

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 13 MAY 1879

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QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

SECOND SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT,

APPOINTED TO MEET

AT BRISBANE, ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF MAY, IN THE FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1879.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 13 May, 1879.

Opening of Parliament.—Changes during the Recess.—Members Sworn.—Elections and Qualifications Committee.—Election Petition.—Bill *pro forma*.—The Opening Speech.—Address in Reply to Opening Speech.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

THE House met at five minutes to 12 o'clock.

Shortly after 12 o'clock, a message was conveyed by the Usher of the Black Rod that His Excellency the Governor requested the attendance of the Speaker and honourable members of the Legislative Assembly in the Council Chamber.

THE SPEAKER, accompanied by honourable members of the Legislative Assembly, proceeded to the Legislative Council, and, having heard the Address of His Excellency the Governor, returned to their own Chamber.

CHANGES DURING THE RECESS.

THE SPEAKER: I have the honour to report that, in pursuance of resolutions of the House of date the 21st of January last, I issued my writs for the election of members for the electoral districts of Mulgrave, North Brisbane, Aubigny, and Ipswich respectively, and that such writs have been duly returned with certificates endorsed thereon of the election of the Honourable Thomas McIlwraith, Esquire; the Honourable Arthur Hunter Palmer, Esquire; the Honourable Patrick Perkins, Esquire; and the Honourable John MalbonThompson. I have further to report that since the termination of the last session the following vacancies have occurred in the House, viz. :—

1. By the resignation of John Deane, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Townsville.

2. By the acceptance of an office of profit under the Crown by William Lambert Fowles, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Clermont.

3. By the resignation of William Sheffield Paul, Esquire, one of the members for the electoral district of Leichhardt.

4. By the resignation of the Honourable Joshua Peter Bell, member for the electoral district of Northern Downs.

That upon the occurrence of each of the said vacancies I issued my writ for the election of a member to fill the same; and that such writs have been duly returned to me with certificates respectively endorsed thereon of the election of the following gentlemen, viz. :—

1. The Honourable John Murtagh Macrossan, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Townsville.

2. Henry Weld-Blundell, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Clermont.

3. John Macfarlane, Esquire, as one of the members for the electoral district of Leichhardt.

4. The Honourable George Thorn, as member for the electoral district of Northern Downs.

MEMBERS SWORN.

The following members were presented and sworn, and signed the roll :—

The Honourable Thomas McIlwraith, Esquire (Premier and Colonial Treasurer), Mulgrave; the Honourable Arthur Hunter Palmer, Esquire (Colonial Secretary), North Brisbane; the Honourable Patrick Perkins, Esquire (Secretary for Public Lands), Aubigny; the Honourable John Murtagh Macrossan, Esquire (Secretary for Public Works and Mines), Townsville; John Macfarlane, Leichhardt; Henry Weld-Blundell, Clermont; the Honourable George Thorn, Esquire, Northern Downs.

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes past 12 until half-past 3 o'clock.

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

ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE.

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

ELECTION PETITION.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) moved—

That the petition of William Graham against the election and return of William Miles and Francis Kates, for the electoral district of Darling Downs, presented to this House, and by the House referred to the Committee of Elections and Qualifications, on the 21st January last, not having been reported upon by the said committee, be referred to the Committee of Elections and Qualifications of the present session.

Question put and passed.

BILL PRO FORMA.

The PREMIER presented a Bill relating to Matrimonial Causes, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed.

THE OPENING SPEECH.

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

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

“1. I have much pleasure in again meeting you, and, notwithstanding the delay consequent on the change of my Advisers, in seeking your aid in the legislation of the colony at about the usual time of the year.

“2. The Local Government Act of 1878 has been sufficiently long in operation to show that, whatever its value as an amendment of the Municipal Laws, its principles will not be availed of voluntarily by any district while hope remains of local works being undertaken by the central authorities. You will therefore be asked to sanction the necessary steps for relieving the Government of the colony from its responsibilities in connection with purely local affairs. To further facilitate the general adoption of local government, my Ministers will initiate legislation providing machinery less

cumbrous and better adapted to the circumstances of sparsely populated districts than is supplied by the Act at present in force.

“3. The Royal Commission appointed to investigate the working of the Real Property Office have concluded their labours. Their report and evidence, together with the departmental arrangements approved and carried out by the Government, will be submitted for your consideration.

“4. In December last, my late Advisers gave notice to the Australasian Steam Navigation Company of the termination, on 30th June proximo, of their contract for the conveyance of coastwise mails. They also invited tenders for a new contract, subject to the condition that no Asiatic or Polynesian seaman or fireman should be employed in the service. In reply, the only tenders received were from the Company now performing the service, and these involved a subsidy of at least £2,320 in excess of the amount now paid. My Ministers declined to enter into a new contract on the terms demanded; and a subsequent offer by the Government to withdraw the notice of cancellation, and carry out the existing contract, was rejected by the Company.

“5. It has become clear to my Advisers that in some parts of the colony reasonable facilities for settlement have not been afforded by the lands already thrown open for selection. For the purpose of meeting the demand which has arisen contiguous to the Central Railway line and elsewhere, schedules of lands proposed to be resumed will be laid before you on an early date.

“6. Within the last two years several exchanges have taken place between the Government and certain landowners, chiefly in the Darling Downs district. The lands thus acquired for the public, my Ministers consider, should be alienated on conditions differing from those imposed in the case of other Crown lands. To secure the *bond fide* settlement upon and the actual farming of all the areas so acquired, a Bill will be shortly submitted for your approval.

“7. My Ministers have given serious attention to the subject of Immigration from the United Kingdom and the continent of Europe. The general character of the immigration, and the disproportionate number of persons landed here during the hottest months of the year, made radical changes necessary in the conduct of the department. At the same time, the lessened demand for labour in consequence of the late disastrous droughts, the depreciated value of pastoral products, the diminished yield of our gold-fields, and the decreased returns from our other mineral districts through

the low prices ruling for metals, made it evident that immigration on the scale recently carried out ought not for the present to be continued. In February, therefore, my Ministers instructed the Agent-General to suspend emigration until the receipt of further advices, and they intend that, when resumed, it shall be conducted under more effective supervision.

"8. The agreement with the Union Bank of Australia expiring in March last, tenders were invited from the several banking institutions for the conduct of the Government account. In reply, two tenders only were received, and the Queensland National Bank submitting terms more favourable than those previously obtained, as well as better than those offered by the other tenderer, the proposal of the former was accepted.

"9. When Parliament last met, in January, no action had been taken by the then Government to put into operation the provisions of 'the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act of 1876.' The leases having all expired in December last, my present Advisers took immediate steps to offer the sale of new leases by auction, in accordance with the law. The result was in every respect unsatisfactory. A Bill will be shortly introduced making other provisions for leasing these runs.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:—

"10. The Estimates for the latter half of the present financial year, prepared on the same scale as those already voted by Parliament, will be laid before you.

"11. The revenue anticipated by the late Government will not be realised; and a considerable deficit on the year's account will be the result. For this deficit you will require to make provision, as well as for the ordinary annual expenditure. The Estimates for the approaching financial year have been framed with the strictest economy, to meet the present failing revenue. By removing from the Central Government certain local responsibilities, by carefully supervising the public disbursements, by fostering extended settlement on the land, and by diverting back into the Consolidated Revenue certain funds appropriated to other purposes by the Railway Reserves Act, my Advisers believe that the necessity for increased taxation through the Customs—already heavier here than in any other Australian colony—will be rendered unnecessary.

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

"12. My Ministers are of opinion that the settlement of population and the increase

of land revenue depend upon the speedy extension of our facilities for internal communication. They are also of opinion that the slow progress of harbour improvements hitherto has deprived the colony of much of the advantage which ought to have been derived from the sums from time to time expended. You will therefore be asked to make provision, by loan, for carrying on these and other public undertakings with vigour. Full details of the works requiring Parliamentary sanction will in due course be submitted for your consideration.

"13. The present mode of supplying the capital and its suburbs with water has proved totally inadequate for their increasing population. An engineer of experience has therefore been instructed by my Government to collect data, and report on the best means of augmenting the supply and improving the quality of this necessary of life. The question of water supply, as affecting other centres of population in the colony, will also be submitted for your consideration.

"14. Important measures for the following purposes, namely:—To amend the electoral law; to provide for the regulation and inspection of mines and collieries; to constitute separate financial districts; to provide for the better regulation of the Civil Service; to make better provision for the granting of publicans' licenses; to provide for the sale of food and drugs in a pure state; to impose duties on the succession to real property; to regulate the storage and sale of mineral oils; to prevent the influx of foreign and other criminals; and other measures, will be submitted for your consideration during the session.

"15. The depression in commerce and manufacturing industry which prevails in Europe having re-acted upon this colony, has aggravated the losses suffered by our producers through the late disastrous seasons, and must force upon us economy, personal as well as national. Happily, the drought has at length everywhere broken up. In our pastoral and agricultural districts scarcity has been succeeded by abundance; and I trust that, when duty again calls me to this Chamber, it will be my privilege to congratulate you on the return of that prosperity which this richly-endowed colony is certainly destined to enjoy."

ADDRESS IN REPLY TO OPENING SPEECH.

MR. WELD-BLUNDELL moved—

That a Select Committee be appointed to prepare an Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor; that such committee consist of Messrs. Weld-Blundell, Hamilton, Cooper, McIlwraith, and Macrossan.

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

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

“MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

“1. 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 person and government of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank your Excellency for the Speech with which you have opened the session.

“2. We shall give our most serious consideration to the various questions submitted by your Excellency; and we trust that our labours may result in promoting the permanent well-being of the general interests of the colony.”

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL then moved, that the Address, as read, be adopted. He said that the duty now devolved upon him to bring forward a motion in reply to the Speech from the Crown. He felt that had the matter been left to him he should have referred this important matter to some one else who might be better qualified to carry it through. He felt this the more as he had not only the difficulty resulting from his first arrival as a representative in the House to encounter—feeling some diffidence in expressing his views and laying down his principles and in advocating those of the Government—but more especially that he was quite unacquainted with the forms and regulations of the House. He was compelled, therefore, to ask for the leniency and clemency of the House, and trusted honourable members would show him due patience should he not comply with the forms of the House. The first question of importance which appeared upon the Address was the matter contained under the heading 2, having reference to the Local Government Act of 1878, and local government generally. He must express his exceeding satisfaction that the Government had come forward and laid down their views on this most important question, which was not solely one having reference to municipal action, but there was this great question involved in it—whether it was better for the colony that we should govern ourselves or be governed by others, wherever it was possible—whether those best acquainted with local wants should leave the conduct and administration of those wants

in the hands of persons hundreds of miles away, or attend to them themselves. Further than that, there was another question involved—namely, that the principle of applying the system of representation to all our local wants fell in with and was similar to the institutions we have. That was to say that we, as a colony, coming from the mother country, where they appreciated rightly representative institutions, thoroughly believed in the necessity for carrying out and attending to our own public wants and requirements. This had been done in public matters in the general government of the colony, through institutions which had produced our present Parliament; but he considered that it was imperative they should go further than this and carry out the same principle in other public matters, and also in road boards, schools, and even in gold-mining. On the other hand, there were many people who might maintain that it would be better to revert to the old principle of a Crown colony, but those were people who did not appreciate the further development of local and representative institutions. As it was generally conceded that where these representative institutions did not prevail there was considerable trouble and embarrassment, he believed that there was a necessity for them generally. In Queensland we had a partial form of paternal Government. A person might travel through various parts of the colony, and would hear complaints about bad roads or other local matters; but the only way in which they were referred to was—why did not the Government do this or do that or the other, instead of applying themselves to their own interests and getting what was necessary done. He had been a resident of Western Australia at a time when they had no municipal institutions, and no forms of government such as men who lived in other colonies were accustomed to, and any visitor would at once be struck by the dulness and lethargy of the people on all public matters; and not only in public matters, but equally in private. There was none of that interest which, in America, where the smallest questions were referred to local bodies, had tended to raise up the most intelligent body of working men which could be found in any part of the world, and which, he believed, was in a large measure owing to the class being interested in the points at issue, and that they had to test them by vote. A further point in connection with these local institutions was the doing away with the immense patronage which Governments necessarily had. There could be no greater misfortune for a people than that the Government should have in its power an immense patronage which they were bound to dispose of, and which led them to make appointments sometimes of

competent and sometimes of incompetent men. Pressure could be brought to bear on a Government, and any man feeling this, and using it, could not unfrequently do a public harm, and bring about bad results; so that he believed that the doing away of this patronage would be one of the great advantages to be derived from the complete establishment of local representative institutions. It might also be worth while to touch upon the subject of competitive examinations in connection with patronage. The absence of local institutions forcing a Government to give away an immense amount of patronage which the people had to pay for, the system of competitive examinations, which had been adopted in this colony, and which had been found to work so well in England and other countries, would be of the greatest benefit to the country in aiding towards the extinction of patronage. The next question in the Speech was that of the A.S.N. Co. Though little need be said upon it, yet it must be regretted by everybody that the necessity had arisen for the termination of the contract, or some alteration in its terms which would entail upon the country an increased expenditure of £2,320 in subsidy in excess of the amount now paid. It had been the wish of the country that the Government should not allow the employment of Asiatic seamen on mail services, but it would be admitted by even the strongest opponents of this class of labour that we were paying a very high price for the luxury of running our mails with European seamen. It must also be recollected that the steamers were now opening up a large trade on the coast, which, as it became larger, would induce the A.S.N. Company, he believed, to run their steamers without any considerable subsidy. It would be a great discomfort to the Northern ports in particular were the A.S.N. Company to cease to run their boats north. The next parts of the Speech had reference to the question of the settlement of the country, one of the most important questions undoubtedly, because it had direct reference to the development of the great resources of the colony. There were many persons who imagined that there must necessarily be an antagonism or class feeling between the pastoral leaseholders and the smaller settlers. He (Mr. Weld-Blundell) was not one of those that held that view. The large pastoral leaseholder employed many hands, and thus offered inducement for settlement in his immediate neighbourhood to the *bonâ fide* selector. He was also of considerable benefit to the selector, as during dull seasons the pastoral lessee frequently found employment for him at a time when he would have nothing to do for months in the year. What was needed was judicious legislation, so as to guard against

impositions of all kinds, and protect Queensland against a class of men which existed in some other colonies, where, in consequence of the laws being imperfect, a class had arisen who made their livelihood by taking up land on runs merely for the purpose of so annoying the pastoral lessees that they would eventually be compelled to buy them out. All, then, that was necessary was judicious legislation. There were many tracts of land which many honourable members would be acquainted with, where selectors could perfectly well settle to the great benefit of the country, and without interfering in any way with the pastoral leaseholders. There were vast tracts of country that were not even utilised by pastoral leaseholders for grazing purposes, and very often those very localities were most advantageous for agriculture. He referred to such places as were found in the vicinity of creeks and low flat land where there was plenty of water, but where possibly the quality of the grass rendered the country of but little service for pastoral occupation. There were also many places in various parts of the country where leaseholders would derive immense benefit from the *bonâ fide* settlement of a certain number of selectors. He would even go so far in the introduction of *bonâ fide* selectors as to throw open for selection pieces of land of 20, 40, or 60 acre blocks at a nominal rate—even at a lower rate than under the present laws—provided the persons who so took up the land cultivated it. He was somewhat opposed, however, to the principle of giving away land at present leased by pastoral leaseholders to other men, in considerable blocks of perhaps a thousand or 1,500 acres,—to a class of men who did not turn the land to as much use as the larger owner, but who lived there, applying the land to the same purposes, only, by reason of their small holding, paying the country a very small return in comparison with the larger leaseholders. The class of people they wanted settled upon the land was the small occupant class, who would take 20, 40, or 60 acres, and would cultivate them and turn them to the best account. A question immediately connected with this—of the settlement of the country—was that of immigration, next touched upon in the Governor's Speech. He could not, in connection with this, but regret the circumstances under which they were at present living in Queensland, and which compelled the Government to put an end to immigration. He was a firm believer that this country, with its great resources, and its great tracts of land, must depend for its wealth and greatness upon the importation, sooner or later, of immense numbers of people. Sooner or later they must get into the place a class of men that would *bonâ fide*

work the country. Some little time ago, when addressing his constituents in the North, he had stated that he was prepared to advocate immigration; but after he had been some time in the Northern districts, and had travelled to Rockhampton, Clermont, and Copperfield, and seen that the people were suffering greatly in consequence of the immense depression that had existed more or less all over the world, he felt that it was necessary to put an end for the time being to the immigration that had been going on for a considerable period. He found that in consequence of the closing of mines and the cessation of expenditure out west, Copperfield and Clermont were filled with men looking out for employment. It might be unknown to many that in those townships people were really suffering great distress in consequence of there being a larger supply of labour than could be at the present moment absorbed. He viewed this state of things with deep regret, because it showed that at the present moment we had ceased to advance in the way we had previously advanced, and were not absorbing population so rapidly as we ought to do. It was, however, to be noticed that the number of men about the place who could not find employment was attributable in some measure to the inferior class of men that had been coming to the colony. He had himself seen large numbers of immigrants who were absolutely worthless, and who by their own admission had simply come out for the sea trip in hopes of getting rid of some ill they were suffering from, and intended to return to the old country as soon as they could. This was the wrong class of men. On one occasion, when visiting the Rockhampton depôt, he met an immigrant who looked a fat healthy individual, and asked him whether he had just come out? The reply of the immigrant—though he (Mr. Weld-Blundell) did not wish to offer any disrespect to those who came from the sister island—was, “I was over seven years in Ireland without doing a stroke of work, and I hope to goodness I shall not have to do a stroke of work here.” In case there should be occasion to import immigrants—and he hoped the necessity would arise before many months—he trusted every care would be taken to introduce the same class of labour as the other colonies had succeeded in obtaining. The class of labour imported into New Zealand was, as was known by all who had visited that colony, useful, intelligent, and assisted to improve the position of the country. With reference to clause 11, it was a matter for regret that in consequence of the sad depression which had prevailed all over the world the revenue had fallen off as it had done. We could only be thankful that, whereas depression and falling-off of revenue had only taken place here during the last twelve

months, in many other countries depression of trade and great hardship resulting therefrom had been in existence two or three years. To calculate the extent to which the Australian colonies had suffered, it was only necessary to look to one single export, that of wool—the principal export of this colony. Upon that point alone it became evident that the colonies had been immense sufferers. It would be found on calculation that the loss during the last six or eight months, in consequence of falling prices, would amount to something like £3,000,000 sterling. That was the total loss for these colonies, and it was not a matter of surprise, therefore, that this and the other colonies had been suffering from the depression resulting from such losses. But with regard to the question of taxation, he was not of those who viewed with dismay the possibility of further taxation. The burdens upon the people of the colony were frequently calculated upon a proportion per head of the population of the public debt. That, as a rough estimate, was fair enough, but it was not a true criterion of the burdens of the country. A country which had great natural resources, in the possession of a small population, in a position to make immense exportations, was able to bear a heavier debt per head than a country more thickly populated in which smaller returns could only be obtained for its labour and capital. People who were in the habit of comparing the burden per head in this colony with that per head in England thought that we must be terrible sufferers in consequence of the rate being nearly twice that of England. He maintained that was not a just criterion, inasmuch as we were in a peculiar position as a colony in which were vast districts where a small amount of labour would produce immense returns. It might be found necessary to impose further taxation in the shape of Customs duties, which ultimately found its way to the principal employers of people and capital. He believed we had not by any means reached the limit beyond which it might be dangerous to increase the taxation. Of course it was most desirable that principles of economy should be duly studied, and that expenditure should be reduced as far as possible; but still, should it be necessary for public works to apply to the English market for a loan, he believed we might safely and with great advantage, arising from the expenditure of money and the development of resources, in some measure increase our Customs duties. Some hundred odd years ago in England it was considered that the country could not possibly stand any increase to its debt. As late as Walpole's administration it was believed that if the debt of thirty or forty millions were increased to fifty or sixty it would

produce havoc and ruin the country. Yet the debt was increased to eighty or a hundred millions, being added to year by year, and it will be found in history that, at each individual period, it was maintained that the extreme limit had been reached. The increase went on until the debt reached nine hundred millions, and at the present moment it was estimated that England, with her present population, was able to bear a burden of fifteen hundred millions as easily as she could bear the burden of nine hundred millions after the great wars against Napoleon. It was seen, therefore, that the resources of a country were not so much dependent upon population as upon the ability to turn those resources to account. There was another question intimately connected with this subject which had occupied the attention of the various legislatures of the colonies—namely, a Customs' union. This might not be the proper time to enter into the question, but he would just touch upon the subject as being connected with the matter before the House. There could be no doubt that, economically, and in the public interest, the welfare of the colony would be immensely benefited by entering into some arrangement with the other colonies for a Customs' union. He noticed with pleasure that reference had been made in the Speech to the probable necessity of asking for a loan for the construction of public works. He believed there was nothing more required in the colony, and that with the immense resources we possess money obtained from England at the present rate should be expended in developing the resources of the inland districts, by the construction of railway and other public works. Those districts would then be turned to great use, and districts now sparsely populated would become more thickly peopled. The various lines of railway had not been touched upon, but more would be heard about them hereafter. They could, however, only be constructed advantageously by public loan. He believed that the system that had been adopted at various times of raising money by the sale of public lands for this purpose was a most ruinous practice, because it forced those who were in the possession of capital to spend money in securing their improvements which otherwise would be expended in the development of the natural resources of the country, and yield a return of 10 or 12 per cent.; and expended it in the construction of public works which would yield directly, possibly only 2 or 3 per cent., though it might yield a larger percentage indirectly. The practice of raising money in that way, and causing capital to be diverted from the proper channel, was a most disastrous one to the country. If the colony were to adopt the policy of applying to the English market

to obtain large sums of money at a low rate, to be expended in the construction of railways, the loss to the colony of large sums of money would be done away with, and we should have an expenditure of foreign capital in the place. With those remarks upon the leading questions in the Speech, it would be unnecessary for him to say more. He felt confident that, when the Speech was thoroughly taken into consideration, it would be found to contain broad principles, and a policy which would meet the approval not only of the House but also of the whole country. It contained principles which were broad, straightforward, and which would most undoubtedly lead to the advancement of the country.

Mr. HAMILTON said he had very much pleasure in seconding the Address which had been so ably proposed by the honourable member for Clermont. He would first make a few remarks with reference to his sitting on that side of the House, because some surprise had been expressed at the last meeting. His reason was that he conscientiously considered that by doing so he was representing the interests of his constituents and the interests of the colony. He was not pledged to sit there one moment longer than he chose to do so; and if at any time he thought by sitting there he was not representing the interests of his constituents he should at once walk over to the other side. He felt considerable diffidence in addressing the House, not only on account of following the able speech they had heard from the honourable member for Clermont, but also because it was the first time he had stood upon the floor of the House. The honourable member had gone into the subject very exhaustively, but he (Mr. Hamilton) would refer to a few subjects which had been touched only slightly or omitted. The first was the fourth clause, which related to the contract of the A.S.N. Co. The Government, he thought, was quite right in not involving the country in additional expenses. The sum previously paid was quite sufficient for the work performed, and if the company failed to carry out the new contract under the existing condition, there was not the slightest doubt in his mind that they would be able to get some other company to take the contract. With regard to clauses 5 and 6, it was very gratifying to those interested in the progress of the colony to find the Government saw their way clear to afford additional facilities for settlement upon the land; and they must also be pleased to think that the magnificent pastoral country of the Downs had through their action been reclaimed, and that it was to be offered to the people on more favourable conditions than they had hitherto had an opportunity of obtaining it. For the action of the Government in that matter alone they were

bound to look with favour upon them, unless they were inclined to judge unfavourably of the Government before seeing what they were going to do. He considered their action with regard to immigration was also correct, and felt confident that the country was with them in that matter. An influx of population to a country did not necessarily increase the demand for labour, and while the income from important mineral and other resources was lessened a decrease of expenditure was necessitated. The income in these directions had, they knew, decreased during the last two or three years. But it was not only the number but also the class of immigrants that he objected to. The class of men that had been coming to our shores had neither been a benefit nor a source of wealth to the colony. They had been inundated with a class of men that had been a tax to the colony, and had not assisted in any possible way. It was the duty of the Government to provide for the labouring people already here, and who were paying their share towards the revenue, and to see that they should not be thrown out of employment, or to have to work at a lower rate than they were fairly entitled to, by introducing surplus labour to compete with them. Looking at the immigration question in this light, the Government were quite right in the course they pursued in connection with the Agent-General, to suspend emigration until receipt of further advices. With regard to the Union Bank, the Government could do nothing else but take the tender which in their opinion was the most favourable one. He would now allude to clause 11, referring to revenue; and he was certain that every member of the colony would be glad the Government saw their way to meet the deficiency in the revenue without increasing taxation. If the Government should succeed in this alone, they would deserve the thanks of the colony. If they succeeded in doing that satisfactorily, they would perform a feat which no Government of this colony had previously accomplished. Referring to clause 12, there could be no doubt as to the desirability of affording every possible legitimate inducement and encouragement to population; and in order to benefit a large population they must afford them facilities for settlement. The only way to do this was to provide means of communication, and railways were, in the general opinion, the cheapest mode of communication. He would not dilate upon the necessity for a water supply, as it must be evident to everyone that a copious supply of water in a tropical climate like this was indispensable. His own constituency was very much in want of such a supply, and he should bring the matter under the consideration of the Government before the session closed. There were cer-

tain important measures for several purposes, among which he saw one for the regulation and inspection of mines in the colony. It was well known that such a measure had long been required on the various gold fields of the colony, and he was glad to see that the want had been recognised. *Appropos* of the drought, which was mentioned in the succeeding clause, he might say that the gold-mining industry was not so dependent upon the seasons as any other industry in the colony, and he thought that if the various Governments had paid more attention to that industry, the colony would not have suffered so much from the depression through which it had passed. With regard to gold-mining, the Government had simply made one investment to his knowledge. In one instance they had spent about a thousand pounds in equipping a party for prospecting purposes, and had received a tenfold return. The consequence of that step was the discovery of the Hodgkinson; and he should have thought that the benefits which accrued from that expenditure would have encouraged the Government to embark in similar speculations. He was also glad to see that some measure was contemplated to provide for the sale of food and drugs in a pure state. Anyone who had lived in the interior must be aware of the important necessity of such a measure. Men living in the interior had frequently to subsist upon prepared food, and he was in a position to say that more sickness was caused by adulterated food and drinks than from any diseases incidental to any part of the colony; not only were special complaints induced, but the absence of suitable food predisposed the system to any prevailing complaints. As regards the promise of a measure to prevent the influx of foreign and other criminals, honourable members could not but recollect the influx recently of a certain number of men from another colony—men who had confessed themselves to be murderers and scoundrels of the deepest dye. A law on that subject was therefore an evident necessity, and would work a change; and in connection with this, the measure of the Government in stopping immigration under the existing conditions was deserving of credit. Many of the immigrants who had been introduced were persons who had been taken from the "back slums" of the old countries, who were no benefit to the country, and whose occupation was thieving, and with whom nothing was safe, who would steal anything, except perhaps a circular saw in motion or a red-hot stove. It was evidently the intention of the Government to economise, whatever changes they might think fit to make after the depression ceased, and he approved of their action, because the expenditure must be regulated by the income; when the in-

come was lessened, the expenditure must be regulated accordingly. It was with colonies as with individuals—if the expenditure is in excess of the income the result is disastrous. No doubt the colony had suffered very much from the great drought, which was caused by the late Government. He was very glad that the present Government had put an end to the drought by floods, and in connection with the drought he must appeal to the honourable member for Rosewood, the experience of whose constituents must be so very vividly before him in the late disastrous season, not to extend that drought, as he had threatened, to the members of the House. He had much pleasure in seconding the motion before the House.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: Before proceeding to criticise the Speech, and to refer to some other matters to which it will be necessary to call attention, I have to ask the indulgence of the House whilst I make an explanation personal to myself. Shortly after the recess, my honourable friend the senior member for Maryborough expressed a desire to retire from the leadership of his party; at a meeting of several members of the party he expressed this desire, and the members present were good enough to choose me leader of the Opposition in his place during the session. I accepted the position with a full sense of the responsibilities attached to it. I am fully aware of the onerous nature of the duties which devolve upon the holder of the position—duties, perhaps, only second in importance to those devolving upon the leader of the Government. I shall endeavour, so far as lies in my power, and relying upon the assistance of honourable members on this side of the House, to facilitate the business of this Chamber, and I tender my assistance to the honourable member sitting at the head of the Treasury benches. Of course he must accept sharp criticism of the acts of his Ministry, and in some matters determined opposition; but there are many matters, which are not party measures, in regard to which I hope we may be found working amicably together, and I will endeavour to assist in the conduct of the business through the House in an orderly and satisfactory manner. So much for myself. Before I go further, I will take the opportunity of congratulating the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply upon the speeches they have made in the performance of a somewhat difficult task. I believe the House is to be congratulated upon the accession of the new members, and that they may be welcomed as valuable additions to its debating power. Before adverting to the Speech, I will refer to matters outside of it: there is little to be said about the Speech itself, because there is little in it; but, with respect to what has taken place since the House last met,

a great deal can be said. It is seldom that a Government who came into office under such favourable circumstances as this one did have done so much to bring down upon them adverse criticism which was deserved. We will begin with the formation of the Government. The honourable member for Mulgrave found himself on this side of the House last session at the head of a large party, and succeeded in defeating us. In forming his Government, instead of following the usual practice of choosing his colleagues from gentlemen who had been honoured with the confidence of the country, he selected two who had been defeated, not under exceptional circumstances, but by the plainly expressed will of a majority of the electors to whom they appealed; that was remarkable to begin with. Then there was another innovation, and it was the appointment of a Minister for Justice instead of filling up the time-honoured office of Attorney-General. When the Bill was introduced which provided for the appointment of a Minister for Justice, it was pointed out by me that in order to render it effective it was necessary that a Solicitor-General should be appointed, so that the Crown law business of the country might be properly carried on. I am quite sure that had a Solicitor-General been appointed, honourable members on this side of the House would have made no objection; but since the formation of the Government the Crown law business of the country has been conducted in an extremely unsatisfactory manner, as to the method in which the work of Crown Law Prosecutor has been distributed. Then, going a little further, I come to the way in which a seat was found for the Honourable Minister for Works; it was made for him by the resignation of the honourable member for Townsville. I have not a word to say about the conduct of the late member for that electorate in this respect, but there is no instance in this colony, and none that I am aware of in New South Wales, where an election was conducted in such an extraordinary manner; not even is there an instance in Victoria, where the polling at an election was lately interrupted in a strange way. The electorate of Townsville extends considerably inland, its south-western boundary being several miles from the river Burdekin. Two new polling-places were appointed on the river; both being outside the boundary of the Townsville electorate, and not three-quarters of a mile apart. When I visited this district last year, there was but one house and a shanty at a road-side at one of these places, and at the other there were no houses except those used by the day labourers on the new Burdekin bridge. These are the places which were selected for polling-booths. How

many electors could be expected to be several miles west of their district can be imagined by honourable members. However, when the day of election came on, a large camp of men was found there—I do not know how many, but I will say over a hundred. The possible object of opening polling-places so close to each other, and under such extraordinary circumstances, will probably suggest itself to honourable members. I must add, also, that the gentleman who opposed the Minister for Works at Townsville sent his scrutineers on the day before the polling day. The Burdekin was in flood, and the scrutineers for the Minister for Works' opponent had to cross in a boat; when they got to the other side they were mobbed and hooted, and, for safety's sake, had to recross; then their boat was taken from them, and no means of communication was established until after the polling was over. The result was that at these two polling-places something like 230 votes were recorded, and with a few exceptions, it is scarcely necessary to say, in favour of the honourable Minister for Works. I wonder how many electors there were within twenty miles of the polling-booths on the day of election? The whole transaction may have been quite innocent, but it certainly looks as if a remarkable inference could be drawn on behalf of the Minister for Works. The next act was something with respect to the Queensland National Bank. We know that the honourable member at the head of the Government was a director of the bank; and that at the time the late Government left office correspondence had taken place between the Treasurer and the bank about obtaining a share of the Government account. When the honourable member for Mulgrave came into power it was inconvenient for him to continue this correspondence in his official capacity as Treasurer, and as a director of the bank. What, therefore, was done? The honourable member retired from the directory of the bank, and the honourable member for Port Curtis took his place! What is the difference? It does not lessen the influence which the bank might be presumed to have possessed with the Government. The bank's influence is actually greater, for it has now on its directory the Vice-President of the Executive Council in the place of the honourable member for Mulgrave, who is still supposed to have a warm interest in the bank. I shall have more to say to this when I come to the paragraph in the Speech. Another change was in a matter of administration, and it may or may not be of great importance. One of the first things that the Secretary for Public Instruction did was to make a serious change in the administration of that department. Under the

Education Act of 1875, a subscription was required from parents and others before a new school was established in any locality, the object being to test the *bona fides* of the application; but by a proclamation issued immediately after the Act came into force, it was provided that necessary additions should be done at the expense of the Government. Honourable members who were here last year will recollect that I was often taken to task because I would not extend the principle further. The change made by the Secretary for Public Instruction was to rescind that part of the regulation, making provisions for additions to schools; so that, no matter how necessary the additions may be, no matter how often they may be reported as necessary for the preservation of the health of the children, the Government will not make the alterations unless the people first subscribe a portion. That seems to me to be an endeavour to handicap the State schools of the colony. I think it was a most serious innovation, and one which required more public attention than has been directed to it. There were also some other matters of administration in regard to which changes have been made. When the present Government took office the colony was in a state of depression; nearly all countries in the world were in a similar state. The first thing the Government did was to stop immigration. Whether they were right or not in adopting this course may be a matter upon which differences of opinion may exist, but there can be no question that they might have endeavoured to keep within the colony the people that we have, and not set to work deliberately, as they have done, to drive away the best men. A Government who will, in times of depression, adopt such a course deserves to be called the worst enemies of the country, because for every hundred settlers you drive out of the colony with their families, you do an injury which cannot be recovered by the introduction of 500 men. The first thing the Government did was to discharge numbers of men in the employ of the colony. I am not here to maintain that a man who is not doing fair work should be retained, but I do say that it was the duty of any Government to endeavour to assist the country in times of depression, and not to drive people away from it as they have done. It is all very well to say, "You must regulate your expenditure according to your income;" but there are circumstances when every statesman will deem it necessary to begin, not by cutting down expenditure recklessly without any regard to the consequences, but rather to nurse the country through its difficulties. We had difficulties in 1866 much more serious than they are now; but it never occurred to the Government, or any member of the House, that the way to get through them was to

induce working men to leave the country with a curse in their mouths, and dissuade others from coming to it. Yet that is the policy that has been adopted by the Government. They began by discharging all the road parties on lines in this part of the colony. What are the men to do? They have discharged all the survey parties working on the surveys for the construction of lines which must sooner or later be made. There is no work for the men, and so they go to the neighbouring colonies, where good working men who know their business are welcomed and well paid; and when we want to get them back we must pay them increased wages, or import fresh men from Great Britain and teach them their business. There is another matter with respect to the Works Department which I should mention. In the Governor's Speech at the opening of the first session of this Parliament certain statements were made, but they were definite. As to whether the statements made to-day are definite, I will speak presently. Before I left the Works Office I submitted certain proposals to my colleagues which would have had the effect materially of reducing the cost of railways. I said then, and I say now, that we cannot afford to push on our railway lines to the extent we must do to develop the resources of the colony properly, at the price we have been paying. We had the reports of the engineers, and upon them we took the responsibility of issuing instructions to carry them out. If I am correctly informed, all these instructions have been countermanded. The new Minister for Works, like a new broom, not only sweeps clean, but sweeps away all that his predecessor had done, leaving us but that red-tape system and an expensive manner of carrying out our railway system which must diminish the length of our lines by one-half, if the same price is paid as we have been paying. I do not know whether the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government considers his experience as an engineer should be a guide to the Government, but I do know sometimes that the recommendations of engineers should be adopted with great caution. There is another matter connected with the Works Department which I have heard of, and it is very remarkable—it is in connection with the Western Railway Extension. Of course, these are matters upon which we shall by-and-by have papers, but in the meantime they get into the public press, and we shall be wanting in our duty if we do not refer to them. The facts appear to be these: During the election for Northern Downs, on the polling day the Ministers for Works and Lands, in the exercise, I suppose, of what they considered their duty, attended the polling-place; but notwithstanding the presence of those gentlemen, and we may presume the

obvious desire they had that the present member for Northern Downs should not be elected, the electors—the misguided electors—returned the candidate they considered the best man, and who I am sure is the best man. I have no doubt that a great number of the voters were railway workmen, and it is possible that some persons connected with the railway works, but not in the service of the Government, took an active interest in that election, and did not agree with the Minister for Works in the views he took. I am loth to state what followed; but it is strange the Government was so unwise as to act in such a way that a casual observer would be apt to trace a connection between cause and effect. The next thing we hear is that instructions were given by the Minister for Works that certain ballast on the line was not to be used until it was reduced to a condition in which it would be utterly useless. The specification stated that the contractor was to use good, clean gravel; but, according to the instructions of the Minister for Works, it was to be so clean that it would not bind, and was practically useless. We also heard that in consequence of this action the works were stopped, and that the men were coming down in consequence of this trouble. I say all these are matters that tend to the discredit of a Government—I do not mean of the present Government, but that it is to the discredit of the Government of the colony that such things should happen. Then, sir, we have had some very remarkable appointments to the bench of magistrates in various parts of the colony—some in Brisbane and some on the Darling Downs, at Townsville, and Charters Towers; some very good and some very bad. I am certain that all members will agree with me in the principle that it is very undesirable that appointments to the magistracy should be recognised as rewards for political services; and I challenge any honourable member of this House to give any reasons for the appointment of some persons recently appointed to the Commission of the Peace, but political reasons.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Name them.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: There are many persons in those lists who rendered important political services to the present Government, and they are appointed. I will now refer to what is said to be about to take place at Ipswich. It is said that about one hundred men are about to be dismissed from the railway works. My friend the honourable member for Ipswich has given notice of motion calling for the papers relating to that dismissal, and I trust it will turn out when those papers are produced that in selecting the men to be dismissed regard was had to the kind of service rendered by them, and that only men whose services are not really required

are to be dispensed with. I trust it will not turn out that the oldest men in the service, who have done their duty for years and years, against whom no complaint has ever been made, who have brought up their families respectably and honestly in Ipswich, and are useful citizens, are not the ones to be dismissed because their political proclivities are supposed to be in a particular direction. I trust it will turn out that the dismissals have been made upon the report of impartial officers of the department, and not of other persons. Of course, until the papers are produced we cannot say what will be the case, but at the present time there is a very unpleasant feeling abroad on this matter; and that, taken in connection with the other matters I have referred to—the Townsville election, the Northern Downs election, the question of ballast, appointments to the magistracy, and something I shall have to say about the bank business—I say, from all these things, there is an impression abroad, which I must confess I am compelled to share in, that a great part of the administration of the Government during the past two months has been conducted on political principles; or, in other words, that the power placed in the hands of the Government has been used for the furtherance of the objects of a political party. I trust it will not turn out to be so; but the matter requires explanation, and until it is explained, I can assure honourable members opposite that the present unpleasant feeling in that respect will continue to be felt all over the colony. With reference to the Speech itself, it is usual to criticise a speech by saying that it contains very little, but this Speech differs from all others that I remember having heard. It contains less information, it condescends to apologising, and to attacking the previous Government. I never before knew a Speech to contain either of the two last features; but the present Government may not think it beneath their dignity to insert them. The first paragraph says:—

“The Local Government Act of 1878 has been sufficiently long in operation to show that, whatever its value as an amendment of the Municipal Laws, its principles will not be availed of voluntarily by any district while hope remains of local works being undertaken by the central authorities.”

Then it goes on to say—

“To further facilitate the general adoption of local government, my Ministers will initiate legislation providing machinery less cumbrous and better adapted to the circumstances of sparsely populated districts than is supplied by the Act at present in force.”

Now, sir, considering that the Act has only been in force six months, that during the first three months the attention of the late Government was occupied almost entirely by the general elections, and that since then the

present Government have had the administration of it, I scarcely think it can be said to have had a fair trial. I never supposed that it would come into operation in six months, and it is quite certain that since the present Government have been in office they have had ample time to initiate the operation of it in many parts of the colony. It was never said that it would apply to such places as the Warrego or Gregory districts, where there are scarcely any roads that require improvement, because the whole country is a road; but in the settled portions of the colony, where people can be got to meet occasionally, it can certainly be put in force. What was the criticism we heard last year upon this measure from the gentleman now at the head of the Government? He said, Why did we not bring in a measure like that in force in Victoria, which had proved such a success? But when it was pointed out that was exactly what we had done, that criticism ceased. The honourable gentleman appears to have forgotten that, and although the late Government took initiatory steps for putting the Act in force in Gympie, absolutely nothing has been done by the present Government; and now they come down and say the operation of the Act is not satisfactory. As to the desirability of the establishment of a satisfactory system of local government we are all agreed, but what new measure the Government will introduce, of course we do not know. But on this question I would ask, what is the use of applying the principle of local government to places where you cannot get people to meet to carry it out? If the Government can solve that problem, no one will be more delighted than I will. After referring to the Royal Commission of inquiry respecting the Real Property Office, we come to a paragraph relating to the A.S.N. Co. Why that paragraph has been inserted I cannot understand, unless it is to call attention to the matter, or to attack the previous Government. I maintain that the action of the present Government in this matter is such that they ought to be heartily ashamed of. The late Government gave notice to the company to terminate their contract, because it was stated that they had determined to employ Chinese and Asiatic seamen on board their vessels. This was a good and substantial reason, which was fully acquiesced in by the people of the colony, because it was the duty of the Government to prevent those ships, which not only carried our mails but our trade, and might be required for other purposes, from being manned in this way. It was held that they should be manned by European sailors; but, of course, we could not expect to get that benefit without some price. The price demanded was £2,300, and what followed? By the action of the Government

the Northern portions of the colony will be deprived of regular mail communication, and the trade which should come to Brisbane will be carried to Sydney, because it is well known that the directors of the A.S.N. Co. are chiefly merchants in Sydney, and before they were bound down by stringent terms they loaded their ships full in Sydney, so that merchants here could not send up their goods. That is the burden cast upon the North for the sake of this £2,300, and they will now have to be satisfied with a small steamer perhaps once a week or once a fortnight. For the sake of this miserable £2,300 we are to forfeit all the advantages we now enjoy. But is it for the sake of economy? We hear, on the contrary, that we are to have a fortnightly mail *via* Torres Straits by vessels trading from Hong-kong to Sydney, and which is not really a Queensland mail service. Is this to be the remedy? Surely the trade and commerce of this colony are entitled to some consideration, and are they to be sacrificed for this £2,300? That is a matter that requires explanation. I am glad to see that the Government are going to make provision for throwing more land open for settlement; and the necessity for further legislation in regard to the lands recently acquired by exchange is a matter upon which we are all agreed. Then we come to the question of immigration; and in regard to that, I trust we are not going to adopt the principle enunciated by some of the gentlemen who used to be supporters of the Government of which the Colonial Secretary was the head—that there are enough people in the colony. The Government certainly seem to think there are too many in it, for they are driving out some of our most valuable men. I saw in a country paper of to-day a telegram, stating that 100 men had passed through Warwick on their way to New South Wales. In the present state of affairs it may be right for the Government to discourage immigration, but by all means let us do what we can to keep the people we have in the colony. The next matter we come to is the action of the Government respecting the Union Bank:—

“The agreement with the Union Bank of Australia expiring in March last, tenders were invited from the several banking institutions for the conduct of the Government account. In reply, two tenders only were received, and the Queensland National Bank submitting terms more favourable than those previously obtained, as well as better than those offered by the other tenderer, the proposal of the former was accepted.”

I am not, of course, in possession of all the facts of this case, but I am in possession of some. As I said before, there was a difference between the Bank of Queensland and the late Government respecting

deposits, the bank wanting more than the Government were prepared to give them. This matter began by shifting the present Premier out of his position as a director of the bank and putting in the Vice-President of the Executive Council, so that the bank had two representatives in the Government instead of one. Then notice was given to the Union Bank that their contract would terminate in March, but the bank did not think so; and although the Government asserted that they were right, practically they admitted that the bank was right. Then they called for tenders for the Government account, but the time was so short for tenders to be sent in that it had to be extended. I have been informed that it was suggested that in this colony there should be an association of banks, as in Victoria, because it was not desirable for a colony having large sums of money on loan to place it all in one bank; and, moreover, that a bank, unless it had been long established and was well known, might not be able to make satisfactory arrangements for the floating of loans in Great Britain, and that the resources at the command of a local bank might not be sufficient to carry on the Government business in the event of the Government becoming borrowers in place of lenders. But I am told that the Government refused to accept any tenders from associated banks. However, only two tenders were sent in—one from the Union Bank, and one from the Bank of Queensland, and I ask, had any sensible man the slightest doubt as to which would get it? Who are the directors of the Bank of Queensland? From what we hear, one occupies a prominent position as a supporter of the Government in another place, another is Vice-President of the Executive Council, a third is an ardent supporter of the Government in this Chamber; and then we have the head of the Government a late director and supposed to be a well-wisher at any rate. I believe it is usual at the opening of tenders for the tenderers to be present, and for the tenders to be read—generally as a mere form, to show that there is perfect good faith; but I am told that this form was not adhered to, and that a request to have the tenders read was refused. These are matters which may be all explained; I do not impute any bad faith to the Government, but I say these things do not look well, and cause unpleasant feelings in the minds of the people of the colony and other parts of the world where it is of importance that our credit should be maintained. I say that, as far as we know at present, there was a foregone conclusion arrived at with regard to those tenders. I do not say it will result in any harm, but it should be borne in mind that the Government is sometimes a borrower, and the bank they deal with should be

able to grant temporary accommodation to the extent of at least a quarter of a million, when required, without being distressed, and it should also be in a position to transact important financial business at home on behalf of the colony. It may turn out, and I trust it will, that the correspondence will show that all these things have been complied with; but in the meantime the business has carried a very uncomfortable feeling out of doors, and the sooner it is dispelled by a full explanation the better it will be for everybody. Then we are informed that—

“When Parliament last met, in January, no action had been taken by the then Government to put into operation the provisions of the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act of 1876. The leases having all expired in December last, my present Advisers took immediate steps to offer the sale of new leases by auction, in accordance with the law. The result was in every respect unsatisfactory.”

I need scarcely say, sir, that there was a foregone conclusion that the Act should be unsatisfactory. The Government took every precaution to secure that result. They were warned in time, but they refused to take that warning, and they deliberately set to work to make that Act which they were opposed to, but which they had not the courage of their opinions to obstruct or defeat, unsatisfactory in its operation. We know very well that the views of the present Government, and of nearly all the members who support them, were opposed to the passing of that Act. I want to know why that Act was introduced, if it was not for the purpose of breaking the charm of the perpetual tenure which the squatting party had had for their runs. It was about time that that charm should be broken. The then Opposition strongly opposed the Bill, but the Parliament decided otherwise. When the whole of these runs were put up for sale in the different parts of the colony on the same day, the possibility of competition was almost excluded, and the possibility of having intending purchasers from other colonies attending the sales was likewise excluded. The honourable member at the head of the Government had it in his power to do what was right and just, but instead of that he had done wrong, on the plea that his predecessor had begun on the other system, and he was obliged to continue it. I confess I cannot see any reason why those sales should have been rushed on. I can understand why the honourable member, with his well-known disposition, having once issued an advertisement, would not change it even if it was shown that it would ruin the country; for he, like the rest of his colleagues, would consider it an evidence of vacillation, being possessed as they are of a certain amount of firmness—or rather obstinacy—which would prevent them from

giving way. At the same time, they were fairly warned, and, had these sales been conducted on a rational principle, the result probably would have been highly satisfactory. I agree with the Government that the result was highly unsatisfactory; indeed, I may say it was a shamefully unsatisfactory result, and the shame is upon the heads of the honourable members who had the power to make it otherwise. I have no doubt the Bill to be introduced will recognise the principle which we on this side have so long contended against, and establish the principle of the tenure of runs being perpetual. We shall see then if the Ethiopian has changed his skin or the leopard his spots. I think we shall find that the principle which they have always advocated they advocate still, viz., that squatters should have perpetual tenure of their runs. Now let us turn to the revenue proposals. The Speech states that the revenue anticipated by the late Government will not be realised. I think that is a sentence without precedent; it seems to be wanting in that courtesy usually observed in State documents. It is then stated that we shall be required to make provision for that deficit. After a few words about economy, we are told that an attempt will be made to remove from the central Government certain local responsibilities, that the public disbursements will be carefully supervised, which means economy, and that settlement will be fostered on the lands—a singular beginning they have made, driving people out of the colony—and that they will revert back to the consolidated revenue certain funds appropriated for other purposes by the Railway Reserves Act. Boiled down into a sentence, the whole paragraph having reference to revenue amounts simply to this, that they are going to make a transfer in the books of the Treasury. We expected to find in the Speech, at least, something about the public works policy of the Government. Last year the honourable member at the head of the Government brought forward a motion to borrow at once £3,000,000 to carry on a spirited public works policy. It might have been supposed that on such a subject the Government would have given some information. And this paragraph, boiled down, simply means that certain public works are to be submitted for consideration. There is not a word more. What is the public works policy of the Government? We all know that harbour works are required. It is impossible to criticise a paragraph of that kind. There there is nothing in it to criticise. A sop is thrown to Brisbane in the statement that they want a better water supply. Then we come to the important legislative measures, which in the opinion of the Government the colony anxiously demands. The first is the amend-

ment of the electoral law. In what respect it is to be amended I do not know, unless it is intended to bring forward a renewal of the obnoxious electoral rights. Then there is a Bill to provide for the regulation and inspection of mines and collieries. We have heard of that before. Then there is the old thing—a Bill to constitute separate financial districts. That occupies a very low place on the programme, this year, to what it has done on previous occasions, and I trust its place will be equally prominent at the end of the session. The Civil Service Bill we have heard of before. Then comes a curious Bill—to provide for the sale of food and drugs in a pure state. Does that include spirits? Because, if it does, the Government have made a very bad beginning.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Government has done nothing of the sort; and you know it.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: Then I must have been misinformed. What I saw in the papers was that certain spurious spirits with false labels on them were seized, and that they were sold by the Government.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They were not sold by the Government.

The PREMIER: Government had nothing to do with it.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: Do none of the Ministers know that when any property is forfeited to the Crown it is the Government who sells it? In all Governments that I have been a member of, and in all others that I have ever heard of, the Treasurer is the person who supervises the disposal of forfeited goods. But the Treasurer seems in this case to have abdicated that function. We have heard a few things about certain functions being abdicated by the Government during the recess, and I could tell some curious anecdotes about Ministers not knowing how far their functions went; but I will not do that now. If the Government tell me they did not order the sale of these spirits, all I can say is they do not know their duty. All forfeited property is the property of the Crown. I am sorry the honourable members of the Government have not their legal adviser by them, and I hope soon to see him in his place; but, if he were here, those Ministers who have been interrupting me would no doubt not have contradicted the statements I have just made. The next thing I notice is a Bill to impose duties on the succession to real property, which I suppose will bring in about £2,000 a year. Then we have another to regulate the storage and sale of mineral oils; and still another to prevent the influx of foreign and other criminals. I am sure both sides of the House will assist in passing these measures in the best form possible. As a wind-up to the Speech,

we are told about the depressed state of the colony. I, for one, do not despair of the colony. I do not believe that the depression is anything more than temporary, and, comparing it with all the rest of the world, I think we have come through the ordeal very well. The alarmist steps taken by the present Government were quite unnecessary, although I have no doubt they will protest that what they did was absolutely necessary. I have often found that criticism is valuable, even although the person criticised will not listen to it; for it frequently happens that the advice so given is somehow or other taken. Now that Parliament is sitting, I trust that Ministers will be a little more careful in the way they administer the affairs of the colony. They have been for a long while without criticism, but they will no doubt get a little now, and I trust they will not take any further steps to diminish the population of the colony, or to do any serious injury to its interests. I have very little more to say about the programme of the Government, on account of its extreme vagueness. All we can learn from it is, that we are to have some public works, and that there will be no change in the finances excepting economy, and a Bill to provide for the alienation of the Allora lands. If such is the entire programme of the Government, it ought not to take very long to dispose of it; but I am under the impression that the House will want to know a little more when the public works scheme comes to be disclosed. Some honourable members will want to know where the branch lines have gone to, and in which direction the trunk railways are to be extended—on what principle, and at what rate of progress; and I shall not be surprised if some honourable members—strong advocates of branch railways—will want to know what is to become of their pet projects. I shall not further occupy the time of the House, and I do not propose on this occasion to move any amendment on the Address.

The PREMIER: In accepting the announcement made by the leader of the Opposition as to the assistance he is willing to render us, I am glad to reciprocate the terms in which he spoke, for I am satisfied that, as long as he conducts the leadership of the Opposition on the principle enunciated, his actions will be marked by fairness. In carrying out the measures we propose I expect the sharpest criticism which the Opposition can give, and if we are not prepared to meet such criticism we ought to be where we have sat so long. I also thank him for the kind compliment he paid to the mover and seconder of the motion. I can only say it was well deserved, and I congratulate the House on the possession of the two honourable members who have spoken so well on this occasion.

The honourable member has thought it right to give rather a sharp criticism on our actions during the two or three months we have been in office. My opinion was that we had not been in office long enough to do much harm, and I think I am correct in that after all. His first criticism was one which I am sure this House, and I don't believe more than half-a-dozen members of the Opposition, can possibly believe is a right one—namely, that I have done wrong in placing two defeated candidates at the last election in my Ministry.

What test have we of a man's fitness to be a member of a Ministry except his ability as a member of the House? They must have gone through the ordeal in some electorate in order to appear here as Ministers; and has not the Minister for Works done so, and come out triumphantly—in spite of one of the sharpest oppositions ever offered? We have put into the Upper House a man respected by all parties, and I should be only too glad to see a man of his strength of mind and sound opinions, which he always candidly expressed, a member of this House again. So far from feeling sorry that I have selected such a gentleman as that in my Ministry, I glory in seeing him there, and I am sure he is a credit to us all. The next item of criticism was that we had created a Minister of Justice instead of an Attorney-General. No doubt the appointment of a Minister of Justice instead of an Attorney-General has been a cause of considerable difficulty to us; but the Bill enabling us to appoint such an officer was passed at the instigation of the leader of the Opposition, the object of the measure being to enable us to do without an Attorney-General in the House at all. We have found by experience that the working of that Act is attended with very considerable inconvenience, and we will do what we can to remedy it. The honourable gentleman who brought forward the accusation ought to have been the very last man to do so, for if the Act is a failure he is the man above all others who is responsible for it. As to the Townsville election, the Minister for Works will no doubt be able to tell the honourable gentleman something about it—more, perhaps, than he is at present aware of. The greatest accusation connected with this matter was that we had appointed two polling-places outside the district, and that a number of voters actually voted there—the gist of the accusation being that we broke the law by having polling-places outside the electorate. But what did his colleague, the honourable member for Maryborough, do when I was contesting the Mulgrave electorate, last November? Maryborough was a place about fifty miles distant from the nearest point of the electorate, and I did not think it right and proper that there should be a

polling-place so far away, and I protested against it. But there was another polling-place where nobody lives, called Musket Flat, about forty miles away from the nearest point of that electorate, and I protested against that also. I believe wholesale personation was meant at these places, and after considerable expense and trouble I obtained the abolition of Musket Flat as a polling-place, but the other remained. A good many people did poll there, but, very much to the annoyance of the then Government, in my favour. I believe it is not a proper thing to have a polling-place outside an electorate, if it can possibly be avoided; but it often happens that it cannot be avoided. As to the assumption of the leader of the Opposition that this was done in the Townsville election for purposes of corruption, I will leave the reply to that to my honourable friend the Minister for Works. The next charge is one which was made against my honourable friend and colleague, the Colonial Secretary—that is, that he has rescinded one of the regulations made under the Education Act—that I shall leave to my honourable colleague to reply to. The next charge is a very serious one indeed, and one that the honourable gentleman opposite brought forward more than once; but I think, sir, that the House would have been more satisfied if they had had something more explicit from the honourable member. He accused the Government of having knocked off road gangs and surveying parties, and thus thrown men out of employment. The present Government were placed in a difficult position: we took office after a general election, and, whatever the experience of others may be, I found that the late Government had used their influence and the funds of the colony in putting on road gangs in every part of the country, merely for election purposes.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: No.

The PREMIER: I repeat, sir, that they were put on for election purposes. That was my experience in travelling about the country, and I had the information from the very best sources—that road gangs were employed for merely political purposes. Now, this had an effect which was surely bound to be remedied by any Government on coming into power, as they were bound to reduce the extraordinary expenditure thus forced on the Treasury by the late Government; not only that, but we had to make good the deficiency so caused. The works in particular districts were overlaid, and it was the business of whoever took office to see that no more road gangs and surveying parties were employed than the revenue of the colony could bear. Then, again, the amount of surveying which was going on without the sanction of Parliament was ridiculous. If our population consisted of

a million of people, and three-fourths of them navvies, there were enough surveyors to survey work from them all; and this being the case, is it right for the leader of the Opposition to tax us with driving people out of the colony, while only reducing unnecessary employes? What we have done has been merely to put off their political road gangs which were appointed for political reasons, and to abolish surveying parties which were appointed for political purposes also. That we have done to save the Treasury, and now the honourable member has nothing more to do than to tax us with driving men out of the colony. That I deny; but I would glory in driving men not wanted from the Government service, and I say that it is better even to have driven men out of the colony than to employ them unnecessarily and for political purposes. That is my answer to the charge of the honourable member. The next accusation the honourable gentleman made against the Ministry was, that they had for their own purposes brought about a change of directors of the Queensland National Bank. I was a director of that Bank when I accepted office, but I had had an opportunity of hearing the opinions of experienced men whether members of a Ministry should also be directors of a bank. I have studied the debates in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly on the subject, and have myself been always of opinion that the Treasurer of a colony had no right to be a bank director, as the interests of the two offices might be incompatible; therefore, on the day on which I took office as Colonial Treasurer, I had no hesitation as to the course I should pursue, and I resigned my position as a director. Whatever was done afterwards I will refer to presently, when I come to speak of the banking account. I say, however, that the position was one which no other member of a Government but the Treasurer would be placed in. I was a director of the bank whilst a member of a former Ministry, but no member then questioned the incompatibility of the two positions. I had to sit in the same Cabinet with the honourable gentleman who now brings the charge; but neither he nor any of his colleagues ever hinted at there being any incompatibility, nor was there. I do not see why any member of a Government, except the Treasurer, should not be a director of a bank, but I acted as I thought rightly in retiring when I accepted the position of Treasurer. So much for that part of the subject. There is another charge against the Government which to anyone who has read the correspondence—and I hope the honourable gentleman will take the trouble to move for it—will appear ridiculous. The honourable member accuses the pre-

sent Government of having rescinded some resolutions, or some minute, of the Cabinet authorising the construction of railways throughout the colony on some new plan most economical and serviceable. I hope the honourable member has been informed what has been done—that it is quite clear that we have rescinded the minute referred to. These are the terms in which the Ministry announced that they had discovered this new way of making railways, in the Speech, last session. In speaking about railways, it appeared, in January last, the honourable leader of the Opposition, who then occupied the position of Minister for Works, stated, through the Speech, that—

“In determining the character of this line (Townsville—Charters Towers), advantage has been taken of the information in the possession of my Government, which warrants a confident expectation of a large reduction in the cost of future railways, and a corresponding interest in the power of the colony to push forward these necessary means of internal communication.”

That referred to the report of Mr. Ballard, which I had seen some time previously, and there is not one new idea in the whole of this communication which was then made, and when the honourable the leader of the Opposition announced a new system. Why, I had been acquainted with this new system for years before, and did not believe in it. And what was it, after all, which we have rescinded? He proposed to adopt the system of gradients of 1 in 25, and that we should use 30-pound rails. That was the only part we actually rescinded, and it was the part of Mr. Ballard's system on which we differed and which I disapprove; so, too, does my honourable colleague. The next accusation brought against the Government is that in connection with the Northern Downs election, in which the leader of the Opposition has commenced that series of insinuations which were quite as disgraceful to him as to the side of the House in which he sits. He charges this Government that two Ministers were present at the Northern Downs election. I am told this is false.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan): Entirely false.

The PREMIER: It is false, and when I heard the leader of the Opposition saying it was a fact I was utterly astonished. Then comes the next charge of the Government, that of interference in a dispute between the engineers and the contractors in reference to the quality of the ballast used on the Western line. The honourable gentleman ought surely to consider the position of the Government, for he is there not only to attack the Ministry and criticise their actions, but he is there to see that they serve the interests of the country, as in this case I maintain they have done.

It is, besides, a matter entirely between the engineers and the contractors, and all that Government has to do in the matter is to see that the contractors do their work according to agreement. I deny that there has been any political feeling in the case at all: the matter has not gone beyond the verge of a professional dispute, which might arise over other than railway works; and then for the leader of the Opposition to tax the Government with mal-administration because they have tried to do the best they can for the interests of the country is not a procedure which reflects any credit upon him. Let him ascertain the facts, and then he may be justified in bringing in a charge. If we are not able to defend ourselves we will resign our position and take our places on the other side of the House. Another charge brought up against us is much the same as the road gang business, and it is a subject which, with all the sort of warmth the honourable member tried to throw into his speech, he was unable to give us any clue to where the fault lay—the dismissals from the Government workshops. He might have waited for the information on the subject which is available; but I think that Government, on a delicate question of this sort—a question which has given the Government a great deal of very painful consideration—should obtain some assistance from the House, and that such a matter ought to be removed out of the political arena altogether. There are no men who sympathise more deeply with those likely to be dismissed from the Government workshops than the members of the Government themselves; but instead of the leader of the Opposition bringing the accusation he has, I would have expected criticism on our action, and not such a statement as that it would be better to keep these people on than to drive them out of the colony. Is the colony in such a position that she can afford an expenditure of this sort, when it cannot be shown where the money to pay them is to be got? Did the honourable gentleman offer one suggestion on that point? Are we to borrow money to keep people in work in the Government workshops, for which the rest of the people of the colony will have to pay, when that work is not wanted? We have to see the distress of the colony actually proved before we can take up the principle of paying people. We do not want full wages to keep them in employment. All that we, as a Government, want is to get good work done for our money, and I will never be a member of a Government which pays men out of work simply for the sake of it; neither will I be a party to dismissing workmen for political considerations: I have not yet descended to such a depth as that, nor shall I. The leader of the

Opposition should have waited for the proofs of his statements, and should remember that there are two sides to the question, and though it is very hard that these men should be dismissed, it is also very hard that the colony should have to be taxed in order to keep them in work when they are not required. It is a purely false sentiment to bring forward an argument of that kind, and obstruct the Government in doing a good work, and which he knows to be a good work. I have answered all the charges the honourable member has brought against the Government, and I think honourable members will admit with me that they were very flimsy, and such as the honourable gentleman should have refrained from making; for, even if we were as bad as themselves, we could not have gone far wrong during these ten weeks; but he has gone out of his way to rake up little matters of no possible moment. His criticism, which I expected would occupy most of the time he was speaking, comes to very little when it is examined. He may say, if it please him, that there is very little matter for criticism in the Speech; but if that was so, he himself, without intending it, used a very strong argument as to its quality, for he urged nothing against it. I can assure him that the clauses which he said were apologetic were not meant to be so. I meant to make no apology in any case, and the honourable member never pointed out where the apologetic clauses were. Speaking in my own name and the name of my colleagues, I think I may say that there was no intention to be apologetic. The honourable member, again, says that the Speech criticised the conduct of previous Ministries, and had he pointed out in what respect it does so I would have offered him an apology; but I do not think there is any one word which criticises the late Government. It was never intended to do so, and the point he refers to does not bear that construction at all. I thought I was coming somewhere near the mark when, some time ago, I brought before the House what I considered to be the real evils of local government. I did not complain so much of bad legislation as of the inability to put the law into operation, and I know perfectly well it never will be brought into operation until the expenditure by the central Government on local works is stopped. If the object had been to prevent the Chinese from being employed on board the steamers, the Government had simply to put the law into operation to prevent their employment on the coast of Queensland. But that was not enough. The object of the Government was to get credit for having done a popular thing, and get the votes of the working men. They, however, overshot the mark and injured the interests of the country. We are now in the

position which had been deprecated here night after night, especially by members of the Opposition, of having created a monopoly which would tend to drive the trade of the colony to Sydney. What has the action of the Government now done? They have handed us over bound hand and foot to the A.S.N. Co., especially after the speech of the honourable member, in which he says we must accept whatever terms the company choose to impose upon us. I say we will not take any terms that may be offered, but will make the best arrangement possible undeterred by the popular cry which has been raised by the Opposition entirely for party purposes. I think it a most unpatriotic thing for the leader of the Opposition to try and obstruct us in this way. So far from serving the interests of the North, as they pretend they are doing, the reverse is the case—by driving us into the arms of a company said to be inimical to the colony. The honourable gentleman missed one point. The reason of our action was not the saving of £2,320: there are stronger reasons. Having been subject to such treatment by a Government on account of a popular cry, the company now insist that they will enter upon no contract for less than five years. Is not that something—to be handed over for five years to the company through the action of the late Government? The company was treated badly, and that is why they have made the terms so hard upon us. The honourable gentleman should certainly have been better informed on the legislation of the last few years in which he took so active a part before he spoke. A paragraph was put in the Speech announcing our intention to throw open for selection certain lands adjoining the Central Railway. The honourable gentleman had a good deal to do with that abominable Bill—the Railway Reserves Bill. The reserve, for political reasons, was made to go in one direction and the railway in another, so that the railway traversed the reserve diagonally and came out at one corner. The consequence was that at places land contiguous to the line was locked from settlement and other land a long distance off thrown open. If he had had the knowledge he ought to have had he would not have made such mistakes. Our action with regard to immigration was not taken until after very long consideration, and it was with great regret we brought ourselves to believe it was necessary to reduce it, and ultimately to stop it. Does the honourable gentleman mean to say we were wrong? He does not dare to say so, but he says we have driven men out of the colony. I say that his action prevents men from coming to the colony. The howl raised about the dismissal of a couple of hundred men is enough to prevent men

from coming to us from the other colonies. The late Ministry, without due consideration, allowed immigrant ships to leave England in most extraordinary numbers, and emigrants came at times when they should not have come, and in quantities in which they should not have come. It never struck them that they would hurt the colony and drive population out of it. That people have been driven from the colony is entirely because of negligence on this most important subject. If it was vastly important not to dismiss a hundred men, was it not grossly wrong to allow six thousand to land on these shores when there was not work for them? They have done this, and now they criticise our action in stopping immigration. It was, however, the only course which could be taken by us as men who looked to the welfare of the colony. And now I come to a matter in which the honourable gentleman has done both me and this House a gross injustice. I say that if I were capable of doing what has been insinuated against me I should be not only unworthy of being a Minister of the Crown, but unworthy of being a member of the House. I say that, and appeal to the House to support me. The honourable gentleman should have brought his charges in a definite way, and not have simply insinuated them. He insinuated that it was a foregone conclusion on the part of the directors of the Queensland National Bank that they would get possession of the Government of the colony, and then transfer the bank account from one bank to another by undue means, which would amount to something a great deal worse than swindling. He said in terms as plain as possible that the tender of one bank had been opened, and communication made with the Queensland National Bank by the Treasurer, to enable that institution to tender accordingly. Such was insinuated, not only here but elsewhere, and it has been spread over the colony. The honourable gentleman, I believe, was acting with the authors of the slander, for he was talking *Evangelical Standard* for ten minutes to-night, and quoting articles from it. That paper did not mince matters. I knew what kind of men I had to deal with, and took care to see that I was above suspicion in this matter. Everything I have done is open to investigation and criticism. If the honourable gentleman had been a little honest he would have called for papers, and not allow such an accusation to go abroad over the colony. If this is the way the Government of the country is to be conducted, and Ministers to be attacked, it is a downward step in the progress of responsible Government. I acted in a very different way from that insinuated by the honourable gentleman, and from the party to which he belongs. About three years ago it happened that the party now in

Opposition were in power, and they made, without calling for tenders or asking any bank in the colony to tender, a contract extending over three years with the Union Bank. That contract was made by their Treasurer, Mr. Hommant, at a time when he knew he was leaving the Government and the colony. He left the Government and the colony, I believe, within one month of that time. No mention was made in the Governor's Speech of any such important transactions having taken place. The session passed on, and not a word was said about the transaction. After a great portion of the members had left the House for good—I myself was in another part of the colony—in the last few days of the session it was dragged out of the honourable gentleman that such an agreement had been made, and he, I think, promised to produce it the next day. He did not attempt to justify the entering upon such an important negotiation without competition and without the knowledge of Parliament, but simply excused himself by saying the action was taken by his predecessor. I found that agreement expired on the 10th April. I was satisfied, from taking the best opinions, which were all unanimous, that such was the case. It was my desire to terminate at once a contract commenced under such auspices, and I was determined it should be a matter of competition between the banks of the colony. I asked for tenders to be in time to take up the account when I considered the contract expired—on the 10th April. I knew the time was too short, but it was all I could give to get tenders in time. Had I extended the time over that the agreement would have held good for another six months. The Union Bank knew it was the intention of the Government to leave the account with them a reasonable time if it were transferred. Had I put that in writing in calling for tenders the bank would have claimed for the whole six months, in spite of all I could do. I was therefore forced to call for tenders, and could only give the short time I did. I had very good reason afterwards for altering the time. As soon as the banks represented that they had not sufficient time to tender it was a different matter altogether—I saw the interests of the country might suffer if there was no competition, and I immediately extended the time. As soon as I found that I could not extend to any other time than the 11th September, I made that the date. I acted strictly according to the agreement in everything I did. The honourable gentleman accuses me of having prevented combinations of banks from tendering. I did nothing of the sort. A combination consisting of four banks wrote to me making this proposition—"if you give us the Government account we are prepared to

offer very good terms." One part of the proposition was, that it should include any other bank that might wish to join. I gave that offer a distinct negative; but I never, verbally or by correspondence, allowed the slightest objection to be made to a combination of the banks tendering, and I was surprised to find that no tender was received; but I should have a decided objection to all the banks tendering in combination for the Government account. I should not like, in conducting the Treasury, to have the whole of the banks doing the Government business. If I had any little business to do, it would be necessary to consult seven or eight managers—and these, again, would have to consult their principals in the other colonies—as to whether the proposals should be accepted. Why, under such a system there would not be sufficient time to work the ordinary business of the Treasury. Further, I do not believe that the transaction of Government business by banking combinations has been a success. I believe Victoria has suffered more from that cause than any other, excepting Graham Berry. Before I finish my remarks I have to notice the foulest accusation that was made against me—viz., that the tenders were opened by me in such a way as to give me an opportunity of communicating the contents of the one bank to the other which was successful. The honourable leader of the Opposition also said that it had always been the custom to read out to the tenderers their tenders when opened; but he has been Minister for Works long enough to know that he is wrong in this regard. I do not remember any railway contract in which the particulars were read out except when the tender was for a lump sum, and the railway tenders were never read out in this colony. One of the managers of the banks wrote to me to intimate that he would like to be present. When that request came I invited them to be present. I opened the tenders in their presence, consisting of a great many folios of close writing. The Union Bank's tender occupied eight pages, and by looking at it you could draw just as clear a financial conclusion as you could from Greek. I was rather struck by one of the managers asking me if I was not going to read out the tenders. It would have been just as absurd my doing that as if the Minister for Works were to read down the schedule of prices in a railway tender. I would have been placed in just as ridiculous a position, and I said so. I will tell what I did: I called in the Under-Secretary for the Treasury, and wrote my name on every page, and got him to do the same, and then to take the tenders to his office and analyse them. I did not see them for three hours; he was not able to make out by that time which was the most favourable; it required an

analysis extending over two days before he could come to the conclusion that he did. I should have put myself in a false position had I consented to the course of action requested; so, instead of being accused of having made a fool of myself, I consider I deserve credit for having the courage to stand out against it, and subject myself to the base insinuation made by the honourable leader of the Opposition. I am prepared to put every paper connected with the transaction before the House when asked for. Had I known what the honourable member wished for, I should have had the papers here and helped him to get out of the realms of wild imagination into those of facts. I have been accused of want of courtesy in intimating that the revenue anticipated by the late Government would not be realised, and that a deficit would result. How could I have allowed the Speech to go by without mentioning that fact? It is true, and the honourable member will find it a disagreeable truth; if it had not been for that fact the honourable member would likely be still sitting on these benches. It is a patent fact, and it is a significant indication that by whatever means we keep office it will not be by extravagant Government. With respect to the paragraph about the waterworks, the honourable member insinuated that it was a sop to Brisbane. He may call it what he likes. I think it a very useful work; and, until it is settled how Brisbane is to be supplied with water, the innumerable claims outside, in the suburbs, cannot be settled. I believe I am justified in taking the bull by the horns by appointing a competent man to report on the matter, and giving us what we have never yet had—namely, sound information. The honourable member's failure to find a policy in the Speech, ignoring the contents of the Speech altogether, was a convincing argument to me that the policy was there, and that he was afraid it would be carried out successfully. He sees it there, and knows that it will be carried out, and that in carrying it out great discredit will be thrown upon the legislation for many years past. The honourable member does not see how we are to get out of our financial difficulties by putting into operation the causes mentioned in paragraph 11 of the Speech. I have given the matter a good deal of consideration, and these causes he will find to be much stronger than he estimates. By curtailing the work done by the Central Government, by diverting back certain funds appropriated from the general revenue by the Railway Reserves Act, and by encouraging extended settlement upon the land, we will be able to work a wonderful reform. But for the great mistake made in tampering with the general revenue two or three years ago we would now be in a sound financial condition. Had that Act not

passed, and had nothing like the strong exertions that were used to force a large amount of land into the market been employed, had the sales been confined to the normal amount of previous years, our finances would have been sound, although I believe the times would have been bad also. That Act, however, was the direct and immediate cause of our deficit; without it we would have had the balance on the right side, and would have avoided the discredit of appearing with a large deficit whilst the other colonies were recording a surplus. I do not say the money has been lost, but this financing and book-keeping has had the effect of bringing discredit upon the colony which should have been avoided. The other cause of the deficit lies deeper still—in the policy of the Government undertaking works which were beyond the strength of the colony, in order to retain office. I should like to have had the assurance of the leader of the Opposition that he would assist the Government to abolish the possibility of such a state of things recurring—to take away from Ministers the patronage they possess, and the power they have of spending money where they like. I do not think we will have good government until we do this—we will always be in financial difficulties. It will be our object to get the Government out of the difficulty, and I expect the assistance of the honourable member. There is no man can give us more efficient assistance, and, from the action that he took last year in passing the Local Government Bill, he ought to be more ready to come to the assistance of the Government.

Mr. DICKSON: The careful and well-selected remarks with which the proposer and seconder of the Address in Reply introduced their speeches went a long way, to my mind, to cover the demerits of what I conceive to be a very fragmentary policy, as shadowed forth in this Speech; but the honourable the Colonial Treasurer, who has just addressed the House, has, I think, not improved the position in which they left it. He has, as the Government have persistently done ever since they got into office, shown a desire to heap all the obloquy possible upon his predecessors to cover the inactivity or mal-administration of his own Government. The Government have had a very prolonged recess, and during that time public opinion expected that a firm, bold, progressive policy would now be enunciated, and I have no hesitation in saying that throughout the length and breadth of this colony there will be a general feeling of disappointment at the policy that has been uttered by His Excellency the Governor this day. The honourable the leader of the Government must expect a fair amount of criticism to be directed, not only to the policy they have shadowed forth, but also

to the actions of the Government during the late long recess. He should take in good part the criticisms of my honourable friend the leader of the Opposition as directed against his policy, and not as slander against himself. His remarks, to my mind, conveyed no such meaning, but simply put into form what had been the subject of common rumour during the recess. I am convinced that, if my honourable friend had an opportunity of speaking again, he would say there was not the slightest intention of slander, or of insinuating anything discreditable to the honourable the Treasurer of this colony. I was sorry to hear the last speaker offend himself in the manner he complains of and make use of some expressions in connection with the late Government which conveyed a very severe accusation against them. He stated that the late Government squandered a large amount of public money for the express purpose of keeping political road-parties employed on the different roads of the colony. That, sir, is a very grave accusation for the honourable the Treasurer to make, unless he is thoroughly convinced of its accuracy, because it is not only an attempt to vilify the character of the late Administration, but also casts discredit on gentlemen who were a short time ago connected with that Administration, and retired from it before that Government vacated office. The honourable member for Darling Downs and the senior member for North Brisbane, if this be true, must have had a share in it—in fact, every gentleman who formed part of the last Administration must have been *particeps criminis*. But I give that statement the most unqualified denial: there is not one scintilla of truth in it, and I challenge the honourable the Treasurer to prove it. And I say that when we are accused of trumping up statements for the mere purpose of gaining popularity—an accusation made this evening against the leader of the Opposition—we ought certainly have, if it is true, a better example shown us by the gentlemen now in office in exercising a certain amount of care and judgment in giving utterance to an announcement of such a defamatory character as the honourable the Treasurer has uttered this evening. I should really not like this matter to rest here; I should like it sifted to the bottom; and court the fullest inquiry, in order that the statement may be either substantiated or dispelled, and I am sure that is also the desire of the honourable member for Darling Downs, and the senior member for North Brisbane. My intention is now to glance at some points in the Speech which my honourable friend the leader of the Opposition, in his very able and exhaustive speech, did not dwell upon. I do not do so in any captious spirit, but

that the country may be placed in possession of information on what has taken place during the last few months, and also to obtain information upon some hazy paragraphs in the Speech. Immigration is, I consider, spoken of in a very hazy manner. It is spoken of as requiring regulating; but while it may be very desirable to regulate our immigration system, it is a totally different question whether it is desirable to suspend it altogether. I also desire to draw attention to some slight inconsistency in expression and action on the part of the honourable the Treasurer and Premier during the late recess. At a banquet given at Ipswich, on the occasion of the return of the Minister for Justice, the Premier was present, and in the course of a practical common-sense speech made the following remarks:—

“The Premier, on rising, was accorded an ovation, and in replying said it gave him very great gratification to be there, and that there was nothing in the arrangements which did the committee more credit than that the toast of the Ministry should have been placed in the hands of a German gentleman. During the elections he had never hesitated to acknowledge their value as settlers, before even Englishmen, Scotchmen, or Irishmen; but through an unfortunate speech which was made, and which the German mind took so much to heart as almost to make a party cry of it, he had never said much on the subject. Still, he was satisfied himself that the good sense of the Germans would eventually cause them to see in what direction their interests lay, and that the prosperity of the colony would be best served by the party now in power. Long before the elections came on he had stuck up for the Germans.”

The PREMIER: Where is that from?

Mr. DICKSON: It is from the special reporter of the *Telegraph* of 11th February.

The PREMIER: The *Ipswich Observer*?

Mr. DICKSON: No; the *Telegraph*—the organ of the Government, I suppose. Now let us see the *denouement*! On the 29th of February out comes a ukase from the Colonial Secretary stopping German immigration altogether, and reducing European immigration to two-thirds. If there had been any sincerity in the remarks of the Treasurer at that banquet, surely one would have thought that one of his subordinate Ministers would not have dared to stop completely the very source of immigration so much belauded by him on that occasion, or that if there was necessity for restricting immigration, he would have taken equal action in regard to both Continental and British immigration. I maintain that immigration to this colony ought never to have been suspended—that it ought to be regulated I admit. I quite agree with the Government that it is undesirable to have immigrants pouring in during our summer

months; but I say it is unwise and unstatesmanlike to stop it altogether, and that the mere mention of it is not calculated to raise our position as a progressive colony in the eyes of the civilized world, and particularly in any portion of the British dominions. With regard to the paragraph of the Speech concerning the banking agreement, I am glad to have heard the remarks of the honourable the Treasurer, and particularly that he is prepared to lay all documents connected with those banking tenders, and all correspondence connected with banking that he has received during the time he has been in office, upon the table.

The PREMIER: Everything you like to ask for.

MR. DICKSON: I should like to have all papers that will give information to the public—the correspondence with the Union Bank and the Queensland National Bank, and all correspondence between the Treasurer and several banks concerning the question of special deposits, since the 1st of January. I think the honourable the Treasurer was unnecessarily sore regarding the remarks of the honourable the leader of the Opposition concerning his having declined to read the tenders when called upon to do so. It was certainly a rumour that reached my ears, and one that might lead many to think that there was some sinister motive. Nothing of that kind arose in my mind, but still it was told to me on good authority. I am glad the honourable gentleman has given such good reasons for his conduct, which appears to have been perfectly *bond fide*, and I think he ought to be gratified at having had an opportunity of clearing up the misconception. The remarks I now make concerning the banking arrangements are not intended as insinuations against him personally, but as showing a want of judgment in dealing with the banking transactions of the colony. My first ground of complaint is this:—On the 1st January we had an amount of £1,900,000 in the hands of the banks in the colonies and in London; of that amount £380,000 was a special deposit outside the Government Bank. There is a clause in the agreement with the Union Bank whereby, should the balance be reduced below £200,000, then the Government are bound to replenish their account, which of course they would be quite justified in doing, by withdrawing deposits in other banks; and should this emergency have arisen in February, the Treasurer would have been quite justified in taking the action he did. Yet, notwithstanding this large amount of available moneys, the honourable gentleman created a flutter in banking circles, and a great deal of uncertainty and alarm in commercial circles, by intimating to the respective banks that as these special de-

posits matured they would be withdrawn. Had the necessity arisen to replenish the Union Bank account he would have been doing right, but no such necessity had arisen; and at a time when trade was dull and commercial prospects gloomy, to disturb the general feeling of security in the accommodation extended by the different banks to their respective constituents was a most unnecessary and unjustifiable proceeding. These deposits came due in one institution almost immediately after the notification was given, and but for the leniency of the Colonial Treasurer, obtained through strong representation, that bank would have had to part with £100,000 within a week or two of the time this notification was made. The principle existing between the banks and the Government of New South Wales was one which he would have done well to adopt. It is to this effect—that if the special deposits are to be withdrawn, thirty days' notice must be given before one-fifth only can be withdrawn. Those withdrawals are made *pro rata* on the different banks, and an interval of thirty days must elapse before the successive one-fifths can be withdrawn. By that means the banks and their constituents have no apprehension of any accommodation made between them being unreasonably disturbed. If such a system exists in a large and wealthy community like New South Wales, how much greater is the necessity for it here, more especially in a time of general depression? I endeavoured to carry out this principle, and if I had occasion to withdraw these special deposits, I should have endeavoured to act accordingly. The second point is, that on the 17th February the banks received a circular dated the 13th of the same month, inviting them to tender for the Government account, such tenders to be lodged in the Treasury by the 25th February, an interval of eight days. It must be borne in mind that our banking transactions range between £3,000,000 and £4,000,000 per annum, including our revenue and loan transactions, and it will hardly be contended by any common-sense man that eight days is a sufficient period for banks to make arrangement for tendering for such an immense amount under the different details necessitated by the exigencies of the public service. No private individual with a banking account of one-tenth that amount would imagine that a transfer could be consummated and all the details arranged in anything like that period. These are facts, and they are not mentioned by me as an insinuation against the honourable discharge of his duties by the Colonial Treasurer, but as sustaining what was thought a grave error of judgment on his part in endeavouring to fix the banking arrangements of the colony within such a limited period. Regarding the ques-

tion of bank directorship, I am not afraid to express boldly my opinion as to the impropriety of any member of the Executive being a director of a banking institution, particularly of a banking institution tendering for the public account. An Act of Parliament excludes the Auditor-General from being a bank director, and how much more careful ought we to be that the temporary administrators of the Government should be, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion. I hope the Colonial Secretary will not feel like his colleague, the Treasurer, annoyed at these remarks. Although in New South Wales they have not carried the resolution twice before the House precluding members of the Executive Council from being bank directors, yet the common sense of the community will, I am sure, agree with me that it is highly desirable that a bank director ought not to be a member of the Executive Council, particularly when such bank is a tenderer for the public account. How can he discharge both duties satisfactorily to himself? He sits at the board room advocating that the bank shall tender for the public account, and he sits at the Executive Council advocating that the Government should give it to that bank as the most favourable tenderer. Possibly the Colonial Secretary had acted in this matter with the utmost correctness, at the same time he had placed himself in such a peculiar position that people would not be apt to give him full credit for the correctness of his motives. Then we were told by the local press, when the Queensland National Bank tender was accepted, that a saving of £3,500 was to be effected locally, and a similar sum in the working of the London office. I shall be pleased to see how this great saving can be effected, inasmuch as the total cost of managing the public account last year was exactly £3,500, both in London and the colonies, exclusive of loan negotiation. The year before it was £4,000, and the year before that £4,100. The figures appear to have been given with some authority, for they appear in the Government paper.

The PREMIER: I do not deny the correctness of the figures.

Mr. DICKSON: Then the honourable gentleman must have made a mistake, or the Auditor-General's report is unreliable, and, with all respect, I prefer the Auditor-General's report even to the statement of the Colonial Treasurer. But I intend to ask for a comparative statement showing how much the keeping of the public account with the Union Bank cost us, and how much would have accrued had the same account been kept by the Queensland National Bank. I agree with what the Colonial Treasurer has said about associated banks on the Victorian system, and I think he would have been very unwise to have committed himself to the

trammels which surround the Victorian Treasurer. I think the proper course would have been to have divided for a time the account between the Union Bank and the Queensland National Bank, by which means the Treasurer would have had double banking power in floating any future loan in the London market. I am glad to see a local institution get a share of the public account, but it is a question whether an old and wealthy corporation like the Union Bank should altogether be abandoned, especially as it has up to the present time discharged its duties, on the whole, satisfactorily and to the benefit of the colony. The ninth paragraph of the Speech deals with the sale of land under the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act, and that has been so well touched upon by the leader of the Opposition that I need say very little about it, except that I certainly understood the Colonial Treasurer, at an interview I had with him, to give expression to his intention to endeavour to let the country see how disastrous the Act was.

The PREMIER: I disclaim that word. I admitted that I thought the result would be disastrous, but I was bound to follow the law.

Mr. DICKSON: The impression left on my mind was that the honourable gentleman said he intended to let the country see how disastrous the measure was; but I accept his disclaimer, and will only remark that, whether my version be correct or not, his action in selling all the runs on one day was not in accordance with the law, but rather a defiance of the law. It certainly does not tend towards the fulfilment of the intention mentioned in another paragraph of fostering and extending settlement on the land. Selling eight millions of acres simultaneously at the various land courts of the colony does not look much like fostering settlement on the land. I now come to what I consider the richest part of the Speech, although possibly my view of it may not exactly coincide with the Treasurer's. This is the eleventh paragraph, wherein the Colonial Treasurer tells us that by removing from the central Government certain local responsibilities, by carefully supervising the public disbursements, and by diverting back—a strange expression—into the Consolidated Revenue the proceeds of the Railway Reserves Bill, we are all to be placed in a state of prosperity. Now what does this "diverting back" mean? It implies that we are to borrow £400,000 from the public creditor to replenish our deficient revenue account. We are, in short, to debit loan and credit revenue to this extent. This is to save us from all our ills; and by simply changing the Treasury books from double to single entry, we are to write-off

£400,000, and everything is to be pleasant. I say, sir, that it is a system of book-keeping of the very wildest character; it has not even the recommendation of common honesty to the public creditor. We are to fill up a deficiency of revenue from loan, and, instead of telling the public creditor openly our position, we are to say, "Oh, we have allocated certain lands for railway construction; and we want to borrow money on this special security." I say that this is a very undignified way of dealing with our financial affairs, and is unworthy of the honourable the Colonial Treasurer, from whom I expected better things. If our revenue is not sufficient for our expenditure, then we, as statesmen, should look around for legitimate means of increasing our revenue—not by any double or single entry in the Treasury books, but by practically increasing the influx of money to the coffers of the Treasury. If ever there was a time appropriate to a revision of the tariff it is the present. We are driven to that position that we are bound to revise our tariff. It is at present full of incongruities, and yet the honourable Treasurer thinks that he can evade the difficulty of a revision by the recovery of money into the Treasury from loan on account of the railway reserves. Whilst on this subject I would ask how the interest on our loans are to be provided for? Surely the honourable gentleman does not intend to devote that £400,000 to the payment of interest as well as to covering the deficiency in the revenue? The honourable gentleman has had difficulties to contend with, but his chief difficulty has arisen from an inherent fault in the constitution of the Government itself arising from an association of gentlemen in a Cabinet who hold diametrically opposite views on some of the largest political questions. The honourable Colonial Secretary is a pronounced free-trader, whilst the honourable Colonial Treasurer is an equally pronounced protectionist. There can be no common platform between these gentlemen on which even the rudiments of taxation can be discussed. One of these must be subordinate to the other, and, because they cannot settle their differences, a little piece of book-keeping jugglery is resorted to; but I think that these things will have to be explained, for I say that this is the time when the tariff should be revised. We have ample scope by adjustment to increase that tariff without overburdening the people: but I saw at a glance, when this paragraph of the Speech was read, that the protectionist and free-trader could not meet on one common platform, and that they consequently said—We will evade the whole question of fiscal policy, simply because one of us would have to give way. I say, sir, that it is a most unfortunate thing for the country that it should have Ministers holding such a difference of opinion. This

must be the true position of the Government, otherwise they could not have evaded a question which, of all others, is the question which agitates the public mind. We have been told, in another paragraph,

"You will therefore be asked to make provision by loan for carrying on these and other public undertakings with vigour."

"These and other public undertakings," so far as I can read this paragraph, refer to the extension of our railways into the interior; and whether these works are to be continually prosecuted by borrowing from the public creditor is a question which will not be allowed to remain unanswered in this Chamber. There are several gentlemen pledged to see that if such railways are constructed the settlers on the coast must likewise participate in construction of branch lines; and, whilst on this subject, I will ask how we have floated our last loan? I should like to know how it is that in 1879 we should only get £89 whilst in 1878 we got £92 11s. We floated our loan in 1878 in the face of great Continental troubles; but in March, 1879, tranquility was restored, and we had recovered, or were gradually recovering, from the effect of the commercial depression in the mother country. If the Government had waited till the month of May, as I proposed to do, I have no hesitation in saying that we should have got £93. In New South Wales they obtained £98 8s., and yet our loan, which has always been held in favour, has been parted with at £89, or the same as we got in 1872. I say that there must be something wrong in the way in which it was floated. The debentures were sent home in January without instructions; but I think the honourable Treasurer might well have acted on the action of Government of the year before, and fixed the reserve at £92 or £93. Instead of fixing the lower limit of £88 10s., the honourable gentleman might even have placed himself in this position, and said to the English capitalist—We consider our bonds worth par, but will abide by tenders. If he had done so he might possibly have got more than £93. I find that in 1872 our money borrowed cost us £4 10s. per cent.; in 1878, £4 6s. 6d. per cent.; and in 1879, £4 9s. 11d. per cent. I also make the calculation that, assuming our loan to have been floated at £93, there would have been a saving to the colony of (in round numbers) £17,000. It is all very well of the Government to turn round and accuse their predecessors of extravagance, yet they have lost a sum of £17,000 to the colony, entailing a loss, through payment of interest on capital lost in floating loan, of £2,024 annually, which would have gone far towards paying the increased subsidy to the

A. S. N. Company. It seems to me that the funds of the colony have been allowed to be given away by not attending to this important matter, whilst a paltry £2,000 additional for our seaboard mail service has been refused. I think, sir, I have briefly glanced over such of the paragraphs of the Speech as seem to me to demand attention. I must say that I am disappointed with the Speech as a whole. It does not indicate anything like what the country demands. There is in it too much of the caution and not sufficient progression. I do not advocate extravagance, but, at the same time, as a young country we are bound to be competitors for progress equally with our sister colonies; and if the report goes abroad, as it must do from this Speech, that the present Government do not intend to proceed with public works or to prosecute a policy of progress, I am certain the colony will suffer. With regard to the discharge of 103 men from the railway workshops, I think that the obvious course to have pursued would have been this:—Assuming that it was necessary to discharge some men—and possibly Government may be able to shew that such dismissals were necessary—surely the more proper course would have been to reduce the number of working hours all round, and to have allowed a certain amount of time to these men to obtain work elsewhere. I am sure it must be seen by the Government that their action has been somewhat precipitate. If they have three hundred men at Ipswich, and it was necessary to reduce them by one-third, they might have reduced the hours of work by one-third, which would have brought about the same result in economy of disbursements. If the Government had looked to the economical floating of the loan it would have been more to the benefit of the colony, and probably we should not have had to discharge these men; but it is the amount of money thrown away on that loan that has rendered it necessary. The Government take *kudos* for dealing with the public works at present in progress, but I fail to see that the dismissal of 103 skilled artizans proves their argument. I should have liked that the Government policy had been one which, if I had criticised it, I could also have approved. I shall endeavour honestly to support what measures I conceive conducive to the good of the country. But in this Speech there is a remarkable absence of policy; and in one of the most important particulars—that of taxation—there is a total silence. Under these circumstances I very much regret that I am unable to support the Address in Reply.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will take up the speech of the late Treasurer where he left off, and allude to those matters first

which he has just spoken on. He wants to know what was wrong about the floating of our loan. Well, I will tell him. It must have been the management of his pet bank—the Union Bank of Australia—who had the management of the loan in London.

Mr. DICKSON: Subject to Executive direction.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If there was anything wrong in the floating of the loan that was where it occurred. I deny that there was any mismanagement so far as we were concerned. Coming immediately after the Victorian loan, which it would not have done except for the action of the late Treasurer, it could not be placed so advantageously. Then the late Treasurer gives us a lecture upon our duty with respect to the tariff. Well, we certainly expect to be criticised, but it must be by some one who has a right to do so, and the honourable member for Enoggera has none. The honourable member maintains, now, that it is the duty of this Government to alter the tariff. Was it not just as much the duty of the late Government, men who for years have endeavoured to run the country into debt, and to a destruction which we are now endeavouring and are going to extricate it from? We know what their speeches were, and that we got every possible form of promise in their speeches, not one of which was ever fulfilled. They did make an alteration in the tariff, certainly, they put a duty on rice, and can credit themselves with having starved a few unfortunate Chinese, to the detriment of many a poor woman and family in Queensland. If that was carrying out a promise to deal with the tariff, I do not know what a promise is. Then the honourable gentleman told us he had got behind the scenes as to what the present Ministry were thinking about on this subject. He told us he was perfectly aware of the facts, and that he had heard a long discussion on the subject of the tariff. And he went on to say that it was unfortunate for the Ministry that one leading member should be a protectionist and another a freetrader. But let me tell him it is perfectly possible for those gentlemen to meet on a common ground, as regards the tariff, for revenue purposes. I tell him further, if he likes to hear it, that if he has assumed there is nothing in the Speech which discloses our policy in this respect, we can at any future time, as we think it right, alter the tariff as we choose, if we are able. The honourable member has travelled out of his record, and has assumed a knowledge which he does not possess. A further charge he has made against us is, that we have neglected our duties in connection with the sales of land. Pray, who neglected theirs? The late Government most certainly, who succeeded in getting a

majority who were actually rallied together by the old squatting cry, and who passed a Bill they did not believe in, and which was against their common sense. Then, when they had got the Bill, why did not the late Government carry out the terms of the law? What do we find? Why, that the pastoral lessees were entitled to six months' notice under the Act, and when the 30th of September came no action was taken or attempt made to inaugurate the sales, and they treated the matter as if nothing had ever been done. We did simply our duty, and that we might do it we tested the best legal knowledge—even going further than the Minister for Justice, and we took the best advice we could get in the country. It was on clear legal opinion we carried out the law, and the result is known to the country. We prevented a contemptible "ring"—a land ring—from going round pretending to purchase these runs, in order to extort money from those who already held them. That was why the sales were held on one day. If there had been competition from neighbouring colonies, the parties would then have been here or would have had agents to buy up these runs; but there was no competition, and I maintain that not one run less or more was sold under the previous system than would have been sold on the one day. What was the previous system? What became of all their wonderful advertisements, puffing advertisements in a style only worthy of George Robins? What good did ever they do? And now they expect us to follow out their miserable policy, and throw away money without an object on useless advertisements. Then we had a long parade from the honourable gentleman—and any stranger coming into the House could not but think he was an interested advocate of one of the banks—as to the way in which the Treasurer should have acted in withdrawing the balances from the different banks. He may think his criticism of some value, but he will excuse us if we think it is not worth a straw, and that really his conduct during the time he was in the Treasury, the intimate want of knowledge he showed on all monetary and financial transactions, do not entitle us to listen to anything he may say. He succeeded in ruining the colony into a frightful state. But it is not the man who capsizes the coach from whom we take the warning. He made a great point of the Treasurer giving notice of the removal of deposits in the bank, but if he had any knowledge of finances he would have known that the money was wanted, and that if the loan had not been floated every penny of it must have been withdrawn. He began by quoting from some account of an after-dinner speech of my honourable friend, in which he praised the Germans. What

deductions the honourable gentleman drew I do not know—he probably does not know himself. He said because the Colonial Treasurer stated at Ipswich that the Germans made colonists superior in some respects to our own, which I myself think was a bit of buttering—

The PREMIER: I did not say it, and do not think it, at all events.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Germans are remarkably good colonists, but they are not better than our own countrymen. The honourable gentleman opposite seemed to think that the natural deduction from my honourable friend's speech was, that we were going to introduce Germans on a large scale. I will let a little light into his mind on this matter. We stopped German immigration partly because we did not believe they were better than our own countrymen and should be brought over in preference to them, but chiefly because there was no contract for bringing them out, while there was a contract for bringing out our own countrymen. What the honourable member meant to prove—why he spent so much time in proving nothing about German immigration I do not know. Another misquotation he made was as to what he stated the Premier said about political road-parties. He did not call them political road-parties—the men composing them probably knew very little, and cared very little, about politics; but what he did say was that they were road-parties formed for a political purpose. And that they were placed in every part of the colony where it could be done, whether they were wanted or not, for a particular purpose—I maintain and will maintain. Then he contradicted his leader, the leader of the Opposition, by taxing us with inactivity. Why, the fact is that his leader a very short time previously had made it a charge against us that we had been mischievously busy ever since we had been in office. It is only necessary to put the two statements together. I do not congratulate the honourable member for Brisbane on his speech. Anything so petty and so mean as the nonsense he made in the speech he gave this evening I never heard even from him. I think a great deal more of the speech of the honourable member for Enoggera. He told us what his opinions were as to my conduct and the conduct of the banks. He said that he thought I had no right to accept the directorship of a bank, and that I had placed myself in a false position by doing so. But the late Colonial Treasurer made no insinuations, and in this respect he did not follow the example of his worthy leader, who made every possible nasty insinuation upon the subject. I am the best judge of my position. If I consider I may hold a dual position, which I can do with perfect security to the bank and to the country, I

will put it to the test of public opinion whether I am right or the honourable member for Enoggera. I am in no false position with the Queensland National Bank, and am not likely to put myself in a false position with the country. The duty of the Colonial Treasurer is different from that of any other member of the Ministry. Upon such a financial question it is his duty to decide, and it should be left to him. We find that in a neighbouring colony the Premier tried to carry a motion that no member of the Ministry should be a bank director; and yet he was very glad to take as his Treasurer a director of the City Bank. He justified his action in doing so on the ground that, although his individual opinion was against it, the majority thought otherwise, and he had to give way. I do not see why the Treasurer should not be the director of a bank if he choose; it is a matter wholly and solely for his private consideration. With respect to any other member I say it does not put him in any false position whatever. It is his duty as director to see that the bank does not tender for a sum which will not pay the shareholders;—it is his duty as a member of the Government to see that the lowest tender is accepted. How is he brought into antagonism with either party in any way, unless, as the honourable member for Brisbane has shadowed out, he were guilty of the dishonesty of insisting upon a higher tender being taken;—then he would occupy an inconsistent position, and ought not to be the director of a bank, nor a Minister, but should be scouted out of society. What possible harm could there be in the director of a bank being also a Minister? If he was fit for one position he would probably have a better insight into the affairs of the other, and be more fit to hold the two positions than another man. If he attempted to make bad use of his position, to put the country into a hole, by inducing his colleagues to give the tender to a bank that had tendered higher than another, he would be in a false position. That this has not been done will be shown when the papers are produced, and the honourable the late Treasurer would have shown wisdom by refraining from making a long speech on a subject about which he at present evidently knows nothing. He has only listened to one side of the story—a side which I have no hesitation in saying has no truth in it. But, to return to my senior colleague. He first attacked me as Minister for Public Instruction, and said I had been absolutely guilty of altering the regulations brought in by him. I do not consider I have done any wrong. I believe I have a right to alter the whole of those regulations, if my colleagues agree with me that it is good for the country that such a course should be taken. What is this mighty

regulation which has been altered? The Act provides that one-fifth of the money for erecting a new school shall be subscribed before the Department steps in. The instructions were made in such a way that a power was left in the hands of the Minister which ought not to be in the hands of any Minister, because it allowed him to make fish of one and flesh of another. If an application for a new school in a favoured locality was made to him, he could grant it without obliging the inhabitants to subscribe the one-fifth of the cost. The records of the Department will show that. I altered the regulation immediately. I said, "You shall all stand on the same footing, and pay the one-fifth," and I have carried that rule out. Now, how did the honourable gentleman carry out that regulation? A minute of the Executive Council, brought forward by the honourable gentleman himself, shows that the old Toowoomba Hospital, a place not fit for pigs, has been transferred to the Education Department for this purpose, at a cost of £3,500, and not one shilling has been voted by this House for the purpose, nor one shilling subscribed by the inhabitants. A new hospital is to be built, and £3,500 to be charged by that minute to the vote for education. Then we have Maryborough, the pet stronghold of the late Premier, where a new immigration dépôt, constructed out of public funds without a shilling being subscribed, is to be turned over to the School Department. In Ipswich, another favoured locality, we find an old store of J. and G. Harris has been purchased at a cost of £2,000, for a school, without one shilling being subscribed. Is the honourable member who has been Minister of Public Instruction, and done these deeds, the man to censure me? The honourable gentleman also attacked me about the Local Government Bill. He asks why we did not follow up the action of the late Government, and put the Act in force. What was their action? There was one petition from Gympie for making that town into a municipality, and another petition out-numbering it from the other side comes down; so nothing could be done. Another came from Bundaberg, and a precisely similar transaction followed. There were fifty names to one petition, and fifty-four to the other, so that settled that. Another came from Drayton, asking that a shire might be made; and immediately the notice appeared in the *Gazette* a counter petition came down out-numbering the former one, so there was an end of that. Of course, I am well aware that the Government has the power to proclaim a district and to force local government upon it. I have had a large number of districts mapped into shires ready to be proclaimed, but

have not yet proclaimed them, because I have no intention of forcing self-government upon one portion of the community until the principle can be extended to the larger portion of the colony. Under the Act which we shall introduce, the principle will be made applicable to the whole colony. It will not be like the present local and partial measure which we warned honourable members would never come into effect. The whole tone of the honourable member's speech was bad. It was full of insinuations, not one of which he dared to speak out. He told us on several occasions that he did not himself believe the statements, and by disseminating such assertions he did more harm than if he had said openly that he believed them. When he insinuated his beliefs, some of those who did not take into consideration his *nisi prius* speeches might be led away; while his opinion, fully and openly expressed, would be paid no attention to whatever.

Mr. BAILEY said the country was evidently entering upon a new phase of its existence, and was about to suffer from a reign of economy. Economy had been of late very general and very wide spread; but he was sorry to find that the economists were beginning at the wrong end. Government had been very active in looking after country telegraph offices and such like matters, and had not scrupled to dismiss large bodies of working men north and south; but he did not hear one whisper about the upper ten—the highly salaried officials—being touched. The men with £400, £500, and £600 a year, were apparently sacred, whilst the working men with 5s. to 10s. a day were dismissed by scores. That was the policy of economy to which the country was treated. If they dispensed with the services of the men who had been working for 10s. a day, he very much doubted whether they could be replaced as easily as the gentlemen who receive £400 or £500 a year. The first thing that struck him was, that the economy preached by the Government had come in at the wrong end—at the bottom instead of the top—and that it would have the effect of driving out of the country the very class of men on whom the prosperity of the colony depended. It had been said that a great deal too much had been made about the dismissal of 100 to 120 men from the Ipswich workshops. If he did not take the same interest in those dismissals as the Ipswich people did, it was because he knew that similar dismissals had been almost universal from one end of the colony to the other. At Rockhampton the same thing had been done, also on the roads right and left, and in the different departments the men of small salaries, and the men who had voted the wrong way, had been picked out. When a Minister went into a department

and saw a servant who had assisted to oust him—a Minister, it might be, who had been defeated in his candidature—and dismissed that servant without having any fault to find with him, it was making use of power with a vengeance. He knew of several cases of this kind, and they would come before the House in good time. The honourable member for Mulgrave might have to give an explanation of a simple case of terrorism which had occurred in his electorate. If it was necessary to economise, why did not the Premier look to his own department? He could show him an instance where the workmen were dismissed, and the work was being done by private firms; and yet the overseers, three in number, were still retained in the service. That was the economy of an aristocratic Government! With regard to the policy of the Government, it was not from the speeches which had been made by its leaders that he would deduce the policy, or impolicy, of the Ministry. He was much struck by the remarks which fell from the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply. They had a peculiar value, because out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh; and these gentlemen had had consultations with Ministers as to what the real policy of the Government was, and were therefore apt to let more out than was revealed in the Speech. What was the ideal paradise of the squatting Ministry, as pictured by the honourable mover?—a squatter surrounded by a few selectors settled on small parts of low swampy ground, running cattle upon it; and when these men became a nuisance there was to be a law to put them away. During a few months of the year, also, when they could not make any use of their swampy land, they were to work for the squatter. The colony was to return to this patriarchal state of things, and in order to do so, the first step to take was to tell everyone that it was bankrupt, and the next one to turn out every man who would work; by-and-by they would be able to run sheep at Enoggera. The honourable seconder of the Address in Reply gave three reasons why he sat on the opposite side of the House. The first was that he thought it best; the next was that he hoped the Government would give the people of Gympie something to drink—but he mentioned nothing stronger than water; and the third that the late Ministry had caused the drought and the present one had dispelled it—three exceedingly logical reasons why the honourable member should turn a Liberal constituency into a Conservative one. He had never scrupled to blame the previous Ministry for mal-administration, but the country had jumped from the frying-pan into the fire. If the Government held to the policy

shadowed forth in the Speech population would be very much decreased; they would find it very hard work to get people to stay in the land. It was a cruel thing to tell workmen in times of difficulty that they could not afford them employment—the statement was false. If the Government could not afford 10s. per day, let them give 8s.; and if not 8s.—7s., 6s., or 5s. per day.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They would not take it.

Mr. BAILEY: If the men would not take it it would be their fault, but let it be offered to them; let not men be turned out to starve with their families. It was cruel to see the numbers of men which were to be met with on the roads of the colony seeking for work and able to do it. Good men like these should be kept in the colony, but such a policy was not to be expected from a Government who really came in office as the destroyers of what they professed to save.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said he should have much preferred to have first heard the Minister for Works; but as no one from either side appeared inclined to speak, he would make a few remarks. Several members, especially those speaking from his side of the House, had expressed their disappointment with the Speech. He was not disappointed, because he did not expect much. Happy were the people who did not expect much; and he did not think that the people would be in any better position than the House was in regard to the policy of the Government—they would be all disappointed. He should not take the Speech *seriatim*, but should like to deal with one or two clauses merely. In reference to the fifth, which stated—

“It has become clear to my Advisers that in some parts of the colony reasonable facilities for settlement have not been afforded by the lands thrown open for selection.”

He would give it as his opinion that that statement was perfectly correct. In the past, the administration of the land laws had not given reasonable facilities to men to take up land; and if the Government carried out the promise made in the fifth paragraph they would do good for the country; but the want was not so partial as they stated. It was not only in certain but in every part of the colony that sufficient facilities had not been given to settlers. When he first entered the House, he remembered, in seconding the Address in Reply then brought up, that he expressed the opinion that there had not been sufficient facilities given to the people to take up land. If a sufficient quantity was always kept before the people, surveyed in blocks, so that anyone could select where he liked, it would have a great effect in

settling people in the country. The fifth paragraph was certainly a good point in the Speech. He hoped to see the promise given in it carried out. Coming next to the eleventh paragraph, he found it stated that—

“The revenue anticipated by the late Government will not be realised, and a considerable deficit on the year's account will be the result.”

He did not suppose that any honourable member on his side of the House was at all unprepared for this result—they could scarcely have expected anything else. Although the seconder of the Address had said the deficiency and the drought were caused by the late Government, he did not think the honourable member entirely meant what he conveyed. It was not the fault of the late Parliament but of the drought which produced the deficit. He was not astonished at the amount of the deficiency being about £200,000—indeed, he was surprised it was so small, considering the two years of severe drought through which the colony had passed. They had great reason to be thankful that the drought had now passed away and that they had a prospect of better times setting in. Amongst the proposed Bills mentioned in clause 14 were some that he considered of the very utmost importance. The first was to amend the electoral law. This they would all admit was urgently required, and if they could effect a reformation in it, so as to secure the purity of elections, he was sure they would get the thanks of the whole colony for so doing. The next was the inspection and regulation of mines and collieries; and in connection with this he might say that at present the colliery miners here were working in very great fear, and although the mines had not been carried to any great depth they were gradually getting deeper, and the danger increased in proportion. At present there was no inspection of mines, and he was glad to see that provision was promised to be made in that respect. Another measure mentioned was a Bill to make better provision for the granting of publicans' licenses, and although some members might think this a minor matter, he looked upon it as of the greatest importance, because if it only succeeded in reforming the present system of granting publicans' licenses it would have a most beneficial effect. But if nothing more was intended than the transference of the powers of the licensing bench to an elective board it would not have a good effect, unless the board was elected by the people. That he maintained was the proper course, because it was only reasonable that the taxpayers, who had to suffer for drunkenness throughout the colony, should have the power of saying whether or not

licenses should be granted. In Ipswich the magistrates never thought of such a thing as refusing a license, but he was glad to see that in Brisbane there was more interest taken in the matter. He would suggest to introduce into the measure clauses giving the people power to say whether public-houses should be allowed in their neighbourhood, providing for the closing of all public-houses on the Sabbath Day, and the shortening of the hours to, say, from seven in the morning until ten at night. If they could accomplish that, he believed it would do more for the good of the colony than all the other Bills mentioned in the Speech. Reference was made to the general depression in commerce, and he presumed it was in consequence of that depression that so many railway men and labourers on our roads had been promised dismissal. He knew as much of the 103 men promised to be dismissed from the Ipswich railway works as any member of the House, and he said distinctly that there was no necessity for the dismissal. He had it on the best authority that if they were dismissed it would be necessary to take other men on within a fortnight, and that, if they were permitted to go away, in many cases they would never be able to fill their places. Would it not be far better to allow all the men in the works to go home for one week in every four than to dismiss 103? All the men were perfectly willing to do that, and by that means they would save as much as they would by the dismissal of such a large number. He was not there to advocate the retaining of men who were incompetent, or who did not do a fair amount of labour for their pay; but he knew that amongst these 103 men there were some of the very best men on the works. Some of them had been brought to the colony for special work, and had been here many years; they had reared families, and no less than sixty of them had their own cottages, which in itself was evidence that they were sober, industrious, and well-to-do men; while, on the other hand, some of the men kept on were not worth their salt. Who was to blame for this? Had the advice of the head of the department been taken? With regard to three of the carpenters, he had been told by a man who had employed them in Ipswich that if they left the colony they could not be replaced. And if these 103 men were to be turned away, how was it that this week a new man had been taken on? He considered that most unfair, and thought some explanation should be given respecting it. He hoped the House would strengthen the hands of the Government, so as to enable them to retain these men, for it would be a great pity if they were turned out.

Mr. GRIMES moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER thought some reasons should be given for proposing to adjourn at that early hour. It looked rather a bad beginning for the work of the session, and he could assure honourable members that it was not the way he intended that the business of the House should be carried out. He understood from the leader of the Opposition that there was to be no adverse motion, and that being so, he could not see the object of the adjournment. However, they could very reasonably go on until half-past ten o'clock.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said it was no doubt somewhat earlier than was usual to move such a motion; but as there was no business on the paper for to-morrow, and there was a general desire to adjourn, he thought they might very well do so.

Mr. MOREHEAD was of opinion that the debate ought to be prolonged for another hour, in order to allow honourable members of the Opposition to air their eloquence and their grievances.

Mr. RUTLEDGE supported the motion for adjournment, because if time were allowed there were things to be said upon questions which the Ministerial side might not perhaps like to hear; the House certainly expected to hear from the Minister for Works some explanation of the very ugly things that had transpired in his department.

Mr. AMHURST thought the grievances of the Opposition were mere phantoms, and he should support the motion for adjournment, because the more they aired their fantasies the more the House would see the falsity of them.

Mr. PATERSON suggested that a reasonable hour—say ten or half-past ten—should be fixed for the ordinary adjournment of the House.

Mr. GRIFFITH pressed for the adjournment on account of the number of members of the Opposition who were awaiting an opportunity to speak.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY remarked that during the time that had now been wasted in talking about an adjournment a couple of good speeches might have been made.

The PREMIER said he had no desire to push the debate to a conclusion to-night. He added that the Minister for Works would have spoken earlier in the debate had the debate been conducted properly; but when a private member of the Opposition got up to reply to the Colonial Secretary, the ground was cut from under his feet. He consented to the debate being now adjourned.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at five minutes to 10 o'clock.