

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 9 JULY 1885

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 9 July, 1885.

Illness of the Clerk.—Questions.—Motion for Adjournment.—Additional Members Bill.—Record of Attendance of Members in the House.—Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Bill.—Police Officers Relief Bill.—Members Expenses Bill.—Joint Committees.—Local Government Act of 1878 Amendment Bill.—New Guinea Islanders Employers Compensation Bill.—Address in Reply.

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

ILLNESS OF THE CLERK.

The SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received a letter from the Clerk, stating that he is too ill to attend to his business in the House this afternoon.

The PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith) moved that the Clerk-Assistant perform the duties of Clerk in the absence of the Clerk.

Question put and passed.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Minister for Mines—

How soon will the officials to whom have been entrusted the decision as to which claims on the Gympie Gold Field may be subsidised give their decision?

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

The Government Geologist will proceed to Gympie to-morrow, and the Inspector of Mines early next week, and will furnish a report as early as practicable.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Minister for Works, without notice—Will the papers in connection with the question I asked yesterday about the Kilkivan line be laid upon the table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Will you ask that the papers shall be printed?

Mr. BAILEY: Certainly—yes.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to move the adjournment of the House. I said last night that the loss of sheep in the colony had not been fairly represented in the report upon which the Premier based his speech, and which was furnished to him by the Inspector of Stock, and I stated that the loss was more like double that stated, or even more than that. I see, sir, that the Press this evening has taken it up, and stated that I had said what was untrue. But that is not the matter I intend to refer to; I can deal with it elsewhere. I also said that Mr. Gordon had admitted to me in a letter that he was not correct in the statement he made; at any rate, he sent me a letter which materially modified the statements made in that return. That letter I now hold in my hand; it is dated May 9, and is as follows:—

"I did not quite see your point of objection to my remarks on the sheep returns when you spoke to me yesterday. On reconsidering the matter, however, I clearly see that it will be construed into meaning that *we*—that is, the stockowners and Queenslanders generally—have 'grossly exaggerated' our losses.

"I am annoyed at having made this slip.

"The return was written out by me as a reply to the London woolbrokers and financiers. The former, as you will have seen, estimated our losses at from 5,000,000 to 6,000,000, and the latter at more than we have sheep in the colony."

What does Mr. Gordon say in this report which I hold in my hand? He says this:—

"The increase, as shown by my previous reports for the year 1881, was 26 per cent.; and for 1882, 28 per cent. This gives an average increase for the above two years of 27 per cent. Starting, therefore, with the number of sheep in the colony at the end of 1882—namely, 10,400,578—and allowing for an increase for the

years 1883 and 1884 at the rate of the two previous years, the number of sheep in the colony at 31st December last would have been 16,775,000. This shows the losses attributed to drought during the two past years to have been 7,281,000."

Now, where is the false statement it is said I made last night? I say that every word that I said last evening was less than I might have said. I maintain that Mr. Gordon, in writing this report to order, which he evidently did, acted very wrongly, and in so doing deceived in an improper way those who might read the report. I move the adjournment of the House.

The PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith): I am not in a position to deal fully with this matter, because I am not in possession of the necessary information. The hon. gentleman has spoken of the report made by Mr. Gordon, the Inspector of Stock, as having been written to order. I do not know to whose order he means. I do not know whether he means to mine. The return was sent to me in the ordinary way without being asked for by me or any officer of my department that I am aware, and I had no doubt when I received it that it was correct; nor have I any reason now to doubt that it was correct, as far as the information was procurable. I have had no explanation from Mr. Gordon on the subject. He has been invited to furnish any explanation he can, and I had hoped to have had it this evening. As soon as I receive it I will put the House in possession of it. In the meantime, I think the attack made on Mr. Gordon, under the circumstances, most unfair and unwarranted.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I will take advantage of this motion for the adjournment of the House to correct a misstatement which was made last night by the Minister for Lands; and lest I should make any mistake, I will read the misstatement, and then make the correction. The hon. gentleman is reported to have said:—

"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 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."

To show that there has been no pretence on my part, but a great deal of pretence on the part of the Minister for Lands, of knowing anything about the land-grant system in America, I may state that it is just twenty-three years since Congress granted the first land to a railway company, and yet the hon. gentleman tells us that they have carried on this system of oppression from one generation to another.

Mr. MOREHEAD: In reply to what has fallen from the hon. the Premier, that he considered I made an unfair attack on Mr. Gordon, I maintain that I made no unfair attack. Mr. Gordon has been guilty of making an incorrect statement, and upon that inaccurate and untrue information the Premier made a speech; and I have no hesitation in saying that it was made, having in view the fact that the squatters are at this time bringing their runs under the new Land Act. The Premier stated that this cry about the loss of stock was exaggerated, and these are the words used in the preface to the return made by Mr. Gordon. He says, "The losses have been grossly exaggerated." But what do we find?—that he himself admits that the losses of sheep attributable to the drought during the past two years are over seven millions, and yet, notwithstanding this, he is disingenuous enough to mention in a return that

was required for political purposes, that the losses have been grossly exaggerated. The return was written for a special purpose—whether it was written to order or volunteered I do not care—but I say that, knowing this falsehood was being promulgated with reference to the pastoral industry, I would have been failing in my duty did I not expose it. As far as doing any injustice to Mr. Gordon is concerned, I may point out to this House that Mr. Gordon is paid by the squatters and not by the State. He is paid out of a special fund, and therefore he is in a small degree only a Civil servant. I contend that if anyone finds a statement of this kind with reference to the affairs of the colony that is so incorrect—that is absolutely false—he should correct it, and the person responsible for the mistake should be severely punished. With the permission of the House, I will withdraw my motion.

Motion withdrawn accordingly.

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, leave was given to introduce a Bill to provide for an additional representation of certain portions of the colony in the Legislative Assembly.

The Bill was presented and read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

The PREMIER laid on the table a map showing certain proposed alterations in the electorate boundaries.

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS IN THE HOUSE.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Mr. Speaker,—I should like to know what action has been taken with regard to the resolution carried yesterday as to recording the attendance of hon. members?

The SPEAKER: I may inform the House that yesterday the Clerk-Assistant took down the names of the members present. Those who were not present when the House met at half-past 3 o'clock, or shortly after, were noted, and when the absent members appeared in the House at a subsequent period of the evening their attendance was recorded. To-day the same course will be taken by Mr. Costin, who occupies the place of the Clerk-Assistant. Until the Standing Orders Committee have adopted a Standing Order and the House has approved of it, and regulates the recording of the attendance of members, the course now pursued is the only one that can be taken.

Mr. PALMER: May I ask at what time after the opening of the House are the names to be taken down; and whether the list will be printed?

The SPEAKER: The instruction of the House is that the Standing Orders Committee meet to arrange the time when members' names are to be taken. If any members are not present at 3 o'clock, but are present at any time during the evening, their names will be taken all the same.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I should like to ask what will be the result when there is a conflict of testimony between the Clerk and any hon. member. Suppose a member says he was present and the Clerk says he was not, how will that be? It would be a very unpleasant position to put the Clerk in. And how are we to provide against the Clerk being squared, and taking the name of an hon. member who is not present, on condition of receiving half the remuneration? I hope these points will receive the attention of the Standing Orders Committee.

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION ACT CONTINUATION BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to continue the operation of the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881.

The Bill was read a first time and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

POLICE OFFICERS RELIEF BILL.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce 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 Public Service of the colony.

The Bill was read a first time and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

MEMBERS EXPENSES BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to provide for the payment of the expenses incurred by members of the Legislative Assembly in attending Parliament.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

JOINT COMMITTEES.

The PREMIER said: I beg to move—

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

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.

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

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

The only change in the constitution of these committees since last year is the substitution, in that for the management of the Refreshment Rooms, of Mr. Aland for Mr. Macdonald-Paterson, who is no longer a member of this House.

Question put and passed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1878 AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the Local Government Act of 1878.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

NEW GUINEA ISLANDERS EMPLOYERS COMPENSATION BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce 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.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the resumption of 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"—

Mr. BUCKLAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I should not have risen to occupy the time of the House in speaking to the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to the Opening Speech of His Excellency the Governor had it not been for some remarks that fell from the Hon. Sir Thomas McLlwraith, leader of the Opposition, and also from the hon. member for Balonne, in speaking of me as a member of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the introduction of Polynesians from New Guinea. I can only say, sir, that when I was requested, at the latter end of last session, to become a member of that Commission, I distinctly told the Premier that I considered I could not possibly afford the time that would be necessary to devote to that important mission. However, sir, after some consideration I accepted the position, and I can assure you and every member of this House that both I and the gentlemen who were associated with me on that Commission did our best to fathom and bring out the evidence which is now before you and the public. And when I am accused, or when it is asserted by the Hon. Sir Thomas McLlwraith that I was bribed and bought, I say distinctly that I was not, sir. My political principles have been before the people of Queensland for the last twenty years; I continue to hold those same principles to-day, and I believe I shall hold them as long as I remain in Queensland. I am not one, sir, who, for the sake of a few pounds, am likely to turn round from the principles I have adopted and believe in. I am aware that the hon. member for Balonne is a member of a firm which does a very lucrative business and makes large profits.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I do not know how he knows that.

Mr. BUCKLAND: Well, sir, I can assure you and every member of this House that, in accepting a position on that Commission and receiving the amount I did for my expenses and the time occupied, I did not make as much as I had done previously in a much shorter time, or since I have returned to my business; and if he thinks that I was overpaid I can assure him that I was not. More than that, sir, I would not again undertake such a position and go into Northern Queensland at the time of the year that the Commissioners went there.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He got the fever.

Mr. BUCKLAND: Yes, I got the fever. I had four days' touch of fever—I admit that; and I can say this, Mr. Speaker—that every member of the Commission suffered more or less from ill health. It was not at all a favourable time of the year to be there.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Not a fit place for a white man!

Mr. BUCKLAND: No, nor for black men either, for I can tell you that not only were white men suffering but black men also. Polynesians by scores were laid up in the hospitals; there was no exception.

Mr. MOREHEAD: How will it suit Germans?

Mr. BUCKLAND: I think, very well indeed, and I would include Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen as well. I have also this to say, sir, and I am very glad to have this opportunity of mentioning it: that in every instance, or nearly every instance, the Commissioners were met with every assistance

and hospitality from the planters in the districts we visited. Every attention was shown to them, and in more than one instance apartments were set apart and servants appointed to wait upon them if the Commissioners would accept such assistance; and I can only say that I wish the Commissioners had been in a better position to return the hospitality and kindness which was displayed towards them by the planters.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Get a special vote for it.

Mr. BUCKLAND: It is all over now; it is too late. Although the hon. the leader of the Opposition, in speaking on this subject, has asserted that the report is not borne out by the evidence, I can say that a great number of gentlemen have spoken to me in reference to the report, not only in Queensland, but also in New South Wales; and in every instance men of every shade of politics asserted that a fairer or better report could not have been drawn from the evidence. Well, sir, if that is the case I say that I am proud to have my name associated with such a report.

Mr. MOREHEAD: What gentlemen in New South Wales saw the report? We only got our copies this morning.

Mr. BUCKLAND: The report has been in New South Wales several weeks.

Mr. MOREHEAD: And the evidence?

Mr. BUCKLAND: And the evidence. I saw it there, at any rate, five weeks ago, and I think if hon. members had applied to the Government Printing Office they would have got copies long since. Well, I think, sir, that this matter is now cleared up, and the only alternative for the Government, after receiving the report, was to return those islanders to their respective homes. I heartily approve of their action in doing so, and I believe the majority of the people of the colony also approve it. That there was little attention paid to the islanders when the steamer "Victoria" laid off Flat-top Island, and that the boys were subjected to some neglect, was unavoidable, because the time of the year was most unfavourable for taking out supplies. In conclusion, I may say I feel fully conscious of having done my duty, and I am certain the other Commissioners have done theirs in bringing up a faithful and true report of the evidence produced before them.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—Very little has been said by the last speaker with reference to the question before the House. He is apparently merely interested in the report of the Polynesian Commissioners, and for that reason has confined himself to it. I think, if the Speech itself may be taken as a forecast of what is to come, we may expect a very uneventful session. It displays an absence of vigour, and it may be almost classed amongst the *Invertebræ*. I believe it is as common-place a speech as we have had before us for many sessions. There is no doubt that the Government of the country have an opportunity, if they have the capacity and the energy and possess the knowledge—they have the opportunity to make their mark upon the colony and upon the history of the colony—such an opportunity perhaps as may not offer itself very often to a party with such a commanding majority as they have. The question most interesting to us now is—Will the Government make that mark upon the colony; will they leave such an impress upon it as the late Administration left upon it, in the opinion of the public?

The PREMIER: I hope not.

Mr. PALMER: Whether they leave that mark or not time will show; but there is nothing indicative in the Speech at the present time to

show that they have accepted or grasped the position in a way that should command the attention of the members of this House. In the first place, there is no reference made to what was mentioned in the last Speech—of a railway to the Gulf of Carpentaria. It may seem that that is merely a local matter.

The PREMIER : The money is voted for it.

Mr. PALMER : No reference is made to the carrying out of that railway, and we know that money is voted for a great many railways. The proof will be in the carrying out of the line. As I say, people may consider this a merely local matter, and it may be deferred ; but it has been the ambition of every leading man in Queensland to connect the north coast with the east coast by some manner or means. There have been various projects for doing so, but most people are unanimous in the opinion that it is a national undertaking.

The PREMIER : Hear, hear !

Mr. PALMER : That is the most conspicuous of the railways on the Loan Estimates. I may say I believe it will yet be left for South Australia, who has already passed us in large public works, to be beforehand in carrying through the transcontinental line. They are making one in the North ; the tenders for two sections have been let, and the line from the South has gone a long way towards meeting it. Of course it is one of the opportunities offered this Government to make its mark by emulating the public spirit so conspicuous in South Australia. The same may be said in reference to the telegraph, in which respect they are far beyond us. Another way of looking at it is, that this connection would be made by a Gulf line connecting the lines in the South, where the country is much easier for building a railway line than by constructing the coast line, which would have to cross innumerable rivers and creeks. The coast line will cost ten times the amount of a line through the western part of the country. I have the opinion of Mr. Hannam, an engineering surveyor, that he has never seen country so suitable as the country in the Gulf for carrying out a cheap railway. So much so is that the case that he is disgusted with it, because there are no opportunities for the display of engineering skill. I say again, time will show if the Government are sincere in their idea to carry out what has been the dream and ambition of every public man who has ever held office in Queensland. No reference has been made to a movement in the North which I have lately had an opportunity of being witness to, and that is the separation movement. I had no idea that the feeling on that question was so deep as it is and as I have lately found it. They feel that they have a grievance against the South. They feel that they have been ignored in more matters than one : in the matter of representation, which I see there is allusion made to in the Speech, for one thing. They also have a grievance with regard to money matters, and I have long ago referred to a return that I called for last session to show that in the district which I represent, alone, there has been received and paid into the consolidated revenue over a quarter of a million sterling, or nearly £233,000, whereas there has been expended on public works a paltry £17,000. Of course the expenditure has been increased lately, but so also has the revenue increased. Such glaring discrepancy between revenue and expenditure is not peculiar alone to the district which I represent. These are the reasons why the North feels it has a very great grievance against the South. I do not say there is anything in the coolie being mixed up with separation. It is the opinion of those who are mostly interested in the North—property

holders and men who have a stake in the North—those are the people who seem to be most favourable to separation, while on the other hand only those who are here to-day and gone to-morrow are the opponents of it. With regard to the Speech itself, all that can be said upon it has already been said in better words than any I can bring to bear upon it. The first question raised in the Speech—and a great question it is—has reference to the expedition sent to the Soudan. The question has greatly aroused public spirit ; and although I would not be so unpatriotic, being Australian born, as to disparage the glory or anything else connected with that expedition, still I venture to hope that when Australians have again to shoulder the musket and go forth to battle they will have a better cause to fight for than the one for which they were sent to the Soudan. When we have the Prime Minister of England himself admitting in the House of Commons that they had no war with the Arabs—that they had no occasion to fight them—I cannot see why we should send our men there to shoot down those unfortunate men whose great fault was that they were defending their country and what are to them their homes. I do not wish to cast the slightest slur upon the great commoner and statesman who lately ruled the destinies of Great Britain, and who has taken such a conspicuous part in her councils for more than fifty years. I only say that we have his authority that Great Britain had no cause of war against those unfortunate Arabs, and I cannot see why Australian should be mixed up in a quarrel in which they have no concern whatever. The next question to which the Speech refers is one in which great public interest has been taken—that is, the steps taken with reference to New Guinea. On account of the shadowy extent of territory left to England, it matters very little to us Queenslanders what kind of a Government will be instituted there, but it is very peculiar that they should commence by inaugurating the system of passports—compelling people to procure passports before they can visit such a country as New Guinea. That is one of the blessings we are going to have under the government of General Scratchley, and we shall have to procure a passport to enable us to cross the narrow sea which divides that island from the Queensland coast. It is now apparent to everyone that the action taken by the Earl of Derby with regard to New Guinea is one which reflects very little credit upon his statesmanship, and it shows that he did not consider the interests of the colonies in the least. Respecting the Royal Commission to which reference has just been made, I must say I am surprised we did not receive their report before. I certainly read portions of it as it appeared in the newspapers at the time, and the conclusion I came to was, that for an official report it was a particularly sensational one—too sensational altogether for an official report on evidence. Another thing that struck me was, why was not the evidence of the agents themselves taken ? The excuse made was that they were not available, but I have reason to believe that almost every agent is in the colony now, and if their evidence could have been got it would have thrown great light upon the proceedings. The Commissioners, in their report, refer to the great desire which those islanders always exhibited to return to their native country. But anyone who has had anything to do with “new chums” will find that almost every one of them begin by exhibiting the same longing to get back to the country they came from. Even after they have been in the colony twelve months or longer, I have heard them curse this country and wish they had never seen it—men who were receiving good wages, and had every reason to

be satisfied. That is nothing uncommon, and it has often made me angry to hear these men, after deciding to come here and knowing what was before them, abuse the country and desire nothing better than to return from whence they came. It cannot be considered anything extraordinary that these islanders, who came from a land where they could live easily and indolently, to a country where they were made to work, should desire to return to their homes. The question of expense is one that will come before the House; even the passage money, at £6 a head, will come to a very large sum of money. But of all public questions I suppose none has been discussed so much in all parts of the country as the Land Act we passed last session. My own opinions on it are well known to hon. members, so I need not state them again; but during my travels through the country I have met no man who had a kind or a good word to say for the measure. I met many who objected to it very strongly, but not one who spoke of it in a friendly way. I also noticed, Mr. Speaker, that a paper called the *Toowoomba Chronicle*, which, I think, must be run pretty much in the interests of Ministers, condemned the very first action of the new Land Board in assessing lands lately thrown open at Toowoomba, and stated that if the board had had experience of that part of the country they would never have made the mistake they did in putting such a high value on the land. That is quite correct, and, following up the same line of argument, we may ask how is this Land Board going to inspect all the available land in all parts of the colony so as to assess its value? They are as liable to make the very same mistake in other places in this large colony as at Toowoomba, which is, I may say, at their doors. The Act was introduced partly as a revenue measure, but I can point out to the Minister for Lands where he has not gone to work in a proper manner to extract revenue where it would have been got. I refer now to the settled districts of the North, where thousands of pounds might have been put into the Treasury if the land had been thrown open at a reasonable rental. It is absurd to suppose that the land north of Cooktown, even taking Cooktown for a starting point, and from there right round to the borders of South Australia—a very large area of land which is now lying idle—would be taken up at £2 per mile. That land is being used now without any rent being paid for it. If the rent had been reduced to 10s., a great deal, in fact the whole of it, would have been taken up long ago. The argument used is that just outside this line thirty miles from the coast, which is the boundary of the settled districts, the rent of the land is 5s. per mile under the Act of 1869, whereas inside that imaginary boundary line it was £2 per mile. When we consider the difficulties there are along the northern coast in settling the land—the dangers and losses by the blacks—which are not imaginary, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, but which assail everyone who tries to settle there—the losses from fever and sickness, and the other trials incidental to occupying new country—when we take these matters into consideration, I think very little objection can be made to the proposition that these lands should be leased at 10s. per mile, which would bring in a revenue to the Treasury which is not forthcoming now, and never will be as long as these lands are fixed at such a high rental. The fact of the matter is that people are using these lands without paying any rent at all, and nobody will, even upon a yearly tenancy, make the necessary improvements for carrying on a cattle station; for it is only cattle country. I think that under a five years' lease men might be

tempted to put up improvements to carry on such stations. In a paragraph in the Speech, referring to a matter which is of great interest to Northern constituencies, it is stated:—

“Your early consideration will be asked for a measure to give additional representation in the Legislative Assembly to certain parts of the colony which are now inadequately represented.”

That does not refer in any way, even now, to the North, although it is the North that has need of larger representation. I have heard that some of the Southern constituencies are to be further represented; but it will scarcely be fair, in view of the increase of settlement that proceeds up north now—and I have only to refer to the Customs returns to prove it—that when there is to be additional representation in the Southern constituencies there should not be additional representation in the North. That is a measure which we will have to discuss fully before long. The district I have the honour to represent certainly requires another member. It has taken me four months to go over it, and then I failed to visit many places in it. I suppose by the time I returned to Brisbane I travelled about 6,000 miles, in going to the district, travelling over it, and returning to Brisbane. Many other matters have been referred to by members, which I need not waste the time of the House in going over. The last loan has been discussed so much that I can throw no fresh light upon it; I can only say that it is very peculiar that this colony, one of the richest, I suppose, in Australia, could not float a loan as well as South Australia, a colony in which progress has not been as extensive as it has been in Queensland. I am quite certain that the action of the Minister for Works with regard to the railway contracts is one that we shall see the fruits of before long, to the great disadvantage of the colony. I think there is nothing so much to the discredit of this colony, which has such a large system of railways now, not only in progress, but in anticipation, as to reject or cast any slur upon the system of tendering. The best thing we can do is to encourage all the tenderers from the other colonies, where the means and plant are available to carry out these works for us at as cheap a rate as possible. I will refer now to the remark made by the Colonial Treasurer, when he said in his speech that the blame in regard to the labour question lay in the action of the leader of the Opposition. He said his action in annexing New Guinea was the laughing-stock of everyone at home. I only know that the leading papers at home indorsed his action, and that the colonies unanimously indorsed it, and I heard the leader of the Opposition state there from his seat, that before he left office he left orders that no recruiting should take place from New Guinea or any part of its coasts. So that no blame can be attached to him for the abuses that have been shown to have taken place. The question which is last upon the paper, Mr. Speaker, is one of the most important in the Speech, and it is one also in which the Government may, if they choose, make their mark upon the colony to its advantage. There is no question more important to the colony than that of the conservation of water, alluded to in the Speech in this manner:—

“I trust, also, that time may allow of your dealing with the important question of the supply and conservation of water, upon which much valuable information has been and is still being obtained by my Government.”

I think it should not read, “that time” may “allow.” I think they should insist that time should be made to deal with this question thoroughly and efficiently. There is no question upon which the people of the colony will indorse the action of the Government more than they

will upon that of the conservation and supply of water, not only in the Western country, but even in the towns which are becoming very populous, and in which water is a matter of great consideration. There is too much money being spent in buildings, in bricks and mortar, and such matters, which yield no return. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been authorised to be spent upon public buildings, which will never gain for the Government as much of that support which they are anxious to receive from the people, as a proper system of water supply in the interior. I think that, as most of the heavy guns have now fired off their shots, it will be needless for a small firearm like myself to take up the attention of the House any longer.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I was in hopes that the debate upon this question would have closed last night. I suppose I also am one of the small guns; but I think it is my duty, although I am a very small gun indeed, to say a word or two. I will first remark that I have had the honour of sitting in this House for several sessions, and hearing a similar debate to this disposed of, and it strikes me that any Speech which has been brought forward by the Government of the day has always been objected to by the Opposition, and I suppose it will be so to the end of the chapter. The Opposition believe that the Government can bring forth no good thing; and as to the Government, I suppose they have no more charitable feeling towards those who oppose them. But it appears to me, sir, that full attention has not been given to the Speech which His Excellency delivered to us. The Speech has been criticised certainly, but very mildly. I suppose that in the programme which the Government have laid down there is nothing which hon. members on either side of the House can object to. There has also been some criticism upon the administration of the affairs of the colony during the recess, and I certainly think that every hon. member must admit that the criticism has been of a very mild nature indeed, and that the charges which hon. gentlemen opposite have sought to hurl against the heads of the different public departments have likewise been of a very, very mild nature. It rather amused me to listen to the opening remarks of the last gentleman who spoke, for I have never heard of matters such as he has referred to being put into the Governor's Speech. Why, it was only during the last session of Parliament that this House passed a loan vote in which was included a sum of money for the work he has mentioned. A deviation of the Toowoomba line was also passed, but we did not expect that railway to be mentioned in the Governor's Speech. We have full faith in the Government; at least I have.

Mr. PALMER: I know you have.

Mr. ALAND: And I have no doubt the hon. gentleman has too. We have full faith in the honest intention of the Government to carry out the programme which they laid before Parliament last session. And I think, too, it would have been out of place for the Government to have introduced the vexed question of separation into the speech addressed to Parliament by his Excellency. If the Ministry now in power thought it a very desirable thing for the colony to go in for—if it were part of their policy that they should rend this colony in twain and split it up into a number of small colonies—then I could understand that the subject should form part of the Governor's Speech. But I think the present Ministry do not favour the proposal for separation—that it is not part of their programme to grant separation unasked for by the persons living in

the northern part of the colony. I must take exception to some of the remarks which have been made, both by the gentleman who has just sat down and by the hon. member for Mackay, as to the reality, the sincerity—the deep sincerity, I think the hon. member for Mackay said, or something to that effect—of the people up north in their wish for separation from this part of the colony. I am not the apostle of separation, sir, but I think it may be said that the hon. member for Mackay is. I remember that some two years ago the hon. gentleman told us in this House that if we did not allow the planters to have coolies we should have an agitation in the northern part of the colony for separation. Well, sir, you know that this House and the country came to the determination that we should not have coolie labour in the colony. And what did the hon. member for Mackay do as soon as the question was definitely settled? He started on his separation mission—I was going to say accompanied by Mr. William Coote, but I am not quite sure of that. I presume Mr. Coote is one of the gentlemen of whom the hon. member for Burke spoke as gentlemen of means and influence having property in the country, who are agitating this question of separation. However, as soon as Parliament was over the hon. member for Mackay started on his mission, and, among other places, visited Charters Towers, where, as has been said, the miners listened respectfully to him but at the same time were not disposed to accept his views. I have lately travelled over some parts of the North. I am sorry I was not able to get to Mackay. Someone, I believe, said that I was afraid to go to Mackay. Well, I am not afraid to go to Mackay, or any other part of the colony, or to meet any man or men in any part of the colony. I am not afraid to do anything of that sort. I made inquiries while I was in the North on this subject of separation, and if hon. members will take my belief in the matter, it is this: that there is nothing like a consensus of opinion upon the subject—there is no unanimity of opinion on the subject. I do not refer to Charters Towers, where the expression of opinion is altogether in favour of non-separation; nor do I refer to Ravenswood, or to Cooktown, where also the feeling is certainly against separation; but I will refer to Townsville, which is the town, I suppose, most of all towns in the colony, that expects to gain by this separation movement. It is true, as the hon. member for Burke says, that those who are agitating the question are persons holding corner allotments in the place, and syndicate firms there. Those are the parties carrying on the movement, not the working men of the colony—men who have been of late despised, men who have also been spoken of in a very patronising tone. The working men, who are the backbone of the colony, and who will have a great deal to say on this subject of separation, and whose opinion will be respected, are not in favour of the movement. They do not see, in the first place, what they have to gain by it, and they will not get this idea out of their heads—let these advocates of separation do what they will—that the separation and coolie business go hand-in-hand together. I believe I am right when I say that the separation movement started in Mackay of late; that it started there in connection with the agitation for coolie labour; that when the planters saw there was no chance, as matters at present stood, of getting the particular kind of labour they wanted, they came to the conclusion that if they could get separation they would get just the kind of labour they required. But that sort of talk did not go down at Townsville, and the promoters of the movement were com-

pelled to alter their arguments and to disclaim any sympathy with the planters' view. I believe it has even been said that they have no sympathy at all with Mackay on this question.

Mr. BLACK: The present Minister for Works agitated separation in Townsville three years ago.

The PREMIER: You must take that with a grain of salt; it wants seasoning.

Mr. BLACK: The Premier was present himself on the occasion.

Mr. ALAND: I should like to know whether it was an after-dinner speech to which the hon. gentleman refers, because, you know, Mr. Speaker, that many funny things are said after eating and drinking. Very likely, in this case, it was a little bit of chaff by the Minister for Works; possibly he said something like this: "Why do you not go in for separation?" Now, I should like to take notice, sir, of the attack which has been made upon the Minister for Works for his action in reference to the contracts for railway extension. A great deal has been made of his calling tenders and accepting none of them, but making a private arrangement with Mr. Bashford. Those who have made the charges against the Minister for Works altogether forget, or at any rate have not mentioned, that Mr. Bashford's tender was the lowest, and that, therefore, the Minister in making the arrangement with him was guilty of no injustice to the other tenderers. It would have been a very different matter had he gone to the lowest but one, or the lowest but two, and offered them the contract at a price lower than Mr. Bashford's tender; in that case Mr. Bashford would have had a very good ground of complaint. Under the circumstances, although I might deprecate the Minister bargaining with tenderers at all, still I cannot see that any injustice has been done to the other tenderers. But why do not the hon. gentlemen who attack the Minister for Works tell us that by the action that gentleman took he saved the country something like £60,000 or £70,000? They were very pleased to be able to say that by something which the hon. the Treasurer said, and which was reprinted in some papers at home, the country suffered a loss of some £63,000; and why in this case do they not give credit where credit is due? Then, as to the poor Minister for Lands, he deserves a very great deal. I am not altogether pleased with the manner in which the Land Act has been initiated. I am not going to say that I disapprove of that Act. I do not mind repeating what I said when the Bill was under discussion—that the Land Act of 1876, if it had been honestly administered, was good enough for me. However, I gave my support to the measure brought in last year, and it is too soon to begin to find fault with it, especially as it has scarcely yet come into operation. Let us wait till the lands which are to be leased have all been thrown open, and see if the provisions of the Act work well, and if they do not then we can find fault with it. Then the Minister for Lands has been grumbled at very much for the Timber Regulations which he sought to enforce. I was in the House some two years ago, and helped the other side to pass a Bill by which an export duty of 12s. a hundred was placed on log cedar. I believed in that at the time, and I am not sure now that it was not a proper thing to do. I believe that Bill went right through, and only remained for the third reading; but a hubbub was raised by the timber-getters, pressure was brought to bear by some members of the House, and the whole thing was let slide. I think that was quite as weak, and, if they choose to use such words as "contemptible,"

it was quite as contemptible as the weakness displayed by the Minister for Lands in issuing regulations and then recalling them and issuing others in their stead. Then the Minister for Works—I do not stand here as his apologist, but I do believe in fair play—the Minister for Works has been taken to task for his action about the carriage of cattle on the Southern and Western line. I think the hon. member's explanation was a very good one: he found that the rates he was charging were higher than those charged in the colony of Victoria, and he assimilated them to those charged in New South Wales. I think that was a very good reason indeed, and one that ought to be accepted by every member of this House. There is another thing, sir, I wish to say. I think a spirit of fairness ought to be exhibited by the Opposition; and I notice that no member has referred at all to the second paragraph of the Speech. A great deal has been said about the Soudan expedition from another colony, but nothing has been said about this second paragraph. It is to this effect:—

"Since I last had the opportunity of consulting you, events have occurred which appeared to indicate the necessity of immediate preparation for the defence of our coasts against invasion by a power hostile to the British Empire. Prompt measures were taken by my advisers to meet this emergency, and it is with great pleasure that I record the satisfaction with which I observed the loyalty and alacrity displayed by the inhabitants of all parts of this colony in coming forward for the defence of their country. I am confident that under similar circumstances the same willingness to perform their duty will always characterise the people of Queensland. Your sanction will be asked for the expenditure necessarily incurred in connection with this subject."

Now, sir, we all know that the Government did take very active steps in this matter, and that very considerable expense was incurred over it. I think the leader of the Opposition might have given us an expression of opinion, and told us whether he thought the Government did right or wrong in taking the steps they did take. I say myself that the Government deserve great credit for the prompt manner in which they acted. Fortunately the danger was averted, but there is no doubt that, had a descent been made upon our coast by any hostile power, the means which the Government adopted would have been effectual for the purposes for which they were intended. I think the Parliament ought to thank the Government for so promptly attending to the interests of the colony in this respect. Now, sir, there have been speeches presented to this House which perhaps contained a list of matters of a much more pretentious nature than those submitted in this programme; but the submitting of measures and the passing of them through the House are two very different things. I know that for the last two or three years, since I have been a member of the House, we have had a host of measures presented at the beginning of a session, but there has been a tremendous slaughter of the innocents before Parliament closed. The Government now in power, however, do not do that sort of thing. I do not think we slaughtered any innocent last session—we only slaughtered two simple innocents last session; and if we get through the programme placed in our hands this year without any slaughtering, Parliament may congratulate itself upon having done some good work. I must say that I am disappointed to find that the Bill to continue the operation of the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881 goes no further than it does. I was in hopes that the Government would have attended to that matter. Petitions have been presented to this House—I believe the hon. member for Blackall presented a petition on the subject of flying-foxes. It is a small matter to talk about flying-foxes, but we know that small things often become great nuisances.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Rabbits.

Mr. ALAND: Yes; the rabbit is very small—very little larger than the flying-fox, I suppose—yet their depredations are of serious consequence to the districts infested by them. But marsupials are of serious consequence to the pastoral interests, and that is the reason why special mention is made of them even by a Liberal Government. To other producing interests, however, the question of flying-foxes is of as much importance as that of the rabbit invasion is to the pastoral interest. Though there is no promise of a measure dealing with flying-foxes this session, I trust the Ministry will not forget that there are fruit-producers in this colony, and that their interests are being jeopardised if not almost entirely ruined—jeopardised to a far greater extent than the sugar industry is by the withdrawal of black labour—by no attention being paid to this matter. I am very much pleased to see the introduction of a Bill to amend the Local Government Act of 1878, with respect to loans for waterworks and in other respects. What the other respects are I do not know, but as far as loans to waterworks are concerned that is certainly a move in the right direction. I speak on behalf of the municipality which I have the honour to represent in this House, and also on behalf of several other municipalities whose members have spoken to me on the subject. It is highly necessary, and I am glad the Government have recognised the fact, that the borrowing powers of a corporation should not be crippled by any amount they may have expended on their water supply.

Mr. FERGUSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I had no intention to take any part in this debate, but I do so now for the reason that hitherto the whole debate has been confined to the northern and southern parts of the colony, while not a single reference has been made to the central districts. Being one of the representatives of the central part of the colony, I cannot allow the debate to close without saying a few words. If there is one district more than another entitled to the consideration of any Government it is the Central, yet the present Government have totally ignored that district.

Mr. ALAND: Oh!

Mr. FERGUSON: And I will prove it before I sit down. I was astonished when I came to Brisbane and saw the prosperity in this part of the colony. But what was the cause? Simply the large amount of money—public money—expended in this part of the colony. Not a single vote passed last session or the previous session has been expended in the Central district; but votes passed only six months ago are in course of expenditure about Brisbane and Ipswich. The Central district has suffered lately more than any other part of the colony. In the North there are fair seasons and plenty of rain; in the South there have been fair seasons also; in both North and South there is an amount of prosperity not witnessed in the Central district, where there has been a drought for the last three years, from which every industry is suffering. If ever there was a time when the Government should assist a district to tide over a time of depression, now is the time they should do something in regard to the Central district; but, as I said before, that district has been ignored in every shape and form. I will refer to two or three items for which votes have already been passed. Several years ago the sum of £2,500 was voted out of loan for an immigration dépôt at Rockhampton, but the last Government thought that amount too small, so they put another £5,000 on the Estimates. Now there is an amount of £7,500 on the Loan Estimates for the work, and though everyone acknowledges that in no town

of Queensland is there a public institution in such a disgraceful condition as the dépôt at Rockhampton, yet the Government have not begun the work. When the Attorney-General and the junior member for North Brisbane made a tour in the North a few months before the last general election, they called at Rockhampton on their return. They held a public meeting in the school of arts—but before that they visited the various places of interest in the town—and while addressing that meeting, which was a very large one, they said that the immigration dépôt was a disgrace to the colony. They added, however, that as soon as their party came into power, which they expected would be in a few months, that state of affairs would be altered. But what do we see? The party got into power, but not a single sixpence has been expended on that institution since they have been in power. And this is not the only case. There are many other instances, but I need not go over them all. This, sir, is the general treatment the Central district has received ever since the present Government has come into power. It has been ignored in every possible way in many other respects. About two months ago, on the 13th May, the Government decided to advance loans for the encouragement of deep sinking, at various scales, on our goldfields. This is a matter, of course, that affects every part of the colony. The gold-mining interest is a very important one at the present time in every part of Queensland; but what have the Government done? They have applied the scheme only to Gympie and the Northern gold-mines—to six in all—Gympie, Charters Towers, Ravenswood, Hodgkinson, Palmer, and the Etheridge—ignoring altogether the Central district. I am not alluding merely to the Rockhampton district, although the gold discoveries there are of a very important character; but the whole of the Central district has been completely ignored by the Government in this instance. They have passed from the southern to the northern part of the colony, leaving that district out altogether, although there are something like six or seven crushing machines in course of erection there; and they have limited the depth of sinking to 217 feet on some of the Northern goldfields, although there are shafts in the Rockhampton district that are down 280 and 285 feet; and on the Gladstone goldfields there are some down over 300—about 350 feet. Still no notice whatever is taken of that part of the colony. It is the same with things generally. In fact the Government have not visited the district for the last twelve or eighteen months. No member of the Government has thought it worth while to visit that district during that time, and they are ignorant of what is its condition and what are its requirements at the present time. We have been told by the hon. the Treasurer that the colony is in a prosperous state, but, as far as I remember, that hon. gentleman has not been north of Brisbane for the last two or three years. If I were a resident of Brisbane, and only knew what was going on in this part of the colony, I also should say that the colony was prosperous; but the hon. the Treasurer has not visited the North for years, and therefore he cannot know the depressed state of affairs in that part of the colony. I think it is the duty of the Government to study the interests of one part of the colony as well as another. Then again the Government have decided to establish schools of mines on three goldfields—Gympie, Charters Towers, and Herberton. Why should the Central district be ignored in that matter also? The Government are prepared to grant £500 to start these schools and to give £2 for every £1 subscribed; and I say there is

no district in Queensland or in the Australian colonies where a school of mines would be so valuable, not merely to the colony but to the whole of Australia, as the Central district. Hon. members know that gold has been discovered there under most exceptional circumstances. It is of a character not likely to be found in any other part of the world, and it is puzzling the geologists and other scientific men, not only of Australia, but of the world; and still the Government pass over that district, and do not think it worth while considering in a matter of this kind. These are matters that I think the attention of the House should be called to. The Central district has not been mentioned by a single member during the debate. It is ignored by the Government, and hon. members have passed over it in silence.

Mr. MOREHEAD: We will resume Mount Morgan.

Mr. FERGUSON: The sooner you do it the better. I shall not allude further to matters connected with the Central district, but will now refer to the Speech itself. The first paragraph I wish to allude to is this:—

"I regret that little advantage has hitherto been taken of the Act passed by you during last session to facilitate the introduction of indented labourers from Europe. There is strong reason, however, to anticipate that employers of labour will shortly avail themselves of the provisions of this Act to a considerable extent." The Government express regret that the planters of the North have not taken advantage of the Act passed last session, but say they expect that they are going to do so. There are many hon. members present who will remember what I said when this measure was before the House last session. I said it was the most dangerous measure for the majority of the people of this colony that was ever introduced into this House—that it was a measure that struck the first blow for the reduction of the wages of the working classes—and I now see that what I said is about to come to pass. We are told that the planters are going to avail themselves of the provisions of this Act to a very large extent, and what will be the result? Here we are importing into the colony a low-paid Continental class of labourers at the expense of the taxpayers—the very people with whom they will compete, and whose wages they will reduce. There is not the slightest use thinking that these men will remain on the plantations in the North after they have arrived in the colony.

Mr. NELSON: Unless they die there.

Mr. FERGUSON: I am certain they will not remain there. They may sign any agreements you like in Europe; but the agreements will be broken as sure as they arrive in the colony, and what will be the consequence? That they will leave the North, come down to the South; in fact spread all over the colony, and compete with the working men of the country. That is what the effect of this will be, as soon as the measure introduced by the Government is put into operation by the planters. And even if it were otherwise, what would be the consequence? We know that at the present time planters are paying about 25s. per week for ploughmen and 10s. a day for mechanics, but this indented labour from the Continent will include all classes—mechanics, field labourers—all descriptions of labour will be engaged and come out at the rate of 10s. per week, and the result will be that the men at present employed on the plantations in the North will have to leave, because the planters will not keep them at their present rate of wages when they can get other labour from Europe to take their place at a much lower rate. Therefore the effect will be

that the whole of the working men of the colony will suffer. The wages of all classes of labour—field labourers, town labourers, bush labourers, miners, and all classes of mechanics—everyone will have their wages reduced as soon as that scheme is put into operation. This is exactly what I said when the measure was before the House, and I see it is coming to pass and will come to pass very soon. The next paragraph of the Speech says:—

"Immigration has been maintained at a moderate but steady rate, and I am glad to know that the immigrants introduced have been of a class well suited to the requirements of the colony."

I deny that. I know of my own experience that of the class of immigrants that have been coming into the colony during the last twelve months at least 25 per cent. are fit for nothing after they arrive here. I have been informed by two or three medical gentlemen, who knew perfectly well what they were speaking about, that about 25 per cent. of the immigrants that are coming out from England at the present time are in bad health—in fact, that they are suffering to some extent from disease of some description; and the hospitals of the colony are getting full of them.

The PREMIER: You have been misinformed, that is all.

Mr. FERGUSON: I am sure I have not. At all events, I believe the gentlemen who informed me that 25 per cent. of the immigrants coming here are diseased—that they are suffering from consumption or some other disease which they acquired before leaving England. I know myself that many of them are going straight to the hospitals of the colony after they arrive here, and I know also that even lunatics—persons who were lunatics before they left England—have been arriving here; so that it is evident there is something very lax in connection with the conduct of the Immigration Department. I believe myself that the wrong is at the other end—in England; but that there is something wrong there cannot be the slightest doubt. I do not know whether the Government are aware of it or not. I do not know whether they have an appointed medical officer to look after the emigrants that are sent out, but if they have he has certainly been carrying out his duty in a very slovenly and bad manner. I have been informed that 300 passengers who had to come out to the colony to fill a certain ship were put aboard in less than half-an-hour, and were examined in that time—shoved on like a flock of sheep through a gate. That is the way people are brought out here, and that is the way we suffer. I am not making a rash statement, because I have got this on very good authority. I do not intend, Mr. Speaker, to make a long speech, but there were two or three matters that I could not allow to pass without giving an opinion upon them. The last paragraph of the Speech I consider the most important, as it refers to the conservation of water. There is no doubt that the day will soon come when this country will have to go in for water conservation on a very large scale. The day will also come when we shall have to take up the question of irrigation. We can pass all the Land Acts we like, and dispose of the land as much as we like, but we can never settle the people on the land until we generally adopt a system of irrigation. The experience we have had of the climate of Queensland is sufficient to show us that there is not the slightest chance of settling the millions of people that the colony is capable of receiving until a system of irrigation is introduced. I have read with much interest lately the reports of the hydraulic engineer whom the Victorian Government sent to America—or rather, not his reports, but the reports of the gentleman whom one of the Melbourne papers

sent with him. It appears that in a number of the districts they have visited the climate and the average rainfall are almost similar to those of certain parts of Queensland, and I feel convinced that if we would go in for irrigation the value of the land would be greatly enhanced. If we had passed the last ten-million loan for irrigation purposes it would have enhanced the value of land in Queensland more than anything else. I do not know that I need say anything further. There appeared to me one or two matters of too much importance to allow them to pass unnoticed.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has adopted his usual tactics in reference to Rockhampton and the Central districts. He reminds me very much of the Parnellites in Ireland. They get a great deal this year, and yet come for more the next year. Why, Rockhampton is the most pampered town in the whole of the colony! I have no hesitation in saying that the tactics adopted by its representatives have been very successful.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The insurances are lower.

Mr. MACFARLANE: I do not know what the hon. member means.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I am stating a fact.

Mr. MACFARLANE: Well, I do not understand what it means. I may refer to a remark made by the hon. gentleman who just now interrupted me. He has said that hon. members on this side of the House were like a lot of dumb dogs who did nothing else but warm the cushions. In reply, I may say that there is a good deal of the little parrot about hon. gentlemen on the other side, who keep on coo-cooing, and indulge in a good deal of repetition. I think it is far better that a member who has nothing to say should warm the cushions rather than get up and talk a lot of balderdash.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Why do you not follow your own advice?

Mr. MACFARLANE: The hon. member is evidently not a believer in the saying that speech is silver and silence is golden. We frequently hear the rolling of the hon. member's silvery tones because he believes in talking; but it would please the House much better if we had some of his golden notes of silence. There is not much, Mr. Speaker, in the Governor's Speech to bring out very great enthusiasm. It certainly has not had that effect either on this side or the other, and I must confess that there is as little in it as I have seen in any speech for the last seven years. We therefore need not be surprised that there was little warmth of feeling exhibited on the other side, because there is very little to get up steam about. The leader of the Opposition, in speaking of the Land Bill, said that that Bill was condemned by all parties. He said it was condemned by the Press of the Darling Downs and in fact generally condemned. Now, that remark has had more to do in bringing me to my feet than anything else. I deny that the Land Bill passed last session is generally condemned. It is not; and if we were to take a vote of the colony at the present time we should find that the people have just as much faith in it as when it was passing through. So far as I am concerned, I have just as much faith in the Land Bill as I had when I did all I could to pass it through its various stages last year. It is very true that up to the present time the Land Board has not been a great success, but I do not think it would be fair in this case to condemn them for the way they have managed their business. They were not given a fair start. The principle of survey before selection was adopted, and there was a demand for land. They were conse-

quently placed in a dilemma. This is what I blame the Land Board for. They should not, as they did, have thrown open what land they had, but waited until they were ready, they threw open land that had been previously rejected over and over again, and consequently people would not have it. If they had wanted to make a good impression, and magnify the importance of the Land Act, they would have waited until they had sufficient land from the divided runs to satisfy the demands of the people. They have not satisfied the demands of the selectors; and I think it was bad judgment to throw open bad land when they ought to have waited until they had such land at their disposal as would have provided for all classes. A little more business tact on the part of the Government in instructing the Land Board would have averted the mistakes that have been made. The hon. member for Townsville last night made a few remarks with reference to the Land Act. He said something to the effect that the Premier had brought the Bill forward for party purposes. That Land Act will yet, I believe, be considered by the people of the colony as an Act to benefit all classes of the community; and I believe that in after years, when it has begun to work, and when revenue begins to come in from it, it will be generally admitted that one of the wisest Land Acts ever passed in this colony was passed in 1884. With the hon. members for Rockhampton and Townsville, I agree that the last clause in the Speech is one of the most important—that is, with regard to the conservation of water. That is an old friend; it comes up almost every year, no matter which party is in power. The promise is continually being made, but somehow or other it is never carried into execution. Why that is so I really cannot understand. A good supply of water is admitted to be one of the things most urgently required in this colony, and yet it is not attended to. I trust that will no longer be the case, and that the Government will have time this session to carry through a Bill dealing with the conservation of water. Another promised measure is a Bill dealing with the reform of the liquor traffic, and local option. I speak of this because the hon. member for Townsville last night, who evidently does not know very much about local option, expressed a hope that it would be thrown out. If that hon. gentleman has any idea of becoming a member of the next Parliament he had better alter his tactics with reference to local option. We are all here by the local option of the constituencies we represent, and any candidate who will dare to deny to the electors the right of local option will very likely find himself outside the House when the time comes that he wants to get into it. There is local option and local option. I may say that I do not know anything about the new Bill that is to be brought in. If it is anything like the one in New South Wales it will be as great a failure here as that has been there. But I have a better opinion of our Government: I believe they understand better what local option means, and will introduce such a Bill as will satisfy the people by giving them power to veto public-houses in their own districts if they feel disposed to do so. It is simply local opinion carried into effect. I was struck with a remark of the Colonial Treasurer last night, in replying to Sir T. McIlwraith, with regard to the revenue and expenditure of the colony for the past year. He said that an income of nearly £3,000,000 had been raised from a population of 300,000, and asked us to compare that with the income and population of the other colonies. Well, such a comparison shows that we are a long way ahead of them; but it must be remembered that,

if our income is larger in proportion than that of other colonies, so also is our expenditure. If the expenditure of New South Wales were at the same rate per head as that of Queensland it would amount to £10,000,000. I trust that in his forthcoming Estimates the hon. gentleman will do his best to meet his expenditure by his income. It tells tremendously against a colony when its expenditure exceeds its income; and although we have nothing very grave to fear, yet as one who has always stood here and maintained that our expenditure was always too great, that we were too liberal, I maintain that the Colonial Treasurer should strain every nerve to make his expenditure tally with his income. If we expend £100,000 more than we receive there is something wrong, and that something requires to be righted; and it can only be righted by members of the House setting their faces against all unnecessary expenditure and keeping it down. There are a few members on the cross-benches on both sides who have always set their faces against unnecessary expenditure, and I should not be sorry to see them form a third party so as to check any Treasurer or Minister from increasing his expenditure at such a galloping pace as we have seen in the past. I know some hon. members think I am going too far in this respect, but if a business man were to spend in 1884 the profits he made in 1883 he would be going to the bad. I say we have been going to the bad this last year, and the Colonial Treasurer would have done better, when he saw how things were going, even to have sold a little more land, so as to square his Financial Statement—I do not mean “cooking” it, but for the purpose of keeping faith with the public; because people outside, who only see the broad fact that the expenditure has exceeded the income, come to the conclusion that we are going behind. I do not think the Liberal Government is any more to blame than the Conservative Government, but there is always a disposition in a Liberal Government—I have noticed it especially in this colony—that if the money comes well in they like to see it go well out—they will spend it if they get it. It will be far better to keep down our expenditure so as to prevent the necessity for any fresh taxation. Another of the measures mentioned in the Speech is a Bill to amend and put a limit to the operation of the Pacific Islanders Act of 1880. I hope we shall be able to carry such a Bill as that into law. I have always been in favour of this measure from the time I had first the honour of a seat in this House. I have always advocated putting a limit to the incoming of kanakas, and I believe it will be far better for the sugar-planters in the North that the thing should be completely stopped. They will then know where they are, and how to plan for the future. I am very glad indeed that this Bill is promised, and I hope it will pass. With these few remarks I shall give way to any other gentleman who wishes to address the House.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree with my friend, the hon. member for Mackay, that this is one of those occasions upon which it is the duty of hon. members to express their views upon the administration of the Government during the recess, and also upon the subjects which are shadowed forth in the address of His Excellency. I believe it is the function of the Opposition to criticise, and criticise fairly, the acts of the Government. At the same time I do not think it is the function of the Opposition to offer blind and unreasoning opposition to everything the Government has done or proposes to do. Nor can I say at once that I am prepared to condemn all that the Government have shadowed forth in the Speech, and what they have done during the recess. With some of their

actions I agree to a certain extent; others I do not believe in. I will therefore run through the several matters I propose to touch upon. I am suffering from a severe cold, and do not feel able to say much or talk for very long. To deal with the matters seriatim, I at once indorse and cordially approve of the action taken by the leader of the Government in reference to the war scare; but I regret very much that, owing to the vacillation of the English Cabinet, such a scare ever arose. I am glad to know that the gentlemen to whom we owe all that has taken place have given place to another set of rulers, and possibly the trouble that would have been likely to have arisen under the administration of Mr. Gladstone is likely to be permanently removed, or, at any rate, for a long time, by Lord Salisbury, the gentleman who has succeeded him. With regard to the offer of men and arms made by the colony of New South Wales to the mother-country, it is significant that we have not had the opinion of the Premier or any member of the Government as to the propriety of that action. Not a single member on the Treasury benches has expressed his opinion as to whether that was a right thing or a wrong thing, although the leader of the Opposition has not failed to express his views. I consider it to have been an unconstitutional action, though at the same time it was a bold and patriotic one. I do not think that it should have been undertaken without the sanction of the Legislature of New South Wales. It has precipitated the Australian colonies into the arena of foreign politics, and no doubt we have attracted the eyes of European nations to our wealth and position. However, it devolves upon us, now that attention has been drawn to us, to prepare for defence. I have said, Mr. Speaker, that the action of the Government of New South Wales in sending a contingent to the Soudan without the sanction of Parliament was unconstitutional, and so it was. Their action should have had the immediate ratification of Parliament. Speaking, therefore, as one who believes in the Constitution, the action must be condemned; but as an Australian, one must express one's admiration of it and also a hope that if similar circumstances arise again the same action will be taken, not only by New South Wales but by other colonies as well. Now, sir, His Excellency has told us that this action will have the effect of bringing the Australian colonies “conspicuously into notice throughout the civilised world, and drawing closer the bond of union between them and Great Britain.” I think we were entitled, and that the Government of New South Wales were entitled, to have the opinion of Ministers upon the action taken by the Government of New South Wales. If we are looking forward to federation of the colonies it is only right that one Government should express their view of the action taken by another Australian Government in a matter which was of vital consequence to all Australia. I think it would be scarcely fair for the Government to abstain from giving public expression in this House to their opinion of the action of the Government of New South Wales in sending troops to the Soudan; but as yet not a single Minister has said whether he approves of it or not. With reference to the state of affairs in New Guinea, it is very much to be regretted that Her Majesty's Government did not act in a more determined way, and by their prompt action have secured the sovereignty of the whole island, instead of the paltry half-Guinea which the Gladstone Government have left us. I was sorry to hear the Colonial Treasurer stigmatise the action of the late Government in reference to the annexation of New Guinea as a filibustering expedition. That action has had the approval of every other Government in

Australia, and I regret that it should have remained for our political opponents—at least, for some of our political opponents—to stigmatise it as a filibustering expedition. That action was taken from purely patriotic motives; it was taken from a desire to secure the shores of these colonies—of Queensland especially—against the aggression of any foreign power which might settle in New Guinea. What may happen in the future none of us can tell. Suffice it to say that Germany has now settled in New Guinea. If the time should ever come that a rupture will take place between Great Britain and her colonies and Germany, we may then feel the effects of the policy of the Government of Mr. Gladstone. With reference to the Commission of Inquiry into the case of the natives who were brought from New Guinea, I think that it was a very proper step for the Government to take to appoint that Commission. It was a very proper step indeed, and I have no fault to find with the report, but I do object to the constitution of the Commission. I am not going to say a word against the personal honour of any gentleman appointed on that Commission. Mr. Kinnaid Rose I know slightly, and I have nothing to say against him. Mr. Milman, the police magistrate of Cooktown, was a man who should not have been placed on that Commission. He had taken an active part in connection with the islanders in the “Forest King” case; he had also been mixed up in other matters relative to this labour trade, and I think that it would have been better for the Government to have left him out. That he gave a fair judgment I believe, and so with respect to the hon. member for Bulimba, but we know that that gentleman is a determined supporter of the present Administration, and that his public utterances—in fact, almost his daily utterances—display a most uncompromising opposition to coloured labour of any kind. He must, therefore, have a prejudice in that direction, and under those circumstances it was a most unfortunate thing that he should have been placed on the Commission. I have read the report of the Commissioners, and to-day I read a small portion of the evidence; but apart from that report and apart from the evidence, I believe, from my own knowledge of other cases, that a great many of the islanders brought here did not understand the nature of their agreement; and I say so for this reason, that when certain cases were brought before the Supreme Court recently there was apparently nobody—not even the interpreters who were on the ship when they were obtained—to be found who could communicate with some of the islanders who were called as witnesses. I have no doubt, therefore, that many of the men were not acquainted with the nature of their agreement. At the same time the evidence given by these natives through the interpreters—I notice two interpreters whose names I will mention, Cago and Toiameena—was most unsatisfactory. Those interpreters were interpreters in the “Hopeful” case, and their manner of interpreting the evidence of the natives at the trial was most unsatisfactory. The jury were satisfied, but it was unsatisfactory; many times the interpreters were unable to communicate with the natives, and very often could give no answer at all. I recollect one case in which one of the witnesses distinctly swore that a boy was shot through the breast and that he saw the bullet-hole in his back. In his evidence before the Commission that witness stated that the boy was shot in the back.

The PREMIER: That was another affair—another murder.

Mr. CHUBB: If my recollection serves me aright, it was the same occasion. The boys told

different stories, but in the main I believe their story was true, and that they had no real knowledge of the nature of their agreement. I have therefore no fault to find with the Government for their determination to send those boys back, and under the circumstances I think they can do no other than offer the planters compensation—full compensation. If the planters are not morally responsible for the action of the Government agents and their own agents on board the vessels, then if they are to receive compensation at all it must be in full. It is impossible to draw a line. It is quite true, as His Excellency points out in his Address, that the master of the vessel is formally and nominally the agent of the planter; the Act makes him so. The acts of the master of the vessel are legally the acts of his employers; but it must not be forgotten that the Government send with each vessel an officer of their own, whose duty it is to see that the boys are properly recruited, and when the boys arrive in the colony there is another Government officer whose duty it is to satisfy himself by personal examination of the natives that they thoroughly understand the nature of their agreements. Now, sir, these boys referred to in the Address could not have been landed unless both the Government agent on board the vessel and the Inspector of Polynesians in Queensland had certified that they understood the nature of their agreements. That being so, the planters are morally absolved from responsibility, and the compensation which this House will be asked to give should be made full and complete. In this connection I may say that I am glad to see that the Government are about to introduce a Bill to put an end to this traffic. It is a pity it was not done even so late as two years ago, when the present Government took office, and when they were invited from this side of the House to bring in a Bill to stop it. Of course it will be retorted upon us that we ought to have done it, but two wrongs do not make a right. Even if we were wrong in not doing it, the Government were still more wrong when they knew of these abuses in not putting a stop to the traffic. The Colonial Secretary says it was after they took office that they first became aware of these abuses; then that was the time to take action. If any attempt is made by the Government to carry out this programme, so far as putting a limit to this traffic is concerned, it will have my support. With regard to the Crown Lands Act of 1884, I am inclined to think that sufficient time has not elapsed to give it a fair trial. I do not believe in the Act, which I believe will eventually turn out an excellent one for the pastoral tenant, and not a good one for the selector; but inasmuch as the country has passed the Act, and a majority of this House has made it law, I do not think that three months is sufficient time to give it a fair trial. I believe the Act will be a failure, but I am not prepared to condemn the Government until we see how far they are going to make their prognostications true. At the same time, I think they are to blame for not making provision for the loss of revenue that would take place before the Act came into successful working. With regard to the promised measure for additional representation, it is one which has been wanted for a long time; and I hope the Government will give the North the additional representation to which it is entitled.

The PREMIER: The Bill is on the table.

Mr. CHUBB: I think it was decidedly unfair of the Premier and the Colonial Treasurer to level a charge against this side of the House of attempting nefariously to damage the success of the loan. At first I was inclined to think that no charge was intended, but that it was simply

an expression of opinion by those hon. gentlemen—that they were carried away by their feelings, and fastened on this as an excuse to account for the loan not having been so successful as the Victorian loan. But I have changed my opinion; and I think that, while the charge is not made in direct language, it is made by innuendo and insinuation. I base my opinion on this: Yesterday the Colonial Treasurer was asked if the Government was in possession of any information leading to the identification of the writer of the letters referred to, and the deliberate answer he gave was—

“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.”

Now, sir, the political opponents of the present Government are on this side of the House, or ought to be.

The PREMIER: They are not all in the House.

Mr. CHUBB: They are represented in the House, and must be connected in some way, either by sympathy or otherwise, with the members on this side. It was unfair and undignified, and there were not the slightest grounds for insinuating that members, or the political opponents of the Government, had anything to do with that charge. I repudiate it entirely, and I am quite sure every member on this side does so also; but it is very easy to supply the reason; it is this—there was a commonplace attempt to rig the market in order to so depreciate the loan that it might be sold at a lower price than it would otherwise have fetched. It was simply an attempt to make money. Surely, if the attempt had been made by the political supporters of the Opposition their references to the Government would have been much broader; but there is no reference to the Government except that mentioned by the Colonial Treasurer.

The PREMIER: Yes, there is. They said the loan was to make railways for the supporters of the Government in small places.

Mr. MOREHEAD: It is quite true.

Mr. CHUBB: Assuming that is so, does the hon. member say that it is not true?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. CHUBB: It may not be true in the sense in which it is expressed, but it is true as a fact that railways are promised in all the electorates which are represented by supporters of the present Government. You may twist the words as much as you like, but the fact remains. That is the most natural thing to be seized on by any money-jobber determined to make money by depreciating our loan. Financial agents at home are well acquainted with the colony. They know all our proceedings. They see our newspapers, and they know what is going on in Queensland as well, if not better, than we do ourselves, and it is very easy to get enough facts to formulate their charges or ground their attempts to damage the colony. There was no attempt made by any members on this side of the House, or knowingly, any of their supporters, and there is no evidence of such a nature; but there is abundant evidence to show that it was a pure commonplace attempt to rig the market. I notice that the Speech says that various public works that are sanctioned have been pushed forward with expedition. I wish I could say that statement was accurate, because there is one public work sanctioned by this House which has not been pushed forward with any expedition at all. I allude to the railway from Bowen to Haughton. That railway has been sanctioned by this House to this extent: it has been included in the Loan Act, the money has been voted for it, and borrowed, and has been lying in the Treasury for

two years, and there remains. That public work has certainly not been pushed forward with expedition; and I can only say that considering the Government, through their mouthpiece, the Minister for Works, told my constituency they would give them another railway in place of it at once, I was surprised he did not, at the beginning of the session, lay on the table the plans of a section of the pet railway he has substituted for the first one this House sanctioned. I am informed on good authority that the Parliamentary plans of fifty miles of that railway are ready, and that there is nothing to prevent Parliament being asked to sanction the construction of that section if it is the intention of the Government to go on with it. I am told—and we have *Hansard* as an authority—that the hon. gentleman in charge of the Works Department stated that he intended to make that line under any circumstances—the line which was going westward—the limit not being mentioned; but I am given to understand that he intends to take no step till he ascertains the result of certain coal-boring operations on the Bowen River. If that is the case, I can only say that the constituency I represent has been very much misled, for I was informed that the hon. gentleman promised them that railway without any conditions at all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. CHUBB: I can only express my surprise that if the Government are really sincere in their public works policy, for which they obtained authority for a loan of £10,000,000, they have not tabled the plans of that railway already. But I have not much hope of seeing the line, for which money has been already voted. Therefore I cannot agree with that part of the Speech which says that public works are being pushed forward with all expedition. I know several other works for which money has been voted but which have not been carried out. Nothing has been done yet towards the court-house at Charters Towers, but possibly the Attorney-General may have something to say about that. I have not had the opportunity of going further north than Bowen during the recess, but I understand from the hon. member for Rockhampton that there are many works promised in his district but not carried out—there have been plenty of promises no thicker than piecrust. It was said by the leader of the Opposition on Tuesday night, referring to the speech of the hon. member for Fassifern, that he was very much hampered by the ten-million loan, inasmuch as the public works policy of the Government was complete for the next three or five years, and it would be impossible to raise any further funds by way of loan for other necessary public works. The Premier repudiated the suggestion, and said it was not likely that members were held together in that way—that there was no chain round them, because the public works were already sanctioned. So was the Bowen line, but it has been put off. What is easier than for the Government, if they wish to retain the support of their followers, to delay the construction of a public work sanctioned, or to get up an agitation in respect to rival routes, and so put the thing off from year to year and not do it at all, or only at the last moment when they find it absolutely necessary to obtain support? Judging by their action with regard to one railway it is quite possible and not improbable that they may do the same in regard to others, more especially when they find it necessary to give some excuse to members on their own side of the House, in order to retain their support during the present Parliament. There is no necessity to give any excuse for treating Opposition members in that way. I say it undoubtedly does hamper members in the free criticism they

may be inclined to offer on the policy of the Government, and that it is unconstitutional to vote money which can never be spent during the lifetime of the present Administration; to hamper their supporters and also to hamper the succeeding Government; and the evil which has been done will yet be felt. With reference to the measures which are promised for consideration this session, there are some, I believe, to be useful and necessary. I suppose the Bill "for facilitating sales, leases, and other dispositions of settled land, and for promoting the execution of improvements thereon," will be an adaptation of the English Act of 1882, and that the one "to consolidate and amend the laws relating to justices of the peace" will be an adaptation of the Summary Jurisdiction Act of 1879—both Imperial Acts which have worked very well, and will be very useful here. With regard to the Bill to amend the liquor laws, I shall certainly give some support to it. On that subject, sir, I hold views somewhat in accordance with those of the hon. member for Ipswich. I am not prepared to go so far, perhaps, as he is, but I believe that the liquor law does require amendment. I believe that public-houses should be shut on Sundays, at any rate in large cities, and I believe that there should be a prohibition against the employment of barmaids in public-houses.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: What! Oh!

Mr. CHUBB: And there are other matters that require amendment.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Amend the liquor!

Mr. CHUBB: I do not care whether the liquor is amended or not. It does not trouble me very much. It is certainly time that the present law was amended, and I think some very efficient amendments can be made in the administration of the liquor traffic. I do not think it is a good thing to see the liquor revenue of the colony increasing every year. No doubt it brings in revenue, and no doubt it is considered an impolitic thing to offend the publicans, but I believe, sir, in maintaining the welfare of the colony, and in regard to that measure I shall certainly do all I can to amend the existing law. I am rather curious to see the last Bill mentioned:—

"A Bill to make provision for Regulating the Width of Streets and Lanes, and to prevent the Subdivision of Land in such a manner as to be injurious to the Public Health."

Whether that proposes to place a minimum on the size of allotments—whether they are not going to allow any more 16-perch allotments—remains to be seen; but it seems to me very much like locking the door after the steed is stolen to bring in a Bill of this kind. I have been told, sir, that there are as many 16-perch allotments in Brisbane and its immediate neighbourhood as would if built on carry a population of something like 2,000,000. Perhaps there will be some provision in the Bill to consolidate these 16-perch allotments and to resell them to persons who will hold them in blocks of not less than two or three acres. If so, it will be a very good Bill. At any rate it will send up the price of large blocks of land, and may be a very good thing for the land-jobbers. I hope that something will be done with reference to the supply and conservation of water. The report of the Engineer in charge of that department is very encouraging. I think a great deal of good work has been done during the past year, and I hope that more will be done, because, unless water is plentifully supplied in outlying places, a large extent of country will be unfit for settlement. I am sorry, sir, to see that although the revenue is increasing in one sense it is not

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increasing in proportion to our expenditure. I do not think it is a good thing to see that our expenditure has exceeded our revenue by nearly £100,000.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That was explained last night.

Mr. CHUBB: One item that I wish to allude to especially is stamp duty. A large sum has been received under that head, and I do not think it shows a sound or prosperous state of things. I think it shows that there has been a large amount of unwholesome speculation in land.

Mr. MOREHEAD: It may be accounted for by the frequent change of Postmaster-General.

Mr. CHUBB: I think, sir, if you want evidence of commercial morality, or wish to draw a parallel as to the attempt made to damage our loan, you have only to look at the commercial morality that exists here in connection with the land syndicates. I know some cases in which they have invited their friends to a picnic, and endeavoured to sell them, at very largely increased prices, land which they had bought for a nominal sum. That was to their own personal friends. That, sir, may be considered an honest transaction, but if that kind of morality exists in Queensland—and I know that it does—in fact I know some gentlemen who hold their heads very high, who have been connected with such transactions—I say if that sort of morality exists here, we do not need to go very far to find a similar kind of morality amongst the financial agents in London who wanted to rig the market in order to reduce the price of our loan. I think there will be no difficulty in finding it there. I have now reviewed the several matters dealt with in the Speech. I trust we shall soon have some of these measures placed before us for consideration; and, as far as I am able, I will do my best to assist in carrying into law those matters which I consider beneficial to the colony, while, on the other hand, those which I do not approve of will have my most determined opposition.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said: Mr. Speaker,—I did not intend to take any part in this debate, but my hon. friend the member for Bowen having spoken, he is entitled to the courtesy of a reply; and in reply to the speech which he has just delivered I shall endeavour to make as few observations as possible. Beginning with that part of the hon. gentleman's speech which was the subject of the last observations he made, I would say that I do not think there has been any such attempt made on this side of the House to insinuate anything against the personal honour of members sitting on the Opposition benches as has been supposed by some hon. gentlemen. As far as I am personally concerned, the idea of anything political being connected with the attack made upon the Queensland loan was suggested by a paragraph I saw in the *Brisbane Courier* which referred to a telegram, or rather a cablegram, that appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stating that the Queensland loan had been made the subject of a political attack, or that an attempt had been made to damage it by political opponents of the present Government. That was the idea evidently entertained in London by those who had charge of the telegraph wires; and that having been the message deliberately cabled out to New South Wales, and it being thought by the *Courier* to be of sufficient importance to give it a place in its columns, I do not think hon. gentlemen who sit here can be accused or ought to be accused of levelling insinuations against hon. members of any

political party, by accepting that statement as containing within it a certain amount of truth. There is no reason why any members of this House should attribute to themselves—as though they were the only political opponents of the present Government—statements of the character that have been made as to the attempt to damage the Queensland loan by political opponents of the present Government. If it be true that the only reason why there was an attempt made to injure the Queensland loan was that certain speculative individuals wished to enrich themselves by depreciating the loan beforehand, that they might afterwards be able to sell a considerable portion of the stock which they had purchased at a cheap rate under the influence of the fears which their falsehoods had engendered, how comes it to pass that the same tactics have not been employed in reference to the loans that have been floated by the other colonies? We know that New Zealand is a very heavily taxed colony. We know what they have been doing in the shape of large expenditure for railways and other public works. We know what Victoria has been doing in the same direction. Is it not notorious that the Government of Victoria has been largely influencing the votes of members of the Legislature by means of railways constructed to the electorates of faithful supporters of the Government? Yet there was no attempt made in regard to the loan of Victoria, and it is singular, to say the least of it, that attempts of this nature should only have been made in respect of the Queensland loan. The hon. gentleman made reference in his speech to the alleged fact that there was a suspicion of truth in the allegation that was made by the enemies of Queensland, inasmuch as the Government were proposing to construct lines of railway to the electorates represented by many of their supporters. Well, of course it does happen that in the majority of instances the railways are to be made in or to or through electorates which are represented by Government supporters; but that simply arises from the fact that the great majority of members of this House happen to be sitting on the Government side of the House; and if that is so it surely is not a very strange thing that the majority of lines proposed to be constructed should be lines to electorates represented by Government supporters. But it is a fact that there are lines proposed to be constructed to the electorates of members who sit on the Opposition benches. Is not one of the most important lines proposed to be constructed—the line to St. George—a place represented by the hon. member for Balonne? Is there not also a line proposed to be constructed to Emu Park—a place represented by the hon. member for Rockhampton? Has there not been an arrangement made for constructing a line from Cloncurry to the Gulf, which is in the Burke electorate? Why, I maintain that, considering the proportion of members who sit on this side and the proportion who sit on the other side, the allotment of loan money has been as fair as could possibly be devised. Then again, this is quite irrespective of the proposal to carry lines further west, one of which will run into the electorate of the hon. member for Warrego and another to the electorate of the hon. member for Gregory. The hon. member who has just sat down made reference to a matter that was touched upon by the hon. member for Mackay—the amount of expenditure that has taken place in the North, as compared with the South. The hon. member for Mackay last night informed the House that the only amount of money that had been voted for public works in the northern part of the colony, exclusive of the ten-million loan authorised last session, was £1,964,778. I am not prepared

to challenge the hon. member's figures, but the hon. member forgot to inform the House that those figures solely represent the amount specifically appropriated in various Loan Acts to public works in the North. But in all Loan Acts since the very formation of the colony a large sum of money has been appropriated to the purpose of public roads, bridges, the extension of telegraph, harbour works, loans to municipalities, waterworks, etc., and during the whole of the existence of Queensland some millions of money had been appropriated on different Loan Acts to those several purposes, and the Northern districts have participated in the expenditure not included in the £1,964,778. And what is the fact in regard to the late loan? Let the deficiencies of particular Governments be what they may, what is the fact with regard to that loan? We find that a little short of ten millions has been authorised, and of that total amount we find £1,625,000 has been appropriated for Northern railways alone. And there are also various public works authorised—such as loans to local bodies, the extension of the telegraph, and improvement of harbours and rivers, in which the North will also participate, and of which the North will get a very large share. The case of Bowen has been cited by the hon. member for Mackay and the hon. member for Bowen, and I may say that when I was returned for the constituency which I have the honour to represent it was a question that was very much talked about. I may say that at that time I had very strong feelings on the question. I felt that there was an injustice being done to the constituency that I represent and to other parts of the interior by reason of the fact that goods had to be taken out of ships lying in Cleveland Bay, brought up Ross Creek, and carted a long distance to the railway station. This was a great injustice, and I felt that, unless something was done to remedy the evil, it would be an improper thing not to construct the line by way of Haughton Gap. In fact, unless I could have seen some way by which deep water could have been reached, I should have made it a condition when accepting a position in the Government.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Why, you asked for it.

Mr. STEVENSON: You implored to be taken in.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I had very strong convictions on the point, but when I mentioned the matter to the Minister for Works he told me that he himself was neutral on the question of the Haughton Gap route, and that he would suspend all action until he had gone over the ground. He said he would make it his business to see whether there was a justification for the construction of the line, and he told me at the same time it was his intention to extend the line of railway from the present terminus at Townsville down to the jetty. Now, the hon. gentleman fulfilled his promise. He went up north, but before he went a deputation came down from Bowen. They waited upon him as well as upon myself and others, and I said then that, in view of the fact that there was a main line of railway about to be taken to deep water, unless it could be shown that there was a possibility of additional traffic in the neighbourhood of Bowen—unless the deputation could show that there would be a certain amount of local traffic by reason of the existence of good land which would be opened to settlement thereby—it would not be a fair thing to construct a line by way of Haughton Gap. The deputation that came from Bowen assured me that upon that fact rested their claim. They said, "We rest our claim upon this: that there is sufficient good land between Bowen

and Haughton Gap to warrant the construction of the line, quite apart from the existence of the interior traffic." The Minister for Works was about to take the line to deep water, and thereby remedy the great grievance complained of. I saw then that the construction of a line to Haughton Gap would mean that sixty miles of additional carriage would have been entailed upon all commodities that were forwarded to the sea-coast, and unless there was a local traffic the development of which would contribute towards paying interest on cost of construction, it would not be a proper thing to construct the Haughton Gap line of railway. I expected the hon. member for Bowen would have made some reference to the burning question in his constituency—the question of separation. The hon. member for Mackay is the only member who has boldly faced that question, and he, we know, is an advocate for it.

Mr. CHUBB: So am I.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. gentleman did not say a word about separation. I know the hon. member for Bowen is a fair-minded man, who takes his views of public questions quite apart from local ideas, and he has had the manliness to tell his constituents that a parliamentary representative should not be a mere delegate. The hon. gentleman declares himself a separationist, and yet after the question has been brought forward very ably by the hon. member for Mackay, who used many strong arguments from his own point of view in favour of it, he did not say a single word about it. I can only take the silence of the hon. gentleman as being indicative of the fact that he is not prepared to go heart and soul for separation of the North from the South just now.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I will advocate separation if you will go to the northern part of the colony.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not know that if there was separation I should prefer to go to the North.

Mr. MOREHEAD: You will go farther before it is all over.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not know that I should like to be a sharer in the financial burden that would fall on the Northern people as a result of the separation of the North from the South.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Go, and take the Treasurer with you.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The Treasurer could not be spared from the South; he is the best Treasurer we ever had. As in remarks of that kind "present company" is "always excepted," I do not mean to insinuate any comparison between him and a former Treasurer who is sitting opposite. Before this question of separation can claim sufficient prominence to justify its being brought before the House it ought to be shown that the people of the North are really in favour of it. The hon. member for Mackay has endeavoured to gauge public opinion upon this subject during the course of his travels; and, although a large number of mercantile firms in the North appeared to favour the idea of separation, he found that the great bulk of the working men, particularly the miners, are utterly opposed to it, and will not have it on any terms. I was very pleased indeed that the hon. gentleman was good enough to pay the compliment he did to the constituency I have the honour to represent. He went there and had the opportunity of placing his views fully before the people, and the hon. gentleman in paying

them the compliment he has now done did nothing more than was just and right. They knew the hon. gentleman was a strong advocate of separation, that he was dangerous to meet as an opponent by reason of the urgency of his arguments, and yet there was no disposition on the part of Charters Towers to deny him an opportunity of expounding his views as fully as he would. And he did expound those views fully and clearly; but after he had done that he was far from having succeeded in bringing about the result he aimed at, and a resolution was unanimously passed that separation was not desirable. And he will find out that if he visits Charters Towers again next year, or in any succeeding year, the miners there will be of the same opinion. There is no more thoughtful and clear-headed class of men in the colony than the mining population. They are men accustomed to think, who read the newspapers, and who form their own opinions on current public affairs, and they are not to be swayed by specious arguments or carried away by the last comer. If they were, they would have been swayed and carried away by the hon. member for Mackay. But, no. They listened to him, and while still under the spell which his speech must have produced upon them, they then and there declared to him what their opinion on this question was, and it speaks well for their intelligence that they have formed a determination not to have separation at any price. I do not think it is necessary for me to refer to any other matters touched upon by the hon. member for Bowen. The various questions mentioned in His Excellency's Speech have already been adverted to at sufficient length and with sufficient clearness by hon. members who have spoken on both sides. I cannot throw any additional light on anything that has been said, nor need I make the attempt. I am glad to find that no very serious accusations have been made, and I have not the slightest doubt that if the Government succeed in carrying out the programme they have put before hon. members they will have accomplished a work of which they, as a Government, will have no need to be ashamed.

Mr. STEVENSON said: The debate this evening has not been a very lively one; in fact, it has been on the whole rather dreary, and I am glad the hon. gentleman who last spoke has tried to infuse a little warmth into it, although I must say of the Attorney-General that he generally appears to be most earnest when he is most insincere. That hon. gentleman commenced by telling us that no charge had been made from that side against members on this side of having influenced the floating of the recent loan. I should like to know how he interprets the Premier's remarks on that subject. Although the Premier, when challenged on the point by the hon. member for Balonne, denied it, yet he cannot get over his own words, which are as follow:—

"I should like to know who was the man in Queensland who got up that conspiracy to damage the Queensland loan—for I have not the slightest doubt that it was got up in Queensland, if not in Brisbane, by enemies of the Government, who thought that if they could succeed in damaging the position of the Government, even at the expense of damaging the credit of the colony, they would be doing a good work. I should like to see those men exposed. I wonder whether I am now addressing any person who was a party to that conspiracy?"

Does the Attorney-General mean to say that that is not an insinuation by the Premier that someone on this side of the House was connected with that conspiracy to influence the floating of the loan in England? If the charge

was not made, words have no meaning. But the Premier is too much of a coward to make a direct charge against any members on this side, so he resorts to his old game and throws out insinuations, hoping the colony will believe that it is really a charge against members on this side that we were implicated in influencing the floating of that loan. I say it is a most disgraceful charge to make, and it also shows the Premier's great want of common sense. He ought to know that members on this side are as deeply interested in the prosperity of Queensland as he is, and that if we had prejudiced the floating of the loan in England it would have recoiled upon ourselves. There is not a member on this side of the House who would not have suffered if the last loan had not been floated with some success; so that the hon. gentleman must know that these charges are simply absurd. At the same time he thinks that he will get a certain portion of the people of this colony to believe that such disreputable charges can be made against hon. members on this side of the House. The hon. gentleman next tried to put himself right in regard to the railway from Bowen to Haughton Gap. He evidently seems to have given this matter very great consideration; in fact, it was a matter that he considered very seriously before he accepted a position in the Government. I am now referring to the Attorney-General. He had to quiet his conscience in regard to this matter before he could even accept an office in the Ministry. He gave as his reason for having made up his mind that this railway was not required, although he at first thought that an injustice was being done, that deep water could be found at Townsville.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Hear, hear!

Mr. STEVENSON: I should like the hon. gentleman to compare the expense of finding deep water at Townsville with that of finding it at Bowen. From the former place the railway would cost something like a million of money, whereas from Bowen to Haughton Gap and Charters Towers it could be made for something like £300,000; and not only that, but it would be twelve hours nearer Brisbane than by going *via* Townsville. The hon. gentleman thought so much of this matter that he would not even accept an office in the Government before he had quieted his conscience in this way. Is it not a well-known fact in Brisbane, and was it not the talk of Queen street at the time, that the hon. gentleman went crying to the Premier to get the office, and said that it would simply ruin him if he did not get it? He had staked his whole existence upon it; he had squared the Premier. Sir, it was not the deep water that he found at Townsville, but the land that he found the Premier had there that guided him, and he could not afford to go back on the Premier and vote for the Haughton Gap railway, or advocate its construction. It was also a well-known fact at the time that the Attorney-General, when returning from Charters Towers, distinctly told a gentleman on board the steamer that it was no use advocating the construction of the Haughton Gap railway while Sam held his land at Townsville. It was a byword in Queen street. With regard to separation, I am not going to speak upon that subject at the present time. I do not wonder at the Northern people, however, making some move in the matter. I consider that the North has been scandalously treated by the Premier in more ways than one. I am going to refer to some remarks which fell from the Colonial Treasurer when he congratulated us upon the prosperity of the colony. I was very glad to hear from him that the colony was in a prosperous position; but I do not think he

was very logical in the way he took to prove He told us that the colony was prosperous because money was flowing into Brisbane. It shows hon. members and the people of the North that when the Treasurer finds there is money flowing into Brisbane he thinks it is perfectly good enough for the whole colony. It shows what a Queen-street Government is. When the Colonial Treasurer finds there is prosperity in Brisbane—when he is doing well in selling 16-perch allotments—he thinks that that is good enough for the whole colony. I can tell him that the colony is not in a prosperous condition; and I say that the leader of the Opposition was perfectly right when he said in his place that the very reason why so much money was in Brisbane at present was because things were so depressed in other parts of the colony. And so they are. The reason why so much money has been invested in Queen-street and suburban property is simply that people are afraid to invest it in any other way in the colony; and why? The Treasurer told us, of course, that we were suffering from drought. We have been suffering from a very severe drought, and we are still suffering from it; but although this has a very great deal to do with the depression that exists in the colony, the want of confidence in the present Government by capitalists has far more to do with that depression, and I do not hesitate to say that people with plenty of money would have flowed into Queensland to invest it in stations and sugar plantations, but for the course adopted by the present Government. Do we not know perfectly well that ever since the present Government came into power, as the Treasurer must know, scarcely a single station has changed hands in Queensland? Is it because there is no money to invest? That is not the reason. It is because of the insecurity of the tenure, and of everything else in regard to the land laws of the colony, which has been brought about by the present Government. We had a proof of the repudiation policy of the Government last session when they brought in a Land Bill by which they tried to do away with the pre-emptive right; but they could not have passed the clause relating to pre-emptives if an amendment had not been brought forward by one of the hon. members for Stanley—Mr. Kellett—whereby the pre-emptive right to a certain extent should be allowed as long as the improvements on 2,560 acres were equal to 10s. an acre, or £1,280. The discussion upon that clause, even by members on the other side of the House, clearly proved that there was no desire on their part to do injustice to the squatters and to repudiate that right. I appeal to hon. members on that side of the House if that was not so? When the Bill went to the Upper House they would not even have repudiation to that extent, and they would have thrown out the Bill altogether had not a conference taken place, whereby the 54th clause was left as it was in the Crown Lands Act of 1869. Now, sir, I say if there was any fairness, any sincerity, in the conference last year between the two Houses on the Land Bill—if the Premier was sincere in the compromise arrived at on that occasion—the pre-emptive right ought to have been recognised up to the present time. But what has really been done in this matter? The Minister for Lands, in his high-handed way, has taken no notice of the decision arrived at by the conference or the views of members on both sides of the House as expressed in the debate on the Land Bill, but has refused every application for pre-emption up to the present time with the exception of a few from his own friends. The hon. gentleman laughs, but a man may "smile and smile, and be a villain." I say it is a most disgraceful

thing that after the legislation of last session any Minister of the Crown should be allowed to take the action taken by the Minister for Lands, backed up by the Premier. It is not administration; it is simply an act of revenge done because the Land Act was not passed as it was introduced into the House. The action of the Government in this matter is one reason why the condition of the colony is not as prosperous as it should be at the present time—that it is in such a depressed state. But not only are the squatters to be deprived of this pre-emptive right arising out of a bargain which they entered into with the State, and which has never been repudiated by the House, but now it is proposed in the Governor's Speech to introduce an amending Bill to upset that part of the Act passed last year providing for survey before selection. If an amending Bill is to be brought in to amend an Act which is not yet fairly in operation, where is legislation of this kind to end? Where is there to be any finality? Where is there to be any security for squatters? The next thing will be a Bill to do away with the indefeasible leases granted under the Act. I said last year that it would be quite possible to repudiate those leases, and that if the land held by the squatters was wanted, a measure would be introduced taking away the leases just in the same manner as it is now proposed to make provision for selection before survey. There is no security whatever for squatters, and this shilly-shallying on the part of the Administration is another reason why money which would flow into the pastoral industry is not doing so. Much as the drought has affected this colony, the action of the Government in the matters to which I have alluded has had a great deal to do with the present depression. We know very well, as far as the drought is concerned, that we are not always going to have a drought. People understand that perfectly well, and know that, although perhaps there is a drought this year, there may be good seasons for the next four or five years; but it is very different with regard to the repudiation policy of the Government. That frightens investors. And further, what do we find the Premier of the colony doing—a gentleman who ought to show to people that at any rate they may depend on getting fair play? What does he do when he goes up north on one of his expeditions? Did he not in one of his speeches, delivered, I think, at Charters Towers, distinctly tell his audience that there was one class of people that he intended to do away with in this colony? Did he not say that we want the working men, that we want the middle men, but the capitalists we can do without? Did not the hon. gentleman say that?

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. STEVENSON: Well, it was reported in the newspapers, and I would just as soon believe the newspapers as the hon. gentleman. I have seen the statement in print in the *Courier*, that the hon. gentleman distinctly stated we want the working men and the middle men, but the capitalists we can do without.

THE PREMIER: I did not say that.

MR. STEVENSON: I think that if we can do without the capitalists we shall not want the working men, or middle men either. If the Colonial Treasurer thinks that because there is plenty of money in Brisbane the colony is prosperous, he is greatly mistaken, and if the hon. gentleman is going to back up the Premier and the Minister for Lands in doing injustice to other parts of the colony he will find that Brisbane will suffer along with them. No one part of the colony can do without the other. Brisbane cannot do with-

out the back-country men, and it would be very much better if we could work well together, and let all go on prosperously. I had intended to say a word or two with regard to the remarks that fell from the Minister for Works in reference to the railway rates, but as the hon. gentleman is not in his place I need not trouble the House upon that matter at the present time. I shall, however, make a few observations concerning the Premier's high-handed action with reference to the return of the labourers to New Guinea, as also his action afterwards in regard to the planters in connection with this matter. In the first place I say this: that the Premier was primarily to blame for those men having come here. The hon. gentleman could perfectly well have prevented the recruiting ships going to the islands those men were got from; he had ample opportunity of doing so, but he has kept this kanaka business hanging on before the public so that he may have a political cry. He pretends that he wants to do away with black labour. Then why did he not do away with it? Why did he not take some action when he came into office with regard to this matter? There was a motion proposed last year by a member of this side of the House to the following effect:—

From and after the thirty-first day of December, 1885, before any islanders shall be permitted to land from any vessel, the master of the vessel shall pay to the Collector of Customs, or other officer of Customs authorised in that behalf, the sum of fifty pounds for every such islander, the same to be paid into the general revenue of the colony. If any master shall neglect to pay any such sum, or shall land or permit to land any islander at any place in the colony before such sum shall have been paid for or by him, such master shall be liable for every such offence to a penalty not exceeding fifty pounds for each islander so landed or permitted to land.

Now, sir, if that proposal from this side of the House had been adopted, it would practically have put a stop to any more kanakas being brought here at all. I do not say that I agree with that, but if the Premier had been earnest in his professed desire to put an end to the traffic he would have voted for the motion. He not only would not put a stop to the traffic: he actually extended it by giving the masters of these vessels leave to go farther afield to new islands. He was certainly primarily to blame for these islanders having come, as he had his agents there who saw the whole thing going on. Perhaps the hon. gentleman let it go on simply for the sake of getting up a disturbance and showing his own sincerity by sending the men back. I have not read the evidence; but I read the report when it first appeared in the *Courier*, and I read what the hon. gentleman said about it, I think, at Maryborough. That was certainly not very creditable to him, and it had the effect of blackening the fair fame of the colony in a quite unnecessary way. Now, sir, when it was decided to send these men back, and it was proposed to get an injunction from the Supreme Court to prevent their being taken away, the hon. gentleman not only said he would take no notice of an injunction of the Supreme Court, but he actually intimated that if any planter showed any resistance his claim to compensation would not be recognised. Now, sir, this is a most scandalous position for the Premier to place himself in. The hon. gentleman is a lawyer, one of a class of men who ought to be the first to respect the position of judges of the Supreme Court—men who are supposed to decide between man and man fairly—and are highly paid for doing so; yet the hon. gentleman tells the people of the colony that he will not take the slightest notice of the Supreme Court. What confidence can the people of the colony have in a

Government when the head of it acts in such a way? We have been used to look upon the Supreme Court as a place where we could go for redress even when a tyrannical Government was in power; but we find now that even the Supreme Court is to be ignored and the judges set aside and taken no notice of. Now, sir, I want to refer to a matter which took place during the recess, which the hon. gentleman ought to blush at. When McNeil and Williams were sentenced to death for the supposed murder of certain islanders, the hon. gentleman had not the moral courage to follow out his own desire and hang them, because the people of the colony would not let him do it. He wished to hang those men for the sake of pandering to the Exeter Hall people, and to show what a virtuous Premier he was; but when the people of the colony rolled up as one man and prevented it, what did the hon. the Premier do? The hon. member was not satisfied to let these men's lives be sworn away by a paid perjurer, who went about the streets of Brisbane boasting he could get any money he liked out of the Government to swear their lives away, but he must needs take a lot of kanakas down to gloat over these men in prison and in chains. I say the hon. the Premier ought to hang his head in shame at such an idea, which could only have originated in the mind of a cold-blooded and inhuman man. When he could not hang those men, it might please him to punish the planters and send the kanakas back to their homes, and so pose as a highly virtuous man; but the other thing was a disgraceful proceeding. I have not read the evidence, but I have had a large experience in island labour, and I know perfectly well what kind of evidence can be given by blackfellows. I do not say that the islanders should not have been sent back if they were improperly brought, but I doubt whether they were improperly brought. I believe the islanders know better than to mistake three moons for three yams. I say again that the Premier's action in sending the kanakas to gloat over the sufferings of men in chains and in prison was a most disgraceful one, and would have been impossible to any man with a spark of humanity or a trace of the milk of human kindness. There were several things I wished to speak of, Mr. Speaker, in connection with the departments of the Minister for Works and the Minister for Lands, but as those gentlemen are not here I shall not do so now. I suppose the debate is nearly finished, and as most hon. members are no doubt anxious to get home, I shall not go on any further.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I beg to move that the Speech of His Excellency the Governor be taken into consideration at the next meeting of the House.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER: I am authorised to state that it will be convenient for His Excellency to receive the Address in Reply on Tuesday afternoon, at half-past 3 o'clock. I therefore move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday next. I may state for the information of hon. gentlemen that on Tuesday we propose to deal with the business on the paper in the following order:—Police Officers Relief Bill, Members Expenses Bill, Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Bill, New Guinea Islanders Employers Compensation Bill, and Additional Members Bill.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-seven minutes to 9 o'clock.