

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 4 JULY 1882

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QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

FIFTH SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT,

APPOINTED TO MEET

AT BRISBANE, ON THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY, IN THE FORTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER
MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1882.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 4 July, 1882.

The Rockhampton Election.—Vacancies during Recess.
—Members Sworn.—Members Adjudged Insolvent.—
Petition.—Elections and Qualifications Committee.
—Bill *pro forma*.—The Opening Speech.—Address
in Reply.

THE House met at 12 o'clock, a few minutes
after which hour a message was conveyed by the
Usher of the Black Rod, that His Excellency the
Governor requested the attendance of Mr. Speaker
and hon. members of the Legislative Assembly
in the Council Chamber.

The SPEAKER, accompanied by hon. mem-
bers of the Assembly, accordingly proceeded to
the Legislative Council, and, having heard the
Address of His Excellency, returned to their
own Chamber.

The House resumed at half-past 3 o'clock.

THE ROCKHAMPTON ELECTION.

The SPEAKER announced that, pursuant to
a resolution of the House passed on the 22nd
September last, he issued his warrant for the
election of a member for the Electoral District of
Rockhampton; and that such writ was, on the
14th October last, duly returned, with a certifi-
cate endorsed thereon of the election of John
Ferguson, Esq., as a member for the said elec-
toral district.

VACANCIES DURING RECESS.

The SPEAKER announced that since the ter-
mination of the last Session the following vacan-
cies had occurred in the House, viz. :—

1. By the resignation of Francis Kates, Esq., one of the Members for the Electoral District of Darling Downs.
2. By the resignation of the Hon. Sir Arthur Hunter Palmer, K.C.M.G., one of the Members for the Electoral District of North Brisbane.
3. By the resignation of Archibald Archer, Esq., Member for the Electoral District of Blackall.
4. By the resignation of George Morris Simpson, Esq., Member for the Electoral District of Dalby.

5. By the resignation of Charles Lumley Hill, Esq., Member for the Electoral District of Gregory.

6. By the resignation of Oscar de Satgé, Esq., Member for the Electoral District of Mitchell. That upon the occurrence of each of the said vacancies he had issued his writ for the election of a member to fill the same, and that such writs had been duly returned to him with certificates respectively endorsed thereon of the election of the following gentlemen, viz. :—

1. William Allan, Esq., as a Member for the Electoral District of Darling Downs.
2. William Brookes, Esq., as a Member for the Electoral District of North Brisbane.
3. The Hon. Archibald Archer, Esq., as Member for the Electoral District of Blackall.
4. John Shillito Jessop, Esq., as Member for the Electoral District of Dalby.
5. Thomas McWhannell, Esq., as Member for the Electoral District of Gregory.
6. John Govett, Esq., as Member for the Electoral District of Mitchell.

MEMBERS SWORN.

The following members having been presented and sworn, subscribed the roll :—

John Ferguson, Esq., Rockhampton; William Allan, Esq., Darling Downs; William Brookes, Esq., North Brisbane; the Hon. Archibald Archer, Esq. (Colonial Treasurer), Blackall; John Shillito Jessop, Esq., Dalby; John Govett, Esq., Mitchell.

MEMBERS ADJUDGED INSOLVENT.

The SPEAKER announced that by notice dated the 2nd day of November, 1881, signed by George Crawford, Registrar of the Supreme Court, and published in the issue of the *Queensland Government Gazette* of the 12th day of that month, it was publicly intimated that Archibald Meston was, on the said 2nd day of November, adjudged insolvent. Also, that by notice dated the 13th day of February, 1882, signed by William Bell, Deputy Registrar of the Supreme Court, and published in the issue of the *Queensland Government Gazette* of the 18th day of that month, it was publicly intimated that Frederick

foulkes Swanwick was, on the said 13th day of February, adjudged insolvent.

The PREMIER (Hon. T. McIlwraith) moved—

That the seat of Archibald Meston hath become and is now vacant by reason of the insolvency of the said Archibald Meston since his election and return to serve in this House as member for the electoral district of Rosewood.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That the seat of Frederick foulkes Swanwick hath become and is now vacant by reason of the insolvency of the said Frederick foulkes Swanwick since his election and return to serve in this House as member for the electoral district of Bulimba.

Question put and passed.

PETITION.

Mr. McLEAN presented a petition from certain electors of South Brisbane, Oxley, and Logan, praying for the construction of a Line of Railway from the Metropolis to the Tweed River.

Petition read and received.

ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE.

The SPEAKER, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly Act, laid on the table his warrant appointing the Committee of Elections and Qualifications for the present session.

BILL *PRO FORMA*.

The PREMIER presented a Bill to prevent the Improper Subdivision of Land for Building Purposes, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed.

THE OPENING SPEECH.

The SPEAKER reported that the House had, in the earlier part of the day, attended the Governor in the Legislative Council Chamber, where His Excellency delivered an Opening Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which, for greater accuracy, he had obtained a copy, and which he would now read to the House:—

“HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“I have great pleasure in again calling you together to seek your advice and counsel on the various important matters which I have to submit for your consideration.

“The recent attempt on the life of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, which under the blessing of Divine Providence was so happily frustrated, sent a thrill of horror and indignation through the colony. The expressions of feeling which were evoked throughout the length and breadth of the land demonstrated the depth of loyalty and affection of Her Majesty’s loving subjects. It is gratifying to find that the belief which was universal that the attempt upon the life of one so pure and so exalted could have been made only by a person bereft of reason has turned out to be well founded.

“I am sure you will join with me in an expression of deep regret for the untimely death of the late President of the Legislative Council, Sir Joshua Peter Bell, who occupied for so

many years positions of the highest responsibility with honour to himself and advantage to the colony.

“I am pleased to be again able to congratulate you on the increasing prosperity of the colony. Our country has not suffered the disastrous effects caused by the drought in the southern colonies; but for the most part abundance has prevailed in our pastoral districts. Our mining and agricultural industries have started forward with renewed impetus, and population which is so much wanted to ensure the lasting prosperity of the colony has been flocking to our shores.

“Another year’s experience of the working of the Divisional Boards Act has proved the value to the colony of local self-government. Several improvements have been suggested in the measure which will duly be submitted for your consideration.

“The British-India Mail Service has continued to prove of great advantage to the colony. Doubts at one time were expressed as to the route being suitable for immigrants, but our late experience has proved it in that respect to be a distinct success. From the fact of immigrants being able to come in steam vessels, and by a shorter route, a better class of people is offering at home, and considerably less difficulty is found in recruiting immigrants of the right stamp for the colony. Delay, which we did not anticipate, has occurred in putting a quicker and better class of vessels on the service. This, I understand, has been occasioned by the enormous tonnage of steamers being constructed at the present time in the British ship-building yards. Several new steamers, however, have been promised, which we expect soon to add to the efficiency of the service. The value of the service for mail purposes has been much impaired by the action of the London Post Office, and my Ministers have been compelled to protest in the strongest language against the obstructive action and want of consideration for our interests manifested by the authorities there in charge.

“Negotiations have been in progress between the Transcontinental Railway Syndicate and my Government in reference to the construction of a line to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and with other bodies in reference to the construction of lines from the Southern and Western Railway to the New South Wales border. The proposals of the latter have been declined on account of the terms asked being too high. The offer of the former was also declined, but my Ministers believe that terms will be satisfactorily arranged such as will justify them in asking your authority for the construction of the line this session.

“Offers have been made by a company to construct a railway from Rockhampton to Port Alma with no land grant except such Government land as might be required for the purposes of the railway and wharves. The Government have accepted the offer by agreeing to support a private Bill to give powers to the company to construct and work the line.

“The Public Works of the colony have been very much retarded by the extraordinary and

unprecedented demand for labour in every part of the colony. My Government have taken exceptional steps to increase immigration; and to supply the existing demand no efforts on their part will be spared.

"Confidence in the future of the colony has manifested itself strikingly during the past year in the increased desire to acquire land in almost every district. Land suitable for sugar cultivation is eagerly sought after, and an immense area has been selected for that purpose in the northern portions of Queensland. These lands were withdrawn from selection last year, and again declared open at an advanced upset price, without affecting any diminution in the rate of selection. The cultivation of sugar land promises a great future for Northern Queensland.

"Draft regulations for Indian immigration into Queensland, approved by the Indian Government, have been under the consideration of my Ministers. Amendments, with the object of ensuring the return of the labourers to their country on the completion of their term of service, have been proposed and submitted to the Indian Government. When mutually agreed upon, the regulations will be presented for the approval of Parliament.

"The low cost at which railways have been lately constructed, and the increased settlement in the various districts of the colony, will, I think, justify my Ministers in submitting to you during the Session proposals for the construction of several lines. Those proposals, however, will be subject to modification should no arrangement be come to by which the grand trunk lines can be constructed by land grants.

"A commission to inquire into the present position of the Volunteer Force of the colony has sat during the recess. Their report, which I am sorry to say establishes the thorough inefficiency of the force, will be laid before you, and proposals will be submitted for putting the defences of the colony on a permanent and more satisfactory basis.

"The oft-recurring periods of drought in both this and the neighbouring colonies have satisfied my Ministers that much greater provision should be made than heretofore for the conservation of water. Measures will be introduced for the purpose of securing and conserving enlarged supplies.

"My Government consider the time has arrived when a trigonometrical survey of the colony should be commenced, and you will be invited to sanction arrangements for carrying it out.

"The leases of certain pastoral lands in the colony will shortly expire. As no power is at present in the hands of the Government to deal with these lands, a Bill will be submitted for your consideration.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

"I am happy to inform you that the Revenue has increased beyond our most sanguine expectations. The financial year closed with a gratifying

surplus, a portion of which my advisers propose to appropriate to particular services instead of carrying it over as a balance to the following year. The Estimates of the present financial year will be duly submitted to you, and I hope you will find that they have been framed with a view to the strictest economy consistent with efficiency.

"Proposals will be laid before you for the abolition of coast light dues and the reconstruction and reduction of the pilotage rates.

"The six-per-cent. debentures issued in 1863 fall due in January, 1884. Provision will require to be made during the present Session to meet this liability.

"HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

"The following Bills, among others, will be submitted for your consideration:—

"1. A Bill to authorise the Construction, Maintenance, and Working of Tramways on Public Streets and Roads in such manner as not to impede ordinary traffic.

"2. A Bill authorising the Surrender of Freehold Land to the Crown, and the issue of Deeds of Grant to the owner thereof in certain cases.

"3. A Bill to Amend and Consolidate the Laws relating to the Distillation of Spirits.

"4. A Bill to Amend the Divisional Boards Act of 1879.

"5. A Bill to make better provision for the regulation of Immigration into the Colony of Queensland.

"6. A Bill to Provide for the Sale to Local Authorities of Land required for Local Works or other purposes.

"7. A Bill to Amend the Law relating to the right of Stoppage *in transitu*, and for other purposes.

"8. A Bill for the Protection of Oysters and the Encouragement of Oyster Fisheries.

"9. A Bill to Consolidate and Codify the Laws relating to Bills of Exchange and Promissory Notes.

"10. A Bill to Amend the Law relating to the Rights and Liabilities of Married Women.

"11. A Bill to Amend the Savings Bank Act of 1872.

"12. A Bill to Consolidate and Amend the Laws regulating the Sale by Retail of Intoxicating Liquors within the Colony of Queensland, and for other purposes relating thereto.

"13. A Bill to Amend the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869.

"14. A Bill to Provide for the Construction, Maintenance, and Management of Works for the Storage and Distribution of Water.

"15. A Bill to Consolidate and Amend the Laws relating to the Insane.

"16. A Bill to Amend the Navigation Act and Amend the Laws relating to Merchant Shipping.

"17. A Bill to Amend the Laws relating to Jurors.

"18. A Bill to Amend the Law relating to Mineral Lands.

"19. A Bill to Amend the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act of 1876.

"All these measures I submit for your consideration in the full confidence that you will deal with them to the best of your judgment and ability, and I trust that your labours will result, under the blessing of Divine Providence, in adding to the progress and prosperity of this great country."

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Mr. FERGUSON moved—

That a Select Committee be appointed to prepare an Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor, in Opening this Fifth Session of the Eighth Parliament of Queensland, and that the said Committee consist of the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Allan, Mr. Norton, Mr. Black, and the Mover.

Mr. ALLAN seconded the motion.

Question put and passed.

The Committee retired, and, having returned, brought up the following Address, which was read by the Clerk:—

"To His Excellency Sir ARTHUR EDWARD KENNEDY, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies.

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

"We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure Your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Person and Government of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and we thank Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have opened the Session.

"We shall give our careful and serious consideration to the various measures submitted by Your Excellency; and we trust that our labours may result in promoting the advancement and prosperity of the colony."

Mr. FERGUSON moved that the Address in Reply to the Speech of his Excellency the Governor be now adopted by the House. He took it that a member might very properly move the adoption of the Address in Reply although not agreeing with all the matters referred to in the Governor's Speech; but he considered the matters contained in that Speech to be of such an important character that if most—he did not say all—of the measures were carried through it would tend greatly to increase the welfare, prosperity, and the resources of the colony. In fact, he did not think a Governor's Speech had ever before been delivered which contained measures of such importance to the colony as were contained in the present Speech, and therefore he hoped hon. members on both sides would give those questions a fair and impartial consideration. With reference to the attempt made on the life of the Queen, he offered his sincere and heartfelt thanks for the escape of Her Majesty from the attempt of that miserable insane assassin. He trusted that she might long

live to reign over the British Empire, a pure, noble, and bright example to her subjects. In speaking to the Address in Reply, he understood an hon. member was allowed more latitude than was permitted on other occasions, and he craved that indulgence from hon. members which was usually extended to young members in his position. He wished to congratulate the House on the favourable circumstances under which they had met, as the affairs of the colony were in a most prosperous state. Of that they had ample evidence in the state of trade, the activity of various industries, and the high price obtained for all colonial produce. He did not say that that prosperity was due altogether to the fact that the gentlemen now occupying the Treasury benches had been in power for the last twelve months, and he was sure they would not, from modesty, make such an assertion. That the prosperity was real and substantial was apparent, when they took in consideration the last half-yearly balance-sheet just published. He always considered that the careful administration of the finances of a country was one of the causes of its prosperity, for it was of the utmost importance that the credit of a young colony like Queensland should be kept good; and that could only be done by the able and careful administration of its finances. He was pleased—in fact, he was proud to be able to say—that the credit of the colony of Queensland never stood higher in the money markets of the world than at the present time, and to that fact he attributed the general prosperity of the colony. There was no doubt whatever that the administration for the last two or three years had been the cause of bringing Queensland more prominently before the world than ever it was before. The very fact of the Premier's trip to England, the successful floating there of the three-million loan, and the establishment of the mail service, had brought Queensland more prominently before business men and money men than ever; and to those facts was due to a great extent the flow of capital that had taken place not only from the old country but also from the other colonies. It was very satisfactory to know that there was a large credit balance in the Treasury—especially satisfactory to the ratepayers of the colony, for he took a credit balance to mean that increased taxation would be unnecessary. And that satisfactory state of affairs had not been arrived at from niggardliness on the part of the Government, for all the various departments of the Public Service had been liberally supplied; therefore he could fairly say that through the present administration Queensland had attained a position financially she had never attained before. The next matter he would refer to in the Speech was a Water Storage and Distribution Bill. He considered that to be the most important measure the House would have to deal with during the session. He did not know how far the Government intended to go with the measure, but he hoped they would bring forward a scheme on a liberal scale, for he did not know of anything that would enhance the prosperity of the colony so much as the conservation of water on a liberal scale, more particularly in the Western territory. The lands in the Western territory were of vast extent and of the richest description, and he had no hesitation in saying that no other country in the world possessed so large an extent of such rich land as Queensland. Though large blocks of that country were held on lease, the bulk was waste land because it was waterless; but it was a well-known fact that in the Western territory the waterless lands were the richest. He was informed on very good authority, by men who had spent a great deal of time in that district and were capable of giving an opinion, that if water conser-

vation was carried out there sufficient only for stock, the waste lands in the Central district of the colony would carry the whole of the stock of the colony. But he hoped the day was not far distant when that rich land would be put to better use than grazing purposes; and if ever they were to settle the millions of people the colony was capable of settling, it would not be till a scheme of the kind indicated was carried out. Without water they could not cultivate, and without cultivation they could not settle a large population; and if ever Queensland, or that grand territory in the west, became one of the granaries of the world, they must carry out a scheme of that kind. With regard to the public works policy of the Government, he thought the colony had no reason to complain. The harbours and rivers were the gateway to commerce, and it was by means of them that the produce of their industries found a ready, cheap, and convenient outlet to the markets of the world; and if their ports were closed their industries must suffer. An effort had been made to improve the navigation of the Brisbane River, and for some time improvements had been carried on without intermission with good results, for they found that two of the British-India Company's steamers came up to town within the last week or two; and he hoped that was only the forerunner of much larger steamers coming up to the wharves. It was also satisfactory to know that the Dry Docks were finished and available for ships of large burthen. His constituents in Rockhampton regarded with jealousy the expenditure on the deepening of Francis Channel. He (Mr. Ferguson) had always maintained, and did so still, that the Brisbane River, being not only an important port, but the waterway of the metropolis, was entitled to consideration. At the same time, in carrying out the improvements of the ports between Brisbane and Rockhampton, he thought the Government had hardly dealt fairly with the latter place. The old dredge "Lytton" had been taken away to Bundaberg, and the new dredge "Saurian," built specially for the Fitzroy River, was detained in the River Mary. The result of that was that the navigation of the Fitzroy was not so clear as it had been. Hon. gentlemen were aware that a cutting had been made through the Upper Flats in the Fitzroy River parallel to the retaining wall constructed there, and that part of the cutting, being confined to a narrow channel, was expected to scour and keep itself clear. The result had been to a large extent what was anticipated, but, the dredge being removed before the cutting was completed, sand-bars had formed at the mouth of the cutting, causing a barrier to the navigation of the river. When the "Saurian" dredge was at work those bars would disappear, and the navigation of the Fitzroy River would become greatly improved. He was sorry he could not congratulate the Government on the progress made with the construction of the wharves at Port Alma. After inquiries made on the spot, he found that there were peculiar difficulties which the engineers had to contend with; but now the work was about to commence he hoped nothing would prevent its being carried out at once, as the rapidly increasing prosperity of the Central district, to which it was the key, demanded that the harbour should be improved. With regard to the railway policy of the Government, he could only say that the people of the Central district of the colony, and, he thought, the people of the whole colony, would be much better satisfied if it was carried out much more vigorously than at present. They were all agreed as to the extension of the trunk lines westward, and why they were not carried on more rapidly he could not understand, seeing that the money had been voted and the work approved of. For the last twelve months there had been a blockade of

traffic on the Central line, and the colony suffered to a great extent, because a large amount of money was lying idle in the Central district, ready to improve the colony if the necessary facilities were given. Instead of letting contracts for sections of 15 or 20 miles he considered they should let 100-mile sections, as contractors would then have something to go upon in the way of engaging labour and securing proper plant. It would then even be worth the while of a contractor to send to England, Ireland, or Scotland for 500 or 1,000 men, when he knew he could employ them, and in such cases the Government should bring them out as free immigrants. The progress of the Central district was very much checked at the present time through the delay in the construction of the Central Railway. One contractor had now only 120 men employed, and the number was likely to become less from week to week. With regard to the Transcontinental Railway, he had already stated to his constituents at Rockhampton that he was opposed to the scheme as at that time proposed; and his opinion on the subject was not in the slightest degree changed. A line of railway from Roma to Point Parker east of Blackall or Muttaborra would greatly diminish the traffic on the present trunk lines, and would interfere with the eastern ports of the colony; and he could not see that any advantage could arise to the colony in any way from running a line of railway by that route. A railway on the land-grant system to the borders of South Australia would not meet with such strong opposition from him; but one taking the route now proposed he would oppose in every shape and form. The proposed line from Rockhampton to Port Alma was, in his opinion, one of the most important pieces of railway to be constructed in the colony, and he hoped the Government would not allow any private company to get it into their hands. It would be the key of the front door of the Central districts, and that was the key to the main door of the colony. Such a railway, connecting as it would the main trunk line in the Central districts with the only port in the colony where the largest vessel afloat could enter and moor at any time, day or night, and at any state of the tide, was a national work which ought never to fall into private hands. That port would yet become the best in the colony, and the people of the colony would have need to be proud of it. He was pleased to observe that the Government intended to introduce a larger supply of immigrants than heretofore, because many industries were at the present time languishing for want of labour. He was at the same time unwilling that the colony should be flooded with immigrants irrespective of the demand in such a way as to bring about such a state of things as existed about four years ago, when the Corporation of Rockhampton were employing as many as 100 men at a time at a starvation wage of 3s. or 4s. a day to prevent them from becoming chargeable upon the charitable institutions of the city. The working men, who were the bone and sinew of the country, had as much right to participate in the prosperity of the colony as the capitalist had. At the same time the supply of labour should be kept up something like equal to the demand, and an effort should be made to secure a better class than had come out of late. He would suggest that employers of labour should go or send agents to England, Scotland, and Ireland and engage labourers for one or two years, the Government undertaking to bring out the persons so chosen. The employer would then go to the country towns and villages and select a class of labour suitable to his work and to the requirements of the colony. The Government paid highly for immigration, and in this way they would

got a class of immigrants worthy of the expense. He was glad the Government were going to bring in an amended Divisional Boards Bill. That Act, which was one of the most valuable passed by the Queensland Parliament, had already conferred the great boon of local self-government throughout the colony, and any Bill amending it should be supported by both sides of the House. In conclusion, he would refer briefly to the Coolie question. Every hon. member knew his opinions on that subject. They had been expressed freely before his constituents, and they had not been altered in any way since. When the regulations were before the House he should have an opportunity of speaking more fully on the subject. He moved that the Address in Reply be adopted.

Mr. ALLAN, in seconding the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply, said that every loyal subject in the colony would concur in the remarks in the Speech having reference to the happy escape of Her Majesty. He had never met any subject of Her Majesty in the colony who had expressed any other opinion. With reference to the decease of the late Sir J. P. Bell, he had had the pleasure and honour of the hon. gentleman's acquaintance, and that fact was sufficient to indicate that he, in common with all colonists, was conscious of the great loss the colony had sustained by the death of the late respected President of the Legislative Council. The prosperity of the colony referred to in the Speech was patent to all. It was perhaps more apparent in the North, but even in the South the corner seemed to be turned at last, and good seasons gave hopes of better times. Though this prosperity was, of course, greatly attributable to the good seasons and the natural resources of the country, still the Parliament and the Government were to be thanked for having contributed to it by fostering industries, assisting in bringing people to the colony, and by inducing a large influx of capital. He was glad that the Government who introduced the Divisional Boards Bill were willing to also introduce amendments in it. Whilst believing that the Act had done much good in decentralising the government and throwing local works upon local bodies, he thought that many amendments might be made—one, for instance, in the clause under which assessments on improvements were made. He had taken the opportunity lately, while travelling a short distance by the British-India Steam Company, to observe the working of the new mail service, and he was glad to see that the government had undertaken to make improvements in the carrying of the mails. The service would stand a lot of improvement in that direction. As a cargo and passenger service it was invaluable, passengers being refused at almost every port on account of the number of persons travelling. As an instance of the success of the service he would mention that the first vessel out brought thirty tons of cargo for Townsville; the next brought seventy tons; the "Chyebassa," brought 700 tons; and the last steamer 1,800 tons. The subject of the Transcontinental Railway was a little out of his latitude at present, and it would be time to give an opinion when the negotiations now in progress between the Government and the syndicate formed for the purpose came before the House. If the scheme were agreed upon on a basis satisfactory to Parliament and the country it would be the means of bringing out a large quantity of capital and also a large number of immigrants, and companies obtaining the advantages promised would, in order to make the railways pay, have to act to a great extent as agents for bringing immigrants. With regard to the proposed line between Port Alma and Rockhampton, he had been along the country proposed to be traversed, and could say that it was most urgently needed, and, whether by

Government or by private enterprise, would have to be made. The public works of the colony were spoken of as having been retarded by the want of labour, and the same thing might be said to some extent with regard to private works. There was, in fact, no part of the country where labour was not urgently required. He believed in white labour—English, Irish, or Scotch, or Germans, Italians, Swedes, or Norwegians—and he was very glad to see that the Government intended to increase the vote for the purpose of bringing out a large number of immigrants from Europe. Coming to the subject of sugar lands and the possibility of regulations being made for the introduction of coolie labour, he would say, as a member for a Southern constituency, having no interest whatever in coolie labour, that he did not wish to see these men in any part of the country where white men could live. He had, however, lately gone among the canefields. The cane was standing at the time of his visit 12 or 14 feet high; the bright, hot sun was pouring down on the heads of the people working; the humid moisture arising did not allow a breath of fresh air to come in, and he did not see how a white man could work there and live. In order to make the sugar industry a success it might, therefore, possibly be necessary to introduce Asiatic labour, however much their employment was to be deprecated where it could be avoided. It was said now that there would be a difficulty in insuring the return of such labourers; but while free-born Englishmen were brought out and obliged to go back under pain of fine and imprisonment, he failed to see what difficulty there could be in imposing similar terms upon fellow-subjects in India. If some kind of Asiatic labour were required he should prefer that it should be labour over which the Government would have full control, and not such as the Chinese, over whom the Government could exercise no efficient control when they came in such numbers as to overrun the country. He had lived among the Chinese in San Francisco and other parts, and had noticed that in eight, nine, or twelve months they would learn a trade which Europeans would take four or five years to learn, and they came from a country, only fourteen days' steam from our shores, supplied with modern rifles and Armstrong guns, and fast becoming one of the first maritime powers. In population they had millions for our thousands, and the colonies would have reason to regret it if they allowed such an inventive and numerous people to settle in large numbers. He trusted it would not be necessary to introduce such labour at all, but in any case he hoped the class introduced would be such that the Government could control it by proper regulations without the risk of offending a large and powerful country like China. The proposal to build low-cost railways was one with which very few members on either side of the House would find fault, the principal point being the selection of the best routes. Many of these so-called branch lines were in reality matters of national importance. One such would be a line from Emu Vale to Fassiferu, helping to connect Sydney with Brisbane, and making the distance sixty miles shorter. It would also open up useful agricultural land on the Logan, and take a great part of the traffic from Sydney overland. He regretted that the commission appointed to inquire into the working of the Volunteer Forces had been obliged to bring in an unsatisfactory report. The day would come when the colony would require to defend itself, and the sooner preparations were made the better for the colony when the time came. The means of defence were within the colony. £140,000 was being spent by the State in the education of 35,000 children, 17,000 of whom were boys. He would suggest that these boys should be com-

pelled to give a certain number of days during their schooling, and also after leaving school, to drill; and that the teachers should be made efficient to act as their instructors and leaders. The youth of the country would then be ready for every emergency, and each man would in time of war be a special constable ready to defend his hearth and home. The question of irrigation he regarded as superior even to that of railways for a country like this, subject to periodical droughts and floods. In Egypt and India it was regarded as of the first importance. In one case in India, by an expenditure of £100,000, the revenue of a particular district had been raised from £10,000 a year to £40,000, and had continued rising ever since. The amendment of the Pastoral Leases Acts of 1869 and 1876 were no doubt matters of very great consequence, and he would suggest also an amendment of the Crown Lands Alienation Act. With regard to the public lands this colony stood in a better position than either of its neighbours. In Victoria the land was gone; in New South Wales it was going fast; whilst in this colony there was still 98 per cent. in the hands of the State. He should prefer to hold that land and alienate none of it. Leases for thirty, forty, or ninety-nine years should be given, and people would be prepared to pay well for such leases; but the land should remain on the hands of the people themselves. The troubles of France in '89, and the troubles of Ireland, arose in great measure through the alienation of the public land, and that danger should be averted while it could. If the people were their own landlords they could not well quarrel with themselves; and the unearned increment, instead of going to the land-owners, would accrue to the State. He hoped, therefore, the Crown Lands Alienation Act would be amended with the others. He begged to second the motion.

THE HON. S. W. GRIFFITH said he, in the first place, offered his congratulations to the hon. members who had just sat down, and to the House upon the accession to its strength of such intelligence and power of expression as the hon. members had already displayed. The House would, no doubt, benefit greatly by their presence. He could not, however, congratulate the Government quite so much with regard to the hon. members who moved the Address. It seldom happened that the hon. member who moved the Address in Reply expressed disapproval of the most important points of the policy enunciated. He was, however, very glad to have heard such an intelligent expression of opinion, because he believed that the opinions expressed by the hon. member on the matters to which he particularly referred were the opinions of a very large majority of the people of the colony. He did not propose to refer to all the matters touched upon in the Speech, but there were some of more prominence to which it was desirable that he should address himself. He was sure that every member of the House would agree with the expression of abhorrence at the attack on Her Majesty's life, and he was very glad also that the Government of the colony were not wanting in promptitude in communicating, on behalf of the people of the colony, their feeling on the point. He was sure that they all deeply regretted the death of the late President of the Council, who had taken part in the politics of the country for nearly twenty years, and during that time had earned the esteem and respect of everyone with whom he was brought in contact, and who made few, if any, enemies, and was one of those men the colony could ill afford to lose. He was sorry also, though in a different way, at the result of the President's untimely death in the loss to the House of so old

a member as his late colleague, Sir Arthur Palmer. That hon. gentleman had been a member of the House for many years, and they had had many a fight in that House. They had always sat opposite to one another, but all the time he (Mr. Griffith) had been glad to see the hon. gentleman in the House, and now he was sorry that the hon. gentleman had left it, although no doubt he would continue to give the State good service in his new position. One could always respect political opponents, though one differed from them on most occasions, as he had from Sir Arthur Palmer, and so he had respected that hon. gentleman. The change, too, had brought an addition to the Government of a gentleman of considerable experience, on gaining whom he congratulated the Government; but the manner in which that had been brought about was, he thought, very singular. At the time it took place it was generally understood that the one point of policy to which the Ministry—or, at any rate, the Premier—had pledged himself most distinctly, was the Transcontinental Railway scheme on the land-grant system. The hon. the Premier had been associated with that project almost ever since he had been a member of the House, and had always been its advocate. That, then, being so prominent a feature in the policy of the Government, it was strange for the public to read that, in seeking for a new member, they should have chosen a gentleman who was known to be their opponent on that point, and who was subsequently reported to have joined them on the understanding that if the subject was brought forward in the way proposed he should leave them. That was very singular. When the subject, however, was brought forward they would be able to see whether the hon. gentleman would adhere to his own opinion or fall in with those of his colleagues. He (Mr. Griffith) did not himself think that the hon. gentleman would take the latter course. But he did not think that they would hear very much more at all of the scheme. Another point referred to in the Speech was the Divisional Boards Act. He agreed with the assertion that the operation of that Act had been very beneficial in many parts of the colony, but he also adhered to his opinion that to many other parts of the colony it was entirely unsuited. He had always said that and was still of the same opinion. He hoped that the amendments which the Government intended to propose in it would be found to be useful. The experience of its past working ought to have given them enough information to enable them to make it a satisfactory measure. He thought that most persons who had heard the reference in the Speech to the satisfactory working of the mail service must have smiled, for it was a long time since anyone had referred to the value of that service as a mail service. For a long time he had himself been of opinion that the service as a mail service was a failure, and even the portion of the Press of the colony which was in the habit of supporting the Government were obliged to admit it. He heard the other day of a gentleman who received a message from a bank that a sum of money was lying to his credit—a sum which had come from England. The gentleman went to get it, and did so, and a fortnight after he received a letter, sent by the mail service, informing him of the money being remitted. This was the sort of thing which was being done continually. Everyone would admit that it was very desirable that they should have communication by steam direct with England; no one denied it. That this service was very valuable as a cargo service would also be admitted by everybody. But talking of it as a success as a mail service seemed to him—well, ridiculous. He was surprised to learn, too, from the Speech that the value of the service

for mail purposes had been impaired by the action of the London Post Office. They knew how it had been influenced by the action of the Queensland Post Office—and not exactly in accordance with law either—in extorting money from the people. A contract was made with the British public who posted letters in Great Britain, and then the Government extorted a further sum on receipt of the letter—

The PREMIER: No!

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the Government extorted money in a way that they had no right to do, and that such a state of things should exist was scandalous.

The PREMIER: It is scandalous; I quite agree with you.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was of opinion that the fault was not the fault of the London Post Office, but the fault of the Queensland Post Office, and he thought that most people believed the same. And why people should be compelled to wait for their letters in the way they had, he had never heard any reason given, and he did not suppose he ever would. He would now pass to the Transcontinental Railway Syndicate. That had not yet assumed a concrete form, and he was very much inclined to think that it never would, and that that was the hope of the members of the Government themselves, with the exception of the Premier, who seemed to have set his heart upon it. During the recess General Feilding had made some proposals to the Government, and they had been published in the Press. They were proposals which certainly no one could have been expected to agree to, if only for the reason that there was no possibility or probability that they would ever have passed through that House. But the Premier could not have been surprised when he got such proposals, because they were just such proposals as he must have expected. He (Mr. Griffith) was not surprised at all. At the same time, the Premier did not assent to them, and a great deal of credit had been given to him for the magnanimous manner in which he had stood up for the interests of the colony. He (Mr. Griffith) had never been able to see that, for it appeared to him that the proposals which the Premier was willing to accept were very nearly as had. Though those proposals might never come to anything, he had one or two things to say in connection with them, one of which was that those proposals, as accepted—as assented to by the Premier—were extraordinarily prejudicial to the interests of the colony. On one point it would be remembered that when the Railway Companies Preliminary Act was before them it was insisted, and he believed by both sides of the House, that the terms that they ought to make with any company which proposed to construct a railway should not be simply for the construction of the line, but also for the maintenance of the traffic, the object in view being the development of the country; and consequently that the company should be bound to work the line, because otherwise they might have the line thrown on the hands of the colony, while it was both unprofitable to work and unequal to the value of the land given away in exchange for it. He (Mr. Griffith) was not at all surprised to see, notwithstanding that expression of opinion, that the proposal of General Feilding was the very opposite of that—that the Government should be liable to be called upon to work the line, not only at their own expense, but also to pay the owners of the line a considerable portion of the gross earnings, although there might be no net profit. And that proposal was accepted by the Premier—the proposal that they might be called upon to pay the owners of the line a large sum of money although the total

receipts might not be paying working expenses. That there should be no mistake about that he would read the proposal of General Feilding. The 18th clause of the contractors' proposal ran:—

"18. The Governor in Council will, if required at any time by the contractors, and may if at any time he thinks fit, work and maintain the railway in connection with the Government railways, and with rolling-stock of the Government, and its cost in all things, on the terms of retaining therefor such percentage of the gross receipts as the actual working expenses, including maintenance and renewals of the Government railways, bear to the gross receipts thereof, and rendering and paying to the contractors half-yearly the remainder of the gross receipts, and holding the contractors harmless against any loss on such working and maintenance. The line may be taken over for working purposes on the completion of each section of 25 miles."

And the Premier's answer to that, in clause 10, was—

"To clause 18 I agree, it being understood the words 'maintenance and renewals of the Government railways' include all the expenses to which the Government may be put in maintaining and renewing the line, working the traffic, maintaining and renewing the rolling-stock, and all other disbursements in conducting the traffic; the net receipts, or what in a line managed by a company would be distributed among the shareholders and called profit, being the amount which shall be handed over half-yearly by the Government to the contractors."

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. GRIFFITH said that on this basis, supposing that the working expenses of the Government lines were one-third of the total receipts, they would have to pay the owners of the Transcontinental Railway two-thirds of the gross receipts from it, although the whole receipts did not pay working expenses. That was as he understood the proposition, and he was surprised at it.

The PREMIER: I framed the clause myself.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the hon. gentleman not only dealt with the proposals of the syndicate, but actually framed the proposal himself. He would ask what sort of a bargain was that? The hon. gentleman framed a proposal and then solemnly said he could not agree to it.

The PREMIER: I said I framed the 10th clause. I did not say I did not agree with it. I did agree with it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the hon. gentleman had been posing as a representative of the country alone, and so dealing with the terms of General Feilding. He (Mr. Griffith) now saw that this was a mistake. There was another part of the proposal to which the Premier also agreed—namely, that the minerals should be given to the syndicate. What sort of a present was that? They knew that in that way they would get half the Cloncurry district. What sort of a present was that to make to a railway syndicate? The colony would very soon have some greater mining magnates than those of Nevada. All those things had been assented to by the Government, but he thought hon. members of that House would have a better idea of their duty to their constituents than to assent to such terms as those. They might as well tell the Government at once that they would not assent to them, as he was sure the people of the colony would not assent to them if they had an opportunity of expressing an opinion. Then, too, they were informed—still on the subject of the construction of railways by private persons—that offers had been made by a private company for the construction of a railway from Rockhampton to Port Alma. He was very glad to hear the expression of opinion by the hon. member Mr. Ferguson on that point—that he would not agree to it. It would be a monstrous thing. That would be one of the best paying lines in the colony, and

he did not suppose that either side of the House would vote against its construction as a Government line. But, no; it was too good for the Government—it must be done by a company. Why had not the Government mentioned the name of the company? Were they ashamed of it? It was the Transcontinental Railway Syndicate; but why did they not say so? He had in his hand the proposal of General Feilding on behalf of the syndicate. Why, it would give them what had very properly been termed by the hon. member for Rockhampton the key of the central part of the colony, the monopoly of the port, which was inaccessible except by rail or water, and, if they got the Transcontinental Railway also, the monopoly of the traffic to the lands at the back. A magnificent scheme for the company, but one not likely to be assented to, and probably that was the reason that the Government took care not to bring it forward as a Government measure. He found that the Premier informed General Feilding that the Bill to construct this railway must be a private Bill, but that it would receive the support of the Government when introduced. The Premier's letter said:—

"The Council advise that the Hon. W. Feilding be informed that the Bill to construct the railway from Rockhampton to Eppatoria Point must be a private Bill, but that it will receive the support of the Government when introduced.

"You will gather from the terms of this minute that the Government favour the views of your syndicate with regard to this extension, but as the provisions of the Railway Companies Preliminary Act cannot be applied to the construction of the line, the only way by which the object in view can be accomplished is by means of a special Act, which should be introduced by some private member of the House. To the passage of such an Act the Government will lend their assistance."

But that Bill ought not to be introduced as a private Bill, but as a Government Bill. An Act passed in 1872 made it the duty of the Government to introduce a Bill of that kind, and yet in this instance the Government shirked it for some reason or other. He thought that the House would have to look after the interests of the country pretty sharply. The public works, they had been told, were very much retarded for want of labour, and he was sorry for it, and hoped most sincerely that it would soon be remedied. He was glad the lecturers in England, supplemented by volunteers, had been so successful, and that great benefit had thereby accrued. But it was certain that their immigration policy was not a good one. What better time could they have than the present to attract the farmers? Farming in England had been in a lamentable state for the last two or three years, and yet the Government gave the English farmers no information as to what land they could get if they came to the colony, nor where they would have to go to look for it. They were getting out large numbers of the labouring classes, but offered no inducement to the farming classes. As had been suggested lately by the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Paterson), he thought that it would not be a bad plan to advertise passages to Queensland at American rates, which were about one-fifth of the cost of coming to Queensland, which was over £15; and they should also make provision for assisting them when they got here to find land, as was done in America. The class of people he referred to did not care to come out as free immigrants, but would probably come if the passage money was reduced to American rates. Let them be told where to go and where to get land. Let land be reserved for them, and let them be carried to it. Then such immigration would increase, and every member of the House would agree that that would be both desirable for and beneficial to the colony. They might also

go to Europe for immigrants. Some of their best immigrants had come thence, Germans and Scandinavians, and they might get men from other and more southern parts; it was certain that if the Italians came they would prove good men, as he doubted very much whether it was much hotter in Northern Queensland than it was in the south of Italy. Another matter referred to was the demand for sugar land, and it was stated that those lands had been withdrawn from selection and then again declared open at higher rates. He thought the only complaint to be made about that was that they were not withdrawn sooner before such enormous estates were formed, and that the price was not made higher when they were again put up. He doubted very much indeed whether they had much to congratulate themselves upon in this respect. Instead of the administration being in the direction of fostering the formation of large estates, it should be directed to inducing many people to take up small estates. If ten men could be induced to take up 100 acres each it would be infinitely better than one man taking up 1,000 acres, although he would not say that in some parts 100 acres was enough for one man. To allow the creation of a monopoly would, he thought, be most disastrous; it would prevent settlement and lead to great complications in the future. It was not because they had got a great deal of land that their lands were inexhaustible. Surely the lesson that was being taught them at the other end of the world could scarcely encourage them in doing anything to create large estates. He thought a great deal too much encouragement had been given to people who desired to acquire large estates; in fact, the complaint had been that capitalists were the only people whose interests were considered. Capital, of course, was useful and necessary, but it was not the only thing to be considered; but during the last three years the Administration seemed to have been acting in the interests of the larger men—the big men—as against the smaller men. He had no doubt the cultivation of sugar would have a great future in Northern Queensland; but he did not think it necessary that that great future and the product of sugar should be brought about by the creation of large estates. That future would be very much greater, and there would be more prosperity, if the estates were smaller than were being taken up now. That led him naturally to the Labour question. They were now informed, what they had found out accidentally a few days ago, that the Government had been negotiating with the Government of India as to the terms on which they might be allowed by the august Government of India to introduce some of their subjects into this colony, and as to the conditions which the Indian Government would insist on being imposed before they allowed their subjects to come into this colony. He had looked hurriedly at the regulations which had been laid on the table of the House that afternoon, and he thought that they would never be in force in the colony. He was not going into the general question of coloured labour at the present time, but he would say something on the question of the introduction of coolies. This colony differed from other British colonies which had introduced coolies, in many particulars. Those colonies were without exception not self-governing; they had not responsible government; they were Crown colonies, and were not accustomed to manage their own affairs except in a very partial and incomplete way. In regard to coolies, the main object those colonies had in view was to get as many labourers as they could on any terms imposed upon them. They regarded

coolie immigration as a good thing in itself, and they did not hesitate to obtain it by any means that might be necessary. That was the point of view from which they looked at it. They did not regard themselves as independent contracting parties, but, looking upon coolie immigration as a desirable thing to be attained by any means that might be necessary, they were willing to assent to any conditions. But it was very different in Queensland. In the first place, nobody, he thought, in this country regarded coolie immigration as a good thing in itself; it was not looked upon as a thing to be desired, or as the best thing in the world that could be got for the colony. Of course, he did not express the opinion of everybody, but he was satisfied that he expressed the opinion of the great majority of the people of the colony when he said that the introduction of coolies would be an evil. Some people might say it was a necessary evil, and that, though the thing was bad in itself, it might be necessary to tolerate it for a specific purpose. But they should look at another element in the question as it now arose. Those regulations were to be framed, not from the point of view of the colonists desiring to manage their own internal affairs in the way they thought best, but from the point of view taken by the Indian Government. That Government said, "You must take coolies upon our terms. You are asking a favour from us, and you must assent to those conditions. You must agree to regulate your own internal affairs, not on your own principles, but on ours. These are our terms, and you must accept them." Was that a position that a self-governing colony like Queensland should accept? They were accustomed to make their laws from their own point of view, and if they made regulations for the regulation of kanakas or coolies they did so, not because anybody else told them to do so, but because it was desirable. We should look upon the coolie, or anyone else, as a subject of our colony, and the colony ought to make its own laws and regulations on the question. They were not going to make laws because they were told to do so by the Indian Government, as that would make the colony a mere dependency of a dependency. Such a thing would be intolerable, and no man imbued with a feeling of the liberty so long enjoyed here would submit to it. But they were to be dictated to, and to be told by the Indian Government that they must make those laws. Were they going to submit to anything of that kind? He hoped not. That was exactly the position in which affairs stood at the present time. The present Government desired to bring coolies to the colony. They had appointed some gentleman—of whom no one here seemed to know anything—as a sort of envoy to visit Calcutta, and to confer with the Indian Government. The Indian Government had said, "If you want our coolies you must make the laws we want." Why did not the people who wanted coolies come and ask for them in a straightforward way? Why did not the Government bring in a Bill to regulate the introduction of coolies? He should be glad to see the Government bring in such a Bill, because he did not think it would ever become law. At all events, the colony ought to deal with the matter from its own point of view. On any question of that kind, whether in regard to the introduction of Chinese, kanakas, coolies, Italians, or even North American Indians, they ought to make laws from their own point of view. The colony ought to make their own laws, and if the labourers did not think them desirable then they could stop away. There should be no thought of a free British colony allowing its affairs to be governed by another dependency. He had not had time to read all the regulations; but it was clear that

no regulations that might be framed by the Governor in Council could affect a man's liberty. He had observed one singular regulation—the only one he had observed—and that said that when the term of service of a coolie had expired he must either go away within a month or enter immediately into service again or go to prison for six months. He must do one of those three things. Supposing he went to prison, when he came out, if he did not do either of the two first things, he must go to prison again for six months. If nobody would take him into service, and he could not go away, then he would have to go to prison. But did any sane man suppose that such a law as that could be enforced, or that if such a provision were put into a Bill that it would pass? There would be a good deal said about it; but certainly no such thing should be done by way of regulation. No Government ought to be allowed to make regulations of that kind, and it was perfectly intolerable that such a thing should be done during a long recess—perhaps as long as the late extraordinary recess—about which they had not yet had any explanation, because before Parliament met again there might be an influx of people into the country on conditions that Parliament would not tolerate for one moment, and yet conditions which it might be hard to abrogate. Because, although the Government had no constitutional power to do such a thing, if they made a bargain, and permitted the introduction of coolies under regulations arranged with the Indian Government, that would in effect be promising the Indian Government that those regulations should not be repealed. He did not think any Government should be in a position to bring so important a question into such a position; and he had given notice that evening of a Bill for the repeal of the Coolie Act, because he was quite satisfied that it was the wish of the country that it should be repealed. No such power should exist in the hands of any Government as to be able to flood the country with coolie immigrants. That was a most serious difficulty in connection with the Coolie question. They would not be free agents to manage their own affairs; they would be managed by another dependency of the Crown. Such a thing as that he could never be a party to.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkins): Hear, hear!

Mr. GRIFFITH said he should like to hear what the hon. gentleman who just uttered "Hear, hear!" would have said on the matter if he had been on the Opposition side of the House. Why, there was no one who would have denounced it more violently. The hon. gentleman used to be the champion of white labour—

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So he is now.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman used to pose as the champion of European settlement, and the champion of farming settlement; but he had apparently become the champion of large monopolists, the champion of coolie labour, and the champion of enormous estates. What a difference a change from one side of the House to the other sometimes made! He (Mr. Griffith) had said enough on the Coolie question now, but he should have something more to say on the second reading of his Bill, which he sincerely hoped would become law. Another subject he would refer to was the construction of railways. In reference to that there was a remarkable statement in the Speech. The Government promised to make a number of lines, but they did not mention what lines; they were waiting, he supposed, to see how hon. members behaved themselves. If an hon. member wavered in his support,

then he would be told that there would be no railway to his district. But he did not think the Government need be at all frightened, as the universal feeling was that railways were necessary everywhere. At one time they were afraid to make railways, but that was not the case now. There was one line that he should like to say a word about, and that was the line to connect the colony with New South Wales. Last session or the session before, he called the attention of the Government to the fact that New South Wales was pushing on its lines to the border very much faster than this colony was doing, and he now understood that tenders had been called by that colony for the extension of their railway to the border. He did not know exactly where the junction was to be, but tenders had been called for an extension to Tenterfield, close to the Queensland border; and it was quite time that this colony should also push on towards the border to meet the New South Wales line if it wished to secure any of the New England trade. As to the various lines which would be proposed, he had little doubt that they would be assented to. He hoped that lines would not be proposed to please this member or that member, or this constituency or that constituency, but because they were wanted. Log-rolling in the construction of railways was not a good thing, and he did not see why the question of railway construction should be regarded as a party political question at all. The construction of great trunk lines, or the construction of a transcontinental railway on the land-grant system, were matters of national importance; but the construction of such lines as he was referring to should not be a party question at all. The fear that there had been hitherto was that they were borrowing too much money. They had no doubt borrowed a large sum of money. Some people said they had borrowed too much, and expressed their alarm when they saw the amount of the public debt and the smallness of the population. But he thought there were resources yet untouched which might be made to pay the interest on any railways that would be constructed for a long time. He did not suppose that anybody seriously maintained that the pastoral lands of the colony were returning to the State the revenue they ought to do. He had no doubt that in the remote parts of the colony the struggling pastoral lessees were perhaps paying a fair rent for the time; but in other parts the rents that were being paid were ridiculously inadequate, and if those lands brought a proper rental to the State in proportion to the value they were to the lessees, there would be revenue to pay all the interest on the money borrowed for railways, and the taxpayers of the colony would be very much relieved. That was a question which would have to be dealt with. He did not see why the rents should not be increased on equitable terms. There was another matter which was mentioned last session, when he called attention to the opportunity of raising the rents of several runs at the expiration of the first period of seven years. If the Government had done their duty they would have increased the rents when the opportunity occurred; but they had sacrificed the interests of the country to those of the squatting party, of which the Premier had said he was proud to be the head. No doubt a much larger revenue must be derived in that way. He had no desire to harass the squatter or to do anything unfair; but it was quite certain that the time was fast approaching, if it had not arrived, when the terms on which the pastoral lands were held must be revised, so that a larger amount of revenue could be derived from them. He thought the time had arrived for settling the tenure of the Crown lands of the colony on a more

equitable basis. The extension of railways had made a great difference. No doubt one great difficulty was the absence of water, and he entirely agreed with what the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Ferguson) said on that point. He was sorry the Government had not done more for the conservation of water, and they might have done more in the way of boring for it. He did not know whether water could be obtained in many outlying places, but probably it could. They were told that the Government intended to deal with the Pastoral Leases Act, but they were not told how. It was said that certain leases would shortly expire, but those he thought were some old leases. He wondered whether the Government intended to propose the abolition of the pre-emptive right. If they had announced that, it would have attracted some attention, and perhaps they might have carried it through the House. He would not refer to the numerous Bills that were promised. Some of them were old friends; one had come back after a disappearance of ten years, and it would possibly meet with the same fate again. As to the others, they would know what to make of them when they saw them. He had said all he desired to say that evening, and he did not intend to conclude with any motion. He believed the most important parts of the policy or programme of the Government were entirely opposed to the wishes of the colony, and he was glad to think that there was very little chance of either the Transcontinental Railway question or the Coolie question being accepted by the people of the colony; and those were really the only matters in the Speech that could be called matters of public policy.

The PREMIER said that, before replying to the remarks of the hon. member for North Brisbane, he had much pleasure in complimenting the hon. members for Rockhampton and the Darling Downs on the very able way in which they had introduced the various subjects mentioned in the Speech to the House. He was sure, from the way in which they had begun, that they would do a great deal of useful work in the House. Coming now to what the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) had been saying for the last hour or so, he would first notice how remarkable it was that, although the House had been out of session for about eight months, yet, to his astonishment, there was not a long indictment against the Government for the sins of the recess. Indeed, the Government seemed to have been behaving so uncommonly well that the hon. gentleman had not a word to say against them. The Minister for Works had been up in the North, and they all knew what he had been doing there, for the *Telegraph* had been speaking about it for the last three months; and yet the hon. gentleman had not a single word to say about that remarkable journey. Perhaps he was afraid that some reference might be made to his own travels in that particular part of the country. The hon. gentleman remarked that, in the most important points mentioned in the Governor's Speech, both the hon. members who moved and seconded the Address in Reply disagreed with the Ministry. Those two points were the Transcontinental Railway and the introduction of coolie labour. He followed the hon. member (Mr. Ferguson) very closely, and with reference to coolie labour he (Mr. McIlwraith) agreed with nearly all he said; and with regard to the Transcontinental Railway that hon. member seemed to support the very thing that he (Mr. McIlwraith) proposed, but said he had objected, and always would object, to a railway coming from the Southern and Western line and going to Carpentaria direct. He had never proposed anything like that. With respect to

the hon. member (Mr. Ferguson), he believed the Government would have his support, and he should be sorry indeed when they differed; but, should that ever happen, they must accept it and be relegated, if it so happened, to the Opposition benches. With reference to the hon. gentleman's remarks about his late colleague, Sir Arthur Palmer, it was with the greatest reluctance that he consented to his occupying his present position, and it was a sense of duty that forced him to accept it. He was the fittest man in the colony for the position, and no man in the House would say that he had not well earned it. That his loss was regretted on the Government side need not be said, and he believed hon. members on the other side regretted it too, for he was a foeman against whom the Opposition liked well to fight, and against whom they ought to be proud to fight. In short, there was no man whose absence from the House was more to be regretted than the present President of the Legislative Council. The remarks about the hon. member (Mr. Ferguson) were scarcely so fair. He seemed to think he had secured him for the Opposition right off; but the House well knew that the remarks were made not so much because the hon. gentleman objected to the Transcontinental Railway, but because in his anxiety to trip up the Government he stirred up every possible thing that might tend to injure them. On that side of the House he was sure the hon. gentleman would not succeed. He (Mr. McIlwraith) had taken his ground on the Transcontinental Railway question and meant to stand by it, and believed he should gain it in spite of the hon. gentleman's opposition. It was very gratifying to that side of the House to hear the way in which the Divisional Boards Act was criticised now by the Opposition. The hon. gentleman spoke, no doubt, from the experience he had had, for what he had said now was something very different from the arguments he had used against the Bill when it was passing through the House. They knew perfectly well that it would be a most difficult thing to put that Act into force in certain parts of the colony, and continually said that it would have to be amended to meet exceptional cases; but that fact did not justify the opposition brought against the Bill by the hon. member and his party at that time. They obstructed the Bill for several weeks, not because it would not apply equally well to all parts of the country, but because they did not want it in operation in any part. The Government could claim that they forced the Act through in spite of all the efforts of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman certainly passed the Local Government Act, but he would never have done so had not he (Mr. McIlwraith) been the leader of the Opposition at the time, and determined that it should be. The then Government were actually compelled to pass the measure, and then they did not do anything to put it into operation. No action whatever was taken by them, nor until the present Government came into power. Although the Divisional Boards Act was very open to criticism, and on its introduction it was a crude piece of legislation—yet it was brought forward at a time when legislation in that direction was essentially wanted. He believed the Local Government Act to be a very good one, and liked it very much, but they could not get the people of the colony to understand it, and it would never have been put into operation; but the present Government introduced a measure which the people could understand, and they had put it into operation and introduced the system of local self-government. With regard to the British-India steamers, the hon. gentleman ought to have given the matter a little more considera-

tion instead of talking in such a random way about it, for he evidently did not understand it, as he sympathised with the action taken at home on the subject. He would go so far as to say that if the British Government were to treat the colony in the way they had done with regard to the mail service it would be a blessing to them if they were separated from the mother-country to-morrow. He wished the House to understand perfectly how they were placed. They had a code of rates for their different services—6d. on a letter home by the British-India steamers, and 9d. on a letter home *via* Melbourne. The reason for that was plain. They could afford to send a letter home cheap by the British-India steamers because they had actually paid in the subsidy for the carriage of it. When sending letters *via* Melbourne they had to pay to the Victorian Government 6d. per letter, and to the Australian Steam Navigation Company 1d., in addition to other expenses connected therewith. In other words, on a letter on the round journey, from Brisbane to London and back *via* Melbourne, they received at the Post Office here or in London 1s., and they had to pay the whole of it to Victoria. In addition to that they had to pay for the carriage of the letters to and from Melbourne. The consequence was that on every letter sent to London *via* Melbourne the colony lost 6d., besides having to pay for a mail service which would take it there and back actually for nothing. It was at once evident that if they wanted to make their mail service a success they could only afford to carry letters at a cheap rate by that service, giving at the same time the advantage of all the mail routes at the exact amount of their cost to the country. The tariff fixed for rates just saved the colony from loss. Seeing that the colony was paying £55,000 a year for a mail service from Brisbane to London, they could afford to charge a much lower rate for letters than to send them *via* Melbourne, besides paying the English Post Office for the trouble of receiving the letters there and distributing them to the various parts of the country to which they were addressed. The colony was therefore the first to initiate the cheap system of postage to and from England at so low a rate as 4d. each way. They offered the British Government what he considered a very fair thing for the little trouble they were at—namely, a penny on the amount of postage collected there; indeed, treated them handsomely, he thought, for the very small amount of trouble they were at. They sent to the British Government the tariff of rates, and asked them to advertise in England that letters coming to Brisbane *via* Melbourne would be charged 9d., and those *via* Singapore 6d. Their answer was, no. They declined to have more than one rate, 6d., whether by British-India or by Peninsula and Oriental steamer. They, of course, could not prevent people here from sending letters home for 4d., and would receive them in London; but they absolutely refused to take any in *via* Southampton. They were willing to send letters *via* Brindisi and Singapore on condition that the colony paid the Continental expenses, 2d., for extra postage, and 6d. in addition. By such a course of action the British Government could ruin any mail service. In order to let the matter be clearly understood, he was forced to take the example of a letter on the round. For that reason, in the adjustment of the accounts between the London and Brisbane Post Offices, Brisbane retained all the postage received at that end, and London retained only a portion of the amount received at the London end, in order to pay the charges which the British Post Office was at in forwarding the letters on the Transcontinental route. To clearly understand the matter they must take the example of a letter

travelling from London to Brisbane, and from Brisbane back to London. If hon. members would follow him, they would find it very clearly explained in a paragraph he would read from a letter he thought it his duty to address to His Excellency on the subject, a letter which would be laid on the table for the convenience of hon. members:—

“I will first draw your Excellency’s attention to the financial aspect of the question, on the basis that a uniform rate by all routes is charged both in England and in Brisbane of 6d., or for a letter on the rounds from London to Brisbane and back, by all routes, of 12d. If the letter comes *via* Brindisi, and by our British-India Royal Mail Steamers, out of the 12d. charged for a letter on the rounds, the London Post Office receives 3½d. and the Brisbane Post Office 8½d. If the letter travels *via* Melbourne, Queensland pays 12d. to Victoria, 3½d. to England, and 2½d. for transit between Brisbane and Sydney; in all 18d., being a direct loss to Queensland on each letter on the round of 6d., instead of a gain as by the British-India route of 8½d. It must be quite apparent to you, therefore, that it is not to the interest of the Queensland Government to despatch or receive English letters by the Melbourne route to Queensland. In order, however, to give Queensland people and their correspondents in England the advantage of alternate routes, the Government determine to fix such a rate of postage on letters sent by Melbourne as would just cover the cost of transit. By adopting this course the colony still suffers a loss in having to pay a mail service to carry her letters and allowing them to go by another route; but the advantage to the colony in getting quicker or more frequent communication justified the Government taking that course. Ninepence (9d.) therefore was determined on this principle as the postage on letters *via* Melbourne and Brindisi.”

In the same way, as he had explained, they had a service for carrying as many letters as they chose to send from London to Brisbane—when he mentioned Brisbane he meant Queensland—and having to pay that company, and the company being bound to carry as many letters as the Post Office liked to put on board, the Government considered they were quite able to pay for that service a lower rate, and therefore adopted 8d.—4d. to be collected in London and 4d. on a letter going to London. They offered out of that 8d. to the British Post Office 1d., which he considered handsome remuneration. The action of the British Post Office was this: they would have no differential rates at all, but would charge 6d. on every letter that went from London to Brisbane—it did not matter to them whether it went *via* Singapore, *via* Melbourne, Suez, or *via* San Francisco. They said—“We will charge the same rates, and how you manage the adjustment of accounts is nothing to us. If any individual in the British dominions puts on a letter ‘*via* San Francisco,’ it shall go that way; if ‘*via* Melbourne,’ it shall go *via* Melbourne, and if ‘*via* Singapore,’ that is the route it shall go.” Hon. members would understand the disadvantage at which it placed the colony; in fact, the colony sustained a direct loss. He had never claimed that the British-India Steam Service was the quickest route; he had before admitted that it was not so to the southern parts of the colony; but it was the quickest to the northern parts. The action of the British Post Office, were it not objected to, would have the effect of compelling the people of the southern part of the colony to adopt the Melbourne route, and the people at home would get into the same habit and send their letters by the Melbourne route also, because to Brisbane it was a little quicker; and then the effect would be that while Queensland paid for a mail service for themselves, not only would she lose the whole of the postage, but would actually have to submit to a loss of 3d. on every letter sent, or 6d. on the rounds. The British Post Office had it in its power to coerce them into a policy which he (the Premier) would object to as long as he stood at the head of the

Government—to subsidise other lines besides their own. There was not a member in the House who would not admit that the existence of the British-India Service was of very great advantage to the colony, whether as a mail route or as a freight route. It was one of the principal factors in the progress of the colony at the present time, and at all risks they ought to be determined to uphold it. If they conceded to the British Government what they claimed—preventing their own letters going by their own route—they would concede an interference that Government had no right to exercise. The 4d. rate had been proved by the statistics of the colony of great advantage. It was meant for the poorer classes, and it was an advantage to a poor man to save 2d. on a letter, and it was of advantage to the colony also, because it could afford to carry the letters at that rate. But the obstructive policy of the British Government prevented Queensland from carrying its own letters at its own rates. They said, “You shall not put on the British-India steamers any letters by that route. If they are directed by another route we will send them by that route and charge you the extra 2d. and a fine of 6d.” The Government had never exacted that fine because he (the Premier) considered it unjust. The colony was liable, nevertheless, to 8d. on every letter posted thus tyrannically by the British Government by their own route instead of the route they chose. Action of that sort he considered as perfectly unjustifiable. There had been correspondence on the subject between the Brisbane head office and the London head office, and anyone seeing that correspondence would come to the conclusion at once that the British authorities were determined to carry out some scheme of their own, which he at all events did not think would be for the good of the colony. The Under Secretary of the Post Office, in the course of an interview, said the British Post Office could not put the letters on board the Queensland service steamers because they had contracted with the transcontinental railways to carry letters at a reduced rate on the condition that all letters went through that way. He (the Premier) asked what authority they had for making an agreement to bind Queensland, and pointed out that if the colony was interested it should have been consulted; and he further claimed the right to send letters in the way that suited the colony best. On coming to closer quarters in the negotiation they gave as their reason for insisting on the 6d. rate that he (the Premier) agreed while in London to consent to a universal 6d. rate. That was an agreement which he had clearly proved he never consented to when he was in London. A proposal was made by the Victorian Government to reduce the rate from 7d. to 6d., and he was informed by the Under Secretary for the Colonies that the proposal was likely to be agreed to by the other colonies. He (the Premier) did not like the matter, because he saw no reasons for the reduction, unless a great part of the expense of the reduction was to be borne by the British Government. However, rather than be left out, and see special rates to the other colonies advertised in London, he agreed that 6d. should be the rate to Brisbane, *via* Singapore and the Queensland route. They had afterwards most disingenuously stated that he agreed that people should have the option of sending by any route at a charge of 6d. In his negotiations with the Colonial Office everything had been done fairly and courteously, and there had been no misunderstanding; but there had been great misunderstanding between the colony and the London Post Office. The Government would suffer a great disadvantage if no restriction were put on letters coming *via* Melbourne, and

in consenting to carry letters at bare cost he thought they had treated the colony upon the best possible terms. He believed in the aims of the London Post Office. Their object was to secure a universal postal rate—he believed 5d.—but the interests of the other colonies were so much identified with the object of increasing the value of their own routes that it was impossible to concede to their terms unless an arrangement were made in our interest in consideration of the peculiar circumstances of the colony. It was the only colony having a complete through mail service, and it would be advisable at the expense of a little more time to take advantage of that service. If the Government consented to the terms sought to be enforced by the British Post Office, the result would be that all letters would go *via* Melbourne and Suez, and the system of this colony would be destroyed. He had proposed, as a basis upon which equitable negotiations could be carried on between the colonies and the British Post Office, that the colonies combined should bear the expense of the different mail services, paying in proportion to population—or on some other such basis—and the sender should then be allowed to send by any route. The colony would then suffer no loss and would have the great advantage of the British-India Mail Service. The next matter touched upon by the hon. member for North Brisbane was that of the Transcontinental Railway, and the hon. gentleman appeared to have yielded to the temptation to make a good point at the expense of doing an injustice to him. In reference to clause 18, he (the Premier) said he framed that clause himself, and the hon. gentlemen at once construed that statement to imply that he had made the whole proposal, and was, in fact, the syndicate himself.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

The PREMIER said he did the hon. gentleman justice to believe that he credited him with having acted honourably to the colony throughout the matter. He had framed the clause himself for these reasons. In his negotiations with the syndicate he had found the greatest difficulty in satisfying them that the railway would actually pay working expenses. They proposed, therefore, that they should have the option of handing over the railway to the Government if they chose to do so, and he agreed at once on condition that the Government should at any time have the option of taking the railway into their own hands if they chose to do so on certain conditions. The conditions were these: If the Government chose, they might at any time, under clause 18, take back the railway from the company, work it at their own expense, and pay to the syndicate an amount on their receipts equal to the savings on the other Government railways. No more equitable arrangement could be made. The Government would secure the advantage at any time of having the line in their own hands, and as the Transcontinental line would, he believed, be one of the best paying lines in the colony, it was quite impossible that the Government could make any loss, all that was required being the average percentage made by the other lines in the colony. He regarded that as a capital arrangement, and it was an arrangement he had made himself in defence of the interests of the Government of the colony. The present was not the first time he had heard the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) say that the Government wished the matter might never come up again.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I said "except the Premier."

The PREMIER said he had supported the scheme because he thoroughly believed in it, and he was perfectly willing to stake the existence of

the Ministry upon it—in fact, he did so. Hon. members must definitely understand the position which he had taken up. The Government could not possibly be blamed because no further action had been taken. If the negotiations had only reached the present stage it was not through his fault; he had always been prepared to negotiate on the terms offered by him to the syndicate in London. When those negotiations were going on, a question very plain, and very much to the point, was put to him. It was said—"Colonial Governments frequently change. What security have we that after we have spent from £20,000 to £30,000 in testing the value of this work the matter will be entertained favourably, or that the information the Government will have got through us will not be used as a means of enforcing better terms out of another party." That was a home question, and to it he could give only one answer, namely: "If you accept the terms which I offer, and which I believe to be right, I will submit the proposal to Parliament, and if Parliament does not agree to them then I will resign." There could not be anything plainer than that, and the terms referred to had been put into writing in two or three places. If Parliament refused to agree to such terms he should consider it time to resign. That had been his position all through, and he had been very far from forcing off the evil day, as had been said. If, after putting such an agreement before Parliament and asking them to consent to a Bill to carry it out, the House did not consider it would be to the advantage of the country to pass the Bill, he would be perfectly content to go. With regard to the line from Port Alma to Rockhampton the hon. member again insinuated that this was the same syndicate, and asked why the Government had not the courage to say it was the syndicate. Had the hon. gentleman read the papers on the table he would have seen that the Government had had the courage to put the whole correspondence on the subject on the table, showing what company it was that had made the proposal. How could the Government, therefore, be blamed for referring to the company in the speech simply as a company? There was no cowardice there. It was plainly put forward in the correspondence with the company. He believed in the system himself for a great many reasons. He did not believe that the Government of any country was capable of working the railway system by itself satisfactorily, except when brought into competition with private railway interests. The difficulties, in fact, in the way of reform in railway management were very great. He had seen with dismay the public crying out about abuses, and the Minister desiring to help them, but his hands were tied. Only where a Minister was Minister for Works, Engineer, and Traffic Manager all in one, could it be done. The reason was plain, for the Minister's scheme of reform would have to be submitted to the Traffic Manager, who, if he did not believe in it, would certainly make it a failure instead of a success. He would also have the obstruction of the whole of the Department, and that would be the case so long as there was no competition. He (Mr. McIlwraith) had great respect for Mr. Herbert, who was a thoroughly conscientious man; but he was the arbiter, and they could carry out no reform except through him. He (the Premier) had sent people to the other colonies to see how things were worked there, but with no avail. But if there were another traffic manager in the colony the result would be different, and those people would be compelled to see the other systems. In Victoria some of the lines were in the hands of private companies, and that fact contributed to better management. A very great deal more

could be said on that subject when it came on for discussion, and he would advise hon. members not to take a light view of the case. Wherever he saw any offers from private companies to construct railways he would gladly give them his support, because, although they might, as it was said, be very profitable to the promoters, they would also be good for the Government. Railways could never be made profitable in the hands of the Government, as the people would never allow them to pay more than interest; but the way private lines paid was by the exercise of private enterprise and good management. He thought the clause in the Speech which spoke with confidence of the future of the colony was a very good clause—the best in the Speech; but the hon. gentleman did not appear to think so, and his reason seemed to be that the Government had sold their lands too cheaply. The hon. gentleman was very wise after the event. When the Government of which the hon. gentleman was a member was in office those lands were a fourth part of the price and of a three times larger area to be taken up. The present Government stepped in and increased the price and decreased the area. The Government of the hon. member did nothing, but now the hon. gentleman asked why had not the present Government gone further. He saw the effect after the event. The hon. member forgot that he was one of a Government to whom was owing the Act under which those lands were put up. He (the Premier) had expected to hear a long speech from the hon. member on the Coolie question, but he supposed he had left it to his hon. colleague who was sitting behind him. But when the hon. gentleman had someone he wanted to go in for Brisbane he had got on the stump. In his speech to the electors on the 24th January, the hon. gentleman said:—

“When asked in England why, as the colony wanted cheap labour, we did not encourage Chinese immigration, he had pointed out that what they wanted was to make this an English colony, and that we wanted to try that experiment as long as we could. When it failed it would be time enough to try others. He did not think it was desirable to abandon the principles we had adopted up to the present time. He could not see any particular difference between the introduction of an unlimited number of coolies and the introduction of an unlimited number of Chinese. The only difference was that the coolies were English subjects, and in this respect it would be more difficult to deal with them, as the Home Government would be likely to throw more difficulties in the way of our restricting coolie immigration than they would in the case of Chinese.”

There was a good deal of hedging in that statement, but still it was plain enough even to satisfy the hon. gentleman's hon. colleague and to please the electors in Brisbane. Elated with his success in Brisbane, the hon. gentleman then started up north. He had a different audience to deal with there, and he was much more cautious. His views had taken a considerable change, too, as he said:—

“While considering, however, that coolies would not be a desirable addition to the population, if it could be shown that they were necessary to develop any particular interests in certain portions of the colony they might be admitted under proper safeguards; but it was necessary in the first place to determine the conditions under which they should be introduced. It was a matter that must be settled by Parliament. He had the greatest regard for, and intended to conserve the interests of that part of the colony in every possible way.”

Mr. GRIFFITH: What are you reading from?

The PREMIER: The telegram.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The telegram is all wrong. Read the full report.

The PREMIER: The telegram is from the special reporter sent from the *Brisbane Courier*.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The full report is all right; read that.

The PREMIER said he was reading from the report of the special reporter who accompanied the hon. gentleman—

“Others, again, thought that coolie labour should be encouraged in every possible way so as to introduce it in unlimited quantities. He did not agree with the latter. He was one of those who thought it possible to establish in this part of Australia a British colony. They were only as yet beginning, and were merely a handful of people scattered over an enormous territory; but they were still trying to establish a British colony on the principle that every man who was a British subject should have a vote and have equal rights. It was said that a great deal more money would be made with than without black labour; but money was not the only object. At the same time he did not take an extreme view. He had in the past been asked to prohibit the introduction of kanakas, but he had not done so. At the same time he regarded black labour as a thing not in itself desirable—a thing to be allowed if necessary for the development of any interest in any particular portion of the colony, with proper safeguards. *Prima facie* he regarded the introduction of coolies as undesirable, but if necessary with proper safeguards he had no objection to offer to it. Let them first, however, settle the terms on which it was to be introduced, and there they might leave the matter for the present, because it was one which would be settled by Parliament with the greatest regard for conserving the interests of this portion of the colony as well as for developing its resources in every possible way.”

If the hon. member could have really done what he did figuratively—namely, take a look into Ministers' boxes—he would have found that they intended doing just what he foreshadowed. At Thornborough, when speaking on the subject, the hon. gentleman said:—

“It was undesirable that the home authorities should interfere in our affairs, but as coolies appeared to be thought necessary we ought ourselves to settle the terms upon which this class of labour should be introduced; and if we could not agree upon the terms we ought not to have them at all. It would not do to introduce them first and settle the terms afterwards.”

That was a little milder still; but then the hon. gentleman went back to Brisbane again and said that they would not have coolies at any price, and that the question would be the great question of the coming session, forgetting that the Government would have a little to say to that themselves. Then that evening the hon. gentleman intimated that he was going to introduce a Bill to repeal the Coolie Act. That Act simply gave the Government power to regulate and control the introduction of coolies—in fact, it was for the protection of the colony and of its labourers. If it was repealed they could come in in any numbers they liked without regulations, and a regular slave trade could be introduced into Queensland. So far as making the colony like the United States or Demerara, the climate would make him take it as it was. The only alternative the hon. gentleman had suggested to the introduction of coolies was the bringing in of cheap Italians from the south of Europe. He (the Premier) had taken a great deal of credit for his conduct in the matter, and he would be very sorry to see white European labourers engaged in the sugar traffic in the North. Another alternative proposed by a paper called the *Pioneer*, which he believed supported the hon. gentleman, was to send to Europe to get labourers for 5s. a week. They would be cheaper than coolies, and the colony was to be established on that foundation. In the hon. gentleman's objection to coolie labour he had wandered from the question. He seemed to think that the Indian Government ought to have nothing to say in the matter at all; and he had thrown a mist over the regulations altogether. The regulations were very simple. They stated the terms on which the Indian Government, who

were the protectors of their own subjects, would allow them to enter this country, and also the terms on which this Government would allow them to come here. For the hon. gentleman to say that these regulations were a degradation to the colony was absurd. They showed the good feeling of the Indian Government—a feeling for which they ought to receive the greatest credit. What had been the cause of all the odium in connection with the kanaka question—odium raised by hon. gentlemen on the other side, and especially by the junior member for North Brisbane about the way in which kanakas were torn from their homes? The proposed regulations would prevent anything like that. The people would be made to understand the arrangements under which they would be allowed to come to a country where they would know that they would be perfectly well provided for. All odium, therefore, would be taken from the coolie; but it was not the object of the hon. gentleman to take away that odium. He would do nothing in that direction. He would rather try to get missionaries to go and preach to the coolies, and not allow them to come here and work to get an honest living. That was the doctrine of the hon. gentleman. Was that what he called Christianity? The objections of the hon. gentleman were simply absurd. With reference to the announcement that it was intended to construct certain railways, the hon. gentleman did not agree with it because, as he said, there could be only one reason why the lines were not mentioned, and that was that the Government wanted to drive members to support them. But what had the hon. member himself done? Did he not remember how his Ministry was made to act? The present Government had stated in the Opening Speech that they intended to introduce a railway policy, whereas the hon. gentleman's Government not only did not mention any railways that were to be made, but actually deprecated making railways at all. But when hon. members said that would not do, they not only proposed a number of lines, but they made it a *sine quâ non* that hon. members must pass the whole bunch *in globo*. And it was notorious that that band of brothers was kept together by the bunch. The hon. gentleman, in criticising the Speech in the way he had done, showed that he must have forgotten the position he occupied then. The hon. gentleman had also spoken of the shameful conduct of the Government in regard to the pastoral leases. He said that when certain leases fell in the Government ought to have taken the opportunity to increase the rents. That was plainly answered by him (the Premier) last year; and he mentioned then that the hon. gentleman when in power had not raised the rents when leases fell in. No leases had fallen in during the time of the present Government; but they were perfectly prepared to take action when the occasion arose.

Mr. GRIFFITH: A great many leases have fallen in since last session.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had been rather mild in his criticism because the Government did not push on public works more vigorously. He (the Premier) thought that no one who considered the position of the colony could blame the Government for the action it had taken. They had pushed on the works as strenuously as they could; but if they had desired to gain popularity they might, no doubt, have gained a great deal. The fact was that in many cases where they invited tenders they could not get one. The Government work could not be done, simply because there were not labourers in the colony to do it. Railways had been pushed on as fast as possible;

if they had been pushed on much more it would have resulted in keeping back other works. The Government had not lost sight of the desirability of pushing on public works, but they could not go on any faster in the absence of men. With reference to the border extension, he thought the hon. gentleman was mistaken. He (the Premier) had just come down the line, and he might say that they could allow New South Wales to go on ten times faster than it was doing, and then at the end of three years this colony could finish its lines to meet that of New South Wales. The hon. gentleman said that tenders had been invited for the extension from Tenterfield, but that could have only been done a short time ago. The Government had not lost sight of the desirability of meeting New South Wales, and the authorities of that colony knew that the Government was prepared to confer as to the point where the meeting was to take place. To make a line now from Stanthorpe towards the border would be a mistake for a considerable time to come, as there would be no traffic; and he was sure that the House would agree with him that there were other works of more importance now. A great many public works had been delayed from, not only want of labour, but want of material. The hon. gentleman at Cooktown expressed great astonishment that the Government had not sent a dredger there before now; but the hon. gentleman must have known that one of the first things the Government did on getting into office was to set all the available labour at making dredges, and at the same time they had ordered a dredger from home. There was not a dredge available for the purpose at present.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I don't think that would be found in the hon. gentleman's note-book from which he has been quoting.

The PREMIER said it was in the same speech in which the hon. gentleman expressed his surprise that the people had never got that £600,000. If ever the hon. gentleman got into office again he would find himself in a most intricate position; but probably he saw that any prospect of that was a long way off. The hon. gentleman made a number of singular statements during his northern visit. A railway was nothing to him. He would give dredges for their harbour, and make a railway without the slightest hesitation. Then he went down to Herberton, and there he was prepared to swallow two railways, and had he not left when he did he might have swallowed four. The Government were quite alive to the altered position of the colony, and they were quite satisfied that they should go on more extensively than they had done with railways. They were determined at the same time to increase immigration to a great extent, and they hoped to extend the railways during the next few years sufficiently to meet all the requirements of the colony.

Mr. DICKSON said that when he came to the House in the forenoon and heard the Governor tell them that his Government had great pleasure in calling them together again for advice and counsel, he could not help thinking the pleasure of the Government must be all the greater from its having been so long deferred, for they met again after an unprecedentedly long recess. Considering that the lapse of time had been so long, he had hoped that the Opening Speech would have dealt more fully and exactly upon various pressing matters of public importance. The commencement of the Speech seemed to him to be a pleasing fiction, because it was not likely that the Government had any very great pleasure and satisfaction in calling them together, although the recess had been so very protracted. The hearing of that pleasing fiction gave him a certain

mistrust in the sincerity of the Government in the subsequent paragraphs of the Speech. The Premier, in replying to the remarks of the leader of the Opposition, had given very little additional information on the matters referred to in the Speech. The Speech itself, as would be readily admitted by all, could hardly be considered as dealing exactly or clearly with the matters to which it alluded; and the Premier's speech itself was mainly a eulogium of his Government for having passed so useful a measure as the Divisional Boards Act. The hon. gentleman pointed out that the leader of the Opposition had done a great deal to obstruct the passage of that measure; but he would recall to the Premier's recollection that whatever might be the merits of that Act, or whatever benefits had accrued from it to the colony, they were largely attributable to the very excellent amendments introduced into it by the hon. member for North Brisbane. The Premier ought to have shown a little more gratitude by recognising the services of the hon. gentleman, not only with regard to that measure, but to almost every other that had been passed by the present Government, by the amendments which had from time to time been inserted at his instigation. After the two elaborate speeches that had been made, he did not think it would be wise to deal very extensively with the motion before the House. They would, no doubt, gradually learn from the Ministry something more of their policy—their policy would be gradually unfolded as circumstances arose; and if they remained in session long enough to carry through all the measures referred to in the Opening Speech, they would again have to witness considerable variations of the Ministerial policy during that time. It would be well if the Government would take the House into their confidence, and tell them at once which of those measures they wished to carry through. They had a list of no fewer than nineteen Bills, some of them dealing with subjects of very great importance; and from past experience it was easy to foretell that a large proportion of them would not be passed into law unless the session was to be protracted beyond the limits of all previous sessions. Instead of introducing such a large number of Bills it would have been better had the Government issued a less extensive programme so far as related to Bills, and have told them just what business they intended to pass through. The House could then have addressed itself to those particular measures without unnecessary delay. But those Bills did not represent the whole of the Government programme, for various other matters had been referred to in the Speech. To a certain extent the Government were not dealing with the House fairly. They had submitted a clap-trap programme merely for the sake of showing that it was a very large one, without giving any proof of their sincerity in dealing with those matters. The Premier had told them very distinctly that he intended to press forward his Transcontinental Railway, and to stand or fall with it; but he did not tell them in what position his colleague, the Colonial Treasurer, stood with regard to it. It was understood that that hon. gentleman supported the Ministry without approving of their Transcontinental Railway policy; and it would be desirable to learn whether he was or was not at one with the Premier in that policy. It was a matter of great importance, for it would to a certain extent free the House from the apprehension that there was a division in the Cabinet on such a vital question. No doubt the hon. gentleman would take notice of what he was saying, and remove the misconception under which he laboured before the country concerning his views on that matter. He regretted much that the Premier should have nailed his colours

to the mast in connection with that policy, for it was one which the more one looked at it the less attractive it became. He believed that many who voted for the Preliminary Bill dealing with the construction of railways by land grants would, if the measure were brought before them at the present time, vote against it. He had endeavoured to make himself conversant with the construction of railways on that system, and if that measure were to be again discussed he should certainly vote against it, for it was a system which very largely tended towards jobbery. Before committing the colony to a scheme from which there was no possibility of escape without serious loss, they would be acting wisely to defer the initiation of the system. He did not know of a single instance in the colonies where that system had been a success. It had been attempted on a small scale in Tasmania, from Launceston towards the Mersey on the north-west coast. It was certainly a small affair as compared with the Queensland project, but he would read the following facts about it from a local publication:—

"A railway line to Latrobe, near the mouth of the Mersey, was surveyed and partly constructed many years ago: a company undertook to carry it out at an expense of £100,000, the Government giving them 1,000 acres of land on each side of the railway for each mile. Fifteen miles of the road was constructed on the narrow gauge of 3ft. 6in., and two large wooden bridges crossing the Mersey. The company, though it secured about 20,000 acres of land, collapsed. The property was sold, and the works are in a ruinous condition."

That was what had happened under the system in one of the colonies, and he should be glad if any hon. member would point to a similar enterprise in any of the other colonies which had had a more successful issue such as would justify them in entering upon the construction of their railways under that system. It was certainly injudicious on the part of the Premier to persist in his intention of pressing forward the scheme, for unless he very much misjudged the feeling of the country on the subject the vast majority were by no means in favour of it. There was one feature in the question which seemed to have been entirely overlooked, and that was that it would greatly facilitate the introduction into the colony of Asiatic labour. That fact was recognised in the Preliminary Bill, wherein the company were empowered to construct a portion of the line with Asiatic labour. On that ground alone he should deprecate the initiation of a system of constructing railways by land grants, for he had no wish to see it accompanied by the introduction of a large number of Asiatic labourers. The hon. the Premier had vindicated the action of the Government in approving of the construction of a short line to Port Alma by private enterprise, but his remarks were entirely opposed to what was going on in the mother-country and the other colonies. There, instead of private enterprise absorbing the management of railways it was altogether the reverse. The Governments were purchasing several railways held by private proprietors. Of late years there had been a large number of railways at home held by private companies which had been secured by the Government. In Victoria there was certainly a tendency for all railways to be the property of the State; and while he admitted the views of the hon. the Premier on matters of railway construction ought to receive due consideration, yet in a country like this, where they built railways not so much for a large pecuniary return as to encourage settlement and to afford facilities to settlers, he did not see that it would be at all judicious for the State to give up the management and control of their railways, or to desire that private enterprise should supersede railway construction by the State. Private enterprise could not at the present time supply railways as

economically or as beneficially to the community. He thought the hon. member for Rockhampton had put this question of the Port Alma railway very forcibly before the House when he said that it would be the key to the Central Railway. The Speech proceeded to say that—

“The low cost at which railways have been lately constructed, and the increased settlement in the various districts of the colony, will, I think, justify my Ministers in submitting to you during the session proposals for the construction of several lines. Those proposals, however, will be subject to modification should no arrangement be come to by which the grand trunk lines can be constructed by land grants.”

It seemed from this that unless they acceded to the views of the Premier in his Transcontinental policy the settled districts of the colony would be absolutely deprived of railways, no matter to what extent they were demanded by the people. He considered this to be log-rolling of the most objectionable character. He knew the Premier was quite sincere in the paragraph that nothing would be done with the branch lines until the House had arrived at a decision on the Transcontinental question. He regretted to see that old and vicious principle continued and flaunted in their faces as what they were to expect unless they were obedient. There were railways which would be insisted upon in districts where settlement would be promoted thereby, which ought and should not stand over for any negotiations to be concluded between the Premier and the Transcontinental Syndicate, of whom the more they knew the less they desired to know. Now, the Government had taken great credit to themselves for resuming immigration, and they considered it time to enter into it on a larger scale. He regretted that they had been so long in making up their minds to what, in his opinion, was an absolute necessity. And what had the Government done to encourage that which they seemed now so much to desire? In 1878 they passed their Loan Bill for three millions. The only provision for immigration was £100,000. During the last three years, when immigration was particularly lax, our expenditure was something like £50,000 per annum. On the 30th June 1881, according to the Auditor-General's returns, there was only £100,000 available for immigration; and, according to the *Gazette* returns of April, of this sum £84,000 had been spent on immigration to the 31st March in this year. There was a Loan Bill introduced last session, and in that Bill not one single item appeared for immigration, and at the present time the Treasury was actually deficient of funds for carrying on immigration. The idea of resuming it on a larger scale seemed to come upon them unexpectedly and without that evidence of statesmanship or forethought they had a right to expect the Government to show. He should certainly like to see immigration resumed and continued on a much larger scale than before. He was not afraid of this colony being over-peopled or of bringing paupers into the colony, but he should like to see greater inducements offered to immigrants than had been presented to them hitherto for many years past. They had an excellent opportunity of bringing out immigrants, but they must not forget that America held out greater rival attractions; and unless they offered every inducement in their power by having areas of land thrown open for them to settle upon, there was not much probability of their efforts being successful. It was well known that at least 1 per cent. of the entire population of Great Britain were annually emigrants; that number emigrated every year either to the colonies or to America, and it was their bounden duty to see that a fair proportion of them settled down in Queensland. Without imputing any blame to the present or to former

Governments, he might say that they had now an excellent opportunity to endeavour to acclimatise in the north of Queensland some of those yeoman farmers who must seek homes outside of Britain. Undoubtedly the expense of passage money was a grave consideration for immigrants to bear, but the idea of the hon. member for Rockhampton was well worth considering when they came to discuss the matter more fully—namely, a reduction in the passage money. He was fully convinced that there never was a better opportunity for immigration. If they could induce some of the right class of people to come out and settle upon the land it would greatly simplify the question of coloured labour. There would be less talk then about coloured labour, and less necessity for it. On the last day of last session he asked the Colonial Secretary certain questions concerning Indian labour. His questions were:—Has any person been appointed by the Executive Council as Immigration Agent in British India? The answer was “No.” Is it in contemplation to start any such person for India within the next month? The answer was also “No.” Is the person so appointed, or any other person at present engaged in framing regulations in connection with Indian or coolie immigration? “No one has been appointed. A gentleman long resident in India (Mr. O'Rafferty) is drafting some regulations for approval.” If no such appointment has yet been made, will any such appointment be made before next session? “Mr. O'Rafferty may visit India and confer with the Indian Government; but, if so, it will not be at the expense of the Government.” He presumed that had not been carried out; and that whatever action Mr. O'Rafferty had taken had been paid for. The answer he received was that Mr. O'Rafferty's expenses would not be paid by the Government.

The PREMIER: They have not.

Mr. DICKSON said from what he had heard he should have thought his expenses were paid, but he found now that they were not. He trusted that the Government, in dealing with the question, would do so by a Bill, and not by regulations under Executive authority. Hon. members would thus be able to express their opinions better than in speaking to resolutions laid on the table of the House. That would be the straightforward course, and it was to remove obstruction that his hon. friend (Mr. Griffith) had moved that the present obsolete Bill dealing with Indian immigration be repealed. There was a paragraph in the Speech to which he commended the attention of the Treasurer. It was this:—

“The 6 per cent. debentures, issued in 1863, fall due in January, 1884. Provision will require to be made during the present session to meet this liability.”

The provision was simply for £700,000; but, seeing the easy state of the money market, and that the whole of the 6 per cent. debentures would mature in a few years, he should have imagined that the Colonial Treasurer would have been prepared to formulate proposals to convert the 6 per cent. debentures into 4 per cents., or possibly less. He supposed the paragraph was inserted merely for the sake of appearances. He regretted that Parliament had not been summoned earlier, so that the Treasurer might have prepared a measure by which the holders of 6 per cent. stock might have the option of converting it into a longer period stock bearing a reduced rate of interest. There was about £3,600,000 of 6 per cent. stock at present in circulation, and with the easy state of the money market—the long continuance of which no one could foretell—it would be well for the Treasurer to give the matter his attention, so as to save to the colony as much as possible in the shape of annual interest. A matter of much

greater interest than that might have been adverted to in the Speech—the renewal of the bank agreement before it had matured. He was not going to criticise that agreement, but it seemed to have been renewed with extraordinary and unnecessary haste, the motive for which was undiscernible. The explanation given by the Premier of the action of the postal authorities at home, to his (Mr. Dickson's) mind, simply amounted to saying that because the British Post Office would not favour the Torres Straits route and allow the Queensland Government to handicap all correspondents by other routes—as they had done—therefore, in the words of the Speech, the Government had addressed the postal authorities at home in the strongest language, protesting “against the obstructive action and want of consideration for our interests manifested by the authorities there in charge.” The obstructive action and want of consideration was shown by the Ministry in imposing on the home correspondence a tariff much higher than that charged by any other colony, thereby compelling the people to adopt the most dilatory route. He would quote the following from the Postmaster-General's report laid on the table of the House last year:—

“On letters from the United Kingdom to Queensland, *via* Brindisi, the Imperial Office retains 3d. out of every half-ounce letter—out of which the transit rates are paid in both directions—and also retains the whole of the postage on outward newspapers and packets; and on letters from Queensland to the United Kingdom, *via* Brindisi, this colony retains the whole of the postage of 6d. per half-ounce letter, and accounts to the Imperial Office for one-half the postage collected on newspapers and book packets.”

That was what the Premier informed them, but he (Mr. Dickson) would point out that Queensland charged *via* Melbourne-Galle 9d., and *via* Orient line and Naples 8d., and *via* San Francisco 8d. The Premier had not explained why they should pay 8d. *via* San Francisco; but it seemed to him that the tariff was fixed so as to induce correspondents to send their letters as much as possible *via* Torres Straits. The home authorities said they intended to charge 6d., and for that they would send letters by any route without any additional postage; and in so doing they deserved the thanks of the community.

The PREMIER: They will never be allowed to do it while I am here.

Mr. DICKSON said that business letters coming to the southern part of the colony had been handicapped by the additional postage imposed on the English rates, thereby acting unfairly and falsely to the people who posted their letters at home. When correspondents at home paid 6d. they contracted with the Imperial authorities to deliver their letters at that price, and any postage in addition to that was a breach of agreement with the authorities at home. Even if they did not gain pecuniarily *via* Melbourne and Galle, if they gave increased facilities that of itself should be sufficient. He observed that one, if not more, of the other colonies had entered into an agreement with Victoria by which a sixpenny rate was adhered to by all routes; and if the Queensland postal authorities had opened up correspondence with Victoria the additional impost of 2d. would probably have been removed or modified. The way the Torres Straits service had been favoured had caused much heartburning, because it had been regarded as being subsidised by the State and then patronised by having the postal matter compulsorily sent by that route. If they simply wished to popularise the service at the expense of time, which was one of the chief ingredients of a service, they would place the colony at a great disadvantage, not only through the postal

matter being loaded with an additional tariff, but also through letters, unless specially addressed by the quickest route, being detained for weeks to go by the Torres Straits route. Therefore, in an age of rapidity like the present, letters should be sent by the first opportunity, regardless of route. The 10th clause of the Postage Act of 1871 expressly stated:—

“Every letter, packet, and newspaper received by post from any place outside of Queensland shall be transmitted and delivered free of charge within Queensland, except as hereinafter mentioned and except in cases where it may be necessary to collect the postage under any arrangement to be made as hereinafter provided, in which case such postage and all other fees or dues, if any, upon such letter, packet, or newspaper shall be collected on or before the delivery thereof respectively.”

The PREMIER: That is the very basis of our contention with the English Government.

Mr. DICKSON said the Government had the power of collecting, and used it. At the same time he considered it a moral wrong to those people who sent posted correspondence in England and paid the fee demanded by the postal authorities there to make the recipient pay an additional fee because it was sent by a different route to that subsidised by the Colonial Government. The way to popularise the service was to allow it to be open to competition with the other lines, so that the British-India Company would feel that unless they delivered letters within something like the same time as the Peninsular and Oriental and Orient services they could no longer maintain their character as a mail service. The Government would then no longer have to deplore the fact that the British-India Company's had not been a successful mail service. The Opposition foresaw all along, whatever might be their views with regard to the policy of subsidising a commercial service, that this company could not come into the same category with the modern fast mail services to the other colonies. So long as the Government insisted upon all correspondence going by the British-India Company there would be no incentive on the part of the company to run their steamers at a higher rate of speed. It was a matter for regret that the Premier had not been as explicit on some other subjects as he had been on that of the Transcontinental project. That scheme would, no doubt, be formulated in the course of the session, and when it came before the House it would give rise to a good deal of discussion. He would conclude by repeating that he for one had changed his views entirely on the subject of the construction of railways on the land-grant principle, and were the Railways Construction Preliminary Bill now before Parliament he should vote against it. In that respect he felt he was not singular, and he believed that the repeal of that Act would be at the present time one of the greatest boons that could be conferred on the colony.

The PREMIER explained that the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) had quite misunderstood his remarks on the subject of the postal service. Everything he had said with regard to what the Government had to pay applied equally to the San Francisco route.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Mr. Archer) said the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) seemed rather inclined to doubt the correctness of the first paragraph in the Speech, referring to the pleasure experienced in calling Parliament together; but the paragraph was correct, although the Opposition did not seem to evince much pleasure. Having been told off to make a few remarks, he felt some regret that there was not a little more liveliness on the part of the Opposition. He had known the time when they would have criticised not only the acts but also the projects of the Government in great style, but

that night they were very tame. In spite of the hon. member's assertion of his disagreement with the Government on the subject of the Transcontinental Railway, it appeared from his soft and mild criticism on other subjects as though the hon. member felt a sort of half-love for the Government. It was a difficult matter to make a speech on a Queen's Speech, especially when, as in the present case, paragraph by paragraph, it seemed to be just exactly to describe what the country wanted, whilst the Opposition had criticised the proposals with mild and bated breath. The hon. member (Mr. Dickson) said there had not been enough immigration, but it was very difficult to say exactly what was enough and what too much. The hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Ferguson) referred to the time, only a few years back, when the Municipality of Rockhampton had to employ 100 men at a time at 3s. a day. Whilst perfectly agreeing that there was not enough labour in the colony now to carry out the necessary works, he would point out that a couple of years ago there was a great deal too much; yet the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) actually charged the Government with want of foresight because they did not, at a time when there was a superabundance of labour, propose measures for continuing the supply of immigration. Was the hon. member above the laws by which ordinary mortals were guided, that he could foresee such a change in so short a time? The Government, as soon as they found out that labour was wanted, took the earliest steps and had introduced lately more immigrants than any other Government had in a similar time for many years past. There had been some talk about holding out inducements. The inducements now held out to immigrants were very high wages and a prospect of earning sufficient money, if steady and sober, to enable them to enter into business or to establish themselves as farmers. But there was always something on the minds of hon. members opposite when they were in opposition, and their idea of inducement then was generally connected with settlement on land. It was, however, in his opinion, a misfortune to a man who was not a farmer to be induced to settle on land. If he could make his living as a tradesman, and in a few years establish himself as a master tradesman, it would be a great injustice and a wrong to settle him on the land. Such a man must entirely change his method of living, and instead of being a skilled labourer would probably become a clothopper. Both the hon. member for Enoggera and the hon. member for North Brisbane had asked what did the colony offer to the farmer? His reply to that was, "More than any other Australian colony did." But whenever the present Government party had attempted to offer rather greater inducements to farmers they had been blocked by the Opposition members. They had tried during several sessions in succession to remove the most objectionable provisions of the Land Act of 1876 relating to the expenditure of money on useless improvements; but they had not been allowed to succeed, simply because the Opposition insisted that they knew better how the farmer should spend his money than he knew himself. If the farmer were allowed to use his own knowledge and judgment in the expenditure of his capital he would probably in a few years become a successful man; but restrictions were placed upon him on the ground that, the land having been given to him cheaply, he must put upon it improvements in a certain way and not according to his own wish. With regard to the question of coolie labour his opinions had already been expressed very freely, and he did not withdraw from those opinions. As, however, the hon. member had said very little on that subject,

he would reserve any further remarks for a future opportunity. With regard to the paragraph referring to Queensland debentures, the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) said he regretted that a larger measure had not been introduced and provision made for a larger loan to redeem these debentures. The simple fact was that a loan could now be floated in London, and the old 6 per cent. debentures might be paid off by an issue at 4 per cent., because, the time of the old debentures having expired, the people could no longer keep them. Assuming that the proposed loan was floated at par, they might say to those people "You can give us your debentures at par"; but how could they go to the other people who had only given £80 or £90 for their debentures, and force them to give them up for £100 debentures bearing 4 per cent., while they were now receiving 6 per cent.? Those people would simply smile and say no; and so long as they could get their 6 per cent. they would not hand them over for a sum that would suit the colony, or for a smaller sum than would suit them. People in England would not be got the better of in money transactions, but would have the terms which the colony had incurred. Those debentures could only be met by any Colonial Treasurer as they fell due. The hon. gentleman, in speaking of the postage rates, seemed to think that it would be an advantage for the Government to have the same postage rate and allow the letters to go by the different lines. He (the Colonial Treasurer) entirely disagreed with the hon. gentleman, as he believed it to be the duty of the Government, as they had entered into an engagement which cost the country a large sum for the establishment of the service, to have a low rate of postage by one route; he believed it to be the duty of the Government to make people engaged in commerce to pay an extrasum for letters going through Melbourne or Sydney, because the extra charge was very small and the cheap service was a benefit to people who corresponded very little with England, and at long intervals. He believed that the mail service had been of immense value to the colony of Queensland. He had always been a supporter and a defender of it, for it had not only brought an immense amount of cargo direct to Queensland ports which would otherwise have come through the southern colonies, but it had been the best immigration service that they could have had, and the best indeed that they ever had been in any of the colonies. No colony, either Victoria, New South Wales, or any other colony of Australasia, had ever had such an exact immigration service as this in every respect. He believed that one great reason why, whenever the service was mentioned, a good deal was said against it was simply that the hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House had not only opposed it but had stonewalled it. They had made up their minds that it should not be, and that, whatever amount of money might be spent in deepening the Brisbane River and other such works, no ocean steamer should ever come up to Brisbane. They opposed it tooth and nail, and the result only showed that their opposition was not an intelligent opposition, such as that of people who sought to improve, but the blind opposition of those who wished to oppose everything which their political opponents proposed. The people of Brisbane had seen the benefit of the service, and only the other day the Mayor of the city entertained the captain of the first of the mail steamers that had come up to the wharf. He (the Colonial Treasurer) was present, and heard what the Mayor said at the banquet, and how he spoke of the service. No one could have spoken in higher terms of the service and the action of the Government than the Mayor of Brisbane. The opposition shown to it in the

House was simply not an intelligent nor a critical opposition, but merely a blind opposition; and in a few years, when they saw larger steamers still coming up to the wharves, they would admit—or if, perhaps, they did not admit they would feel—that in opposing it they had shown a blindness and a want of that forethought for which the hon. member blamed the Government in not introducing immigrants into the colony sooner than they did. There was one more matter which fell from the hon. member for Enoggera to which he would refer. It was contained in the paragraph of the Speech which he would read to the House, and which said:—

“The low cost at which railways have been lately constructed and the increased settlement in the various districts of the colony will, I think, justify my Ministers in submitting to you during the session proposals for the construction of several lines. Those proposals, however, will be subject to modification should no arrangement be come to by which the grand trunk lines can be constructed by land grants.”

Now, the hon. member here seemed to think that he had got the Ministry on the hip. There was nothing, however, in it that any one of the Ministry—or, in fact, anyone who understood it—could have the slightest objection to. There was nothing in it in the way of holding out a bribe to anyone. The hon. member for Enoggera said that here was a threat that if any member did not vote as the Ministry said, or did anything the Ministry did not like, he would be told that he should not have his railway; or, as in other words used by the hon. member for North Brisbane, it was a bribe held out. Now, the thing was perfectly simple. Everyone would admit that, however many railways they would like to see in the colony, only a certain number could be built within a certain limit of time. One reason they could not be built as fast as they would like was that they had not the labour, and another was that there were certain limits to the money they could borrow. He did not mean to say that Queensland could not at any time borrow as much money as she might require, but if large extensions of railways were to be carried on by the Government the money must be spread over the country instead of through the settled districts only. If they were not called upon to borrow money for the extension of lines in the West, then it could all be used for the extension of lines on the coast and in the settled districts. But when the Ministry brought in these schemes they would not know whether the transcontinental railway was going on or not. The scheme would only have been laid before the House and no decision would have been come to upon it. He thought he had touched upon most of the topics mentioned by the hon. member for Enoggera.

Mr. DICKSON: Your own views on the Transcontinental Railway.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that it was for the hon. gentleman to criticise what was brought before him; his (the Colonial Treasurer's) views were expressed in His Excellency's Speech. He had expected that some hon. gentleman opposite would really have criticised the Speech; but there had been nothing of the kind. There had been a few faults found here and there, and a little half-hearted opposition, but nothing more. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickson) had spoken in such a manner as to lead to the belief that he did not desire a counter reply; he spoke with bated breath. He (the Colonial Treasurer) thought he himself had said enough for the present, and he would leave some more fightable man to carry on the debate.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he believed that the hon. gentleman who had just sat down was a

considerable acquisition to the Treasury bench. He did not wish to make any invidious comparisons between the hon. gentleman and the gentleman whom he had replaced; but his opinion was that the Government had suffered no diminution of strength by the change that had been made. At the same time he could not congratulate the hon. gentleman upon the disappointed tone of his speech. He said that he felt rather astonished, or words to that effect, that the attack made had not been characterised by greater vigour, and, he (Mr. Rutledge) thought the hon. gentleman intended to say, also by greater acrimony.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No, no!

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that perhaps the hon. gentleman did not say so—at all events, he would have liked severer criticism. It was impossible to please hon. gentlemen on the other side. If hon. members on the Opposition side attacked them peaceably, they complained that it was not sufficiently vigorous; and if they attacked them with a sufficient amount of acerbity, they were told that they were the worst body in the world, and that as an Opposition they ought to be squelched most unceremoniously. But the Opposition were not there to accommodate themselves to the predilections of hon. gentlemen opposite. When the discussion on the Bill to repeal the Coolie Act came on, no doubt those hon. members would get as much as they wanted; and if that did not finish them off, perhaps they would get their *coup de grâce* on the question of the Transcontinental Railway. He wished to make a few remarks in reply to the head of the Government, whose position entitled him to recognition in that way. That hon. gentleman travelled out of his way most unnecessarily to attack his own colleague, the Minister for Works. If hon. members on the Opposition side had impugned the administration of the Public Works Department in the way the hon. gentleman had done, he (Mr. Rutledge) did not know what bad things they would not have been called. They would have been told that he was the best Minister for Works the colony ever had, and they would have had his excellencies enumerated to such an extent as to show the improbability of any succeeding Minister for Works imitating him. The Premier had made out that the Minister for Works was an incompetent head of a chaotic department; that the Minister had no control over it whatever; that when he issued a ukase it was not attended to, and that he had not sufficient will to see that his orders were obeyed. The Premier also was most unfortunate in his illustration in support of the beneficial results accruing from the example furnished by private enterprise. He had referred to the beneficial results in Victoria. What did they see in Victoria? It was in that colony where the only disastrous railway accidents had taken place for many years, and he did not think there was any desire to imitate them. In addition to that, Mr. Bent, the Minister of Railways, had had a succession of actions by persons injured in those accidents; and such a state of things had existed that lately one of the officials in his evidence stated that when he examined the rolling-stock on the suburban lines his blood ran cold. Those were the sort of results they got from having the opportunity of copying private enterprise. With reference to what had fallen from the Colonial Treasurer as to the mail service, he might say that it seemed to be assumed that that service was a most pronounced success. The hon. gentleman said that the Brisbane merchants could not be convinced that as a cargo service it was not about the most excellent thing of its kind that could possibly be imagined. He (Mr. Rutledge) did not want to depreciate the cargo service to the Northern ports; and if it

was to meet the just demands of those ports, no doubt it was a good service. But he took it that before many months were passed the Brisbane merchants would be able to tell about the results of the cargo service as far as they were concerned. The fact was that the service would diminish by about one-third the trade done with the storekeepers in the Northern ports. They were becoming direct importers; and while they paid cash to the English manufacturers, the Brisbane houses would have to take paper for goods sent to the North; and when those Northern people required accommodation the Brisbane merchants would have to find it. That would be the result as far as the Brisbane merchants were concerned. Reference had been made to immigration, and to the fact that public works had been retarded owing to the scarcity of labourers available. That was a splendid card for the hon. gentleman to play. Did not the hon. gentleman know that he himself brought about that very state of things which enabled him to give out to the country the idea that it was absolutely necessary to supplement the labour already here by labour of a different description altogether? It was said that labourers were so scarce that they could demand what wages they liked, and therefore it was thought necessary to have additional labourers in the shape of coolies. But the Government had themselves to blame. Did they not stop the tide of immigration? Did they not interfere with the natural flow by putting a stop to the arrangements of the previous Government, the results of which were acknowledged to be beneficial at the time? They had done so, and consequently such a state of things now existed that the demand for labour could not be supplied. The Government, taking advantage of this also, cried out about the great prosperity of the colony. If they had allowed immigration to go on in its natural course, the present state of things would not exist. With reference to the question of immigration, he would just draw attention to a matter that he thought ought to be attended to. He had learned from the public prints that most eligible men had been denied passages to the colony because the number of their family had exceeded three. That was a most undesirable state of things. He thought that a man who had four or five sons and two or three daughters was just the kind of immigrant wanted in this colony; and a regulation that prevented him from getting a passage ought to be eliminated.

The PREMIER: You are speaking in the densest ignorance.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he was sorry if he had been misinformed, but that was what he had read in the public Press. He now came to the question of the sugar industry and coolie labour, although he should touch but lightly upon it at present, as the opportunity for more exhaustive discussion would come later on. According to the Speech they were told that—

“Land suitable for sugar cultivation is eagerly sought after, and an immense area has been selected for that purpose in the northern portions of Queensland. These lands were withdrawn from selection last year, and again declared open at an advanced upset price, without effecting any diminution in the rate of selection. The cultivation of sugar land promises a great future for Northern Queensland.”

As a consequence of that extraordinary demand for sugar land, there came the alleged necessity for the introduction of coolie labour. He took the liberty to doubt whether there was really such an amount of genuine desire to obtain sugar lands in the colony. There was a vast amount of speculation going on, and southern capitalists and others believed that there was a good thing to be done in selecting vast areas of fine sugar land in the North, keeping them for a time, and

making a profit out of them that the Government ought to have made. To that extent there was a certain influx of Southern capital; but it was very extraordinary, if there was that wonderful amount of development in connection with the sugar industry, the exportation of sugar should not be larger than 18,000 tons for the whole colony. There was a fallacy underlying all the arguments of the other side on that subject, although many of those who used them were men who sincerely wished well to the country. They advanced the plea of the necessity of cheap labour, because without cheap labour the sugar industry could not be a success in the colony. He would refer to some statistics on the subject, supplied by the hon. member for Mackay (Mr. Black). According to that authority, the total amount of sugar raised in the colony last year was 18,000 tons. The average value per ton was £25, giving a total return of £450,000. The article went on to say that the net value of the sugar, after paying for freight, insurance, commission, storage, and other expenses, was only about £20 a ton. The 4,000 kanakas employed in raising those 18,000 tons of sugar cost at the rate of £15 for every ton of sugar produced, leaving £5 a ton as the margin of profit to cover interest on capital invested and wear and tear of machinery. Then it was stated that the total cost of the 4,000 kanakas was £25 a year each, or £100,000; and that if the same number of white men were employed the cost would be £52 a year each, and £18 more for rations. The conclusion of the paper was that, seeing that the sugar industry was essential to the prosperity of Queensland, it became indispensable that the planters should have a large supply of cheap labour in order that it might be developed. That was the kind of argument used. The sugar industry was protected to begin with. There was a duty on refined sugar imported into the colony of over £6 a ton, and upon raw sugar of £5 a ton; and yet, with all that, the planters wanted to be still further protected to the extent of £10 a ton more in the shape of cheap labour. If those statistics were correct, and if that was the kind of basis on which the sugar industry rested, how was it going to benefit the colony as a whole? If any industry was to be of permanent advantage to the colony after it had passed through its infantile stages of existence, it ought to be robust enough to be self-supporting. If the sugar industry could never be self-supporting without overthrowing some of the fundamental principles of our Constitution, and introducing a state of things contrary to our traditions and instincts, the colony would be better without it than with it. If the Government were to introduce European immigrants—Germans and Italians—men who did not require to be acclimatised, and who were capable of developing into the highest condition of humanity—it would be a step in the right direction. After they had passed three or four years in a servile capacity they would be ready to take their places among the superior classes of the colony, and fitted to be taken up, absorbed into, and amalgamated with our own people. A prosperous community would then, in course of time, be built up. No argument that he had ever heard had been sufficiently strong to convince him that the canefields of the North could not be worked by white labour. That was the true principle on which the sugar industry ought to be based; and the whole system, as it existed in Queensland, was rotten. It was the same condition of things which existed years ago in the West Indies and Demerara—a little local nobility, with their vast army of coloured retainers, and whose large estates enabled them to go home to England to enjoy their wealth and leisure after they had accumulated enormous fortunes. If there was a class

of people who would work the land themselves, they would take their own time for trashing the cane. Men who cultivated their 50 or 100 acres would not take the middle of the day, but the early morning and the cool of the evening, to trash and prepare their cane for the mill. There would be division of labour, a large population settled on the land, and capitalists would realise fortunes in converting their produce into a marketable commodity. That was the true solution of the sugar-growing problem. With regard to the Land question, it was stated in the Speech that "the leases of certain pastoral lands in the colony will shortly expire," and that "as no power is at present in the hands of the Government to deal with these lands, a Bill will be submitted for your consideration." That evidently meant another provision for the welfare of the wealthier sections of the community. While the prosperity of those sections was so jealously guarded by the Government, why did they not bring forward some measure to ameliorate the condition of the free selectors, or to provide means whereby immigrants on their arrival might be able to find and make homes for themselves? The Government had studiously set itself to advance the interests of the classes by which it was kept in power, and as the Ministry almost exclusively represented capital—against which he would not say a word—it became the duty of representatives of people who were not possessed of great wealth to condemn the policy which, session after session, insisted upon advancing the prosperity of those who already had enough and to spare. It was very strange that, whenever measures to benefit those classes were to be brought forward, they were invariably introduced by the Government, while any measure tending to the benefit of the selector was left to the tender mercies of a private member. Reference had been made to the prosperity of the colony. He was very glad to hear the hon. member (Mr. Ferguson) say that he was not going to attribute that prosperity to the administration of the Government, but to causes over which the Government had no control; and it was certain that no credit whatever was due to the Government for the very prosperous state of things that at present prevailed. He thought that they must look carefully at this supposed prosperous state of things. All was not gold that glittered, and there seemed to be a great deal of glitter. A great deal of the appearance of prosperity was, to his mind, not prosperity at all, and there was a time of reaction at hand. How was it that that prosperity was brought about, and such a lot of money knocking about? It was easy enough to be

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that they could all have money if they supported the Government. He found a condition of things which, to his mind, was suggestive of very serious reflection indeed. A great deal had been said about that political institution, the Queensland National Bank, and he found, on reference to the contract entered into between the Government and the Bank under such extraordinary circumstances when they transferred the Government account, that the Queensland National Bank was not supposed to pay interest to the Government on more than £400,000 of the amount deposited. When he turned to the tables prepared last year by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, he found that there was then in the bank—partly in England, and partly in Brisbane—a sum of £1,331,509. The National Bank had that amount of Government money, on £400,000 of which it had to pay interest, or less than one-third of the total deposit with which they were

entrusted. Since those tables were prepared there might have been some reduction from the total for necessary public works, and the balance might not be quite so fat. Now, how was that thing managed? They had to refer to those matters some time ago, and they must do it again, for it was no use hiding them. He found that under the same roof as the bank the business of the Queensland Pastoral Land Mortgage and Investment Company was conducted. The directors of that company were the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, an hon. gentleman who was recently connected with the Government, and the general manager of the Queensland National Bank. He did not require to be gifted with any very great amount of insight to discover how two and two made four. That large balance downstairs, for which they were getting no interest, was taken upstairs, and then how did they find it dealt with? He would not read any names, but would state some facts. He found from the *Trade Protection Circular* that there was a certain squatter in a certain locality who obtained a loan from the Queensland Pastoral Land Mortgage and Investment Company to the extent of £45,000, and any further advance necessary, with interest at 9 per cent., to be reduced 7 per cent. for punctual payment. £45,000 was advanced by the company, and he had not the slightest doubt that the money belonged to the Government. And what security did hon. members suppose was accepted? 43,000 sheep and 100 head of cattle; that was to say, that more than £1 per head was advanced on that number of sheep. The value of the sheep and cattle on that date was, according to the *Courier*, sheep from 10s. to 11s. per head, and cattle £4. A large number of those flocks would consist of various sexes of sheep, so that the average might be put down at 9s. per head. What would be the consequence? Supposing a drought were to come, and, as in the case of New South Wales, only about one-third of some of the flocks were left, where would be the security of the bank then? What would be the value of it, and how was the colony to get hold of its money? They would be told that they must not press the bank, because it would paralyse the whole state of things. It would bring about a crisis, and that if they did not wish to bring about strangulation and paralysis the bank must not be pressed to pay its overdraft. That was what he foresaw, and too much prominence could not be given to the fact. That bank was held in terror by persons who had transactions with it. He did not say that was justified by any bargain between the bank and its customers, but still he said it argued badly for the state of things when there was that feeling. He felt satisfied that unless they shook off this incubus of the bank they would see dark and gloomy days in Queensland yet. With regard to the prosperous state of affairs, it behoved the Government to make as much of it as they could while it lasted, and by-and-bye when they were driven from office—as he was satisfied they would be in the course of time—when they bequeathed to their successors the legacy of mischief and destruction which was apparent, the colony would wake up when too late, and realise the extraordinary way they had allowed themselves to be imposed upon by the present occupants of the Treasury benches.

Mr. McLEAN moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER said that his hon. colleague the Treasurer had had occasion to complain that the debate was becoming dismal, and he thought it was about time to adjourn. After the extraordinary financial nonsense they had just heard—he could not possibly call it slander, on account of its utter absurdity—he thought also it was time to adjourn. The speech of the hon. member

was the most gross financial nonsense he had ever heard, and he hoped he would reflect a long time before he delivered such another.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said, with reference to the words that had fallen from the hon. the Premier, he did not consider himself annihilated at all. He pleaded guilty to the charge of ignorance. It would take a necromancer or conjuror to unearth all the secrets that were locked up in the parlour of that banking institution.

Mr. BLACK said he thought the highest compliment that he could pay to the hon. junior member for Enoggera, after the most extraordinary speech they had heard, was to say that the mantle of the late lamented member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea) had descended on his shoulders. If the hon. member's ignorance of banking matters was only equal to the gross ignorance he had shown in his reference to sugar cultivation, he was certainly a very creditable representative of Enoggera.

Motion for adjournment put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House adjourned at 10 o'clock till 3 o'clock to-day.