairs into the nursery? Was that a position for a Minister of the Crown to take up? It appeared to him that when the Premier got to London he hunted about for two of the ablest criminal lawyers in the country, and he asked them could they in any way manage to prevent him from being put into the witness box. "Oh," they said, "we shall soon manage that; we will treat you as the big Claimant; we will make you a defendant." The reason assigned for not examining the Premier in London was that he was an accused person; but was not Mr. Macalister an accused person? Was not he examined? Were not Messrs. Ashwell and Haslam accused persons, and were not they examined? But the hon. Premier was to be left out, and it did not speak creditably for him to have sheltered himself in that way. When he (Mr. Rea) came to see the way in which the Premier's brother was allowed to shun disclosure in the way the Report showed, he then became satisfied that the whole proceedings were nonsense. He would quote what the Premier's brother said, or rather what he refused to say. On page 108 he found this:—

"2838. What was the date of the contract? October 8th.

"2839. Was it in writing? Yes.

"2840. Do you mind producing it? I object to produce it. I have it here."

That was the evidence of his own brother bearing upon a subject which the Premier was supposed to have participated in. He would read some of the answers:—

"2851. Will you let us see it? No.

"2852. Do you remember, when you negotiated with the Barrow Company, what kind of rails you stipulated for? Yes."

This was the next question:—

"3035. Will you tell us what was the price of the first lot you sold to the Haslam Company? No; certainly not. Do you say, will I do so?

"3036. Yes? No.

"3037. You will not? No."

Then this:—

"3038. Will you tell us the price of the second parcel? No; of neither parcel.

"3039. Will you tell us whether you had sold any of the 30,000 tons that you bought besides the parcel to the Haslam Company? No; I have already objected to give any information upon that."

This is another of those refusals:—

"3046. Mr. McEacharn has told us that the average price that you sold at was about £9 3s. 2d.: can you tell us whether that is correct?

"Mr. Clarke: It is hardly reasonable to ask that question when he has once said that he declines to give any information."

And numerous other questions—this, for instance—

"3040. Was the price for the two parcels you sold to the Haslam Company the same? I will not give any information with reference to the price at all."

A man who had been supposed to be implicated like the Premier—who was as sensitive as his friends represented, suffering under an imputation, mental agony—who was the Premier of the colony and could have ordered the questions to have been answered upon oath—who could have got a commission to have the same powers as an elections committee at home;—any man outside the House who had had such imputations cast upon him would have said to his brother, "If you do not give every information in your power, I will apply at once to have an Act passed by which you may be put upon your oath and compelled to answer every one." But the Premier was perfectly satisfied to have those sort of questions left unanswered, and yet they were told they ought not to act upon suspicion. What could they do but act upon suspicion when they could get no information upon the very points upon which information was required? Those were the answers: to imputations of acting upon suspicion. He could undertake to say that there was no Premier in the colony, or ever had been in Australia, who would have sat down under those imputations, and have heard his own brother, who was implicated in what was called a swindle, and what many people still believed to be a swindle, make these refusals again and again. Then they had got proof of the other men. At page 32 they found this on the part of Mr. Law, who, at question 869, was asked by Mr. Griffith:—

"869. Do you remember whether you received any communication from him after the condition as to full-cargo ships was imposed? I had some communications with him, but I have not got them with me now.

"870. Have you them in London? Yes, at my hotel.

"871. Would you mind producing them? I would not care about doing it.

"872. Would they throw any light on the transaction? I will produce them if necessary, if you wish them.

"873. I should like to see them very much. Did you know that this condition as to full-cargo ships was going to be imposed until you got the letter? No; we did not know whether it would be imposed or not. It was put in the second letter.

"874. Did you know of it before? No."

Then it went on with a lot of other questions bearing upon the same thing. Then came Mr. Timmins Smith, at page 64; and this, he thought, was a fair specimen of what his evidence was worth, where he said—

"If you will allow me, I will read the statement in which is contained all the facts in connection with the contract which I know of; and I shall then beg to be excused from answering any questions upon it, or being cross-examined upon it; but I can vouch for the truth of every word, and if it becomes necessary to prove it I shall be able to do so."

There was a direct refusal to give evidence; and this was the gentleman of whom the Minister for Works had said he drew a salary greater than the whole of the Ministry of Queensland put together. He (Mr. Rea) did not wonder at it; he was worth more than the whole of them. He would give a statement in writing, but would

not subject himself to examination. Then came Mr. Anderson at page 90, question 2464:—

“Would you have any objection to produce an agreement, if there is one in writing, or to its production? I could not without the permission of the others. I do not see why you should ask me for such a thing. You will excuse me, but I have told you quite straightforwardly all that I know about it; at least, when I say all that I know about it, all that I think it desirable you should know about it.”

Had ever anything been heard like that? He would like that their Chief Justice had a man like that in the witness-box; he would very soon have found a safe place to locate him. He held that these charges, or attempted charges, made by the Minister for Works, to the effect that the leader of the Opposition had disgraced himself by going upon nothing but suspicion, as he called it—but he (Mr. Rea) said they had nothing else but suspicion to go upon—

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hear, hear!

Mr. REA said that that was all they had to go upon, and when the Premier's friends came forward and said that they would tell as much as they liked and nothing more, they found that no notice of these statements was taken in that thing called a Report. He had said before that it was the bounden duty of every member of the House never to rest satisfied with that Report. Some hon. members thought that they had come to the end of it, but they were very much mistaken if they thought so. They might pass what amendments they liked; they might say that this Premier was the greatest man in creation—that never since the days of Solomon was there such a man; but the people outside of the House would not be bamboozled in that way, and, therefore, the imputations cast across the table were utterly without foundation, and the people of the country would see that they were. But they had, besides, to take into consideration the general character and conduct of the Premier in his other transactions, in confirming the opinion of suspicion. They saw that wherever he worked since he had become Premier of this colony, and before he came to the colony, he had always acted as a very keen business man, close up to the verge of rectitude, knowing what bargains to make and to avoid. And yet they were told that when in London he went to Mr. Macalister to get information about rails. Let them ask any of the hon. gentleman's former friends, and they would tell them that the Premier of this colony could give Mr. Macalister and any member of the House more information about rails and rail-making than they ever knew before; and yet he asked Mr. Macalister to give him information as to what it was advisable to do. The Premier knew well enough what was going on in the market, and that if he did not make the contract his friends would not get the advantage they had expected; he knew from the past history of the rail market that in a few months all this flash in the pan would go off, and that if he waited until July he would get rails for 50 per cent. less than he did; and yet they had to pay £1,000 for the Premier going home to make this specious bargain at the worst state the market had been in for the previous ten years. Last night the hon. member for Blackall spoke of the impudence of hon. members on the Opposition side in attempting to throw imputation on the Minister for Works, who had never been in a mercantile office, and therefore did not know how to properly draw up the contract; but when the Crown Solicitor sent warning that this man Thomassen had no authority to make the bargain, did it require the education of the counting-house to tell him whether it was right or wrong? Were they to be put off with such nonsense as that? But the

same excuse could not be made for the Premier, who, ever since he had been in the colony, and long before, had made himself aware of the whole of the transactions in connection with the manufacture of steel rails. Yet, when the Premier was on the spot, thus superseding the Agent-General according to the rule of the office, he asked information from Mr. Macalister as to whether it was desirable to purchase rails. But, whatever credence was given by hon. members, no credence would be given outside the House to those excuses. Then what did they find in connection with the freight part of the subject? Did they not find that until the McIlwraith family got into the office there never was any ring there? while now they saw that family gathering the money of this colony, just as in the early days of the colony a dray was stuck up by the blacks, who were corroboreeing round and dipping their hands in the sugar as they went on. Queensland was the stuck-up dray, and the brothers-in-law were corroboreeing round while the man who should have been on guard was quietly looking on. That was the summary of the matter; and, of the whole of the business, perhaps this was the most discreditable. Why were they laughed at for acting on suspicion, when they had nothing else to go upon?—because all the facts required were carefully kept back by the friends and relatives of the gentlemen interested. The whole history of the Premier showed that he had a mania for these transactions, and he would leave his mark on the colony as the greatest curse that had come on it. They read in history of a gentleman called Attila, and that where his horse's hoof rested the grass ceased to grow. In Queensland they had no Hun and no Attila, but they had something quite as good—namely, the great Mucklewrath, the Ostrogoth, or, rather, the Faisleygoth; but he had established a characteristic of the very opposite kind—namely, that wherever he put his hoof out sprouted a contract, but of a growth so rank that when one went near it he had to hold his nose; and if he wanted to find out the cause of the loud smell he had only to dig down deep enough, and there he would find either a brother or a brother-in-law lying at the root of it; and if hon. members only granted the transcontinental railway the Premier would give them such an eye-opener as they had not seen this century. By voting in favour of the amendment hon. members would take away all reason against voting for the transcontinental line, because after they had whitewashed the Premier they could not do less than vote for this railway. Then they were told that they placed the Premier in a heartrending position by raising these suspicions, which would stick to him all through life. They would stick to him until they got an inquiry where the evidence was given on oath and where witnesses who refused to give evidence would be sent to prison. To say that the Report before them was a clearance of the Premier was the greatest monstrosity that ever existed; and he would give his reasons for believing that neither of the Commissioners wrote that Report. He had turned over only two pages before he saw the whole explanation, which was this: The two Commissioners, in reviewing the evidence, came to a stumbling block, and one said “I will pass that,” while the other said “I will not swallow that,” and then they came to a stop. Then they agreed to hand over the evidence to a third man and get him to draw up a fair report from that evidence, and bound themselves to sign whatever was drawn up, being fully satisfied of the character and position of the man who did the work. They must be satisfied as to his possessing three qualifications: first, legal knowledge; second, some knowledge of the colonies; and third, that he should have

a high standing in their estimation. The moment he (Mr. Rea) saw J. Bramston's name in the evidence he felt sure that was the gentleman who drew up the Report, because he could find the twin report of this one—not in words, but the same way of dealing with the evidence—in the Colonial Secretary's Office in this colony. He (Mr. Rea) had occasion to bring a charge against the Crown Solicitor some years ago, and it was referred to this Johnny Bramston, as he was called, who was the Attorney-General, and who drew out a report identical with the Report before them, shirking the whole of the facts, and giving plausible reasons. It must have been in some way similar to that that this Report was drawn up. Two honourable men never could have put their names to the Report but for the reason he had given. Then why was it that Mr. Andrew McIlwraith, who had never previously done business in rails, should suddenly jump to the determination to go into the rail market? McIlwraith and Company never did this before they got hold of the office in London. It was then that they started the business, having arranged for all possible contingencies and determined to carry on their correspondence in an unknown tongue by means of code signals. This was a dangerous thing to do, and they should have been more careful with these signals—about dropping them—which they were obliged to take to the telegraph office in order to make sure that any misunderstood telegrams were right. Here was the code in use by McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company:—

“Bartoli means new railway to be constructed.
Bookhara means Ibbotson's tender is accepted.
Anthropos means to be delivered here.
Penguin means we have secured freight room.
Tartaglia means 17,000.
Agelochia means cannot arrange with Thomassen.
Agcalasses means have arranged with Thomassen.
Atrebates means cannot obtain any information regarding rails from Ibbotson.
Mumbo means the Minister for Works is doing it beautifully.
Jumbo means our Tom looks as innocent as though he knew nothing.
Beeryngle means the Land Minister doesn't seem to see it yet.
Heliogabalus means the Colonial Secretary swears whatever is, is right.*
Abracadabra means the whole boiling of them are in it.”

Hon. members could see from this the evil consequences of carrying on correspondence by means of code signals through the telegraph office. One hon. member had put forward the pretended excuse that the rails were bought because of the confusion in the telegram; but that placed either McEacharn or McIlwraith in the same position that Mr. Hamilton was—namely, that he had not told the truth, and should not be believed; because he had discovered that the contract for the rails was made before the telegram was sent. To his (Mr. Rea's) mind, the whole of the evidence went to show that the conspiracy remained where it was, and that the people of this colony were no wiser than they were before the affair was carried to London. He warned those gentlemen who were going to vote for this whitewashing—this deodorising—that if they voted thus they could not under any circumstances refuse to pass this huge contract for the transcontinental railway. But members on the Opposition side would have something to say on that. It would be their duty to speak even more plainly than they had ever done about this giving of 20,000,000 acres of land to the friends, and relations, and supporters of the Premier; although he might succeed in carrying it in spite of them, because he could get a sufficient number of followers, as he did for the mail

contract. But, rather than that, he would suggest that they petition Her Majesty the Queen to send out a band of the celebrated London public-house card-sharpers, and let them take charge of the affairs of the colony; then the people of Queensland would know whom they had to deal with.

Mr. LOW said that at one time he had made up his mind not to give a silent vote in support of the Ministry, but after hearing such bubbles come from the last speaker he thought it better not to address the House.

Mr. MESTON said he had had no intention of speaking on this particular subject, but he felt it necessary to offer some explanation as a reason for the vote he intended to give. He took it that this was not a subject for fiery declamation or for any particular display of oratorical power. Never had a subject been brought before this House in which there was a more sacred duty for every member to throw aside personal and political prejudice, and bring a calm and unbiassed judgment to bear upon it. He had refrained last session from expressing any opinion on the steel rails contract. Accusations had been made against one of our leading statesmen, but he felt it to be the duty of every man to refrain from forming an opinion until the inquiry was concluded, and until all the available evidence was before the House. He knew that during last session, by not offering any opposition to the passing of the mail service, and by not joining in the accusations against the Premier, he had become suspected of disloyalty to his party. He had refrained from giving judgment on a subject which ought not to have been judged then, and certainly not by anyone previous to the present time. He accepted the advice of Shakespere—he took each man's censure, and reserved his judgment until the proper time for that judgment had arrived. He believed in the Premier's innocence originally on principle—on the principle which guided him never to believe anything he heard about any man without conclusive and irrefutable evidence in support of it. From the time the Hemmant petition was laid on the table of the House up to the present he had, as a journalist, upheld the innocence of the Premier. He made reference to his influence as a journalist for the simple reason that his constituents and public writers in the colony had held him responsible for the opinions expressed in the Press. That responsibility he was prepared to accept, and could show that there was nothing inconsistent in the opinions he had held. When he was accused of disloyalty it brought to his consideration the question what loyalty to a party meant. If it meant blindly and unquestionably following a leader, whatever that leader chose to do, without exercising any independency of thought or action, then, probably, he had been disloyal; but if it meant a fair and impartial criticism of Government questions and the exercise of his discretion on any occasion, while at the same time retaining his allegiance to his party and respect for the leader, then he was loyal, and he intended to remain so. The only opinion he expressed during last session upon the steel rails subject was that the course adopted by the leader of the Opposition was a mistake. They could have obtained the whole of the evidence now before them by a totally different course, without the necessity of uttering a single sentence of that deplorable discussion which had made the whole subject one that could only be regarded as a national calamity. But while he regretted what he believed was the mistaken course of the leader of the Opposition, no man was more profoundly impressed with the unmistakable earnestness, and the evident conscientious belief that he was right, and no one admired more the analytical mind-power with which

* Good Lord, how our army swore in Flanders.

the hon. gentleman mastered the whole of the details of the evidence, and built up a structure which had been the astonishment of every member of this Assembly. But it reminded him (Mr. Meston) of a castle built by the hero of a fable of Pilpay—a magnificent edifice, perfect in construction, but built on a quagmire foundation, which gave way and brought the whole edifice down. The hon. gentleman started with a false premise instead of a true one, and of necessity he came to a false conclusion. The evidence upon which he based his accusation was placed before him in the most plausible and alluring form, by men

“Skilled in the art to deepen scandal’s tints

With all the kind mendacity of hints,

While mingling truth with falsehood, sneers with smiles,

A thread of candour with a web of wiles.”

In forming a judgment on this affair, let them never forget for a moment how far their judgment was influenced by surrounding circumstances. He believed that every member of this Assembly would act conscientiously, and that everything that had been said had been the outcome of their conscientious belief. Let them remember that if the position of parties had been reversed—if the Ministerial party had sat on these benches and the Opposition party on the Ministerial benches—if the present Premier had been the leader of the Opposition, and a similar accusation had been brought against a member of the Ministry of whom the present leader of the Opposition (Mr. Griffith) would have been one;—he (Mr. Meston) was perfectly satisfied that the hon. gentleman, instead of proving, or attempting to prove, the allegations which he had made, would have been equally successful in refuting the whole of them. He (Mr. Meston) had not the slightest doubt about that. The Commission which was appointed consisted of two men in whom they all had confidence. The appointment of Mr. King met with universal approval both in this House and in the country, and he believed no man in Queensland was better qualified for the position, for he was a man about whose integrity and capacity there was no doubt whatever. It might also be accepted that the other arbitrator appointed by the Secretary of State was a man in whose impartiality and integrity the Imperial Government had implicit confidence. Thus there was no doubt about the integrity and capacity of the Commissioners, and we were bound to accept their verdict from the simple fact that it was a qualified legal tribunal, and we had no other tribunal to appeal to. We could not accept the verdict of any member—of any number of members—of this House. Several speakers had alluded to outside public opinion, but the only time to ascertain what public opinion was was when members went before their constituents. In the Press there was an infinite diversity of opinion. The people were divided into sects and opposing parties. He never saw public meetings held to influence a verdict but he was reminded of what Lord John Russell had said:—

“There is no instance on record in which the multitude has attempted to influence the deliberations of public assemblies in which their verdict was not hasty, capricious, and unreliable.”

He had not the slightest doubt that the opinions of men outside the House were quite as conscientious as those of hon. members inside, but people outside had not the same means of obtaining accurate evidence to base their verdict upon as hon. members had. Besides, hon. members were placed there in a position that was supposed to be beyond the reach of outside influences. They were placed there by their constituents to exercise their own discretion, and

if they were not prepared to use their own discretion, or if they had none to use, they had no right to be there; that was perfectly certain. The amendment of the hon. the leader of the Opposition did not imply a vote of want of confidence in the Government. If it were a vote of want of confidence in the Government he would vote for it, because if he had confidence in the Government he would not be sitting on that side of the House. But this was a vote of want of confidence in the honesty of the Government, and his honest belief was that the Report of the Royal Commission had effectually and conclusively exonerated the Government of all blame whatsoever. That was his belief. Every other man was quite welcome to his belief, and he gave every man credit for honesty of belief, claiming the same for himself. There never was, during the term of any Ministry of the colony, a period at which judicious legislation would give a greater stimulus to progress than at the present time. The colony was in a healthy and progressive state. The mail service was inaugurating what would be a very extensive direct trade to the old country, and Queensland at the present time—and particularly Northern Queensland—was attracting the attention of capitalists at home in England, as well as in several countries of Europe. People were looking to them for that legislation; they did not expect them to be wasting any more time in the discussion of a question which had been practically settled. He sincerely believed the whole of the people of this colony were surfeited and sick of that steel rails business, and he thought the sooner they disposed of the subject the better. It was a subject which had been productive of incalculable mischief, which had spread among the people of the colony a political animus hitherto happily unknown, which had to a serious extent destroyed the harmony of that Assembly, and which had planted the seeds of a deadly nightshade which would cast its baleful influence far into the future. The honour of one of their statesmen had been called in question, and the fact of his honour having been established, and his innocence having been clearly shown by the Report of the Royal Commission, was, he thought, a subject for congratulation by every member of that House. It was a subject that every member of that House ought to rejoice over. He had been the more earnest in his advocacy of the innocence of the Premier, until it was shown whether he was innocent or guilty, because he assumed, under the principles of justice, that he was innocent until proved to be guilty. He held that they had all reason to rejoice. He was the more earnest in his advocacy of the Premier's innocence because he felt that the honour of the colony was more involved with the reputation of the Premier than it would be with that of any private member; and let them not forget for a moment that trying to establish any guilt on the Premier after his innocence had been established was really striving to cast discredit on the whole of that Assembly and on the political credit of the colony. Now, it was just possible that he might suffer by the vote he was going to give. He might suffer politically; he would not suffer as a man. If he were to give a vote other than that he intended to give, it would necessitate the sacrifice of his own self-respect, which was infinitely dearer to him than even the applause of his constituents. Giving the vote which he intended to give did not imply that he had any the less sympathy with the Opposition; he was merely exercising his own discretion on a subject on which every man ought to use his own discretion, and to use it with the utmost impartiality and dispassionate judgment. He could only claim for his vote that

it was a perfectly honest one, and he hoped that, if ever a charge of a similar nature was brought against any Premier or statesman thereafter, it would be as effectually refuted as it had been in the present instance in the Report of the Royal Commission.

Mr. THOMPSON said he wished to say a word or two on this question. The amendment seemed to raise a false issue. What had this country to do with this question at this particular time?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Everything.

Mr. THOMPSON: The matter was introduced to the notice of the House by the leader of the Opposition as a question of administration, and now they were asked to depart from that, and to express an opinion on a collateral subject—the honour of the Premier. He declined the issue; he declined to be drawn into any such expression of opinion. It appeared to him that this thing had been worked on that wrong issue all along. The Premier was involved in the matter because he happened to be the person who was foremost in it. As he said before, he should decline that issue. It was asserted over and over again in the House, and he was surprised that no lawyer had taken up what in this case was the fallacy that an accused man was entitled to the benefit of the doubt. That was a maxim of law, and it applied to a case where a man was tried. But they were not there to consider the Premier of the colony; they were there to consider the interests of the country, and if there was any doubt it must be given to the country in whose service they were. That was the real way to put it. He thought the thing had drifted into a wrong channel altogether. What right had they to put the Premier forward and to let the whole thing rest on whether he was to blame or not to blame? He (Mr. Thompson) made a speech on the general question at the beginning of last session as far as his lights went; and he laid claim to some sagacity in predicting the result of the inquiry. He thought Mr. Ashwell was at the bottom of the whole thing, and he did not hesitate to say so. He should decline to vote on that amendment as it was put: he should avoid the responsibility of voting upon it. It was not for him to judge; it was not for him to care. He cared for the country so long as he was there, and it was a very little time he was going to be there. He should vote upon the matter in what he considered a constitutional way—that was, as it regarded the country; and he said it was leading them off on the wrong scent to put it off on the hon. the Premier.

Mr. GRIMES said he had, like several other members of the House, refrained from expressing his opinion in several debates on this very unpleasant question last session. He thought it, however, incumbent upon him to make a few remarks; and he must say that he did not regret having refrained from expressing his opinion during the previous debates. Having now had an opportunity of reading over the evidence that had been taken at the inquiry at home, the evidence taken before the Select Committee in the colony, and also the Report of the Commissioners who were sent home, and having had an opportunity of listening to the very able analysis of the evidence as given by the hon. the leader of the Opposition, and also the remarks of hon. members opposite, he thought now that he was in a better position to give a clear judgment on the matter, and he intended to express his opinion decidedly before he sat down. He must be permitted to draw a comparison between the speeches on this side of the House and the

speeches on the other side. The first speech made during that debate was by the leader of the Opposition, and he must say that he very calmly and temperately gave them an exposition of the conclusions he had arrived at, and those conclusions were backed up by portions of the evidence fairly quoted, and not withholding those portions that were favourable to the opinions of hon. members opposite; but he could not say the same of the speeches which had fallen from the other side of the House. From the speech of the hon. the Minister for Works to the last speech from the other side, they had heard very little argument but plenty of abuse. He would remark that abuse would not weaken argument, and hon. members opposite, he thought, had made a great mistake in that respect. Frequently, in discharging his duty to the country and his sovereign, he had been called into the law courts, and he had generally found that when a counsel began to abuse the witnesses, and doubt their veracity, that he had a very hard case to pull through, and, generally speaking, the verdict, when it had been given with equity, was given to the opposite party. That was the case on this occasion. Hon. members opposite had held up Mr. Hamilton to their view as a man utterly unworthy of credence. They had called him all manner of names, and the name of Mr. Hemmant had also been mentioned, giving that gentleman a like character and speaking of him as a very worthy match for Mr. Hamilton in carrying on this affair. Both of them had been alluded to as arch-conspirators, endeavouring to damage the reputation of the Premier. Having heard all that had been said during the debate, and having read the evidence and the Report, and having also read again afterwards the petition of Mr. Hemmant, he could but say that every allegation set forth in that petition was either admitted or proved by documentary evidence during the inquiry—every allegation from first to last—except one, and that was the one which referred to the seats of the hon. the Premier and the Colonial Secretary in that House. That had yet to be decided, and he sincerely hoped that that allegation would also be proved to be correct—that they had forfeited their seats in this Assembly, and if it was for nothing else than to allow hon. members to go to the country, so that those who sat on the Government benches who had acted contrary to the expressed wishes of their constituents, and contrary to the principles expressed by them when they were elected, might be left out in the cold. If it was only to bring about that, a good thing would be done. He had noticed that hon. members opposite, in their endeavours to blacken the characters of the witnesses at the inquiry, had really let go past them unchallenged portions of the evidence which had been exceedingly damaging to their case, and which was taken from the evidence of the very persons whom they were endeavouring to shield. They had especially forgotten one part of the evidence which had been quoted—he referred, for instance, to the quotation made by the hon. member for Logan, on the previous evening, with reference to the telegram which was said to have been mutilated. He (Mr. Grimes) had heard it stated in the House from time to time that the whole of this confusion had arisen from the blunder which was made in connection with this mutilated telegram. But if hon. members had taken any notice of what had been quoted in the House on this point they would have seen how this theory broke down and was scattered to the winds, because the rails were bought before the telegram was sent from Queensland. They had it from the evidence of Mr. Cooper that on the 8th October he finally concluded the contract with McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company for these

rails, and from Mr. Andrew McIlwraith's authority that the contract was completed on the 8th or the 10th October—he was not sure which.

Mr. GRIFFITH : The 8th.

Mr. GRIMES : They knew also from the evidence that Mr. McEacharn's telegram which was mutilated was sent on the 10th October—two days after the rails were purchased by his partner in England. This quite upset the argument that the bungling of the telegraph officers caused this uncertainty to occur, and that he bought the rails to secure himself lest he should be let in for the contract. He (Mr. Grimes) knew that it would be said that two other telegrams were sent before the telegram of the 10th, but the mutilation of this telegram was, as had been shown, of very little account, and did not affect the question of the purchase of rails. This statement he should support by reference to the letter which was sent by Mr. McEacharn's partner, Mr. Andrew McIlwraith, on the 31st October, and which they would find on page 83 of the evidence taken before the Select Committee, and in which it was clearly pointed out that it was the telegram of the 10th October which misled him—if he was misled at all. It was not his intention to read the whole of this letter, but only the small portion which referred to the subject now mentioned. They would find it at the top of the page. It was dated the 31st October, and was from Mr. A. McIlwraith to his partner in Queensland. In it he said—

“On the 16th instant I asked you to repeat part of your message of the 11th instant”—

He (Mr. Grimes) thought this was a mistake, and that he meant the 10th instant. The letter continued—

“but as you made no reference to my request in your message of the 27th, I conclude you thought the matter of no great importance. I again set to work, and at last hit upon what I consider is the proper reading of this message, viz.—

“Telegram arrived Will reply by mail Rails—Have arranged with Thomassen Telegraph instructions, &c., &c.”

This clearly identified the mutilated telegram with the one which was sent on the 10th October. Now, he said again, that if hon. members on the other side had taken notice of these arguments which had been used, they would never have said that the telegram caused Mr. McIlwraith to purchase the rails to secure himself. There was here a pathway open for hon. members on the Opposition side to damage the character of this witness. How could he reconcile this statement of his with the fact when he received the telegram two days after he purchased the rails? He (Mr. Grimes) might try thus to blacken character, but he did not choose to do so. He and those with him would rather bring forward arguments, and by those arguments they would stand or fall. There was no occasion for them to attempt to damage the character of any witnesses who presented themselves before the Royal Commission at all. He would now have a word with the hon. member for Blackall (Mr. Archer). That hon. gentleman had tried to excuse the strong language used by his friends by saying that they were irritated by the language of the other side. The hon. gentleman had also drawn a comparison between the conduct of his young friends and that of the hon. member for Enoggera. He (Mr. Grimes) did not think that the hon. member for Blackall had dealt fairly with the hon. member for Enoggera in making such remarks. He was sorry to have to refer to any statement of that hon. member as unfair, because he did not know a more gentlemanly man in the Assembly—nor one who was a better model or

example for his (Mr. Archer's) young friends than he. He would not like to weaken the influence of the hon. member by anything he might say, but he considered and felt bound to state so, that he unfairly twisted the remarks of the hon. member for Enoggera, when he made reference to the trip of the Premier to Ayr, by attributing to him the statement that the Premier went out of the way when this jobbery was going on. The hon. and learned member for Enoggera said nothing of the sort.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : He did !

Mr. GRIMES said he had listened to the remarks of the hon. member, and had since read them in *Hansard*. That reading had borne him out in the opinion he gathered while the hon. gentleman was speaking, that he charged the Premier with neglecting his duty when he arrived in Cork on the 21st December, and in Liverpool on the 22nd, and knowing full well the rising market in rails, he neglected to attend to the interests of the colony, and went away to enjoy himself with the old folks at home. That was all the hon. member for Enoggera said, and he (Mr. Grimes) did not think he had been treated fairly by the hon. member for Blackall. He (Mr. Grimes), too, would back up the remarks of the hon. gentleman which he had just quoted, and would say that there was neglect of duty on the part of the Premier when he placed the interests of the colony as subordinate—well, not to his own interest, but to his own pleasure. “Business before pleasure” was not the maxim of the hon. gentleman on this occasion, as it ought to have been. Honourable members on the other side seemed to set a great value upon the Report, and seemed to be very much surprised that hon. members on the Opposition benches did not set the same high value upon it. He must confess that he did not set a great deal of value upon the Report, and he was prepared to give his reason why. There were several things to be taken into consideration in connection with it. First, they must ascertain who were the Commissioners in the matter. He did not know either of the gentlemen personally. They had been spoken of as men of integrity. He did not doubt it, but at the same time they might not be competent to perform the duties imposed upon them. Their integrity had not been challenged, but their competency had been, and by one whose opinion would be valued as highly by the community at large as any opinion which could be given from the other side of the House. It was not only the individuals who composed the Commission that must be taken into consideration, but also their competency, as well as the power which was given to them. Now they had heard this called a Royal Commission. Well, he did not know whether or not he was in error in saying so, but he did not think it could be fairly called so. He had always understood that a Royal Commission had power to send for persons and papers, and power to insist upon every question which was put being answered. But he found that this Commission lacked this power which was essential to a full inquiry, and before a proper report could be given upon the matter there must be a full inquiry, and that they had not yet had. A good deal of evidence had been suppressed. When the truth had been coming out it had been stopped by the counsel for the gentleman who chose to place himself in the position of the accused person. That would detract from the value of the Report, and hon. members opposite could not expect them to set the same value upon it as they themselves did. There was another matter to be taken into consideration. The instructions given to that Commission were not as they ought to have been. The leader of the Opposition had justly

characterised the conduct of the Colonial Secretary, in sending to the Commission copies of *Hansard* containing his speech, as impertinent. If such was the case on the part of the Colonial Secretary, what ought they to say to the conduct of Sir Hardinge Giffard, who had charged the members of the Opposition with having conspired to damage the reputation of the Premier? Impertinence fell far short of accurately describing such conduct. After carefully reading the instructions to the Commission he had come to the conclusion that they were misleading, and had been the cause of the inquiry being conducted more judiciously than it ought to have been. It was supposed that the Commission would arrive at the truth and the whole truth, but by making the Commission more judicial than it should have been they had allowed counsel to keep back that which was damaging to his client. The Attorney-General, in speaking of the Report, said the Report was not intended as a mere comment on the facts, but was intended to supply them with the presence, the demeanour, acts, and looks of the witnesses who appeared before the Commission. There was nothing to object to in that, for much might be learned from looking witnesses full in the face. If they were to take the looks, demeanour, and acts of witnesses into consideration, it was only fair to take into consideration the looks, demeanour, and acts of the parties who would have been affected by the verdict. The conduct, demeanour, and acts of the Premier in that matter did not, in his opinion, coincide with the conduct, demeanour, and acts of one who was not afraid of the truth, and the whole truth, coming out. If the Premier did not fear a full inquiry for himself and his friends, he would have pursued a very different course of action. Had he felt that he was entirely innocent of any charge made against him, and that the truth would do nothing but clear him, he (Mr. Grimes) would have said—“Gentlemen, I know nothing of the allegations set forth in the petition, but you shall have the fullest inquiry; I will throw no difficulty in the way of your choosing whom you please as Commissioners, and give them any power you wish to have placed in their hands so that a full and free inquiry may be held.” That would have been the position of one who did not fear for himself or for his friends whatever might be the result of that inquiry; but what did they find? When the petition was first brought forward a full inquiry was promised, but amongst the names of the Select Committee they did not find that of the leader of the Opposition; and it was not until the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) declined to act that that gentleman was placed on the Committee. When the report of that Select Committee was brought up, the Committee recommended that further inquiry should be made at home by a Royal Commission. One Commissioner was nominated by the hon. gentleman, who took up the position of an accused person. He was urged to add a second name, and attempts were made by the Opposition, wishing to have an inquiry and report which would satisfy the public, and suggested for that purpose the names of Mr. R. M. Stewart, Mr. Foster, and others. That being refused, it was proposed that two additional Commissioners should be appointed by the Colonial Office. That also was refused, and they were compelled to accept two Commissioners only—one appointed from Queensland by the Government, and the other by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Directly the Commissioner, and after him the leader of the Opposition, started for home, the Premier followed them. He then tried to get that hon. gentleman kept out of the

inquiry room; and then, by instructions to his counsel to object to certain questions, prevented the whole truth from being brought out. What would be the impression on the public outside?—that he did fear the truth coming out, perhaps not on his own account, but certainly on that of his friends. Now, by taking into consideration the acts, looks, demeanour of the Premier, who put himself in the place of an accused person, they could not be satisfied that he had done all he could and ought to have done to obtain a full inquiry into the matter. Under all those circumstances, and with all those surroundings of the Commission and its Report, they would not be justified in accepting it without question. If the Premier had no fear of the truth coming out for his own sake, he had certainly done himself an injustice by the course he had taken, for he had closed up every avenue of light and truth, and the result was that there remained about the matter a darkness which would never be removed. It would have been far better to have had the whole truth, however damaging it might have been to the Premier's friends, than to allow the question to rest in doubt and uncertainty, which were often more damaging than truth. From his remarks hon. members would have gathered that he did not agree with, and could not vote for, the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Blackall. He thoroughly agreed with the amendment of the leader of the Opposition, that the interests of the colony had been subordinated to the interests of private individuals; and he had no hesitation in saying by whom. The hon. member (Mr. Thompson) was right when he laid it upon the shoulders of Mr. Ashwell. There was no doubt that information had leaked out from the London office, and everything was arranged that the contract should go into the hands of the Premier's friends. He did not say that the Premier had helped on the matter, but he was certain that if the inquiry had been pushed on a little further he would have found it all out. He would no longer occupy the time of the House. He had expressed his opinions on the matter faithfully, and personally did not care whether those opinions pleased or not. He had done his duty to those whom he represented, and would not now trouble the House with any further remarks.

Mr. ALAND said his remarks would be nearly as short as those of the hon. member for Balonne (Mr. Low). He did not intend to speak on the subject, because the natural feeling of diffidence possessed by a new member on addressing the House was to him intensified by the delicacy of the question before the House. He had listened with the greatest interest to the speeches from both sides. They had had served up, if he might so speak, good, sterling dishes, and some highly spiced and seasoned dishes. Personally, the highly spiced dishes did not digest with him, and he preferred to listen to speeches which had more argument in them; and he agreed with the hon. member for Oxley, that the argument on the question had mainly proceeded from the Opposition side of the House. When addressing his constituents some six months ago, he made little or no allusion to the subject beyond telling them that he had made himself acquainted with the subject so far as the debates in *Hansard* were concerned, but had not read the evidence given before the Select Committee, and that he had gathered from what he read the belief that there had been gross bungling and mismanagement; that the bungling and mismanagement had commenced with the Minister for Works; and that through that bungling the colony had lost a very considerable amount of money. He held that opinion still. It was all very well for the hon. member for Blackall to state, as an

excuse for the Minister for Works, that he had not served his time in a counting-house or a merchant's office; but that was really no excuse. The hon. member had at his command every possible facility for obtaining any information which he might have lacked, but he would not avail himself of those opportunities. He did not call to his counsel the gentleman whom he ought to have called—namely, Mr. Stanley; and though he did call the Solicitor-General for the colony, he completely ignored the advice that gentleman gave him. He (Mr. Aland) also found in the London Report, which had been variously designated by different speakers—the language being sometimes very unparliamentary—a letter sent out to this colony by Mr. Macalister, in which that gentleman complained that contracts had been previously entered into with Messrs. Ibbotson Brothers, and said that it was a very bad practice indeed to make contracts in the colony in regard to matters which should be remitted to the care of the Agent-General in London. The hon. member for Port Curtis, last night, when speaking on the freight question, tried to make out that the freight combinations which had been referred to were for the good of the colony. That was the first time that he (Mr. Aland) had heard it argued that combinations of that sort, or trades' unions—which were included in the remarks of the hon. member—were for the benefit of the community. He had always been taught, and had regarded it as a principle of commercial education, that competition, and not combination, was for the good of trade. At the present time vessels were lying at the Brisbane wharves that had brought out dead-weight to this colony at from 21s. to 25s. per ton, and yet the Government were paying 38s. 6d. per ton for freight on rails to Brisbane. That was an illustration of the benefit which the public, through the merchants of Brisbane, were deriving from competition, and the loss which was resulting to the Government through combination. He might state at once that he was not going to be caught by the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall, which he presumed was inspired by a paragraph which appeared in the *Courier* a few days before. He had never yet entertained or expressed the opinion that the Premier had been implicated in these matters, by which the colony had lost a large amount of money; but his opinion was, as had been very tersely and properly expressed by the leader of the Opposition in his amendment, that in the contracts for the supply and carriage of rails, specially referred to in that petition, the interests of the colony had been subordinated to the interests of private persons. The digest of the evidence by the leader of the Opposition, supplemented by the remarks of other hon. members on the Opposition side of the House, had fairly demonstrated that proposition. One other matter occurred to him in reading the last part of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Blackall. The hon. member said—

“Whilst deeming it inadvisable to express any opinion upon the working of the London office pending the further inquiry now being held by the Commissioners in London, we are glad to congratulate Your Excellency on the fact that the charges made against the Premier have been proved to be completely unfounded.”

He (Mr. Aland) might be wrong, but he had hitherto believed that the matter placed before the Commissioners in London was not a charge against the Premier. The matter into which the Commissioners were called upon to inquire was the petition of Mr. Hemmant, and no other matters. It was the wish of the House, he believed, that they should so limit their inquiry; but it appeared that the Colonial Secretary—whether as an afterthought or not had not been shown—by means of letters to the Commission,

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placed before them other matters which, in the opinion of hon. members sitting on that (Opposition) side of the House, the hon. gentleman had no right to submit to them.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said there had been more speeches delivered than he expected to have heard, and he felt regret that so much should have been said on the subject by hon. members on both sides of the House. He should very much prefer to have heard one or two speeches from either side and then have gone to the vote. That would have been quite sufficient, as it was probable that no member of the House had changed his opinion on the subject since the day when the House met. Although he had not intended to speak he would take this opportunity of making a few observations on three points: first, the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition; secondly, the observations which had been made with reference to the Premier personally; and, thirdly, a word or two upon the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Blackall. First, with regard to the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition, the hon. gentleman said—

“That, in making these contracts, the interests of the colony had been subordinated to the interests of private persons.”

The discussion on that point was very well carried on for some time, but subsequently, for some unexplained reason, the debate went off at a tangent, and drifted into a consideration of the general question as affecting the Premier personally. That was a great mistake, and many hon. members, speaking after, followed the lead and forsook the line of argument which properly attached to the resolution of the leader of the Opposition. He (Mr. Paterson), in considering the matter, had disavowed from the subject anything having reference to the Premier personally, and put that part aside altogether; and wished it to be distinctly understood that his vote this evening would have special reference to the amendment as formulated by the leader of the Opposition. His conclusions in reference thereto were just the same as they were on the first evening, and they had been arrived at after a careful consideration of the whole circumstances of the purchase and freight matters, from the first appearance of the subject, until he had digested the evidence which accompanied the Report. Without troubling the House now with quotations from the evidence, or giving his reasons for coming to the conclusion he had arrived at, he should simply say that with respect to this part of the subject he should support the amendment of the leader of the Opposition as it stood, believing that it had been amply corroborated and justified by the evidence from first to last, by the circumstances disclosed by the Select Committee as well as by the evidence taken before the Royal Commission. Hon. members would be justified in supporting the amendment if for no other ground than on account of the action of the Government, through the Minister for Works, in respect of that absurd *quasi*-contract made with Mr. Thomassen on behalf of Ibbotson Brothers. Even if there were no other matter than that to be dealt with, the terms of the amendment would be most appropriate. That conditional contract tied the hands of the Government for three months, and shut them out from a very good market indeed. As a matter of fact, dust was thrown in the eyes of the people of the colony by means of it. A paragraph appeared about that time in the leading newspaper of the colony stating that the Government had concluded a large contract at satisfactory prices, whereas it now appeared that that statement was founded on the conclusion that the conditional contract which

had led to such unhappy results was absolute. Hon. members would remember that, when the Loan Bill and the advisability of extending main trunk railways were under discussion, one of the arguments used by several hon. members in favour of those measures was that that was an opportune time for the purchase of steel rails. It was a great pity the cable was not used on that occasion—a few pounds spent in that direction by the hon. gentleman in charge of that department might have enabled the colony to obtain rails at the then current prices. The Minister for Works had himself admitted that he committed an error of judgment, and the Royal Commission had pointed out the same thing, but it was not sufficient for the Ministry to say—We condone the offence, and won't allow such an error of judgment to occur again. The act of the Minister for Works was the act of the Government. Many hon. members would remember that a British Government was thrown out of office on account of a deficiency of ability on the part of the Minister who had charge of the Commissariat Department at the time of the Crimean War. His actions in that case were regarded as the actions of the whole Government. Secondly, with regard to observations made in the Report and verbally by hon. members, he would simply state that he entirely accepted the conclusion of the Royal Commission with respect to the Premier, and entirely concurred with them in their complete exoneration of the Premier in every respect. The third point to which he should refer was the amendment moved by the hon. member for Blackall. He had always understood in the course of his previous experience that an amendment was an embodiment of opinion having some relation to the subject matter of the motion antecedent to it; but in this case the amendment of the leader of the Opposition appertained entirely to the question of the purchase of steel rails and the conveyance of them to the colony, while the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall referred to neither one nor the other, and therefore could not be regarded as an amendment on the amendment of the leader of the Opposition. It was, in fact, a red herring drawn across the trail. The hon. member admitted as much, because he began his speech by stating that he was not going to address himself strictly to the question which had been discussed, and he had succeeded in driving the debate off the line altogether. Hon. members on both sides of the House had to some extent forsaken the point promulgated by the leader of the Opposition and taken up the track suggested by the amendment, which was—

“Whilst deeming it inadvisable to express any opinion upon the working of the London office pending the further inquiry now being held by the Commissioners in London, we are glad to congratulate Your Excellency on the fact that the charges made against the Premier have been proved to be completely unfounded.”

With the latter part of that amendment he perfectly agreed. If a motion came before the House with respect to the Premier personally, he need not say, after what he had just stated, that he would vote for it. However, he did not think it would be a compliment to the sense of the House to say to His Excellency that they deemed it inadvisable to express any opinion upon the working of the London office, when they knew that at present it would be very improper to express any such opinion. They might say what they pleased outside as to the working of the London office, but the subject had not been introduced into this discussion at all. At any rate, it had no relation to the resolution of the leader of the Opposition, and, seeing that the matter would ultimately re-

ceive attention at their hands, he thought it had been improperly introduced at the present time. Therefore, agreeing, as he did, in general terms with the motion of the hon. the leader of the Opposition, and believing that there had been lack of sound business acumen somewhere by which these freight and rail contracts had been very unsatisfactorily arranged, he should vote for the amendment of the leader of the Opposition. At the same time, while he could not vote for Mr. Archer's amendment, he took that opportunity of expressing his entire concurrence with the latter part of it. The first part, as he had previously stated, he thought should have been left out, so as to allow each member to express his opinion on the conduct of the Government as he went on. The question was not one upon which the fate of the Government depended; and hon. members should confine themselves to expressing an opinion on the mode in which the business connected with the steel rails and freight contracts had been conducted.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he thought it would be generally conceded that, in a debate of this kind which had extended to such length, he might be entitled to say a few words in reply. He hoped that courtesy would be afforded to him. He was aware that he was strictly in order in speaking at this time, because an amendment had been moved; but if any other honourable member desired to speak, of course he should prefer to let him take precedence; and it was only ordinary courtesy to allow the mover of an amendment of this importance to be conceded the right of reply. When he moved his amendment on the Address in Reply, he did so as temperately as he could. He desired, so far as he could contribute to that result, to have a fair, dispassionate discussion of the case, as elicited by the various tribunals of inquiry. When he directed their attention to the matter he avoided using any strong language, so far as he possibly could. He addressed himself simply to the facts as disclosed by the evidence, from which he had adduced certain conclusions, which conclusions he placed before the House as temperately as he could, and he had hoped that the debate would have proceeded upon the same line—that the merits of the case would have been discussed, that it would have been thoroughly sifted, and that nothing might be said or done to cause any unnecessary ill-feeling in connection with the matter. He could not too strongly express his regret that, from the first, his attempts in that direction were thwarted—deliberately thwarted. The first answer attempted to be made to his arguments was not an answer to them, but, to quote an expression used by the last speaker, “it was drawing a red herring over the trail”—drawing hon. members from a calm, dispassionate consideration of the question to a consideration of the merits of this man or that man, or somebody else, instead of the question whether the interests of the colony had been made paramount or had been subordinated to the interests of private persons. He did not propose to repeat any of the arguments he used before, but he would refer briefly to some things that had taken place during this debate. The answer given to his arguments by the hon. the Minister for Works was to endeavour to excite the angry feelings of hon. members on that side of the House, by talking, first of all, of absent men—Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Hemmant—in a manner which he thought would not commend itself to members of that House, or even to the hon. member himself in his calmer moments. Then the hon. gentleman devoted a considerable portion of his speech to an attack upon him-

self (Mr. Griffith); but what, he would ask, had that got to do with the merits of the case? Supposing Mr. Hamilton were the greatest scoundrel unhung—supposing that Mr. Hemmant, instead of being a man respected by all portions of the community, were the most despicable character—what had that got to do with the question—Had the interests of the country been looked after, or had the interests of private persons been considered at the expense of the country? What had Mr. Hamilton's character or Mr. Hemmant's character to do with the matter? And yet, from first to last, that had been the only answer that had been attempted to be made to the arguments which he (Mr. Griffith) had adduced, by which he had intended to lead the House to the conclusion expressed in the resolution he had submitted.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A very good answer, too!

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Minister for Lands interjected, "A very good answer, too!" and, according to his (Mr. Griffith's) mind, that was the only answer possible.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government Benches: No, no!

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had been, he confessed, disappointed that no serious attempt had been made to answer his arguments, for it was a mockery to talk of the abuse and the violence that had been used as an attempt at argument. He had attempted, when he was addressing the House, to state the conclusions he had arrived at from the evidence as clearly as possible, but admitted then that he might be to some extent biassed; but he said he would avoid, as far as possible, being led away by any unconscious bias, and he had endeavoured to do so; and he thought the total failure of hon. members opposite to show that in any instance he had omitted to quote material parts of the evidence showed that that failure proceeded from the fact that, if they had attempted to show that he had omitted important parts of the evidence, that attempt would have been utterly unsuccessful. His speech remained, and it was unnecessary for him to repeat it or repeat his arguments. Now, as the conduct of some gentlemen had been called into question on the other side of the House, he would say a few words on that subject. They had had two lectures—one to-night, the other last night, from the hon. members for South Brisbane and Blackall—lectures upon the propriety of the course of action adopted by himself in particular, and lectures to other hon. members upon the impropriety of the action of the Opposition in suggesting that some people had done wrong, the people who had done wrong being Ministers of the Crown or paid servants of the State. They were told they were behaving in a grossly improper manner in making these suggestions. He wondered whether it ever occurred to those hon. members that their speeches from beginning to end consisted of imputations of the most disgraceful motives to members on the Opposition side of the House. He really thought that those hon. members themselves had become so much imbued with the sense of the purity of their own side of the House, and the wickedness of the other side, that they thought that, while they were making the most despicable imputations, they were at the same time doing nothing at all wrong. He did not care to defend himself much from imputations—unworthy imputations. He had lived in this colony and taken part in its public affairs in vain if it was now necessary for him to stand up in the House and defend himself from such imputations, and he was content to let the country judge. What he did he did openly, and was not ashamed of

it; and when he did anything wrong he would apologise for it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Who is to be the judge?

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. Minister for Lands asked who was to be the judge, and he was obliged to the hon. gentleman for his interruption, which reminded him of something he had almost forgotten. When he introduced this subject last session he said that he appealed first to the honesty of members of that House; secondly, to honest men outside of that House; and, as a last resort, to the opinions of all honest men in the British community who took an interest in honest administration of public affairs. He appealed to the good sense of honest men, and they would be the judges of who was right and who was wrong; who had acted rightly and who had acted wrongly; as to whose motives were good and whose motives were bad. When this matter came before the House last session, he brought it forward because he conceived it to be his duty to do so. Certain facts had been brought to the notice of the Premier in England tending to show that there were grave irregularities in the Agent-General's Office; tending to show, in fact, that there was something like corruption there. The Premier had held an inquiry there which he (Mr. Griffith) had always thought and still thought was a mere mock inquiry. The attention of the House was then called to it. What was his duty? He believed there was no more deadly enemy to all sense of morality than corruption in high places; corruption in Government offices, whether amongst Ministers or subordinate officers. It reminded him of the words of a modern poet:—

"Like some new disease unknown of men
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd."

If corruption was once found in high places it would spread itself throughout the community almost without the community knowing it, and he would say now that he believed this was the fact already, for if any man had told him twelve months ago that members in that House would have been found to get up in their places and defend transactions that they had been found defending during this debate, he would have declined to believe it. Their ideas of morality seemed to have become perverted. It might be that his own had become perverted—possibly they had, but if they had he hoped they would always continue to be perverted in the same way. What was the cause of the abuse of Mr. Hamilton but that he had felt it his duty to bring under the notice of his chief, the Agent-General—the Premier being there—certain facts, which looked very much like abuses in the management of the London office? He wrote a letter, in which he stated certain very plain facts, which, unless he (Mr. Griffith) was strangely ignorant of all idea of right or wrong, ought to have been brought to the notice of the Government. This gentleman brought these matters to the notice of the Government, and for that, in his (Mr. Griffith's) opinion, he was dismissed. Then Mr. Hemmant considered it his duty to bring under the notice of that House a circumstance that would have had to be brought, under any circumstance, to its notice. Mr. Hemmant, a gentleman who had held a distinguished position in this colony, and might have been now in the position occupied by the head of the Government if he had thought fit to accept it when he was invited by the Governor to take upon himself the duty of forming a Government, conceived that it was his duty as a man who had occupied a public position here, and still had a great stake in the colony, to call the attention of Parliament to what appeared to be abuses. He called attention to the facts set forth in his petition. He

(Mr. Griffith) had already pointed out on many occasions that every word in that petition was proved.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was no use denying it; it had been proved over and over again. When the Commissioners started their proceedings in London, they stated that they understood all the allegations in Mr. Hemmant's petition were proved, not only in the passage he read the other night, but in another passage to the same effect. There Mr. Hemmant's part of the matter ended. In all that followed, if anyone was responsible, he (Mr. Griffith) was responsible. From the inferences that were drawn from that petition he was responsible; he had taken the responsibility, and should never shrink from it; but why, in the name of common sense, should Mr. Hemmant or Mr. Hamilton be abused because they brought—one under the notice of the Agent-General, and the other under the notice of this House—those plain facts which it was essentially necessary should be brought under the notice of Parliament? There Mr. Hemmant's action ended, and for that he was denounced as a conspirator, and by much worse names than that, by the Minister for Works; and he (Mr. Griffith) was called the tool of a conspiracy. What was the conspiracy? The hon. gentleman did not venture to say what the conspiracy was; he knew the only thing that they did was to tell the truth. Was that conspiracy, to lay before that House facts which it was highly necessary that the House should know? That was the only conspiracy that anyone could attempt to say those gentlemen entered into. It was suggested that Mr. Hemmant was actuated in this business by the basest motives. Really the treatment that Mr. Hemmant had received for performing his duty—an important duty, a plain duty, though a painful one—would be enough to deter many men from performing a similar duty again. And yet he hoped that corruption would never obtain so firm a hold upon the Government of this colony in the administration of its affairs, either in a high or low branch of the Government, that some men would not be found with sufficient public spirit to come forward, in the way Mr. Hemmant had done, and call the attention of Parliament to abuses on their discovery. One would have supposed, to hear the argument of the Minister for Works in abusing these gentlemen, that the whole argument in support of the amendment that he (Mr. Griffith) had brought forward rested upon the unsupported statement of Mr. Hamilton, or that in some way Mr. Hemmant was responsible for it. No one single fact that he had relied upon was founded upon any statement of Mr. Hamilton—not for a moment that he doubted Mr. Hamilton's word, or that he should be ashamed to rest any fact upon his statement. As a matter of fact, not one single fact that he had adduced depended in the slightest degree upon anything that Mr. Hamilton had said or done; neither did any fact or argument that he had used depend upon anything that Mr. Hemmant had said or done. All that had been brought before the House had been proved by independent testimony; by that he meant testimony independent of the gentlemen against whom this intolerable torrent of abuse had been launched. What could be the object of attacking two persons, in no sense witnesses—in no sense persons upon whom any allegations or fact depended—and launching against them all this abuse? What could it be except to endeavour to divert the attention of hon. members, and the public outside, from the real issue? He could not understand what other object could be gained by it. He could understand ignorant persons out-of-doors, unaccustomed to following argu-

ments, getting carried away by their feelings for the moment, and attaching some weight to it. They might say, "Oh! Mr. Hemmant has something to do with this;" and that was the only way such an argument could operate. He had pointed out that the facts were established by independent testimony, and Mr. Hemmant was entirely beside the question. He thought that hon. members would very much regret that a gentleman who had attempted to do his duty in a painful matter, and had done his duty nobly and manfully, should be attacked in that manner. He was happy to think that Mr. Hemmant needed no words from him to habilitate or rehabilitate him in the public estimation. Mr. Hemmant had been sufficiently long before the public here for them to form their own opinions of his character—

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They don't know him.

Mr. GRIFFITH: And they had formed their opinions. He would say no more upon that subject. He had pointed out so far that the speech of the Minister for Works had thrown no light upon the subject before the House beyond introducing a painful element into the debate which would not tend, certainly, to the impartial discussion of facts as they ought to have been discussed. The result was as might have been anticipated. From that time forward, with a few notable exceptions, the debate had been of a most acrimonious and personal character. Crimination and recrimination naturally enough arose. When the fire was lighted of course it spread. He thought it was a great pity that the debate had not been conducted as he thought he might claim credit for having begun it. The only possible excuse that could have been made for the attack made by the Minister for Works upon these gentlemen was that the statements made by Mr. Hamilton in his letter, and by Mr. Hemmant in his petition, ought never to have been brought forward. He could well understand that some people thought they should not have been brought forward, and the wish of some that they had never been brought forward. It would have been much more pleasant and more agreeable to many persons if the Barrow Company had never made that sad mistake of sending in the invoices, but then they would not have known so much about the London office as they did now. It would have been very much more agreeable if Mr. Hamilton had never pointed out the irregularities of the freight contract—but then they never should have discovered the existence of the ring, the conspiracy, about which they had got so much information from Mr. Bethell's letters, which contained a whole history of fraud and swindling; and, no doubt, some members thought that all that ought never to have been discovered. And, as to Mr. Hemmant—the gentleman to whom they were indebted for the discovery—it was thought that he, too, ought not to have mentioned them. But, for all that, he thought that the great majority of the intelligent people of this colony and in that House thought that it was desirable that these things should be disclosed and fully investigated. He thought, all these things considered, that it would be proper that the gentlemen who called attention to these things, so far from deserving abuse as their meed of reward, should receive the thanks of hon. members, and the thanks of the House as a whole. He did not know what other arguments there were in the speech of the hon. Minister for Works. He accused him (Mr. Griffith) of garbling evidence. Of course that was an accusation easily made, but an accusation which, when made, required to be proved.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So it was.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had followed the hon. gentleman as carefully as he could, and had failed to see where the arguments he had used were seriously attempted to be answered. The hon. gentleman went so far as to commend these people who, as he (Mr. Griffith) said, had been imposing upon them, for their moderation in not imposing upon the colony more. Wasever such a statement heard from a Minister of the Crown before? He (the Minister for Works) was satisfied that these gentlemen—these brokers, that ring formed for the purpose, as had been said by themselves, of getting high prices out of the Government—a ring of such a nature that the man who would not go into it with them was told he was heaving away a lot of money—were doing a disinterested, kindly action for the benefit of the colony, and the Minister for Works believed that they had lost by the transaction. Well, he (Mr. Griffith) did not believe anything of the kind. He thought the proposition was simply ridiculous, and he was sure from what they said at the time that they did not think they were going to lose by the transaction, when they said that those who held out from them were heaving away a lot of money. Here was a milch cow ready to be milked, and they found Mr. Bethell writing to the man who was fool enough not to come in and take a share of the spoil, that he was heaving away a lot of money. Then, in answer to the evidence brought before the Commission which showed that the price at which the rails were bought was above the real market price, the Minister for Works quoted some unsuccessful tenders that were sent in about that time, which was like finding out what it would cost to have a house built by quoting a collection of the highest unsuccessful tenders sent in a month or two before. All this was answered already by the facts before the Select Committee, which had before it an account of the state of the market from Ryland's *Iron Trade Circular*. Hon. members would find that at page 937 of the second volume of the "Votes and Proceedings" for 1880. The part he referred to was as follows:—

"Steel rails, f.o.b., per ton, January, 1877, £7 5s.; January, 1878, £6 7s. 6d.; January, 1879, £5 15s.; July, 1879, £4 15s.; January, 1880, £3 5s.; July, 1880, £6 10s. "Steel rails rose in price to £9 15s. in February, this being due for the most part to the inflation in the value of steel-making ore and hematite pig, but partly also to competition of buyers for early delivery. Indeed, prices as high as £11 per ton were quoted; but, except for small quantities and special sections, no real business was transacted at these rates."

What was the use, in the face of that, of quoting a lot of unsuccessful tenders? He did not know that there was anything else in the hon. member's speech which required answering. The hon. member did not attempt to justify his own action in the matter, nor had anybody else attempted to do so, because it was incapable of justification for a moment. He would not refer to every speaker; but the hon. and learned Attorney-General, he thought, had suggested that there were several courses open to him (Mr. Griffith)—he might have apologised to the Premier, he might have done this, or he might have done that. But the only course open to him as an honest man, as he (Mr. Griffith) thought, was to give the Premier the benefit of every doubt, of everything not clearly established, and then state plainly and distinctly to the House his honest conclusions on the matter. That was the duty he conceived to be incumbent on him. How could he, believing a thing to be proved, get up and say that he believed it was not? It would be as disgraceful to do that for the sake of false peace as it would be to get up and say a thing was proved

which he did not believe to be proved. He was bound to state exactly what he thought, and that he had endeavoured to do with as little heat as possible, giving his conclusions exactly as he had formed them, and giving the Premier and everybody else concerned the benefit of every reasonable doubt; and that was the course he had adopted. In the speeches that followed, the only argument he was able to get hold of was that the Commissioners were eminent persons, and that their judgment was the best. But he hoped he should never see the time when the Legislature would subordinate its judgment to that of two persons appointed to collect evidence. The next thing would be to subordinate their judgment to that of a select committee. That would not be so bad; but to say that the Legislature of this colony should subordinate its judgment to the opinion of two gentlemen, selected no matter how, seemed to him to be an insult, not only to the intelligence, but to the authority of the House. He had already referred to the attack on Mr. Hemmant, which was no argument; he had mentioned that it had been suggested that he, not misquoted, but unfairly quoted evidence. His answer was—Why did not some hon. member attempt to show in what respect? No serious attempt had been made to answer the argument he derived from the circumstantial evidence he quoted to the House the other evening; not the slightest attempt had been made to answer the argument he deduced, as he thought, clearly and in accordance with the actual facts—namely, that there was a deliberate train of circumstances arranged beforehand leading to the placing of that large contract in the hands of the Haslam Company as the representatives of somebody else. No attempt was made to find fault with a single link in the chain of circumstantial evidence, and therefore there was nothing to answer on that point. Neither was there any attempt to answer the argument deduced from the letters of Bethell, disclosing in the plainest manner what had been done.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: We deny the truth of it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he asked what attempt had been made to answer the argument deduced. Which was more likely to be true—a letter written under those circumstances—never intended to see daylight, but intended to be secret, and written to induce men to join with them in a fraud; or the explanation given when the writer was confronted with the letter, and must make some sort of explanation or admit himself to be a man of very shady commercial morality? Then the hon. member for Port Curtis (Mr. Norton) read a number of passages, which certainly did not appear to him to throw any additional light on the matter—if they did he should be glad to take the benefit of that additional light in coming to a conclusion. He failed to see, however, how the arguments he had brought forward had been answered except by appealing to the Report. But he had given reasons why the House should not be guided blindly by the Report. Then there was another answer given with respect to Mr. Hemmant besides that given by the Minister for Works. It was said that Mr. Hemmant, while Mr. Hamilton was in the London office, had an unfair advantage with respect to contracts, and because Mr. Hamilton had gone he wanted to be revenged, and did so by making untrue charges. Now, if Mr. Hemmant had made untrue charges, he (Mr. Griffith) could have seen the force of that argument; but what were the facts about this unfair advantage? He had never discovered any. The hon. member for Blackall said yesterday that Mr. Hemmant was allowed to alter a tender, and suggested that, although he was not the lowest tenderer, he got a

contract. If the hon. gentleman had read the rest of the evidence on the subject, which was read by the hon. member for the Logan, he would have seen that on that occasion Mr. Hemmant supplied to the Agent-General very good value indeed for the money—better value than they would have got if he had not been invited to tender. It was strange that Mr. Hemmant was not allowed to go into these matters before the Commission. The inquiry on that part of the case was entirely one-sided. On the other hand, the Premier's solicitor had got up a case on which he examined witnesses from the office with a view of showing that Mr. Hemmant had obtained an unfair advantage, but when Mr. Hemmant offered to show to what extent these unfair advantages existed the Commissioners said they did not want to hear anything of the matter. Just think of the virtuous horror expended by the Colonial Secretary last year to begin with, and by the hon. member for Blackall, on the fact that Mr. Hemmant got a contract on which he made a profit of £5 without competition—compare that with the complacency with which they saw the colony victimised to the extent of tens of thousands of pounds! They saw no harm in that; that was an ordinary commercial transaction; there was no favouritism, because the firm of McIlwraith and Company divided its business with others. But if Mr. Hemmant was allowed to sell to the Government without competition, or with that of only one other firm, it was a terrible thing; and because he had lost the chance of making some two or three pounds out of the Government he had entered into a base conspiracy with Mr. Hamilton to do—what? To bring before the House some of the shadiest transactions that had ever taken place in the London office, and which fully deserved exposure. If there were anything in the argument of the hon. member for Blackall and other hon. members, it showed this; that the system in the London office was radically bad from beginning to end, not only with regard to these comparatively gigantic contracts, but even in smaller matters. It should be borne in mind, however, that Mr. Hemmant gave a full explanation of this matter to the Colonial Secretary in writing, of which explanation the Commissioners refused to receive proof. The hon. member for Blackall had given several members of the Opposition a lecture on demeanour, and the hon. gentleman, from his age and standing in the House, was no doubt entitled to take upon himself to some extent the character of Nestor or Mentor; but he might be allowed to tell the hon. gentleman, with the greatest respect, not to fall into the error for which he rebuked others. The hon. gentleman from beginning to end was imputing to the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) and himself (Mr. Griffith) the basest possible motives.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was glad the Colonial Secretary recognised the accuracy of his description.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The basest possible motives.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had endeavoured, and thought he had succeeded, in saying what he had to say without imputing motives of any kind. He was content to differ from hon. members, and believe that they were actuated by the best motives, unless irresistible evidence led to a contrary conclusion. To say that an hon. member was actuated by the basest motives, merely because he viewed his duty in a different light from the light in which another viewed it, was unworthy not only of the youngest and most inexperienced member of the House, but was

most unworthy of an hon. member who took upon himself to lecture others as the hon. member for Blackall had done. The hon. member for Port Curtis went even further. He condescended to particularise the motives, saying that they were of the basest character—political animosity, cruelty, and he did not remember what else. Why should those accusations be made? He had taken the responsibility of what he had done, and any member in his (Mr. Griffith's) place who would not have done what he had done would be unworthy of a seat in that House. He did not mean to say that the manner in which he had done his duty might not be beyond complaint; he did not profess to be perfect. He had a duty to perform, and that he had performed it was perfectly certain. He might have committed errors of judgment in the mode of performing his duty; but he had a plain duty to perform, and he had done it to the best of his ability. It was said by one hon. member that he (Mr. Griffith) wanted to get into office over the mangled reputation of the Premier. Another statement to the same effect came from the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Kingsford)—that his (Mr. Griffith's) only motive was a desire for office. He (Mr. Griffith) did not think these accusations deserved a serious denial from him. He knew this, and he had never made a secret of it, that there was nothing he should lament so much as to be compelled to take office on the defeat of a Government on a matter of this kind.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: You would take it any way you could get it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he could not help thinking sometimes that there were strangers in this House, because every member of this House was supposed to be guided by certain rules as to the conduct of gentlemen; but when continuous interjections came from some person whose face he could not see, but whose interjections showed a total want of appreciation of honourable principles, he could not help thinking that some stranger had been admitted to the House, and that no constituency had sent him to take his seat among gentlemen. He did not think that a desire to obtain office would be sufficient to induce him to take up this matter; he did not see how it could be. He did not think the object of ambition was very great after all. At anyrate, he had never yet attempted to take any position that he could not obtain by fair means. He would sooner wait, even though it were a great object of ambition, than willingly commit a single act of injustice, or express an unfair opinion against a political opponent. He had stated the conclusions he had come to from the evidence, and he adhered to them. If this debate had had any effect on his mind, it had tended only to show, from the weakness of the arguments used on the other side, and the unfair arguments that had been used—arguments of personal abuse instead of dealing with facts—that there must be something more in the case even than he supposed. He must say a word or two before he sat down about the amendment which had been moved by the hon. member for Blackall. He proposed to omit the censure he (Mr. Griffith) proposed to the House to pass on whoever was responsible for the administration of the London office when these disreputable transactions took place, and substitute a statement that the charges against the Premier had been proved to be entirely unfounded. He prefaced this by saying that it was deemed "inadvisable to express any opinion upon the working of the London office pending the further inquiry now being held by the Commissioners in London." Now, he (Mr. Griffith) could inform hon. members that they were mistaken if they expected to get any more information about the

working of the London office. The Commissioners had stated on more than one occasion that that part of their duty was limited to the present mode of conducting business in the London office. They certainly thought that it was no part of their duty to inquire afresh into the steel rails and freight contracts. Upon those we had all the information we were going to get. He did not wonder that the hon. member for Blackall hesitated to give expression to a white-washing opinion as to these transactions, and he appeared to have found it necessary to insert some caution of that kind preparatory to the certificate of character to be given to the Premier. He said he was glad, or was not sorry that the facts had come out. Everybody ought to be glad that the facts had come out or had been dragged out, because the chances were that these things would not be repeated again. But upon what did the hon. member for Blackall base this certificate of character which he was giving the Premier? Was it on the Report of the Commissioners, or on the general principle of sympathy, or on what he (Mr. Griffith) said, or on what somebody else had said somewhere else? He (Mr. Griffith) did not exactly understand how the hon. member made out that the various charges had been proved to be unfounded. He (Mr. Griffith) assumed, and thought that the transactions in the London office in connection with the steel rails and freight were entirely unjustifiable, and the hon. member for Blackall did not desire to whitewash the persons concerned in these transactions. Were the charges against the Premier proved to be entirely unfounded? How far was the hon. gentleman responsible for those transactions? He had assumed the full responsibility of them. Was he to be commended for that? Like a certificate of bankruptcy, was he to have a clean sheet and be allowed to start afresh? All the charges made against him—charges of carelessness, charges of incompetency, charges of not making a proper inquiry, charges of screening guilty persons—were they all entirely unfounded? Were they all proved to be entirely unfounded? They could never be proved to be entirely unfounded, and the Premier was himself to blame for that result. His conduct rendered it impossible that they should ever be proved to be entirely unfounded. One of the things the hon. member for South Brisbane suggested to-day, was that he (Mr. Griffith) should endeavour to put himself in the Premier's place in considering this matter. He would endeavour to do so, as he had often endeavoured to do. Had he been a member of the Government, and had accusations brought against him that he allowed his friends and relatives to obtain an unfair advantage of the Government, what position would he take up? He would tell them the position he would take up, and the position that he would have taken up. He would like, as soon as the first whisper of the accusation had reached him, to have had it brought before this House, and stated in the strongest possible manner. He would entreat the fullest investigation, and he would use all the means in his power to obtain the fullest information. He would seek out all his friends and relatives and endeavour to induce them to give all the information they could. He could not conceive of a man in such a position not courting the fullest inquiry. But the Premier had adopted a different course. The information we had had been got in spite of him and against him; it had been got without his assistance, and in spite of him. When he (Mr. Griffith) said in spite of him, he referred entirely to what was written and recorded. He thought the information that had been got had been in spite of the Premier, and that the Premier had

not contributed in any way to the discovery. It had been his (Mr. Griffith's) unfortunate task to take it up. The Premier's conduct might have warranted harder things than he had uttered; but he had endeavoured to form as fair a judgment as possible. What were the charges that had not been proved against the Premier? He was going to refer to a speech he made at the end of last session, on the 17th November; it would be found on page 1,500 of *Hansard*. The Premier said then—

"I will be only too glad to allow the hon. member as long a period of time as he likes to do that which he has shirked for a long time; that is to formulate his charges."

Now, he was going to refer to what the charges were. Referring to the rails, he (Mr. Griffith) said—

"It might turn out to be merely a mercantile transaction; but in using that term the hon. member appeared to him to have lost sight of the real nature of the transactions that were being investigated. The committee did not sit to investigate how much money McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company made out of the Government. The House did not care whether they made 5 per cent. or 500 per cent. on a legitimate transaction. The matters really involved were that the Government of this colony was induced unnecessarily to incur an enormous expenditure of money; that that transaction took place in an irregular manner during the presence of the Premier in England, and that it was for the advantage of his relatives. That was the gravamen of the charge with respect to the rails."

He then went on to say—

"With respect to freights, it was that a contract was made which involved the expenditure of a much larger sum of the colony's money for the purpose of doing certain work than had ever previously been incurred for the same work, but the persons who gained that advantage were the firm of McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company, one of whom was the Premier's relative, and who were the managers of a line of ships in which the Premier and the Colonial Secretary were shareholders."

That was the second time he formulated these charges; and had they been disproved? Had they been proved or were they entirely unfounded?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was content to take the opinion of this House; but he thought the charges were proved, and therefore he could not vote in favour of the amendment of the hon. member for Blackall. What were the other charges? Various charges had been made against the Premier. He had been accused of not holding a proper inquiry in the London office. He (Mr. Griffith) believed he had not held a proper inquiry, and he thought that it was a most serious charge. Another charge was that the Report of the inquiry held by the Premier in London had been edited and altered somewhere else; and now it turned out that it was edited in the colony. That was also a serious matter, and one that deserved an expression of the opinion of this House on a formal resolution. Did the hon. member for Blackall want to address His Excellency to the effect that that House considered an expression of opinion given utterance to last session by him (Mr. Griffith) to be erroneous? The fact was that from the very beginning there had been great difficulty in getting at the facts. The last step that the Government took was to substitute for an inquiry into the real transactions an inquiry into the accuracy or propriety of the opinion he expressed in that House last session. Was that what the hon. member for Blackall meant? If it was, why did he not say so? Why did he not say that the expression used by the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) was not justified? That would be a peculiar thing upon which to found an address to the Governor—a vote of censure upon a private member; though it was no doubt what the hon. member wanted to arrive at. He (Mr. Griffith)

had already said in the plainest manner that he did not now consider the evidence pointed to that conclusion. He thought so at the time, and he said it, and he said he was justified in saying it; and if he was wrong, as he now believed he was, in coming to that conclusion, it was the Premier that was to blame for it and not he. It seemed to him that it was as absurd to blame a man for coming to a conclusion honestly as to blame him for the colour of his hair. He considered at that time that there were ample grounds for coming to that conclusion, though he did not think so now all the evidence was before them. He did not think a resolution in that form would be likely to pass. It might be gratifying to the Premier's feelings to present an address of that kind to the Governor, and it might be gratifying to his feelings to receive a reply from the Governor, but he did not think it would be carried. This matter must end. He gave, the other day, the conclusions that he had come to, and he expressed those conclusions to the House. He hoped the matter would come to a termination that evening, one way or another, and he did not desire to say any more upon the subject in that House. He was satisfied that in the end truth and justice would prevail; it might be difficult to say at that time when that would be. He had come to a strong conclusion of his own, and the members on the other side had, no doubt, a strong conclusion in their minds. He gave them credit for it, but, holding the opinion that he did, he would be a hypocrite if he were to express any other; but, where truth was, where justice was, would ultimately be found out. He was contented to wait until it was found out. If it should turn out in the course of time that he had been mistaken in his conclusions—if it should be decided by an intelligent public when the time came, and their minds were cool, that he had been wrong in the course he had taken—he was content to take the blame; but until then—and he thought he should have to wait a long time for it—he would believe that he had acted up to the best of his ability, not perfectly, but that he had done what he conceived to be his duty. He was not ashamed of what he had done, and he was content to leave it to the judgment of his fellow-countrymen in this colony to say whether he had done his duty or not.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was not going to weary the House in replying to the hon. gentleman who had just sat down by reiterating arguments that had been used in the course of that debate over and over and over again until they were perfectly tired of it. He should endeavour to confine himself to answering a few of the observations made by the hon. gentleman, both in the speech which he made at the opening of this session and the one with which he had just favoured them. In the first speech which he addressed to that Chamber this session, he found fault with the competency of the Commission. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) thought that the hon. gentleman might have a little more modesty. Most of them there were very well acquainted with Mr. King. They knew what he was; they knew what he had been for many years. They were aware of his abilities in every possible way, and he thought they all were enabled to say that he would bear comparison at any moment with the hon. member who had thought fit to question his competency. He would go further and say that in all commercial transactions, in all matters of honesty and fair dealing between man and man, he was incomparably superior to the hon. member who had just addressed them, and able to form a much clearer and more unbiassed opinion than that gentleman was ever likely to form. Of the gentleman who was appointed to act with Mr. King on that Commission he could not speak so positively,

but he was quite certain that no one could point to him except as a man of very great ability and experience. He (Mr. Gibbs) considered this a very serious question, and it was considered by Lord Kimberley to be a very serious question. They were told by the hon. member with a sneer—with a distinct sneer and an insinuation—that the only capability of Mr. Gibbs for that office was that he had been tutor to the Prince of Wales. Well, he thought it came very well from the hon. member for North Brisbane to criticise Mr. Gibbs in the way he did. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) thought that the tutor to the Prince of Wales was selected from all England on account of his education and capacity for holding that office; but it appeared, according to the hon. member for North Brisbane, that it was derogatory to a man to occupy that position. The only reason the hon. member gave as against his competency as a Commissioner was this—as far as he knew. The hon. member might have questioned their statements, but he (Sir Arthur Palmer) thought they were every man of them just as capable of forming an impression as to the competency and character of the gentleman in question as the hon. member for North Brisbane. He thought it was an absurd thing for any member of that House, or any body of members of that House, to suppose for a moment that those Commissioners, having heard all the evidence and all that the gentleman had to say upon the subject, and all that he refused to say—having heard him shelter himself, under the privileges of being a member of that Parliament, from pressing that inquiry as it was his bounden duty to press it—he thought they were bound to take their Report very much indeed in advance of the hon. member for North Brisbane, who had shown himself throughout that transaction a thorough-going partisan. Within the first ten minutes of his (Mr. Griffith's) speaking, he withdrew the charges—for they were charges—that he made against the hon. the Premier in his closing speech last session; he withdrew them entirely. He told them he had altered his opinion on the subject; but, as had been pointed out by previous speakers, he did so without the slightest attempt at an apology. Now, if any member of that House who was actuated by the honourable feelings of a gentleman had made a charge against another which he found to be unfounded, he said it was that hon. member's bounden duty to apologise; and he believed the hon. member, with one or two solitary exceptions on his (Mr. Griffith's) side of the House, was the only member of that House who, having found that he had arrived at wrong conclusions, would not apologise to the man against whom he made those charges. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) was not astonished at the hon. member not apologising. He told that to a friend of his (Mr. Griffith's)—a very intimate friend—some weeks ago. His friend said he had no doubt that he would apologise. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) had no doubts whatever on the subject—he knew very well that he would not apologise. Having taken up a course in the beginning, he would insist upon it to the end. He was hardly prepared for his withdrawing of the charges, even in the very mild and sneaking way in which he did withdraw them; but his opinion was very strong on the subject that there would be no apology from the hon. gentleman. If the hon. member was at all anxious to know to whom he gave that opinion, he did not mind telling him. Now the hon. member's next complaint was against the witnesses. They would not tell the hon. gentleman everything that he wanted to know; in fact, they would not prove his case for him, and that was the great complaint that he made against them. He wanted to get certain information, and he thought it was their bound-

den duty to tell him what he wanted to know. They were all honourable gentlemen, with one or two exceptions, which he would come to presently, and they gave very straightforward evidence; but they certainly declined, and with good reason, to give Mr. Griffith and the world at large—a small world, no doubt—an account of the state of their private affairs. He would like to know from the hon. gentleman whether, if they had examined and cross-examined him, he would have disclosed the state of his private affairs. Would he have produced his bank-book? Would he have stated what cheques he got from Miles *versus* McIlwraith, or from Mr. Hemmant, or what large amount he got from the Reimbursement Fund? He would have told them, in stronger language than the witnesses used to him, to mind their own business. They had had it stated over and over again that the Premier gave no assistance in procuring witnesses or in procuring evidence on that subject. Well, he said most distinctly that, without that assistance, the prosecutors, Messrs. Hemmant and Griffith, would have found it very difficult to get witnesses to come forward at all; and, looking at the style in which those witnesses were examined, re-examined, and cross-examined, he was only astonished that every one of them did not refuse to give information. It was prying into their private affairs, into the money they made, and into a variety of other things that were utterly uncalled for; and he was very much astonished that some of those gentlemen did not give Mr. Griffith very different answers to those found in the evidence. They found that Mr. Devitt asked Mr. Griffith if he wanted the deed of partnership. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) thought the cross-examination must have gone to a considerable extent when a gentleman like Mr. Devitt asked him if he wanted the deed of partnership. That was the style of cross-examination, and yet they found fault with the Premier for not calling in witnesses in his defence. Why, he had nothing to defend. They had all, these gentlemen—Messrs. Hemmant and Griffith, or Griffith and Hemmant, he did not know what was the style of the firm exactly—they had all the witnesses called on the subject; there was not one left to be called. And yet they complained that they got no assistance from the Premier in getting at this evidence. He said they got all the evidence, but many of the witnesses came at the Premier's request to give evidence. But he was not to call all of them, because they were all called by the prosecuting counsel, Mr. Griffith;—for it was no more use his denying before the Commission, or denying here, that he went home as counsel for the prosecution, than it was of use denying that they were then sitting under the gaslight. He went home specially to conduct that prosecution. And a prosecution to all intents and purposes it was, and no amount of double-dealing—no amount of attempts at concealment by the hon. gentleman of his proper position—would answer with the members of the House or with the country. They all knew how he went home—how he conducted the inquiry—what a number of questions he asked; though he also held up his hands when challenged, and said he had nothing to do with it—he was only a member of Parliament. And when he was called on by the counsel, and was begged and implored to consider what charges had been proved, or what, in his opinion, the evidence tended to prove, he sheltered himself in the false position of a member of this House, though he had already acted throughout the inquiry as counsel for the prosecution. Not only that, but he (Sir Arthur Palmer) would go a little further and show the hon. gentleman that they knew a little here in Queensland. If London gossip after the hon. gentleman had left was to

be believed, the speech of Mr. Hemmant at the conclusion of the inquiry was no more Mr. Hemmant's speech than it was his (Sir Arthur Palmer's). Every word of that speech was dictated by the hon. member, Mr. Griffith, was taken down in shorthand, copied out, and spoken.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: And printed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Printed and spoken by Mr. Hemmant, who was simply the mouthpiece. The hon. member was the author of that speech, and yet he sheltered himself under the privilege of Parliament, and shielded himself in this way from making a speech on the occasion. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) did not tell them this as an absolute fact, but he said that it was reported so in London. The shorthand-writer had come forward and confessed it, and he (Sir Arthur Palmer) believed the story to be true. The hon. gentleman had also laid a great deal of stress on his (Sir Arthur Palmer's) threat that if ever he came into office again he would dismiss the Agent-General, Mr. Macalister. No doubt he did make that threat. He made it in 1876, when the job—the notorious job in which the hon. gentleman himself was concerned in sending Mr. Macalister home—was fresh, and when public indignation was very strong indeed upon the subject. If he had come into office then, and into the office of Premier, he should most certainly have carried out his threat and dismissed the Agent-General; and he thought it was a great loss to the colony that he did not come into office then, and that he did not dismiss the Agent-General. But all through his speeches the member for North Brisbane ignored the fact that Mr. Macalister was the Agent-General of the Government of which he was a member, and that the same Government kept him in office notwithstanding the statement of Mr. Douglas that Messrs. Macalister and Hamilton could not remain in the same office together. That Government still continued the Agent-General in his office despite Mr. Douglas's statement, and retained the services of the wonderful Secretary, Mr. Hamilton, too. They must have known that Mr. Douglas must have had very good authority for the statement he made. Why were they not removed by the Ministry of which the hon. member for North Brisbane was so long a member? When he (Sir Arthur Palmer) did return to office it was not as Premier, but as Colonial Secretary, and not only had a long while elapsed between his making the threat of expelling the Agent-General, but the feeling of annoyance at it had died out long before, and in pressing his threat then he felt he would be displaying an inveterate hatred of a political opponent which was no part of his character. He was still of opinion that Mr. Macalister would very properly have been removed then, and he believed that but for this miserable trumped-up steel-rail case he would have been removed by the present Ministry long before now. He did not think that there was any reason for the hon. member to lay so much stress upon that threat, for he had taken care on resuming office to let one of the Agent-General's most intimate friends know that there was no intention of carrying it out so long as he behaved himself. The member for North Brisbane had in his opening speech been very shady on the subject of Mr. Hamilton, never quoting him at all or his evidence; and he (Sir Arthur Palmer) recognised that the hon. member had very good reason for not doing so. They could see his character as it was laid down through the whole of the evidence, and it was plain that the Commissioners did not place the slightest dependence on one word he said. It was proved

that he told downright lies about the Premier, that he told lies at the London Inquiry in 1880, and that he perjured himself before a Committee of this House. What, therefore, dependence could be placed on anything that such a man said? Another statement which was made by the hon. member for North Brisbane, and it was the only time he mentioned Mr. Hamilton, was that—and the hon. gentleman gave it as his thorough conviction—had not Mr. Hamilton written that letter of the 31st March he would never have been dismissed from the London office. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) could state most positively, and his colleagues could bear him out in the statement—or, if they could not remember it, he could produce the letters themselves—that in every letter written to him by the Premier from England, up to the time that Mr. Hamilton was dismissed, he gave it as his opinion that it would be absolutely necessary, for the sake of the office, to get rid of that gentleman. The Premier wrote to him soon after he got to London that he was never so disgusted with the appearance of any other place as he was with the Agent-General's Office. It was mean, shabby, dirty; there was no discipline, and it was not under the control of the Agent-General; and that he blamed Mr. Hamilton more for this than Mr. Macalister, who was ill at the time and unable to attend to his duties. The Premier repeated this statement every time he wrote, and said that he would have to dismiss Mr. Hamilton, as he was thwarting the Agent-General in every way, and was not attending to his duties. So much for that statement of the hon. member's. The Minister for Works had said so much on the bad taste displayed by the hon. member in attacking his former master, Mr. Macalister, that he (Sir Arthur Palmer) need not allude to it any more, though he also thought it was decidedly bad taste, particularly as Mr. Macalister had no possible means of replying to the attack—though he might have sooner than the hon. gentleman thought—and then, if he was anything like what he was formerly, the hon. gentleman would, no doubt, remember it. One other little thing he wished to allude to was the assertion made that evening by the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) when he informed the House, *apropos* of nothing he (Sir Arthur Palmer) knew of, that Mr. Griffith, in going home to take the examination of evidence in the case *Miles v. McIlwraith*, had received no fee from the hon. member for his services. That was, he (Sir Arthur Palmer) ventured to say, the most extraordinary assertion that was ever heard of in reference to a lawyer; and if it was true that neither did he receive a fee nor was he to receive it hereafter, he (Sir Arthur Palmer) could only say that the fact went to show that the object of that action was a purely political one, that it was brought for political reasons, and that the work was a labour of love for Mr. Griffith.

Mr. MILES: I never said so.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY appealed to hon. members whether the statement was not made.

Mr. MILES: I said he got no fee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that was exactly what he had said—the hon. gentleman got no fee for his services. The same hon. gentleman had rather astonished him that evening by asking hon. members what they had to do with the character of Mr. Hemmant or Mr. Hamilton in this colony. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) thought that they had a great deal to do with the character of those gentlemen. The character of a witness had a great deal to do with the worth of his evidence, and where one of them—one of this worthy couple—had been telling false, malicious lies on all occasions, it

would have a great deal to do with the matter. He would say further, notwithstanding the assertion of the hon. member to the contrary, that the whole of this petition of Mr. Hemmant's was entirely composed of information obtained from Mr. Hamilton; and at the same time he would say that if that petition had only been laid on the table of the House in the usual way it could have done no harm. An inquiry would have been held into the truth of the allegations, and the inquiry, he was sure, would have done good. But it was the way in which the petition was laid upon the table, and not what was in the petition—it was the manner in which it was spoken to by Mr. Griffith, the charges that were made, and the language used in his first speech—that had caused all the trouble. The petition in itself was very harmless, but the manner in which it was supported by the hon. member for North Brisbane made it become dangerous, disagreeable, and led to the abominable charges which were made by that gentleman, and which had since been repeated by some of his toadies on the other side of the House. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) was not going to allude to the speeches of some of the hon. gentleman's followers. Anything more despicable than the motives imputed by some of those members could not be conceived, but it only showed how base their own minds must be when they suggested a way of action in which no honourable man could engage. The hon. member himself professed to have been very mild in his language, but, notwithstanding that profession, he (Sir Arthur Palmer) hardly thought the use of the words "fraud" and "swindle" to be very mild, and the hon. gentleman had used those words more than once that night. The hon. gentleman, too, had made a great deal of capital out of a letter which he had got hold of in a very doubtful way. The letter—marked "private and confidential"—was written by Mr. Bethell to Mr. Law. Now, he (Sir Arthur Palmer) wanted to know what the Government had to do with that? How was his hon. friend the Premier, or any other member of the Government, criminated in any way by what Mr. Bethell chose to write to Mr. Law? The hon. gentleman forgot to tell them that Mr. Bethell admitted that everything he wrote, everything he did, everything he said to Mr. McIlwraith and others, was founded entirely on information that he got from Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Absurd.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that was the fact; they were all founded on lies told by Mr. Hamilton. He was not going to stand there to defend Mr. Bethell's character. Mr. Bethell was a member of a firm whose conduct had been before the House before now. They all remembered Taylor, Bethell, and Roberts, and how they were prevented from entering into any contracts with the Queensland Government, and that they got back to it in some wonderful way while the hon. member was in power. It had been said more than once that a long speech did not alter many votes; but before sitting down he would say something that might perhaps astonish some hon. members. Although believing in the Report as a whole as a very good Report indeed—that the matter had been thoroughly sifted, and every question gone into up to the hilt, and that the Commission had given their opinion on the subject in clear and unmistakable language—he thought they had made one great mistake. They said there was no conspiracy in the Agent-General's Office. He (Sir Arthur Palmer) said there was, and that the conspirators were Mr. Hemmant and Mr. Hamilton. There was no doubt whatever of that fact; and he could tell hon. members that,

if his information was correct, there would be a good deal more evidence of that sort when they had the evidence of the rest of the inquiry into the working of the London office. That the telegrams he got from the Agent-General were perfectly true as to Mr. Hemmant's connection with the office he believed, and they were fully borne out by the evidence of Mr. Clay and others, and also to a certain extent by Mr. Hemmant's own correspondence. Whether Mr. Hemmant made 5s. or £5, or £50, or £500 out of his transactions had nothing to do with the question. What the Agent-General charged him with, and what he (the Colonial Secretary) asked for information about, was whether Mr. Hemmant got business from the Queensland Agency Office without tenders being called for. He did not care what profit Mr. Hemmant made from it, the question was—was he unfairly treated in competition with other tenderers? and the evidence distinctly proved that he was. He got the supplying of ships' kits and rugs without any competitive tender being called for, and in that case of the ponchos the contract was given to him most dishonestly. Mr. Hemmant had tendered higher than the other parties—Abbott, Anderson, and Abbott—and those which he tendered for absolutely from the samples sent in by that firm, which were sent back in order that Mr. Hemmant might tender again on their samples.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No; on different samples.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; the part was cut off. Anybody who had read the evidence knew that. A part of the sample of Abbott, Anderson, and Abbott was absolutely torn off and sent to Mr. Hemmant that he might tender again, and Mr. Hemmant tendered at the same price for the same article.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No; it was a different article.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He tendered at the same price for the same article, and got it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Look at the evidence.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he remembered the evidence well enough without reading it again, and he was not going to inflict seven hours of drivel on the House. Anyone who had read Mr. Clay's evidence at page 247 must come to the same conclusion. He did not intend to detain the House any longer on the subject. He did not like to give a silent vote upon it, and in sitting down would repeat what he had said before, that Mr. Hamilton's letter of the 31st March, so confidently asserted by the hon. member for North Brisbane to be the cause of his dismissal from office, had very little if anything to do with it, and that he would have been dismissed if he had never written that letter.

Question—(on Mr. Archer's amendment) that the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put.

The House divided:—

AYES, 20.

Messrs. Griffith, Dickson, McLean, Garrick, Thorn, Thompson, Kates, Rea, Miles, Rutledge, Stubley, Bailey, Macdonald-Paterson, Aland, Macfarlane, Foote, Grimes, Groom, Beattie, and Fraser.

NOES, 27.

Sir Arthur Palmer, Messrs. McIlwraith, Perkins, Feez, Macrossan, Pope Cooper, O'Sullivan, Stevens, Lunley Hill, Simpson, Stevenson, Lalor, Baynes, Sheaffe, Weid-Blundell, H. Palmer, H. Wyndham Palmer, Norton, Scott, Kingsford, F. A. Cooper, Black, Low, Hamilton, Meston, Price, and Archer.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

On question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was quite clear to him that the amendment ought not to be submitted,

and he should certainly not himself be a party to it. The motion was unwarranted, as pointed out by the hon. member (Mr. Thompson); and the most proper course that could be adopted by hon. members of the Opposition would be to abstain from voting.

The PREMIER said that when the Address in Reply was brought forward, it was thought that it would be unfair to make any reference to the Report of the Commission, because on that occasion hon. members had no means of forming an opinion upon it. It was not, therefore, the intention of the Ministry to ask for such expression of opinion upon it. It was the other side that challenged the opinion of the House, when the amendment was tabled by the leader of the Opposition. The amendment of the hon. member for Blackall took the last words out and put others into their place.

On the question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—being put, the members of the Opposition left the Chamber, and the motion was declared carried.

Question—That the amendment, as amended, be adopted—put and passed.

On the question—That the Address, as amended, be adopted—

Mr. GRIFFITH moved the adjournment of the debate.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY asked whether it was competent for the hon. member, having already spoken, to make that motion?

The SPEAKER said that the hon. member had previously spoken to the amendment.

Question—for the adjournment of the debate—put and negatived.

Mr. DICKSON moved the adjournment of the debate. The actions and general policy of the Government had not, he said, received any consideration in the debate which had taken place, the leader of the Opposition having distinctly pointed out when he introduced his amendment that he intended to confine himself solely to a consideration of the Report of the Royal Commission and the evidence attached thereto. It was fully understood at the time by the majority of hon. members that a subsequent opportunity would be given to consider the general policy of the Ministry, and surely the Government did not wish to burk that discussion. There were very grave matters to be considered in connection with the policy disclosed in the Opening Speech, and also with the actions of the Government during the recess, and the Government would therefore be justified in now postponing a division on the Address in Reply until those matters had been fairly considered. The ordinary debate on those subjects would have taken place had it not been eclipsed by the superior importance attached to the evidence given before the Royal Commission. Those were his reasons for moving the adjournment of the debate, and he hoped the Government would have no objection to accede to such a reasonable request.

The PREMIER said that no man who had read the newspapers of the colony during the last three weeks could possibly accuse the Government of wanting to burk inquiry or debate with regard to any question whatever. The House met on the 5th July; it was now the 20th. Three weeks of Parliamentary labour had been given to one motion—a length of time which was, he believed, unprecedented in the colony. Motions had, he was aware, in some cases lasted for that length of time; but only in cases where there had been a large amount of obstruction on the part of the Opposition. This was, however, the first occasion, he believed, on which a debate had lasted over three weeks; and now the Opposition,

on the plea that there was another branch of the subject which they wanted to have ventilated, coolly asked the Government to give them another week to debate the Address in Reply. Although it had been his (Mr. McIlwraith's) wish all along that the matter which had now been decided should be fully discussed, no hon. member had been prevented throughout the whole of the debate from discussing the general policy of the Government. He had himself warned hon. members that the subject just decided, being one of vital importance, would be bound to take prominence; but, if it had taken such prominence as to exclude other matters, the fault was entirely the result of the action of the leader of the Opposition in having forced the question so prominently before the country. That hon. member had brought the politics of the colony to such a pass that the character of the Premier had been the subject of discussion in the colony instead of the ordinary politics of the colony. By his actions during the past twelve months the hon. member had been trying all he could to turn the House of Parliament into a court of law; and while in London he laboured strenuously to turn what should have been a court of law into a committee of the House of Assembly—doing everything he could to twist and turn matters in such a way that he might be able to bring his peculiar talents to bear and gain an advantage over his adversaries. He (Mr. McIlwraith) would ask hon. members to consider the harm the hon. member had done to the colony by his action in suppressing what were the really vital questions for consideration. He deplored the lamentable position into which the affairs of the colony were getting, not because his private character had been at stake, but because matters of vital interest to the colony had been kept back. The hon. member made a great mistake if he thought that he had consolidated his power by making an attack on him (Mr. McIlwraith). If any one had helped to burke any questions it had been the hon. member himself. Had the hon. member been a prudent leader, considered the political subjects of the day, and seen the points where he could best make an attack upon his adversaries, he might have made considerable inroads in the ranks of the Government supporters before then; instead of which a solid phalanx had been formed against him during the last two years purely on account of the false issues which he had raised. Now that those issues had been disposed of after practically three continuous weeks of debating the hon. member coolly said—Let's go into politics. The House ought to have been discussing politics all along. If, however, hon. members wished to debate the Address further with relation to the policy of the Ministry, he was perfectly prepared to sit up and finish the debate to-night; but it was most unreasonable, after the patience that had been shown, to ask the House to delay any further than that.

Mr. DE SATGE said that while deferring to a great deal that had fallen from the Premier, he must point out that it was distinctly understood from the first that this debate should have exclusive reference to the Report of the Commission. In reference to those independent members who had acted upon that understanding, it would only be fair that a discussion on the general policy of the Government should be allowed, though it need not extend to anything like the length of the previous debate. He had always deprecated that debate from first to last, believing that the proper course would have been to adopt the Report three weeks ago, and spare the colony the recent discussion. The Government had brought forward the most important programme that had ever been laid before the colony, and if it were allowed to

pass by some sidewind, without discussion, the consequences would re-act very strongly against the Government. Having now come to the gist of the session, those important matters might be fairly and equitably discussed, and it would redound to the discredit of the Government if they did not allow fair time—say one week—for the discussion of the programme before the country. The Government could not wish to shirk responsibility in connection with the introduction of those measures—measures which would affect the future of the country to a greater degree than any had before. Whatever majority the Government might now have, he could not believe that two statesmen like the two leaders of the Ministry could possibly, at this stage of the colony's political life, dare, by their majority, to smother an expression of opinion on the part of independent members of the House. He was now speaking, not on his own account only, but also for many other hon. members. If the Government were prepared to go on to-night, he would defer to their wishes and commence himself. As, however, the hour was late, and the passions aroused during the last three weeks had calmed down, it would be well to take one night for reflection, and start again to-morrow to discuss the subject. He hoped the Premier would see his way to give time for the fair discussion of his important programme.

Mr. SIMPSON said the hon. member who had just sat down had formerly, when he was anxious to get back to his station, objected to any adjournment; but now that it suited him to go on he wanted another whole week. As a country member, who did not wish to be detained in town longer than was necessary, he (Mr. Simpson) was in favour of going on. It would make no difference in the votes of hon. members, and the measures to be submitted by the Government could be discussed in due course as they came on. The strength of the Government had been tested by the vote to-night sufficiently to convince hon. members that the Address in Reply would be carried. Measures could be better discussed in detail hereafter.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he agreed with the observations of the Premier that the House should get to politics, and he hoped that they would enter upon their discussion in a calm and statesmanlike way. Now that the idea had been mooted, he trusted that every member of the House, present or absent, would address himself to that subject and forget the past, and especially those matters which had lately engrossed the attention of the Assembly, and which he hoped were now entirely purged from the Chamber. To close the debate now would, however, be unfair to the majority of hon. members, who had been distinctly under the impression that the amendment of the leader of the Opposition was first to be discussed in its entirety, and other matters relating to the general policy of the Government, with reference to future or past transactions in connection with their administration, would be discussed at a distinct and separate time. That, he had no hesitation in asseverating, was the general understanding entertained up to the present moment by a majority of hon. members on this side of the House. It would, therefore, be exceedingly unfair to ask hon. members to enter upon a happier view of matters at so late an hour as 11 o'clock. They had rid themselves of a matter which had been an incubus on the Chamber—that had been most unpleasant to the listeners as well as the speakers, and he hoped the Premier would see his way to let them leave the Chamber to-night and come back to enter on the other discussion after twelve or fifteen hours interval.

Mr. LOW said he did not see the reason for delaying the settlement of this question. If

they stayed away two months they would give exactly the same votes when they went to the House again. It was only wasting time.

Mr. FREEZ said he could not see why hon. members should object to adopting the Address in Reply. All the different matters introduced by the Speech of His Excellency could be entered into hereafter on their merits when the Bills were introduced. Though he had voted on the Government side of the House to-night, he did not by any means pledge himself to vote for all the measures that were referred to in the Governor's Speech. Any member would be perfectly justified in voting for the adoption of the Address in Reply, and afterwards in accepting or rejecting, as he might think fit, any measure proposed in the Speech, when those measures came to be considered in detail.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had moved the adjournment of the debate without saying a word, because he understood, as a matter of course, that when the question they had been discussing was disposed of they were to adjourn until to-morrow, and then discuss the general policy of the Government. He had no idea that any objection would be offered to this by the Premier. He should not presume to offer any opinion as to the good taste of the Premier in making the remarks he had just delivered with regard to the manner in which he (Mr. Griffith) conducted the business of the Opposition, and to the fact that the course pursued had tended to consolidate the Government party. He (Mr. Griffith) was perfectly aware of that—that was his misfortune. He had simply performed what appeared to him to be a plain duty, and he did so knowing the consequences; but that was entirely irrespective of what they had to do now. As he said last week when he moved the amendment, he did not think it fair to the Premier to mix up the steel rails question with any other acts of the Government. The debate on that question being now concluded, he understood that the debate on the policy of the Government and their administration during the past recess should be proceeded with. He believed the arrangement was perfectly understood by both sides of the House. Remarks had been made to the effect that the discussion could take place when each item was before the House; but it was well known by the more experienced members, though not perhaps by some of the new members, that now was the time to speak, because if they waited until the individual items of the Speech were before the House they would be out of order in referring to the past administration of the Government. If any time were lost by continuing the debate to-morrow he could understand the objection raised, but they would not lose an hour. There were only one or two matters of private business on the paper, which could be disposed of in a very short time; and on Tuesday there was nothing on the paper except the introduction of some Government Bills; so that, under the most favourable circumstances, they could not do a stroke of actual work until Wednesday. He thought it would be very unfortunate indeed that, because a burning question had intervened, there should be no discussion of the general policy of the Government. He thought it would be very unfortunate for the Government themselves if they were to attempt to burk any discussion of their general policy. It would certainly not save time; but he believed that time would be saved by adopting the course he suggested, because if they devoted to-morrow and Tuesday to debating the general policy of the Government hon. members would only make one speech, and probably a brief one. If, on the contrary, discussion of these matters was burked, the object could be gained by motion for adjournment, and in other ways, which would only lead to

loss of time. He hoped some of the older members of the House would counsel the Government that it was to their interest, and to the interests of the House generally, that they should accede to the arrangement he proposed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he differed from the opinion of the hon. member that any adjournment of the debate would tend to shorten the business of the House. No matter what debate might take place on the policy of the Government, their fate would not be in any way affected, so far as they could judge, from the vote that had just been taken, and there would be ample opportunity for discussing the measures mentioned in the Governor's Speech when these measures were brought forward. Hon. members speaking to these questions on the Address would not shorten their speeches one iota when they came to deal with the measures themselves; in fact, they would make some speeches over again when the measures were brought forward. There was really nothing to be gained by it. If the discussion of the policy of the Government would settle the question that the measures mentioned in the Governor's Speech were to be passed he could understand it, but the discussion would settle nothing. Every Bill that was brought in by the Government would be discussed on its merits, but as for the understanding the hon. gentleman referred to, he was aware of no understanding except that the debate on the Address in Reply was to be finished to-night. That was the only understanding he had heard anything about, and it was the only one the Premier had heard about. If hon. members on that side of the House understood that there was any understanding of the sort they had only to mention it to the Premier; but he thought that, as it was evident that no amendment on the Address could really be carried, hon. members opposite should be satisfied.

Mr. McLEAN said the Colonial Secretary was quite right in what he said with reference to measures that were referred to in the Governor's Speech—that when those measures were submitted to the House there would doubtless be repetition of some of the speeches that would be made on the Address in Reply; but that hon. member knew perfectly well that this was the only opportunity hon. members would have of dealing with the administration of the Government during the recess. Therefore he did not think the Government should be afraid to have their administration considered in connection with the Address in Reply, and it would only show that they had nothing to fear in connection with their administration if they would gracefully give way and allow the discussion to be carried on to-morrow. He agreed with the leader of the Opposition in saying that instead of hindering business it would expedite it, because there was no business that could be brought forward before Wednesday next, at the earliest.

Mr. REA said that when the House met the Premier himself suggested an adjournment for a week to consider the bulky volume of evidence taken by the Royal Commission, and not to consider measures in the Speech. The argument that had been used by the Colonial Secretary—namely, that the measures could be discussed on their merits when they came forward—might apply to all other Governor's speeches, and it was perfectly useless to say that the discussion that had taken place had reference to anything but the big volume he had mentioned.

Mr. MILES said he would strongly advise the Premier to grant the concession asked for. The hon. member for North Brisbane had pointed out

that there was no business on the paper, and very possibly they might get through the whole of it to-morrow. It would really be a saving of time to allow the policy of the Government to be discussed.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

Question—That the Address as amended be adopted—put.

Mr. MILES moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER said he thought the hon. gentleman would act much better if he would allow the sense of the House to be taken as to whether they should continue the discussion on the Address in Reply. He was under the impression that the Address in Reply was to be disposed of to-night, and that that was the case he had every reason to suppose from the action of the other side. The Government had got all their men together, and why should they take up further time, when they would have full opportunity of discussing these matters afterwards? The hon. leader of the Opposition had said what was perfectly true, that on debate in the Address was the best opportunity of discussing the general policy of the Government; but they had been discussing a very important part of their administration for three weeks, and it had been made the test-point of the confidence of the House. It had been proved that there was no chance of ousting the Government, at least until these measures came before the House; and what, therefore, was the use of going on in that way? The hon. gentleman would do better by conceding to the sense of the House, as there was not one single item in the Address that would not have full deliberation before it was passed, and there would be ample opportunity for discussing the measures of the Government when they were brought forward.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the adjournment of the debate had been moved in order that the Government might reconsider whether they should give an opportunity of discussing their policy, and particularly their administration during the recess. If that course were not adopted, hon. members would have no opportunity of discussing their administration except by moving the adjournment of the House from time to time, which was a most inconvenient and undesirable way of conducting business. He would point out that the argument used by the Premier against discussing the Address in Reply would apply to any Address in Reply. It had been repeated three times that the discussion on the Address had occupied three weeks, but he would point out that they had adjourned for a week, on the suggestion of the Premier, in order to consider the matter so that it might be thoroughly understood and disposed of. It had been only under discussion five days, and he did not think too much time had been taken up in discussing it. The reason given why the established constitutional practice of discussing the policy of the Government and their administration on the Address in Reply should be departed from was that so much time had been occupied since the commencement of the session in dealing with another matter. If public business would be delayed by such a discussion he would be willing to ask his friends to stretch a point, and allow it to be dropped; but there was nothing to go on with until Wednesday next, as he had already pointed out, and there was really nothing to be gained. He was certainly under the impression, as he had stated, that they were to adjourn when the matter that had first been dealt with was disposed of. He thought that was a fair thing to do. He knew there might be several members who would

have preferred to go into the question at large, but he deemed that that would not have been fair to the Premier, because he considered it was a matter which should be dealt with by itself, so that it might be cleared away. He should feel disappointed if he had not an opportunity of saying something about the administration of the Government during the recess. There were many questions of importance, such as the administration of Crown lands, postal administration, and many other things he need not refer to now. He hoped he was not wasting his breath. He was speaking in the interests of a minority, and asking that the established constitutional practice should be followed of discussing the policy of the Government at the opening of the session. He hoped the Government had not absolutely made up their minds not to grant this concession. They were asked to give up nothing; they were simply asked to concede something that cost them nothing. He simply asked them to concede that to-morrow and Tuesday night be spent in discussing the policy of the Government, instead of being spent doing nothing, as there was practically no business to be gone on with. He did not wish to protract a single piece of business for one hour, but he thought it desirable to clear off old scores and get into politics, which he regretted had been too long kept in the background.

Mr. STEVENSON said he was not aware that there had been any understanding as to the adjournment of the debate, and thought it could only have arisen in the hon. gentleman's own crooked mind. He thought the hon. gentleman should be the last man in the House to ask the debate to be adjourned, considering that he had spoken for eight hours on the Address in Reply. The only understanding that he was aware of was that the debate was to close to-night. As for the remarks of the hon. member for Mitchell (Mr. De Satgé) in stating that too much time had been spent over this very unimportant subject as he called it, he (Mr. Stevenson) could remember that a few months ago the hon. member did not consider it a very unimportant subject—in fact, he would not now be occupying a seat in that House if he had not made so much of it as he did. He thought from the action of the hon. gentleman to-night—which was very far from what he had said last night—

Mr. DE SATGÉ: Exactly the same.

Mr. STEVENSON said he thought that the sooner the hon. member went over to the other side the better.

Mr. REA said that the supporters of the Government had themselves said last night, that while the character of the Premier was under a cloud they could give no consideration to anything else, and therefore they could not have been engaged in discussing the policy of the Government during the debate which had taken place. It was their own admission that the contents of the book of evidence were to be discussed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the hon. leader of the Opposition had just said that the discussion upon the Address in Reply, so far as related to the policy of the Government being discussed, was a firmly established constitutional practice. That he denied. It was a firmly established constitutional practice when the position of the Government was understood to be uncertain, but when their position was thoroughly assured the constitutional practice in these colonies had been to invariably allow the Address in Reply to be carried before entering upon the Government policy. That was the firmly established practice in the colonies, and the hon. gentleman must know it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No, I do not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the test which had just been given assured the position of the Government; therefore there could be no reason for discussing their policy, as the position of the Government could not be affected by the discussion in any way whatever. He thought the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) must see that, and that hon. members must see it also. It would be no use discussing the policy now, and as everyone knew there would be plenty of time for discussing it during the session.

Mr. DE SATGE said that it had been said most decidedly that the question which had been decided was not a party question; and certainly during the discussion of that question the policy of the Government had not been brought in in any way. In the few remarks he had made, he understood, and he thought that the impression was general throughout the House, that the policy of the Government was to be distinctly postponed for discussion after this matter had been cleared up. The Government certainly had the power, and he thought they would be exercising it exceedingly unwisely in refusing to allow discussion of their policy before the passing of the Address.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he certainly understood that the amendment of the hon. member for Brisbane—the leader of the Opposition—was to be the test-point upon which would depend the carrying or rejection of the Address. It was all very well to suggest that they might go on with the discussion upon the Address in Reply to-morrow afternoon; but who was to guarantee that the discussion would not be protracted for three weeks or a month?

Mr. GRIFFITH: We have no intention of doing anything of the kind.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said they all knew they would have many opportunities of dealing with the subject of the policy of the Government. A very admirable time for criticism of the administration was in the passing of the Estimates. He (Mr. Hill) generally found time to say all he wanted to say at that time, and he had no doubt that hon. members on the other side had pretty well learnt that too. It would only lead to much idle discussion, as it was evident to all parties that the test which had just been taken carried the Address in Reply. He would much rather do nothing than fool away his time listening to a desultory sort of warfare for over two days, and it might be for two months.

Mr. SIMPSON said the hon. member for North Brisbane had threatened them that if this debate was not postponed till to-morrow it would be carried on by motions for adjournment. He said, let them go on by motions for adjournment; it would not compel hon. members on that side of the House to attend any longer. The Address in Reply would be carried, and they might just as well let it be carried to-night as at any other time. If they wanted to discuss the policy of the Government upon motions of adjournment, let them commence to-morrow; it would only show their hand, and that their policy was simply the same as they had pursued last session.

Mr. DICKSON contended that the motion of the leader of the Opposition was made in the interests of the Government, in recommending that the debate upon their policy should be discussed in the manner usual upon such occasions. He could not see what the Premier had to fear in the matter. It was not likely the discussion would alter a single vote, still there might be a variance of political opinions expressed by hon. members opposite, which might be very interesting to hear and to learn. He considered they

were right in representing to the Government that the discussion upon their general policy could be more conveniently conducted at this time than at any other. Hon. members on the opposite side appeared to be taking every motion as a party vote; and if they went to a division upon the question of the adjournment of the debate, not a single gentleman on the opposite side would vote independently in the matter. The Premier had announced his intention of taking the vote as a party question, which he (Mr. Dickson) deprecated. No doubt they were acting up to the traditions with which they came into power—they had power, and they meant to use it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Mr. DICKSON said they evidently did not intend to listen to any reasonable suggestions from the Opposition side, and it would be wise to throw on the Government the whole responsibility of the session, and take as little part as possible in the debates. They had simply asked for a reasonable concession, and an hour had been wasted during which any bitter feeling which might exist had only been intensified, so that they were not prepared to enter into a discussion on the general policy of the Government at that time. He hoped the Government would not hold out from mere obstinacy; it would be wise to further the conduct of business by being more conciliatory to members on the Opposition side, and he hoped the Government would accede to their request after the assurance of the leader of the Opposition that there was no desire to protract the debate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS, to cut the matter short, would ask the leader of the Opposition whether, in case his amendment were carried, would he allow business to be proceeded with? The hon. gentleman had interrupted the constitutional parliamentary order of things. He should have discussed the Address first, and left the discussion on the Report for a subsequent period. He should be glad to let the new members of the House know that what was done last session would not be repeated, and should therefore like to get an assurance from the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) that the course pursued by the Opposition last year would not be pursued on this occasion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) started with his usual knock-me-down assertions that the Ministry were stifling debate. After listening to the twaddle from that hon. member, in common with some others, for hours together, this was a rash assertion. How had they tried to do it? They listened to the leader of the Opposition for eight solid hours, to the long polysyllabic sentences of the hon. member for Enoggera two hours, and to some others three and a-half and four hours;—was that stifling debate? The hon. member at the head of the Opposition, if not the hon. member for Enoggera, knew as well as he (Sir Arthur Palmer) that he could take one hundred and fifty or more advantages of discussing the policy of the Government if he wanted to; he could move the adjournment of the House.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I won't.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member wanted to put the Government to as much inconvenience as possible.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I want to get on with the business.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member wanted to dictate what the policy of the Government should be, and the manner in which it should be carried out; but the Premier was

not the man he took him for if he allowed the hon. member to do anything of the kind. The hon. member started with the assertion that there was an understanding that as soon as the vote was taken, there was to be an adjournment of the House. He would put it to every member of the House whether there was any understanding?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Not between the leaders; there was certainly no understanding in the sense of an agreement between the two sides.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was no understanding of any sort or description expressed or understood, but the hon. gentleman was just repeating his practice of last session, the practice he had followed ever since he had been leader of the Opposition, of delaying business. He (Mr. Griffith) knew very well that the Address would pass—a test vote had been taken—and he might just as well let the question pass and go home to bed, where he ought to have been long ago, because they (the Government) had shown before now that they could out-sit as well as out-vote the hon. member. The debate had gone on long enough, and they would pass the Address even if they had to sit there till Sunday morning.

Question of adjournment put.

The House divided :—

AYES, 16.

Messrs. Rea, Griffith, McLean, Dickson, Thompson, Bailey, Aland, Kates, Macdonald-Paterson, Miles, Grimes, Beattie, Rutledge, De Satgé, Tyrel, and Groom.

NOES, 25.

Messrs. Pöpe Cooper, Palmer, Macrossan, McIlwraith, F. A. Cooper, Feez, Scott, Black, Hamilton, Perkins, Low, Price, Sheaffe, Lalor, Baynes, H. W. Palmer, Simpson, Stevenson, Hill, Stevens, O'Sullivan, Norton, Weld-Blundell, H. Palmer, and Kingsford.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

The Address, as amended, was agreed to, and the PREMIER intimated that the Governor would receive it to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House adjourned at fourteen minutes to 12 o'clock till the usual hour to-morrow.