

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 1885

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 8 July, 1885.

Days of Meeting.—Standing Orders Committee.—Joint Committees.—Rabbit Bill.—Address in Reply.—resumption of debate.—Presentation of Address in Reply.—Adjournment.

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

DAYS OF MEETING.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. T. Macdonald-Paterson) moved—

That, unless otherwise ordered, this House will meet for despatch of business at half-past 3 o'clock p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday in each week.

Question put and passed.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That the Standing Orders Committee for the present session consist of the following members, namely:—The President, Mr. Hart, Mr. Macpherson, Mr. Walter Horatio Wilson, and the Mover, with leave to sit during any adjournment of the House, and with authority to confer on subjects of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Assembly.

Question put and passed.

JOINT COMMITTEES.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

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 8th Joint Standing Order.

Question put and passed.

RABBIT BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL presented “A Bill to prohibit the keeping of rabbits in the Colony of Queensland and to authorise their destruction,” and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Wednesday next.

ADDRESS IN REPLY—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR said: Hon. gentlemen,—Having moved the adjournment of the debate yesterday, it is for me now to speak, which I will do as briefly as I can. I am very glad the Postmaster-General acceded to my request, for when a request is so reasonable I think the Minister may always do so with advantage, because the result will be that the work of the Council will be hastened thereby. I am not going to take the Speech seriatim, but will only deal with certain points. With regard to what was lately done when war seemed imminent, it is not for me to criticise the action of Ministers. Under such circumstances, I have always thought that a Minister has a responsibility which he must exercise—if he thinks the thing right he has to do it; and I am very glad to see that, especially in the mother-colony, this has been done. Troops were sent from that colony to the Soudan. They were quartered with some of the crack regiments of the service, and not even by those crack regiments were they considered to be a disgrace to them. I believe that if necessity had arisen Australians would have been found fighting shoulder to shoulder with the finest troops of England; and I have no doubt that, if it were necessary for this colony and Australia at large to bring troops to the assistance of the mother-country, plenty of volunteers would be found. They might not be very efficient at first, but we all remember the old war in America, and the gallant actions performed after a time by the Americans in that war. They showed no fear of death, but did their duty; and the men of Australia will be ready to do their duty also, and those who cannot go into the field will be ready to make sacrifices of money and everything they have to help the mother-country. Thinking men must see that war, though averted for a short time, may happen at any moment. If we take into consideration what such men as Colonel Burnaby and others who have travelled in eastern countries have said, we shall see that Russia has intentions which will sooner or later come to a head. As far as can be seen, it is very much to be feared that when once the hostile armies take the field it will not only be a war between Russia and England, but one in which the whole of Europe will be engaged—a war between autocracy and democracy—a war such as perhaps was never heard of before. I will now leave this question to be dealt with by some of my gallant friends, who are better able than I to deal with such matters. Since last session, and up to the present time, the gentlemen composing the Government, with the exception

of the Postmaster-General, have been in office something like eighteen months; and I am going, as far as I am able, to look at what these gentlemen have done for the good of the country. Hon. gentlemen will remember that not very long ago many members in this Chamber expressed their fears that the ideas of the Government would not be carried out, and there can be no doubt that those opinions have been verified. There were two great questions of policy brought forward at the late elections—one was as to labour, and the other land—that the land should be given for railways. What have the Government done with regard to labour? I need not go back very far, but will refer to the memorable trip taken by the Premier and certain members of Parliament to Charters Towers, Townsville, Ravenswood, and other places; and I will deal more particularly with the speeches made by the Premier on that occasion. Whatever the reason may be, in all the speeches made there has been an attempt to set class against class, and nothing could be more subversive of the general weal of the colony than such an action coming not only from the Government, but from a Premier who is so popular amongst a certain class of people. Capital cannot exist without labour, and labour cannot exist in opposition to capital, and those very men who attempt to bring them into enmity ought to be the ones to try to make them work together. I need hardly say that the sympathy of a digger would be greater for a squatter, or a person dwelling in the outside districts, than it possibly could be for a gentleman engaged in a profession which did not require him to engage in manual labour, and the working capitalist has much more sympathy for the horny-handed digger or working man than for the white-handed citizen. I was very sorry to read the reports of those speeches made by the Premier, and to come to the conclusion to which I have come. I profess to belong to no party, and I should like to see anyone in office having the weal of Queensland at heart; but I cannot say that the present Government are acting as if they had that weal at heart. In regard to coloured labour, I have, and always have had, my own opinion—that an employer of labour ought not to be trammelled, but should have a perfect right to engage any labour whatever, whether coloured or not, which may suit him; and I do not suppose I shall alter that opinion. I am the last man who would have even the semblance of slavery in the colony. I like efficient labour and well-paid labour; that is the cheapest labour. But what does the Premier say in one of his speeches to which I have alluded? The great cry is—"The country for the white man." In that way a division is made in the community between the working man and those who wish to employ certain labour. In fact, the hon. gentleman admitted that "white men could not be employed with the same profit as coloured labourers, nor in the same gangs under overseers, nor could they be moved about and regarded as chattels." I think it a pity for any hon. gentleman in the position of the Premier publicly to use these words—publicly, by imputation, to accuse employers of labour of driving their men in gangs; assimilating them, as it were, to the West Indian slaves, and moving them about as goods and chattels. I should like to know what employer of labour ever did anything of the sort. Black labour, as I have before illustrated in this House, is not the cheapest labour; it is perhaps the dearest. If there were only black labour it would be the dearest possible labour which could be obtained, because you would require skilled labour to carry it out properly; but black labour is the most reliable, and under certain circumstances is best adapted for tropical agriculture. I might give

some more quotations from the paper to which I have alluded, but that would only weary the House. The papers are public property, and can be read by everybody. If read attentively, there are few unprejudiced persons who will not arrive at the conclusion to which I have already arrived. There is another matter in which I think the Government have acted very badly for the colony—namely, in regard to the trials which took place, and to their actions concerning certain islanders. We must remember that in all labour vessels the Government are represented by men chosen by themselves, and by captains whom they may put aside if they choose. Everything was in their power. They were, therefore, represented in reality by their own agents, and they had it in their power at any time, not only to put such regulations in force as were in existence, but to make such regulations as would in fact stop the trade altogether. And much better would it have been had the trade been stopped altogether, than that the fair fame of this country should have been blackened by the reports which have appeared in many home papers, and which are thought true by many persons. Suppose, for instance, we take a number of immigrants, from whatever country they may come. If they knew they were expected to bring forward any grievances they might have, how many would there be who would come in the same category with the islanders, and say they had been brought into the country under false pretences? There is no gentleman in this Chamber who has not seen and heard accusations of that sort brought against the Immigration Agent; and if Europeans—people who understand our language and can argue—would act in this way, how much more would men who do not understand our language—whose ideas have to be filtered through several interpreters—I say, how much more likely would they be to cause confusion, and to make those who examine them arrive at a false conclusion? I think a very great deal of harm—more harm than most of us imagine—has been done by the action of the Government. We are not slave-drivers—no one can accuse any man in this country of being that—and yet we have been accused as such in the mother-country. Then, as to the commission which was appointed to examine into this question. Who is there could not have seen what would be the conclusion come to by that commission? It has already been said, "Give me the names of a commission, and I will tell you what their verdict will be." I must give one more extract from the Premier's speech which struck me very forcibly. Posing as a friend of the working man, the hon. gentleman is reported to have said to the persons he was addressing—mostly working men—"They had to fight, not only against the forces of nature, but against persons in whose hands were powerful weapons which they knew how to use." Why did not that hon. gentleman go a little further and describe the persons and the weapons they used? He said also, that "Queensland should be a free country—free to all who were able to take a share in the government as voters and citizens. Of course, there was no such thing in the British dominions as slavery, openly so-called, but an oppression under which persons were bondsmen quite as much as the slaves in the West Indies." We all know what an impression such a speech as that would make, not only in this colony, but also in the old country. Anyone who believed that such things were done here would set down the planters and employers of dark labour as slaveholders, very much like the West Indian slaveholders, which would be

putting them in a position quite unmerited. Hon. gentlemen,—I could go on a long time in the same strain, but I have said enough. It must be evident to you that the fair fame of this colony has been vilely blackened, and there I will leave the matter. Passing now to the question of land-grant railways, I wish to refer first to the Land Bill brought in last session by the Ministry. We had a great deal to say about that Land Bill—in fact we were all very tired of it, but we all predicted that the great scheme for which it was passed—the gaining of revenue—would be a failure. That the Land Bill has been a failure for gaining revenue is proven; and it has not only been a failure in this respect, but it has failed to settle the country in the way predicted. It is now some months since it was passed, and there has hardly been a single place taken up in the whole colony. The real truth of the matter is that the Land Bill offers no inducement to any class to settle on the land; but I hardly anticipate, for all that, that hon. gentlemen who conduct the Government business will bring in a Bill and revert to the old system of 1868, which really did settle people on the land. They will hardly do that, and we shall have a long time during which a continual diminution of revenue will take place. These are the friends of the working men—the friends of the farmer who take away from them the chance of getting freeholds, and wish them to increase the revenue by taking up leaseholds—leaseholds which the Anglo-Saxon does not care to take up. The one ambition of the Anglo-Saxon is to have a house that he can call his castle, and land which he can call his own. These two matters should be quite enough to damn any Government, and it should be quite enough to prove to those people who voted for and supported the Government, that the promises given at the late elections have not been fulfilled. In the Speech it is said “I regret that little advantage has hitherto been taken of the Act passed by you during last session to facilitate the introduction of indentured labourers from Europe.” Well, there have been very few who would care about trying it. Then again, “Immigration has been maintained at a moderate but steady rate.” One great harm that has been done to the country by closing up of the lands by the so-called Liberal Ministry, has been that capital which would have been expended on those lands has found no outlet. It has been centred in the towns; and we see now in all large towns buildings going up, but we see no increase in the amount of settlement on the lands of the colony. In fact the very supporters of the Government, who spoke so much of the unearned increment, cut up their land into very small pieces, and it is sold in some instances by Ministers themselves whose profession it is to do so. We see them in this way making seed-beds for all sorts of diseases. So much is that the case that we find this Government see the necessity of bringing in a Bill to alter that state of affairs in some way. There are several other Bills shadowed forth, and when they come before us it will then be time for us to discuss them, but there is one matter that will crop up, and I might as well allude to it at once. I refer to the undue augmentation of members which this Chamber has witnessed of late. If hon. gentlemen will read the various dispatches they will find that in all ways it has been tried to keep down the number of members in this Chamber. We arrived last session at the largest number of members that we have had here hitherto. From twenty the number suddenly sprang to thirty-four, and I cannot see the necessity of placing two more members in the Council. The Postmaster-General, of course, does not count,

because he simply takes the place of a late member; but no doubt the hon. gentleman will turn round upon me and say, “Why, the Government to which you belonged were the first to place a great number of gentlemen in this Chamber at one time.”

The POSTMASTER - GENERAL : Hear, hear!

The HON. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR : Therefore, I meet the hon. gentleman at once. He must remember that those members who were put in by the Government to which I belonged—by the Palmer Administration—were put in in a very different way and in a very different spirit from the way in which other hon. members have been put in. Those gentlemen were not partisans; they were gentlemen chosen for their adaptability as members of this Council. They belonged to no party; they gave no promises; and if the Postmaster-General will read the records of the House he will find that those gentlemen voted more against the party who appointed them than for them. I myself would have been prepared to bring forward a vote of want of confidence, for I have no confidence in the Government, and I believe a majority of hon. members in this House have no confidence in them either. I am perfectly well aware that a vote of want of confidence would be a very unusual thing in this House, and would have very little effect on Ministers, but I should be prepared to bring one in if this Chamber were ready to support me. However, we have not a great number of members present, and I do not wish to do anything which would be absolutely repugnant to myself or which would harass the Government unduly. My course is a very plain one, and that is to act straightforwardly, not to endeavour to embarrass the Government, and help to reject everything of which this side does not approve. I have no intention of doing so, and if I had, I do not think, under the circumstances, it would be any good. I think, however, that in a Council constituted as we are it is our duty to hold our position before the country with dignity; to honestly and properly express our feelings and do what we think best for the good of the country, and in that way so hold up a high and honourable name before our fellow-citizens, and by giving praise when praise should come, and condemnation when condemnation is deserved, we shall earn their best thanks.

The HON. P. MACPHERSON said : I would like to add a tiny ripple to the wave of eloquence which has preceded me. I think the Speech is a very good one, simply because there is nothing in it. When I say there is nothing in it, there are several inconsistencies in it. I would like to mention one of them at all events that appears to be an inconsistency to my mind. Looking at the policy of the present Ministry, the policy of strangulation of the sugar industry, I think it is inconsistent that the eighth paragraph of the Speech should appear in its present form. Had I been alongside the drafter of that paragraph, instead of saying as he says :—

“Although the men by whom these islanders were recruited were formally the agents of the persons by whom the islanders were employed in the colony, my Ministers do not think it fair, having regard to that fact,” &c.—

I should have said, “Inasmuch as the men by whom these islanders were recruited were the agents of the persons by whom the islanders were employed in the colony, my Ministers think it fair that the employers be called upon to bear the consequences of such recruiting, to wit, hanging. A Bill will, therefore,

be introduced at the earliest possible date to make provision for effecting this object, without the intervention or assistance of judges and juries. This will necessarily involve the suspension of the Standing Orders; delay in the administration of justice being an evil to be deprecated." I think that such a clause as that would have been consistent with the policy of this Ministry, and that is one objection I have to the Speech. I recognise in the Speech the ghosts of departed friends. There is "A Bill for facilitating sales, leases, and other dispositions of settled land, and for promoting the execution of improvements thereon." I hope that that Bill will be introduced and passed. "A Bill to shorten the duration of Parliaments." I hope that that Bill will be introduced and passed. "A Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the jurisdiction of Justices of the Peace." I presume that that Bill will be a copy of the Justices Act which was passed in England in 1879. Mention is also made of a measure which will provide for the conservation and supply of water. A Bill of that sort has been brought before us for the last five years, and I hope we shall be able to deal with it this session. Look at the last paragraph of the Speech: I would amend it by saying "For these, together with such other mercies as you may be disposed to grant, may the blessings of Providence be upon us."

The HON. G. KING said: I am sorry to say that I differ from some of the conclusions that my hon. friend Mr. Murray-Prior has arrived at. In my mind it does not matter at all who is in power so long as we have purity of administration; that is the first thing. Large contracts, much money-making—that is no proof of purity of administration, but justice. The country must not suffer to enrich friends; that would be maladministration, and that is the main point. There is nothing of that sort, so far as I am aware, that we can charge the present Government with. As to unintentional mistakes, errors of judgment, I look upon them as nothing. We are all liable to error, and I have no doubt that the present Government have made many errors; but, after all, that does not go for much. My hon. friend next referred to labour and capital. Labour, I confess, is a difficult question to deal with, but I understood my hon. friend to say that the Government should undertake to supply all kinds of labour.

The HON. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR: No.

The HON. G. KING: I understood the hon. gentleman to say so; but my view of the motion is, that the Government should only provide the machinery, and the sugar-planters or other people introduce the labour they require. Now, with regard to these islanders. If these unfortunate wretches had been kidnapped and brought here, it is only an act of justice that they should be sent back, and I say simply that this act of justice would be incomplete unless justice were done also to those who suffer by their removal—those who innocently engaged them. I say it is very creditable to the country that they intend to give compensation to the employers of these men. Now, if any of us engaged thirty or forty men, not knowing the circumstances under which they had been sent here, and if they were taken away from us, we should feel ourselves cruelly aggrieved if we did not receive compensation. I will not touch upon the question of land-grant railways, because I do not think there is any necessity for me to do so; but with regard to the assertion of the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior, that there has been no settlement under the new Land Act, I would say that none of us know at the present time what the effect of that will be. We can only speculate as to what its effects will be; some take one

view, others another, and it must be remembered that hardly any of the runs have been brought under the Act. Therefore it is quite premature to censure it until it has been in operation two or three years; that is the period which I think it should be allowed in order to test it properly. My hon. friend next talked about a vote of want of confidence. Well, I do not think there is any necessity for us to pass one. Moreover, it would carry very little weight with the country, and therefore if my hon. friend would move it I certainly would not support him. We are not a responsible House, and we have not to give an account of our actions to constituencies: that, I think, is our misfortune.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said: Hon. gentlemen,—It is refreshing to find that at any rate the Government have one supporter in this House who can speak out and take exception to the remarks of hon. gentlemen on this side, and I think that has been done by the hon. gentleman who has just sat down, with a fearlessness which shows a great amount of courage; in fact, I think the hon. gentleman's speech was rather an attack upon Mr. Murray-Prior than anything else. I am not going to take up the points already referred to. My object is more particularly to refer to one or two points which I think should not be passed by without remarks from the House generally. There are some things in the Speech which it is not safe to allow to pass by with expressions of opinion emanating only from one or two members. A considerable majority of the House should decidedly give expression to their opinions, for though perhaps we are now speaking upon a subject which is a purely formal one, still the movement of the Address in Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor is an occasion on which hon. gentlemen have an opportunity of giving expression to the views they hold generally, and to criticise the policy of the Government. We can only assume that the Speech, as far as it goes, embodies the policy intended to be pursued during the present session; and taking this view, I wish to deal with a few points which merit some attention. In the first instance, I must say that it is much more agreeable to praise than to censure any Government, and I should be failing to do the present Ministry justice if I omit to express my commendation of the active and intelligent way in which they met the probable dangers by which the country was menaced. In this they only acted with judgment and common prudence. As for the remarks which have fallen in another place, that the Government took the matter in hand with insufficient authority, I think they were justified fully in all they did. Under the circumstances, they were not able to call Parliament together, and it cannot be fairly said they exceeded their duty in any way. On the subject of the naval defences, I am quite in accord with the spirit of the Address. That we require a strong increase of the naval defences of this colony is beyond question. We are as much exposed as any one of the Australian colonies, having a very large seaboard, although I pity the enemy who should try to enter any of our ports. Notwithstanding that, the naval defences are essential to the protection of our country, and I therefore feel the necessity and desirability of making ample provision for them. It is not alone the defence of the coast one has to look at, but our commerce on the high seas stands in much greater need of protection, and if a war took place with any power possessing a navy of large dimensions that commerce would be considerably endangered. To meet this, no doubt, would involve a heavy expenditure if done by the colony itself; and

we can only look forward to the case being clearly and fully met by our uniting with the mother-country for increasing the naval forces of the Empire at large. Taking up the New Guinea question, that is only another proof of the importance of these colonies being more closely united with the mother-country than they are at the present time. No such blunder would ever have been made, as the Imperial Government repudiating and ignoring the action of this colony in securing the island of New Guinea, if we had been able to take united action. That was a blunder which the home authorities are already fully alive to, but there is not a doubt in my mind, or in the mind of anyone, that the action proposed now to be taken is a proof of the wisdom of our late Government, although at the time their action was characterised as bombast. It was no such thing. Those who are aware of the circumstances which led to the annexation of New Guinea must acknowledge that they acted wisely. Turning now to the Federal Council Bill, I must say I feel very strongly on the question, only having recently returned from the mother-country, and having been engaged on both the executive and organising committees of the Imperial Federation League, and had an opportunity of listening to the discussions which took place in committee upon the federation of the colonies and the whole Empire, I feel disposed to detain hon. gentlemen for some little time by giving them an explanation of what is the condition of the federation movement at the present time. Many of you are aware that a league has been formed, but are possibly hardly conscious of the length to which the discussions have gone. There are at least sixty members of the Imperial Parliament, and amongst them some of the leading and most able men of the Empire, who have taken a part in the movement. I can assure hon. gentlemen that, in the discussions which I have listened to, it has almost brought a smile over my face to hear the way in which the colonies are spoken of—the anxiety which was shown to conciliate the colonies, and the desire which was expressed that they should take a part in the federal movement, and be more closely allied to the old country. There is no doubt that those who represent the Federal League in England are thoroughly conscious of our loyalty and of our desire to preserve the integrity of the Empire. This feeling is so strong that I sincerely trust that the operation of the Federation Enabling Bill will quickly bring about a closer union, and that we may work more in harmony with the mother-country, so far as her foreign relations are concerned. There are still threats, if not of new penal establishments, of present ones being maintained near the limits of our waters, and it behoves us to use every opportunity to bring about a more thorough accord with the mother-country in her foreign relations. That can only be done by carrying out the purpose of the Federal Council Bill as a preliminary to a far closer and more perfect alliance. Various propositions have appeared in the Press for carrying out so vast and important a scheme, but they have been found more or less wanting. The mere appointment of agents-general has been looked upon as totally inadequate to the thorough representation of the colonies at home; and the appointment of a united federal council is not regarded with much more favour; while the proposition to send members to represent the colonies in the House of Commons is characterised as simply futile. Indeed, the latter plan would be worse than useless, because it would involve us in a heavy expenditure, while the members would have little weight in the House of Commons. One of the peers who has visited the colonies considers

that we might be represented by the importation of experienced and influential colonists into the House of Peers; but I took upon myself to express the opinion that though there may be men of standing, wealth, and ability, who would be proud to sit as members of the House of Lords, they are quite conscious that they would have very little influence on the external policy of the Empire. The question of Polynesian labour is the next to which I shall allude, briefly. Everyone ought to deprecate the abuses which have taken place in connection with Polynesian labour; and to allow anything approaching slavery in regard to a poor harmless race would not be tolerated by even the most rough and ready and unfeeling classes of the community. But the action of the present Government and their mode of constituting the commission of inquiry is greatly to be deprecated; there was a want of openness and straightforwardness in selecting suitable people to take evidence fairly in the interests of justice. It is a bold thing to accuse the Government in this way, but when men of proclivities known to be hostile to a particular section of the community are sent to perform duties which have been carried out in the most one-sided manner, the accusation is quite justifiable. Questions were put to those semi-barbarians, leading up to answers which would meet the wants of the Commission, and by that means a stigma has been cast on the fame of the colony. We have been represented to the British public as a hard, cruel, money-making people, who do not care how we get our money, even though it be through shedding the blood of these unfortunate savages; and nothing can be more prejudicial to the interests of the country than such misrepresentations. There are some poisons which, when taken in overdoses, are their own antidote, and I think this Polynesian question will prove one of them. It has been so overdone that it will recoil upon those who have produced these false impressions in the minds of the public in other parts of the world as well as in the colony. I cannot refrain from saying a word or two on the question of indentured labour, which in these days is a perfect fallacy. I wonder at anyone, possessing a knowledge of what has transpired during the last ten or twenty years in connection with the working classes, attempting to bind any man or body of men by means of indentures. If they do not like their occupations, or think they can better themselves by breaking their agreements, they simply do so; and not unfrequently they prefer to take three months in gaol rather than fulfil their engagements; preferring to seek employment free and untrammelled by indentures. The result of such breaches of agreement has been so baneful that in more than one instance important undertakings have been relinquished owing to the unreliableness of labour. After all, it is only another form of trades' unions, which have done so much damage both at home and in the colonies. I am far from being one of those who would coerce the working classes, or place them at a disadvantage—no one is more ready to protect their interests in every reasonable way; but when they combine unfairly to take advantage of public institutions, or private individuals who have undertaken large contracts, it is only right that punishment should recoil upon them. And when the educated classes hound them on under the pretence of being their champions, I am not surprised that they very often fall into a trap. But I have found, from my experience in this colony and during the short time I was recently in the mother-country, that the working classes are beginning to get wide-awake and to think a little more for themselves. I agree with some of

the previous speakers that it is somewhat premature to say much about the Crown Lands Act, but there can be no doubt that it will result in a great deficiency in the revenue for several years. If the country were likely to derive any considerable benefit from the Act in other ways one might feel inclined to forego a large revenue, but I cannot discover how the country is to derive any benefit whatever commensurate with the injury caused by the change in the land laws of the colony. However, the result will be the best proof, and with many others who hold the same opinion I shall be found a true prophet in saying that the Government will in time bitterly regret the day the measure was passed. There is a brief reference in the Speech to increased representation. Now, if it had been found either in this colony or in other parts of the world that increased representation was a benefit to a country, I should be the first to join in supporting such a measure; but it is patent to the minds of men who have carefully considered and weighed the results both here and elsewhere that the more you increase the number of members the more you increase the troubles and difficulties of government. One might suppose that with an increased number of members there would be more men of talent and ability, but unfortunately that does not appear to be the case; in fact, the result is a diminution of power. If it were so distributed that the outlying districts which have no representation at all might be represented, I could see some reason in the proposal: but we know by past experience that every attempt to increase representation only benefits the already densely populated and well-represented districts. I may point out that one of the leading questions agitating the minds of legislators in the old country at the present time is the possibility of reducing the numbers in Parliament; and I have heard more than one man who has held the office of Cabinet Minister express the opinion that if the number of members could be reduced by one-half the result would be increased efficiency in the general working of the government of the country. There is also a brief mention of payment of the expenses of members; but this seems rather extraordinary in the face of the proposal to increase the number of members. More men than are really required are willing to be elected if they could get seats, yet the Government propose to pay members and thus add to the taxation of the country. If any of the members of the other branch of the Legislature are unable to bear the expense of attending to their duties in Parliament the sooner they give up their seats the better. I cannot help thinking that the measure is the fulfilment of a promise made to political supporters of the Government, who will bring it forward with the consciousness that it will meet with a well-merited fate. The remainder of the measures to be submitted no doubt contain some which will prove useful; but until they come before the House we cannot judge of their respective merits, so that it would be idle to take up time in attempting to discuss them now. I have no doubt that when the various measures are submitted to us they will receive the consideration they deserve.

The Hon. W. D. BOX said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think that whatever party happens to be in power at the beginning of a session, the Opposition finds fault with them for delaying the opening of Parliament to such a late period. They blame the Government for not calling the House together earlier, in order that the representatives of the people might have some control over the expenditure. In the present case Parliament was not summoned till after the commencement of the financial year, and I think the word "late" might be inserted in the first

clause of the Governor's Speech. One clause of the Governor's Speech says:—"I have been informed of Her Majesty's determination to substitute direct and complete jurisdiction over a portion of New Guinea." That is a simple statement of fact, but immediately afterwards we are told that His Excellency is not yet "in possession of full particulars as to the intentions of Her Majesty's Government." I may remark, with regard to the islanders, that I have seen them landed, seen them leaving the colony, and have seen them at work, and I say that on leaving the colony they are very much better men than when they arrived. In every case which has come under my notice they have benefited by service in Queensland. I say this unhesitatingly, because I should like it to be generally known. I believe that in every case in which irregularities have recently taken place the Government authorised the departure of their own agents in the vessels complained of. The islanders were brought here and employed under proper articles, and yet suddenly the Government find that the islanders have been deceived, and the country has to pay for the loss the employers have suffered. Triennial parliaments and payment of members seem to hang very well together, and I hope that if we have payment of members triennial parliaments will also become the law of the land. I do not think, however, that payment of members will result in the election of wiser men or men who are more interested in the progress of the country. The most important question, to my mind, touched upon in the Speech, is the conservation of water. Even in Brisbane I have heard it stated that though more has been done in this city than in any other part of the colony for the conservation of water, the supply will not be more than sufficient, even when the reservoir at Gold Creek is available, and if the population increases at the present rate we shall soon be as badly off as we are at present. I believe that plenty of rain falls in the colony, and that if proper measures were taken for its conservation the colony would be well supplied with water.

The Hon. A. J. THYNNE said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think in all the speeches made there has been an omission which I should like to supply—namely, the congratulation of the mover of the Address in Reply. No doubt, if it had occurred to previous speakers they would readily have supplied the omission. I look upon the accession of the Hon. Mr. Wilson to our House as likely to be of considerable advantage to us in the future, and I congratulate him upon his appointment, and on the manner in which he has moved the Address in Reply. In regard to the subjects contained in the Governor's Speech, I concur in what has been said approving of the action of the Government in their readiness to take steps towards putting the colony in as good a state of defence as possible; but we have overlooked the importance which our defences acquired from the assistance of our gunboats, for the existence of which we are indebted, not to the present, but to the late Administration. In the absence of those gunboats, the defences of the colony would have been of little value indeed, but the existence of those vessels gave a sense of security which otherwise would have been absent. I am sorry one of those boats is now out of commission and has been engaged for surveying purposes. I think that one vessel should be kept in the neighbourhood of an important place, such as Townsville, where naval defence is most needed; but I believe the arrangement was made with the Admiralty before the boats came to the colony, and possibly the Government can make no alteration now. I should like to see some better arrangements made in connection with procuring

material from home for defence purposes. I know from my own experience that there has been a great deal of delay in obtaining material through the Agent-General's Department. Material has been ordered for a considerable time, and there has been a delay which cannot be accounted for by any ordinary business explanation. At the present time there are not more Martini-Henry rifles available in the colony than are required for men already enrolled in the Defence Force, and corps formed some time ago are not able to obtain a supply. I do not blame the Government for this, because I believe they have cabled home for materials; but, as I said before, the absurd delay in their arrival cannot be explained by any ordinary business explanation, so far as one can see at present. In fact, corps formed here, instead of utilising the Agent-General's Department for getting out materials, are actually now employing private firms to indent goods for them. It may not be a matter of very great moment at present, but, by-and-by, if there should be a need for a sudden supply, a delay of this kind might be absolutely fatal. There is one part of the Speech which seems to me somewhat incongruous—that is the allusion to the offer of services for the Soudan expedition. It is rather a pity that the first offer of Australian arms should have been on such a mission as that of the Soudan war. I should have liked the first appearance in the field to have been in a cause which could claim our sympathy more than the Egyptian expedition. But, however that may be, why should the Government seek a little cheap popularity by hanging to the coat-tails of another colony which has gained popularity by real action? Our Government was silent and took no step, but because the New South Wales venture was a success as regards attracting public attention, why should we who have done nothing at all claim a share in the glory? It does not commend itself to my sense of what is right and proper. I am glad to see that the Government, even at this late hour, have awoke to a consciousness of some defects in the Land Act. We have been promised a first instalment of an amendment with regard to survey before selection. I remember distinctly that, if there was one topic more than another on which I spoke when the question was under discussion, it was the question of survey before selection. I then called the attention of the Postmaster-General to the manner in which it would affect parts of the colony already partly selected. I implored the hon. gentleman, for the sake of men wishing to take up land, to reconsider that part of the Bill. However, it is better that the Government should come to this knowledge even at this late hour than never; and while on this question of extended suspensory powers, I think they will have to come to the conclusion that all land thrown open for selection under the late Act should continue open until it is all selected. Unless they do that they will increase the complaints and difficulties already in existence with regard to the Act. I am also glad to see that the promise, which the Postmaster-General made last session, with regard to introducing a measure for the subdivision of land is about to be carried out. When the Health Bill was on last session I remember making a few remarks about it, and subsequently the Postmaster-General promised that the Government would give the matter their consideration. It has now been introduced and I hope sincerely it will pass. The infinitesimal subdivision of land has been doing a great deal of harm in this city. With reference to the late Postmaster-General I can only add to what my hon. friend, Mr. Murray-Prior, has said, my regret at having lost the late leader

of this Chamber from amongst us, and without in any way depreciating his successor I think that we are not likely for many years to acquire a man who will be so much missed as the present new puisne judge of the Supreme Court. I will not go so far as to say he was a man of perfection. I have had many warm passages of arms with him across this table, but I will not give way to any member of this House in my appreciation of his great ability and the excellent manner in which he conducted the business of the Chamber. I am quite sure the same qualities will distinguish him in his new position, which is one which I am heartily pleased to see him occupy.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I think the Hon. Mr. Thynne is scarcely correct in the observations which he made just now in respect to the fourth paragraph of the Speech, which refers to the offer of men and arms made to the Imperial Government by New South Wales, when he stated that an attempt had been made to make Queensland, by inference, share in the glory of that noble circumstance. I think anyone who reads the words of that paragraph will see that it is more in the nature of a distinct expression of congratulation to the mother-colony for the action that was taken by it. I can see nothing in the paragraph to warrant the observation that there was any desire to share in the glory of that colony; on the contrary, the paragraph merely relates to the feeling of this colony, as it is the feeling of all the other colonies, that the Australian colonies have been brought conspicuously before the world by the action of New South Wales. Incidentally it is mentioned that offers of men came from our colony as well as from others. Adverting to what fell from the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior, I must say that I was greatly surprised to hear him make the statement that the fair fame of this colony had been blackened because of the action of the Government in relation to the kanaka traffic. He did not make it quite clear whether the fair fame of the colony had been blackened through the trials that had taken place, or through the working of the traffic itself, or through the iniquitous kidnapping that had been discovered to be going on, and which the Government very properly endeavoured to annihilate and exterminate. I think it is an unhappy circumstance that he did not explain himself a little more fully on those points, because the debates of this Chamber are read by the people of the colony as much as the debates in the other Chamber; and it comes to this: that if the fair fame of the colony has been blackened by the Government action in regard to that traffic, then we may fairly ask the question what would the fame of the colony have been if the Government had not taken that action? We believe that the fair fame and reputation of the colony has been preserved by the action we have taken in regard to the Polynesian labourers. Now, with respect to the Land Bill, and the statement of Mr. Murray-Prior that it had proved a failure. As a very old colonist, with large experience in the making of Land Bills, he lost sight of the fact that the Land Bill has not even had a trial. The new principle of survey before selection involves a large amount of preparatory work in the Lands Department. The staff of surveyors and draftsmen has to be greatly augmented. The runs have to be divided, and all the work of mapping out and other work has to be done before the division of the runs. Surely a few months are not sufficient to do that! I am inclined to think that there is a haste to condemn a measure which, I believe, will ultimately prove of great advantage to the colony as a whole, and

which will benefit the very men whom Mr. Murray-Prior thinks it will ruin—namely, the farmers and small graziers. I believe the principle of the Bill is a good one, and the country believes it is good. In criticising that Act as a failure in respect to its advancing settlement, and also as being a failure in regard to its revenue-producing powers, is condemnatory language which I think quite premature. I was therefore all the more glad to hear the Hon. Mr. King tackle that point in the precise and determined manner he did. With these observations upon that subject, I may now pass on to the statement that the Government have unduly augmented the number of members of this Chamber. The Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior anticipated the reply that should properly come from me on that point, but besides stating that the late Government appointed two or three members to this Chamber after they were defeated in the country at the polls—which is a fact, as everyone knows—I may say that that Government had something between nine and twelve nominations during their term of office. I was very glad to hear the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior say that he was not a political partisan, and that partisans should not be in this Chamber. I participate in that feeling, but I have yet to learn that it is desirable for us to discuss the qualities and capacity of the nominees to this Chamber as made by any Government. The hon. gentleman referred to the quality of the men whom the late Government appointed, and inferentially suggested that the late appointments were not of equal standing, and that they were political partisans.

THE HON. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR: I rise to make an explanation. The Postmaster-General misunderstands me. I have nothing whatever to do with the present appointments. I have taken no exception to or spoken in any way of the gentlemen recently appointed. I also had nothing whatever to do with the appointments of the late Administration. I was not a supporter of theirs, but I had something to do with the appointments made by the Palmer Administration.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I thought I heard the hon. gentleman refer to the recent appointments as political partisans.

THE HON. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR: No.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: There is evidently a misunderstanding between the hon. gentleman and myself as to what he did say, and under the circumstances I shall not pursue the subject any further. However, I think with the hon. gentleman that all political partisanship should be eschewed in this Chamber. With reference to the additional statement of the Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior, that he believes every man in this country should be at liberty to employ any kind of labour he pleases, of whatever description—whether coloured or otherwise—I think that that is a doctrine that is not held by the people of this colony, and it will certainly not be the policy of this Government to cultivate any such doctrine. The people have determined that they shall not allow any man to bring in what kind of labour he pleases, and I am very happy indeed to have the opportunity of stating that in contradistinction to the policy which the hon. gentleman would advocate. Regarding what fell from the Hon. Mr. Gregory on the subject of the appointment of the Commissioners to inquire into the alleged kidnapping, I do not think that the selection of the Commissioners was one-sided. On the contrary, three gentlemen were chosen who were known to be moderate men, without any distinct feeling on the subject, as was alleged by the hon. gentleman. They were selected after

very careful consideration, and they were selected because it was believed they were the fittest men for the subject-matter with which they had to deal. Their report speaks for itself, and anyone who peruses it can but come to the conclusion that there was not in their conduct anything to justify the observations of the hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman, who has just returned from the old country, has informed us that we hold now a false position in other parts of the world because of this very labour question. Perhaps what I said before would be a suitable reply to what fell from the hon. gentleman. The Government desire to stand before the whole world and put the labour question before it just as it is. Surely the Hon. Mr. Gregory would not have the Government withhold the information or hush up those crimes which have been brought to light! The Government has done its duty; it has searchingly investigated the traffic, and it has endeavoured to altogether eradicate the grievous abuses that subsisted formerly. Therefore, instead of standing in a false position, I think the colony stands in the position of determining to have the affairs of this country, in regard to coloured labour, exposed to the full light of day. I have authority for saying that we are in a very much better position in the eyes of the other colonies, and in the eyes of the world, now that this matter has been exposed and justice has been done, than we were before. The Hon. Mr. Murray-Prior said, why did we not make regulations to prevent these iniquities? To this, I can reply that there were no regulations at all when these ships which brought back the kidnapped islanders left the colony. They had sailed before the regulations were made, and they were made as quickly as possible. Since the regulations were made, however, there has been a very great difference indeed in the working of the traffic. The Hon. Mr. Box referred to the late summoning of Parliament. On behalf of the Government, I may say that there are very few in the colony who expected Parliament to be summoned one week earlier. The Government were charged with a great deal of work and much responsibility in connection with defence matters, and a great deal of business had to be prepared, which was done as speedily as possible. Indeed, it is very well known that some members of the Government have not had one day to themselves since the close of last session, and every effort, I can assure hon. gentlemen, has been put forward to bring Parliament together at the earliest possible date. The Hon. Mr. Box also referred to clause 5, in which the Governor states that he has been informed of Her Majesty's determination to substitute direct jurisdiction over New Guinea, and he objected to what followed. Upon reading that, hon. gentlemen will see at once that it means that the Government are not yet in possession of the facts detailing the particular form this jurisdiction will take. These particulars the Government hope to have very shortly, and they will be made public as soon as practicable.

Question—That the Address as read by the Clerk be now adopted—put and passed.

PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS IN REPLY.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I have it in command to inform the House that His Excellency the Governor will receive the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech at Government House to-morrow afternoon, at 4 o'clock, and I therefore beg to move that the Address as adopted be presented to His Excellency the Governor at Government House,

by the President, the mover, and seconder, and such other members as may be present, to-morrow afternoon, at 4 o'clock.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that the House do now adjourn.

The HON. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR moved, as an amendment, the addition of the words "till Wednesday, 22nd July."

Amendment agreed to ; and motion, as amended, put and passed.

The House adjourned at half-past 5 o'clock.
