

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 26 MAY 1893

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 26 May, 1893.

Presentation of Speaker.—Administration of Oath.—Elections Tribunal.—Savings Bank Securities.—Ministerial Statement.—Officials in Parliament.—Adjournment.—Leadership of Labour Party.—Bill *pro forma*.—The Opening Speech—Address in Reply.—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the chair at a quarter-past 11 o'clock.

PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER.

Shortly after the House met, the SPEAKER, accompanied by the Clerk and hon. members, proceeded to Government House.

On the House resuming at five minutes to 12 o'clock, a message was received that His Excellency the Governor requested the attendance of Mr. Speaker and members of the Assembly in the Council Chamber.

The SPEAKER, accompanied by members of the Assembly, accordingly proceeded to the Council Chamber, and, having heard the Address of His Excellency, returned to their own Chamber.

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

The SPEAKER: I have to report that I have this day been to Government House, where I presented myself to the Governor for Her Majesty's Royal approbation as the member chosen by the Assembly for the high and honourable office of Speaker, and that His Excellency was pleased to make the following reply:—

"MR. SPEAKER,—

"I approve, on behalf of the Queen, the choice which the Assembly has made in your person.

"H. W. NORMAN.

"Government House, Brisbane,

"26th May, 1893."

I also, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, laid claim to all the undoubted rights and privileges of the House, and prayed that the most favourable construction might on all occasions be put upon their proceedings, to which His Excellency was pleased to make the following reply:—

"MR. SPEAKER,—

"I further recognise, on behalf of the Queen, the lawful rights and privileges claimed by the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in as full and ample a manner as they have been heretofore granted or allowed by Her Majesty.

"H. W. NORMAN.

"Government House, Brisbane,

"26th May, 1893."

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH.

The SPEAKER: I have to report that His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to issue a Commission under the Great Seal of the colony empowering me to administer the oath or affirmation of allegiance to such members as may hereafter present themselves to be sworn, which I desire the Clerk now to read.

The Commission was read at length by the Clerk.

ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a letter from the Chief Justice intimating that Mr. Justice Harding would be the elections judge for the year 1893.

SAVINGS BANK SECURITIES.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a letter from the Auditor-General upon the subject of the investment of the funds and the condition of the securities of the Government Savings Bank. Ordered to be printed.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir Thomas McIlwraith): I desire to make a statement with regard to the Ministerial changes which have taken place since the prorogation of the last session of the late Parliament. Since then a new Ministry has been formed by me, the members being as follows:—Myself as Chief Secretary and Secretary for Railways, the Hon. Hugh Muir Nelson as Colonial Treasurer, the Hon. Horace Tozer as Colonial Secretary, the Hon. Walter Horatio Wilson as Postmaster-General and Secretary for Public Instruction, the Hon. Isidor Lissner as Secretary for Public Works and Mines, the Hon. A. H. Barlow as Secretary for Public Lands and Agriculture, and the Hon. Thomas Joseph Byrnes remaining as Attorney-General, to which office he has been sworn. Since then another change has been made. The Governor has received the resignation of the Hon. Isidor Lissner as Secretary for Public Works and Mines, which resignation has been accepted, and the Hon. Robert Philp has been appointed a member of the Executive Council as Minister for Mines and Works. I now lay on the table the *Gazettes* indicating these changes.

OFFICIALS IN PARLIAMENT.

Mr. GROOM: I presume I am within my rights in following the hon. gentleman in his Ministerial Statement, because I desire to call attention to what is a constitutional innovation in this Chamber. I am not going to challenge the action, because in accordance with the Officials in Parliament Act it is correct, but I do not believe that there were three members of the late Parliament who knew that under that Act the practice of members who accepted offices of profit under the Crown going before their constituents for re-election had been abrogated. Since the Act was passed in 1886 we have had more than one change of Ministry, and both the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government and the late Chief Secretary went before their constituents for re-election. At that time, I believe, it had not been discovered that sections 5 and 6 of the Constitution Act had been repealed, and it is a very grave question whether it was intended to repeal those clauses. I do not believe that was the intention, for on looking up the debates I find that the question was never alluded to. It looks as if this is one of those cases where the schedules to Acts are passed by hon. members as correct from their extreme confidence that the hon. gentleman who introduced the measure was doing the right thing. They did not, therefore, take the trouble to refer to the clauses which were being repealed in the Constitution Act. I draw the attention of the Attorney-General to the 5th clause of the Officials in Parliament Act, which provides that where a Minister subsequently accepts another office, or holds both offices together, he shall not vacate his seat. That indicates that the Act contemplated that on the first acceptance of office a Minister should go before his constituents. I am not saying that the action taken with regard to the present Secretary for Mines and Works is wrong. I believe it to be strictly in accordance with the Act, but I will just refer to another instance. In the first week in January last a proclamation appeared in the *Gazette*, notifying that Mr. Hume Black had been appointed special agent to England. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been the Speaker's duty immediately after the notification appeared to have issued his writ for a fresh election for Mackay, because had Mr. Black, in the face of that proclamation, taken his seat in this Chamber and spoken or voted on any matter he would have been liable to a penalty of £500.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No. The Speaker could not act until he had the resignation in his hand.

Mr. GROOM: Well, he ought to have resigned.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. T. J. Byrnes): He would not have been liable to that penalty either.

Mr. GROOM: I am only giving my experience in this Chamber, and I will take the hon. gentleman's legal opinion. When Mr. Black's appointment cropped up several members of the late Parliament became aware for the first time that the sections in the Constitution Act referred to had been repealed. Whether the late Chief Secretary intended to repeal those sections I cannot say, but I draw attention to the matter now, as this is the first time since the Act was passed that it has been put into practical operation, and it is just as well that the House and the country should know of it. It might happen that a new Ministry might be formed and take office without appearing before their constituents. I am not prepared to say that that would not be right. There is a great deal to be said in favour of it. It is the law in South Australia, and in New South Wales a Bill to give effect to it was introduced, though I cannot say whether it was passed or not. I specially allude to this in connection with Mr. Hume Black's appointment. He should have at once resigned. Certainly the fact that the general election was so soon to follow may have had something to do with it, but the ordinary constitutional practice should have been followed; and considering that he was at one time a Minister of the Crown, he at all events should have set a good example. However, I have discharged my duty in calling the attention of hon. members and the public to this repeal of the 5th and 6th sections of the Constitution Act.

The SPEAKER: There is no motion before the House, but as the matter which has been referred to is one of considerable importance, I allowed the hon. member to make his statement in answer to the Ministerial explanation. Probably the House would like to hear an explanation from the Premier on the subject, but there can be no general discussion.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: What the hon. member has said with reference to Ministers going before their constituents for re-election is quite true. The hon. member himself said he did not believe in Ministers going for re-election; neither did the late Parliament. Hon. members must remember that this matter was fully debated, not in 1886, when the Officials in Parliament Act was passed, but last year, when the Provincial Districts Bill was before Parliament, and the principle was then affirmed that no member accepting office should go before his constituents for re-election. It is quite true, as the hon. member has said, that several elections have taken place since the passing of the Officials in Parliament Act, but they need not have taken place. The law is emphatically that there is no necessity whatever for a member accepting office to go before his constituents, and we have followed that principle.

ADJOURNMENT.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was resolved that the House, at its rising, adjourn till 3 o'clock on Tuesday next.

LEADERSHIP OF LABOUR PARTY.

Mr. HOOLAN: I rise to say a few words concerning my present position in this Assembly, and to impart to hon. members a little information which is already in the possession of the daily Press. As is usual with that body in all matters where I am concerned, this has met with their unmistakable approval—that is, that I have been appointed leader of the Labour party in the Assembly. I have been told that it is an unfortunate matter, but I wish to say publicly, from my place in the Assembly, that this is an unfortunate time, that we are surrounded by misfortunes, and that this particular unfortunate circumstance must be met in the usual way—the same as droughts, floods, broken banks, and other misfortunes. It is rather an awkward position for me, owing to the peculiar position I held in the late Assembly from first entering it; but I will try to make it as pleasant as possible with your assistance, Mr. Speaker, and the assistance of hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House who are not connected with the young politicians now around me, known as the Labour party. I am sure they will do credit to the Assembly and to their constituents. Possibly they may have entered the House with certain feelings of hostility towards the Government, but at the same time with very strong principles of their own, to which I trust that under all circumstances they will rigidly adhere. If the Government have advances to make towards them, they will be only too happy to receive them at all times. I do not wish to inculcate them with any bad feelings at the outset of their career. The public and their own constituents will judge them by their words and actions in the House; and I trust their words and actions will always remain creditable to them and to the people who sent them here. Speaking of the Labour party as a whole, we are a fixed deposit. We are ready to make any advances to the Government, so long as they are based on good security; and if we do close we will post up the usual notice of reconstruction at a very early period, and give those who reposed confidence in us and in our political principles plenty of time to withdraw it. I trust the actions of the Labour party will be as creditable—if not more so—in the future as they have been in the past. In fact, I am sure they will be more creditable, and that they will receive every assistance from yourself and others. If any hostility is shown to myself I can always take it in good part; I take it as a compliment. I trust the other members of the party will have a very different career in Parliament from mine, and I shall do all I can to smooth their efforts and assist them towards truth and rectitude and strict adherence to political principles. For the rest I must leave it to the care of the Assembly.

The PREMIER: I have not seen those comments made by the Press on the action taken by the Labour party in appointing Mr. Hoolan, the member for Burke, as their leader; but I can assure him that the House receives the information he has given—in the nice way in which he has put it before us—very cheerfully. I reciprocate thoroughly the spirit in which he has spoken, and I am sure it will be found a great advantage to the Labour party themselves, and to the business of the House, that they should have a leader of their own. The very responsibility of office thrown upon the hon. member will assist him materially in helping us to carry out the business of the House. I can assure him that he will have every assistance the Government can give him in getting every possible information that may assist him in his position as leader of a party; and every Minister will endorse what I have said on this point, and

give him full justice. I am glad to hear the information given by the hon. member that we shall have his assistance, and I quite believe it. I believe we all feel the responsibility of the times, and that we should all put our heads together to do what is best for the country in its present condition.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

BILL PRO FORMA.

The PREMIER presented a Bill for the Correction of Errors in Deeds of Grant from the Crown; and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed.

THE OPENING SPEECH.

The SPEAKER: I have to report that the House this day attended His Excellency the Governor in the Legislative Council Chambers, where His Excellency delivered an Opening Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which, for greater accuracy, I have obtained a copy, which I shall now read to the House:—

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

“Since the prorogation of Parliament in November last a change has been made in my responsible advisers, a new Ministry has been formed, and a general election has taken place. The extraordinary financial convulsions which have so disorganised all commercial and industrial operations became so alarming during the period of the elections that my advisers considered that Parliament should be summoned at the earliest possible moment consistent with law. But although you have been specially summoned at this time to meet an emergency, and under great inconvenience to yourselves, the present period of the year is in my opinion, apart from the consideration of the actual circumstances, the fittest time for Parliament to meet.

“A majority of the banks trading in the colony having stopped payment, the note circulation of these suspended banks has become practically dormant, and a large amount of money has been locked up in these institutions. Owing to these disturbances, commerce and industry have become partially paralysed, and some immediate remedy must be found to enable the ordinary business of the country to proceed. It is for that purpose that you have been thus early summoned. My Ministers will submit to you measures calculated, in their opinion, to relieve the immediate pressure, and to establish the currency on a sounder basis.

“While the revenue so far as the financial year has gone shows an increase over that for the corresponding part of last year, it does not come up to the Treasurer's anticipations, owing to causes which are mostly traceable to the adverse seasons experienced in portions of the colony. The expenditure, however, has much decreased, both as compared with last year and with the Estimates passed by Parliament. This is so far satisfactory, but the prospects of next year's revenue require the fullest and gravest consideration. Not only must revenue be increased

but expenditure must be decreased, and my Ministers will ask your sanction for approval of their action in this direction.

“During last Parliament two strikes paralysed for a long time the shipping and pastoral interests. I invite you earnestly to devise some means to put capital and labour on a more satisfactory footing. Where land is so abundant, so cheap, and so good, want in this country must be only temporary. My advisers will endeavour to obtain your approval to measures calculated permanently to encourage producers and settle them profitably on the soil.

“Owing mainly, my Ministers believe, to a hostile agitation against the prosecution of railway works under the land-grant principle, the confidence of companies who would be willing to tender has been disturbed, and no definite offers for their construction have yet reached the Government. Now that they find the country has pronounced so unmistakably in favour of such works, no doubt offers will be forthcoming, which will in due course be submitted for your approval.

“At the last sitting of the Federal Council, held in Hobart, a resolution was carried that the number of representatives of each colony should be increased to five. The necessary measure to provide for the agreement of this colony to the resolution will be submitted to you, with an earnest hope that it will be carried, and that similar action will be taken in other colonies. My advisers believe that through the present Federal Council the benefits of Australian federation will be most speedily achieved.

“While the Western pastoral districts have been, and to some extent still are, suffering from a scanty rainfall, the Southern coastal districts have been devastated by destructive floods. I have noted with much satisfaction the recuperative powers exhibited by those people who were driven from their occupations and dwellings by the floods, with the loss of their portable property and homes. I have also seen with much pleasure and satisfaction, and gratefully acknowledge, the prompt liberality of our fellow-countrymen in all parts of the world in sending such munificent contributions for the relief of distress.

“The sugar industry since the extension of kanaka labour has become decidedly prosperous, and the farming districts have been enjoying good seasons. The frozen meat industry is gradually becoming established on a sound footing, and the latest intelligence from home speaks of improved prices and an expanding market. Gold-mining enterprise is also in an advancing condition, and I am glad to observe that the output has been steadily maintained.

“GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“The Estimates for the ensuing year will be submitted to you at the earliest practicable date. The necessity for economy and retrenchment is apparent and does not admit of postponement. I have no doubt your full deliberations will result in such reductions as will meet the present condition of affairs.

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

"The rapid increase which continues to be shown in the exportable products of the colony is a subject of encouragement, while the lessening imports prove that the legislation of past sessions that was designed to substitute articles of local production for imports has not been without effect. There is room for indefinite expansion in the agricultural, pastoral, and mining industries; our difficulties, though terribly severe, are but temporary; and I have full confidence that under the blessing of God the result of your calm and mature deliberations will be to launch once more the ship of state on the sea of prosperity."

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Mr. ARMSTRONG, in moving the adoption of the following Address in Reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech:—

"May it please Your Excellency,—

"We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure Your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Throne and Person of Our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to tender our thanks to Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present session.

"We will give our most careful attention and consideration to the several measures which Your Excellency has specially mentioned, and to all other matters that may be brought before us, and it shall be our anxious endeavour so to deal with them that our labours may be conducive to the material and moral advancement and prosperity, and the good government, of this portion of Her Majesty's Dominions."

said: In speaking to this question the difficulty of having had so little practice as a public speaker almost overcomes me, and I claim the indulgence of the House, which I am sure will be advanced to me. We are told in the first part of the Speech that since the prorogation of Parliament in November last a change has been made in the responsible advisers of His Excellency, and I think the country generally is to be congratulated upon that change. The past elections have shown distinctly that the population of Queensland recognise that they will be well and truly governed, and that if any men can get Queensland out of her present troubles they are the men who are now in power. The colony is suffering with regard to finance, and banking institutions of undoubted strength by closing their doors have brought pressure upon the people generally, not because these institutions have been insolvent, as many people would wish us to believe, but purely because their assets are not of a liquid character. The trouble is forced upon us by the action of persons outside who have invested in the colony with the hope of ultimate gain. I trust that measures will be brought forward to deal with this matter that will be thorough, and will relieve us without treading upon unsound ground. Although troubles press upon us from every side, I feel sure they will yet be productive of good, as the people generally will be forced to rely upon our natural resources,

and in that way good will ultimately accrue to us. One of the chief things we have to do is to establish outside confidence, and we can do that by letting people outside see that we are capable of developing our own resources without their aid. It is true that interference by the Government in matters affecting private financial institutions is supposed to be unwise, but we have precedents for such action in our mother country and in many other countries older than Queensland. We must endeavour to relieve trade, as, speaking for my own district, which is a farming district, I can say that little or nothing is being done there in consequence of the closure of the banks, and people have to hold their produce instead of sending it on to the markets in Brisbane. We must consider measures to give immediate relief to current credit account holders and holders of short-dated deposits, as trade really rests upon the operations of these men; the money they have lying at call is the money by which trade generally is carried on. We will have to look also to acceptances falling due early next month, and into which people entered in good faith in the belief that they would be able to meet them. Many other questions may be dealt with in detail when the financial proposals of the head of the Government are submitted. We are told in the next clause of the Speech that there has been a falling off in the revenue; but, considering the financial pressure upon us and consequent limit of the consumptive power of the people, that is not to be wondered at. One of the most gratifying parts of the Speech is that in which we are told that the expenditure has decreased. That all sides of the House should be very glad to hear. The government at present costs more than our revenue; it is, therefore, necessary to retrench, and I have been elected on the pledge that I should support measures of retrenchment. The Financial Statement will come later on, and we shall then have an opportunity of pointing out the direction in which we consider retrenchment should take place. We are asked in the 4th clause of the Speech to devise some means of putting capital and labour on a more satisfactory footing. That is a question that will commend itself to all sides of the House. We have seen the troubles of the past, and with the experience we have we may reasonably expect that we will be able to do what His Excellency has asked us to do. One of the easiest means, I think, of establishing good relations between employers and employees would be to extend the principle of the Conciliation Act which was passed by last Parliament, so that both sides shall be equally represented. The court might be presided over by a Supreme Court judge, and its decision should be final. That question will have to be considered later on, but from the moderate tone adopted by both sides I should hope the troubles of the past will not be so real in the future. I think at the outset there may have been reason for them, but throughout the colony it will be admitted that the same reasons do not exist now, and with wise legislation all sides should work amicably together for each other's good and benefit. It is said that one means of settling disputes would be to settle people on the land. I have always recognised the necessity of settling population on the land, but we have first to legislate to make those people who are already settled prosperous. We have men on the land living almost from hand to mouth; men who have contributed more than any others to the wealth of the colony. The farmers of the colony generally are in a bad way, and we must legislate to make them more prosperous, and there will be no trouble at all in

settling people on the land. We shall then find people flocking to the land of their own accord. Queensland within a certain zone is very productive, and there is every reason why the land should be cultivated. We are told further on that the confidence of companies who would have been willing to tender for the construction of land-grant railways has been disturbed. I believe thoroughly that the land-grant railway principle would be one of the greatest benefits to Queensland. I have travelled over the north-west portion of Queensland, and I am speaking with some knowledge of the subject. I do not know what is to become of that country if it is not opened up. It is useless for people to say the land will fall into the hands of syndicates, and large estates will be created. The mere fact of companies building these lines for the land will mean that they will have to develop the land to make it pay. It is an unfortunate thing that some of the electors will not see that, but they will see it before very long. I am elected on the distinct understanding that we give the land for the railways, and if we can induce syndicates to tender, good will be done to every portion of the community. The people who are very despondent over the bad times will have a market placed at their doors for everything they can produce, and that alone will be a great benefit to the country. The great trouble, to my mind, is that it is hardly likely during the course of this Parliament that we will be able to induce syndicates to tender. I do not know that it is necessary for me to speak in favour of any clause in the Speech. With regard to the Federal Council, I hold different views. As a Queenslander I hope to see the federation and Australia become a nation, but I do not think the means devised are sufficiently practical. The great trouble at present is the question of the tariff, and if we establish a Customs union we shall see federation before very long. I know I am differing with some people on this side. People say the farmer will to a great extent suffer through the establishment of a Customs union, but I do not agree with that. Queensland can grow nearly everything that is produced in the other colonies, and many things they cannot produce. Therefore federation can only be the means of opening a wider market. I look upon that as a very great gain, and I am greatly in favour of the establishment of a Customs union. We are told the Western districts have been suffering from a scanty rainfall, and we know the Southern districts have been inundated by floods. Those things are incurable, of course, and being in the hands of nature, we can only bear them as best we can. We are also told that the sugar industry is prosperous. That, at any rate, is gratifying intelligence in the midst of all our trouble. We are also told that the frozen meat industry is gradually being established. That is also something to be thankful for, because in Queensland alone there are over 6,000,000 of the horned stock of Australia, and the establishment of a market for them will do a very great deal towards relieving us of our troubles. The principal question to be brought before us directly will be the Estimates, and we are promised that legislation will take the form of economy and retrenchment. That is also something to be grateful for, and I shall willingly support any measure which may be brought forward to reduce our expenditure. The next thing we see in the Speech is that the productions of the colony are increasing. That, of course, is gratifying. We send away more wealth than we consume, and if our industries are properly fostered we will find that our own resources will relieve us in a great measure of our present troubles. Under existing circumstances the duty of every

member of Parliament is very plain. The colony is in the most deplorable condition, and it is only by good feeling existing on all sides that she can be extricated from her troubles. I am certain that means can be devised which will have that effect, and it is for all parties to clearly recognise that party grievances, party prejudices, which only raise class against class, should be buried once and for ever. As a Queenslander, I should like to see this done. Queensland is the richest of the group in natural resources, and if we will only pull together our troubles will be brought to an end. I now conclude by moving the adoption of the Address in Reply.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. KINGSBURY: In rising to second the adoption of the Address in Reply, I am conscious that a very great honour has been done me by the choice which has fallen upon me. I do not say it is in recognition of any special fitness on my part, but rather as the representative of the great constituency of Brisbane North. Notwithstanding that, I shall endeavour, as far as possible, to express to the fullest extent my individual opinions apart from the opinions that may be held by any constituency. Very good reasons have been given for calling the House together at an earlier date than was intended. Some objections have been taken to the House being summoned before time had been given for the return of the writs from a couple of Northern constituencies; but the reasons for it—the financial convulsion, dormant note circulation, money locked up, and industry paralysed—are absolutely unique in their character, and if we had no precedent for calling the House together on such an occasion as this, the excuse might simply be urged that similar circumstances had never arisen before. I trust they will never arise again. Hon. members who find fault with the action of the Government in this respect must be amongst those who would appreciate the law which is said to prevail in China, by which fire brigades are not allowed to turn the hose upon a conflagration until all the members of the brigade have had time to arrive. The gravity of the banking crisis with which we are face to face is best realised by glancing for a second at the figures which are involved in the lock-up process. The Australian deposits amount to £109,000,000; British deposits to £39,000,000—total, £148,000,000. These figures are so enormous that only at a time of crisis do we realise the extent to which the trade and industry of Australia have been supported by money borrowed here and in the old country. The happiest feature of the question is the extraordinary strength of the banks which are left untouched. Of the colonial deposits, £56,000,000 are held by the banks which have closed, while the surviving banks hold £54,000,000; so that, although the number of those which have closed is very great, while the number of those which have survived is very small, the survivors represent nearly 50 per cent. of the colonial deposits. We have, therefore, ground for congratulation that things are not as bad as they might have been. Looking at these figures, and endeavouring to ascertain some of the causes which have given rise to the banking troubles, we discover that the banks which have closed hold £25,000,000 of British deposits, while the banks which remain open hold only £12,000,000. Therefore, whilst the latter hold about the same amount in colonial deposits as the former, the former hold twice the amount of British deposits. This points to an error having been made in the past in all colonial banking in depending so much upon the support of British deposits; and it is quite possible that this may open up a fresh field for legislation not only in this but in

the other colonies. In looking for the causes which have led to the financial catastrophe, the first that will strike any reasonable man is that the percentage of shareholding capital has been allowed to drift into an unsatisfactory condition as compared with the vast volume of depositing capital. In 1860, in Australia, the relation of shareholding capital and reserves to deposits was about 50 per cent. At present they only form 22 per cent. Now, if that vast difference had been transferred from deposit capital to shareholding capital this crisis would not have arisen. The desire on the part of the banks to pay unduly large dividends has landed them, their shareholders, and the colonies generally in a most unenviable position. I have extracted from Mulhall some figures regarding the percentage of capital and reserves to liabilities in other countries. In France the percentage is 110 per cent.; in Germany, 58 per cent.; in Canada, 50 per cent.; in the United States of America, 36 per cent.; in the United Kingdom, 45 per cent.; and in Australasia only 22 per cent. It remains to be considered whether it will not be desirable to force banking companies in the future to hold a large proportion of shareholding capital as against the amount of deposit capital. Since 1860 the shareholding capital has increased two and three-quarter times, whereas the deposits have increased seven times. The second cause which has led to this disaster is advances for speculative purposes. We have all realised, both privately and collectively, the error that has been made in this direction, and I have no doubt that in the future banking will be carried on upon entirely different lines in that respect. Speculative purposes and speculative values will be discountenanced to a great extent. Another serious element in the trouble has been inadequate gold reserves. I have taken the gold reserves of ten of the largest banks which have suspended, and they only form 18 per cent. of the deposits. It is questionable whether business conducted with such a proportion can be said to have been conducted on lines of safety. Then speculative land companies and building societies have been allowed to take deposits of public money, practically unhampered by conditions. Although not banks in any true sense of the term, they have been allowed to use the name of bank, and have pursued a course that has landed them in disaster. They have largely had their reserves in banks of issue, and this practice has tended to weaken both institutions. I think the time will come when the practice of one bank depositing a portion of its reserves with another bank will have to be stopped by Act of Parliament, because fictitious figures result therefrom. A reserve that is supposed to be held by a bank, part of which is deposited with another, is not to that extent a true reserve. Causes in the mother land have also contributed to our unfortunate financial position. The great Baring crisis, which convulsed for a short time the financial centre of Europe, has been one of the primary causes. Distrust has arisen from that in regard to securities and investments at a distance. That crisis would not have arisen but for the overweening confidence exhibited on the London money market in securities at a great distance. Australia has come in for a share of the distrust which has since arisen. That distrust has been accentuated by the shipping and shearing strikes—those useless, resultless labour disputes. The collapse of inflated values in bank shares has also had the effect of causing a feeling of insecurity in the minds of the investors at home. When a bank declines to float a new issue of shares for the purpose of gaining additional capital, but works an enormous business on small capital, and pays such dividends as enables

[Mr. KINGSBURY.

shares to be sold at four times their paid-up value, collapse is bound to come; and when the inflated values fall, panic is the result. Future banking will, I believe, be conducted on such a basis that dividends will be moderate, and the inflations of value few and far between; consequently panics in regard to share values will not be likely to arise. The falling off of exports to Australia has been another cause of our trouble; the large import trade into England from Australia used to be met by exports to Australia. That could not be continued, and the exports had to be paid for by coin, and large sums had to be drawn from Australian banks to meet the discrepancy. In 1892 the Bank of England held 44 per cent. of gold reserve; at the present time they have only 36 per cent. That points to the feeling of unrest which exists in banking circles, and has contributed to the crisis with which we are face to face. Disapproval also exists in England of the practice in Australian banking of carrying on lapsed business instead of endeavouring to realise them, and face the loss. Of the remedies to which our attention is directed the first is the rehabilitation of the note issue. We must be satisfied and pleased that we have got the preliminary experience of New South Wales in regard to the method in which this may be done, and the probable results; it will be a guide to us with respect to the pitfalls to be avoided and the course to be pursued. The bank-note issue is not a very serious one, and cannot involve the country in any serious liability, as the total note issue in Queensland is only £547,000. Relief to current account holders is perhaps the subject to which our minds will turn with the greatest avidity. We have numerous precedents for it, and we have ample reason to believe that the thing is eminently practicable; it can be done without involving the Government or the colony in any risk whatever. A question may arise as to future interference by Government with note issues—as to whether we have been really sailing upon safe lines in allowing banks unrestricted privileges with regard to note issues. The next remedy suggested is by the stimulation of trade. We are asked to consider the possibility of assisting our export trade, and that matter will have to be considered from various points of view. But one of the first, upon which perhaps we think most but speak least, is that of a Canadian outlet for our produce. We have all felt that an enormous outlet could be provided therefor our tropical produce if exported at a time of the year which would land it in the frozen winter of Canada; and if this House is asked to adopt any steps towards subsidising a Canadian steamship service, I believe the proposal will meet with the hearty concurrence of a majority of members. It is quite possible, also, that something may be done in the immediate future to create a wool market in Brisbane. If we can establish in Brisbane a wool market of anything like the importance of the wool market of Sydney, it is perfectly certain that both German and French steamers would be induced to come to Brisbane for the loading of wool; and the indirect benefit resulting from such a course would largely recoup us for any additional outlay that might fall upon the colony. The quantity of wool sold by local auction in the Sydney market during the last ten months was 357,000 bales, which, valued at £10 per bale, amounts to £3,570,000. Queensland is a rapidly increasing wool-producing country; and if by any possible means we can establish a wool market here, it will open up a trade with Europe which will be a great benefit not only to Brisbane, but to the whole community. The export of agricultural produce—butter, cheese, bacon, and

other commodities—should also be encouraged. If we compare the results achieved here in this respect with the results achieved in other colonies, we find ourselves face to face with the fact that we have done nothing. New South Wales in 1892 exported 31,000,000 lb. of butter, cheese, and bacon; we exported none at all. In the export of fresh fruit a great deal will be done in the immediate future owing to the assistance given by experts drawn to the colony from America to teach us how to can and pack it. The exports of fresh fruit in 1892 amounted to £41,000. This is capable of being multiplied 100 times if proper steps are taken, because no country in the world contains such advantages within her borders for the production of all kinds of fruit as does Queensland. I believe there is a possibility of stimulating our wine export; it is a stimulating subject, but has been neglected in the past. We have never endeavoured by any direct or indirect means to teach agriculturists how to produce wine fit for the home market. We have got the soil and the grapes, but we have not the best method of manufacture. Our coastal towns have progressed at the expense of our inland areas; agriculture and small farming have been neglected, and the producing industries of the colony have been made second to the progress of speculation, and the growth of our coastal towns. That day has passed, but we are still face to face with some of the results of the bad policy of the past. In 1892 we imported into Queensland flour, maize, oats, barley, wheat, fruit, and vegetables to the value of £583,000, all of which could, with the greatest ease, have been grown of equal or better quality within our own borders. Nothing has been done in the past, so far as I have been able to ascertain, with regard to stimulating the production of beet-root sugar in Southern Queensland. That trade has developed enormously in other countries with a similar climate to our own, and it may be worthy of consideration whether in Southern Queensland experiments might not be made in beet culture. With regard to land settlement, we must all be interested in the statement that vigorous efforts will be made to bring forward some scheme to settle people on the land. Village settlement is in full swing in Victoria, and has absorbed 600 labourers with their families, and the scheme is said to be progressing to the satisfaction of the Government. New Zealand has set apart 10,000 acres for a similar purpose, allowing five acres to each man. Again, we may be in a position, when our finances have been attended to, to reduce the railway freights on agricultural produce for export. The handicap under which that produce labours at the present time is known best to country members, but it ought to be realised by town members to the fullest extent. With regard to land-grant railways, I believe such a process of education has been going on the last three or four weeks in Queensland with regard to the necessity and probable success of these railways that the majority of hon. members, some of whom were previously opposed to them, have entered the House with a full determination of supporting them. The references to the Federal Council we must all realise are at least timely. If the Federal Council can, in any shape or form, be recognised as the nucleus of complete federation in Australia, it is a germ of great things. It will bind colony to colony, and form a nation out of what are now merely scattered communities. The question of reciprocity in trade may, I hope, come up in the next session, or may be discussed in some sort of federal form. The breaking down of the barriers between the colonies would assist each and every colony, and would assist Queensland, I believe, more than

any of the others. Federal banking laws are about to be made without any parliamentary interference, because the crisis with which we are face to face has driven the banking authorities of the colonies simultaneously to devise schemes with regard to the future which are really and truly federal in character. And it is to be hoped that the Conference which is about to sit will receive assistance, either in person or by other means, from Queensland in regard to the enacting of something like uniform laws of a federal character in this respect. A pleasant reference has been made to the liberality with which the public stepped forward to alleviate the terrible distress caused by the floods in Southern Queensland, and we must all feel that it would be a fitting thing for this House, at some early time in the session, to recognise in a distinct way the wonderful help we received from the other colonies and from the mother country. At no previous time in our history has there been such a period of financial tightness, and at no previous time has help been given so liberally. The question of bridge construction is one upon which it is almost dangerous to touch, because there are not two men with exactly the same opinion about it. But if municipalities have got to raise funds for the reconstruction of bridges which at one time were Government bridges, the thought exists in the minds of many that it may be necessary that those municipalities should be empowered to go to the home market. If such a necessity should arise, I would draw the attention of the House to the fact that the 4 per cent. city of Sydney loan was quoted on the 18th May in London at 101, while the 4 per cent. loan of the colony of New South Wales was quoted at 99. If the city of Brisbane could borrow 1 per cent. better than the Government, we must have to consider, at a proper time, the desirability of its borrowing direct. Taxation and retrenchment are painful subjects—subjects about which the less said the better. We shall have to deal with them, but with a kindly hand, and with a consideration for all the interests involved of the most humane description. Recovery from all our troubles is referred to, and that is the happiest thing in the entire Speech, because it has never yet been possible to crush a British colony, and it never will. Queensland is not crushed, and her recovery is absolutely certain. It is also certain that we must pull together to hasten this recovery; and when I look at the magnificent issues before us I feel in my heart that there is no necessity for more than one party in the House at the present time; all the hon. members on the Opposition and the cross benches should, for the next session, come and sit on this side of the House. Australia has no need to fear for its future. We need only look to the fact that the wool exported in 1892 amounted to £22,000,000, and the precious metals to £10,000,000 more, giving an aggregate four times as large as the entire interest upon our loan indebtedness. We have resources such as were never contemplated at the time Australia was founded, and with such we can never sink. Our own gold production has, during the past year, increased at all centres. Charters Towers, as compared with 1890, shows an increase of 104,000 oz.; and Gympie, as compared with last year, of 27,000 oz. In all directions, whatever way we look, we can see nothing but hope; we can see nothing but the silver lining to the cloud of depression, which is at present, I believe, passing away.

Mr. POWERS: Although a member of the Opposition—a member elected to oppose the present Government—I wish first of all to congratulate the hon. gentlemen who have moved and seconded the Address in Reply. We miss

many old faces from the last Parliament, but I must say that if the new members acquit themselves as well as those to whom I refer, our regret at missing some of those old faces will be lessened. I also take the opportunity, as an old friend of yourself, to heartily congratulate you on the high honour the House has conferred upon you by electing you as its Speaker. I hope and believe that you will so conduct the affairs of the House that at the end of this Parliament it will be with honour to yourself and satisfaction to the members of the Assembly. As I said, I was elected to oppose the present Government, and my endeavour will be to carry out the true functions of an Opposition. We do not intend to offer any factious opposition, but to help the Ministry when we honestly believe they are working for the best interests of the country. We shall only oppose them on those measures which we believe to be fraught with danger to the colony. That is, we believe, the kind of opposition which those who sent us here expect, and what they will get. With regard to the Address, there are not very many promises made in it, and that, though an innovation, is a good one. It is wise not to make rash promises which the Government are not capable of carrying out. I am not one of those who take exception to the early date at which Parliament is called together, only I think all the members elected ought to have had an opportunity of being present, although certainly the result of yesterday's election would not have made any difference. In view of the financial trouble that is upon us we have not met a day too early. It is a trouble not only to the capitalist, but to everybody, and one as to which the people look to both sides of the House to do their level best to get the colony out of the disaster that has befallen it. What has been stated by the junior member for Brisbane North on this matter is what the people are looking for. One thing is with respect to bank notes which people have held, believing them to be good—and, as a matter of fact, we know they are good—but some means must be adopted to give people the advantage of using those notes. With respect to current deposits, the Government must find some means to enable current deposits to become available, or to some extent available, to persons who have been closed down upon by banking institutions. Fixed deposits are lodged in the expectation of interest as investments, and the banks as trustees of current accounts owe more to the current account depositors. I see that one scheme proposed delays the payment of these deposits for four and three-quarter years; but that will not do for the people of this colony, and I hope that when we see the promised Bills on Tuesday it will be found that the scheme of the Government is one that can be heartily supported by the Labour party, the Opposition, and the Ministerial supporters alike to help the colony out of the difficulty. With regard to revenue it is said that not only must the revenue be increased, but the expenditure must be decreased. We must now face this question of reducing expenditure, and I am sure the Government will have support from this side of the House if they attempt reduction of expenditure fairly all round. As to the statement that the revenue must be increased, it is to be hoped that in raising future revenue the burden will be cast upon those best able to bear it, and not solely, as heretofore, upon the shoulders of those least able to bear it. We are told that during last Parliament two strikes paralysed for a long time the shipping and pastoral interests, and we are invited to devise some means to put capital and labour on a more satisfactory footing. I hope that will be done, but it will not be done by

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raking up old disputes. I hope those things will be forgotten in the earnest desire to bring about a satisfactory footing, and that true settlement of the land will be encouraged by the Ministry and supported by all sides of the House. We are told in the Speech that—

“Owing, mainly, my Ministers believe, to a hostile agitation against the prosecution of railway works under the land-grant principle, the confidence of companies who would be willing to tender has been disturbed, and no definite offers for their construction have yet reached the Government.”

I am glad the agitation has caused some little delay in the sending in of tenders, so that people might be educated up to the land-grant proposals, because I believe that the Parliament of last year would have accepted proposals which would not be accepted now. Although the Government went to the country on the Land Grant Bill of 1892, with eleven proposed railways, their advocacy of the Bill was reduced practically to condition No. 2, and to four railways instead of eleven. If they did nothing else, the Opposition did some good in reducing the thing to some reasonable proposals, such as we heard during the elections, and to which I think members on the other side are pledged. I opposed land-grant railways consistently in the House and before the country, believing it to be my duty to do so in the interests of the colony. As to increased representation on the Federal Council, federation is a question upon which we should hasten slowly. I consider that we have shut ourselves out from the possibility of entering a federation of Australia, because while the other colonies have progressed by adopting a general policy for the abolition of plural voting, Queensland stands as a plural voter, and that will be a good reason for keeping us out. The only thing for us to do is to go to the Federal Council with the hope of working up slowly to the federation of Australia. The question dropped out during the election, as there were many other matters of more immediate importance to be considered. We are pleased to see there is some little hope of progress so far as the Government are concerned in the position of the sugar industry and gold-mining enterprise, and if the Government take in hand the encouragement of the industries of the country, with such a Ministry, with such support as they have, and with an Opposition prepared to support anything that will be for the interest of colony, I think this Parliament ought to be able to do good work, and I hope it will.

The PREMIER: I have never risen with greater pleasure in this House than I do now to congratulate the two members who moved and seconded the adoption of the Address in Reply. It has been the custom to have a Speech every year, but I do not think there has ever been an occasion, certainly not in my experience, when greater promise of ability has been shown by new members than we have seen to-night. We have seen evidence of ability, and have heard something really eloquent from both. I congratulate them heartily, and on behalf of the House I welcome them amongst us. I can speak in similar language of the speech made by the hon. gentleman opposite, who so far has represented the Opposition. The Government policy could not have been more kindly met than he has met it, and I gladly accept his promise to assist us as far as he can in passing good measures in this emergency. This is a time above all others when the best ability of the colony—and we do not know where it is—is wanted to help us out of the slough. I believe we are all willing, and this afternoon has shown that the House is anxious, to face the work and get it through as quickly as possible so as to relieve the present

distress. I have scarcely anything to remark upon the criticisms that have been made, but I will say one thing with regard to what may be a misunderstanding on the part of the hon. member for Maryborough and the hon. member for Lockyer as to the clause in the Speech referring to the Federal Council. I confess now—I have done so before, I think—that I consider our endeavours about two years ago to make a federation, or rather to burst into a federation, as it were, were a complete failure. I feared it all along, and had very little hope of any other result at the time. I have always had the opinion, and hold it now, that the real way to federate is to work up from the basis we laid in 1881. I believe that is a sound basis, and the only reason why that basis has not extended and given us a strong foundation for a real federation has been due to one thing, and that is the fact that our neighbour, New South Wales, has not joined. I think it is a pity in the interests of Australia that that has taken place. I do not believe that the people of the colony are really responsible for it. I believe that the men who had the ear of the colony made a great mistake; that if they had consulted the colony the verdict would have been different, and they would have joined the Federal Council. That is what we want to see accomplished. This is only a small effort we are making now. We cannot have a Parliament of five colonies, with only ten members, two from each. I think it is a reasonable proposal to increase the Council, and one with which the other colonies will join in. The main thing I desire to see is a federation commenced on this small scale and worked up, and the real federation will begin when our sister colony of New South Wales joins. That is the position that is meant to be indicated by the clause referring to the Federal Council. The hon. member for Maryborough introduced another question by saying that we had put a bar to federation by the stand we had taken with regard to plural voting. I do not see where the bar comes in. Our elections are conducted on very much the same principle as they are in Victoria, and I think one man one vote is a long, long way from being accomplished. It is not likely to be found of very vital importance down there, or to be consummated in our lifetime; and although it has started up into a little liveliness in New South Wales, it is not a really live subject.

Mr. POWERS: It has been carried.

The PREMIER: When?

Mr. POWERS: Last night.

Mr. GROOM: Parliament has accepted the Bill as it came back from the Upper House.

The PREMIER: One man one vote is not in that Bill.

Mr. POWERS: Yes.

The PREMIER: It is, but with qualifications that will affect it very materially. It is a long way off in this colony, at all events, and any bad example that has been set in New South Wales we have no intention of following.

Mr. POWERS: I am afraid it is two years off, at all events.

The PREMIER: Yes; and a great deal more. The next general election is three years off, at least. With regard to land-grant railways, I accept the hon. member's criticisms in the same spirit as he gave them in referring to the action of the constituencies. I believe the subject is now a great deal better understood, and that the country would welcome an equitable system of constructing railways through land grants. The great block to it is not amongst ourselves, but in the want of confidence of men who would tender. They have no confidence that the Government

would be able to carry out their plans in consequence of the agitation that is going on against them. Whenever men of capital have confidence that the bargain they make will be carried out, then I believe we shall have tenders sent in. Of course I need not impress upon this House, as I would have to do upon the electors, that the whole thing lies with Parliament. It does not lie with Ministers. It lies entirely and exclusively with both Houses; if either House differs from any bargain the Government make, it goes to the wall, so that Parliament has the full responsibility. What I want to see is the matter coming to such a pitch that capitalists will have confidence sufficient to make offers of such a character as to justify the Government in putting them before the two Houses of Parliament. When that time comes we will be a step forward in the progress of the colony.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GROOM: I join with my hon. friend the member for Maryborough in congratulating the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply. I have heard many Addresses on similar occasions, and I join with the Premier in saying that they are the two most able Addresses I have heard on such an occasion, and I welcome those two hon. members as valuable additions to the debating power of the House. More particularly do I welcome the mover of the Address, who is personally known to me as a native of my own constituency, and to whose respected father, I take this opportunity of saying, I am greatly indebted for obtaining a seat for the first time in this Chamber. I am one of those who think that in the present emergency it is the duty of every man to rise superior to party and give his best assistance to the Government to restore confidence outside. As a business man I have some idea of the deplorable state of affairs which exists. The obligations which business men have to discharge on the 4th of next month and the 4th of July are being looked forward to with great apprehension by a large number of business men, and it is on the action that this Chamber may take that the commercial safety of considerable numbers of people depend. Therefore I think this is a time when we should try to restore confidence in the country. While analysing the various schemes that have been suggested, I should very much have liked if the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government had indicated in some way how our railways could be utilised for the benefit of the agriculturists. He is a practical gentleman and perhaps that may receive his attention. I have lately had an opportunity of visiting an agricultural district where one of our chief productions is likely to be grown, and this question is of importance, especially in view of the figures quoted by the hon. member, Mr. Kingsbury. He pointed out that the cost of the wheat and other cereals which we can very well grow, and which I have for the last twenty years tried to din into the ears of Parliament can be grown here, amounted last year to over half a million of money. In round numbers we send out three-quarters of a million of money for food supplies every year, and that is one of the largest drains on our financial resources. We have to find the gold for the food supplies which we ought to produce ourselves. I understand that the value of the wheat crop on the Darling Downs was estimated to be about £100,000; but when it came to be threshed the average was found to be much lower than had been expected in a very considerable area of the Downs; so much so that one firm which deals largely in agricultural machinery, and which had

sent a large number of harvesting machines up to the Darling Downs, assured me that in consequence of the low average yield they had had to renew 80 per cent. of the bills which fell due on the 4th March last. I wish to call attention to the long standing grievance with regard to the wheat producers on the Downs sending their produce to Brisbane. There are others in the colony who have grievances deserving the attention of this House as well as banking institutions, and some scheme of relief should also be formulated for them. The Railway Commissioners fixed a tariff which was endorsed by the Government, and the late Secretary for Railways accepted the responsibility of it.

The PREMIER: The Government did.

Mr. GROOM: That tariff has worked very disastrously. The hon. member for Warwick will bear out what I say. It is working very disastrously to the interests of the farmers, and the stiff-backedness of the Government in not granting concessions has had this effect—that a considerable area of land will not this year be put under wheat. Knowing the practical mind of the Secretary for Railways, I trust he will devise some means for remedying this grievance. At present it is not worth the farmers' while to send their produce down to the Brisbane market. If the carriage of their produce would interfere with the system of day trains, cannot the hon. gentleman initiate some scheme of night trains by which the farmers can send their crops to Brisbane and sell them for cash? This would tend to alleviate the distress that exists. We have met to consider what is the best we can do for the colony, and I know that the hon. gentleman can formulate some scheme whereby the wheat grown in the colony can be converted into flour, and the flour brought down to the market. At present, the purchasing power of our millers is limited. A miller is not in the position to tender gold to every wheat-grower who comes to him with 400 or 500 bushels; and he pays partly by cheque and partly by promissory note. I have known farmers who have taken promissory notes go about in fear and trembling, as they were not able to pass them on to some other person. All these questions should be taken into consideration, and if we can do anything to relieve those engaged in the industry we shall have done very good work. I am entirely in accord with the Premier with regard to the Federal Council. I have always been in favour of that body, believing that it possesses in itself the true elements of future federation for these colonies. I shall give the proposals of the hon. gentleman every support. Ten years ago I said the time had almost arrived for federation, and I believe the time has now arrived for the establishment of a federal court of appeal. Cases are now sent home for decision at an enormous expense to the litigants, and probably they are imperfectly argued before judges who cannot be so cognisant of the colonial laws as our own judges and barristers. Then in regard to quarantine we could have a federal law, and we could also have federal defence. These are matters that a Federal Council could very well agree upon. The obstacle has been the refusal of New South Wales to join the Federal Council. I believe the very strong opposition of Sir Henry Parkes is the sole reason for that colony not joining. When it was proposed by the Ministry of the day he strongly opposed it and caused the rejection of the proposal, and he has consistently opposed it from that day to this. Whether he will relent now that he sees all the colonies in favour of it I do not know, but I hope he will. The Federal Council possesses all the true elements for bringing about federation by slow degrees. It

will not be forced upon the people as was attempted some two years ago. I was amused at the tactics resorted to in order to accomplish the desired result. We are all aware that at the time the Federal Convention met in Sydney Sir Henry Parkes gave a banquet which cost New South Wales something like £2,500; and it was entirely composed of gentlemen favourable to his views. To show how far Queensland was interested in the question, I do not believe there was one member returned who was pledged to such a federation. It was not even referred to, which is a clear indication of how little sympathy the general public had in the scheme. The fact is that our time during the last two or three sessions in Queensland has been devoted to mere academic legislation of a useless character, and it is high time we descended from the lofty position we have taken up, and came back to earth and the consideration of the more practical questions the hon. gentleman has submitted to us. In endeavouring to relieve the distress which prevails, he will receive the very hearty support of every member on this side, and also the strong support of the outside public. We are in extreme difficulties just now. Many unfortunate people are suffering from the late disastrous floods, and it will take them years to overcome the effects. We extend our heartiest sympathy to them, and to those in the West who are waiting for the heavens to send their moisture and dispel the drought from which they are suffering. They are seeing their flocks and herds dying before their eyes, without being able to give them relief. If in the meantime this House can devise any useful measure to relieve the distress it is our duty to give the Government every assistance, and I reciprocate the expressions which have been uttered, that we should sink party and any sectional differences we may entertain. If we unite in one bold effort to relieve the colony from its present distress, we shall earn the gratitude of everyone for the manner in which we have discharged our duties in this Chamber.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: It must be a matter of great satisfaction to all in this House and to the country generally to hear the tone of the debate this afternoon. The acerbities which to a certain extent characterised the recent elections are now buried, and both sides of the House have expressed a wish to assist the Government in what I may term their endeavour to reconstruct the colony. Owing to the visitation of floods and the more recent bank failures, the Government must have had their hands full ever since the year commenced, and they deserve to have the fullest support accorded to them by both sides of the House. It will therefore be reassuring to the country at large to find that hon. members are now rising superior to party feeling, extending a helping hand to lift the colony over the stile, and recognising that that is a higher consideration than mere party or political differences. As one member of the House, I tender my hearty congratulations to all those members who have shown this superiority to party feelings or political grievances, many of which we might, perhaps, have discussed in a calmer atmosphere. But, at the present time, we should endeavour to assist the Government to float the colony into less troublous waters. I would also say to the Government that, while knowing they are duly impressed with the gravity of the position, I hope they will not be superior to receiving the suggestions of members who are possibly practically acquainted with some of the difficult subjects on which legislation is to be submitted to the House. The questions coming before us are such as have not arisen within the memory of the present

generation; there has never been such a collapse of financial institutions, owing to the fact that never previously has there been such a development of banking institutions. While, therefore, we endeavour by all possible means to lend assistance to the Government we must take care that we do not legislate under any hasty or panic-stricken impulse, but strive to deal with such legislation in a collected, cool-headed manner, so that it may be for the permanent benefit of the colony and the restoration of its institutions on a sound basis. I must express my complete satisfaction with the opinion expressed by the Premier with regard to the Federal Council. I had the honour to be one of the members of the first Federal Council, and have always held that it contained the germ of larger things to come, which must not, however, supersede the consideration of local matters of urgent importance. Sir Henry Parkes has shown a remarkable amount of vacillation in connection with the scheme of federation. He was a member of the first Federal Convention, then he retired from the movement, and would not join in the council sitting at Hobart. Subsequently he assumed the rôle of champion of federation; but since then his ardour has abated. I thoroughly believe that the Federal Council will be the means of educating the people of the different colonies up to the desirability of federation, but there are many questions which come before that. I never believed in introducing a Federal Constitution Bill making federation compulsory; it must be a matter of voluntary compact, and the people must be educated up to recognising that such subjects as those referred to by the hon. member, Mr. Groom—namely, a federal court of appeal, and federal quarantine laws, and other questions on which united action is desirable—should be dealt with by a Federal Parliament. By supporting this infant body, the Federal Council, we are laying the true foundation of what will eventually be a most important Federal Parliament. I am very glad to recognise that one thing in which I claim to have had a voice is referred to in the Speech as having assisted to restore prosperity to our tropical industries—that is, the resumption of the recruiting of kanaka labour for those industries. I only regret that many men during the late general elections shut their eyes to the good which has resulted from the resumption of recruiting. But for that resumption where would the sugar industry be at the present time? Bundaberg has suffered from a great deluge; and had the sugar industry not been revived, it might have been obliterated or washed out instead of being as it is now one of the most prosperous towns in the colony; and throughout the length and breadth of tropical Queensland prosperity has been restored to a very large extent by the resumption of kanaka recruiting. Fortunately the colony has been delivered from the sentimental delusion under which it had laboured up to that time, and I can only say that as one member of the House I shall heartily support the Government in endeavouring to place the colony as early as possible on a prosperous footing. I agree with everything that has been said with regard to the unlimited potentialities of the colony; we do not fully know the vast resources we possess. The only fault I find with the Speech is that it does not allude to the true key-note of prosperity—that is, the revival of immigration at the earliest possible opportunity. We will never prosper as we should until we have a larger population. I am one of those who are not ashamed to tell the people to their face what is the true antidote to the bane from which we are suffering at the present day. After setting our house and finances in order, and thus showing

confidence in ourselves, we should encourage by all legitimate means the introduction of new men and women, who will make their homes in the colony, and increase our prosperity. I need hardly say that the addresses of the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply were of an able and elucidatory character, and afforded not only pleasure but also instruction to the House. I add my congratulations that the House has been strengthened by the advent of such able members, and it is with great pleasure that I support the adoption of the Address in Reply.

Mr. MACFARLANE: It is not my intention to refer to the matters mentioned in the Speech *seriatim*, but rather to confine myself to one or two questions. Not many promises are made in the Speech, but I take it that that means we are to have practical measures submitted this session instead of being over-dosed with legislation, and that an attempt will be made to administer the laws of the colony in such a manner as to promote prosperity. I am very glad that the Government have applied themselves thus early to find a remedy for the terrible distress which exists in the colony, and that "measures are to be submitted to relieve the immediate pressure and establish the currency on a sounder basis." If that promise is well and expeditiously carried out it will confer a great benefit on the colony, as the fact that bank notes are not negotiable is causing very great distress. By making them legal tender immediate relief will be given all over the colony. In the first paragraph of the Speech it is stated that the revenue must be increased. I have no great hopes of seeing the revenue materially increased, but even an increased revenue would do little good if the present Ministry do as their predecessors did, because while the revenue increased the expenditure increased in the same proportion. I trust the Government will apply themselves to the reduction of expenditure in every department of the State, otherwise there will be very little relief to the Treasury. I will only refer further to the passage in the Speech announcing the introduction of a Bill to increase the number of representatives in the Federal Council. I have always been in favour of the Federal Council, even at a time when it had very few supporters in this House. I look upon it as the forerunner of federation, and however we may oppose federation, it will come in spite of us. All present circumstances are working in that direction. The time has, perhaps, not yet come for what is known as Imperial federation, but it is certainly near when there will be colonial federation—when, in fact, it will be forced upon us. Imagine for a moment the isolated position the colonies would be in should a general European war take place. I shall do all in my power to enable the Government to pass this Bill, because I believe it will be the means of hastening on the great work of federation. We are fraternally connected with the greatest nation in the world—federated with ourselves, and with her, we should be able to defy the world, not only in war, but in commerce, and in all things concerning our common welfare. I will not detain the House. My only desire is to express my full concurrence with this particular passage in the Speech, for I am certain that whenever we have federation, even amongst ourselves, it will be for the equal and lasting benefit of us all.

Mr. ALLAN: I am almost entirely in accord with the Speech as a whole. With regard to banking and commercial matters, the present is hardly the time to speak, as we shall have the Bills dealing with them before us next week. What I wish to refer to are the passages in the Speech referring to our producing industries and to the agricultural industry in particular. In

the 4th paragraph the Government tells us that where land is so abundant, cheap, and good, want in this country must be only temporary; and that it is the intention of the Government to introduce measures calculated permanently to encourage producers and settle them profitably on the soil. Further on it is stated that there is room for an indefinite expansion in the agricultural and mining industries. With both those statements I am entirely in accord. It was pleasing to see, in nearly all the election addresses lately, from that of the Premier downwards, reference was made to the necessity of encouraging the agricultural industry in every possible way and to put producers on the land. We are all dependent upon our producers, and if we wish to get once more on the top of the flood we must encourage those producers more than we have done in the past. I trust the Government will not only endeavour to settle people on the land, but will also do something to assist those who are already settled on the land to enable them to exist. Give them markets, and people will readily go on the land. We have an unlimited market for breadstuffs. Unlike the pastoralist, the farmer need not go to England, Egypt, or Gibraltar for a market; he has the best market in the world in his own colony, and can get as high a price for his breadstuffs as anywhere. And yet we only produce one-fourth of our requirements; and 90 per cent. of that is grown in the district I represent and the neighbouring districts of Cambooya and Toowoomba. The junior member for Brisbane North said he trusted some action would be taken to get railway freights reduced for produce for export. But we cannot supply the produce we want now; we want the freight reduced for what we require ourselves at present; and I trust a gentleman so able as the Premier, who is also the Secretary for Railways, will see that it is absolutely necessary, in the interests of the wheat-growing districts, that something should be done in the way of reducing freights to the capital. Wheat has not yet been grown profitably close to the coast. The wheat-producing country is more than 100 miles from the coast, and to get the produce to the metropolis the farmers are charged a higher freight than in any other part of the world. A large quantity of wheat is also produced beyond the 100-mile line, in addition to one-third of all the hay and one-fourth of all the maize grown in the colony. To give an idea of the anomalies that exist in this country and nowhere else, I will take the railway freight on produce from my district. The rate upon four-ton lots for wheat from Allora to Brisbane is 16s. per ton. That is for a ton of 2,240 lb.; but if you take off 240 lb. by making the wheat into flour the rate becomes over three times as much—£2 10s. per ton. I have never been able to get an answer from anyone as to why that should be so, and I do not think anyone is capable of answering it.

The HON. G. THORN: There is an import duty on flour.

Mr. ALLAN: We have an import duty of £1 per ton, and the only effect of that is that the £1 is added to 11s. 4d., the cost of bringing flour per ton from Adelaide, and it is landed here at £1 11s. 4d., while it costs £2 10s. to bring it from Allora. I can see no reason for that rate, unless it is intended to subsidise the Brisbane millers. Another matter of great importance is the establishment of agricultural colleges. This matter has been dealt with before, and on two occasions £5,000 have been voted to put up agricultural colleges to teach our young men how to farm and give them something to do other than joining the police, the railways, or other Government departments. We have got an Agricultural Department here

with a very respectable man from America at the head of it to teach us how to farm theoretically; but should we not give him land and let him show us what he is worth in a practical way? I hope that even in these hard times the Government will be able to see their way to carry out the proposal for the establishment of agricultural colleges. You, Sir, as Secretary for Lands, went all over the colony in connection with this agricultural farm business, and no one knows more about it. That it has been backed up by men in our part of the country is well known, and I need only mention the fact that the Hon. John Donald Macansh offered 1,000 acres of the best land, to be picked out wherever the Government liked on any creek or railway, to have the college erected upon it. This is rather a sore matter in our part of the country, and I trust something will be done in connection with it. So many aspirations have been raised in the bosoms of the agricultural population that I trust they will not be trodden upon now, but that they will get every encouragement to raise money on grain crops, and build up a healthy yeoman class—the best class we can have. If that is done, instead of having our towns congested with people unable to find work we will have them settled where they may become producers instead of consumers. I hope the railway rates will be so arranged that the inside millers may get some help. In New South Wales alone there are fifty-seven up-country mills, and we have only five. I have taken the earliest opportunity to bring these anomalies in the matter of the freights on wheat and flour before the House, and I trust the Secretary for Railways will take the matter into earnest consideration and endeavour to meet us in some way or other, so that we may get our produce down to this market or make use of it in our own markets, as far as we can, in the same way as is done in other manufacturing States.

Mr. HOOLAN: There is not much to congratulate the Government or the Governor upon in this Address, but I suppose we must take it in the spirit in which it is offered, and that is a very tame spirit indeed. It is very good of a sort, and I suppose suits the occasion. There is nothing for our side to accept in it, and nothing to reject in it that has not been repeatedly rejected and denounced. It is a very vague matter from beginning to end, and if it is a disclosure of the Government policy their policy is a very mild and conciliatory one indeed. Having had so much policy and legislation during the last two or three sessions, it is quite a relief, to myself at any rate, to find that the Government do not intend to dose us with much fresh legislation this session. Referring to the extraordinary financial convulsions which have so disorganised our commercial and industrial operations, I am very glad to find that the Government do not accuse anyone of them. It was not to be expected that they would become self-accusers, as they have not yet been educated up to the dogma that "open confession is good for the soul"; but they might have gone a little further and confessed to a little more. At any rate it is satisfactory to know that they do not intend to put the blame for the present troubles on to that much abused but still very active party of which I have now the honour to be the head. A little matter cropped up here yesterday afternoon with respect to the somewhat unseemly haste in calling Parliament together, and I took a stand against it. I believed at the time it was perhaps in accordance with the letter of the law; but I still maintain it was not in accordance with the spirit of it to get the writs returned by telegraph, and unless the Government could get the members here also by

telegraph, I hold their position on the matter could not be a sound one. With regard to the financial business, we will deal with it when it comes along. My colleagues and myself are in a very fortunate position on this matter, and will be able to judge it impartially, as we do not owe the banks anything, and have never been indebted to them for any favours. Had I any desire to show extreme hostility, I could find contentious matter in the Speech, but I must say that that is not my desire at present. I know very well how we are placed since the general election. I know the little influences that led up to the general election, and I know the Government command a very substantial majority in the House. Therefore I feel it would be very bad policy to start extreme hostility. I hope, as far as I am concerned at any rate, that while I occupy my present position there will be no extreme hostility towards the Government. We, of course, do not admit we were beaten at the polls. We say we have gained a victory; but we must accept the present electoral law as constituted, and do our utmost to alter it. It is no use acclaiming about the victory we have gained when we cannot show it in this House. I trust the Government will not be the least exultant over their victory, but will do all that they have promised; that they will in reality put their shoulder to the wheel, and if labour can assist them it is only too ready if they be in the right. Then we come to the old phrase referring to the relationship between capital and labour, and the general friendliness which should exist between the two bodies is trotted out here. One accepts that for what it is worth. It is one of those stock phrases that come in on every opportunity. It is like Ipswich tweed. It will stand washing and starching and stitching and washing and boiling over again; it always comes up fresh and never gets threadbare. I hope it is used in earnest this time. I know very well that labour must make a move onward or fall back. As far as I am concerned it will make a move on. There is no more determined labour advocate than I am at present, and within the next year I intend to show it or else leave the political and labour arena altogether and return to my former status. I most decidedly object to continue to fight the battles we have been fighting for the last two or three years. The country is open to labour. Some of our people maintain that it is not. As a gold-miner I cannot truthfully take the stand that the country is not open to us, because the gold industry has always been open to us. There are no fairer mining laws when they are properly and efficiently administered than our Queensland laws, although they are open to improvement. I can take my miner's right, and I may discover a colossal fortune, and as soon as I put my pegs in I am absolutely secure; no man, however rich or powerful he may be, can interfere with me. It would be senseless to say I do not know the resources of the country are open to us and to capital likewise. Capital has had a large share of what was going. You cannot blame capital, but you can blame labour for not taking greater advantage of what was available. Within my experience I have seen a great many working men make a great deal of wealth. Some of them nursed it with great care; others have squandered it as easily as they have obtained it. I hope for the future proper direction will be given to labour, and I may say that labour intends to move for itself with the assistance of whatever Government is in power. Of course labour tried to capture as much as it could of Parliament House. I would have done anything I could to have got rid of the present

Government, and I would do anything within my power to get rid of them at the present moment, but then I am powerless to do it, and it is as well to accept any assistance the Government may offer if they are prepared to offer it. In a short time, if the colony or the Government do not break down entirely, there will be a direct move made, and the assistance of the Government will be candidly asked for. We will then see if their assistance will be cheerfully given. I hope and trust that it will. The hostility we have shown to the land-grant railway principle is to be continued, whether it is effective or not—unbounded hostility to any sacrifice of any portion of the public estate. I always maintained that we have long lines of railway already built which are almost worthless. They go through the endless bush, across the boundless plains, and through the howling wilderness, and the land along them is still unsettled. Why should that be? That is a question that the Government should immediately take up, and not try to sacrifice any portion of the vast wilderness. It should be the duty of the Government to bring about close settlement, and also let the people who are already settled along these lines have greater advantages. There is a little railway from Normanton to Croydon, the rates on which are something exorbitant, and the Etheridge Gold Field, 100 miles distant from the terminus, suffers in consequence, and drays are competing from Normanton to Georgetown with the Government railway. Why that state of things exists I do not know, but the fact remains, and it is one of those things which the Government should immediately attend to. The hostility to black labour, of course, will still continue, whatever conciliation may take place in the House. It is the duty of the Government, and everyone who desires the prosperity of the colony, and the prosperity and purity of the race, to hold up their hands against black labour and try to settle people on the soil, whether along the coast or inland. I do not stand here as a conciliator by any means. I am placed in charge of the new members of the Labour party who have come into this Assembly. I feel that I should take up the position of a venerable patriarch, and it is possible I will do so. As an individual, I come here with a heart charged with bitterness against the Government, but it is incumbent upon me now, placed in the position I am, to inculcate a feeling of love. Whether the members of the party will be guided by me or not, I do not know. I will set them an example, and, above all, I have to take care of them while here, and not get them into any peculiar positions that they might find it awkward to get out of. I have always felt the awkwardness of my position, and I find it ten times worse now; but I want it understood that I forego, not my principles, but all the animosity and cantankerousness I felt towards the Government. I bury it all like some Brisbane depositors are said to have done—in the back yard or the teapot or somewhere else. Of course, if any new member feels inclined to take a turn out of the Government there is a broad ground for him. The Speech, no doubt, has been compiled with great care, but there are some matters that seem to have been left out of it on purpose. For instance, there might have been a good deal more attention given to the gold-mining industry, which is merely stated to be in a satisfactory position. So it is, but I hope the little incident I have mentioned will help to place it in a still more satisfactory position, and that the Commissioners will be induced to reduce the heavy rates on that line. It may be unfortunate that the mining centres went against the Government, but I hope that the hon. gentleman in charge of

the Mines Department will give as much attention to that department as to his own business, and make it as highly successful. We should then have nothing to cavil at. Of course, Governments do not take dictation in a very good spirit, but if they take a little candid advice from an humble opponent they will pay less attention to federation and give their undivided attention to the troubles at our own doors. Each of the colonies is surrounded with troubles of all kinds, and now they want to band together and amalgamate these troubles. In the southern colonies we find more poor and more unemployed than in many cities in the old country. Amongst the public men we find the most indecent dishonour. The southern cities are thronged with starving people, and the southern gaols are thronged with public men; and are we to have a federation of all this? I trust that federation will be put aside until we settle our own questions. Congratulations have been the order of the day, and I wish to convey my congratulations to the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply. One of them comes from an agricultural district, and it does not do to flatter men from agricultural districts; they are generally a bit bushy, but I can offer sincere congratulations to the other. This silvery-tongued oratory travelled to the remote regions of the North almost as soon as the silver had dropped from his tongue in the Centennial Hall. I came here expecting to hear some of it, but I have heard none. In place of that we have had figures concerning wool and agricultural items, and he declaimed against myself for calling attention to the position of the Assembly yesterday, and compared it to the action of the superintendent of a Chinese fire brigade who refused to allow the men to turn on the hose until the whole brigade had arrived. I can only compare the haste with which the Government has called Parliament together to the action of a man who sets fire to his own house and rushes naked into the street to call the neighbours to extinguish it. The Government only are responsible. They knew what was going to happen. I am not here to make any charges that I cannot sustain; but I had an idea that the Government knew the Queensland National Bank was going to close its doors as soon as the elections commenced. Therefore, it is the fault of the Government, and they should have made preparation. They delayed the general election till the very last moment, and then hurry to cover up their neglect by inconveniencing members, and by what I maintain is overriding the Constitution Act. You, Mr. Speaker, would have been elected all the same. Very grave duties have devolved upon me within the last few days. They have not been of my seeking, and I have done all that a man can do to avoid the position; but while I am in this position I shall have to adopt an honest course, and hope the Government will meet me in a proper spirit.

Mr. MURRAY: I have first to express my regret for the cause that has arisen for summoning Parliament together at this comparatively inconvenient stage. I regret the absence of many members who have been elected, and think it would have been a pleasure to the House if they had been in their places to take part in this debate. The Government are to be congratulated upon their return to office with such a large and influential following as they have; they are placed in a position stronger than any Government that has preceded them. No doubt the crisis that is the cause of our being called together is one great reason why so many members here have floated in to their assistance. There are many on this side who, like myself, occupy an independent position, and are here to do what they can to lift the country out of its

present condition and bring about prosperity. I am pleased to see the harmony and goodwill prevailing at present, because I think it shows that there is a disposition, when any serious crisis arises, to throw all contentious questions on one side, and bend our energies to restore confidence and prosperity. I think it is a good thing we can no longer go into the English money market as we have done in the past, because it is owing to over-borrowing that we are in our present condition. I think that such reckless borrowing and lavish expenditure will not be repeated in our time, because the lesson that has been taught is sure to be remembered. I for one would be opposed to borrowing money for public works not required. It is only by means of our producing industries that prosperity can be restored, and I hope the Secretary for Lands will administer the land laws in the most liberal and comprehensive manner. I hope he will do away with many vexatious conditions that have been imposed upon struggling selectors. Many of them have been imposed with the object of securing residence; but I think the Minister would be justified in waiving a great many of those vexatious and harassing conditions when he knows that the selector is a *bona fide* selector whose object is to make a living on the land. That is all the country requires at the present time. I have to express my regret at the absence of any reference in the Speech to the question of the territorial separation of the colony into three divisions. The Chief Secretary in addressing one of the constituencies recognised the fact that this was a question that required to be dealt with, and after that I am the more astonished at the absence of any reference to the question in the Speech. It is a question that will be forced on the attention of the House before the session is over. In the Central district it was the burning question during the elections, and the result was the return of every member pledged to support territorial separation for that part of the colony. To prove how strong the feeling was in that district, I need only say that a most influential member of the last Parliament failed to secure his return owing to the fact that he was unacquainted with the feelings and aspirations of his constituents. On the other hand, I was returned unopposed because of the stand I had taken with regard to this question, though I had expressed my determination to retire from Parliament. I do not intend to go into the fiscal policy of the Government; but I may congratulate the junior member for North Brisbane on his ablespeech on that subject; and I feel sure that the House will derive very great assistance from him in connection with this question. The hon. gentlemen who have preceded me have confined their remarks principally to Southern Queensland—Brisbane and its suburbs. I think that many members have very little conception of the extent of Queensland, and the many struggling industries that are far removed from the seat of government; and it will be well for them to acquaint themselves with those industries. I trust that they will recognise the fact that many members are here at much loss and inconvenience to themselves, and that the Government will insist on pushing on the business of the session as quickly as possible consistent with careful legislation. I see no reason why Parliament should not sit four nights a week to begin with, so that hon. members may soon be at liberty to attend to their own business. I believe that many members would be doing as much for the country in carrying on the enterprises in which they are engaged as in sitting here week after week. I hope that hon. members representing

metropolitan and suburban constituencies will consider the question. Last year I drew attention to this frequently. I hope the Government and the House will bend their energies to offer every inducement to the producing industries of the country. The true interests of the working classes rest solely upon the successful prosecution of our own industries. There are no other means whereby they can live. Their labour can only be regulated by the value of its products. All the unions and boards of conciliation that may ever be formed can never transform that question. The working men must depend entirely upon the fruits of their labour for their wages. When I have heard them complaining about their treatment by their employers and their remuneration, my invariable advice has been that they are not compelled to work for any man. I have said, "Why not employ your labour on your own account?" Why should not a body of working men band themselves together and start some little thing, and work for themselves? There would then be no employer to rob them of any fruit of their labour. That is my advice to the working men of the colony. But we are all working men. I believe I am as hard a working man as there is in the colony, and I always have been. If a man wishes to succeed it can only be by self-reliance, by plodding industry, and by economy; by no other means. I hope my little bit of advice will be taken to heart, and that the hon. gentlemen who are now in this Chamber representing labour will recognise that one fact—that they can never secure a living except through the produce of their own industry. I have to congratulate you, Sir, upon your brilliant career since you first entered this House five years ago. I have to congratulate you upon your elevation to your very distinguished position. I feel sure you will have to exercise the greatest patience and forbearance in dealing with the conflict of opinions which is likely to arise. All shades of society and all shades of opinion are here represented, and I feel sure you will exercise that good judgment and impartiality that will be a credit to yourself and a satisfaction to hon. members.

Mr. MORGAN: The hon. member who has just sat down claimed that the question of territorial separation was the issue which decided the elections in the Central districts. He advanced that as a reason why this House should without delay proceed to give the Central districts independence. Upon the facts I join issue with him. I deny that the question of territorial separation decided the elections in the Central districts. The hon. gentleman should have honoured the House by furnishing some proof. Did the issue of territorial separation decide the elections for Leichhardt, Clermont, or Barcoo? In every case the answer must be in the negative.

Mr. MURRAY: What about Port Curtis?

Mr. MORGAN: Because one egg has been hatched the hon. gentleman wishes us to regard that as a whole clutch. The late Speaker, Mr. Norton, was unfortunate enough to lose his seat. His hostility to separation was, perhaps, a contributing cause, but it was not the only cause. However, against that we can put the successes of the anti-separationists in the constituencies I have named. The fact that the hon. member was called from his selection and sent here against his own will must be very gratifying to himself, but it is not sufficient reason for us to grant the Central district a constitution of its own. I read the lesson of the elections differently. They have not only decided the fate of the agitation for Central separation, but also the fate for many years of the agitation for Northern separation.

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The powerful man at the head of the Government first absorbed the leader of the Opposition and left us in the unfortunate plight we now find ourselves in, with an empty front bench. He then annexed the leader of the Northern separationists in this House, and he has left that body also without a head. If he goes on in the same way, I do not know but that before long he may also annex the leader of the Labour party. It may be that we have in store the unexpected experience of seeing the hon. member for Burke realise what he assured us was the dream of his life—getting on to that front bench as a colleague of the present leader of the Government. Not only has Central separation been killed by the appeal to the people, but Northern separation has also been killed, and the pure and simple patriot of the North is now in a more hopeless condition than he has ever been in since the agitation was started by the Cinderella of the North some twenty-five years ago. The leader of the Separation party has joined the avowed enemies of his cause; and I am afraid that you, Sir, have also been won from your allegiance. We may, therefore, look forward hopefully to the work of this Parliament—certainly of this session of it—being carried on without any disturbance or delay from the question of separation. The hon. member for Normanby may look wistfully to Lord Ripon, but I think he will look in vain for assistance from that quarter. He has failed to convince even this House that the people of Central Queensland are at one on the question, or that any considerable majority are unanimous in their demand for independence. The elections have gone very much as Lord Ripon anticipated. He has found in Central, as he has found in Northern Queensland, that there is no united demand for separation; and we may therefore look upon the question as out of the realm of burning questions of pressing importance. In referring briefly to one or two paragraphs in the Speech, I must congratulate the gentleman who wrote that Speech. I rather fancy I detect the Roman hand of the Attorney-General in the document. I congratulate him upon the skill with which he has avoided many questions on which the House and the country would have liked to have had an expression of opinion from the Government. Old members will miss with regret that interesting tail which was always tacked on to the Opening Speech, the joints of which were composed of various Bills, calculated in a measure to satisfy the craving of members who had fads and were sanguine enough to believe that the Ministry were going to give effect to them. Of course, in the present circumstances of the colony, it was only natural that prime importance should be given to questions of finance. I have observed that all the speakers, from the mover and seconder downwards, have touched this question with a gloved hand. Perhaps it is just as well to follow the example of more experienced members; still, I think it would be well, if we dared to do it, to face the question a little more boldly in debate than has yet been done. Possibly it would not be discreet under the circumstances to do so; but if the position were not so desperate as it is, a good example might be set to those who may in future have charge of our financial institutions by expressing the opinion which I know is held by a very large number of members as to the manner in which our financial institutions have been managed in the past. I will not go further than to express a hope that no future Treasurer will make the mistake of Treasurers in the past in importing large sums of money from the old country, and putting them in banking institutions here to bolster up industries

which ought to be made to stand upon their own legs. The hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Kingsbury, traced the history of our present position from its genesis down through its exodus to the revelations which he made, but I think that position is attributable principally to borrowing money in amounts greater than the country could find profitable employment for. I hope that the legislation which the Government propose to submit will have the effect of giving immediate relief. I particularly put in a plea for current account creditors, who have been employing their money as trading capital, and not for the purpose of earning interest or dividends. They never gave their bankers any permission to use it, yet in very many cases those bankers have laid violent hands on that money without the sanction of the creditors, and are now proposing to charge them with heavy interest on money they ought never to have been deprived of. The Government should give their attention to the releasing of this trading capital as soon as may be. The Government have not been as active in affording measures of relief as they might have been in the present crisis. The Treasury has been paying in gold the demands made on the Government Savings Bank in Brisbane, but not those made in country towns. In all country towns, even at a short distance from the metropolis, depositors in the Savings Bank have been compelled to take cheques drawn on the Treasury in Brisbane. In many cases the whole of the banks doing business in country towns have closed, and in others three out of four have closed, and the cheques are practically valueless, as the only remaining bank doing business refuses to collect them.

Mr. SMYTH: They could open trust accounts. They did that at Gympie.

Mr. MORGAN: I am told that the only remaining bank doing business refuses to collect the cheques drawn upon Brisbane. The men who got those cheques were placed in this position: that they could not get them negotiated in the town in which they were delivered, and they had either to go to Brisbane to collect them at the Treasury or send the cheque to someone in Brisbane, and take all the risk of transmission of the gold by coach or other conveyance. The Government might have relieved the pressure that had come upon many people in the country towns, to a very great extent, if they had accepted the responsibility of transmitting gold to meet the cheques drawn upon the Treasury, to the towns in which the depositors resided. That has not been done yet, and trade in the provinces has been almost paralysed in consequence. Of course, we know that in the case of an institution like the Savings Bank, having offices in remote parts of the colony, gold could not be transmitted to all the districts where there were depositors, but there was nothing to prevent the transmission of gold to such places as Roma, Charleville, Warwick, Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Gympie, where the Government have railways at their command. That has not been done yet, and trade has been almost brought to a standstill.

Mr. SMYTH: It has been done now.

Mr. MORGAN: It must have been done very recently.

Mr. SMYTH: Yes; a few days ago.

Mr. MORGAN: I have my information from the Under Secretary to the Treasury, and I got it to-day. If I am making a mistake the Treasurer can correct me. But I know that it had not been done in Warwick when I came away. I think it ought to be done. Putting aside the question of the financial measures which the Government propose to introduce—measures in which, I believe, they will receive

the cordial support of members on both sides of the House, so far as the proposals they submit are safe and satisfactory—I will now pass to one or two other matters of less pressing importance. We are told that the revenue has failed to meet expenditure, a fact that is patent to all of us, and that it is necessary to raise additional revenue. But we are in the dark as to the means to be adopted for raising this additional revenue. No doubt, in due course, we shall be taken into Ministerial confidence. But I have noticed, from the manifestoes issued to the electors by aspiring leaders of all parties represented in this House, that there was a general consensus of opinion that further taxation was undesirable. That was before the elections. What may happen after the elections I do not know; but I sincerely hope that if any attempt is to be made to increase the burdens of the people, the additional burden will be cast upon the right shoulders. We ought to look to our pastoral lands to give a larger contribution to the revenue of the country in the future than they have done in the past. I believe, notwithstanding the depressed state of the pastoral industry, we have a right to look for that larger contribution. We were led to believe, when we gave the pastoral lessees fixity of tenure in 1884, that we should get from them a larger revenue than they were giving previously. We have looked in vain for that revenue hitherto. On the other hand, we are told that we shall have presented to us a schedule of Estimates framed with a strict view of economy. I hope that promise will be fulfilled. The country expects that Ministers will make a bold attempt to reduce the expenditure on the Civil Service. It has been done in New South Wales and in Victoria; it ought to be done also in Queensland. Particularly, I think, ought we to make an effort to cut down the ever-growing vote for Defence Force purposes. It is all very well to spend money for those purposes when we have the money to spend. We have not the money to spend now, and I hope the Treasurer will deal with a firm hand when he is framing his estimates of expenditure for defence, land and marine. Our expenditure in the past has mounted at such a rate that the Treasurer has felt himself compelled to cut down the endowment paid to local authorities. What with the steadily reduced endowment during the last three or four years, and the troubles brought upon them by the suspension of banks, many of our local governing bodies are bordering on insolvency; and if the Treasurer does not come to their relief, and that very promptly, disaster will overtake our local governing bodies outside municipalities. This question has an intimate bearing upon the finances of the country generally, because a great many of those local bodies are directly responsible to the Treasurer for large sums of borrowed money; and if the present system of cutting down the endowment is persisted in much longer, I am afraid that many of those bodies will make default in payment of their interest and redemption money. The Treasurer, therefore, will find himself in rather an unfortunate case if he continues to cut those endowments down until they reach the vanishing point. Upon that point the Treasurer himself holds views that will be acceptable to most hon. members. I have heard him express the opinion that special sources of revenue should be set aside for the purpose of endowing local authorities, so that the element of doubt that enters so largely into their calculations now would be removed. They would know what they were going to get, and so cut their coat according to their cloth. I hope, therefore, he will see his way to give a helping hand to local governing bodies which have done in the past much good work for Queensland.

We are promised also that something will be done to help to settle people on the land. That has been a familiar feature of every Speech I have heard delivered in the House, but I look with some confidence to the gentleman who now presides over the Lands Department, and who is full of energy and zeal, to do something towards fulfilling that promise, and to show the country that Ministers are really earnest in their desire to put people on the land. The hon. member for Lockyer struck a true note when he said that the first thing essential to the increase of settlement on the land was to make those who are already there prosperous. By what means can we achieve that object more readily than by employing the State railways to promote the interests of the State? It is a most remarkable thing, and a serious reflection on the management of our railways, that quite recently in the Central district, not many hundred miles from where we are, maize was selling as high as 10s. a bushel, while it was going begging purchasers on the Darling Downs. And so with other lines of produce. Surely it is not a matter beneath the dignity of a Minister to give his attention to these matters, and to ascertain whether it would not be possible to bring produce almost rotting on the Darling Downs to the consumers in the Central district who were wanting it to keep their stock from starvation, and who were prepared to give a price for it that would have paid the producer well, and left a handsome profit for the State railways by which it was carried. Surely when we have State-owned railways, and lines of State-aided steamers running on our coast, it is possible to do something to ameliorate a condition of things so disastrous alike to the producer and the consumer! I hope the practical man now at the head of the Railway Department will give his attention to this matter, for if he does he will not only benefit the men who are already settled on the land, but will benefit the State by getting a larger revenue from the railways. It is often asked how you propose increasing your revenue by reducing your railway freights. I maintain that if the railways are employed in the interests of the producers, though it will be necessary to reduce freights, before very long we shall see a steadily-increasing revenue. The people who used the railways would be enabled to prosecute their industries at a profit, and that profit would be expended in the purchase of dutiable commodities. Customs revenue would be increased, employment would be found for skilled artisans, and the revenue from the up traffic, which is carried at a higher rate than the down traffic, would be increased to a very considerable extent. I think the Government are right in directing the attention of Parliament to the possibilities that are open before us by the extension of the frozen meat industry. There is no doubt that a colony like Queensland, having so large an annual surplus of meat for the market, ought to be able to take front rank among the meat exporting colonies of Australia. And though objection was taken in many places to the action of the late Parliament in going to the aid of the meat export company in a manner that possibly could not be strictly justified, I believe they did the right thing in the interests of the colony. I hope that industry will do for Queensland in the near future what it has already done for New Zealand, and that frozen beef in Queensland, as frozen mutton in New Zealand, will help largely to restore the colony to the position of prosperity it enjoyed a few years ago. I believe that members representing all classes of the community will be prepared to give the Government hearty assistance in any effort they may make in that direction. For myself, I may

say that the measures the Government propose to introduce will be considered on their merits without regard to the fact that I sit on the Opposition side of the House. Especially in regard to measures for the relief of the financial distress, I think I may say for members on this side that they will be prepared to give hearty assistance to any effort to restore confidence in Queensland.

Mr. DUNSFORD: My first words here must be a protest against the hasty manner in which this Parliament has been called together. I think I am justified in offering this protest on behalf of the Northern constituencies that have not been able to be represented here to-night. We have Carpentaria, Cook, Croydon, Woothakata, Kennedy, and Flinders, most of them returning labour members, and though I believe the writs have been telegraphed, it has been physically impossible for those members to be present, and I make the protest on their behalf. As the member for Burke has said, mutual congratulations have been the order of the night, but upon what? Are we not in the midst of one of the greatest financial crises that have ever taken place in this colony? How can we congratulate ourselves? To-night members of this House are congratulating themselves upon promises, upon something that is to be done in the future; but I say that, judging the Government by the past, those promises are like pie-crust—they will be broken. When the Government has done something, and has pulled the colony out of the present despondent and despotic state, I may call it, for we are really ruled by a number of financial despots, it will be time enough for us to assemble here, and, in the name of the colony and of the people, offer mutual congratulations. Do not let us hear any more of this until something has been done. I am glad to be able to agree with something in the Speech. I read that not only must revenue be increased but expenditure must be decreased, and further on we are told that the necessity for economy and retrenchment is apparent, and does not admit of postponement. I take it that by that we are expected to understand that the Government intend to retrench in the Civil Service. I hope they do intend that. I hope they will prove as soon as possible by their actions that they are in earnest in this matter. There is ample room for retrenchment in the Civil Service, and I hope the Government will amply consider it and retrench in the right direction. The dismissal of a message boy and the reduction of the salaries of men already in receipt of very small pay is not in the truest sense retrenchment, and I hope the Government when they are retrenching will go to the top of the service, and if they can get at the Chief Justice I think the House would be perfectly justified in withdrawing the additional £1,000 he voted to himself the last time the House met.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. DUNSFORD: It is tantamount to that.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: That is not true.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I hope, in considering the matter of retrenchment, the Government will reduce the number and cost of the Railway Commissioners. With the paraphernalia about them they cost at the present time not less, probably, than £7,000 or £8,000 per annum, and that is too much for the colony to pay at the present time. In New Zealand, I am given to understand, they have only two commissioners, receiving £300 each per annum; and this colony might run the railways without the aid of the Commissioners at all, or with but one. I hope also that those who are drawing

salaries without giving any service to the colony will be dismissed at once. The Speech says that during the last Parliament two strikes paralysed for a long time the shipping and pastoral interests of this colony; but at the present time there is another strike—the strike of the banking institutions—paralysing the whole of the interests of this colony. They have shut their doors against the people who gave them credit, gold, and wealth, and refuse to meet their notes for which they received full value from the people. I say this is a strike, and one the ill effects of which will be greater than any of the industrial wars which we have had in the past. While speaking on this subject, I will call the attention of the Government to the fact that the prisoners who participated in the shearers' strike—the so-called prisoners—are still lying in St. Helena. I hope the Government will immediately release those men. We know they have not broken any law of this country or any English law. Why should these political prisoners be kept there, suffering? It is no use the Government talking about letting bygones be bygones; that the past is behind us, and the future before us. They must release those men. I demand it, because they have broken no law of this colony. The Speech further says—

“I invite you earnestly to devise some means to put capital and labour on a more satisfactory footing.” I hope the Government will see their way to pass a measure of arbitration, so that both parties shall be compelled to arbitrate on any of these industrial matters. Why should the colony at any time be thrown into a strike? At the present time the Government propose to arbitrate between the banks and the people. They step in. Why? For reasons best known to themselves. I can hardly state them. Why did not the Government arbitrate between the shipowners and the people, and between the squatters and the shearers? If they had done so there would have been no industrial war. The hon. member for Lockyer, I think, has pointed to the desirableness of establishing State-aided village settlements, and he said we could learn something from the other colonies. I am with him in that, and hope the Government will follow in the footsteps of New Zealand. Let us wisely copy any colony that is bringing prosperity to its people. It is sometimes said it is unfair to compare this colony with New Zealand, because it is said, “Look at the rainfall of New Zealand and its natural facilities.” We have had considerable rainfall in the Southern portion of this colony lately, and perhaps we can compare favourably in that respect; but I maintain that this colony has greater natural facilities than any of the other colonies of Australasia. We are told by Professor Shelton that the wheat-growing portion of this colony is larger than the whole of the land now under wheat cultivation in Australasia, so we cannot say we have no facilities. We have a wonderful colony, and it only needs a little common sense on the part of the Government to place it on a sound foundation. I hope we will not be above copying New Zealand or any other colony when they have something to teach us. Referring to the construction of railways on the land-grant principle, the Speech says—

“Now that they find the country has pronounced so unmistakably in favour of such works, no doubt offers will be forthcoming, which will in due course be submitted for your approval.”

Well, offers may be forthcoming now, especially when we consider that the Government have proposed to give away the land of the people. That is about the first time I ever heard of an intelligent person or nation proposing to become rich by giving away its only available asset. What would be thought of a man who went out into

[Mr. DUNSFORD.

the street and picked up the first shivering wretch with only a shirt on his back, and said to him, “Give me that shirt so that you may be warm and comfortable.” Would that man not think that he could make very good use of his garment, although it was the only one he had? It seems that, so far, there is nobody ready to take the land for nothing. I deny, further, that the people have pronounced in favour of this class of railway. The great majority of the men of this colony have had no opportunity to record their votes during the election which is just ended. That is a fact; and yet we are told by the Premier that he does not propose in the future to give us any electoral reform. I can quote roughly a few figures. I may be wrong, but it will only be in a matter of degree after all. For the Ministerialists, excluding the elections of Cook and Carpentaria, there were 30,000 votes cast. For the Labour, Oppositionists, and Independent candidates there were 45,000 votes cast; 75,000 votes have been recorded altogether, and I submit that 75,000 votes does not represent one-half of the men of this colony. The last census proves that there are about 114,000 men in the colony. Out of these 75,000 votes must be taken the allotment votes and the contingent votes, and also a large number of these votes were recorded in double electorates, where each man has two votes. So that I am perfectly justified in saying that not one-half of the men in this colony have had an opportunity of recording their votes. It may be replied that there are 86,000 votes on the rolls; but even then I say that owing to their occupations and other reasons not one-half of the people have been able to vote. What use is a vote to a man if he cannot exercise it because he is on the wrong side of a political arbitrary line which separates two electorates? Is it not right that all the men who have to submit to the laws of the colony should have a voice in making those laws? They have to contribute to the revenue, and therefore they should have a voice in the administration of that revenue. I request that the Government will endeavour to give these men a voice in making those laws. It is stated that the gold-mining industry is in an advancing condition, and that the output is steadily maintained. Of course that may refer to mullock, of which there is a considerable output, generally more than that of gold. But I will take it to mean gold, and I agree that there has been a considerable increase in the output; but unfortunately we find that the larger proportion of this increase is going to the older countries in the shape of dividends, and it must gradually be absorbed by absentee syndicates. Now it must be admitted that any drain upon the wealth of the colony in this manner is not for the public good, and while the yield is increasing the increase does not go to the credit of the colony. We are likely to be in want of gold, and why should we allow it to be exported in the manner it has been? It is not wise, and we should keep it here for our own use. I am sure the Premier could devise a plan by which all the gold produced here could be kept here. Does not the gold belong to the colony that produces it? I also wish to call attention to the fact that the warden at Charters Towers, probably acting under instructions, has exempted all the mines in the district for one month, which I consider an iniquitous proceeding. There are enough men out of employment without adding to the number. Why should not the warden consider each application for exemption separately? He has that power, so why should wholesale exemptions be granted? A public meeting was held recently, and the miners agreed to accept any deferred payments rather than see the mines locked up. They agreed to take I.O.U.'s, by which the mineowners had every-

thing to gain and the men nothing much, because in the event of call-paying mines breaking or shutting up as the banks have done, the I. O. U.'s would have no value. The mines should be kept going wherever possible, instead of locking up the natural facilities of the country while men are willing to work them. There are hundreds of men at Charters Towers who are willing to go into these mines even on tribute, or by any other means; but the owners, who are holding for speculative purposes, go into the warden's court and get exemptions, thus throwing numbers of men out of work. I bring this matter forward, hoping that the present Minister for Mines will see that these mines are not conducted in this manner in future.

Mr. CROSS: I think the congratulations that have been offered to the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply are well deserved. I envy their capacity of speech, and hope the House will grant me indulgence in my efforts to express my ideas and comment upon what has passed this evening. Like other hon. members, I do not approve of the manner in which Parliament has been called together. I have no doubt that the House is legally constituted according to the Electoral Act and the Constitution Act, but there is a higher consideration than a mere technicality. Had the business to come before us not been so important and of such a very high character, the matter would have passed unnoticed so far as this side of the House is concerned. Our financial position is very alarming, but I think it would be wise to do no important business here until every member has an opportunity of being present. I contend that, while the present and past Governments have justified their actions by obsolete and existing Acts of Parliament, they have not received the approbation of the people—I mean the whole of the people of the colony, enfranchised and disfranchised, including the 38,000 disfranchised male adults who ought to be on the roll. I can say, from my experience as a newspaper reporter and as a candidate during the present campaign, that had the franchise been on a proper basis the constitution of this House would have been different. And if the Government expect the co-operation of this side of the House I think it is their duty to the people of the colony to concede some considerable measure of electoral reform. I claim for every law-abiding citizen the inherent right to exercise the franchise after six months' residence. Recognising the fact that so many men are disfranchised, and that so many have been prevented from exercising the franchise because they shifted over the dividing line between two electorates—on behalf of this large section I hope the Labour party will work together and see if they can persuade the Government to bring in a measure of electoral reform. No measure would be more popular, and nothing would tend more to give the people confidence in the ability and capacity of the Government. In connection with the votes polled by Ministerialists and non-Ministerialists, I will quote from the *Worker* some figures which will bear the strictest investigation. Hon. members on the other side laugh at the *Worker*, but I think that for the last five weeks many of them have had reason not only to respect but to fear the *Worker*. I have no hesitation in saying that the influence of the *Worker* entirely revolutionised the elections, and I challenge anyone to deny the truthfulness of the figures I am about to quote:—

"McIlwraith's supporters will feel very strongly that 'comparisons are odious' when they study the following figures which are compiled from the official election returns, and represent the total number of primary votes polled by the various parties at the late elections, together with the members returned, and certain

startling conclusions drawn from a comparison of the voting and representative strength respectively of the Ministerial and Labour parties:—Ministerialists, 29,044; Labour, 27,407; Opposition, 9,496; Independent, 11,225. Ministerialists polled 29,044 votes; non-Ministerialists polled 48,123 votes. Majority of non-Ministerialists, 19,084 votes. Notwithstanding this huge majority of votes against the Government we find that the 62 contested seats are divided in this way: 34 for the Government, 28 for the others. The majority of votes gets the minority of seats.

Now for Labour v. Government:

Ministerial vote	29,044
Labour vote	27,407

If votes and members were in the same proportion on both sides we should have 28 Ministerialists and 24 Labour members.

"Instead of this we find 34 for McIlwraith and only 16 for Labour. The difference in members should be 2. It is 18. Therefore the difference in favour of the Government is nine times too much.

"Look at the same thing in another form:—

	M.	L.
Percentage of votes	51.4	48.6
Percentage of members	68	32

"Again, each Ministerialist represents 854 votes; each Labour man represents 1,713 votes. That is, on the vote basis, one Labour member is worth two Ministerialists."

I cannot say that I agree with some remarks made by the hon. member for Warwick, Mr. Morgan, with regard to Central separation. I am bound, though a Labour man, to support the statement made by the hon. member for Normanby. The hon. member for Warwick referred to two or three Central members as having been returned against Central separation, but so far as I am concerned and so far as the member for Leichhardt is concerned, we were both avowed separationists, and the only restriction was that we should first get electoral reform. I believe the hon. member for Barcoo is similarly situated as far as separation is concerned, and my opinion is that if the Labour members combine with the Central separationists, pure and simple, the Government will have no reason to smile over the matter. The feeling in favour of separation in Central Queensland is a great deal stronger than the gentlemen on the Treasury benches seem to imagine. I do not regard separation by itself as the be-all and make-all of Central Queensland, but if the Government proposals under the Land Grant Subsidy Act were likely to be carried into effect in the Central district, I think it would be the duty of the members representing Central Queensland to combine and save that portion of the colony at all events. I am sorry that no mention has been made of the goldfields. When the first Bank of Queensland failed it was just previous to the breaking out of Gympie, and the colony owes a debt of gratitude to the alluvial diggers of Gympie. What with quartz-reefing, deep sinking, and boring, the alluvial miners have been sadly neglected, and if the Secretary for Mines would grant a sum of money to assist alluvial working he would be doing a measure of justice to the alluvial diggers. With regard to the land, it is absolutely essential that something should be done for the smaller agriculturists and pastoralists. There should be a readjustment of the amount of revenue derived from them. Small graziers have to pay as much as £1 6s. 8d., whereas the large pastoralist, without any condition whatever, has only to pay up to about 10s. In some parts of the country, I understand, the divisional boards charge a road tax, the carriers being taxed according to the width of the tires of their waggons or according to the number of horses they drive. Some of them have to pay as much as £1 5s. a year, and yet they are not permitted to have a vote in the divisional board elections. That is contrary to the principle of no taxation

without representation. I am aware that a ratepayer and a taxpayer are two different things, and that if a vote is granted to a man who paid taxes on horses and bullocks you might also logically be called upon to give a vote to the man who paid taxes on goats; but an arrangement could be come to which would meet the difficulty. I am sorry no mention was made in the Speech of the large and increasing army of unemployed. The amount of destitution I have seen in Brisbane during the short time I have been here is deplorable, and in Rockhampton and other places a similar state of affairs exists. If the Government could pass some legislation to improve the condition of the large section of the community who are now living from hand to mouth, whilst another section are absolutely denied the right of earning a bare existence, they would earn the gratitude of the people. Unless the Government take some action, I am afraid we shall have some very serious trouble. Men driven to despair by hunger and necessitous circumstances are men who have very little respect for law, being practically outlawed and denied the opportunity of earning their living. It is a callousness which I scarcely believe the Government would be guilty of. I rather believe the omission of any reference to the matter is an oversight, and I hope that before long the Government will take it into consideration. I am sure their long experience and their ability in legislating for the colony is so great that if they attempt to solve this problem they can do so in a satisfactory manner.

Mr. FISHER: Hon. members seem to imagine that this debate is a kind of light entertainment at which young members are to talk, and it is a pity to disappoint them by remaining silent. I came here wishing to learn a great deal, and wishing, as you, Sir, said to His Excellency to-day, that the most favourable construction may be placed upon anything I say or do. At the same time, I am here believing in certain principles, and while I reciprocate the sentiment, and wish that good feeling may exist between hon. members, I consider it necessary that the whole truth should be told to the colony, so that some of the causes of trouble may be avoided, and a similar state of affairs may not again be brought about. I agree with the hon. member for Charters Towers that there was no great need for such an early summoning of Parliament. It is practically another injustice to the North. If the members who have been unable to be here in time had been Ministerial members, I do not think we should have been summoned so early; but because most of them are against the Government, Parliament has been called together now, so that the Government, with the following they have, can practically carry any measure they wish to pass in their own interests. I do not wish to impute motives, but that is fair criticism from a member of the Opposition in regard to the action of the Government. If they will not waive their right to proceed with the most important legislation that is likely to be brought forward during this session, I trust the Opposition will insist that the whole of the members have an opportunity of being present before such important measures are discussed. In reading the Governor's Speech there are many things which would leave a wrong impression on the mind of the ordinary reader. A great deal has been said, concealing much more. There are numerous paragraphs, but the measures of reform promised are practically nil. We are going to have administrative government. Well, I hope it will be of such a character as to benefit the whole of the people. During the little time I have been in the colony I have had my eyes open, and I say at once that I believe the Premier has

capacity for carrying on the Government, provided always that it is government for the benefit of the whole and not for a class. The party to which I belong has been accused of desiring class government. I say that it has been all class government ever since I have been in the colony, and we hope, by the help we shall be able to give by our criticism of the various measures brought forward, to secure more equitable legislation. The 1st paragraph of the Governor's Speech states that since the prorogation of the last Parliament there have been "extraordinary financial convulsions which have so disorganised all commercial and industrial operations" that it was considered advisable "that Parliament should be summoned at the earliest possible moment consistent with law." I have already offered my reasons for differing from the opinion expressed by the Government. I agree, however, with the statement that this is the "fittest time for Parliament to meet," because in the cool weather we can do more and better work. One of the things that have happened since the last Parliament is that the late Premier has left the arena of politics and accepted a high position in the colony. That might have been mentioned in the Speech, and also the fact that for his convenience the colony is suffering very great inconvenience in the shape of extra taxation. The 2nd paragraph states that a majority of the banks have shut up, and that a speedy remedy is necessary. However necessary it may be that the banks should be reopened, it would have been well if some Government supporters, or the Premier himself, had given some reason why there should have been such haste in patching up those banking institutions. I am quite sure that nothing will be said by us on this side which will have a tendency to create a panic, but at the same time it will be necessary that the whole truth, so far as it can be told without causing a panic, should be laid before the people of the colony and the world. The hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Kingsbury, stated that one of the causes of distrust on the part of depositors in the old country was the disastrous strikes which had occurred in the colony. I contend that the maritime and shearers' strikes were the outcome of a commercial conspiracy or compact to crush the working men of the colony.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. FISHER: I contend that it was so—that an effort was being made to render the working men of the colony as docile as the coloured gentlemen so highly spoken of by the hon. member for Bulimba. I know from my own experience that the commercial spirit of this commercial age causes commercial men to do things they would revolt from in another age. The present desperate state of affairs, even in the commercial world, cannot continue, and is not calculated to promote proper government. With the present combination of capital it will be impossible to bring about a satisfactory condition of things unless both capital and labour meet on equitable ground. If ever any newspaper published stupid, unnecessary, and insane writings with regard to the working men, the Brisbane papers should get the bun for it.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The *Worker*.

Mr. FISHER: I will present the hon. member with a copy of the *Worker*, and if it does not shine in comparison with the *Telegraph*, then I am no member of this House. One of the reasons for the distrust exhibited by Scottish depositors in Australian banks was that the Press of this colony made them believe that the men engaged in manual labour were practically revolutionary in their ideas, and were aiming at the destruction of property.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Hear, hear!

Mr. FISHER: These interjections are no new thing to me, they are rather amusing. I am well acquainted with the Colonial Secretary, and read a report in that very respectable newspaper, the *Courier*, of his speech at Nundah, in which he spoke of the "devilish and hellish designs" of a certain class of people in the colony. People who can conceive ideas like that, and express them to an audience in a calm spirit, are likely to impute to honest men motives that are beneath the dignity of a kanaka. The principal reason why the banks had to shut up was that depositors in the old country became suspicious, not of the working classes simply, though they were suspicious of them, but because they began to doubt the integrity of public men. They found that in the Southern colonies public men, who had occupied high positions, were implicated in financial concerns that could not be properly cleared up. Endeavours have been made to get a conviction against some of them, and some are now in Her Majesty's prisons. Against others it has been found impossible to get a true bill filed, and we have the spectacle in Victoria at the present moment of the Attorney-General endeavouring to make the colony believe that a certain person is not guilty, and the Solicitor-General declaring that he ought to be put on his trial. The people at a distance, who invested in all good faith, have lost their money, and a conviction cannot be got against the men who took it. In the case of the City of Glasgow Bank, some years ago, criminal proceedings were taken against the directors, and they were given lodgings for from three years to eight months at the Government expense; and I honestly believe that had the directors of the first bank which suspended here been brought to a criminal prosecution, we should not have heard of banks closing pending reconstruction. I give you that as my opinion as a new member, and you can take it for what it is worth. We are told in the 3rd paragraph of the Speech that the revenue has fallen short of the estimate. That is no new thing. The reason given this time is adverse seasons. I have read a good many of these Speeches, and they have all had the same burden; now it is a drought, then a flood, and then a commercial disaster. But I have always understood that the last three seasons have been the most prosperous the colony has ever known. We find also that retrenchment and economy are necessary. I agree with that, and I would suggest in the first instance that the military and naval vote, which runs up to £108,000, should be cut down to at least £50,000. I was in the Defence Force once myself, and my first experience was travelling up the Mary River on a Sunday morning, and then being commanded to march where a glass of beer was served out to each man. I am a teetotaler; I do not care who knows it. I protested against being marched out on a Sunday morning, and ordered about by nonentities who have never studied either good manners or military tactics, and I wrote a letter to the Press about it and tendered my resignation, although I was told that to write a letter to the Press was against all the rules of discipline. I told the electors of Gympie that I should advocate the reduction of the Defence Force vote by one-half. They have endorsed that proposition, and it is for the House to say how much weight they will give to that expression of opinion. I hope it will be one of the first items of economy that will be touched, and that hon. members will remember that it is not possible to give thousands to persons who are in high offices, and expect to do justice to those who are in the lower branches of the service. I hope the Government will start at the top, and that when they come down to the men earning £200 a year they will stop, because such a person

gives to the revenue through Customs from £16 to £20 a year, and needs all the rest of his money to keep his house together; whereas the person who is receiving three, four, five, or six times that amount needs someone to look after him, and is, generally speaking, useless to the State. I hope that, instead of beginning at the lowest and going upwards, the Government will begin at the top and go downwards until they come to a certain point, when they will cease altogether. That is the kind of economy that the colony at the present time expects at the hands of any Ministry, whether led by Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, or a Labour leader, or any other person. I agree with the latter part of the paragraph, which says that an endeavour will be made to obtain approval of measures calculated to encourage producers, and settle them permanently upon the soil. That is our platform; and as it has already been explained by members of the party, I will not take up your time upon it. In the 5th paragraph we are informed that owing mainly to hostile agitation against the land-grant principle no offers have yet been made for the construction of railways upon that principle. It is needless to state that we, as a party, are entirely against that principle. If we could convince ourselves, or if the Government could convince us, that their scheme, which was so much modified during the elections, is likely, if acted upon, to benefit the country, they would receive my support at least. But I have yet to hear of any syndicate that has fought for the good of the whole colony. My experience of syndicates has been that they put before ignorant people, or before people without the means of knowing the real truth, a false issue and practically receive their money under false pretences. I have seen certain placards of a large river which was only an old ditch, and showing steamers lying at ports where there were no houses. People were asked to go in for this thing as a good thing for the colony, and the money was received upon certain promises, but the fulfilment is not yet. Syndicates running a speculative game cannot bring any colony out of the condition Queensland is in at present. The Government tell us they have had no offers yet, and though I am not particularly anxious to know whether they have or not, I know the hon. member at the head of the Government is not a man to tell you what he has until the proper time has arrived. At the proper moment and when the time is suitable these matters may be brought on, and we shall be prepared for every emergency and watch them as closely as possible. A very remarkable feature in connection with this is, that during the elections, as the hon. member for Maryborough has said, the Act was very much modified, and really we are hearing so much about Acts just now that they appear to be like the Scriptures—you can prove anything you wish from them. The Government have very conveniently discovered an Act to relieve the pressure at Townsville, and they may find out other Acts to carry out a simple purpose where there is likely to be strong opposition to prevent it. There are plenty of Acts on the statute-book not repealed which hon. members would be astonished to hear of, and there are certain Acts which are not likely to be brought to light, and which I hope will never be brought to light; but which, for all that, are still in existence. I trust we will have a revision in this connection, and that these matters will be dealt with on more democratic lines. I will not go further into the paragraph dealing with federation than to say that I advocated federation at my meetings. I am not a native, but I am democratic, and probably republican in principle, and I would like to see a growing federation brought about by the unity

of will of the people of Australia combined for the common good and not for speculative purposes. I hope our representatives will do what they can to cultivate a spirit of federation in Australia. The next paragraph recognises the liberality of our fellow-countrymen in all parts of the world in sending contributions for the relief of distress from the effects of the floods, and that is a very proper paragraph to put in at this time. The first thing the Government should do is to release the money sent here for the relief of distress and now held in one of the banks closed for reconstruction. That is one of the most villainous things that could happen in any country, and the money subscribed for charitable purposes should have been put in a safe place and kept safely from all other things. The sympathy of the people should not be interfered with, nor should their contributions be withheld from those who have suffered for one moment longer than is possible. I regret that the spontaneous outburst of fellow-feeling should be minimised by the action of certain banking institutions in this colony. The 8th paragraph tells us about the sugar industry and the kanaka labour, about which the hon. member for Bulimba was so emphatic. It seems to me that hon. gentlemen opposite think it would be a very good thing if three parts of this colony were populated by Polynesians.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. FISHER: To put it in another way, they say that as many more as could conveniently come would be acceptable and beneficial to the colony. On that question I differ from them; and I may say that at the time the Polynesian labour traffic was extended the sugar industry, so far as the returns go, was in a more prosperous condition than it ever was before in this colony.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES AND WORKS (Hon. R. Philp): You are mistaken altogether.

Mr. FISHER: I challenge the hon. gentleman to produce the returns.

Mr. CHATAWAY: No; the returns were best in 1884.

Mr. FISHER: I have not the returns by me, and did not intend to speak upon the matter, and I accept the hon. gentleman's statement in the meantime. A great deal has been said about the frozen meat industry, and we have been told that it is going to bring the colony out of its difficulties. I should be glad to think that that was so. At least, it is one industry that has received the help of the whole of the electors of Queensland. Without consulting them, the last Government thought proper to lend a meat preserving company £12,000 on second mortgage; that act has a sort of socialistic tendency that I do not altogether disagree with, but I expect the same consideration for any other industry.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You subscribe your own funds and they will be lent to you.

Mr. FISHER: I refer to the question for the reason that application may be made to the Colonial Treasurer from other sources for a similar loan.

The PREMIER: Out of their own funds?

Mr. DALRYMPLE: By the people who subscribed the money.

Mr. FISHER: This money was taken out of the Brands Funds.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: No.

Mr. FISHER: Well, it was taken out of the consolidated revenue of the colony.

Mr. SMYTH: That shows your ignorance.

Mr. FISHER: It was got out of money in the hands of the Colonial Treasurer of this colony, and money put into the hands of the Treasurer is public money.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: What about trust accounts in the banks?

Mr. FISHER: The trust accounts are not trustworthy at present. At all events, if what hon. members say is correct, if the Treasurer has certain funds that we can call upon, it will help us considerably. We intend to apply for a loan, and will make application for his kind assistance. The latter part of the speech speaks of the gold-mining enterprise, and as that has been referred to by the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dunsford, I will simply say that I regret that there is no mention of a Mining or Private Property Bill. I think if you wanted to bring the colony out of its present condition that would help it considerably.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. Tozer): Where do you want it?

Mr. FISHER: On Gympie.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is not a single acre sold on Gympie that is auriferous.

Mr. FISHER: There are three private properties that have been worked there during the last few years.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Where?

Mr. FISHER: Next to Menzie's.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Not an ounce of gold has been got from there for the last twenty-five years.

Mr. FISHER: If Mount Morgan had not been prospected there would not have been an ounce of gold got there either. Do hon. members expect gold to rush out of the ground to passers-by? You have to search for it on private property as well as anywhere else; and it is difficult for a man to get on to private property and mine without considerable expense. I will not trespass further on the time of the House. Some hon. members seem to get angry, and others seem to be much amused. I thought this was a kind of light entertainment, and that it would be a fine opportunity for the hon. member for Burke to see the kind of men he was looking after. I will only say further that I hope everything that is to be done will be done in a proper manner. If we differ widely, I hope we will differ like men, and I hope none of the low, sneaking, and outrageous tactics will be used in this House that were used towards the late member, Mr. Glassey.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Never.

Mr. FISHER: One thing I regret having been omitted from the Speech, and that is electoral reform. The first thing that would have a tendency to consolidate the whole of the people would be to give them equal electoral rights. In the present state of democratic feeling you will never reach the hearts of the people or govern them properly until you enfranchise men and not property. The Premier has said that one man one vote is a long way off. I hope he will live to see one man one vote, and also be able to take his wife with him, so that she should have a vote too. I believe every man and woman should have a vote, and that the majority cast by both sexes should declare the policy of the country. When that comes about, I believe we shall have reached a stage that will enable us to evolve from the present social state a system that is likely to benefit the whole of humanity, and not a portion or class of it only. Those are the views I hold. If they do not coincide with the

views of men of more experience, all I can say is that I have a duty to perform to myself and to the country. I expressed those views to my constituents, and they endorsed them, and I trust I shall live to see, during this Parliament, the enactment of a law providing at least for one male person one vote, if females are not enfranchised also.

Mr. STEVENS: I quite agree with some hon. members who have spoken with regard to the opening of Parliament before the remainder of their friends have the opportunity of coming here; at the same time I think they overlook a matter of much greater importance—that is, the present financial state of the colony. The Government have power to call the House together in case of emergency, and no more emergent case in the history of the colony has ever occurred than exists at the present time. Some hon. members have complained of exemptions being granted to mines, and the labour conditions dispensed with. I feel assured that if the mine-owners had not known that it was intended to call Parliament together they would have asked for a much longer term of exemption, which would have meant that the men would have been kept out of work for a longer time. If the Government had not called Parliament together as they have done they would have shown a very great want of duty. They would not have been in touch with the colony. A large majority of the electors will, I am sure, thoroughly approve of what the Government have done. We must have immediate relief, which can only be given through Parliament, and therefore the Government are thoroughly justified in calling Parliament together. With regard to the Speech, I think it is one of the most workman-like and promising I have seen brought down yet. There is not a long list of Bills with which we are threatened. Everything shows that the Government intend to do work, and do it as quickly as possible, and although it is necessary that Parliament should meet now and deal with subjects of great interest, it is also necessary that hon. members should be allowed to get back to their business as soon as possible, so that they may be able to get on a better footing than at present. The paragraphs relating to retrenchment and to land-grant railways are among the most important in the Speech, and both will command my strongest support. Land-grant railways will be the quickest means of relieving the present distress, and I know of no other means by which work can be found for a large number of men. For that reason alone the principle ought to receive support. With regard to retrenchment, there is not the least doubt that it is absolutely necessary. The country has demanded it with no uncertain voice, and no Government can exist long that does not enter into some scheme of it. Hon. members hope that the Government will commence at the highest salaries and work down; and I do not think there is the least chance of the matter being dealt with in any other way. The Defence Force expenditure can be considerably reduced—perhaps by one-half or more. It may be said we are as much in need now of defence as when the colony was more prosperous, and that is a fair argument; but we must cut our coat according to our cloth, and can afford to risk an attack for a little while. It is not as if we were depriving ourselves of the services of the men, because they can be called together again at short notice, and it will be some time before they have lost the benefit of the drilling they have received. I intended to speak upon other subjects; but there is an evident desire to close the debate so that the House can get to work on those subjects which are of such

vital importance just now. I shall reserve my right to speak upon them on a future occasion. I hope the Government will deal with the financial subjects at the very earliest date, because it requires very little argument to show that they are of the greatest consequence now, and unless they are settled there is very little chance of the colony pulling itself round in the near future.

The HON. G. THORN: I have only a few words to say, and first of all I notice that the hon. member for Toowoomba has already trotted out his old hobby of placing the Darling Downs above every other place in the colony, and the hon. member for Cunningham followed him. They would have us believe that the Downs is the only place in which agricultural produce can be raised; but I can tell them that in the little electorate I represent there is more wealth from agricultural products than in the whole of the Downs. The hon. member for Normanby referred to the question of separation; but I have heard no talk of separation lately, except from a few shopkeepers in Rockhampton, and I can tell the hon. member that the election for Port Curtis was not decided on the separation ticket. The hon. member for Port Curtis was elected by a few labour and railway votes which gave him the preponderance. I am astonished that such a high-minded gentleman as the hon. member for Normanby should talk about separation at this time. We should stick together and get out of our troubles, instead of thinking about dividing our territory now. I give the Government credit for very good intentions, and if there is one man more than another who is competent to get us out of our financial troubles it is the present Premier. I have every confidence in him, and if he is allowed a free hand there will be a revival of commercial industry and prosperity far sooner than people imagine. But there is one paragraph I am not pleased with. It was understood that there is to be no more taxation; but it appears that there is to be after all. One way in which we might raise more money is by repealing the last remaining part of the Land Act of 1884, and abolishing grazing farms. The Government are anxious to sell land, but it is not to be supposed that people will buy land at 10s. per acre when they can get it at 2s. 6d. or 3s. per acre. We have had a shrinkage in the Treasury ever since that Act passed. The very next year, in spite of a lavish loan expenditure, the revenue went down, and it is now next to nothing. That Act has been badly administered, and has caused a loss to the country of between £200,000 and £300,000 to my knowledge. I would put it to the Premier whether it would not be advisable to abolish the grazing farm clauses. We would then have a revival of public works, and unless there is some alteration in that direction we shall never have an elastic revenue. We must get more revenue from our land, unless we are to have an income tax; and this is not the time to bring in such a tax. I have one more plan—one which I believe the people of the colony would endorse, a plan that would put the revenue up by leaps and bounds—but I am not going to give it to the House to-night. With regard to federation, though I am an Australian, I do not think this colony is fit for federation at the present time. The basis of federation must be intercolonial freetrade, and that would be the death knell of our great farming industry. I can be no party to that, but I would approve of federation for defence purposes. In conclusion, I may say that I shall give my support to the leader of the Government, having every confidence in his ability and integrity, and believing that he will very soon bring the colony into a prosperous condition if he is allowed a free hand.

Mr. DAWSON: Every member who has spoken on the other side has been listened to with rapt attention by the Labour party, but I regret to say that when our leader stood up this afternoon there was an immediate rush outside; and members opposite carried on a conversation in a manner that to me, as a new member, appeared rather scandalous. There seems to be a great difference between the courtesy of common people outside and the courtesy extended by gentlemen inside Parliament. The hon. member for Lockyer stated that the present Ministry was a great deal better than the last. To my mind the present Ministry is similar to the last; but the gentleman who shared the responsibility in the last Ministry with Sir. T. McIlwraith is not here; so that the statement is a very poor compliment to him. He also stated that the consumptive power of the people was lessened, but that statement I distinctly deny. I hold that the consumptive power is as great now as it was before, only the articles required for consumption are locked in cellars and on shelves belonging to one portion of the community. We were told also that the result of the strikes has been disastrous to the colony. I can claim that the two strikes mentioned turned the thoughts of the workers in the direction of political action, and that is the chief cause of the Labour party being represented in this House. The junior member for North Brisbane expressed the hope that the men who were previously opposed to land-grant railways now intended to support them. On the other hand, I sincerely hope that no member who was returned to oppose land-grant railways will be base and treacherous enough to betray his constituents. The hon. member wound up by saying, in effect, that there was no necessity for Opposition members, independent members, or Labour members while the present Ministry held office. I may be wrong, but I took that as a veiled threat, that nothing to which independent members, Opposition members, or the Labour party aspired would be conceded by the Ministry. The hon. member for Normanby tendered us some very good advice to the effect that he sincerely hoped the working men of the colony would receive the fruits of their labour; and I can assure him that all the Labour party is aspiring to is simply that they shall receive the fruits of their labour—that if a man earns 1s. he shall receive 1s., and if he earns nothing he shall get nothing in return. The hon. member also stated that we were all working men, and was applauded by members on that side; but before concluding he looked over here and expressed the hope that the gentlemen representing labour intended to do all they could for the benefit of the colony, implying that there are certain members representing labour, and certain members representing those who do not labour. If that is so, I thank the hon. gentleman for his frankness, though I cannot admire his position. The hon. member who has just sat down pointed out that if a certain valuable suggestion he had in his mind, but which he would not make public, were only adopted, there would be no necessity for Labour members. I can assure him that he need not fear the Labour party; that there is no necessity for him to have a body-guard. Another hon. member, notwithstanding all our protests against the hasty manner in which Parliament has been called together, persisted that the Government have done the correct thing; but I cannot help remarking the fact that none of the legal gentlemen on the other side have attempted to give the reason for what has been done. The hon. member for Burke entered his protest

previous to your election, Mr. Speaker, and he was told that the Governor's Speech would give the reason why Parliament was summoned so early. I presume that part of the Speech which refers to the "extraordinary financial convulsions which have disorganised all commercial and industrial operations" being the cause of our meeting now is what was meant. I am of opinion that it is really not consistent with law, as is claimed in the Speech. In the Constitution Act of 1867 there was a clause which provided against delays by floods and other accidents, and enacted that Parliament could meet provided there were not more than five writs out. I am also aware that in the Telegraphic Messages Principal Act power was given to send in the writs by wire, but I think that that was also in case of similar accidents. In the present instance it is utterly impossible for several members to be here, and it is not fair in the Government to summon us at such an early date without having given notice to the constituencies, and giving their representatives an opportunity of being present. The Speech also states that although we have been specially summoned to meet an emergency, the Government consider the present period of the year the fittest time for Parliament to meet. I cannot allow such a thing to go unchallenged, because a designing, unscrupulous Government would then have power, under any circumstances, to issue the writs in such a way that, while not more than five writs would be out, Parliament might be called together at once and a large number of members might be unable to get here in time. In common with the hon. member for Gympie, I regret that the Government have not made any reference to the unemployed in the different centres of population, a question which deserves our earnest and speedy attention. I can offer a suggestion whereby the Government will be able to start public works and relieve some of the distress. The Queensland National Bank owes the Government a substantial sum, and it has a certain amount of coin on its premises. I am led to believe that the Government have the right to compel the bank, at any time, to pay over that coin in payment of their debt, just as I am given to understand the Government compelled the Australian Joint Stock Bank to pay back some £75,000 after it had suspended, and in the same way as the Government of New South Wales forced the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney to pay them over £300,000. I deny that the Government have been returned distinctly as a party in favour of the construction of railways on the land-grant principle. The Government have really been returned through a financial scare, the people being afraid that if they were not returned financial ruin would ensue.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. DAWSON: Some hon. members ejaculate "Hear, hear!" as much as to say that the contention is right, that the Government have been returned to power on account of the fear of financial ruin, and not as the exponents of land-grant railways. I am very glad that members on the other side recognise that fact, because I am certain that if a ballot were taken on the question of constructing railways by means of land grants there would be a decisive majority against it. On the subject of federation I have very decided opinions. The Government of a country exercise certain powers by delegation, though they often usurp other powers. The various Governments of Queensland have been delegated to look after the affairs of the colony; in no single instance have they been delegated to interfere in federation, and to do so would simply be usurpation. Another

paragraph of the Speech states that "gold-mining enterprise is also in an advancing condition, and I am glad to observe that the output has been steadily maintained." I refer to that, because a member behind me stated that applications had been made by mine-owners for exemption. I am not aware that any portion of the mine-owners of Charters Towers have made any such application, and I may state that when it was intimated that a month's exemption was going to be granted indiscriminately to non-paying and dividend-paying mines the workmen invited the employers to confer with them in public meeting, so that some arrangement might be come to by which the mines could be worked with as little inconvenience as possible. The men attended, but the employers did not. Before sitting down I would like to emphasise the remarks of the hon. member for Burke in reference to the position of the Labour party in this House. Though in opposition, it does not follow that we are to oppose every measure introduced by the Government. We are sitting here because we hold political opinions opposed to those enunciated by the Government, but will support any measure that is for the benefit of the people as a whole, no matter from what part of the House it may come. We are all equally desirous to do the best we can for the people of the colony; and whatever opposition may be offered to the Government, whatever contention may be raised, whatever bitterness may be felt during the heat of debate, we sincerely hope that whatever measures are passed may be for the welfare of the people and add to the greatness of Queensland.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I just want to correct the hon. member who has just sat down in reference to his observations concerning the Mines Department. I have been acting Secretary for Mines during the last month; and I can inform him that all that was done at the time he referred to was that, upon certain representations being made to me by various wardens that certain properties in this colony were liable to be forfeited by reason of the owners not being able to work them in consequence of the banks having suspended payment, I gave directions to the wardens to grant a month's exemption, without fee, in cases where there were claims, and that upon all goldfields where leases were held they should exercise their own discretion. Since that time I have only passed three exemptions for Charters Towers, each for a very short period, none for Gympie, and one, I think, for Croydon. The practical result of that instruction, therefore, is that persons who had properties at Croydon, and who were not able to work them, through their money being locked up in the banks, had their claims protected from the operations of jumpers during the present crisis.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: I was very glad to hear the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dawson, give credit to hon. members generally, if I understood him correctly, for having sincerely the good of the colony at heart. It is possible—I may say probable—that many hon. members on the other side of the House hold what we may fairly call opposite opinions to other hon. members. For my part, I can say—and I believe I am speaking for the majority, if not for every man in the House—that, whatever roads we may choose to pursue, we all have the same goal in view. The hon. member spoke of the Labour party. Those men distinctly profess to be the representatives of a class. We do not profess to be the representatives of a class, but to represent the best interests of every man in the colony.

That is our claim, and we propose to act upon it. I have been in the House a few years, and I have noticed at the beginning of every session that members on one side—that is the side on which Ministers do not sit—profess to be intensely dissatisfied with the Opening Speech. We know they are dissatisfied, and really it matters very little what reasons they give. It is quite sufficient to understand that the hon. members who object sit on the other side. If they happened, by any accident, to come over to this side of the House it is exceedingly probable that those objections would not occur to them, or that if they did they would be repressed. With regard to the objections which have been made to the House being called together early, if the House had not been called together early those same hon. members would have said, "Why, when this crisis is at hand, refuse to accept the collective wisdom of the people? You delay; you shilly-shally; you would not call the great heart of the people to your assistance." But, the Government, being alive to the critical position of affairs in the colony, have called together the Parliament to assist them. It is quite true that some few members are left out, but some new members seem not to be aware that for the first few days of every session the House is practically opened to let off steam. By-and-by we shall settle down to business, and by that time almost every member who has been elected will be in his place in the House. With regard to the objections which have been taken as to the legality of the constitution of the House at present, because two or three members are not here, it has been admitted by the hon. member for Charters Towers that it is consistent with law. If so, it is a legally-constituted House, and for further information on the subject I will refer the hon. member to the Attorney-General. With regard to the objection of one hon. member to the Defence Force, it seemed to arise from the fact that he was offered some rather indifferent beer on a Sunday morning. The question of one man one vote is a very wide one, and I do not propose to debate it to-night. We have been told by one member—and that he is a mining member makes it the more extraordinary—that the cure for the present distress is that no gold should go out of the country. But if gold is not to go out of the colony what, in the name of goodness, would become of Charters Towers? It is only because gold goes out of the colony, and is bought and paid for, that the gold is valuable. Unless we dress in gold, and enlarge those breastpins which some hon. members sport to an alarming size, of what value would it be? We cannot eat it or drink it, and as to the hon. member who objects to gold going out of the colony, I am afraid that if he could have his way he would have to retire from public life at the next general election for endeavouring to ruin his own constituency. I am exceedingly glad to see the representatives of labour here, for this reason: Certain opinions are being spread throughout the colony which are being accepted by people who are either thoughtless, or who have not the time, or perhaps the capacity, to deal with them. Statements are made, which are purely one-sided, to people who are not able to judge. Let them come into this House, and we will deal with all those questions in due course. If I do not hold the views which I call Bellamistic, or anarchical—I am sure they are not truly social—it is because I know that the balance of evidence is, in my opinion, against them, and I am prepared to maintain it, and to prove the truth that is in me. With regard to those opinions that are now being disseminated so widely, it is absurd to even imagine that they

arenew. Eight hundred years ago, before William the Conqueror had overcome the Saxons, they were not only promulgated by a Chinaman, but were acted upon, and the result in every instance was a total and absolute failure. The Address has been, very naturally, as I said, objected to, as would any other Address that the Premier could frame. Hon. members on that side are bound to justify their position, and if they could not find fault in even a faultless Address, they would be unfit to be entrusted with the positions they occupy. Whether the remedies which have yet to be disclosed are likely to be successful or not I do not know. Whether I will approve of the schemes the Government may have I do not know. If I do not believe that on the whole they will be for the good of the community, I shall not approve of them. But I say it was distinctly, in my opinion, a right and proper thing to bring matters which were of importance before the country by summoning the House together. I will say that I have somewhat drifted into this position, because there is really such a large majority for the Government that the seat I was wont to occupy not being protected, and being without any exemption whatever, has been jumped. I happen now to be behind the Ministry, and if their proposals are, as I hope they may be, satisfactory, I shall support them. I believe that on the whole the Speech is a wise one. It does not indulge in wild promises. It does not promise a large amount of legislation. For my part I have had plenty of legislation, and the legislation with which I have been familiar has been comprised in a general average output of about forty Acts of Parliament per session. I do not know that they have been particularly beneficial except, perhaps, to the legal profession. I see my hon. friend in front is squirming under the statement, and I will say that possibly some of them may have been beneficial to the public. I say that undoubtedly in the present crisis it is more necessary for us to deal with thoroughly practical problems than to attend to other matters which, however important, may be left to stand over for a time; and I am satisfied with the Governor's Address, occupying the position I do at present.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER: I have to inform the House that His Excellency has intimated that he will be pleased to receive the Address in Reply on Tuesday next at half-past 3 o'clock.

On the motion of the PREMIER, His Excellency's Opening Speech was ordered to be taken into consideration at the next sitting of the House.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes past 10 o'clock until Tuesday next.