

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 1885

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.*Wednesday, 8 July, 1885.*

Messages from His Excellency the Governor.—Questions.—Auditor-General's Report.—Joint Committees.—Sessional Orders.—Formal Motions.—Record of Attendance of Members.—Address in Reply—resumption of debate.

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

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY
THE GOVERNOR.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following messages from His Excellency the Governor :—

No. 1.—Transmitting “A Bill to continue the operation of the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881.”

On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith), the message was ordered to be taken into consideration in committee to-morrow.

No. 2.—Transmitting “A Bill to give relief to persons who, having become entitled to certain rights as members of the Police Force, have, under the Police Act of 1863, ceased to belong to that force, but are still employed in the Police service of the colony.”

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the message was ordered to be taken into consideration in committee to-morrow.

No. 3.—Transmitting “A Bill to provide for the payment of the expenses incurred by Members of the Legislative Assembly in attending Parliament.”

On the motion of the PREMIER, the message was ordered to be taken in consideration in committee to-morrow.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. KATES asked the Colonial Treasurer—

1. Is the Government in possession of any information leading to the identification of the authors of certain letters signed “J.A.F.” “P.B.A.” etc., adversely criticising the financial position of this colony on the eve of floating the last loan?

2. Is it the intention of the Government to reply to these letters, with a view of refuting the charges made against them, and of vindicating the credit of the colony?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) replied—

1. No; but there is reason to believe that they were written by political opponents of the present Government, and not by persons interested in finance.

2. The Agent-General has already taken such steps as, after consideration and consultation with his advisers in London, appeared most expedient.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked the Colonial Secretary—

1. What sum of money (if any) has been paid to Mr. J. F. Buckland, the member representing Bulimba in this House, for services performed in relation to the late Commission, of which Mr. Buckland was a member?

2. If any such payment has been made, from what source have the funds been provided?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. W. Griffith) replied—

1. £150, and actual travelling expenses.

2. From the Consolidated Revenue, and charged to "Unforeseen expenditure" until voted.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: Has the hon. gentleman any objection to tell us the full amount paid to the hon. member for Bulimba; and at the same time, how much has been paid to the other members of the Commission?

The PREMIER: I can give the hon. gentleman a little more information. Mr. Kinnaird Rose received also £450, and his actual travelling expenses; Mr. Milman received £100, and his actual travelling expenses. I cannot say what the actual travelling expenses came to, because they were not paid separately to each member.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Minister for Works—

Will he cause an inquiry to be made as to a reported deviation of the Gympie and Kilkivan line, which, by cutting off Wide Bay Creek, renders a large area of valuable country waterless, and therefore valueless?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) replied—

Inquiries have already been made on the subject, and the papers in regard thereto can be laid on the table of this House if required.

Mr. JORDAN asked the Minister for Works—

When the enlargement of the wharf in South Brisbane will be commenced: whether the exact route of the extension of the South Brisbane branch of the Southern and Western Railway into Melbourne street has been determined; and when the building of this extension is likely to be commenced?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. As soon as the necessary plans, etc., are ready, tenders will be invited.

2. Plans will be submitted for Parliamentary approval during the present session.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.

The SPEAKER said: I have to inform the House that I have received the following letter from the Auditor-General:—

"Audit Department, Queensland,
"Brisbane, 7th July, 1885.

"SIR,

"In compliance with the provisions of the 6th clause of the Savings Bank Act of 1870 (34 Vic. No. 10), I have the honour to report to the Legislative Assembly that the Government debentures and other securities held in trust for the Savings Bank by the President of the Legislative Council, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the Colonial Treasurer, have been duly examined, counted, and audited, on the 1st instant, and that they were found correct.

"The enclosed statement shows how the funds of the Savings Bank were invested on that date.

"W. L. G. DEWE,
"Auditor-General."

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the report and statement enclosed were ordered to be printed.

JOINT COMMITTEES.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received a message from the Legislative Council, stating that the following Sessional Orders had been passed:—

1. That the President, Mr. King, and Mr. Murray-Prior be appointed members of the Joint Library Committee.

2. That the President, Mr. W. Forrest, and Mr. Box be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management of the Refreshment Rooms.

3. That the President, Mr. W. Forrest, and Mr. A. C. Gregory be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings.

4. That the foregoing resolutions be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly by message, requesting that they will be pleased to nominate a like number of members from their body, with a view to give effect to the 5th Joint Standing Order.

The PREMIER said: If there is no objection I will move the nominations of these committees now. This has been the custom in years past. If there is any objection to the motion, I will give notice of it for to-morrow. If there is no objection, I will move—

1. That the following members of the House be appointed members of the Joint Library Committee, namely:—The Hon. the Speaker, Mr. Brookes, and Mr. Norton.

That is the same as last year.

2. That the following members of the House be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management of the Refreshment Rooms, namely:—The Hon. the Speaker, Mr. Aland, and Mr. Black.

Mr. Aland's name being substituted for that of Mr. Macdonald-Paterson.

3. That the following members of the House be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings:—The Hon. the Speaker, Mr. Ferguson, and Mr. Mellor.

Mr. Ferguson's name being substituted for that of Mr. Stevens; and

4. That these appointments be communicated to the Legislative Council by message in the usual form in reply to their message of this day's date.

The SPEAKER: Is there any objection to the motion being put without notice?

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: I think we had better have the usual notice given. I know that in previous years we have always had some consultation with the members nominated to know what their wishes might be in the matter.

The PREMIER: As I have said, if there is any objection notice can be given, but it has been the practice for several sessions to move it without notice. I think myself it is better that notice should be given of the motion, and therefore I will move that the message of the Legislative Council be taken into consideration to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

SESSIONAL ORDERS.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the following motions were agreed to:—

That, unless otherwise ordered, the House will meet for despatch of business at three o'clock p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and at ten o'clock a.m. on Friday, in each week; the sitting on the last-named day to terminate at one p.m.

That on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday in each week Government business take precedence of all other business.

The PREMIER, in moving—

That Standing Order No. 8, relative to business under discussion, and business not disposed of at time of any adjournment of the House for want of a quorum, be suspended, so far as it relates to notices of motion, with a view to giving effect, until otherwise ordered, to the following recommendation of the Standing Orders Committee, adopted by the House on the 22nd December, 1870, namely:—"That remanet motions, instead of

being placed at the bottom of the notice-paper for the following sitting day, shall, with the motions for that day, take precedence in the order of the dates for which they were first given: but that they shall not be permitted to displace motions originally given for the day to which such renamnet motions go over"—

said: I may add that this motion has been carried now for fifteen years running, and it may be desirable that the Standing Orders Committee should consider the advisability of drawing up a Standing Order to give effect to it—considering that Standing Order No. 8 has been abrogated for fifteen years to give effect to this motion.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That it be an Order of the House during the present session that on each Wednesday, when the House is sitting, the Clerk shall read out the titles of all motions for returns agreed to previously by the House and not yet furnished.

Question put and passed.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following motion was agreed to:—

By the PREMIER—

That it be an Order of the House during the present session,—

1. That every motion or Order of the Day for the third reading of a Bill, to which (on the question being put from the Chair, "Whether there is any objection to its being a 'formal' motion or Order of the Day") no objection shall be taken, shall be deemed to be a "formal" motion, or Order of the Day.

2. That, before the ordinary business of each day shall be entered upon, the Speaker shall call over the various notices of motion and Orders of the Day for third reading of Bills: and, on any such motion or Order being called, it shall be competent for the member, otherwise entitled to move it, to have the above question put with reference thereto; and such "formal" motions or Orders of the Day shall be disposed of in the relative order in which they stand on the business paper, taking precedence of all the other motions and Orders of the Day.

3. That no debate shall be allowed on any such "formal" motions or Orders of the Day, or upon the further proceedings following the reading of such Orders; but the House may proceed to division thereupon, without amendment or debate, as in the case of a motion for the first reading of a Bill.

4. That, in consequence of any such "formal" Orders of the Day having been disposed of as aforesaid, it shall not be held that the House has proceeded to the Orders of the Day upon the business paper, so as to exclude thereafter the asking of questions, the presentation of petitions, or the reception of notices of motion.

On the next motion being called,

Mr. MOREHEAD said: I think, having passed this Order, you should now proceed to discover the formal motions, Mr. Speaker. Let us have everything done decently, if possible, and in order.

The SPEAKER: It has always been usual to allow the Government to take such motions as this as formal.

Mr. MOREHEAD: We will do the thing properly this time.

The SPEAKER: I take the opportunity of informing the House that in discovering the formal motions I propose to adopt the same course that was followed with advantage last session. That is, that when a motion is declared formal, and the member who has given notice of it is not in his place at the time, I shall call upon him at a subsequent portion of the evening, or if he should not be in attendance that evening it shall be considered a formal motion on the following day. I shall now proceed to discover the formal motions.

By the PREMIER—

1. That, in compliance with Standing Order 266, a Select Committee be appointed to assist Mr. Speaker in all matters which relate to the printing to be executed by order of the House; and for the purpose of selecting, and arranging for printing, returns and papers presented in pursuance of motions made by members.

2. That such committee consist of the following members, namely:—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Jordan, Mr. Stevens, and Mr. Brookes.

By the PREMIER—

That the Standing Orders Committee for the present Session consist of the following members, namely:—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, Mr. Chubb, Mr. Scott, and the Mover,—with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer upon subjects of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council.

By the PREMIER—

That this House will, to-morrow, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Local Government Act of 1878.

By the PREMIER—

That this House will, to-morrow, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make provision for the Assessment and Payment of Compensation to certain Employers of Pacific Island Labourers who have been returned to their native islands by order of the Governor in Council.

By Mr. BLACK—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return showing land revenue for each of the land districts of the colony, for each year, from 1859 to 1885.

By Mr. STEVENSON—

That there be laid on the table of the House, all Papers connected with the arbitration case in respect to the disputed boundary of the Ghingindi and Waterford Ruus in the Leichhardt district.

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS.

The PREMIER, in moving—

That it be an Order of the House, during the present session, that the Clerk shall, on each day on which the House is appointed to meet for the despatch of business, record the names of all such members as shall be present at the time so appointed, or at any time during which the House shall be sitting on that day—

said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think it necessary to make a long speech in connection with this motion. No valid objection can be offered to recording the attendance of members, even if there were no other object in view than to ascertain what members do attend, as is the practice in the other branch of the Legislature. But the particular reason why this motion is introduced is in connection with the Bill which has been to-day recommended by His Excellency the Governor. Hon. members will remember that last year a Bill was passed in this House by a large majority affirming the principle of payment of the expenses of members of this Chamber, to be calculated upon their daily attendance in Parliament, but it was rejected by the Legislative Council. The Bill that has been recommended by His Excellency to-day is in exactly the same words as that which was rejected by the Legislative Council last year; and in the event of a measure of that kind becoming law during the present session, I think it desirable that a record of attendance should be kept in order that when the measure comes into operation immediate effect could be given to it. The Bill recommended to-day is in the same language as that passed last year, which, it will be remembered, was to commence on the 1st January, 1885. Of course, if that Bill is passed, it will be necessary that there should be some record of attendance of members of this House. That is the special reason why the motion is made. But, even apart from that,

hon. members might very properly support such a motion, because, in any case, it would be useful to have some information as to the attendance of members from day to day. I do not think it necessary to say more at present, beyond this, that the only practical way of recording the attendance of hon. members is to make it the duty of the officers of the House, as is done in the other branch of the Legislature.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: As I took exception to this motion going as a formal one, I think I may be pardoned if I claim the right to make a few remarks on the Premier's speech. He has told us—what we all suspected—that the real reason for recording the attendance of hon. members is in connection with a measure which we have not yet been asked to consider. He has further told us that this record is to be taken in order to ascertain the amount of emolument to be given to each individual member if that Bill, which is not yet passed, ever comes into force; and he has also stated that the payment of members will date back from the commencement of last session. How can a record of attendance last session be made now?

The PREMIER: From the 1st January, 1885, I said.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I am wrong here; I thought the hon. member intended it to apply to last year. What I want to know is—is an hon. member who comes into the House, and after putting in an appearance clears out for the rest of the night, to have the same amount of emolument as men who sit here hour after hour and night after night? I know members on the other side who only come for a few minutes and then leave the House. If there is to be payment of members, let it be on the scale of services performed, not on the system proposed by the hon. gentleman. Under that system one of the hon. gentleman's supporters might say to the Clerk, "You see I am here; get me my two guineas in the morning; let there be no mistake about that. It is a matter of much importance to me. I have some debts to meet at the end of the week;" or "the bailiffs are in my house, and I must get a certificate from you that I have attended before I can get them out." Members should be paid for services performed, and not because they are mere voting machines whose duty is to keep the present Ministry in power, and nothing else. These sops are thrown out to benefit no one but those who sit on the Treasury benches. It is monstrous if the Payment of Members Bill is to be framed on such a basis, and I think I have done well to call attention to it now, at the present stage. I say it is monstrous to pay members because they choose to come here and sit silent and somnolent—I will use no stronger language—but who, at any rate, do nothing but keep warm the cushions they sit upon with, in many cases, their heavy carcasses—it is monstrous if such men are to receive the wages of members who labour hard in the field. I object, therefore, to this record being made on the grounds set forth by the Premier. Of course there is no use going to a division on the motion, nor do I intend to do so; but I think the hon. gentleman should have told the House what his intentions were when he put it on the business paper, instead of attempting to pass it as a formal motion.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved—

That it be an instruction to the Standing Orders Committee to prepare Standing Orders for the purpose of ascertaining and recording the daily attendance of members of this House.

Question put and passed.

ADDRESS IN REPLY—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

On the Order of the Day being read for the resumption of the adjourned debate on Mr. Annear's motion, "That the Address in Reply to the Opening Speech of His Excellency the Governor, as read by the Clerk, be now adopted by the House,"

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Before resuming the debate, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words with reference to my object in moving the adjournment of the debate last night. I do so because I think it is not a good practice to establish in this House to adjourn early on the first day of the session, when probably the debate could be finished on that day, more especially in a case like the present, when there is so little debatable matter on hand. My object in moving the adjournment of the debate was because a great many members on this side of the House were suffering from bad colds. The leader of the Opposition himself, I believe, was scarcely well enough to attend the opening of Parliament, and I myself was suffering, and am still; so that in moving the adjournment I was simply the mouthpiece of several hon. members on this side. I make this statement in the hope that it will not be established as a precedent, especially as this is the second session in which it has been done. In reply to what the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government said last night in commencing his reply to the leader of the Opposition, that that hon. gentleman had simply made a re-hash of a great many speeches he had made in this House on the Land Bill and the Loan Bill—that he had said nothing new, and that what was really new was inaccurate—does the hon. gentleman not know that he himself has frequently made use of those very words, word for word? He has actually committed the same fault, if fault it is, with which he charges the leader of the Opposition. It may perhaps be only by way of a preliminary canter on the opening of Parliament, nevertheless I think he should refrain from such remarks as much as possible. I must say that my task is extremely easy this evening in replying to the hon. gentleman, and also in making whatever criticisms I have to make upon the matters contained in His Excellency's Speech. I think the Speech is a very weak speech indeed. Of course it is usual for members of the Opposition to say so, but I say it thoroughly believing it. There is scarcely anything in the Speech which is really debatable. Even the Bills mentioned in it we know nothing at all about. We are simply told their names and no more. As to what fell from the hon. gentleman, I think that will deserve a little more consideration than the matter contained in the Speech. He took objection to a statement made by my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition, which I think was made in error, about speeches having been made by the hon. gentleman on former occasions in which it was stated that, if he were allowed to have the reins of power, in a year or two he would make laws which no Government could alter afterwards. That was not what was said. The leader of the Government has stated what he said exactly. He said he would make laws which would prevent any future Government introducing a railway scheme on the land-grant system, and he believes now that he has done so. But how has he done it, Mr. Speaker? I will show the House, and in showing the House I hope I shall show the country, how he has done it. Up to last year we had on our Statute-book laws by which the lands of the colony were alienated and leased—I refer to the Land Acts of 1869 and 1876. By

those Acts the pastoral lands in any portion of the colony, east, west, north, or south, either in the settled or unsettled districts, could be resumed by the Government, without payment of one farthing of compensation, upon giving six months' notice to the pastoral tenant, which I think hon. members generally will admit to have been a very useful provision; because otherwise the functions of the Government could not have been very well carried out in the interests of the people if they were debarred from resuming land for public purposes. No matter what purpose land was required for, if it was a public purpose the land could be resumed from the pastoral tenant. Now what has the hon. gentleman done? In his anxiety to carry out his ideas in this matter he has actually placed the colony in such a position that no future Government, no matter how strong it may be, no matter if it represents every single individual in the colony, can deal with the lands. The lands are now as much taken away from the possession and control of the people of the colony as if they were actually given to the squatters of the West. That is the condition in which he has placed the country. By the Act which he has passed he has given certain squatters a fifteen years' lease—an indefeasible lease, one which cannot be touched by the Government, one under which the land cannot be resumed. At the end of the lease the squatter can demand payment for every penny of improvements he has made on the land; and the improvements on that land will, I am positive, be so great that no Government will dare to take the lands from the tenant. His lease will therefore come to be a perpetual lease, such as exists in many parts of the old country. The squatters will have a life interest in the land as much as many members of the English aristocracy have in the lands which they hold by entail. These are the means the hon. gentleman has adopted to prevent us building railways on the land-grant principle should an emergency arise when we may not be able to go into the home money market to borrow money for public works, an emergency which does not seem improbable judging from the present state of the political horizon. It may be that the whole public works of the colony may be stopped through our being prevented from borrowing in the English money market, as no Government will be able to introduce private capital for the purpose of making railways by giving them the material which we have in such plenty, as could have been done up to last year. This is what the hon. gentleman has done, and he has done it, I am positively certain, from purely party motives. He certainly does not understand the subject as he ought to do—as the leader of a great party such as he represents ought to do. He understands it no more than the merest tyro who has just begun to study the land question. He has gone about the country making speeches—I have read his speeches lately—lamenting that Irishmen cannot see the iniquity of giving away the public lands to companies to build our railways, because they are the unfortunate victims of the landlord system which prevails in Ireland. The system that prevails in Ireland the hon. gentleman does not seem to understand. If, instead of appealing to Irishmen, he had appealed to the example of the United States of America in this matter, he would have been nearer the mark. Now, what are the facts in connection with the land-grant system there? We may put them in a nutshell. During the great Civil War, when the country was almost prostrated from the enormous expenditure which the war necessitated, the land-grant system was introduced for the purpose of connecting the West with the East and preventing any attempt at a dissolution of the union between those two great portions of the

country; and also, at the same time, to bring the South more in connection with the North. The land-grant system was introduced under great difficulties and under many obstructions, and it was a perfect success.

The PREMIER: Oh!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I maintain, in face of the hon. gentleman in this House, that it was a perfect success, and the only objection that has been raised is this: that some companies who obtained grants of land did not build the railways. The objection was not because the railways had been built on the land-grant system, but that some companies, having received grants of land, did not build the railways. It was said that the companies obtained enormous power, but it appears that Congress has actually been able, in spite of the great powers possessed by these companies, to take back every acre of land on which the conditions of the grant have not been fulfilled. Now the American people no longer require the land-grant system—it has served its end; the conditions under which it was begun do not exist now; their railways are all over the country—east, west, north, and south—and it is not necessary to grant land for the building of railways; therefore the people are no longer anxious to encourage building railways by that system, because the country has been populated, chiefly owing to the land-grant companies being such good immigration agents. Now, wherever railways are required, they can be obtained without alienation of land. The action which the Government of this colony has taken will have the effect of preventing the introduction of the land-grant system, which the leader of the Opposition wished to adopt; and this action has been taken by the Premier because he wanted to obtain office. He has obtained office, and with the assistance of his party has destroyed, to a certain extent, the future prospects of the colony. He has placed it in such a position that no Government will probably be able to do what the hon. gentleman at the head of the Opposition wished to do, as he has taken the land entirely away from the control of the people; they will no longer have any control over the land in any respect. Even the halves of the runs that will be taken will be leased for thirty years to similar pastoral tenants under exactly the same conditions—an indefeasible lease and compensation at the end of the term. In New South Wales, with all the experience they have had there of the squatting system, no Government has been strong enough to carry a proposition that compensation should be paid for improvements at the end of the term of the lease. It has been reserved for a Liberal Government in this colony to do it, and thereby to rob the people of their just right of control of their own lands. The hon. member stated last night that he had educated the people up to that point, and also to recognise that coolies were dangerous to the country. I say he has not done so. At the last general election there were only two or three constituencies in the country where the question of land-grant railways and the introduction of coolies for the sugar industry were fully debated, and in those constituencies the advocates of the system carried the day. The hon. gentleman knows that as well as I do, and he also knows the constituencies as well as I do. If, instead of making the misrepresentations he made about both the coolies and the land-grant system, he had told the people he was going to alienate the land for ever and introduce cheap Germans instead of coolies, I am certain the result would have been very different from what it was. Now, the hon. member takes exception to the manner in which the leader of the Opposition

criticised the placing of the loan on the London market. It was the only time he was warm during the whole of his speech last night; I was nearly frozen listening to him. Generally speaking, when the hon. member gets on his feet he says something to excite people, and the excitement keeps them warm, but I must say that last night I was extremely cool. The only time the hon. gentleman got warm at all was when he was addressing some imaginary conspirators. Now, I do not think there is any need to imagine a conspiracy by political opponents of the Government to account for the partial failure of the loan. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer himself said quite enough to account for that. I know he took exception to the words used by the leader of the Opposition, but I will read the exact words used by himself as reported in *Hansard*. Of course I am not certain they are his exact words, but they are the words he is reported to have used. Those words are quite sufficient to damage our credit in the London market without supposing that any political opponents were conspiring against the colony. I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that any political opponents tried to damage the credit of Queensland; I believe all the letters were written by persons who simply wanted to make money out of the loan, and took the means they thought best for the purpose. If I am not very much mistaken, more serious things were said by several newspapers in this colony than by all the English newspaper writers alluded to by the hon. gentleman last night. If he had read them perhaps he would not have been so warm on the subject. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer, in introducing the Loan Bill, said that we were in the position of a man who was entering upon business and trying to force his way along as best he could; more especially by gaining the good graces of those who had lent him money. Then he went on to tell us that there had been a very severe drought, which had affected the pastoral and agricultural interests very much; that he was happy to say the drought was passing away and that its effects were ceasing; but that enough still remained to create a feeling of financial difficulty. Now, I shall just read what he said on that subject, and I will leave it to any hon. member to come to what conclusion he likes. The conclusion I have come to is that he said quite enough to give those men who wanted a cheap investment an opportunity of damaging the colony. The passage is in vol. 44 of *Hansard*, page 1874—

"To relieve this feeling"—

That is, the apprehension of financial pressure—

"To relieve this feeling is, I contend, among the functions of sound administration, and if any such feeling should have found admission into the guidance of our large financial institutions, Government should now by bold vigorous action speedily extirpate such nervousness, and restore full confidence in the soundness and elasticity of our great industries, while suffering recovery from a natural temporary depression."

Then he goes on to enumerate the works upon which this loan is to be expended—railways, waterworks, harbour improvements, and so forth; then he adds:—

"And I have yet further to add that, as with the impetus to grazing settlement which is afforded under the new Land Bill the financial institutions of the colony may, in all probability, be largely applied to for pecuniary assistance, with which the present condition of pastoral enterprise might interfere, the maintenance by the Government of considerable balances of funds within the colony may enable these requirements to obtain fuller and more favourable attention than they would otherwise receive, especially were money to become stringent."

Now, sir, is not that the substance of what the leader of the Opposition said last night?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is exactly the substance. Money was to be borrowed and placed in the banks to assist the industries of the colony just recovering from a general depression. If those words were quoted in the London financial Press, is it any wonder that we should lose £63,000 in floating the loan? The only blame attaching to the hon. member is for indiscretion. I shall not warm over it, as the hon. the Premier did last night over the imaginary conspirators. The only conspirator was the hon. gentleman himself, but I am sure he did not intend to conspire, and so the offence is condonable. Nevertheless, it is to him alone, and to no one else, that the partial failure of the loan can be attributed. Can we wonder that, after seeing words like those quoted and commented upon in the London Press, the people of England should examine our position very closely indeed? We have not nearly the population of some of the second-rate and third-rate cities of Great Britain, and yet we owe an immense debt; and it is no wonder that people who do not know our resources as well as we do should begin to consider, when they see these things in print, whether the colony of Queensland is really in such a state of financial stability as to warrant them in giving the price demanded for her securities. I think myself that we have been very fortunate in being able to get the money, and that the success we had was not due to our resources being known, but to the depressed condition of trade in England during the last few years, which has made money plentiful and cheap. The very same thing is making money cheap and plentiful in the city of Brisbane, which the hon. gentleman denied last night. The whole colony is at rest; the sugar industry and the pastoral industry and the timber industry, and every other industry in the colony except mining, are at rest. Therefore, money is plentiful and cheap in Brisbane, and money is plentiful and cheap in England for a similar reason, and we get our loans easily upon good terms when we ask. But let a different state of things arise, then the Government or the succeeding Governments will find it will be more difficult to get money—quite as difficult as it was five years ago, and perhaps more so because our debt will be so much larger in proportion to our population. I will say a few words, Mr. Speaker, upon one or two paragraphs in the Speech. The second paragraph relates to some communication with the Governments of the other colonies, upon the important subject of an adequate naval force in Australian waters. I should have liked to get some information upon that subject from the hon. gentleman last night, because I think it is a very important one. We have been very properly lately doing all we can to raise a martial spirit all over Australia; but I think that that is not the most important part of our defence. The most important part of our defence, in my opinion, must be upon the sea. I do not think it should consist of colonial ships. I merely give my opinion for what it is worth; but I think we ought to depend upon the Imperial naval force, and if we depend upon it I believe that we shall be well defended; but we shall have to bear a fair share of the expense. I do not know what system the Government are contemplating, but I think if they intend to increase our naval defences by buying more paltry vessels called gunboats they will make a very serious mistake. The only defence of that kind which we should have should be mere despatch boats and plenty of torpedoes; and depend upon the Imperial Navy for the rest and we shall be upon the right side. In regard to the Soudan affair, it has been spoken of a great deal too much lately, I think. A great deal more was made of it than was necessary. I

do not believe myself that all the offers of volunteering made in the different colonies arose out of pure loyalty to the British Empire: but I think more than half was due to the unfortunate death of General Gordon, which excited the people, probably, to an unchristian feeling of revenge. I think that that was the great cause of the loyalty which was displayed, and I feel certain that if the same thing were to occur again there would not be such a great display. I know in New South Wales it took a great deal to keep up the spirit of loyalty for one month after the departure of the Contingent; it cooled down very rapidly. The strongest supporters of it—that is, outside the Government—were never able to get up such an amount of enthusiasm as they did at first. That, I think, was chiefly owing to the people beginning to reflect upon the unchristian idea of sending men to Africa to avenge the death of General Gordon. I do not disapprove of the expedition; I merely give my opinion as to what would be the result upon a future occasion. I do not think there will be another General Gordon to be killed; such men do not rise every century. The hon. gentleman expressed great regret last night more than once that something was not said upon this side of the House by the leader of the Opposition about New Guinea. I think, considering that this side of the House did its duty to Queensland and Australia in the first place—what was acknowledged its duty by all the colonies—in annexing New Guinea, enough has been said and done by us to justify our silence at present. All I can say about New Guinea, or about anything appertaining to New Guinea, is that I am extremely glad for one that the gentleman who, by his unstatesmanlike conduct and his want of capacity and perception, deprived Australia of New Guinea, has no longer power to do harm. I am extremely glad of that. There is one little Bill which the hon. gentleman has given notice of. That is a Bill to give additional representation to certain portions of the colony. This should have been done two years ago. When the late Government was expiring, the leader of that Government offered to introduce a Bill, if the leader of the then Opposition did not object, without debate, to give additional representation required by four electorates, which were admittedly very much under-represented. The leader of the Opposition rejected that offer, but stated, in reply, that it would be the first duty of the new Government to bring in such a measure. But the new Government has been in power for more than eighteen months—between eighteen months and two years—and it is only now that a Bill is to be introduced. I can scarcely give the hon. gentleman credit for good intentions in regard to this Bill. Has he not been waiting during the time when this Bill should have been an Act in operation to have the rolls of those electorates “Bulcocked” so as to make certain of the returns being favourable? He knew at the time the offer which I referred to was made that three out of the four electorates had returned members opposed to him, therefore he rejected it, and he has taken nearly two years to consider the matter. I hope I may be mistaken in saying that that two years have been expended in doing what I say. It is quite on the cards anyhow, because we know what some of the hon. gentleman's supporters are capable of doing in that direction. I do not accuse him of anything, but I know that several of his supporters—and he knows it also—are capable of doing anything in the way of manipulating the electoral rolls.

The PREMIER: They will be punished severely if they do.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I hope that in punishing the guilty the hon. gentleman will

not also include the innocent. It is an extremely difficult thing in cases of the kind to distinguish one from the other. It is extremely difficult to pass an Elections Act which will prevent corrupt practices and at the same time not put too much restriction upon the exercise of the franchise. Almost amongst the last of the matters mentioned in the Speech is the supply and conservation of water. Really that should be the first; it is a most important work. We are suffering from a drought; the revenue suffers from the drought, and the greatest industry suffers from it. In fact every industry suffers from it. Yet it is left now to the chances of time and opportunity whether it will become an accomplished fact, as the people of the colony desire. I think it is far more important than almost any other matter which precedes it in the Speech, and I shall be very glad to see it amongst the first things accomplished. I have a few words to say also upon the selection of the Commission to inquire into certain alleged malpractices in the Polynesian trade, although I have very little to say about the result. The leader of the Opposition last night took exception to the gentlemen composing that Commission; at least, he took exception to two of them—Mr. Buckland, member for Bulimba, and Mr. Milman, a police magistrate. I do not think any exception was taken to Mr. Rose, who, I believe, is a barrister.

Mr. MOREHEAD: That does not make him any better.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It certainly makes him no better, though it might make him better fitted for the sifting of evidence if he made use of his legal ability. The leader of the Government last night, in defending the appointment of the other two gentlemen, I think made a very unfortunate defence indeed. He said that he looked upon Mr. Buckland as a typical juror.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Yes, who would hang anybody.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: He looked upon Mr. Buckland as a good juror, a man capable of judging facts. I have no objection to Mr. Buckland as a good juror; neither have I any objection to Mr. Milman, whom I do not know; I have no objection to either or both of them as good jurors. But what would be said of a juror who had taken a particularly active part in the very case which he was going to try? A man who had delivered himself frequently, privately and publicly, giving his opinion of facts connected with the case upon which he was about to be called as a juror! Would he not be told at once, when his name was called, “to stand aside”? The hon. Premier knows he would. And has he selected him for that very reason? It seems almost as if he did. I know that if I was going to be tried for any offence I should like, above all things, that the men who were to try me should be men who knew nothing at all about me or my offence—that they should come to my trial with blank consciences.

Mr. BLACK: Perfectly unbiassed.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes, as my hon. friend says, “perfectly unbiassed.” I say, as a juror that man ought never to have been selected, and the hon. gentleman should never have selected him for that reason. I certainly would never have selected him. As to the Polynesian traffic, we are to have a Bill that will put a stop to it or determine its operation. The hon. gentleman says—speaking of what the leader of the Opposition would have done had he been in office, and of course imputing strong motives—that he would not have discovered any irregularities, and if he had discovered them that he would not have

punished them. I do not believe that there was ever a Government in this colony that would not have punished irregularities if they found them out. The hon. member knows very well that the irregularities began about the time he took office.

The PREMIER: They were then found out.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. member knows that it was only then the island of New Guinea was visited by those men, and that there never had been those irregularities before. The traders then went to new islands where the natives did not understand English, and where it was difficult to get an interpreter between them and the Government agents, and he knows that such irregularities as were complained of must always take place under those conditions. I would also ask, was not the hon. gentleman cautioned by some of the people in the office, having the control of the Polynesian traffic, against allowing such people to go near the coast of New Guinea?

The PREMIER: Never!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Well, if not, he ought to have been, because those having the control of the traffic should have known better from their long knowledge of the trade. The hon. gentleman says: "I, at least, have a clear conscience." Well, I think his clear conscience on the subject of the Polynesian labour traffic must come from a very defective memory. Does he recollect, in 1877, when sitting on the same benches as he sits on to-day, though not as a leader of the Government, he was asked by members on this side of the House to put a stop to the traffic altogether. Did he not oppose it?

Mr. STEVENSON: He was offered a similar opportunity only last session.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Was it not his duty then, if he believed in doing away with the traffic, to have adopted that proposition, and stopped the trade entirely, as he is now going to do after the lapse of all those years and the malpractices carried on in the trade during that period? I say his conscience cannot be clear on this point. If any man in this House is guilty of having done anything in regard to allowing that traffic the hon. Premier is as guilty as any man in the House, and it is impossible for him to clear himself in the easy manner he tried last night. I say the whole of the Legislature is guilty if there is anything wrong, and the Premier is at least as guilty as any man who was a member of the Legislature at that time. I should be very glad myself to see an end put to the trade, because I believe myself it cannot be conducted entirely upon Christian principles, as it ought to be conducted. I believe, however, that a great deal of good is done to the Polynesians by bringing them here. They have first of all been taught to work and to pray. In being taught to work they have been taught the value of labour, and that must tend to good, but I suppose that is counterbalanced in some way by the evils they have been taught. I think a great many of those men sent back by the hon. gentleman had no desire to go back—so far as I could see from the newspapers, and of course I know nothing of it but what appeared in the newspapers. From what I saw I came to the conclusion that many of those men were unwilling to go back, and were perfectly satisfied with their position—although they had made a mistake in coming for "three moons" instead of for "three yams"—the expressions, I believe, for months and years in the islands—they were satisfied to remain the whole term.

The PREMIER: They remained—those who wished to.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: That is not so.

The PREMIER: It is so.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: If so, I am very glad to hear it, but the information supplied by the Press led me to think differently. I now come to deal with the administration during the recess, and which was criticised last night. I certainly thought it very strange when I saw the report in connection with the Treasurer and the Customs overtime arrangements. Indeed, I thought the hon. gentleman was made of a little sterner stuff. There seems to be no doubt that he thought he was right in making the regulations he did, and when he thought so he should have stood by them. He should have considered the matter thoroughly before he made the regulations; but, once having made them, and finding that they were the correct regulations under which the system should be carried out, he should have stood by them in spite of any deputations. It seems that the Government are to be ruled by deputations. The hon. Minister for Lands made the next list of regulations.

Mr. MOREHEAD: And ran away too.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: And ran away too as soon as he was chased by a deputation. It seems to me that the gentlemen occupying the Treasury benches are rather crude in their notions about what they want. They should first make up their minds as to what they want done, then make regulations to accomplish that, and stand by their regulations when they are made. But the action of the Colonial Treasurer and the Minister for Lands is not government at all, and should not be allowed. As for the Minister for Works, he has done something which, I hope in the history of the Works Department, will not be done again. I do not now allude to his imperfect and crude regulations in regard to the cattle traffic, which my hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, last night exposed quite enough, but I allude to the matter of the contract for the Stanthorpe Railway. I recollect when I was in office, if my memory does not betray me, the Engineer's estimate for that line at that time, four years ago. Considering that labour is paid higher now than it was then, both here and in New South Wales, and also that the material for making railways is not more plentiful now than it was then—in fact, timber is a little scarcer—and the fact also that he, as Minister for Works, invited tenders from all the other colonies, and that a great many tenders—I forget the number—came from the different colonies as well as from Queensland, he behaved in a strange way, as he rejected them, and then went about in a huckstering kind of way to get someone else to take up the contract at a smaller figure, nearer to the Engineer's estimate. If he was not satisfied with the tenders, what he should have done was to call for tenders again.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Call for tenders again and again. It has been done before. In the case of the Bundaberg railway, tenders were called for three times at the instance of the Engineer, because the tenders were all so very much above his estimate. But I do not take his estimate as being the correct one. I am quite certain that it was not correct, and that he is not as capable of judging what the work can be done for as the contractors themselves, who manipulate the work and the men. The hon. gentleman is under the impression that he has saved £5,000 because he has got Mr. Bashford to take £5,000 off his contract; but I venture to say that if he should remain in office another two

years that £5,000 will cost the country £50,000, because he has placed the Government entirely in the hands of Queensland contractors only. He thought he was surrounded with a ring of contractors, but I can tell him that it is impossible for there to be a ring of contractors where there were so many. It is very easy to have a ring where you are restricted to only three or four contractors, but when you have as many as a dozen tenderers it is impossible to have a ring. What has the hon. gentleman done? He has driven the outside contractors away from Queensland—they will not come here again—and has left himself entirely in the hands of two or three firms, at the very outside, in Queensland.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Bashford was the lowest tenderer.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: They can manipulate the tenders. It has been done, I can tell him, since he has been in office. They can manipulate the tenders as they think fit, and instead of £5,000 being saved by keeping foreign tenderers—if I may call them so—out of the colony, fully £50,000 will be lost. It does not matter whether Bashford was the lowest tenderer or not. These men are dissatisfied with the manner in which the contract was given. It is the principle that is wrong, and the hon. gentleman had no right, as Minister for Works, to descend to such huckstering as he has done. I have no doubt the hon. gentleman thought he was doing what was right, but it is part of the crude administration we have had during the recess, and part of the want of ability displayed by hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches. While upon this question, there is another matter I wish to refer to. Last year, during the debate on the Address in Reply, the same as is now proceeding, the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government admitted to me—to the House, in fact, in reply to me, that the condition—I think it is 40 or 41 in the general conditions for contracts for railways—was inequitable, was unjust, and should be altered. And how has he altered it? He himself was the framer of the condition. I do not know whether he is the framer of the alteration or not, but he was the framer of the condition, and it was framed so that a contractor had no possible chance of getting justice. He could not go to law; he must take the Engineer-in-Chief's decision as final. Right or wrong, he was to be the victim. Now, what is the alteration? He has given the contractor the option of accepting the Engineer-in-Chief's decision as final, or taking the matter to arbitration; but what sort of arbitration?—something like the selection of a juryman who knows all about the case, and has already formed his opinion upon it. The Government is to select two arbitrators and the contractor one, and the decision of the majority is to be final. I say that is one of the most iniquitous things I ever heard of.

The PREMIER: Why did the contractors ask for it?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I do not believe they asked for it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They did.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: They asked for arbitration the same as they did in New South Wales, and they got arbitration there—fair arbitration, one arbitrator being appointed by the Government and one by the contractor.

The PREMIER: Our condition is the same as in Victoria.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: No.

The PREMIER: It is.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: It is not.

The PREMIER: It is, though.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: There are people in this House who know more about contracting in Victoria than the hon. gentleman. A contractor who would ask to be weighted two to one against himself would certainly be an intolerable ass. I did not intend to say very much, Mr. Speaker, when I got on my legs, but I have a word or two to say with respect to a Bill which I see put down as one of the innocents which I hope will be slaughtered at the end of the session—"A Bill to amend the laws relating to the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors by Retail, and to provide for the exercise of Local Option." I hope, sir, that any measure containing provisions for the exercise of local option will, after the experience of the working of that system in New South Wales, never be passed by this House. In fact, it is almost a dead-letter there. Out of the large body of people who have the power of determining whether a house should be licensed or not, only about 1 per cent. take the trouble to vote. In fact, the matter is left in the hands of a few persons, the great body of moderate people on both sides refraining entirely from voting. I am not going to discuss the Local Option Bill now, but I hope that in the measure referred to the local option part of it will be struck out, which may be easily done without the loss of the Bill, because, I dare say, some amendment in the present law is required, but I do not think it is required in the direction of local option. With these few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I shall sit down. I hope I have not detained the House too long or offended hon. gentlemen opposite.

The PREMIER: Not a bit.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sure the House has listened with pleased attention to the eloquent speech of the hon. gentleman who has just sat down, as it always does; but I feel equally convinced, sir, that hon. members will not be led away by the sophistry of his arguments. I must confess that while the hon. gentleman was speaking it appeared to me that he was endeavouring to make the best of a very thin case, and that both the hon. the leader of the Opposition and that hon. gentleman showed by the manner in which they criticised the Speech which has been placed before Parliament that there are no very serious demerits in that Speech, nor have they any very serious faults in administration to lay at the door of the Ministry. Why, sir, we were apprised by a certain portion of the Press in this colony that we were to be overwhelmed with charges of the most serious character—that it was possible that on the very first day the House met the Ministry could not sustain the heavy amount of charges which were to be laid at their door. I am sure hon. members must admit that up to the present time the accusations which have been made against the Government are of a very trivial character—of so trivial a character that really they do not stand in need of any rebuttal. And, so far as anything of that kind is needed, the speech of my hon. colleague, the Premier, has been quite sufficient to vindicate the action of the Government—their administration during the recess, and the policy which they have now placed before the House. Really it is more in courtesy to the hon. gentleman who has just spoken that I rise to make a few remarks, than with any desire, or with any necessity, to vindicate the action of the Government in any of those matters that have been commented upon. There are certainly a few subjects that I may more fully go into, such as the floating of the loan, that being in my department; but generally I shall pass over very slightly what has been alluded to by the hon. member for Townsville. That hon. gentleman

is generally very emphatic in his remarks. He sometimes employs the force of a five-ton steam hammer to drive home a carpet tack. He has not done so on this occasion. Still he has shown a good deal of warmth in commenting upon some of the actions of the Government, and has placed before the House some remarks of mine in connection with the Loan Estimates which, I think, deserve to be explained fully both to the House and to the country. Before proceeding to that portion of the hon. gentleman's remarks, I must take exception to his statement with regard to our defences. The hon. gentleman thinks that our naval defences ought to be conducted solely by the Imperial Government. I must say I do not share that opinion. I think that if we have anything to protect, if we consider the land we live in worth protecting, it is our duty to do our share in aiding the Imperial Government to protect us. I take this opportunity of saying that the defences of the colony have been a matter of very grave consideration to the Cabinet during the recess; and I am sure that the action taken by my hon. friend the Premier—action forced upon him by the grave situation in which the colonies were placed—commends itself to the general approval of the colony. Although it has been attended with a considerable amount of expenditure, still I think the Premier has clearly shown that he was prepared to face the gravest consequences in the event of a possible rupture of the peace of Great Britain. I hold that in arranging our naval defences particularly we must be guided by the advice of men like Admiral Tryon and other commanders of the Imperial Navy, and that we should endeavour as far as possible to assist the Imperial authorities by the formation of local navies of our own, so that whenever it should become necessary we may be able to act in concert with the Imperial squadrons on the coast.

Mr. NORTON: But one of our gunboats is to be engaged in surveying work.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That was arranged before there was any apprehension of a rupture between Great Britain and Russia; and until that matter assumed its present more peaceful character, the "Paluma" has remained here ready at any moment to resume her proper armament and act under the orders of the Admiral on the Australian station. She proceeds to-day with the survey of the coast, but her preparations for that work would certainly have been interrupted in the event of any fresh apprehensions of war. My contention is in opposition to the statement of the hon. member for Townsville, that the colonies ought to possess embryo squadrons of their own, which they could place under the command of the Imperial Admiral on the coast, in the event of our shores being threatened by a hostile force. With regard to the position of the coloured labour question, I think a great deal of the shame that has been attached to the traffic, and a great many things that have come to light lately, have arisen through the unfortunate action taken by the hon. member for Mulgrave, when Premier, in that filibustering attempt to annex the island of New Guinea. There is no doubt that his annexation of New Guinea was the laughing-stock of all thinking men in Great Britain. It was an ill-advised step, and it has led to this consequence: that recruiting agents have with avidity seized the opportunity of proceeding to fresh fields for recruiting purposes. More abuses have crept in, chiefly in connection with the New Guinea trade; and I believe that if he had never attempted an act which he had no legal right to do, and which has led to several complications between Great Britain and other

European countries—if he had not attempted to annex New Guinea, at that time the recruiting agents would not have proceeded thither for the purpose of obtaining a supply of labour which they thought was illimitable.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: It was the only way to prevent them doing it, as you would see if you were to read the Polynesian Labourers Act.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I say the attempt to annex New Guinea was an encouragement to recruiting agents to proceed to that island for a supply of labour—an island where they had not hitherto gone for that purpose. The hon. member for Townsville—and more particularly the hon. member for Mulgrave—in referring to the condition of the colony, took exception to the statement of the hon. member for Moreton, in seconding the Address in Reply, wherein he expressed his opinion that the colony was in a prosperous condition. I do not think it can be truly urged that the colony is not prosperous.

Mr. NORTON: Oh!

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I say I do not think it can be truly urged that the colony is not prosperous. It contains within itself all the germs and elements of great prosperity, and the development of that prosperity is retarded, not by any maladministration of the Government, but by the unfortunate inclemency of the seasons. I believe that if we had been visited by ordinary seasons the present year would have shown a very large increase indeed upon the satisfactory results which up to the 30th June have been exhibited. If we look at our revenue returns for the last twelve months, during a period of unprecedented drought, and see that that revenue has been obtained by no abnormal means, such as the forced sale of land, but chiefly from taxation and the consumption of dutiable articles—I say, when we consider that we have raised a revenue of nearly £3,000,000 sterling from a population of 300,000—and compare it with the revenue raised by all the other colonies—we have every reason to be satisfied with the prosperity and condition of the country. We are in a thoroughly sound condition, and our prosperity is being retarded solely through the want of genial seasons to give that encouragement to those great national industries upon which the permanent prosperity of the colony so largely depends. Under such seasons as the present is it likely, I would ask hon. members, that our Land Act can have a fair trial? I say that, looking at the season we have passed through, which has been one of unparalleled severity, it is a wonderful thing that settlement in any shape upon the lands of the colony takes place at the present time. But I am convinced that such settlement is only being delayed. Sooner or later it will take place; sooner or later we shall have genial seasons. I can agree with the hon. member for Mulgrave this far: that the present season is certainly a time to give anxiety to anyone having to forecast the requirements of the colony for twelve months, but I have no such apprehensions as he has on the subject. I do not croak about the condition of the colony. I am glad to believe that the colony is on the high road to prosperity, and that although its productiveness may be diminished, and possibly the development of its industries retarded, it is only temporary, and is not due to any fault of administration, or to any decrepitude in the resources of the colony itself, but rather to the want of those genial seasons which have hitherto visited the colony. I would ask hon. gentlemen to tell me whether the colony is in a depressed condition? Look at the Savings Bank returns during the last two months, which show a larger increase in the deposits of the

working classes during that period than at any previous time. Then there is the fact that property in the large towns is steadily increasing in value. Are these indications that bad times have fallen upon the colony to any great extent? I would, however, like to see a great deal of that capital which is now lying in the banking institutions of the colony and finding its way into land speculations in Brisbane, finding its way into pastoral and agricultural settlement in the interior; and I have no doubt that it would find its way in that direction if the seasons were genial. People are only waiting for those seasons to make investments which will materially enlarge our national prosperity and wealth. And here I think I may be permitted to take this, the earliest, opportunity of correcting a false impression which exists with regard to the expenditure of the colony during the past twelve months. From the *Gazette* returns it would appear that our expenditure during that period considerably exceeded our revenue, and we have accordingly been accused of very lavish extravagance in not having restricted our expenditure during the past twelve months within reasonable limits. And I am free to admit that the returns published in the *Gazette* gave this handle to those who are disposed to adversely criticise the expenditure of the Government. But the facts of the case are these, as can be easily ascertained by hon. members if they will take the trouble to investigate the quarterly returns in the *Gazette*: It will be in the recollection of hon. members that at the end of the year 1883-4 there was a surplus of £311,000, of which sum £310,000 was specially appropriated to what was called the Surplus Revenue Appropriation Account. It had been the custom of the Treasury under preceding Treasurers to withdraw sums so appropriated, and it would probably have been done in this case had any other Treasurer been in office. That sum of £310,000 would have been withdrawn from the general revenue and placed to a separate account, leaving the revenue denuded, unnecessarily denuded, of that amount of money, and showing only a balance of perhaps a few thousand pounds. I object to that principle for this reason: As a business man I view it in this light: that when the colony makes appropriation of a certain sum of money for a particular purpose, that money should not be withdrawn from the public revenue until it is required for expenditure. To carry out in its entirety the plan advocated by those who hold a different view on the subject, as soon as the Appropriation Bill passes this House the salary of every officer in the Public Service should be withdrawn from the revenue and placed to a special appropriation. In fact it would be like a man accepting a bill, say of four or six months' currency, and immediately he accepted it charging his account with it and withdrawing the amount of the bill from the bank three or four months before it was due. I say the practice is a pernicious one, and I am prepared to take all the responsibility for the new departure made by the department. I am not fortified in this action by the approval of the Auditor-General, of whom I have a very high opinion, but I am fortified in it by the opinion of the Under Secretary for the Treasury, a gentleman of very long experience. I, however, take the whole blame on my shoulders, and am prepared to defend the change. Had this £310,000 been withdrawn from the revenue we would have had a very sorry credit balance indeed. We have, however, not unnecessarily denuded the revenue by withdrawing the money until it was actually required for expenditure. But now, to come to the point I was referring to. The expenditure for last year comprises £131,906

of this £310,000, thereby giving the total expenditure for the year as £2,819,000; whereas the actual expenditure on account of current appropriation was £2,681,947, which is considerably under the current revenue for the year. It is not the case, as has been stated—it may possibly have been unintentionally—that our revenue for the year was far short of the lavish expenditure which was authorised by the Government during the year. I hope I have made this matter clear to hon. members.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: No.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. gentleman is not naturally obtuse, but he can be obtuse when he chooses.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: You have been trying elaborately to prove that you would like to have your pie and eat it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: On the contrary, I am trying to show that we have taken a portion of that pie for our ordinary sustenance, but have left a considerable portion so as not to be in a condition to apprehend anything like starvation. I would point out that the credit balance of the consolidated revenue on the 30th June, 1884, represented £366,301, and that at that time the balance of unexpended surplus revenue appropriation was £231,593, which left an actual balance in the consolidated revenue of £134,708. What was our position on the 30th June last? We have still maintained a good credit balance of £267,000. The unexpended balance of the £310,000 is £100,000, so that our actual credit balance is £167,000 as against £134,000 for the year 1884. So that, while the *Gazette* return would seem to show the expenditure larger than the revenue, that is simply caused by the expenditure of that £310,000. Neither the Revenue returns nor the Savings Bank returns in any way justify the gloomy apprehensions expressed by some hon. gentlemen in this House, especially the hon. member for Mulgrave, who is always imagining that we are on the brink of a precipice, and who seems to take a chronic delight in anticipating a catastrophe, so long as he sits on that side of the House. His chief argument to show that the colony is in a bad way is that there is a superabundance of money in the city of Brisbane. I am free to admit that the colony is in such a position as to justify any reasonable man in criticising thoroughly and minutely its financial position, and when it becomes my duty to make a financial statement I shall be very glad to hear the hon. gentleman's criticism, but I hope his criticism then will be divested of anything which would obscure the true financial position of the colony. The hon. member is rather indiscriminate in his charges. I understood him last night to accuse me of having lost the country £70,000 over the loan. I see in the report of his speech it is £63,000, which reduces the charge by £7,000.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: I said £63,000 last night.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That is only a small thing beside the charge he fulminated against me when he was before his constituents at Bundaberg. He said there that he had left in the Treasury £700,000. He must have left it in some obscure corner of the Treasury, for the most minute microscopical investigation fails to reveal any trace of it. I have no doubt the people at Bundaberg were rejoicing in spirit to think that there was £700,000 knocking about somewhere in the Treasury, so that there was a chance of them or some other constituency getting a little extra bit of railway construction not provided for in the Loan Estimates. We do not want to confound our true position with balances which only exist

in imagination—which are not a real entity. The hon. gentleman may labour under the impression that, by withdrawing money from the Railway Reserves Fund and obtaining authority to borrow a further amount to provide for money already expended, he had obtained £700,000, but that had all been spent. The hon. member knows well that the Treasury returns are strictly correct, and that he could find no trace of the £700,000 he says he left in the Treasury.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: What was the balance in November, 1883? The figures I used at Bundaberg I obtained from the Treasury.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: I have not the figures here, but the balance left by the hon. member was not £700,000. Surely the hon. member does not mean to say that if there was £700,000 in the Treasury in November, he is entitled to credit for that balance, seeing that there was £300,000 to pay on the 31st December following for interest due on that date!

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: The hon. member challenges the statement I made at Bundaberg; I forget what it was now. Before making that statement I communicated officially with the Treasury, and asked what the balance was. If the statement I made at Bundaberg is wrong, it is the fault of the Treasury.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: It appears from the Financial Statement that the balance at the credit of the consolidated revenue on the 31st December was £529,000. What the hon. gentleman said at Bundaberg, as reported in the *Courier* of the 29th May, 1885, was simply this:—

“He had to contend when in power with droughts and deficits, and he never tried to palm that excuse off on the country. When he took office there was a large deficit to cripple his efforts, and an uphill task he had with it, but when he left the Treasury it had a surplus of £700,000, which, by the way, was now getting smaller every day, and at the present rate it would soon be all gone.”

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I got that statement officially from the Treasury.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: We shall have to argue the matter in discussing the Financial Statement. In the meantime, I think the reference I have made to the Financial Statement shows that the statement was not exact; and even if it were exact and the interest on the 31st December had to be paid out of the £700,000, it was a very disingenuous way of stating what was left in the Treasury. The hon. gentleman seems to imagine that the Government have made a fresh departure in dealing with the loan, and that it was not intended that it should be divided. If the hon. gentleman will look at what was said when the loan was authorised, he will see it was distinctly stated that the amount was to embrace requirements for the next three or five years. It never entered into the head of any hon. member of this House that such a large amount of money was to be raised by one application to the London money market. I need not delay the House with what I said in this respect. Mr. Garrick simply put before the London public what had been spoken in this House by myself, and which was well understood by the Cabinet—that the loan was not to be sold at one time, but would be sold by instalments. I can quite understand how the hon. gentleman has fallen into this error. He has always, when selling his loan, committed himself to what I say is a false step: he has always allowed the financial institutions to bargain with the Treasurer to obtain a promise that no further loan instalments shall be offered for sale for a certain period. I have always deprecated the Treasurer saddling himself with restric-

tions, and the hon. gentleman doubtless thought that because no such unwise promise had been given in this case that, therefore, it was to be sold all at once. We are in this position, and call the attention of the colony to it: that while there is no necessity to sell the balance of the loan, we are perfectly free to act as we please at any moment. We have made no stipulation with the Bank of England or any syndicate, that no portion of our loan shall be offered for any period, and it leaves the hands of the Treasurer and Government free to go into the London money market whenever a favourable opportunity appears. I can quite understand, as I said, how the hon. gentleman has fallen into the error of imagining that we intended placing it all at once, from the absence of any promise being given. I have been called to task by a certain portion of the Press of this colony on account of part of my speech when I introduced the Loan Estimates to the committee last session. I am not at all afraid to reiterate what I said, and the report in *Hansard* is substantially correct. The part for which a commination service has been held over me is as follows:—

“And I have yet further to add that, as with the impetus to grazing settlements which is afforded under the new Land Bill, the financial institutions of the colony may be largely applied to for pecuniary assistance, with which the present condition of pastoral enterprise might interfere, the maintenance by Government of considerable balances of funds within the colony may enable these requirements to obtain fuller and more favourable attention than they would otherwise receive, especially were money to become stringent.”

I am not at all ashamed of my statement, and any man who has observed the financial condition and policies of Governments in the Australian colonies will assuredly indorse it. We have witnessed in these colonies Governments leaning unduly upon the banks, and what has been the consequence? The supplies that such a bank might offer to its constituents are dried up. Sometimes we see banks lend money lavishly, and then draw it in stringently. They are regardless of the business and trading public of the colony, and are regardless of the ruin, I would say, of men who may have been dependent upon them at the time they wished to close their accommodation. While I am not in any way indicating that the Government will necessarily become parties to the banks to lend money, I have indicated strongly that the Government ought not to lean upon banking institutions in the colony to provide funds to carry out that large programme of works which we enunciated last year. We ought to be possessed of funds at all times to enable us to proceed with the construction of those works without having to lean upon the banks for assistance, and thus deprive business persons in the country of that support which they ought to receive from banking institutions. That is all I meant and all I intended to mean, and it has been most disingenuously misconstrued if it has been construed that my remarks went to show that I intend to deluge the banks with money that they might keep up the pastoral interests of the colony. I have a higher opinion of the pastoral interest of the colony, and I have a higher opinion of the soundness of the banks. The banks have sufficient capital of their own to conduct the pastoral and industrial pursuits of the colony. I say also that a large number of the pastoralists of the colony are in a condition not to require to lean unduly heavily upon the banks. And at the same time, what would be the consequence if the Government of the colony had to apply to its bankers for a million or two of money to proceed with public works so that they might not be interrupted? There would naturally be a reflux and a restriction of that credit given outside, and we cannot prevent

one thing hinging upon another. It would be futile for us to say that, the Government having a large balance in the colony, the money market would not thereby be more easy. I am glad to say that I know at the present time that, by the introduction of a certain portion of our loan money into the colony ready for expenditure as public works require, a feeling of apprehension has passed away, which very likely might have appeared if the Government had not sold their loan and had been under the necessity of applying to their bankers locally for a large amount of pecuniary assistance. But while this speech has been twisted and distorted—and there is no speech made in this House which could not be distorted—while it has been so distorted by political adversaries—I will always say disingenuously distorted—through political rancour, to take hold of any handle, however small, so that the Government might be shown at a disadvantage, I have the strongest indorsement of my policy; an indorsement which goes far beyond any indorsement which can be given to me within the colony. We all know the Bank of England to be the largest and most important financial institution in the world; and we also know it to be the most conservative. That bank had my Financial Statement before it; it was sent to the chief cashier; and yet that bank, after having read this speech which has been so injuriously commented upon, offers us a million of money. I can find no record of a similar offer having ever been made to any other Australian colony. Is it for one moment likely that the Bank of England would have offered a million of money to the Treasurer to place in the hands of other banks here for the purpose of making advances if they had interpreted that speech in the disingenuous manner in which others had interpreted it? That indorsement by the Bank of England was the result of a long and careful investigation of the progress of the colony. It was not only an indorsement of the loan proposals of the Government, but also of the extent of such loan proposals of the Government. We were condemned for trying to get £10,000,000. The bank said—"We will lend you a million of money, and if further sums be required we will be prepared to consider them. Let war come or not we are prepared to advance this money." What more could be asked? I ask if the hon. gentleman has ever had such a proposal made to him? I think this statement alone is worth all the jeremiads that have been launched against us on account of an unsuccessful loan. We have got the money; that is a proof of success. We asked for two and a-half millions and were offered four millions.

Mr. NORTON: At what price?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: At a very fair price. The price was not improved by the political animosity and the wretched malevolent means which were resorted to by our adversaries to try and depreciate the credit of the colony merely for the sake of throwing discredit upon the Government. We were offered four millions for our two and a-half millions, and we are told it was unsuccessful. If I wanted to sell a station for £50,000 and sold it, should I be called unsuccessful because the buyer did not demand two stations? If I have sold £20,000 worth of goods, am I to say it is an unsuccessful transaction because the buyer does not insist on buying £90,000? We have the knowledge that the loan was sold, and under all circumstances the price was as fair as we expected, and we were offered more than we asked. Therefore I fail to see where the want of success, in the ungracious accusation made against us, comes in.

Mr. NORTON: What was the price of the debentures?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I will come to that presently. I have been accused that through my speech the colony has lost £63,000. I think I have unmistakably shown, however my speech may have appeared to hon. members of the Opposition, that to the authorities—the Bank of England at all events—it appears to have been sufficiently favourable to induce them to offer the Government a million of money if the loan was not sold.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: On what terms?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: At 4 per cent. I think that is a sufficient reply to hon. gentlemen opposite, and I dismiss the matter entirely, for that offer is certainly the highest indorsement of my action and of the proper construction put upon my speech, which has been commented upon in a manner to cast discredit upon myself and upon the Government. Our loan has been attacked by what were well called "malignant" letters in the public Press, and I hold that these letters have undoubtedly their source from political circles, and are not the casual contributions which gentlemen ordinarily write to the Press. I think I shall be able also to show the House that these surmises of mine, with respect to these letters, are built upon a true foundation. The following letter appeared in the London Press:—

"May 8th, 1885.

"SIR,

"Referring to the prospectus of the new Queensland loan for two million five hundred thousand pounds just issued by the Bank of England, I think would-be investors cannot too clearly understand before subscribing for any portion of this loan that the revenues of the colony of Queensland alone will be liable in respect of the stock and dividends thereon, and the Consolidated Fund of the United Kingdom and the Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury will not be directly or indirectly liable or responsible for the payment of the stock or of the dividends thereon, or any matter relating thereto.

"I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"A STOCKHOLDER."

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What paper is that from?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I think, entirely apart from the matter contained in this letter, which is really very easily answered, the spirit in which it is written clearly shows that it is intended to depreciate the loan, and not merely to obtain an answer. Everyone who has received a stock certificate from the Bank of England knows that there is prominently printed on the face of it that the Commissioners of the Inland Revenue wish it to be understood that the revenues of a colony are solely responsible.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What paper is that letter from?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: This letter appeared first in the *Investors' Guardian*, on the 9th of May; it also appeared in the *Bullionist* of 9th May; and the writer not content with that, it appeared in the *Standard* of the 11th of May. I would ask, do casual contributors to the Press send round their contributions to different papers? It is the rule in this colony, and I believe it is the rule in the respectable Press of Great Britain, that correspondents are supposed to contribute an article or letter solely to one paper, the paper to which it is first sent. Here we find, however, that the writer of this letter inserted it in three papers consecutively. There is again another letter—

"THE NEW QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT FOUR PER CENT. LOAN.

"To the Editor of the *Financier*.

"SIR,

"I observe by the prospectus of this loan, just issued by the Bank of England, that this stock is to rank *pari passu* with the Queensland Government 4 per cent. stock previously created.

"Surely it is not competent for a Government, more than a private individual, to make a second mortgage rank with the first, unless a power was reserved on previous issues so to do, and if in Queensland's previous issues that power was reserved, it is a subject for consideration whether it is a fit investment for trustees, who have been so sedulously solicited to invest.

"I am, sir, etc.,

"A TRUSTEE."

As if the resources of a great colony like Queensland were of such a limited character that the second issue of loan must necessarily be placed at a disadvantage with the first. Our Loan Bill specially provides that a loan shall take precedence according to date, and shall rank in succession with the one previously issued. This letter, signed "A Trustee," appears in the *Investors' Guardian* of 9th May, in the *Financier* of 11th May, and in the *Money Market Review*. This is another case in which the same letter with precisely the same phraseology appears in three papers consecutively. These letters have been well replied to. The first one was replied to as follows in the *Bullionist* of 14th May:—

"QUEENSLAND FOUR PER CENT. STOCK.

"To the Editor.

"SIR,

"Your correspondent 'A Stockholder' appears to think that he has discovered something new or exceptional in the clause of the Act 49 and 41 Vic., ch. 59, s. 19, which he quotes as appertaining to the proposed new issue of Queensland 4 per cent. stock. He is, however, mistaken. All colonial loans for many years past have been issued without the Imperial guarantee or liability, and the Act in question merely requires that the fact be plainly stated. Your correspondent will find the clause he quotes in the prospectus of every Colonial loan issued since the passing of the Act in 1877—indeed, not only in the prospectus, but in every document issued in connection with such loans. He will find it in the current prospectus of the Victoria issue.

"In the face of such security as is now offered by our colonies, and particularly in the case of Queensland, it appearing from the statement published by the Agent-General and obtainable with the prospectus, that the income of the colony from territorial sources and public works is sufficient to meet the entire interest on the debt, without recourse to taxation, the Imperial guarantee is not required; but it may indeed be asked, what would be the value of the Imperial guarantee on the day that England abandoned her colonies?

"Your obedient servant,

"A STOCKBROKER."

"London, May 13th, 1885."

I think I have shown that these two correspondents must have had some greater object in view than merely contributing to the papers in the ordinary course of newspaper correspondence. I here show that they here endeavoured to keep up this feeling in the minds of investors, with a view, doubtless, to depreciate the value of our stock. Then I come to a notice in the *Telegraph* of the 12th May:—

"The following refers to the new Queensland loan:—

"To the Editor of The Daily Telegraph.

"SIR,

"Referring to the proposed loan for £2,500,000 just issued, intending investors should not forget (1) that the objects for which the loan is required, as set out by the speech of the Minister introducing the measure, are to keep up large bank balances."

I deny ever having made use of the words "to keep up large bank balances."

"to assist advances to squatters and others, and that even the 'railway objects' are to please every little place in the colony where support is wanted; and (2) the enormous amount of debt per head as compared with the other colonies. This new loan of £2,980,000 will make the debt of Queensland about £83 per head.

"Yours obediently,

"J.A.F."

"J.A.F." was followed by "P.B.A.," who writes in the same tone to the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the 9th May. The argument is precisely the same in both letters, though the language is slightly

altered. In the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the 15th May the following appears from a gentleman who signs himself "Australian":—

"SIR,

"Some letters have lately appeared in the daily papers regarding the new Queensland Loan which display an anxiety for the safety of the British investor so unusual as to be somewhat difficult of explanation. The information furnished, however, by these correspondents appears to be partly superfluous as well as partly incorrect. 'J.A.F.' for instance, bases his calculation of the indebtedness of Queensland on a comparison of the population of 1883 with the debt as it will be of 1892, even supposing that the present heavy expenditure is continued undiminished until that date. Elsewhere however he implies that the money is not to be spent, but to be used in keeping up large bank balances, and making advances to squatters and others—presumably supporters of the Government. I should be disposed to conjecture that presumably J.A.F. is no British investor, but an opponent of the Queensland Government."

Mr. MOREHEAD: Perhaps he is J. F. Garrick.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No; J. F. Garrick writes afterwards. The writer continues:—

"Surely this is somewhat unfair criticism. Queensland has an enormous territory—great and manifold natural resources. It is a fair subject for discussion whether she is not developing those resources somewhat too hastily; but it contributes nothing to the solution of this question to retail baseless calumnies against the honesty and common sense of her rulers. Another writer, however, has gone still more out of his way to find a cause for attacking this colony. He lately called Ministers to take notice that 'the revenues of Queensland are alone liable' &c. Has anyone ever said or supposed that this was not the case? The clause from which he quoted is one which has appeared and must appear in the prospectus of every colonial loan embracing provisions for the inscription of stock in accordance with the stipulations of the Inscribed Stock Act, and is not in any way peculiar to Queensland. Yet it is mentioned by this writer as if it were a special defect in the securities of the colony which he has chosen, for unexplained reasons, to make the subject of attack.—I am, sir, your obedient servant, AUSTRALIAN."

Such, sir, has been the attempt made to injure the credit of the colony, and I should feel more indignant at the despicable spirit that has been shown by the writers of those letters—who, I trust, do not live in the colony, although they may have been inspired from within it—I say I should feel more the despicable character of those attacks if I allowed myself to believe that such vile calumnies, traducing our credit and fair fame, have had the effect which some people think they have had upon investors in Great Britain. I will tell the House why I think that those letters, written with every desire to ruin our credit, have failed to accomplish that end. The *World*, in its leading article, referring to colonial loans, writes thus:—

"The advance guard of the approaching army of colonial loans has made its appearance, in the issue of loans for Victoria and Queensland, for which tenders are invited. We must warn our readers against assuming as a basis for estimating the value of any colonial loan the figures which have been so diligently circulated in some quarters, showing the *pro rata* proportions of the various debts to the population. No safe inference whatever can be drawn from any such figures, unless they are accompanied by a statement of the revenue and assets in the shape of public works, by which these debts are secured. The Victorian loan is perhaps the more attractive; but the Queensland loan is engineered by the Bank of England. Both are eminently safe, and we expect to see them allotted at least at 2 per cent, above the minimum price."

That, sir, is in a leading article from a respectable paper, and gives a fair indication of the opinion held at home in regard to colonial loans. But my chief reason for considering that those letters have not had the injurious effect that some people believe, is this:—The Bank of England was perfectly cognisant of these attacks upon us at the very time it was prepared to advance us a million of money, and they advised

the Agent-General not to reply to them. It was under the advice of the Bank of England that my hon. colleague, Mr. Garrick, remained silent.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Then the letters did no harm.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am coming to that. Do not anticipate. The letters were intended to do harm, but I do not think they did so to the extent that some people imagine. I think the price of our loan was affected by another cause. If hon. members will make diligent inquiry I think they will find that there had been over-speculation in the Victorian loan—that the syndicate which purchased the greater part of that loan found that they had tendered a shade too high; they had not got rid of their stock, and did not tender for the Queensland loan, for it is a remarkable fact that no other Queensland loan has found its way into the hands of such a large number of small proprietors as the present. In fact, the tendering syndicates were conspicuous by their absence, as has been stated by the Agent-General. He says:—

“The applications amounted to £3,935,200, at prices varying from £100 15s. 6d. to the minimum, £97. The average price obtained is £97 19s. 4d. The result is considered satisfactory by the bank.”

I think, sir, that the opinion of the Bank of England, with all their knowledge of the frequent and capricious changes of the London money market, may be taken as authoritative upon a question of that kind; and in their opinion the loan was floated satisfactorily. We must also remember that there was great uncertainty in Europe at that time as to how long peace would be maintained, and on the very morning of the allocation of the loan news of a very unsatisfactory character had arrived from Russia. He goes on to say—

“An unusually large proportion of the loan is allocated amongst the public without the intervention of the brokers.”

Confirming what I have said.

“At my request the bank prepared a statement. This shows the real difference in the average price of Victoria and ourselves is £1 11s. 7d.”

With regard to that £1 11s. 7d. it must be borne in mind that the Victorian loan bore 4 per cent. interest from the 1st April, while our loan bore no interest until the 1st July of this year, so that a difference of about £1 must be allowed for accrued interest on the Victorian loan in favour of investors. That will reduce the difference of price between the two stocks very considerably. Besides that, we allowed a very long time—in fact, six months—for the instalments of the purchase money to be finally paid upon the loan which we offered. Mr. Garrick further says—

“I send you cuttings from newspapers showing, amongst other matter, letters sent for publication with a view of affecting our loan. A considerable number of these, you will observe, display a strongly hostile spirit, and some of them appear to have been written in circular form, as they were inserted in many of the papers, and rejected—as I am informed—by others. My own opinion, as also that of others having a knowledge of colonial and money affairs, is that these attacks were not made by or at the instance of brokers, but by persons politically and not financially interested. From my own observations since I have been here I apprehended opposition. The Bank were opposed—properly, I think—to my meeting these attacks in the Press myself. In one case, that of the *Daily Telegraph*, I, with the Bank's assent, officially corrected an inference which appeared in a letter published by them.

“On the morning of the last day for receiving tenders unfavourable political news with respect to Russia was published, which affected consols and other securities, and the Bank informed me that it operated against us, probably to the extent of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.”

If we allow $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent for accrued interest on the Victorian loan, I would ask where the loss of £63,000 appears? That is calculated at £2 10s. per cent.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Yes.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Well, did the hon. gentleman imagine that we would get a superior price to the Victorian loan, or rather that we would get par? I have shown, sir, that it was deemed wise by the Bank of England that the Agent-General should not take any notice of those attacks with the exception of correcting a misstatement that had been made. I have adverted to the peculiar circumstance that those scandalous letters which were published in some of the financial papers at home ran their course through two or three different journals; and I wish particularly to dwell upon that in order to make it clear that, inasmuch as I believe the respectable portion of the Press would not allow the continued insertion of epistolary matter which had been contributed to another newspaper, I therefore regard it as an extremely suspicious circumstance that the writers of those letters must have used more than ordinary means, and had more than ordinary ends to serve, to maintain that continuous insertion and reproduction in the papers to which I have referred. The letter stating that the revenues of the colony were solely responsible for the loan, and which was the insidious means of warning investors that they had only the revenues of the colony to look to, appeared, as I have stated, in three different newspapers—in the *Investors' Guardian* of the 9th May, in the *Bullionist* of the 10th May, and in the *Standard* of the 11th May. The second communication, which endeavoured to raise the objection against our loan, that these later issues would not rank equally with the first as a charge on the consolidated revenue of the colony, was also reproduced in three different papers—in the *Investors' Guardian* of the 9th May, the *Financier* of the 11th May, and the *Money Market Review* of the 12th May. The letters of “J.A.F.” and “P.B.A.,” which are almost the same in matter, appeared also in two papers—the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the 9th May, and the *Telegraph* of the 12th May. This, to my mind, shows incontestably that the writers were not merely actuated by the desire of warning ordinary investors against investing in the new loan, but that they were actuated by the strongest motives—and I believe by politically hostile motives—in endeavouring to cast discredit upon this colony. I do not, as I have said before, think that they have attained their object. There is no doubt that these writers would have been glad to have seen the loan an entire failure, but I contend that the loan was not a failure, although it was not subscribed for so largely as under other circumstances might have been expected. These letters were regarded by the Bank of England as beneath contempt, and under the advice of the Bank of England, the Agent-General declined to answer them. He had occasion, however, to correct a statement which appeared in the London *Telegraph*, and I will read to the House the only letter he addressed to the metropolitan financial Press on this subject. In the London *Telegraph* of the 4th May, there was published the following:—

“The following is a reply to a recent letter in our columns on the new Queensland loan. In the official memorandum of statistics which accompanied the prospectus, it was pointed out that although the debt may appear large as compared with the population, it involves no appreciable burden upon the taxpayer, ‘the territorial and public works revenue defraying more than the entire charge for interest’ :—

“To the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*.

“Sir.—My attention has been called to the following statement which appeared in your ‘money market’ column of Tuesday last:—“This new loan of £9,980,000 will make the debt of Queensland about £83 per head.” I must point out that the sum of nearly ten millions is the estimated requirements of the colony for several years, and it is proposed to be raised in instalments from time to time, a first portion of £2,500,000 having been offered to the public. The writer, in his figures, takes

the population as at December 31st last, and adds nothing whatever to it for all the time covered by the authorised loan of £9,980,000. The error is transparent, and is well shown by our statistics. In 1860 the population was 28,000; on December 31st last it was 312,000. In the last five years it was increased by 93,841, of which increase 25,000 was during last year. This addition is mainly from emigration, which the colony is actively continuing, liberal provision having been made for it in the authorised loan. A consideration of these figures will show the inaccuracy of your correspondent's statements.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES F. GARRICK.
Agent General for Queensland.

Queensland Government Office,
1, Westminster Chambers,
Victoria street, London, S.W., May 13."

Now, sir, I have gone fully through this matter because, whilst every desire was shown by these despicable correspondents to traduce the character of the colony and to depreciate the value of our credit—while all the malevolence and malignity possible has been exhibited in the consideration of this matter—I do not think it has succeeded to anything like the extent the writers of these letters intended. The Bank of England have considered the loan a success, as I have read from a letter of my colleague, the Agent-General.

Mr. NORTON: Under the circumstances.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The words I read were, "The result was satisfactory"; and I can show that the result was also considered by other authorities in addition to the Bank of England to be satisfactory. I am quite prepared for hon. gentlemen opposite casting discredit on the loan, and endeavouring to show that our credit is restricted. They would be untrue to the principles they have continuously represented if they did not take advantage of every opportunity to show that our borrowing powers are exhausted. We have seen from the utterances of the hon. member for Mulgrave during the recess that he still has the transcontinental scheme on the brain. Like the Bourbons, he has learned nothing and forgotten nothing. He does not know that the colony will not have it, but he is trying to show them that they must have it, because we cannot borrow to carry on our public works. I speak now without wishing to say that he would like to see the colony in bad circumstances, but I believe it would be a happy day in his political thinking if the colony had to accept the transcontinental project; and he knows that as long as we can borrow the colony will have none of his transcontinental scheme. And this brings me to the remarks made by the hon. member for Townsville on this subject in the course of the eloquent speech he addressed to the House, when he referred to the advantages gained by America from land-grant railways. I am not prepared to enter fully into a debate on the question of land-grant railways in the United States, but I will say this, that the conditions under which the system was introduced into America were widely dissimilar to the conditions under which the leader of the Opposition proposed to introduce it into Queensland. The conditions were widely dissimilar as to the size of the blocks of land to be given to the company, as to the encouragement of settlement, and as to a variety of other matters of detail, which I will not occupy the time of the House by entering into just now. Without referring further to those matters, or to the jobbery in connection with those railways, I repeat that the conditions under which they were built were widely dissimilar from the conditions which the hon. member for Mulgrave intended to be adopted by the colony of Queensland. I said just now that in addition to the opinion held by the Bank of England, that the result of our 1885—D

recent loan was satisfactory, I could quote equally favourable opinions from other financial authorities. I have in my hand a paragraph from the *Bullionist* of the 16th of May—the day after our loan was placed. This journal is an independent authority, and had no active part, to my knowledge, in floating the loan. It makes a simple record of the fact of the loan having been floated and of the financial position held by this colony. The paragraph is as follows:—

"Tenders for £2,500,000 Queensland Government 4 per cent. stock were opened yesterday at the Bank of England. The applications amounted to £3,933,200, at prices varying from £100 15s. 6d. to £97 (the minimum). Tenders at £97 8s. 6d. will receive about 35 per cent. of the amount applied for, those above that price being allotted in full. The average price obtained for the stock is £97 19s. 4d."

I would call the attention of the House to this next statement particularly:—

"There have been some exceptions taken by our correspondents and others to this loan, as bringing up to too high a total the liability of this young colony. The result, however, gives no indication that this feeling of distrust is general."

I think that this editorial, taken in connection with the opinion of the Bank of England, clearly proves that the want of competition for a larger quantity of our stock is not to be attributed to the credit of the colony being diminished, but to a variety of other causes. Amongst these—I will not say conspicuously amongst them—were these letters, the writers of which are entitled to the same amount of public obloquy as if they had been entirely successful in carrying out their wish and intention of preventing the loan being floated satisfactorily. I believe that the main cause was that the syndicates tendered rather too high for the Victorian loan. That had the effect of keeping those syndicates outside, and the Queensland stock in this case was consequently allocated among a larger number of the public. I trust, Mr. Speaker, that I have not unprofitably occupied the time of the House. We should have been glad to see more competition for our loan, but we cannot say it was a failure, seeing that we obtained within a few shillings of the net amount realised by the Victorian loan, which was very largely competed for. I do not wish to detain the House, but there is one subject I cannot pass over. It has obtained so much prominence in the accusations against the Government that the other charges laid at the doors of my colleagues must be very small indeed. The charge against me is that I have shown vacillation in dealing with overtime regulations in connection with the Customs. I may say that the question of overtime has never been approached as it should have been until of late. It has been a growing extortion, and had attained such dimensions that it had become imperative to meet it. My desire at first was to adopt regulations which should bring the practice into conformity with that in the large ports of the other colonies—Melbourne and Sydney. When the first regulations were framed, I thought this principle had been carried out; but I subsequently found that if the regulations as then framed were put into force the Customs officers here would be placed at great disadvantage as compared with those in other ports. This arose through the designation of officers performing certain duties in Brisbane not being the same as that of officers performing the same duties at other ports. When I was apprised of that by a deputation, I gave instruction that the comptrollers of Customs in Melbourne and Sydney should be communicated with, and the issue of the regulations was deferred until the replies should be received. I found then that, had the first regulations been put into force, the

Customs officers would have been subjected to hardships to which it was not the intention of the department to subject them, and consequently amended regulations were prepared in conformity with the practice followed in the case of ships discharging in the ports of Melbourne and Sydney. The Customs officers are satisfied, and I think it is a great relief to the shipping of this port. However, I should not be ashamed to take up the position of having made a mistake and rectified it. It would be a most harsh, arbitrary, unjustifiable thing for a Minister to persist in perpetuating any mistake he had made. None of us claim to be infallible, and I hope that whenever we make mistakes we shall be ready to redress them. That is the whole gravamen of the offence, and I leave it to hon. members on both sides of the House to say whether it is a matter of such importance as to be brought into the discussion on His Excellency's Speech. But there is another matter of far more importance. The hon. member for Mulgrave made a charge against the hon. member for Bulimba of having been bought and sold, simply because he acted on that Commission to inquire into the islanders from New Guinea. It certainly comes with very bad grace from the hon. member for Mulgrave, who, if that be a sin, has certainly been a greater offender than any other Premier who ever held office in Queensland. Do we not remember a gentleman who sat on and adorned these benches, who supported the late Administration through thick and thin, and who received a thousand guineas for revising—I cannot say improving, according to the opinion of competent authorities—the compilation of the Statutes of Queensland? Yet we did not attempt to insinuate for a moment that he was bought and sold.

Mr. NORTON: Yes, over and over again.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No such charge was made against that gentleman as was made by the hon. member for Mulgrave last night. It may be a question whether it is perfectly constitutional for an hon. member to perform duties of that kind, and receive remuneration for them, but the question should not have been raised by the hon. member, who has certainly been the greatest offender in that respect. I dismiss at once from my mind the insinuation that my hon. friend the member for Bulimba has anything to be ashamed of. He performed his duties honestly and well, and it is only reasonable that, when a gentleman is invited to perform such duties during the recess and neglect his own business, he should receive remuneration. With regard to the intention announced by the hon. member for Mulgrave of criticising the financial management of the colony when the Estimates come forward, I can only say I shall be very glad to have the hon. gentleman's assistance by criticism—for I believe genuine criticism assists and strengthens a man in any proposition brought before this House. I wish the financial position of the colony received the attention of a larger number of intelligent people than ordinarily devote their attention to this subject. The financial position of the colony is a very important question, and should not be treated slightly. The progress of the colony may have been retarded by climatic circumstances, but I deny that there is any cause for alarm. I hope when the hon. member for Mulgrave devotes his attention to the financial position of the colony he will not parade before the public the claptrap of £700,000 having been left in the Treasury, for it will occupy unnecessary time for me to disabuse the minds of hon. members and the public of that idea. Coming from any other source the state-

ment might be disregarded, but when it comes from a gentleman who has held the offices of Treasurer and Premier it can only be regarded as a desire to make obscure in the minds of the public and of the members of this House the true position of our finances, and an endeavour to show that the present Government have been guilty of the most unwarrantable extravagance in disbursing a sum of nearly three-quarters of a million, which never existed except in the fertile imagination of the hon. member himself.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman has managed to escape as Venus is reported once to have done—in a cloud. He has sat down with a peroration which I hope he will enjoy when he reads it in the morning, but that peroration will not save him from the figures which will show the hon. member for Mulgrave to be right and the hon. gentleman wrong. The hon. gentleman pointed out just before tea that there was a balance on the 31st of December to the credit of the revenue, of £529,000. He was then evidently nonplussed, and said that if time were given to him he would put it all right. We shall see about that; but until that time comes, do not let this House, or the public, be beguiled by the statement of the hon. member that the figures quoted by the hon. member for Mulgrave are incorrect. Now, to come to what the hon. gentleman said in his speech. He has told us in more words than I think were necessary that the loan had been prejudiced by the action of certain individuals. That was his announcement. Certain letters had been written to certain papers at home which had prejudiced the sale of, and price paid for, the loan. This is to excuse a charge that was levelled against the Government from this side of the House. As he got up in his argument he went on to say that these letters in no way affected the loan. The loan brought the price he expected it would. But we have a very much graver aspect of the question, and that is what was stated by the Premier last night. In language studied and carefully worded he looked over to this side of the House and said that there were hon. members, he believed, in the House who had to do with the low price that the Queensland loan had brought in the London market. He said if he could only lay his hand upon those members—and he further said that he believed the names of them would be discovered if he was right in his surmise—the names of those men should be held up to obloquy for all time in the colony. I agree with him; and if he can find those men, every member on this side of the House will be amongst the first to condemn them as unpatriotic and without a right to reside in Queensland. But the hon. gentleman practised those tactics; they were conducted by his side of the House and not by this. Look at the hon. Minister for Lands, the father of a yellow pamphlet, who was not content with damaging the policy of the late Government, but went further and maligned the personal character of the occupants of office; that was before he was a member of the House. From the other side we might reasonably expect the dastardly conduct that the hon. the Premier has charged this side with. Such conduct has not and never can be brought home to men who sit on this side of the House, and I defy the hon. gentleman to show that there is one scintilla of truth in what he said last night—a sentiment which was deeply echoed by the Treasurer to-night, when he spoke of the letters which had been written from political sources for political motives. I do not believe a word of it, and until the hon. gentleman proves it I will not believe a word of it. Then the hon. gentleman thought that he could borrow a million, with a flourish of his hand, from the Bank of England. If he could, wha

was his security?—£9,850,000 of Queensland debentures. I fancy that was good enough security.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Not debentures—stock.

Mr. MOREHEAD: It is a mere question of words; the stock is there. The hon. gentleman knew when he made that proud vaunt that the money could have been raised from a hundred sources beyond the Bank of England if he had wanted it. We have had enough about the loan, and if the Premier can prove his words—that is to say if he can prove that there was actually a collusion between the political opponents of the Government of this colony and those who deal in stock at home—he must either stand by his words or be branded as a liar and a coward.

The PREMIER: Will you read what I have said?

Mr. MOREHEAD: I have.

The PREMIER: You have misquoted me. What I said I adhere to; but what you say I said I did not say.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman looked fixedly across the House, and his action would bear no other interpretation. It was a direct accusation against some members in this House, and he alluded to myself almost personally as I sat at that table. There could be no mistake. The hon. gentleman's words will bear no other interpretation. I will go a little further. I suppose this report of the hon. gentleman's speech is correct—the speech he made at Charters Towers. It was corrected, I believe, by the hon. gentleman, on the way down, and possibly pared down to its minimum—

“A serious charge to make against the planters party. He knew”—

He did not suspect—suspicion haunts, as a rule, the guilty mind—

“they had been injuring the credit of the colony in London, and as an instance of the statements made he read a paragraph published in the *Financier*, and cut from a leader in the *Courier* of 9th June, as follows:—The retrograde policy of a large proportion of the colonists of Queensland who are represented by the party at present in power, which prevents the introduction of coolie or other tropical labour for the plantations of Queensland, which the white men themselves cannot grapple with, and the manner in which the squatters apparently combine with the same party to prevent the development of the large interior lands of the colony, are reasons which suggest great caution on the part of the public in encouraging this young colony to borrow too fast.”

If the hon. gentleman knew who wrote that, why should he attempt to fasten upon the Opposition what he himself, according to his own account, can lay his finger upon? Finishing with the Treasurer, or rather, not quite finishing with him, I will come to the three points he mentioned in his speech. I have dealt with the matter in which he and his colleague the Premier try to throw a charge upon this side of the House. The next part is the loan, and the third part is the annexation of New Guinea, which he termed a “fillibustering expedition” initiated by the late Premier. I will commence by reading an extract from a speech made by the junior member for North Brisbane, who, I am sure, you will all admit is not a very strong advocate of fillibustering expeditions. This is what I will quote; it is in connection with the annexation of New Guinea—

“He believed Sir Thos. McIlwraith did a service to the whole of Australasia by the manner in which he acted on the occasion referred to. On the principle of wishing to do justice to everybody, he made that remark, and he admitted with genuine pleasure that that gentleman had rendered the whole of Australasia a signal service.”

I will go a little further, and in doing so I hope I shall bring out my friend the Colonial Treasurer. I hope, when I have read this extract, that he will apologise to Sir Thomas McIlwraith and the House for the language he has made use of when he spoke about “fillibustering” expeditions. This is assuming that the Hon. C. S. Mein was the representative of the Government in the Upper House at the time this speech was made. Mr. Mein, in moving a resolution with regard to an address to Her Majesty the Queen, respecting the constitution of a Federal Council of Australia, is reported to have said—

“When it was publicly announced that the Government of Sir Thomas McIlwraith had taken formal possession of New Guinea, nobody—not even Sir Thomas McIlwraith himself—could have foreseen that the result would have been so momentous as it had been shown to be by the experience of the past few months. He must confess that, whilst admiring the courage of the late Premier to a certain extent, he had shared the opinions of those who at the time thought his action somewhat precipitous; but it was now almost universally admitted by politicians of all shades of opinion that, viewed by the light of subsequent events, the action of that gentleman was such as to entitle him to the grateful recognition of all patriotic Australians. The chord he then struck vibrated not only throughout Queensland, but resounded to the centre of the British Empire, and attracted the attention and enlisted the sympathies of statesmen in other European dominions. Prominent public men in Australia had at times expressed the hope that, at no distant date, the colonies would be federated; but their expressions of opinion had been received with a large amount of coolness from the bulk of public men, and the most sanguine could have scarcely expected that his aspirations would have been realised within at least a generation.”

That, sir, is the opinion of the leader of the Government in the Upper House, the Government in which the hon. the Colonial Treasurer was at that time in the same position that he is in now. And yet he has the hardihood, for some purpose best known to himself, to get up and talk of the annexation of New Guinea as an act of fillibustering! Surely we will get some information from him on that point. I will go further and say this—that supposing that annexation had been approved of, as we had every reason to hope it would have been, by the Home Government, we should have had none of this trouble with regard to the return of these natives to New Guinea, because it would have been part of the British Empire. I repeat that all this trouble would have been saved if the action taken by Sir Thomas McIlwraith had been carried out by the Imperial Government. I ask the Colonial Treasurer to answer that—and yet he gets up and talks about an act of “fillibustering.” That is the word he used. Does he deny that he used that word? I repeat again that if the action of Sir Thomas McIlwraith had been indorsed as it ought to have been—if there was any loyalty, or, I should say, any feeling of friendliness on the part of the Home Government towards the Australian colonies—we should have had none of this trouble that has come upon us with regard to the return of these islanders. That is an important point which I do not think has received sufficient consideration at the hands of the House or of the country. I should recommend the hon. the Treasurer to read back what has been said before—not perhaps by himself, because that is not of much importance—but to read back what his intelligent colleagues have said with regard to that matter. Then he may speak a little more guardedly than he has spoken to-night. Coming now, sir, more generally to the Speech itself, the hon. the Premier spoke last night with great scorn—almost derision—of the statement made by the hon. the leader of the Opposition, that, although there was depression in almost every industry in the colony, yet there was a good deal of money yet to be found in the capital—in Brisbane. Does the hon. gentleman

read the English papers? Does he comprehend the position? Does he not know that when trade becomes depressed there is always an aggregation of capital in the hands of capitalists? Does he not know that at the present time in England the bank reserve is larger than was ever known in history? Does he not know that when trade is good exactly the opposite state of affairs exists, but now trade is stagnant in every direction; every branch of industry is depressed, and consequently money flows into the Bank of England, and stops there until it can be let out at interest in some safe way? The hon. gentleman should have known that before he sneered at the statement of the hon. the leader of the Opposition, that money was accumulating in the capital. I know, of my own knowledge—and I am perfectly sure the Minister for Works knows—that there is any amount of money to lend in Brisbane, but upon what? Is it upon stations? I say no. Is it upon selections? I say no. Is it upon sugar properties? I need not answer. But there is plenty of money to lend upon Queen-street property, or upon any valuable property close to town. That money should have gone and been employed in the channels in which it has been hitherto employed. But, sir, by the action and the legislation of the present Government those industries have been checked, and the money flows back to the banks. It is not utilised, but lies latent when it should be employed in fostering and advancing industries, which before the present Government came into power were in a prosperous condition. Those industries have been crippled, and the capital which should have been employed in them now lies at a low rate of percentage in the banks, or in private hands. There can be no getting away from this fact. The Minister for Works knows it as well as I do. I think we should have had from the Colonial Treasurer some indication of what revenue is likely to be derived from the public lands under the new system inaugurated under the Act of 1884. We have been promised this for a long time, but we have not got the smallest approach to an estimate from him. We were told, as an inducement to vote the ten-million loan, that the revenue from the public lands would meet the interest on that debt, but the Treasurer has never attempted in any way to show that statement to be true. We, on this side, and some hon. members on the other side of the House, doubt the correctness of that statement. We also find, in regard to that Act, that already the Government are becoming shaky about some points in it. Although the ink can hardly be dry on the Governor's assent to it—at any rate, although very few applications have been made under the Act—we find the Government coming down with an entire change of front, as you, Mr. Speaker, know as well as I do. They come down now and ask that they may be given additional power—to allow selection before survey in the settled districts—although we had it distinctly decided by this House that selection is only to take place after survey, and although one of the most powerful speeches in favour of that system was delivered by the Premier himself, which he can find in *Hansard*. I would rather not read his speeches, but I will give him the page if he likes to read it for himself. Now, sir, we find that not only has the land tenure been unsettled by the action of the Government, but we find that it will be still further unsettled by the legislation that is now proposed. Where is it to end? Is there to be any finality? When this selection before survey is granted—if this Bill become law—is it to stop there, or are we to go further afield? Then there comes another and broader question. What is to

happen to those runholders who have come under the Act? Is the Act to be retrospective? Are those who have come under the Act as it now stands to suffer by being subjected to this new provision? I ask this question, Mr. Speaker, because the present Government have acted in such an extraordinary way in many instances, and especially with regard to the pre-emptive right—where they ruled that the mere passage of the second reading of a Bill through this House—without it becoming law at all—which cancelled a certain clause in the Act of 1869, was sufficient to justify them in refusing all pre-emptives. I say that when we have a Ministry that will do that, we have a right to ask how far they will go and what we may expect from them. The Premier said, among other things, that a planter should not be a politician. I would like him to explain that maxim.

The PREMIER: I did not say so. I said they should not mix up business with politics.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman said that a planter should not be a politician, and I want him to explain what he means by it. Is he to go on his knees and worship that brute Baal; is he to sink his manhood, or is he to have the same rights as are enjoyed by every other individual in the community? Does not the hon. gentleman himself mix up his own business with politics? I am perfectly certain he does, and I am perfectly certain the Attorney-General does also. I will now deal with another of the erroneous statements made by the Premier during the recess. For purposes, I suppose, best known to himself, he instructed—so I am led to understand—the Inspector of Stock to make out a return of stock up to a certain date—an impossible date—a date up to which the returns were not sent in. By that return it was shown that the loss of sheep in the colony was only something like 1,800,000. On that the Premier made a great point in one of those magnificent speeches which he serves out round about the country when he has apparently nothing else to do, or is bilious and wants a trip into the interior or up the coast. I met Mr. Gordon, when I saw the statement, and challenged the accuracy of it, and I have got his note in my possession now, in which he admits that the statement was incorrect, and that it was made simply to controvert some report that appeared in an English paper stating that the loss in this colony had been very much more than he represented.

The PREMIER: Whose note?

Mr. MOREHEAD: Mr. Gordon's. I am simply stating what happened. I maintain that the loss of sheep in this colony has been more than two and a-half times as much as the 1,800,000 reported by Mr. Gordon, and that the loss in sheep and their wool has amounted to something like three millions of money. And yet the Premier, with a light heart, tells the world that our loss has not been so very great—with the same light heart that at the commencement of last session he told us the drought was over. But I tell him the drought still rages, and that the loss of stock will be greater still. It is wrong that such a statement should go forth bolstered up by the authority of the Premier, and the sooner it is corrected the better.

The PREMIER: You are making a very serious charge—not against me, but against an officer of the Government.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I don't care if he is ten officers of the Government; and there is a member here present who saw me challenge Mr. Gordon as to the inaccuracy of his statement. The Government have also taken great credit to themselves with regard to the rabbit question. I will let daylight into that, too. If there is one

member who deserves credit on that question it is the hon. member for Logan (Mr. Stevens). I knew he was an enthusiast on that matter, but I thought he magnified the evil, and I said so, and I bitterly regret I ever did say so from the information that has since come into my hands. The Government say they are taking the necessary steps to prevent the rabbit invasion. The Colonial Secretary knows what happened five weeks ago. Mr. Tyson called upon me and asked if I would arrange for an interview between him and the Colonial Secretary. I did so, and when we called upon him he had Mr. Woolcock or Bulcock, or somebody, with him—there are always plenty of them about him; at all events, he had his private secretary with him, and we were with Mr. Griffith more than an hour.

The PREMIER: I never kept a deputation for an hour.

Mr. MOREHEAD: We were there for more than an hour, and I can prove it. The result of the interview was a promise that if Mr. Tyson could put himself into communication with a man—Davey, I think, was his name—he would pay the expense of that man and two assistants, and try to discover where the rabbits were. It was with the utmost difficulty that that was extracted from the hon. gentleman. The Minister for Works, I remember, came in and objected to the employment of three men, saying that one was quite enough. But he was convinced by the irresistible common sense of Mr. Tyson that three men were better than one. And if there were three men in the Minister for Works's place they would be better than himself, or anyone of them. So much for their conduct with regard to the rabbit question, for which they take so much credit. Now, with regard to the expedition returning those islanders, I should like some information on that subject. Here we find Mr. Chester, a nephew of the Governor, a doctor, and two men of the name of Harris. Who are they?

The PREMIER: One of them is private secretary to Mr. Romilly. The other I do not know, beyond that he was a passenger to Port Moresby. I only saw their names in the newspapers.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Colonial Secretary is one of the most innocent men I ever came across. He knows nothing or he knows everything. I am certain he knows everything about this.

The PREMIER: I can assure the hon. gentleman I do not.

Mr. MOREHEAD: What about this piano being put on board to "soothe the savage breast"?

The PREMIER: I never heard of that till yesterday.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman seems to be very ignorant indeed on this subject. While dealing with the return of those islanders, I would like to ask the Colonial Secretary this question: When a protest was urged against their return, and he was told that an injunction would be applied for in the Supreme Court, did he say practically this, "If an injunction is applied for, I shall not nominate a defendant on behalf of the Government; and, should the injunction be granted by the Supreme Court, I, backed by the Executive, will treat that injunction as a nullity"?

The PREMIER: That is not correct.

Mr. MOREHEAD: If that statement is correct—and I think it is—it shows collusion between the head of the Government and a higher power than he.

The PREMIER: You will misquote me; you have no right to make misstatements.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I am not misquoting the hon. member.

The PREMIER: Well, I never said that.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Did the hon. gentleman say that if the planters obtained an injunction from the Supreme Court he, backed by the Executive, would treat it as a nullity?

The PREMIER: I said that anything they could do would not prevent me, as far as I was concerned, from sending those men home.

Mr. MOREHEAD: With the Executive at your back.

The PREMIER: I said nothing about the Executive. The occasion for doing so might have arisen, but no such occasion arose, and I certainly never made any reference to circumstances that had not arisen.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Did not the hon. gentleman use the words, which I saw in writing, that if an injunction was granted by the Supreme Court it would be treated as a nullity?

The PREMIER: As far as I am concerned.

Mr. MOREHEAD: With the Executive at your back?

The PREMIER: I said nothing about that.

Mr. MOREHEAD: How could the hon. gentleman ignore it unless he had the Executive at his back? I may say that in my opinion it is almost to be regretted that some speeches made by a higher power were not left unsaid.

The PREMIER: You have no right to say that.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman has stated all I wish to know, namely, that he—the Government—would have treated an injunction in this matter as a nullity. In this remarkable episode of releasing the blacks, how has the hon. gentleman acted? Instead of being named Samuel Walker, should he not be known as Samuel Wilberforce, the freer of slaves? Was there ever such a tawdry exhibition, such tinsel statesmanship, as the hon. gentleman has shown in this matter? The whole thing is absurd. Fancy the hon. gentleman shaking hands with the horny-handed sons of toil and making himself a miner, and talking in the inflated way he did up north, only to be surpassed by his more inflated colleague the Attorney-General, who is dumb in this House, but when he gets up north on the rampage, and, I suppose, filled with sea-serpents, and probably encouraged by his leader, he delivers a magnificent oration. I should like the constituents of the Attorney-General to see him in this House, where if he gets up he soon sits down again. Throughout the whole recess the Ministry have gone on plundering and blundering. The Minister for Works has received deputations with brutality. The hon. gentleman cannot receive any person civilly, and he appears to think that if he is rude and coarse he will be considered honest. But it will take a great deal more than that to impress people with his honesty. Owing to the way in which he has treated deputations, he has become a byword throughout the colony. I must say he is the only member of the Ministry to whom this remark will apply, but it does apply to him. I have now referred to the sins of omission and commission of the Government, but I am absolutely bound to say a word or two about the Minister for Lands. That hon. gentleman has shown a most vindictive and malevolent spirit towards his political opponents whilst he has given favours to his friends. I will show during this session of Parliament that a more malevolent, vindictive Minister never existed. The hon. member may think that I will not carry out this threat, but I will. He turned out one of the best magistrates in the colony, Mr. Morey,

and put in his own cousin, Mr. Alfred Henry. The hon. gentleman may laugh, but he has done it, and there is no more comparison between Mr. Morey and the Minister for Lands's cousin than there is between day and night.

The PREMIER: He has never referred to it.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman may not have referred to it in writing, but the fact remains that Mr. Henry was foisted into a position over the head of a most deserving Civil servant. I have now finished my indictment. I have nothing to say to the Hon. Mr. Moreton, and I do not suppose I ever shall have anything to say to him. I think he is perfectly harmless.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Mr. Speaker,—I am sure I am very much obliged to the hon. member for Balonne for the character he has given me. It is, however, very extraordinary that, notwithstanding all this brutality towards deputations attributed to me, deputations still come. I am bound to say this: that no Minister for Works has received so many deputations as I have, and I think that is pretty plain proof that they have not been received with that brutality of which the hon. gentleman has spoken. I should be very glad indeed if they would not come so often. Many deputations come and ask the Government to do things which it is utterly impossible that any Government could undertake, and if I speak out plainly and tell them that I will not be a party to it, is that any reason why I should be branded by the hon. member for Balonne as treating deputations with brutality? If any one has a complaint to make, it is I, who have received so many deputations. I can tell the hon. gentleman that so long as I occupy the position of Minister for Works and any persons come to me as a deputation they will be treated civilly. I have not had the honour of receiving the hon. member for Balonne, therefore I have no fault to find against him as far as deputations are concerned. But the hon. member for Mulgrave made a more serious charge than that against me; he accused me of ignorance, and said that I did not know how to conduct the business of my department. Well, I never professed to have the ability of the hon. member, but I conduct the department on what I consider to be commercial principles. The hon. gentleman charged me last night with raising the rates on travelling stock. I admit that I have done so and claim that I have a perfect right to do it. I have a calculation here in my hands of the number of stock which was carried on the Southern and Western Railway during the year 1883. The number of cattle carried was 8,984, and the rates received amounted to £4,042 10s. 5d., while the working expenses were £6,454 16s.; showing a loss on this particular traffic of £2,432 5s. 3d. The hon. member knows very well that this is not a profitable traffic. I have had a comparison made of the rates charged in the other colonies, and I endeavoured to strike an average between New South Wales and Victoria. Acting upon that principle, I have increased the rate on cattle by 50 per cent. and that on sheep by 20 per cent., and even at the increased price the earnings will barely cover expenses. I have given the number of cattle carried for the year.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: During the whole of 1883?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: During the whole of 1883. The hon. member drew a comparison between the number of stock coming down now by the railways and the number taken to the southern colonies, but I would remind him that not only can they get a better price for fat stock there, but they can

actually get as good a price on the stations for store bullocks as they can get down here. Are they likely, then, under these circumstances, to send them by rail to Brisbane? The number of sheep carried during the year 1883 was 140,273; the earnings amounted to £8,616 8s. 7d., and the cost of working was £7,662 16s. 5d.; showing a loss on that traffic of over £1,000, or a total loss on the carriage of cattle and sheep of £3,000. Does the hon. gentleman suppose that stock should be carried at a loss, and that the whole of the community should be taxed to that amount of money for the benefit of one class? The hon. member knows perfectly well that the carriage of stock is the heaviest traffic on the line. The hon. member wants to make out that the country can afford to carry this particular traffic at a loss. Since that time I have endeavoured to meet the difficulty and have reduced the rates to those which are charged in New South Wales. Before that they were the same as those charged in Victoria. The hon. member will have no more grievances on that score. I maintain that I was perfectly right in the course I took, for this particular traffic was carried on at a loss to the country of £4,000 a year.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: And you reduced the rates! You have given us no explanation of that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I maintain I had a perfect right to endeavour to raise the rates so as to cover the cost of carriage. Then the hon. member charges me with making a private arrangement with a contractor. He says that by the arrangement I made with Mr. Bashford I put myself completely under his thumb. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman is interested in that contract or not. If he is, I would like him to speak out.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Surely the hon. gentleman will do me more justice than that!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Mr. Bashford agrees to build a railway for £5,000 less than his tender, and how does that possibly put me under his thumb? I would point out that when tenders were received for the extension of the Central Railway and the extension from Stanthorpe to the border, the tenders were between £50,000 and £60,000 over the estimates. Surely I would not have been justified in accepting any of those tenders, and I called for fresh ones. Mr. Bashford's tender was the lowest, but I considered it too high, and my intention was, unless I got a reasonable offer, that the department should carry out the work itself. Does the hon. member think I did not know what was going on? An arrangement was made among the tenderers for that section of the line, that one of them was to get the contract and pay the others to stand out. I could not have accepted those tenders if I had known that conspiracy was going on. I would not have been doing my duty to my country if I did.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Do I understand the hon. member to say that he knows as a fact that the last tenders that were given for the Stanthorpe extension were arranged among the contractors? I hear that for the first time, and I hear it with very great astonishment. I think the hon. gentleman, before making charges of that kind, ought to be most specific in his charges. I want to understand if he knows as a fact, in the last batch of tenders that were given for the Stanthorpe extension, the tenderers had arranged among themselves who was to get it—that they had arranged among themselves to defraud the Government. This is the charge that has actually been made. I ask for information.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I did not speak of the last tenders; I said the tenders that were first sent in.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: How many of them?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I was informed that there was an arrangement made between certain contractors that one was to have the contract, and he was to pay the others £1,000 each.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: That was the first series of contracts. Among Queensland men how many tenders were sent in?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There was a small number.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Did not the Minister for Works let a tender under the same circumstances for the Cooktown line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know anything about what took place.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Does not the hon. Minister for Works know he was swindled in that way on the Cooktown line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member for Townsville made some remarks about contractors from the southern colonies being treated in the way they were. There was one contractor to whom I suppose he was alluding, who went to examine the line which was marked out some years ago, and it took a great deal of trouble to find it. I happened to be up there at the time. It was a very wet day.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: It was badly marked.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The contractor inspected the line and came down and put in his tender. He examined the line in a day and came back and put in his tender. Afterwards he came to me and said he had made a mistake. That was one of the tenderers from the southern colonies who had been badly treated. The hon. gentleman made some allusion to the arbitration clauses. If the contractors received what was asked for they would hardly expect more. A deputation waited upon the Premier during my absence, and brought this matter under his observation. They said they would be perfectly satisfied if a clause were put into the contract similar to that used in Victoria, that is, either party wishing to refer a case to arbitration must give two months' notice. There is no difference.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Yes, there is.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. gentleman will always contradict; he is always right and other people are wrong. The hon. gentleman stated at Bundaberg the other day that the plans and sections of that line were all ready before he left office.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Quite true.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. gentleman must know that he was stating what was not true.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: They were upon the table of the House, I tell you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is simply a parliamentary plan.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: That is the statement I have made; they are a record of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member knows very well that a Parliamentary plan is not a working plan; it is only a plan to be approved of.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: My statement at Bundaberg was that the parliamentary plans for that section of the railway were ready and placed upon the table of the House before we left office, and that the hon. gentleman, the day after my speech, telegraphed up, and treated my statement as correct, namely, that the plans were placed as a parliamentary record upon the table of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. gentleman must have dreamed it. It is not more than fourteen days since the working plans of the Bundaberg extension were completed. The hon. gentleman does not tell a falsehood, but he goes as near it as possible. He knows perfectly well that the working plans of the Bundaberg extension—or rather from Burrum to Bundaberg—were not completed. The working plans were only completed fourteen days ago, and tenders will be called for the construction of the line in a few days.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Does the hon. member really mean to say that I ever stated that the working plans were ready? If so, I contradict it; I never made such a statement. The statement I made was that the parliamentary plans were laid upon the table of the House before I left office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. gentleman must have been humbugging his audience when he told them that. He knew perfectly well that tenders could not be called for until working plans were prepared. He knew that all the quantities must be calculated before we call for tenders. If the hon. gentleman said that the parliamentary plans were completed before he left office, I will not contradict him.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: That is the statement you did contradict.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. gentleman wished to deceive the people of Bundaberg, as he knew that tenders could not be called for until the working plans were ready. I can assure the hon. gentleman that my authority is correct with regard to the matter. At all events the party who told me was present when the arrangement took place. I have no desire to slander anyone or to say anything that would be injurious, but the fact is that it was stated to me, and I believe it can be verified, that an arrangement was made by the contractors that a certain sum of money should be given to them, and that one was to get the contract for the work. I presume it was on the condition that the tender was accepted.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Is that in connection with the Stanthorpe line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. I have yet to understand where there was anything wrong in my making the arrangement I did with Mr. Bashford for the reduction of his tender. All the other tenders were cancelled; Mr. Bashford was the lowest tenderer for the extension from Stanthorpe to the border, and he came and asked me what I intended to do. I told him I intended that the Government should carry out the work, because I was perfectly satisfied that it could be done for the estimate of the Chief Engineer.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: What was his estimate? Can you tell?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think it was £133,000.

Mr. NORTON: What was the contract price?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not remember it. I have not got the papers here; but I know this much, that Mr. Bashford has got a very good tender.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Opposition Benches: Hear, hear!

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: That is what I told you last night.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then why blame me for doing it? It is impossible to know what the hon. gentleman means. He says I have done wrong—that I had no business to enter into an arrangement with Mr. Bashford for a reduction of £5,000 in his tender, and then he says he knows that he has got a good contract.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: I am sorry that you do not see the point, and at the same time are Minister for Works.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot see any point at all. Perhaps the hon. gentleman would have liked me to accept the tender for £5,000 more. It seems a most extraordinary thing that I should be called a bad Minister because I have succeeded in reducing a tender by £5,000. However, I have done it, and I think I have done a very good thing. With regard to the Speech itself, hon. members opposite have criticised it; but altogether, there is not much to find fault with in it. I think, myself, that on the whole it is a very fair speech—that it is one of the most intelligible speeches that has ever been introduced into this House. Speeches, as a rule, are intended to mystify; but this is entirely different. It shows clearly and distinctly what the intentions of the Government are, and I presume that hon. members are pretty well satisfied with it. I presume that we will get through this debate to-night. I do not think there is much more to be said on the subject. However, if hon. members have anything further to say, I shall be very glad to listen to them.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—My hon. friend, the member for Balonne, was pretty rough just now with regard to the Minister for Works and deputations. I do not intend to say how far his remarks are justified, but I can say for myself that on several occasions on which I have had to wait upon the hon. gentleman with deputations, or personally, I have always been received with the greatest courtesy. I wish to say that, and to make a point of it, because it is not the first time I have heard similar remarks upon the subject. I have heard others say the same thing, and therefore I, for my part, feel bound to express the satisfaction I have always felt in having received that courtesy from the hon. gentleman which everybody who goes to see a Minister is entitled to receive from him. There is one matter with regard to these cattle rates that I confess I do not quite understand. The old rates were in force at the time the late Government went out of office. The hon. the Minister for Works thought that the price charged was not such as it ought to be, and that the department was actually losing by carrying cattle at those rates, and he therefore felt justified in raising them. He was perfectly justified in doing so if he thought proper, and he did raise them. But having raised them, and having justified himself for so doing, he has not made it clear why he should now turn round and reduce them. That is where the point comes in, and the hon. gentleman's remarks have thrown no light whatever upon the subject. In fact, we stand in exactly the same position now that we were in before the hon. gentleman got up to speak at all. We simply know what we have known all along—that the rates were raised, and have since been reduced. We do not know why they have been reduced any more than we did half-an-hour ago. It strikes me that the hon. gentleman's action with regard to that matter has been something like the action of the New South Wales Government, which I saw referred to in the Sydney papers

to-day in connection with the tramway rates. The rates charged on the tramways in Sydney from the very first were low, and when the Government began running the tramways outside the town where there was less population, and consequently less traffic, they found that they were losing very considerably—that instead of receiving a larger dividend at the end of the year than they had been receiving previously, they were actually running them at a loss. In order to remedy that they raised the rates just as the hon. gentleman raised the cattle rates, and the result has been exactly what has been done here. They found that at the end of the year, or, at any rate, after a few months, that instead of the higher rates increasing their revenue, they were sustaining a loss, and they had to reduce them to what they were previously; or at any rate very considerably. The hon. gentleman is in exactly the same position with regard to these cattle rates. I must now say a few words with regard to the tenders for the Stanthorpe line. I heard exactly what the hon. gentleman told us to-night with regard to a conspiracy amongst the contractors here, when tenders were first invited for the construction of that line. Before the matter was made public I heard that that had been done, and I heard also that the hon. the Minister for Works had decided to call for tenders in the other colonies. I did not then know whether my information was reliable or not, but it turned out to be correct. Tenders were invited in the other colonies because the contractors here had tried to take advantage of the Government, because being a limited number they were able to arrange among themselves as to the price that should be tendered, and the successful tenderer was to give something to the others who did not get the contract. That was my information. I give it for what it is worth—it may be true or it may not. At any rate it appears that contractors in Victoria and the other colonies were invited to come here and tender for our lines. The result was that some came from Victoria—I do not know whether any came from the other colonies—but at any rate we had several contractors from the other colonies represented here, as well as our own. Was it fair to those men, when their tenders were put in and the whole of them had been rejected, that a contractor here should be singled out and a contract privately made with him for a few thousand pounds lower? I do not think the hon. gentleman intended anything dishonourable; I give him credit for acting as he thought best; but I do not see the advantage of calling for tenders, if after tendering an arrangement is to be made with a private contractor. If the tenders were found ineligible it would have been only fair to the men who tendered from the other colonies, and who must have been put to considerable expense in doing so, that they also should have been permitted to send in fresh tenders as well as the one who got the contract here. If that had been done there could have been no cause of complaint. One of those contractors—although I do not think I should place too much reliance on his statement—wrote to the papers expressing his indignation at the way in which they had been treated, and pointing out that it was not probable that in future tenderers would come from other colonies to offer their services for carrying out our public works. I do not know whether that is correct or not, but it is very discouraging to men, after they have been at the trouble and expense of coming here and inspecting the work that had to be done, and waiting here some two or three weeks, and have had all the anxiety of making their financial arrangements, and so forth, to find their tenders rejected and a private contract immediately

entered into. I do not know who the gentlemen were who in the first instance tendered for this Stanthorpe line, but I should like to know whether this gentleman who now has the contract was one of them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know whether he was or not.

Mr. NORTON: I am sorry for that, because from information I have received, and which I think is reliable, this very gentleman who now has the contract—who had a private contract made with him after the whole of the tenders had been rejected a second time—was one of those whom the Minister for Works described a few moments ago as a “band of conspirators.” If that is so, surely the discouragement to other men to come here is still worse than it would have been under ordinary circumstances. The mistake made by the hon. gentleman was in not allowing the whole of the tenderers to send in fresh tenders. Then there would have been no cause of complaint among them, whoever got the contract. For my own part I regret very much that the Minister for Works, in trying, as I believe, to do what he thought best, has made what I think will turn out to be a very expensive mistake to the colony by and by. I cannot say I was very much surprised at the manner in which that contract was given. It is not the only contract that has been dealt with after tenders have been called in the proper way. The Colonial Treasurer dealt in that way with a very important contract. He called for tenders not very long since for a dredge and some punts. Two separate tenders were invited, and there were two tenderers for the work. For some reason best known to the Colonial Treasurer, and I believe to nobody else, although one of those tenderers was the lowest for both works, a private arrangement was made by which one tenderer got the dredge and the other the punts. Some people call that manipulating tenderers.

The PREMIER: The lowest tenderer got the contract in each case.

Mr. NORTON: I am glad to hear it, because we were informed that one firm was the lowest tenderer for both. I do not say that is correct, because I have never seen the papers, but the statement was made that the lowest tenderer was made the highest because one agreed to deliver his work in Maryborough and the other in Brisbane, and the cost of conveying it to Maryborough was added to the estimate, thus making it the higher of the two. Such, at all events, was what appeared in the newspapers at the time, and I have never heard it contradicted. Even the Minister for Works is not quite blameless with regard to previous contracts. Shortly after the Government came into office an informal tender was accepted for a large amount of public work with a company which was actually not in existence at the time the tender was sent in. What is called a fishing tender was sent in. On other occasions, so particular is the Works Department with regard to accepting tenders, a cheque can be objected to instead of a tenderer's cash being lodged in the bank; and yet here was a company which had no existence until after the contract was entered into. The Minister for Works told us that his idea of conducting railways was to conduct them on commercial principles. We have only to look at the published returns of the Treasury which appeared, I think, last Saturday to see what those commercial principles result in. The increased revenue from our railways last year was £81,892, while the increased expenditure upon them was £188,074, the difference being £106,000. That is the hon. gentleman's idea of conducting railways on commercial principles. Although this increased

revenue was only £81,892, the Colonial Treasurer, when he made his financial statement last year, estimated the increased receipts for the year just ended at over £122,000. The Treasurer, in his written Budget speech, congratulated the country that the drought was at an end.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No; I expressed a hope that the drought would speedily terminate, but never said it had ended.

Mr. NORTON: If I had time I could point out to the hon. gentleman when he said it. Does the hon. gentleman forget that I introduced a deputation from Gladstone, who asked that the Government would assist them in supplying the town with water, and that when he said the drought was over I reminded him of the fact that the gentlemen who waited upon him had come all the way from Gladstone to Brisbane, simply because the town tanks were empty. If the drought had been at an end at the time the hon. gentleman made his estimates, there would have been some ground for expecting the increase looked for in the railway revenue, but, under the circumstances, there was not the slightest reason for expecting it. There was nothing whatever in the circumstances of the colony to indicate that the revenue could by any possibility be increased to the extent of £122,000. I am now referring to the revenue of the whole railway system. One railway returned very much more than the hon. gentleman estimated, but others returned very much less. The total increase, according to his calculations, should have been £122,000, whereas it was only £81,000. Can facts speak more plainly than this? We knew at the time, as was pointed out to the hon. gentleman, that the increase in the railway revenue at that time was owing to causes which were abnormal, and that these causes were ceasing to operate to the same extent as they had done previously. It was apparent to anybody who paid the slightest attention to the subject that it was absolutely impossible for any one who seriously considered the matter to fail to see that the railways could not possibly return what was expected from them by the Colonial Treasurer. If it had not been for the mistake made by the hon. gentleman in his estimates of Customs receipts, he would have been in a much worse position than he is at present. He overestimated the revenue from railways and underestimated the revenue from Customs. He calculated that the increase from the latter source would be £53,000, whereas it amounted to £70,000. I have alluded to this matter simply to show that the hon. member in making his estimates was just as incorrect in his calculations respecting Customs receipts as he was with regard to revenue from railways. The result of these combined mistakes has put him in a very much better position than he would otherwise have been in. He told us just now, that the colony was in a prosperous condition, but I think he afterwards explained that away by saying that the germ of prosperity existed now, but it was retarded by the severe drought of the last few years. Well, can any one fairly claim that the colony is in a prosperous condition when men, outside the town of Brisbane, are subjected to enormous losses in consequence of these three dry seasons. Visit any part of the colony you may, and you will find, north and south in every direction, numbers of men who have lost everything they possess, some who have lost half their property, and that all who have much stake in the country are great losers. Can the hon. gentleman deny that, and can he attempt to say that the colony is now in a prosperous condition? I do not mean to say that the colony may not recover in the course of

time when good seasons come round, and when the hon. gentlemen opposite are out of office; but as long as they remain there I have no doubt that the same thing will happen as when they were in before. They invariably commence with a large surplus and go out with a large deficit. The hon. member has only to look at his own Estimates to show that in those years when there has been a surplus the surplus has commenced immediately his party went out of office. The same thing has happened over and over again, and yet the hon. gentleman comes forward and says it is all owing to the seasons. Well, there are not always bad seasons when the present party are in power, but there is always the same result when they are in office. They commence in a good position, and end in a wretchedly bad one. I do not intend to say anything more upon that subject, but there is one matter I wish to make a few remarks upon—the question of the late loan. The Treasurer says that he hopes the gentlemen connected with this side of the House had nothing to do with those letters appearing in the English papers with the object of damaging the credit of the colony. The hon. gentleman did not stop there. He deliberately charged someone, and he stated that he was certain those letters were all written with the same purpose of damaging the Government. It was not simply to depreciate the price of the loan for the purpose of buying at a lower rate. Now, what justification was there for that? The hon. member read us a mass of letters which he had cut out of English papers to the same effect, and because those papers published the letters he had the hardihood, as the Premier had done before, to make deliberate statements that he believed the political enemies of the Government in this colony had been connected with that matter. Well, I call that a direct insinuation, and I only regret that a gentleman like the Treasurer should have had anything to do with it. I do not think the hon. gentleman did us justice on this side when he insinuated for one moment that he could believe that we had anything to do with contemptible and disreputable transactions like that. I think there is an indication here of what may have led to the insertion of those letters. I would point out that, on the 16th May, after the loan had been placed, the *Times* referred to the subject, pointing out the downward tendency of the money market, and it concluded the paragraph by saying that “short money cannot be cheaper than it now is.” The whole of the paragraph goes to show the state of the market at that time. It was not greatly affected by that telegram which was sent home to London. There is nothing in fact to show that a reduction was caused by that, because a day or two before the *Times* refers to the sale of the Victorian loan, and it also refers to the Russian scare. This is what it says with regard to Russian bonds:—

“No one placed much faith in the story just mentioned, but in the present condition of most of the markets, the accounts for the fall having been much reduced, while prices have risen materially during the past fortnight, almost any report of an unfavourable tenor suffices to produce a decline. Russian stock of 1873 showed no change, the ‘bear’ account in this security being so large that every slight relapse in price brings in buyers, but it closed below the highest point reached to-day.”

Now, I wonder if the Colonial Treasurer understands what that means? Does the hon. gentleman think for one moment that the gentlemen who resort to disreputable devices at home would not take advantage of his speech in order to reduce the value of our securities as well as others? Do we not know that it is constantly done? We can hardly take up a financial paper without finding some reference to these attempts

to reduce the value of stock, and why should those people not have been operating in this case as well as the political enemies of the Government? Why, the Treasurer himself gave them the opportunity of taking advantage of our position by the unwise statements he made. The hon. member attempted to defend himself to-night. Does he remember what took place in New South Wales a few years ago when money was so plentiful—when the banks, who held large Government deposits, advanced money to people in the country on the strength of having those large deposits? But when the Government came to require the money, what was the effect? The people were placed under the screw and had to suffer. The consequence was financial ruin to hundreds; and that will be the effect of the proposed action of the Treasurer. The Government here must require that money at some time, and the exact result that ensued in New South Wales must necessarily follow here, and the effect the hon. member wishes to produce will be absolutely overturned. The Treasurer also referred to the price brought by the loan as being satisfactory; but let us compare it with the prices of other securities sold about the same time. New Zealand floated a loan of £1,500,000; the amount tendered was £6,800,000; there were 800 tenderers, and the average price was £100 6s. 2d. South Australia, which at the present time has a deficit of £700,000, floated a loan of £1,500,000, the amount tendered being £3,800,000; there were 537 tenderers, and the price realised was £100 8s. 11d. Victoria raised a £4,000,000 loan; the amount tendered was £11,495,000; there were 1,153 tenderers, and the average price was £100 13s. 9d. Queensland floated a £2,500,000 loan; the amount tendered was £3,375,000; the number of tenderers being 353, and the average price £97 19s. 4d. What was there to account for such a low price? According to the hon. gentleman opposite, it was caused by an attempt to damage the reputation of the colony and injure the Government. At the time the late Government went out of office, November 17, 1883, the price of New Zealand 4 per cent. debentures quoted by the *Economist* was—buyers £100, sellers £101; Queensland, not inscribed at that time, buyers £100 10s., sellers £101 10s.; South Australia, buyers £99 10s., sellers £100 10s. At that time South Australian debentures were 1 per cent. lower than those of Queensland, and New Zealand were $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. lower; but at the present time Queensland debentures are about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. less than the others. That is one of the effects either of the management of the Government or of the drought, or else it is a consequence of something not yet disclosed. Can the hon. member, in the face of those figures, say that the colony of Queensland is as prosperous as he said it was? If so, why are its debentures in the London market so much lower than they were two years ago? I need say nothing more on the subject, for the plain figures tell a stronger tale without the addition of further remarks. There is not a great deal in the Governor's Speech; but I may say a word or two with regard to the islanders returned to New Guinea. I think the Government, having heard the reports circulated in regard to those islanders, were bound to make some inquiry, though I do not profess to believe that the Commission was properly constituted. The Premier has said so much in condemnation of the payment of members of this House for work done for the Government, that it is useless for me to argue the matter now. I simply say that a member of this House should not have been appointed; nor do I think that Mr. Milman ought to have been appointed; but I do think that the report having been received—whether the Commission was properly appointed or not—and the

Government believing that report to be justified by the evidence, they were bound to send the islanders back; but I do not believe in the absurd expense to which they have gone in returning them, nor can I say that I agree with the report itself, because hitherto I have not had time to look into the whole of the evidence. While on this question I may point out that though the report has been in print for more than a month it has not yet been circulated amongst hon. members. Other reports were laid on the table yesterday; but in spite of the understanding come to some years ago that all reports should be circulated amongst hon. members as soon as printed, instead of holding them over till the meeting of Parliament, this report has been kept back, and now members are invited to discuss a matter on which they have no information. I think this action should be referred to in the plainest terms, because it is a matter of common sense that when reports are printed members should first get them. Instead of that they are sent to the papers, and generally published without the evidence, so that what is published is of little or no value. It is the duty of the Government, whatever party may be in power, as soon as important papers are issued from the Government Printing Office to let hon. members have them so that they may read them at leisure in their homes without the excitement of politics to trouble them. I regret that this has not been done, particularly in the case of the report of the recent Commission. I believe I am justified in saying, with regard to regulations issued from time to time and withdrawn, that the Government ought to be in a position to see that they have evidence to justify them in framing regulations before those regulations are published; yet in almost every instance the regulations which have been published have had to be withdrawn. Such was the case with the timber regulations; the regulations with regard to overtime; and in regard to gold mines, the Minister for Works listened to reason after he had decided that help should be given to a certain class in the matter of deep-sinking—he afterwards arranged that assistance should be given to all goldfields where Mr. Jack recommended help should be given. The same thing has happened in every case—the Government have framed regulations, objection has been taken to them; they have then been withdrawn, and other regulations framed to take their place. With regard to the Timber Regulations, I do not think they are satisfactory now. There is a royalty charged on pine, cedar, and hardwood. Now, every bushman has his ideas of what hardwood is, but I venture to say that if a number of pieces of timber were put before any one of these commissioners he could not say whether any particular one was hardwood or not. Under those circumstances how can any equitable arrangement be made with the timber-getters? In New South Wales I believe that in each district a certain royalty is fixed for each species of timber, and in settling the amount of the royalty regard is had to the distance of the district from port. If it is far away among the mountains the royalty would be less than if it were near the rivers. There everyone knows what royalty each timber bears, and can see what he is about; but under our arrangement a man may go into the bush and cut what he does not suppose to be hardwood, and then, when the commissioner comes along, he is charged a royalty on it. I do not intend to enlarge upon that subject now. I believe the Government have the power to impose that royalty, and I believe that after the regulations have lain on the table a certain time the House has the power to reject them or not as it pleases. I hope that before many days are over some

further notice will be taken of the matter. There were some more matters I intended to touch upon, but as the hour is growing late and other members desire to speak, I shall postpone my remarks till a future date.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman who has just spoken has confined himself almost exclusively to subjects with which I am not conversant, with the exception of the Timber Regulations; and perhaps he has shown some wisdom in abstaining from discussing a matter which the more ingenious and skilful sophisters among his colleagues have not succeeded in making a very effective attack upon—I mean the Land Act. Possibly his recent brilliant denunciations of the Government at Gladstone may have exhausted his critical powers upon that subject, or possibly the reception he met with there has not encouraged him to repeat them again here. There is nothing in the hon. gentleman's speech which has not been amply dealt with by previous speakers on this side of the House. Going back to the remarks of the hon. member for Balonne, he objected so indignantly to what fell from the Premier last night with reference to those letters in the English papers that it must have given the impression that he himself was one of the men pointed at in the denunciation of the Premier. There was no one in the House referred to particularly in the remarks of the Premier; he simply expressed the hope that there was no one in the House capable of such an atrocity. The hon. member seemed to think those remarks were specially directed against him. Is that the result of a guilty conscience? It looks remarkably like it, and the impression left on me was that the hon. gentleman "doth protest too much." I think he had better have left it for others to assume whether he was likely to be guilty of such conduct or not. The hon. member said I was the father of the yellow pamphlet. I do not know what constitutes paternity; but I should have been very proud indeed to be able to pen such an effective pamphlet, and one that had so much to do with the ultimate defeat of that trans-continental railway scheme. When it first appeared there was one part of it with which I did not entirely agree; I thought it was too personal to the character of one of the great advocates of that scheme; but subsequent remarks made by that hon. gentleman have assured me that everything in that pamphlet was thoroughly well deserved. I say so because the hon. gentleman who brought forward that scheme said in the House that men who had brought forward similar schemes in other parts of the world—notably in America—were the true heroes of civilisation. I maintain that men of that kind are little better than beasts of prey. I am sorry the hon. member for Townsville is not now here, because he pretends to know something of the results of the system in America. Anybody conversant with the practical working of the land-grant railway system in America must know perfectly well that those men tyrannised to a fearful extent over the people who occupied the land they got for the construction of those lines, and that they carried on that system of tyranny and oppression from one generation to another till even now the country has not got rid of the dire results. Nothing was able to stop the course of settlement in America, but it went on under very adverse circumstances; and those men who have been lauded for their method of carrying out these schemes, how are they remembered now? Simply by endowments to libraries or charitable institutions, or in some cases to churches. After a lifetime spent in plunder and oppression, their last act is to sacrifice to God of the devil's winnings. The hon. member for Balonne accuses me of being

vindictive and malevolent, and why? He asserts, without any knowledge whatever, that I induced the Premier to appoint as police magistrate at Townsville a man who has been eighteen or twenty years a police magistrate in Queensland, or connected with the police force, to dispossess a man I never saw or even know by name. To say that is simply an absurdity. Because he happens to have married a cousin of mine—

Mr. MOREHEAD: He punched your brother.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He tried to do so.

Mr. STEVENSON: He did it most effectually.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I had been there I would have taken care that my brother stuck to him till he got more than he wanted. There were circumstances connected with that in which Mr. Henry never got his deserts. He managed to exercise influence that induced the Government to dismiss my brother from the Commission of the Peace. It was simply in consequence of an outrageous attack made by Mr. Henry from the bench upon my brother, who resented it off the bench. However, to say that I should have been influenced by any vindictive or malevolent motives in getting Mr. Henry appointed police magistrate is simply too absurd. The hon. gentleman referred to some other circumstances, and if he had gone into them they would have shown the real cause why he wished to attribute malevolent and vindictive motives to me. I wish he had gone into them and given me an opportunity of letting the House know what I have done in the matter. In that case the hon. gentleman would have got an exposure which he is not prepared for, and when he does bring those matters up he will get it—and not he alone, but a good many other hon. members in this House. The hon. gentleman referred neither to my action as Minister for Lands, nor to any other matter in connection with the administration of the Lands Department, except so far as the Timber Regulations were concerned. What he said then was only an echo of what had been said by each hon. gentleman who preceded him. Perhaps I had better deal with that at once. He wished to know why I had not stuck to the rate of royalty fixed by the first regulations. Well, I am quite prepared to admit that the Timber Regulations are very difficult to deal with. They have been too much for a good many Governments that preceded us. The royalty was shown to be too high by those interested in it, after a good deal of information had been collected. This information could only be collected after the regulations came out, as it was only then that men would come forward to protest against them, and bring forward arguments to show that the royalties were too much for them. The Government then consented to reduce the royalty on two kinds of timber. The hon. gentleman and those who preceded him seemed to have forgotten that they as a Government also attempted to impose a duty on cedar exported from the country of about 12s. per hundred, and as soon as the matter began to be discussed they reduced it from 12s. to 2s. I believe that was the way of the thing.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: No, it was not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was very near it, at all events.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Near enough for you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When this Government came into office the export duty was 2s., and I believe the duty was reduced to that at the time when the objection was first raised.

The hon. member for Townsville was perhaps the only one who made a distinct and definite statement of his objections to the Land Act and its operations. There was nothing in those statements but what we heard over and over again during the passage of the Bill, but as those criticisms assumed a definite form I will answer them as well as I can. The hon. member said that the effect of the Land Act would be that the whole of the leased country would pass into the hands of the present lessees and the smaller graziers—in the one instance for fifteen years, and in the other thirty years—practically shutting out all settlement. How he can arrive at any such conclusion as that I certainly cannot conceive, because one-half of the land will be used—not for grazing purposes, but for agricultural or any other form of settlement for which it is fitted—different sized grazing areas, different sized agricultural areas—it meets every possible want throughout the colony and on different terms of occupation. I can understand what the hon. gentleman is driving at. He thinks the old system of things is infinitely better than anything that can be put in place of it. But while the hon. gentleman talks of liberality in leaseholds, and the method of dealing with things in America, he must remember that he was a member of a Government who gave no chance of settlement outside certain areas; who would not allow, in grazing areas, the amount of land to be taken up to be increased beyond 1,280 acres. Every man knows that it is absolutely worthless to any occupant of such land to be restricted to 1,280 acres. And as long as it was restricted, the present lessee was likely to hold out for all time. Then he attacked violently the method of compensation which was proposed to be given under that Act. That is the very principle upon which the Government act. It is a principle that is just in all its bearings—that the work of a man's hands should be his against all the world. It is a recognised right now—wherever there are rights—that the occupant of land shall be entitled to the value of his improvements, no matter who the possessor of the land may be, whether an individual landlord or the State. Those who come in afterwards are certainly entitled to pay for the value of those improvements which represent the money they are supposed to bring to the late occupant or tenant. I maintain that this is a principle that ought to be recognised anywhere and everywhere. It is a principle for which they are contending in every country in Europe, and it is the principle that is now being worked out to do justice to the tenants in Ireland where there has been so much contention. It is the first move in the right direction, and it is a principle that the State is equally bound to observe here. The hon. gentleman also said that the value of these improvements would absolutely prohibit the re-occupation of this country at any future time. Can it be assumed that the occupants of these lands who put the improvements upon them should not be repaid what they spent for the purpose of working the country? That is an absurd idea for anybody to advance. The value of these improvements will be certainly the same to anybody who comes afterwards, no matter who or what they may be; whether the improvements are represented by water conservation or by fencing, they are equally applicable to the conditions under which that land is held. That may not may be the hon. gentleman's opinion, but it is mine.

Mr. MOREHEAD: And that of course is the opinion of the whole world.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And it will be effective for a time. I do not know that there is anything else in the hon. gentleman's

contention except one point, and that is that for the time that these leaseholders, or the present leaseholders, get an indefeasible lease for 15 years, they would be absolutely in occupation of that country. How can that be assumed? Can the land be worth nothing when it passes out of his hands? He has no legal claim upon it, and when his time is up it reverts to its original owners to be dealt with in the interests of the country. So it will be with the larger grazing areas; they are in the very same condition. If it is thought necessary at the termination of this lease that the land should be divided it will be the duty of the Government to deal with the land in that way. I do not know if it is necessary for me to refer to the misrepresentations that have been made except for the information of people outside, and to show the reason why larger quantities of land have not been made available for settlement up to the present time. It must be known to everybody who is conversant with the condition of things in the country that all the land of any value whatever is under lease to the people who are already occupying it for stock-raising purposes; and by the Act all those leases upon which rents were being paid are still in the hands of certain occupants, and are to be dealt with as a portion of the whole run or division; consequently there is no land to deal with, except in some isolated spots here and there; and wherever they have been met with they have been dealt with as soon as possible. Most land that is available has been dealt with up to the present time, and a great deal of satisfactory settlement has been accomplished. The higher priced land offered to the public has been taken up, and the applicants have been three and four thick. It cannot be supposed that a system such as the new Land Act has inaugurated can come in without any difficulty. You cannot expect to make a radical change of that kind without some delay occurring, as was pointed out by the Premier. In New South Wales they have had their Act in operation for a much longer time than we have, and they have not yet had land in the market, and from the very same reason; but there it seems to have been unnecessarily delayed. The hon. member for Townsville also referred to the action of the New South Wales Government, and to the provisions of their Act which did not give any compensation for improvements. The effect of that will be that under that system, in the case of grazing areas of 10,000 to 15,000 acres and from ten years' to twelve years' leases, by allowing for no improvements, there will be produced a class of men who are very well understood, both there and here too, as "jackaroos." They are men who will put no improvements of their own on their land, and who will absolutely destroy it in its character and work it out as quickly as they can, or, before the termination of their lease, leaving it in a barren condition. They will destroy its grazing qualities, and put no improvements upon it. It will have this effect socially, that it will produce a class of men who are undesirable in the colony; and one of the effects of it has been felt in the late free-selection-before-survey laws in New South Wales, when there was no temptation to carry out improvements. The same effect would have necessarily followed here, if the compensation for improvements had not been allowed in full. No man will improve the land if he can never expect any fair return for it. The hon. the leader of the Opposition, on several occasions when speaking of the land, has chopped about to all points of the compass—first in one direction and then in another, feeling, as it were, what the tendency of popular feeling was; and at the same time portions of the Press—many of them the organs of the late Government,

which seem to be directed by them, and inspired by their wishes and opinions—have been endeavouring to mislead the public by the grossest misstatements, even up to the present time. And when the hon. gentleman discovered what had been the effect of the representations of that portion of the Press and also of his own emissaries in the country in misleading and working upon the prejudices of the ignorant and unthinking portion of the people; when he found that they had made a certain effect he took up another line and said "Why is land not made available for the needs of settlement—why don't the Government bring forward land for settlement?" If he objected to that, sir, why did he not object to it when the Bill was passing? He did not make that any ground of objection then, and he knew perfectly well that there must be an interval, between the Act coming into operation and its practical working, of something like six or eight months. Everyone knew that at the time the Act was passed, and the only way in which it might have been avoided would have been by doing gross injustice to those men who were occupying land under lease, because they had sufficient stock to cover it, and if they were required to remove it at once without notice so that a large amount of land could be dealt with under the Act, grievous injustice would have been done them. Six months, at any rate, should be allowed them to enable them to remove their stock, because many of them knew that as soon as the Act came into operation and land was thrown open for grazing purposes, it would be taken up in large areas very quickly. There is certainly one great difficulty to contend against in working the Act, and the public need scarcely be surprised if it occasions even some greater delay than has occurred already. That difficulty arises from the fact that many parts of the country, in consequence of the dry seasons that we have experienced during the last two or three years, have been rendered almost waterless. To commence operations under this Act in such parts of the country where water is so scarce will of course be a great difficulty, and I do not see how it is to be overcome at once—or until we have one or two good seasons—so that we may make a fair start. If we once get a fair start there will be no further difficulty. If hon. gentlemen opposite would state fairly and honestly what are their objections to the operation of the Act, they would be very different indeed from what they have attempted to make the public believe, and from what they have uttered in this House. It is not because there has been any delay in carrying out the Act; it is not because they think it would be a failure; but because they believe it will be a success—a success in a direction in which they do not wish it to be a success. They do not wish it to be a success in connection with small grazing areas; they do not wish to get twenty thousand acre men settling upon the country, stocking it, and becoming prosperous. That is where the sore point exists—that is where the shoe pinches. They know perfectly well that the Act is likely to become popular—it is already popular in some parts of the country; and there are numbers of men, not only in this colony, but in the other colonies as well, who are waiting to avail themselves of the opportunities it offers in that direction.

Mr. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—I think on an occasion like this, when the House has met for a new session, it should be availed of by hon. members. It gives them an opportunity of criticising the action of the Government during the recess, and also of offering—and this in a friendly way—some suggestions as to the defects that have become apparent in past legislation, and also any benefits that the Government may

erive from what hon. members may have seen since we were last together, especially if they have taken the opportunity of travelling through different parts of the colony. It is only natural that on an occasion like this the Government, should in self-defence try to make everything appear as bright and prosperous as they possibly can. We have been told by the hon. the Treasurer that the colony is on the high road to prosperity. That is a very grand statement for any Government to be able to make if they can only convince the public that there is any truth in it. There is no man in the colony, and certainly not in this House, who would be more glad to think that the colony is really on the high road to prosperity than I should be myself. I may also say that there are very few members in this House who have had more opportunities of judging, during the recess, by extensive travel throughout the colony whether that remark is true or not, and I unhesitatingly say that it is not justified by the condition of the country. I am sorry to say that throughout the different parts of the colony in which I have travelled I have seen evident signs of retrogression. I have not seen the prosperity that the Government so exultingly refer to. I have seen men in all walks of life unemployed; I have seen public works looked to for the means of keeping what were formerly prosperous districts going; and it is a bad thing for the country when the public begin to look to the Government to find employment for them on the public works of the colony. Any comments and criticisms that we have had up to the present time during this debate have, I find, been confined to very narrow limits—limits immediately round this southern corner of the colony, and I propose to go somewhat beyond the track which has been trodden up to the present time. I shall take a much more extensive view of what the general condition of the colony really is. I shall certainly not do it in an unfriendly way to the Government who have not had the same opportunities of judging that I have had. They have remained down here during the recess, with the exception perhaps of that “light comedy company,” headed by the Premier, which went to Townsville the other day. But beyond that, their observations have been confined to the southern end of the colony, and I am very much afraid that they have been wilfully blind to what has been going on in the more northern portion of it. The Minister for Lands has, as one might only expect from the father of our well known Land Act, spoken in terms of praise of what I can only designate as his bantling, and he considers that that Land Act will be the means of solving every trouble that is likely to come upon the colony in the way of a deficient revenue. That view he has long held, and I myself shall be very glad to see that the revenue to be derived from that Land Act will be the means of paying the very heavy deficit which I fear is likely to occur in the revenue during the next few years. We were told last session that although we were not to expect any very great results from the Land Act, that at all events we might reasonably look forward to £10,000 as being the revenue to be derived from that measure by the 30th of June. We are asked now for time. Well, we will give him time; we will give the Land Act time; but I would point out that instead of the £10,000, which we were led to expect we might receive, we have had a paltry £700 up to date. That is the effect of the working of the Land Act up to the present time—an addition of £700 to the revenue. I am well aware that the Act did not come into force until March, but the Minister for Lands had three months at his disposal before that time during which he could have had

surveys effected and done something to prevent the almost absolute stoppage of settlement, as is the case at the present time. It is not, in my opinion, the land tenure that is the only objectionable feature of the Act, and that is stopping settlement. People will not settle on the land because they cannot make a profitable use of it. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me if the Government choose to give the land away for nothing to selectors as long as they can induce people to live on the land and make some use of it. To ask selectors to remain under a leasehold tenure for fifty years, the rent being increased every five years after the first ten years, exposed to a system of espionage during the whole of that period, and their land liable to be forfeited at any time, if the Government chose from vindictive motives to bring a charge against them—this is a state of affairs that will never lead to the settlement of the lands of the colony. Sell the land if you like; fix as high a price as you like, so long as it is fair and just. The people who come here to settle among us come from a country where to obtain an acre of freehold land is almost a practical impossibility, and the one inducement to them to come out is to get a freehold. Charge them for it whatever price may be just. High-priced land will not retard settlement; but at the same time, if you settle people on the land with a freehold tenure, give them some means of making that land available; show them how they can make a living out of it. If they produce anything, give them facilities for getting their produce to market. If they go in for grazing, make roads for them. Do anything to facilitate settlement, but let the people have the land. Get them settled on the land, and afterwards, if you want to raise revenue, do it by taxation. You can tax the people when they are prosperous, but you cannot raise a revenue from land unless you can show the people how they are going to turn it to good account. In connection with the Land Act, I believe it is the intention of the Government to amend it, and I would point out one clause which in its present form will, I am sure, give great dissatisfaction throughout the country as soon as it is properly understood. I refer to the homestead clause, although in calling it the homestead clause I am making a slight mistake, because there is no such clause in the Act. When the Land Bill was introduced the Government deprecated the idea of homesteads, and gave it to be understood that the homestead selector was no longer to exist. However, public opinion was brought to bear to a very great extent, and a clause was inserted in the Bill by which a conditional selector of 160 acres was to be placed in the same condition under the new Act as he was under the old one. That is to say that at the end of five years, by paying up the balance between the rent he would have had to pay for that term, and half-a-crown an acre, and having complied with certain conditions, he was entitled to the deeds of his land; and it was expected that virtually he would be placed in the position of a homestead selector and get his land for half-a-crown an acre. No clause in the Act, as far as I have seen, has given more general satisfaction to the *bona fide* small selector of the colony than what is believed to be a reinsertion of the homestead clause. But we find now that instead of getting his land for half-a-crown an acre, the price he may have to pay for it is quite uncertain. Land suitable for homestead selection must be good, and, judging from the rental the Land Court are assessing good selections at, the rent is not at all likely to be less than a shilling an acre in the northern part of the colony, where certainly the greatest opening for the homestead selector exists. The consequence will be that at the end

of five years the selector will have paid 5s. an acre for his land. I mention this so that the Minister for Lands may put it on a clear footing whether the homestead selector is to get a refund. The rent may be 2s. an acre, in which case he will be paying 10s. an acre for his land. In the same way that, if his rent is threepence an acre for five years, he is called upon to pay the other fifteenpence, I demand that after the homestead selector has paid half-a-crown an acre he should receive a refund, and that he should clearly understand that by complying with certain conditions he gets his land at half-a-crown an acre. I believe that was the intention of the House when the Bill was passed; but I was led to believe, from a conversation I had with a member of the Land Board, that there is no clause in the Act which enables the Land Board to grant any refund in the event of the price paid for the land being more than 2s. 6d. an acre. I am rather glad to find that the Government intend to retrace their steps in connection with that very pernicious and bad clause relating to survey before selection. When that clause was going through committee hon. members on this side—I know I did—pointed out how this survey before selection must inevitably retard settlement; but we were met by the statement of the Premier that any suggestion that emanated from this side of the House in connection with the Land Bill was received with the greatest suspicion by the Government. The consequence was that they put a clause into the Bill which is of itself quite sufficient to prevent settlement proceeding, even if people are anxious to settle on the land, which I am sorry to say they are not just at present. The settlement of the land is an important thing; but it is not the only thing. To make land unremunerative you require labour, and here is another point upon which I must say I am very much dissatisfied with the action of the Government, especially during the recess. I say that the vindictiveness—the malicious vindictiveness—shown by the Government towards the planters of the North is a disgrace to any Government that claims to have a Premier who lays any claim to statesmanship. The vindictiveness with which the planters of the North have been pursued is such that it will reflect everlasting disgrace on the Government. I do not know that anything could be more malicious and disgraceful than the threat made by the Premier last night in this House when referring to the planters. The hon. gentleman said—

“I would suggest this to some hon. gentlemen opposite, that if they did not mix up their business and politics in the way that they do they would be more likely to be successful in both; and so long as they act in the manner suggested there is little possibility of their doing themselves any good or the Government very much harm.”

That I hold is a distinct threat held out to the planters that “unless you surrender all your honest convictions and do as I wish, you will get no assistance from the Government.” A more disgraceful attempt than this to coerce a body of colonists who have done as much as any class in the community to bring the colony into its present state of prosperity, or rather, its past state of prosperity, I have never known. A threat like this is one of the most disgraceful things I have ever heard a Premier utter in the House.

The PREMIER: Nonsense!

Mr. BLACK: The hon. gentleman has also stated that the Government have in no way departed from the promise they gave last session when they introduced their Immigration Bill into the House.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. BLACK: Well, I beg to differ from the hon. gentleman in that respect. I say that the Premier stated that the Government would select and introduce German labour for the planters.

The PREMIER: When did he say so?

Mr. BLACK: I say that the Premier stated that the Government would select and introduce German labour.

The PREMIER: When did he say so?

Mr. BLACK: Will the hon. gentleman be convinced if I show him? I hope there has not been any misreporting or misquotations in this case. I will quote what the hon. gentleman said, from *Hansard* of last year, volume 43, page 274. The language he used, in moving the second reading of the Immigration Act of 1882 Amendment Bill, was as follows:—

“We propose to make arrangements immediately for selecting and forwarding agricultural labourers to Queensland, but I do not think that England alone is the only country in Europe to which we ought to look for such labour. We ourselves, although we have been a separate nation for many years, must remember the stock from which we came.”

And lest the hon. gentleman may say that this does not refer to German immigration, I will read an extract from the Governor's Speech of last session—page 275. In his Opening Speech to the House, His Excellency, expressing, I suppose, the views of the Government, said:—

“The subject of immigration, and of the supply of labour for the numerous and increasing industries of the colony, has received the anxious attention of my advisers. Improved arrangements will shortly be completed for the selection of suitable immigrants in Great Britain and the continent of Europe, and for their conveyance on arrival to the places where their labour is most required; and a Bill will be laid before you to amend the provisions of the Immigration Act relating to the engagement and introduction of indentured labourers from Europe. I trust that by these means, and by offering liberal inducement to settle upon the public lands, a constant stream of immigrants of all classes may be steadily maintained without an undue burden being laid upon the Treasury, and that the dangers attendant upon the introduction of large numbers of Asiatics into the community may be successfully avoided.”

If that does not mean that the Government will select and introduce European immigrants in order to prevent the influx of Asiatics into the colony, I do not know what it does mean. I think, sir, I was correct when I said that the Government had undoubtedly stated that they would select and introduce these immigrants.

The PREMIER: Where does the contradiction come in?

Mr. BLACK: You denied having said so. The hon. gentleman, I understand, has stated to the country—he distinctly said it at Charters Towers and Townsville—that the Government had made an offer from which they had never receded.

The PREMIER: They have not.

Mr. BLACK: I maintain that they have receded from it.

The PREMIER: We did not undertake to engage the men for the planters in England or Europe, and we have said so; but that is what they want.

Mr. BLACK: The hon. gentleman said the Government would select and introduce immigrants of this class, and I have read his words from *Hansard*. I wish now to say a few words about the Commission to inquire into the recruiting of islanders from New Guinea. I may say that it would have been more satisfactory to a large class of the community if the selection of the members of that Commission had been somewhat different. I think in a matter of this sort, in which the interests of the planters are

concerned, that they certainly, in common fairness, might have been allowed a representative.

The PREMIER : A commission of planters.

Mr. BLACK : No, not a commission of planters. I attended, I think, three of the meetings of that Commission. I have nothing to say against them, and the hon. gentleman need not suppose that I am going to condemn them. I was perfectly satisfied with what I saw, although it struck me that the evidence on which the men have been returned was not the sort of evidence that would have convicted anyone in a court of justice. However, I maintain that the Government have again carried their vindictiveness against the planters to an extreme length by the way they have acted. Now, what does it amount to? The Premier or the Government have got a report in writing from three gentlemen, stating that in their opinion certain islanders have been illegally obtained. They do not say a single word to the employers of that labour, but send one of their officers out to the estate to tell those boys to pack up their swags and go away. I would ask any hon. gentleman if that is a fair way of dealing with the planters?

The PREMIER : I do not believe it was done.

Mr. BLACK : I know it was done.

Mr. MOREHEAD : We cannot gauge his belief.

Mr. BLACK : The men are gone, and the planters are told that if they dare to stand up for their rights as any man would do when suffering under a sense of extreme injustice—they are told that if they do not allow the men to go they will never be allowed to have any more labourers. Is this a free country or not, I want to know?

The PREMIER : Hear, hear! It is.

Mr. BLACK : If this is the system of freedom which the present Government would introduce, it is a pity we have not some form of despotic government.

The PREMIER : There is no freedom about slaves.

Mr. BLACK : I have not met a single planter who did not admit that if the men were improperly obtained it was the duty of the Government to send them home, but that might have been done in some sort of way by which the planters would willingly have assisted the Government to carry it out. It was done under pressure; it was done under threats, and it was only lately that any suggestion was made that the planters should receive compensation for the injustice they had suffered at the hands of the country.

The PREMIER : What do you mean by "lately"?

Mr. BLACK : Towards the end of the negotiations?

The PREMIER : What negotiations?

Mr. BLACK : The negotiations which led to asking for the injunction. I say, sir, that if the Government intend to deal fairly with the planters I am glad to hear it; but that a most gross injustice has been done, and gross illegality has been committed, I state most emphatically. Now it is asked—Why is it the planters do not come forward and assist the Government to introduce European labour? Well, it does not require very much consideration to explain why they have not done so hitherto. First of all, they considered the labour was unsatisfactory. They knew that the time would not be far distant when the

working men of the country would rise and denounce the introduction of cheap foreigners. They knew that if they took immediate steps to introduce those men the Premier would say—"The planters did it; do not blame me." No, the planters have held out up to the present time, and till, I may say, they are almost ruined. In about two years this industry will have become extinct in Queensland, except that there will be two or three huge syndicates in whose hands the whole of the sugar production of Queensland will rest. After the illegal way in which the Government have acted in connection with those islanders, what guarantee will any employer of labour have that after he introduced labour from Europe the Government would not do the same thing and send someone up to the estates and tell the men that if they were displeased with their agreements they might break them and go? How many of our immigrants are there who would not only too willingly get a return passage home after they have been here six months? It has been so ever since the colony was formed. We have all heard of Jordan's lambs, who went up and down the country cursing the day when they were induced to leave the old country, but when they became familiar with the ways of the country they were very glad they had come here. And so it was with these kamakas. I know the majority of them were perfectly satisfied until they were told there was a chance for them to go home, and they being home-sick seized the opportunity and went off. That many of them came here with a misunderstanding as to the nature of their agreements, I fully believe, but those men have no idea of the value of time. Many of them came away from their own islands merely for the love of adventure. When they came here they found the work harder than they anticipated, and were glad to go home; but that the Government acted illegally in taking the men away without one single word to their employers I consider a most gross act of injustice. And now they are going to try and enforce the bonds against the shipowners. How on earth can they do that without proving their case? I am not much of a lawyer, thank goodness, but how are you going to prove the kidnapping with these men away? I do not think the shipowners are such simple individuals as to hand over their £500 unless the Government can show a much stronger case than I think they can at present. Well, I think it is a matter of extreme regret that tropical agriculture, that promised so well for the colony a few years ago, should be now in the very bad condition that it is at the present time. I am sorry to say that confidence in that industry is utterly destroyed. The planters only represent a handful of the community. They are men, no doubt, fortified by experience in the views that they hold, but surely with the millions of acres of magnificent land that we have in the North—land that has not suffered by the climatic conditions that have prevailed in the South—surely, I say, it is a pity there is no one to be found in the colony, not even the Government, who will devise means by which tropical agriculture can be carried out under the conditions that the Government maintain it should be. Not a single instance has come to my knowledge where any attempt has been made—not necessarily to grow sugar, for there are thousands of acres in the North well adapted for other branches of tropical agriculture, such as the growth of coffee, tea, and spices—all the tropical productions can be grown in the North if you have suitable labour; but it is strange that no attempt has been made by anyone amongst the advocates of cheap Continental labour up to the present time to make the experiment. Yet, because the planters having achieved success in one

direction by carrying out the views indorsed by all sugar-growing countries in the world—because they will not abandon those ideas and try a new experiment never tried elsewhere, they are denounced on every possible occasion by the Government of which the Premier is the head; and I say that that trip to Townsville, Charters Towers, and Ravenswood, the other day, was a most disgraceful exhibition for the Premier of a colony, such as this, to undertake. It was nothing but a tirade against the planters and a raising of the coolie cry. But as far as the planters are concerned we will make the Premier a present of the coolie cry; the planter has given up all hope and all desire of introducing coolies, so that if the hon. gentleman has nothing to rest his case upon but the coolie cry in trying to bring the planters into disrepute, he has a very poor case indeed. There is one matter to which I wish to refer, and which the Government may be excused for having said nothing about, though I am sure the Ministerial party who visited the North must have heard a great deal about it—that is, the separation movement which exists in the North at the present time. In this matter I do not expect to get possibly more than two or three votes in this House; but I am not going to be discouraged by that fact. It is a necessity of the case that a matter of such importance to the Northern portion of the community should not be supported to any great extent by any of the Southern members; but that this movement is a growing, a sound, and a healthy movement in the North there are very few who have been in the North can possibly deny. It was certainly not the place of the Premier to make reference to it in the Governor's Speech; that would perhaps be giving it more importance than he would admit.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. BLACK: At the same time I should not be doing my duty as a Northern representative if I were not to refer to the subject. I stated in the House last session that I intended making a tour throughout the northern part of the colony to test the feeling of the public, before being prepared to commit myself to separation. I made that tour, and am prepared to tell the House that if they think this is not a real, sound, live movement in the North, they make a great mistake.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What about Charters Towers?

Mr. BLACK: The miners of Charters Towers are opposed to separation, I admit. At Herberton they are also opposed to separation. But I can tell the Premier that however much they may be opposed to separation and coolie labour they are a great deal more opposed to cheap German labour. When I travel I do not select my audiences—I do not merely go amongst those whom I know to be friends, but also amongst those whom I have every reason to believe are politically opposed to me; and I cannot let the present opportunity pass without paying a very high compliment to the men of Charters Towers for the reception I received there, notwithstanding the efforts made in the Brisbane Press to jeopardise the success of my visit; wherein it was said to be all very well for Mr. Black to travel round among his friends on the coast, but let him dare to go to Charters Towers. I am very glad I did go, and very glad to be able to record in this House my testimony to the honest straightforwardness of the Charters Towers miners, although I am quite prepared to say that I did not convert them to separation. But I say that they are open to reason, and that they will yet be separationists there is not the least doubt in my mind. There are wheels within wheels.

1885—E

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. BLACK: They will yet be separationist to a man. So far as I can judge, the party oppose to separation are those who think this is a blow at "Sam." There is a distrust of the Government; they are so dependent on the expenditure of Government money in these bad times to keep things going that they think, if they show approbation of the separation movement too loudly, they will not get their public works carried on.

The PREMIER: This is specially at Charters Towers?

Mr. BLACK: At Charters Towers they are quite independent of any Government; it is the feeling in the North. The Premier yesterday in referring to misrepresentation in connection with the loan said that misrepresentation was a mode of political warfare to be deprecated. I quite agree with him there, and I think that for the leader of a strong party to descend to the misrepresentations that he made at Charters Towers and Townsville in connection with the separation movement is very much to be deprecated indeed. I now refer to those wonderful statistics which he brought forward there, and which he thought would remain uncontradicted, and show that the North had been receiving the full amount of money to which it was entitled. I do not know where the hon. member got his figures.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: He said he got them from the Minister for Works.

Mr. BLACK: This is what the hon. the Premier said at the Townsville banquet. No doubt a certain allowance is always to be made for banquet speeches, but the figures given there were so very wide of the mark that it must have taken a great deal of champagne to justify the error.

"They had been so long told of the grievances of the North that the phrase had become an article in their faith. Indeed, he had come half to believe it himself. But since he had been in power he had taken the trouble to inquire, and he would read for their benefit a few figures which had been supplied him by Mr. Miles."

Where was the hon. the Treasurer? I do not think he would have made such a fearful bungle over the figures. Surely he could have sent up the figures.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He could, but he wouldn't. He has a conscience.

Mr. BLACK—

"Of total loan and revenue expenditure for roads and bridges the proportions had been, for the southern portion of the colony, £9 2s. per head of population: Central district, £11 7s.; Northern district, £12 9s. So was wounded a cherished article of their faith."

Well, sir, as to the expenditure on roads and bridges, that is a matter I intended to get information about. Whether those figures are correct or not I cannot say, but if they are no more correct than those referring to loan expenditure, they are very far wide of the mark.

"The population of the Northern districts was now about one-sixth of the whole colony. Supposing that one-sixth was their share, the amount they were entitled to out of the loans already floated was £2,760,000; the amount they actually got was £2,426,000, and as their proportion of the population was not always one-sixth, he thought they could not say they had received an unfair share."

Now sir, I would like to know where the Premier or the Minister for Works got those figures.

The PREMIER: You will find them all in the report of the Commissioner for Railways laid on the table to-day.

Mr. BLACK: The figures are manifestly incorrect. The total amount of loan that has been voted for the North—and this includes

£222,000 for harbours and rivers taken out of general vote—the total amount of loan voted for the North since Separation has been £1,964,778.

The PREMIER: You mean before the last session, I suppose.

Mr. BLACK: Before the last session. I do not take into account any of this ten million loan. Of the sixteen millions borrowed by the colony, all that has been voted for the North has been a little under two millions—one eighth. The Premier talks about the population being one-sixth; that is a matter of indifference. Out of this two millions voted for the North, there has only been spent £1,200,000. That is one of the great grievances of the North—that when money is voted it remains on the Estimates and is never spent, while in the southern parts of the colony the expenditure proceeds almost without intermission. The North has little doles dribbled out to it according to the politics of the districts that require it. But I maintain that the North, according to her contributions to the revenue, is entitled to a great deal more than one-sixth. I have no doubt the Treasurer will bear me out in the statement that since Separation the Customs revenue of the whole colony has amounted to about £10,000,000, of which the North has contributed £2,000,000—that is, one-fifth. Of the land revenue of the colony, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the North at present contributes no less than one-third. In the last rent list, that is up to September 30th, the North contributed £58,482, and the South £120,298, making a total of £178,780. Thus the North contributed one-third of the land revenue of the colony last year; it has contributed one-fourth of the Customs revenue for the last five years, and one-fifth since Separation. Therefore I maintain that the North was entitled to one-fifth of the money borrowed on loan, and not the one-sixth the Premier talks of. As to the new loan, the North is entitled to one-fourth of it in proportion to the amount it contributes. I was determined to take the opportunity to refute the statistics the Premier made such free use of in the North; and I quite agree with what he said yesterday—that misrepresentation is a style of political warfare much to be deprecated. I cannot understand the extraordinary misstatements he made on that last tour. The coolie question was the only leg he had to stand on; and he took advantage of the prejudices of the people—prejudices which he himself admitted he had done as much as he possibly could to work up. Those are the grounds of his objection to the separation movement. The hon. gentleman will have to find very much stronger grounds than that before he will stop the growth of that movement. I believe that if the majority of electors in the South were convinced that an injustice was being done to the North they would be willing to remedy the grievances. For the North to be told they have no grievances, and for the head of the Government to make such misstatements as the Premier has made, is not the way to conciliate the North; and the Government will have to take steps very different from that if they wish to stop the movement. A movement of this sort is not one that is to be hastily accomplished. If it is sound it will have to stand the full weight of criticism. It will have to stand open to discussion; there can be no misrepresentation about it. There is no use telling the people up north that it is a planters' movement.

The PREMIER: But it is.

Mr. BLACK: I must emphatically say it is not, and I may appeal to this House whether the statements I have from time to time made

are not equally as reliable as those of the hon. the Premier. It is the only leg the hon. gentleman has to stand upon.

Mr. MOREHEAD: A blackleg.

Mr. BLACK: An appeal to the prejudices of the people to tell them it is a coolie movement, and it is got up by the planters.

The PREMIER: Why are you ashamed of your own child?

Mr. BLACK: I said before I do not expect to get half-a-dozen votes if this matter comes on for discussion here. I am aware there is no necessity for it to come to the House. It is a matter for the Home Government. I know, Mr. Speaker, that the impression got abroad that if the figures quoted by the Premier up North are true, the North really had no tangible ground for complaint. My figures are open to criticism; but I say they are correct, and I can also bring Government documents to prove them. One thing is quite certain that the North is not likely ever to have had more money spent than was voted for it by this House. I have made no mistake in my admission. I think that this is the proper time to refer to the tardy way in which many of the Northern works have been carried out. I specially intend to refer to the Herberton and Cairns Railway, for two years ago, when I travelled up there, the money was voted for that railway, and I think we should get some good reasons for the unnecessary delay in connection with it. Out of the old loan there was £200,000 voted, and so far as we can see there are no signs whatever of that railway being commenced. Then, I think that Bowen is entitled to some more definite information as to what is to be done with the £150,000 voted out of the old loan for the Bowen and Haughton Gap Railway. We would like to know if coal has been found there. There was an additional sum voted for a railway to a then undiscovered goldfield. We would like to know whether there is any chance of that railway being commenced within the next five years. I am very much afraid that the Gulf Railway will be a repetition of the Herberton Railway. We have got Normanton and Burketown placed in the same relative position as Cairns and Port Douglas are placed, and the Government were very ingenious, when framing their railway schedule in the Loan Bill last year, in drawing the line carefully between the two places. I should like to know when the time comes, whether the Government have decided where they are going to take that railway; and also if they have yet discovered whether Normanton or Burketown is the better place, or whether we are not likely to have a full discussion on the Point Parker route. Hon. members will not forget that at the time the transcontinental railway was contemplated, an English syndicate, to whose advantage it entirely was to select the very best port on the Gulf, selected Port Parker as the terminus. The people of Normanton are very anxiously waiting for some decision from the Government about this railway; but as the member for Burke will probably refer at some length to this subject I shall not deal with what properly belongs that gentleman's electorate. There is no doubt very little has been said about the New Guinea annexation, and I judge from that, Mr. Speaker, that it is not considered a matter of much importance to hon. members of this House and the country what becomes of New Guinea. I think myself that after the extraordinary way in which this colony has been treated by the Home Government

in connection with New Guinea, that the next best thing that can be done with it is to let Germany take possession of the whole; and there is no doubt that within the next ten years, if the labour policy of the Government prevails, the north-eastern coast of this colony will be a foreign settlement. That settlement will probably consist of Germans, mixed with Swedes and Danes; and I see, myself, no objection, if we are prepared to turn out the working men of this colony in favour of these foreigners, why we should not allow Germany to have the whole of New Guinea, as well as the north coast of Australia. I am quite certain that, as very little has been said in connection with this annexation of part of New Guinea, very little interest is felt by the people of this colony, and certainly by members of this House, as to what becomes of the rest of it. Our intention always was that it should be retained as a security for Queensland; but, now we have allowed a foreign power to take possession of a great portion of it, I think we may safely allow them the whole of it, and spare even the paltry contribution we have to pay of £15,000, and which this itinerant Governor has been trying to augment by every possible means in his power. I am glad to find that the Premier did not readily accede to his request for a further subscription towards that charitable object. I shall not detain the House much longer. I regret to say, notwithstanding the adversity and hard times that the agricultural industry of the North has gone through, that even now the labour question seems to be as far off settlement as ever, for I see that the Government contemplate again dabbling with the Polynesian Act. I do not know what they are going to do, but I maintain this: that it will keep up that feeling of insecurity which undoubtedly exists amongst the planters of the North. I can tell the hon. gentleman this—I do not suppose he ever contemplated that it would be the case—that the only progress being made just now in agriculture in the North is with the assistance of Chinese labour. Where they come from I am not prepared to say, but that they are coming down the coast districts in very large numbers is undeniable. The wages that they are getting is 22s. a week, and they find themselves. 15s. a week is about what they net. The hon. gentleman can get all information on the matter if he wishes it. The ordinary European immigrant, who comes down by the mail steamers, will not look at the work at that price. That is how the planters hope to get their crops taken off this year—with the assistance of Chinese labour. These Chinese work twelve hours a day, less one hour for dinner; they are overseered by a boss Chinaman, who keeps about thirty per cent. of surplus Chinese on each plantation in order to maintain the contract number of labourers that he has agreed to supply to the planters. That is the system we are drifting into on our northern plantations. Self-protection is supposed to be the first law of nature, and that is what the planters are compelled to do by the attitude the Government have taken in regard to the labour question. I am quite prepared to admit that the Government may prohibit the employment of Chinamen on the plantations. The planters never wished to be driven to this, sir. In fact the only applicants for land under the central mill system—and it has been honestly endeavoured on some plantations in the North to introduce that system—have been Chinamen who wished to lease the land because they can get their own countrymen to work at a rate which white people could not afford to take. I do not wish to detain the House longer. This Address in Reply undoubtedly will pass. There is nothing of a very serious nature in it.

There is nothing that I am prepared to take any serious exception to. But, as I said in my opening remarks, I think an opportunity like this should be taken advantage of by every member to lay his views before the House. It cannot do any possible harm, and it may very likely be the means of doing a great deal of good.

Mr. BUCKLAND moved that the debate be now adjourned.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: The hon. member for Mulgrave contradicted a statement I made in my previous remarks, but I find, on referring to a report of that hon. member's speech, that I was perfectly correct in what I stated. In addressing his constituents at Bundaberg, on the 20th May, the hon. member said,—

"Before he went out of office, nearly two years ago, plans and specifications of the Howard-Bundaberg Railway were ready, and money voted for it; yet tenders had not yet been called."

Of course it was understood that the plans and specifications the hon. gentleman referred to were the working plans, not the parliamentary plans.

The HON. SIR. T. McILWRAITH: What the hon. gentleman has stated only shows that, notwithstanding all the time he has been Minister for Works, he is utterly ignorant of the affairs of his office. I have nothing more to say about it.

The PREMIER: I thought the debate would close this evening; but it appears to be the desire of hon. members that it should be adjourned. With reference to what has fallen from the hon. gentleman who has just sat down, I think everybody who heard him speak of the plans and specifications being ready, understood him to mean that the plans and specifications were ready which would enable the work to be proceeded with. That is what they understood; and the same statement was repeated by another member of the late Government, a short time afterwards.

Mr. NORTON: By whom?

The PREMIER: By the hon. member who interrupts me.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman is so reported. Of course these things do not do any harm—in fact they are scarcely worth taking notice of. But when hon. members take credit for doing all sorts of things that they never did, that is what I consider paltry. It is a kind of paltriness which soon comes back upon the heads of the persons making use of it.

Mr. NORTON: I give the most positive denial to the statement of the hon. gentleman, that I ever said the plans and specifications for that railway were ready. What I said was that the plans were laid upon the table of the House by the late Government before they left office, and that if they had remained in office up to the present time the contract would have been given and the work part completed; and so it would have been. I say that the working plans could have been got ready in a few months.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I trust, sir, that the Minister for Lands will be prepared to-morrow to give us particulars of the altercation that took place between his brother and the present police magistrate at Townsville, because, if the statement made by the hon. gentleman be correct, his cousin, the police magistrate at Townsville, is certainly not fit to occupy the position he now holds.

Question—That the debate be adjourned—put and passed, and resumption of debate made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at two minutes before 1 o'clock.