

## VICTORIA.

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

### First Session of the Fourteenth Parliament.

#### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Tuesday, April 9, 1889.*

Opening of Parliament by Commission—New Member—  
Adjournment.

The Fourteenth Victorian Parliament was opened this day by Commission. The Commissioners appointed by His Excellency the Acting Governor for the purpose were His Honour the Chief Justice (Mr. George Higinbotham) and His Honour Mr. Justice Williams.

At noon, the Clerk of the Parliaments (Mr. J. Barker) read the following

#### PROCLAMATION.

“By His Excellency Sir William Cleaver Francis Robinson, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Administrator of the Government of the Colony of Victoria and its Dependencies, &c., &c., &c.

“WHEREAS by the Constitution Act it was amongst other things enacted that it should be lawful for the Governor to fix such places within Victoria, and, subject to the limitation therein contained, such times for holding the first and every other session of the Council and Assembly, and to vary and alter the same respectively in such manner as he might think fit; and also from time to time to prorogue the said Council and Assembly, and to dissolve the said Assembly, by Proclamation or otherwise, whenever he should deem it expedient: And whereas the said Council and Assembly are called ‘The Parliament of Victoria,’ and it is expedient to fix the time for holding the next session thereof:

Now therefore I, the Administrator of the Government of Victoria, in exercise of the power conferred by the said Act, do by this my Proclamation fix Tuesday, the ninth day of April instant as the time for the commencement and holding of the next session of the said Council and Assembly, called ‘The Parliament of Victoria,’ for the despatch of business, at twelve of the clock at noon, in the Parliament Houses, situate in Parliament-place, Spring-street, in the city of Melbourne; and the honorable the Members of the Legislative Council and the Members of the Legislative Assembly are hereby required to give their attendance at the said time and place accordingly.

“Given under my hand and the seal of the colony, at Melbourne, this second day of April, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine, and in the fifty-second year of Her Majesty’s reign.

“W. C. F. ROBINSON.

“By His Excellency’s command,

“D. GILLIES,

“Premier.

“GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!”

The Commissioners immediately afterwards entered the chamber, and directed that the attendance of the members of the Legislative Assembly should be requested.

The members of the Assembly having appeared at the bar,

The CHIEF JUSTICE said—Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, not thinking fit to be present in person this day, has been pleased to cause letters patent to issue under the seal of the

colony, constituting us his Commissioners to do in his name all that is necessary to be performed in this Parliament. This will more fully appear from the letters patent, which will now be read.

The letters patent having been read by the Clerk,

The CHIEF JUSTICE said—Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, we have it in command from His Excellency to let you know that on a future day, of which due notice will be given, His Excellency will declare to you in person, in this place, the causes of his calling this Parliament together; and, Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, as it is necessary, before you proceed to the despatch of business, that a Speaker of the Legislative Assembly be chosen, His Excellency requests that you, in your chamber, will proceed to the choice of a proper person to be Speaker.

The Commissioners and members of the Legislative Assembly then withdrew.

The PRESIDENT (Sir James MacBain) took the chair, and read the prayer.

#### DECLARATIONS OF QUALIFICATION.

The following members delivered to the Clerk the declarations required by the Act No. 702:—The Honorables the President, J. Balfour, J. Bell, J. Buchanan, J. S. Butters, Sir W. J. Clarke, J. H. Connor, S. W. Cooke, D. Coutts, H. Cuthbert, G. Davis, F. S. Dobson, H. Gore, C. J. Ham, C. H. James, Sir James Lorimer, W. McCulloch, D. Melville, W. H. S. Osmand, F. T. Sargood, J. A. Wallace, A. Wynne, and W. A. Zeal.

#### NEW MEMBER.

The PRESIDENT announced that, during the recess, he had issued a writ for the election of a member of the Legislative Council for the Northern Province, in the room of the Hon. D. C. Sterry, who had resigned, and that it had been returned with an endorsement showing that Mr. Joseph Henry Abbott had been elected.

Mr. Abbott was introduced and sworn, and presented to the Clerk the declaration required by the Act No. 702.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The Hon. H. CUTHBERT stated that, as the meeting of the Council that day was merely formal, and as the meeting of another Chamber was only intended to enable honorable members to be sworn, and to

elect a Speaker, the Government did not mean at present to proceed with the despatch of any public business. Indeed, it would be out of place for them to attempt to do so, as His Excellency had already notified to the House that on a future occasion, of which honorable members would have due notice, he would take an opportunity of stating the reasons why he had called Parliament together. He (Mr. Cuthbert) therefore begged to move that the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, June 4.

The motion was agreed to.

The House adjourned at nineteen minutes past twelve o'clock p.m., until Tuesday, June 4.

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, April 9, 1889.*

Swearing of Members—Election of Speaker—Presentation of the Speaker to the Governor—Adjournment—Seating Accommodation for Members.

Proceedings commenced at noon precisely, by the Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. G. H. Jenkins) reading the Acting Governor's proclamation convoking Parliament.

The Usher of the Legislative Council then appeared at the bar, and intimated that the Commissioners appointed by the Acting Governor to open Parliament requested the attendance of members of the Legislative Assembly in the chamber of the Legislative Council.

The members present, accompanied by the chief officers of the House, at once proceeded thither. On their return, His Honour the Chief Justice (Mr. George Higinbotham), one of the Commissioners, was introduced, and took his seat in the Speaker's chair.

The letters patent appointing the Chief Justice to administer the oath of allegiance were then read, and the members present were sworn in the following order:—

Albert Park	...	John Nimmo
Anglesey	...	Thomas Hunt
Ararat	...	William McLellan
Ballararat East	...	James Russell
Ballararat West	...	{ W. C. Smith
		{ J. W. Kirton
Barwon	...	J. F. Levien
Benalla and Yarra-		
wonga	...	{ John Brock
Benambra	...	A. W. Craven
Bogong	...	F. H. Tuthill
Borong	...	Walter Duncan
Bourke East	...	W. J. Wilkinson

Bourke West	...	S. T. Staughton
East Bourke	{	C. H. Pearson
Boroughs	...	David Methven
Brighton	...	Thomas Bent
Carlton	...	John Gardiner
Carlton South	...	W. H. Leonard
Castlemaine	{	J. B. Patterson
	...	W. J. S. Gordon
Clunes and Allandale	...	A. J. Peacock
Collingwood	{	G. D. Langridge
	...	W. D. Beazley
Creswick	...	Richard Richardson
Dandenong and Berwick	{	John Keys
Daylesford	...	J. H. Wheeler
Delatite	...	J. H. Graves
Donald and Swan Hill	...	J. W. Taverner
Dundas	...	C. M. Officer
Dunolly	...	James Cheetham
Eaglehawk	...	H. R. Williams
Eastern Suburbs	...	Duncan Gillies
Emerald Hill	...	Thomas Smith
Essendon and Flemington	{	Alfred Deakin
Evelyn	...	E. H. Cameron
Fitzroy	{	R. W. Best
	...	A. L. Tucker
Footscray	...	W. M. Clark
Geelong	{	Charles Andrews
	...	James Munro
Gippsland Central	...	Albert Harris
Gippsland East	...	Henry Foster
Gippsland North	...	Allan McLean
Gippsland South	...	F. C. Mason
Gippsland West	...	A. C. Groom
Grant	...	Harry Armytage
Grenville	{	D. M. Davies
	...	Alexander Young
Gunbower	...	J. H. McColl
Hawthorn	...	C. F. Taylor
Horsham	...	Walter Madden
Jolimont and West Richmond	{	Charles Smith
Kara Kara	...	J. L. Dow
Kilmore, Dalhousie, and Lancelfield	{	J. Gavan Duffy
Korong	...	R. B. Calvert
Kyneton	...	Charles Young
Lowan	...	Richard Baker
Maldon	...	John McIntyre
Mandurang	...	J. M. Highett
Maryborough	...	A. R. Outtrim
Melbourne	...	G. D. Carter
Melbourne East	{	Frank Stuart
	...	E. L. Zox
Melbourne North	...	John Laurens
Melbourne South	...	W. J. Mountain
Melbourne West	...	William Maloney
Mornington	...	L. L. Smith
Normanby	...	William Shiels

Numurkah and Nathalia	...	George Graham
Ovens	...	Joseph Ferguson
Polwarth	...	C. L. Forrest
Port Fairy	...	Bryan O'Loughlin
Port Melbourne	...	F. T. Derham
Portland	...	H. J. Wrixon
Prahran	...	E. J. Dixon
Richmond	{	G. H. Bennett
	...	W. A. Trenwith
Ripon and Hampden	...	W. H. Uren
Rodney	{	James Shackell
	...	W. T. Webb
Sandhurst	...	Robert Burrowes
	{	A. S. Bailes
Sandhurst South	...	D. C. Sterry
Shepparton and Euroa	...	G. W. Hall
South Yarra	...	Joseph Harris
St. Kilda	...	George Turner
Stawell	...	John Woods
Talbot and Avoca	...	J. S. Stewart
Toorak	...	M. H. Davies
Villiers and Heytesbury	{	William Anderson
Wangaratta and Rutherglen	{	H. S. Parfitt
Warrenheip	...	Edward Murphy
Warrnambool	...	John Murray
Williamstown	...	W. T. Carter
Windermere	...	Matthew Butterly.

On the completion of the ceremony of swearing members, the Chief Justice quitted his seat, bowed to the House, and retired.

#### ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

Mr. OFFICER rose, and, addressing the Clerk of the Assembly, said—Mr. Jenkins, I beg to move that Mr. M. H. Davies do take the chair of this House as Speaker. Those of us who had the honour of sitting in the last Parliament will bear me out in saying that although Mr. Davies was then new to the work which the Speaker is called upon to perform, he conducted the business of this House in a very creditable manner; and I have no doubt that, with enlarged knowledge and experience, he will give further proof, if it is necessary, that he is the right man in the right place.

Mr. MUNRO.—Mr. Jenkins, I have great pleasure in seconding the nomination of Mr. M. H. Davies for the position of Speaker of this House. Many of us, as the honorable member for Dundas has said, have had experience of Mr. Davies as Speaker during last session and a portion of the previous session, and he has given entire satisfaction to the members of the House. During the present Parliament he will have a larger house to preside over,

comprising a great number of new members. I have not the least doubt that he will ably assist them in understanding the forms of Parliament and carrying on the business of the Assembly in a satisfactory manner. I wish to say one word in explanation, as the press has put a wrong construction on a remark I made when addressing my constituents at Geelong. I stated then what I will repeat now, namely, that with a firm and capable Speaker, getting the assistance of the leader of the House, the business of the House would be carried on quite satisfactorily under the present standing orders. I believe so still; but, in saying that, I did not intend, nor do I now intend, to reflect in any way on Mr. Davies as Speaker. I think that the honorable gentleman did his work in the last Parliament, as Speaker, in an admirable manner, and the best proof I can give of my belief in that direction is the fact that I now have very great pleasure in seconding his nomination to the chair.

No other nomination being made,

Mr. M. H. DAVIES rose in his place, and said—Mr. Jenkins, I desire to convey to the House my sense of the honour which it is proposed to confer upon me, and especially to thank those honorable members who have been good enough to submit the motion now before the House. I can assure honorable members that should they do me the honour to confer upon me the position of Speaker, I will endeavour to faithfully discharge the duties appertaining to that office to the best of my ability. I now beg to submit myself to the will of the House.

Mr. Davies was then conducted by his proposer and seconder to the chair, on reaching which

The SPEAKER said—I desire to convey to the House my humble acknowledgments for the great honour which it has bestowed upon me in unanimously electing me to the position of Speaker. I can assure honorable members that I appreciate the honour all the more on account of the way in which it has been conferred; and I shall endeavour in the future to discharge the high and honorable duties in connexion with the office to the best of my ability. I am sure that honorable members on both sides of the House will give me that indulgence in the future which they have shown me in the past; and with the great assistance of the Clerk of the House, and the assistance of honorable members, I trust that I may be able to discharge those duties to the satisfaction of honorable members generally.

Mr. GILLIES.—Mr. Speaker, I have much pleasure in congratulating you upon being unanimously elected to the high and distinguished position of Speaker of this House. I concur with the honorable members who proposed and seconded you in the belief that you will fulfil the duties of the office in a manner creditable to yourself and honorable to the Legislative Assembly. I can assure you that honorable members on this (the Ministerial) side of the House—and I believe I may say honorable members on both sides of the House—will endeavour to assist you in every possible way, and will do all that they can to aid you in maintaining the character and dignity of the House. You will, I am confident, show fair play to all parties, and to every honorable member who may address the House, no matter under what circumstances.

Mr. BURROWES.—Sir, I have great pleasure in rising on behalf of honorable members sitting on this (the opposition) side of the House to endorse all that has been said in regard to your election to the honorable position of Speaker. I do not know of any Speaker—any gentleman who has been placed in the honorable position which you now occupy—who has been elected with more of the good will of the whole House than you have been on this occasion. As an old member of this House, and one who has sat under many Speakers, I am very pleased to be able, not as leader of the Opposition, but as an old member, to congratulate you upon your re-election to the very honorable office which you now hold. I can assure you, on behalf of the gentlemen sitting around me, that it is their desire—their sincere wish—to afford you every facility to fill that position creditably to yourself and satisfactorily to them. I do not know that it is necessary to say more. Although I was one of those who, on a former occasion, opposed your election to the chair, I am pleased to now have the opportunity of congratulating you on being chosen as Speaker for the second time.

Mr. GILLIES announced that His Excellency the Acting Governor would receive the Speaker, and such members as chose to accompany him, at the Government Offices, at two o'clock that day.

The House then adjourned during pleasure.

On honorable members re-assembling at half-past two o'clock p.m.,

The SPEAKER said—I have to inform honorable members that I presented myself to the Acting Governor as the choice

of the House, and that His Excellency was pleased to address me in the following terms :—

“Mr. Speaker,—I learn with much pleasure that you have a second time been chosen to fill the high office of Speaker, and I congratulate you on the distinguished position in which the confidence of the Legislative Assembly of this great colony has again placed you.”

#### ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. GILLIES.—Mr. Speaker, it is my duty to inform the House that His Excellency the Administrator of the Government proposes to attend in person the Houses of Parliament on the 4th June next, for the purpose of informing honorable members of the causes which he has for calling Parliament together. Under these circumstances I beg to propose that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday, the 4th June, at two o'clock. I think it would be convenient for honorable members generally to have a little “breathing time” before they are asked to proceed to the despatch of business—to deal with the number of important measures which the Government propose to submit for the consideration of Parliament. I venture to submit that, under all the circumstances, the adjournment which the Government propose cannot be considered too long. I believe that at the time at which we propose we shall resume our sittings the Government will be in a position to present the business which Parliament will be called upon to consider in such a perfect form as will cause the least possible loss of time. Might I also be allowed to suggest that, in view of the crowded state of the chamber, you, Mr. Speaker, should consult, during the adjournment, with those gentlemen who, during last session, were members of the Parliamentary Buildings Committee, with the view of ascertaining whether some better arrangement could not be come to for the better seating accommodation of honorable members? I believe that could be done without any trouble or inconvenience.

Mr. MCINTYRE.—There is plenty of room over here.

Mr. GILLIES.—Possibly the honorable member opposite looks forward to a time, at no distant date, when there will not be so much room there, but it is necessary to provide for the present circumstances, and I think it is always wise to consult, as far as possible, the convenience of honorable members. I do not suppose there would be any idea of making such a serious and radical change as might cause alteration afterwards, and I

would understand that any alteration suggested would be of such a character as would allow of a further change if it did not quite suit the convenience of honorable members, after some experience. I believe that all the change necessary could be carried out without any considerable cost or trouble. Probably, in the first instance, it would be in the nature of an experiment, and no doubt no radical change should be made without honorable members having first had an opportunity of expressing their opinions on the subject. I trust, therefore, Mr. Speaker, you will accept the suggestion to consult with those gentlemen of long experience to whom I have referred—the Minister of Public Works and others—who will perhaps be in a position to advise you as to what alterations may be necessary.

Mr. LANGRIDGE.—Sir, I wish to take the opportunity of calling the attention of the Government to a matter of very great importance. I am aware that this is not the time to discuss matters of public business generally, but the urgency of the case is my justification for referring to the subject to which I desire to call attention. The matter to which I allude is the health of Melbourne and the suburbs at the present time. During the last session and previous sessions it was stated that we were to have a Metropolitan Board of Works, but we seem now to be as far off the establishment of such a body as we were five or six years ago. The Government are now asking for an adjournment until June, so that unless they devote their attention to the state of the metropolis during the interval, there will be another two months wasted. I therefore hope that they will immediately give grave consideration to the subject. In fact, it would be almost criminal any longer to allow the metropolis to continue in its present condition.

Mr. BURROWES.—Why does not the City Council deal with it?

Mr. LANGRIDGE.—It is not a question affecting the city of Melbourne alone, but also the suburbs. Day by day disease is entering into the homes of the people, and unless something is done a very great calamity will fall upon the citizens of the metropolis generally. What I desire to ask the Government is whether, during the two months' adjournment, they could not themselves carry out this work of sanitation on the same principle that they have carried out railway and irrigation works? I believe that the Government are the only parties who can deal successfully with the matter. Let them first carry out the sanitary works

which are absolutely necessary, and then they can hand them over, if they wish, to any body which may be established. In London the Metropolitan Board of Works has proved an utter failure, and within the last few months it has been superseded. I sincerely hope that the Government will see that it is their duty to take action in this matter. Unless they do, I shall certainly feel it my duty, when the House re-assembles, to bring forward some measures dealing effectively with the question.

**Lt.-Col. SMITH.**—Mr. Speaker, I regret that a new House, consisting of a larger number of members than any previous Parliament in Victoria, should be asked to enjoy virtually a four or five months' recess immediately after its election. I regret this for several reasons. In the first place, I may point out that of late years a practice has been growing up—a practice which, I venture to say, is not constitutional nor in accordance with the practice of the old country—of not calling Parliament together for the transaction of business until almost the close of the financial year. The consequence is that when the Budget speech is delivered, the House is called upon to vote money on account for two or three months, and has no proper control over the expenditure of the public funds. This is a practice which, as I have said, has grown up of recent years, and I hope that a newly-elected Parliament, comprising over 30 new members, will alter it if possible. Moreover, I think that the special circumstances connected with the present occasion should cause the House to revert to the old practice, and see that it has time to consider the Estimates before being called upon to pass them. I believe that we would not have had this cry of obstruction, of which we have heard so much, had Parliament been called together earlier in the year, so that members could have an opportunity of considering the details of the Estimates, instead of being asked to rush them through at the last moment. Every representative would then have had an opportunity of fully considering the public expenditure, whether as affecting his own district or other parts of the colony. That is an advantage of which we have been deprived in the Assembly for many years, and I think we have now a magnificent opportunity of reverting to the good old English practice.

**Mr. GILLIES.**—That is quite a mistake.

**Lt.-Col. SMITH.**—I expected the Premier to say that; but I may remind him that no one spoke more strongly on the subject

of the Assembly having a proper opportunity of considering the Estimates than did the honorable gentleman himself when he sat on these (the opposition) benches. The Attorney-General also when he sat in the opposition corner was a strong advocate for adopting the practice of the English House of Commons by appointing a Committee of Public Accounts, consisting of members who knew something of the subject, to go through the finances of the various departments. Mr. Gladstone, who must be acknowledged to be one of the most perfect Chancellors of the Exchequer that England has ever had, has admitted that this system has worked admirably, although he originally opposed its introduction. We have no such committee in this House, and honorable members are asked to meet here to-day simply in order to sign their names and to be enabled to draw two months' "screw" for doing nothing. I venture to say that what I have stated will be the feeling throughout the country—that honorable members have only been called together to-day in order to be enabled to draw their salaries. If honorable members were left to go through their various election contests without any pecuniary consideration to follow, no doubt it would not be pleasant, and I commend the Government for their action in calling Parliament together so soon; but, while doing so, I would remind honorable members that they have a duty to perform. Are they not prepared before the lapse of two months to go into matters affecting the interests of the people? Do they not think that financial matters should be discussed before voting away the public moneys? Again, there was one question which the two heads of the Government placed before the country as a question of paramount importance above all others—namely, the question of the alteration of the procedure of this House. Do honorable members not think that it would be wise for Parliament to meet earlier than June next to consider the proposals of the Government on that subject as well as for the despatch of public business generally? I would remind honorable members that one-third of the present House consists of new members who are not pledged to allow the Government to adjourn for any period they like. I can tell those members that on occasions in the past Ministers have taken office, gone to the country and come back and met Parliament with a policy to submit to it within one month. Considering that the members of the present Ministry have been in office for three years, and two of them

for six years, why should they require from now until June to prepare their policy? Besides, old members know that after Parliament meets it requires something like a fortnight or three weeks for it to get into working order before substantially any public business is done. Therefore, while I am not prepared to move any amendment, I desire to express my opinion as one of the oldest members of the House—I think there are only three or four senior to me—that the Government should be prepared to meet Parliament in a month, instead of adjourning until June, so as to deal with the question of parliamentary procedure. Again, as an old member of the House, I think I am entitled to ask the Chief Secretary for some explanation of the position he assumes in view of the fact that fully two-thirds of the House declared themselves on the hustings—I have copies of their speeches—to be liberals in every acceptation of the term. I want to know what the liberal members have done—in whatever part of the House they sit—that they were not called together before the opening of Parliament by the presumed leader of the party. The Chief Secretary, in a speech which he delivered at Flemington early in February, declared in effect that if a working majority of liberals were returned to this Parliament he would consider that the coalition was at an end, and that party Government would be re-established. I may not quote the honorable gentleman's exact words, but I believe I have interpreted him correctly; and what more does he want than the present liberal majority? Over two-thirds of the House are liberals, and why should we not have had an opportunity of showing our colours, and of being placed in a position to state whether we would accept the honorable gentleman as leader of the liberal party in this country? Perhaps the honorable gentleman has some reason for retaining his position as a leading member of a coalition Government—a position he has occupied in two coalition Governments for six years—but, if so, I think it is due to the liberal majority in the House that he should explain it. There are many honorable members sitting on the Government side of the House who declared, when before their constituents, that if there was a majority of liberals returned, they would go in for party Government. I could name those members, yet they are now sitting as supporters of a coalition Government. It is true that some of those gentlemen said that if there was not a majority returned in favour of party

Government they would support a coalition, but they did not say what sort of coalition—whether the present or another coalition. Personally, I do not think that since I have been a member of this House I have ever voted on any question against liberal principles, but, on the contrary, have always voted for those principles, and therefore I complain of being absolutely forced into a position of appearing to be in antagonism with some of my old friends who worked with me for so many years. It cannot be said that the Opposition are now obstructing, because the House has not yet commenced the transaction of business. We are asked to postpone the transaction of any public business until June, and therefore there could not be a more opportune time than the present—when discussion cannot affect the progress of business—for considering the propriety of endeavouring to revert to the good old rule of Parliament meeting earlier in the year. As an old member, who have shown by my recent contest that I have not in any way lost the confidence of my constituents, I protest against the waste of public time in members being asked to meet here in order to draw their salaries without performing their duty to the public. It would be far better in the interests of the country, and far more to the credit of this new House, if honorable members were to insist that they should have an opportunity of discussing the expenditure of public money before being called upon to vote it, so that the House might be enabled to deal properly with the finances of the country. I would again put it to the Government that it would be far wiser for the House to meet a month earlier than they propose, in order to deal, first, with the question of parliamentary procedure, if the Government mean that question to be dealt with, and then with the Estimates, before proceeding to the transaction of the ordinary legislative business. In conclusion, I repeat that I think that we are entitled to some explanation from the Chief Secretary as to his present position, in view of the fact that two-thirds of the House are liberals. Why does he not come out from among the coalition—he and the other liberal members of the Ministry—and form a true liberal Government? I think we have a right to complain of the position he has taken up, and, now that I have put the matter to him fairly, I hope he will give some reason why he thinks proper to continue a member of a coalition, and especially of a coalition such as the present.

Mr. SHIELDS.—Mr. Speaker, the honorable member who has resumed his seat is certainly consistent with what he said three years ago, but I think it will be found that his own practice during a period anterior to that is inconsistent with what he now advocates. Why, as a Minister, in 1877, he was very glad to get the grace of five weeks—an adjournment of the House from about the 20th or 21st May to the end of June. Now what I want is fair play. I conceive there is no gain at all to the transaction of public business by bringing in measures hurriedly; and I desire to deal out to the Government what I would wish dealt out to me if I were in office. It is only proper that this and every other Government should have sufficient time for the preparation of their measures, so that those measures, when they are brought on here for discussion, may be in a complete state. In fact this is the only way in which to really expedite business. No doubt the Government will find it necessary to bring before Parliament many measures which they cannot have had time to adequately prepare. The honorable member for Ballarat West (Lt.-Col. Smith) says there is no precedent for the course now proposed; but I think there is. That most eminent parliamentary champion, Mr. Gladstone—probably the most experienced parliamentarian of modern times—obtained an adjournment of the House of Commons for over two months, from December to the middle of February, for the purpose of enabling his Government to bring forward their measures in a complete state. And I think nothing can be gained by our re-assembling in May to consider measures submitted in a bald and incomplete condition. As to the parrot cry about our having no control over the public finances, I have said over and over again that there is no bigger myth than that of this House having control over those finances. I have been a member of the Assembly for nine or ten years, and I have seen no practical control exercised by this House over a single pound of State expenditure.

Mr. GILLIES.—The financial statement cannot be submitted before the middle of July.

Mr. SHIELDS.—I do not approve of denying to this Government any more than I would to any other Government reasonable time for the preparation of those measures which they may deem necessary for the welfare of the country; and I am not for meting out one measure to them now, and perhaps at another time asking for my

friends, or for myself, a different measure. I did not approve of the objection taken three years ago to the adjournment then asked for. The situation then was different from the present in that most of the members of the Government were at that time new to office. An adjournment of eleven weeks was then asked for, and it was granted. Now an adjournment of only seven or eight weeks is desired. Here I beg to ask the indulgence of the House while I call attention to the demand for a measure of extreme urgency, and that is a reform in the administration of the rabbit law. There has been no announcement on the part of the Government as to what measure they intend to propose in that direction or whether they intend to propose anything. There is an old adage to the effect that between two stools one comes to the ground. As a matter of fact the administration of the rabbit law is between three stools, and, in consequence, it has practically come to the ground. The rabbits are increasing; and great dissatisfaction upon the subject prevails everywhere, and especially among the municipal councils.

Mr. GILLIES.—The Government announced last session what they intended to do in that respect.

Mr. SHIELDS.—I am not aware what the intentions of the Government are; and I feel it necessary, at the very earliest moment, to bring before the House the pressing urgency of a complete and radical alteration in the system of rabbit extirpation. At present, the shire councils, although over-burthened with their own proper work, have cast upon them an invidious duty which they cannot and do not adequately perform. Then we have the Government expending a large sum of money—some £20,000 per year—on rabbit extirpation. Lastly, there are local committees, called vermin boards, who have to see to the extermination of rabbits from mallee pastoral lands. Under these circumstances, the administration of the three Rabbit Acts—the original Act and the two amending Acts—is wholly unsatisfactory. I don't think that either the shire councils or the Government are able to do anything efficiently in the way of clearing this country of rabbits. The worst "stroke" of all is the "Government stroke"; and, therefore, I do hope the Government will not attempt to take over—as it was said last year that they intended—the whole administration of the rabbit law.

Mr. DOW.—The municipal councils wish to be relieved of the administration.



Mr. SHIELDS.—They want to be relieved of the duty because they find they cannot adequately perform it, and also because it is a terrible burthen on their own finances. The rabbits are increasing, much to the public dissatisfaction and consternation, in all rabbit-infested districts. Probably the colony is at present worse off, with respect to the rabbit plague, than it has ever been before; and a number of members—some of them new members—have been returned to this House charged with the important duty of pressing the matter upon the attention of the Government. I am inclined to think that one outlet of safety would be some change in the constitution of the local committees. In South Australia, after many attempts, legislation is now in force from which more good is expected than from any other Rabbit Acts previously passed. It is practically on the lines of local committees. The go-by is given to the Government, and the principle of municipal institutions is applied to all rabbit-infested districts. In every district of the kind members are elected to a council which has one sole duty to undertake—the work of rabbit extirpation. These councils have powers of rating and powers to undertake the work of rabbit extermination, or enforce that duty on land-holders; and each council is empowered to watch a neighbouring district, and, if that district fails in its duty, to come in and take whatever steps may be deemed necessary to suppress the plague. Practically, that system exists, to some extent, in connexion with our local committees. There is more hope of good being effected under such a system than under a system which imposes the work upon shire councils or upon the Government. The Government are charged with sufficiently arduous, multifarious, and responsible functions without adding to them work of this description; and I have always had the feeling that the “Government stroke” is the most mischievous, the most expensive, the most idle, and the worst of all “strokes.” I would like, in this connexion, to bring before the House the conclusions of the commission of representatives of the various colonies that was appointed to consider this question. The first conclusion of that commission, unanimously arrived at, was “that the responsibility for the destruction of rabbits, whether on freehold or leasehold land, must rest on the landowner,” and “that, with respect to unoccupied Crown lands, the State must accept a similar responsibility.” Now, the complaint everywhere is this—that areas of Crown land held by the

Government, which are generally of a poor character, are so many rabbit nests, a source of infection to the good freehold land in the neighbourhood; and that the Government are the parties mainly responsible for the inefficient carrying out of the work of rabbit extirpation—that the operations of Government parties are a mere farce; that not only do they not do the work properly, but that they endanger the work attempted to be done either by land-holders or by shire councils. Another conclusion of the commission was “that no finality in rabbit destruction will be obtained without making the erection of rabbit-proof fences compulsory.” It has been strongly urged, and especially in the territory recently added to the electorate of Normanby, that the Government ought to adopt some scheme of importing rabbit-proof fencing, and of selling it to the various landowners, especially the owners of poor land, on reasonable terms. I am not saying that I have come to that conclusion; I merely state that there are men who urge that the only solution of the difficulty—the only effectual way of coping with the rabbits—is by a system of isolation by means of rabbit-proof fences. Unfortunate landowners, if they go to market themselves, have to pay from £20 to £25 per mile for rabbit-proof fencing; but I know, from my own experience, that the Government can have rabbit-proof fencing landed in Melbourne for £13 10s. per mile, including all expenses. Seeing that the Government do many things much more hazardous, I don’t understand why they cannot come to the help of the landowners in connexion with this great national question—a question which affects the whole colony. Among the other conclusions to which the commission came were the following:—

“That there are very large areas of land so poor that the erection of rabbit-proof fences around individual holdings might cause financial failure. That the department administering the Rabbit Destruction Act should be empowered to permit the fencing of such poor holdings in groups. That in dealing with land of very poor carrying capacity the State should show special consideration to the lessees in respect of tenure.

“That in all infested country, but especially in such poor districts, simultaneous operations for the destruction of rabbits should be made compulsory.

“That netting fencing 3ft. high, with a mesh of 1½ in., forms a practically efficient barrier against the incursions of rabbits.”

Another conclusion was “that the system of compulsory trapping, with professional trappers and State bonuses, is radically

bad"; and the final conclusion was in these terms:—

"That legislative measures should be taken compelling landowners or lessees in districts infested by rabbits to join, subject to the above provisions, in payment of the cost of rabbit-proof netting fences, or in the addition of such netting to existing fences."

These were the conclusions arrived at by this commission of eminent experts, appointed by the several colonies, that met at Sydney. I feel it incumbent on me, because the matter has been so strongly impressed upon me by the electors in the new part of my district, to bring it before the House at the earliest possible moment; and I say the Government will not be doing their duty unless they propose some complete and radical change in the rabbit law. No Rabbit Act hitherto passed in New South Wales, Victoria, or South Australia has been wholly satisfactory; but I see some outlook of hope if the Government will give the go-by to the administration of the rabbit law, first, by the shire councils, and, secondly, by themselves. Indeed, I am satisfied the Government will be found less capable for the work than the shire councils. The work must be undertaken by men on the spot, who are animated by motives of self-interest, and who should be made aware that, unless they adopt efficient measures to secure rabbit destruction, they will have to pay for some one else doing the work. Each landowner should be a watch on his neighbour. Each should make it his duty to see that his neighbour does his share of the work. Each rabbit-infested district should not only do its own rabbit extirpation, but should take a keen interest in seeing that neighbouring districts do their share also. It is only by simultaneous action of this kind that we can ever hope to cope with this grave peril, so inimical to the public interests of Victoria.

Mr. MASON.—Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of being outside this House for the last three years, and it is by the will of the electors of Gippsland South that I again occupy a seat within these walls. Sir, I had the honour of knowing you before you were elected Speaker of this Assembly. I had the honour of being a co-partner with you in the introduction of a very important Bill to this House; and I only express my honest conviction when I say that it gives me infinite pleasure to see you presiding over the deliberations of the Chamber. I sincerely hope you may live long to adorn that position. I think it only fair to honorable members, and especially new members, that they should know exactly where they are

travelling. I am delighted, as I am sure other honorable members must be, to see the honorable member for Ballarat West (Lt.-Col. Smith) back in his old place, and enjoying improved health. At the same time, I think the honorable member ought to deal fairly with those who are "new chums" among us. The honorable member objects to the adjournment asked for by the Government, but does not the honorable member recollect that when he was one of the leaders of the liberal party—when Mr. Berry went to England as ambassador—Parliament did not sit for seven months? At the close of that long recess, the honorable member for Ballarat West met us as Treasurer of the colony, having previously proclaimed the discovery of a surplus of £2,000,000. It turned out that there was no substance about those two millions. We looked in vain for them. It was said that they had filtered, somehow or another, through the honorable member's boots. At all events I don't think the country benefited very much by that grand surplus. As to the question of adjournment, what is the most recent precedent? Three years ago, the Assembly met on the 16th March, and adjourned until the 1st June; so that the House then adjourned over nearly three months. We are now asked to adjourn for less than two months. I think the proposition a most reasonable one. The honorable member for Ballarat West need not sneer about honorable members being called together in order that they may draw their £300 per year, because he is one of the fathers of the system of payment of members. I may inform those gentlemen who are new to this House that we have to thank the honorable member for Ballarat West, to a large extent, for the Payment of Members Act. And in all probability, if the honorable member had happened to be the Premier of this colony, he would have proposed something like what has been proposed today. Possibly he would have asked for an adjournment until July or August, instead of June. And for this very good reason: that the financial statement cannot be submitted until after the month of July has been entered upon. Therefore I say the honorable member for Ballarat West ought to deal fairly with men who have not the parliamentary knowledge that he possesses. If the House were to meet earlier than the Government propose, the proceeding would only lead to an immense amount of unnecessary discussion, "stone-walling," and talking against time. Certainly it would not conduce to the transaction of public business.

The House of Commons, which has to deal with such things as declarations of war, the pacification of the world, the affairs of nations, does not hold as lengthy sessions as we do here; and yet we are no more to be compared to the House of Commons than a municipal council is to be compared to this Chamber.

Mr. MUNRO.—They have longer sittings.

Mr. MASON.—I don't object to long sessions; but I do object to sittings which extend to one or two o'clock in the morning, and which can only be attended by injury to the health and constitution of those who take part in them. As to the question of rabbit extirpation, I can assure the honorable member for Normanby that he will have the co-operation of the members for Gippsland—and I am glad to find that Gippsland is now more largely represented in this House than it used to be—if he will only assist them in exterminating the wallaby, wild dog, and fox from that part of the colony. And I take this opportunity of telling the Minister of Lands that if the Government propose to deal effectually with the question of rabbit extermination, they must also make provision for assisting selectors and settlers in the work of destroying wallaby, foxes, and warrigals. I beg, also, to tell the honorable gentleman, with regard to the timber reserves in Gippsland which he has shut up against selection, that he will have to run roads through those reserves to enable Crown tenants to travel to and from their holdings. I have only to add that I consider the Government justified, both by precedent and circumstances, in asking for the adjournment they propose. The interval since the close of the last session has been occupied by a general election; Ministers have not yet been able to give any time to the preparation of measures; and, therefore, it is only fair and reasonable that the adjournment now sought should be granted.

Mr. MUNRO.—Sir, I don't think there is much to be gained by a long discussion this afternoon. I simply rise to enter my protest, as I did three years since, against such an adjournment as is now proposed. Three years ago there was some excuse for a proposal of the kind, because the Government were then newly formed, and had to prepare measures before they could submit any to Parliament. But that is not the case now. We were told the other day, by a member of another Chamber, that the whole of the business which that House had to transact was not submitted until the end of

the session was approaching, and that then it was thrust upon them in a crude form, and had to be passed without the consideration necessary to enable them to deal effectively with it. The Treasurer has been good enough to tell us that he cannot make his financial statement before July; but the honorable member for Collingwood (Mr. Langridge) and the honorable member for Normanby have called attention to two very important matters which are not at all affected by the financial statement, and which could be taken into consideration by this House before that statement is brought forward. We know, also, that the Government have declared to the country—this, in fact, has been their trump card—that they could not carry on the public business because of obstruction. The honorable member for Gippsland South has informed us that the House of Commons does not occupy much more time over public business than we do.

Mr. MASON.—Not so much.

Mr. MUNRO.—But does not the honorable member know that the House of Commons meets every day in the week? Does he not also know that, when an attempt is made here to induce the Assembly to meet on Fridays, country members object?

Mr. MASON.—I don't.

Mr. MUNRO.—I am talking of what is within my own personal knowledge. When I asked the Premier, last session, to call the House together on Fridays, instead of meeting at two or three o'clock on the ordinary sitting days, country members objected to the idea. But business men in Melbourne cannot afford to attend Parliament earlier than four o'clock. They are not, like members of the House of Commons, independent men who can be in their places at any hour, if need be, every day of the week. The result is that the number of hours we devote to public business is limited. Under these circumstances, we ought to begin the session as early in the year as we can. Besides, it is unpleasant and unhealthy for honorable members to be sitting after the hot weather commences. The Government have complained that they were unable to submit to Parliament, last session, all the measures which had then been prepared. If those measures were ready last session, surely they are ready now. I merely want to enter my protest against this proceeding of the House going to the country, of honorable members being elected and being called together by the representative of the Crown to transact business, and of their then being told by Ministers, who are the

advisers of the Crown, that they are not in a position to submit business. For that, I say, Ministers should take the responsibility. I enter my protest against this House being called together on the 9th April, and then being told that it must adjourn to the 4th June. It appears that although the Government went to the country with the statement that they could not obtain the passage of measures through Parliament on account of obstruction, they are not prepared to submit those measures now. That state of affairs is not creditable to the Government. And I say it is a state of affairs which they cannot justify before the country or look upon with satisfaction to themselves. They asserted in the last Parliament, over and over again, and they stated it upon the hustings, that they had measures ready to bring in last session, but, in consequence of obstruction, they could not submit them to the House. If the Government have their measures ready, there is nothing to prevent them submitting them to Parliament at once. I am quite sure that honorable members on this (the opposition) side of the House are prepared to give fair consideration to any measures which they may bring before the House; but we are not prepared to admit statements which cannot be borne out by facts.

Mr. McLELLAN.—Sir, I did not intend to say a word upon the present occasion, but, as a member of the Ventilation and Lighting Committee, I must inform honorable members that, if they desire to meet for business within the next two months, they must find another building to meet in, because it is impossible that the carpenters, masons, bricklayers, plasterers, and other mechanics who are in possession of the Assembly chamber can have it ready for the use of members before the date to which the Government have asked the House to adjourn.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—Nonsense.

Mr. McLELLAN.—It is perfectly true. I may tell honorable members, if they are not aware of the fact, that they are now sitting upon skeletons—that all the seats and other arrangements connected with the chamber have been merely temporarily fitted up, to enable members to meet here for the purposes for which they have assembled together to-day. If they come into the chamber to-morrow morning they will find the whole apartment dismantled and again in the hands of the mechanics. I wish to add nothing further to this discussion except to say that, the Speaker being the chairman

of the Ventilation and Lighting Committee, and other members of the committee not being present, I thought that it devolved on me to make the explanation which I have just given to honorable members, and particularly to new members, who are here for the first time. It is impossible, I say, that this chamber can be ready for the transaction of public business within the next two months. It is now in the hands of mechanics, who are carrying out the necessary alterations as speedily as they can.

Mr. DUFFY.—Mr. Speaker, it is, I take it, a happy augury for the transaction of public business to find that, instead of obstructing, the Opposition on this occasion actually want to force Ministers to go on with business. The new rules of procedure with which we are threatened, judging from what has occurred to-day, will be rules which will compel the Government to bring in business rather than rules to prevent members from obstructing its despatch. For my own part, I do not wish to press unduly on the Ministry in any shape or form. I consider that every Ministry are entitled to a reasonable time to prepare their measures, and, further, I am of opinion that it is the greatest curse to this Legislature and this country to have crude and ill-prepared measures thrust upon them. What I would like to say to the Government is this: let them take whatever time they consider necessary, in the interests of this House and the country, to prepare their measures, and let them then bring those measures down properly prepared early in the session, so that there may be ample time for Parliament to consider them. Let us not have a repetition of what occurred last session. We know that last session public measures were kept back until the session was almost at an end, when they were rushed through this House and another place—the moment that any one attempted to discuss them in any way, the cry of obstruction was at once raised. If the Ministry require further time to perfect the measures which they intend to submit to Parliament this session, I say let them have it; but, having the time they require given to them, let them bring down their measures properly prepared, and at the beginning of the session, so that there may be opportunity for honorable members to fairly consider them. I sympathize deeply with the statement of the honorable member for Ballarat West (Lt.-Col. Smith), who reminded the older members, and informed the younger members, that the control of the public finances is gradually slipping

from this House. No doubt that is so. It has been so in the past, and if something is not done, the evil will become worse in the future. I know that there is a difficulty about bringing down the Estimates for the next financial year until the current financial year is closed, but I do say that as soon as one year is closed the Government are bound to bring down their Estimates and to proceed with them at once. When the time comes, I shall certainly do my part in endeavouring to see that no undue Supplies are given to the Government unless they are prepared to go on promptly with the Estimates for the next financial year, so that the Assembly may fairly and fully discuss them, and thus have as much control over the finances of the country as the nature of things will allow. I am sick and tired of the sham of discussing items of expenditure when we are told that there is no use in discussing them, because either the money has been spent already or the credit of the country has been pledged to spend it. That is a state of things which ought not to be allowed to prevail in future. I desire to say a word or two in relation to the question which has been opened up by my honorable friend, the member for Normanby—the rabbit question. That is a subject of much greater importance than probably a number of honorable members either understand or believe. But honorable members who, like myself and others, have had to traverse large and important country constituencies during the last month, are fully aware what a plague and a pest the rabbits have become. Instead of diminishing in number they are actually increasing; and if the Government are not prepared to deal with the nuisance effectually—if they do not understand how to deal with it—let them at once appoint a Royal commission on the subject. If they are prepared to deal with the question, let them do so trenchantly. Let them adopt any system for exterminating the rabbits—I don't care what it is—so long as it is a uniform system put in operation all over the country, and put in operation at once. Let them especially deal with the rabbits on Crown lands, because the Crown is still the largest landed proprietor in the country, and the landed proprietor upon whose estate there are more rabbits than there are on that of any other landed proprietor. I believe that if the system advocated by myself and some other members eight or nine years ago, when rabbits first became a pest in Victoria, had

been carried out, namely, compelling the Crown to destroy its own rabbits, the evil would have been overcome.

MR. ANDERSON.—You were Minister of Lands at the time.

MR. DUFFY.—I am sorry that political exigencies prevented me from preparing a Bill on the lines which I advocated, and submitting it to the House. The public health is also a question of great importance to the country at the present moment. I do trust, whatever course is adopted now—whether we proceed with business at once or adjourn for two months—the Government will take this matter into serious consideration. If the adjournment is carried, I hope that when they meet the House two months hence the Government will not say that they have had much more important work to attend to in keeping their majority together. If they are not prepared to deal with the question, or do not understand how to do so, let them at once appoint a Royal commission to inquire into it.

MR. BAILES.—Sir, I think there is a very great difference between the circumstances attending the opening of the present Parliament and those which existed at the commencement of the last Parliament. Just before the meeting of the last Parliament the Ministry had been reconstructed, but at the present time the Ministry is almost identically the same as at the close of the past session. Therefore, I think that there is no necessity now for so long an adjournment as took place at the beginning of the session of 1886, or, at any rate, that there is not the same political necessity for such an adjournment. Personally, however, I would not care if this House adjourned for six months if at the end of that time the Government came down with properly prepared measures for the public benefit. During the last Parliament a great deal was said on behalf of the farmer, and both now and on other occasions the necessity of stamping out the rabbit pest, in the interests of the farmers, has been forcibly advocated. While not wishing to differ from the views which have been expressed in this direction, I must urge very strongly the necessity for something being done for the benefit of another industry than the agricultural industry—an industry of paramount importance to this country. I refer to the mining industry, which is of greater importance to the welfare of Victoria than the farming industry ever was or ever will be. It is absolutely essential that something should

at once be done to relieve the mining industry from its present depression. No doubt during the last Parliament the Ministry provided an increased sum for prospecting; but if the prospecting vote were ten times larger than it is, that alone would not place the mining industry in the position which it ought to occupy. I believe that there is only one way of restoring the mining industry to the prosperity which it enjoyed in days gone by. The Mining department ought to be placed under the control of a responsible head, who would devote his whole time to the development of the mining interest. If the department would set to work to deal with the tribute system, the mining industry would again be as flourishing as it was in 1870 and 1871. I hope that the Government will undertake, during the adjournment, to prepare a Bill making it compulsory for leaseholders to let every portion of the ground which they are not working themselves on tribute, and fix a sliding scale of percentage to be paid by the tributers, so that they may be sure of getting some return for their labour, instead of being, as at present—having no legal tenure—liable to be turned adrift after doing all the “dead” work and prospecting. I admit the importance of the farming industry; but the mining industry, I contend, has done more than any other to build up the prosperity of this colony, and I would strongly urge that it is the duty of the Government to initiate legislation to resuscitate it from its present languishing condition.

MR. TAVERNER.—Mr. Speaker, I have been given to understand that any member who makes any remarks to-day will be looked upon as being hostile to the Government; but, under ordinary circumstances, sitting where I do, it cannot be supposed that I am friendly to them. I have, in fact, been returned as an opponent of the Government, but I must, of course, bow to the will of the majority of the country, and I am quite prepared to respect the Ministry so long as they do justice to the farming districts. I wish, on this occasion, to earnestly appeal to the Government to do something to remedy what is a very serious affair, namely, the rabbit pest. In the northern districts the shire councils and the people generally have come to the conclusion that it is a national calamity, and that it is the duty of the Government to deal with it as such, just as they did with the *phylloxera* when it attacked the Geelong vineyards. Only last Wednesday a large number of my constituents

waited on me and asked me to urge the Government to adopt some means to keep the rabbits in the mallee from overrunning the adjoining cultivated country, or otherwise the labour of the farmers would be wholly destroyed. The Minister of Lands has been furnished with the names of a large number of farmers in the shire of St. Arnaud who last year had nearly the whole of their crops devoured by rabbits. If this state of things continues, what will become of the farmers? I trust that the Government will lose no time in dealing with this question. I would like them to fence off the mallee country from the settled country; if they do that, the farmers will be perfectly safe from the inroads of rabbits. Let the Government show their sincerity in the matter by taking some steps in that direction. The Minister of Lands was good enough to tell the local bodies some time ago that he would supply wire netting to keep the rabbits from leaving the mallee country and entering upon the cultivated lands, provided that the shire councils became responsible for the repayment of the cost, and intimated that if it was not paid it would be stopped out of the annual subsidy. I contend that no Minister has the power to stop one penny out of the subsidy to any municipal body after it has been voted by this House. I would again urge that it is the duty of the Government to adopt prompt and active measures to suppress the rabbit nuisance. In the course of this discussion it has been asserted that country members strongly object to Friday sittings. I beg to say that I am quite prepared to come here at six o'clock in the morning; in fact, that is the hour when people in the country commence their daily work. I will be pleased to attend the House at any time that the Government, in their wisdom, think it necessary to call honorable members together in order to do the business of the State.

SIR B. O'LOGHLEN.—Mr. Speaker, the honorable member for Ararat has informed the House that we are sitting here on skeletons. I beg to assure the honorable member that the skeletons are not on this (the opposition) side of the House. If there are any skeletons in the chamber, they are on the other side—under the Ministerial benches. We have heard something in the air about a reconstruction of the Ministry; I don't know whether that is a skeleton. We have certain legacies from the last Parliament; perhaps they are skeletons. Undoubtedly there is some reason why the Ministry want this unusual adjournment.

I join with the honorable member for Ballarat West (Lt.-Col. Smith) and the honorable member for Geelong (Mr. Munro) in protesting against an adjournment for eight weeks under existing circumstances. The honorable member for Ballarat West has been twitted with the fact that in 1877 the Government of which he was a member obtained an adjournment for five weeks; but what were the circumstances under which that adjournment was asked for? The statement made on that occasion is thus recorded:—

“Mr. GRANT called attention to the peculiar circumstances under which Parliament had assembled—the general election having been followed by a change of Ministry—and intimated that it would be necessary for the House to adjourn over several weeks, to enable the new Ministers to go to their constituents and to frame measures for presentation to the Legislature.”

The adjournment asked for in 1877 was for only five weeks, although there had been a change of Ministry, and the new Ministers had to go to their constituents for re-election, as well as to prepare their measures. Not only, however, have the present Government been in office for the last three years, but some of them have been in office for the last six years; yet they want an adjournment for eight weeks before introducing Bills which they say were prepared last session, but not carried into law in consequence of obstruction. For a personal reason, I am glad of the present opportunity of calling attention to a peculiar circumstance which I determined to allude to on the first occasion that offered. Last session was closed by a Governor's speech in the usual way, and Parliament having been prorogued, there was no opportunity for any member to make any observation on anything in that speech. The Government, and not His Excellency, were responsible for the speech, which contained the following words:—

“A happy accident gave the Legislative Assembly an occasion of testifying its loyalty to the Crown.”

Sir, that was an imputation, inferentially, of disloyalty against myself, against the honorable member for Warrnambool, and against the present honorable member for Warrenheip. It was also an inferential charge of disloyalty against Sir Henry Parkes, and the whole of the Government of New South Wales, as well as against Sir Thomas McIlwraith, the Hon. Mr. Moorhead, and the Legislature of Queensland, and the Hon. Thomas Playford and the Legislature of South Australia. Moreover, it inferred a charge of disloyalty against our present Acting Governor, who has

expressed an opinion in favour of views that I have entertained in this House. Sir, I have always said that that glorious anthem, the “National Anthem” ought to be sung upon national, social, and friendly occasions, but it ought not to be degraded into a party emblem. I hold that it was so degraded in this House. It was made use of as an insult to members who have stood up in this House in support of certain views, and all of whom have been again returned to the House. I had a walk-over at the recent election, the honorable member for Warrnambool was returned by a majority of 450 votes, and the honorable member for Warrenheip by a majority of between 700 and 800. We have all been re-elected, notwithstanding the charge of disloyalty, inferentially, made against us, as well as against the Ministries and Legislatures of other colonies in Australasia, by a Government the members of whom are sacrificing their views on the stock tax on the ground of promoting federation. Could anything more tend to postpone federation than the very paragraph I have quoted, which was inserted intentionally and on consideration, in the speech which Ministers dared to put into the mouth of the representative of Her Majesty, and in which they dared to charge me and other members of this House, inferentially, with disloyalty? Sir, I repudiate the charge. For 26 years I have been in the service of the Queen in this colony. I have held official positions; I have held high and responsible political office—the highest that can be held in this colony by a Member of Parliament. I still hold office under the Crown, and, as holding that office, I brought the accusation of the Government, and my answer to it, before His Excellency the Governor prior to his departure from the colony. I have not been able to put before the public my memorandum and His Excellency's reply, but on a fitting occasion I will move that an address be presented to His Excellency, requesting that he will be so good as to publish the memorandum and answer. To come back to the question of the proposed adjournment of the House. I think it only reasonable that an adjournment should be granted over the Easter holidays—say to Thursday fortnight. That would afford the Government an opportunity of sending any gentleman who may accept office with them to his constituents, and meeting the House with a reconstructed Ministry. I don't know whether they are able to manage a reconstruction. I put it to the late House, and I have been of this opinion

ever since I came back again into political life, that we are governed by a press-ridden Government, and I don't know what their masters—the *Age* and the *Argus*—will do. The Government are ruled only by the three Melbourne morning daily newspapers; the rest of the press is free. The *Daily Telegraph* does not take up exactly the same position as it did three years ago, but the *Argus* and the *Age* will not allow the Government to sacrifice their particular pets. It is impossible to say what direction may be given to the Premier by either of those papers. It is a pity that the papers don't quarrel, because then the Government would not be able to reconstruct, and they would only meet the House to resign and allow other members to take their places. I say that the adjournment which the Ministry now ask for should not be granted. The House has met under most peculiar circumstances—under circumstances for which there is no exact precedent—in fact, they appear to me to be almost fundamentally unconstitutional. Seven months ago the Government were beaten by their own supporters; and what occurred afterwards? I am not going into the details of the circumstances under which their supporters were befooled; but I may mention that, after the Government were beaten by their own supporters, a caucus was held, and at that caucus a most unholy compact—politically unholy—was entered into. The compact was that the Government were to pass the Estimates, the two Electoral Bills, and some technical measures; but that no more work was to be done, and Parliament was to be kept in existence until the very last day on which it would expire by effluxion of time. The latter condition was strictly adhered to, but the compact was stretched by the Government, who, before Parliament was prorogued, passed a number of Bills which were not included in the arrangement originally entered into. When the Ministry were defeated they had three courses open to them to pursue, any one of which would have been constitutional. They might have accepted the decision of the House, and increased the stock tax, without resigning; they might have refused to accept the vote of the House, and have gone to the country; or they might have asked the House to pass the Estimates, the Appropriation Bill, and the Electoral Bills, and then have dissolved Parliament. They took none of these courses. But what did they do? They withdrew the Budget, although as to most matters contained in it the House was

nearly unanimous. They said they were stopped by obstruction, whereas they were defeated on one or two items by their own supporters. If that Budget, on which the Government have gone to the country, had been pressed on the House, the House would have passed it, because on the main points both sides were agreed, although no doubt details would have been altered. We are ready to pass it now, seven months afterwards, yet that Budget, which was to be of such incalculable advantage to the country, the Government will not allow us to see again for another two months, and I suppose it will be three months before it is passed. So that the country is to be twelve months without the incalculable benefit of this Budget—and all because the Government would not take the constitutional course they ought to have taken. The course the Government adopted was most unconstitutional, and the political compact they entered into was the most unholy I ever heard of. The result is that we shall be landed face to face this year with the very same difficulty from which the Government ran away last year. There is not the slightest doubt about that, because although a majority may have been returned against an increase of the stock tax, it is now felt by the country that the question is free-trade or protection, and that free-trade has "scored one." It may have been under the guise, or disguise, of federation, but it is felt by the country that free-trade has scored a decisive victory over protection. We were told during the elections that unless the Ministry were returned a financial crisis would take place. There was but one road out of a financial crisis, and that was the return of the Premier at the head of the poll, and all his supporters with him. I fancy that the best thing that has happened to take us out of any crisis has been the welcome rain which has been falling in this and the other colonies during the past few days. But what will be the result of that? In twelve months—certainly before two years—if we have no increased stock tax we shall find fat bullocks selling at £7 per head and fat sheep at 5s. per head in the Melbourne market. If the favorable weather continues, we shall have a large surplus of fat sheep coming down from Riverina and of fat bullocks from Queensland, either alive or as chilled meat, and the result will be that the country lands of this colony will be depreciated in value 50 per cent. If you deduct the value of the land arising from its being able to fatten stock, you will reduce its value to the extent I have mentioned.



Several HONORABLE MEMBERS.—No.

Sir B. O'LOGHLEN.—I heard the same "No" when free-trade was preached at home, and what do we see now? In the agricultural counties of England the finest lands have gone down 50 per cent. in value. If that is the case in a large and magnificent country like England, what will be the case in a small colony like Victoria if we are flooded by fat sheep from Riverina and fat bullocks from Queensland? I have made a prophecy, and I know it is a dangerous thing to prophesy, but for the last dozen years I have studied this question, and I have convinced myself that my prophecy will come true unless there is an increased stock tax. Honorable members have spoken about the necessity for the establishment of a Metropolitan Board of Works, the suppression of the rabbit pest, and other things; but the reply of the Government is, "You must wait another two months," although the Minister of Lands has stated that a Rabbit Bill has been prepared. I have seen rabbits in crowds on the roadsides and in the fields, washing their faces with their paws, and so tame as hardly to be disturbed by passers-by. It is also well known that the worst-infested lands are those which belong to the Government. Crown lands, and the fringes abutting on them, have populated the lands of the farmers. But all these practical questions have to be postponed for two months. I have also a practical question, which has been postponed in the same way by the Government for a considerable time. I refer to a national work in my own district—the completion of the improvement of Port Fairy Harbour, according to the scheme of Sir John Coode. I have seen that the Premier is going to give £60,000 towards carrying on works in another harbour, but there is not a word about Port Fairy. Last year the matter was brought before the Government, and a deputation waited on the Minister of Customs owing to the Premier being too busy to receive it. Subsequently, on the 27th November, I called the attention of the Government to the immediate necessity for completing the works, and the Minister of Customs then stated that he had already promised to send down an officer within three days—the statement can be seen in *Hansard*—to inspect the work and report. But, although two or three deputations afterwards waited on the Government on the subject, no officer was ever sent down until last week, and even now we do not know whether a sum of

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money is to be included in the new loan for the completion of that harbour—the best natural harbour in Victoria outside Port Phillip Heads. What I would urge on the House is that the Government should not postpone the whole business of the country for eight weeks, but should call the House together again in two or three weeks. If the Treasurer then finds that he cannot get on with his Budget, there is plenty of other business to proceed with.

Mr. TUTHILL.—Sir, I think the Government are entitled to the adjournment they ask for, which is in accordance with the usual custom on the opening of a new Parliament. I would ask the Government, however, during the adjournment, to give careful attention to an important matter, namely, the administration of the Mining department. Since the Assembly last met, that department has lost the services of a most valuable officer in the person of the secretary, Mr. Langtree. During the last Parliament it was considered that the department was not so well administered politically as it should be, as the exigencies of the Government would not allow them to give a Minister entirely to it. The trouble is now intensified by the department losing the services of Mr. Langtree, who, as secretary for Mines, was unsurpassed. I congratulate Mr. Langtree on his promotion to a higher position, but his promotion is at the expense of the mining industry. I would ask the attention of the Minister of Mines to an attempt which is now being made on the part of the Water Supply department to interfere, to a very serious extent indeed, with the mining industry. A circular has lately been sent out from the Mining department stating that, owing to the unsettled state of the irrigation schemes, it is proposed to limit the term of water-right licences to one year instead of ten years. Now, as mining members are aware, the very existence of alluvial mining depends on a proper supply of water. Originally, water-right licences were issued for fifteen years, and under those licences the licensees went to a very considerable outlay in cutting races to carry water to their claims. Afterwards the term was reduced to ten years, and now it is intimated that those licences which are expiring are not to be renewed, but in lieu of them the department will issue an annual licence. The effect of that will be that not only will men not feel themselves justified in going to an expense of £5,000 or £10,000 in cutting races, but there will be a scare among the banks and other institutions which have advanced money for such

undertakings, and the present licence-holders will be called upon to pay up. This is a matter which affects the very existence of alluvial mining, and I trust that the Minister of Mines will consult with the Minister of Water Supply and see that the matter is set right. I sympathize with the efforts of the Minister of Water Supply to perfect the various schemes of irrigation, but care must be taken that irrigation is not carried out at the cost of an important industry. I trust, therefore, that the Government will see their way, without waiting for the end of the two months' adjournment, to intimate to those mine-owners who have gone to great expense under their licences that the arbitrary alteration proposed will not be carried out, and that they will get a renewal of their licences for at least the term of ten years. I know one or two claims already seriously affected by the issue of the circular I have referred to, and unless something is done at once others will be similarly injured, and a financial crisis will be brought about.

Mr. RICHARDSON.—Mr. Speaker, I rise in the first place to make an explanation as to the position which I am occupying in this chamber. I may say that that position is almost a pure accident. I do not think I am called upon to make any apology for it, but I feel that it would be almost unfair to say anything in opposition to the Government—to make any attack on them—on the present occasion, as they are in such a position that they cannot reply.

Mr. BURROWES.—Why not?

Mr. RICHARDSON.—I think the Speaker will say that the Government cannot reply to any remarks made to-day. The honorable member for Ballarat West (Lt.-Col. Smith) drew attention to the delay in calling Parliament together for the despatch of business. I think that rather a wrong construction has been put on the honorable member's remarks. He did not complain at some adjournment being asked for by the Government, but merely submitted that the adjournment should not be of such duration as is proposed. I think that was a very fair way to put the matter. The Premier did not ask for an adjournment until June on the ground that the Government were not ready with measures to go on with, but on the ground that "breathing time" should be allowed to new members who have taken their places in the House. No doubt that is a consideration which new members may desire and may be entitled to, but I do not think that new members require the length of "breathing time" which is proposed. I

believe that it would be perfectly within the power of the Government to make a reply on the mallee question, the works question, and the rabbit question, which have been referred to by honorable members. As to the rabbits, the Minister of Lands would say that the landowners have power now to destroy the rabbits on their lands, and the Government to destroy those on theirs. No doubt the question of rabbit suppression is one which requires more than passing consideration, but I do not wish to prolong this discussion. I only desired to place the intention of the honorable member for Ballarat West fairly before honorable members. None of us want to place the Government in the position of having to bring forward measures immediately. It is necessary that some delay should be given to them, but I think the Government might have told us something of what they intend to propose—what proposals for instance it is intended to submit with regard to parliamentary procedure. The experience of the House is that that is a most difficult question. It has been complained by the honorable member for Port Fairy that the press has been urging for some time that some new rules of procedure must be made. I, however, hold the opinion that the Government will not require to submit any alteration of the procedure during this Parliament. I trust that all honorable members here are prepared to assist the Government in the measures they will submit, so as to render them as acceptable as possible, and that the Government proposals will be received and dealt with in such a way as to render any alteration of the rules of procedure unnecessary. It may be that there will be more discussion, owing to the greater number of members, but if that discussion is only carried on in a legitimate and constitutional manner, I believe the Government will hesitate to ask the House to alter the rules of procedure. However, if the Government do intend to submit any proposals on the subject, they might take us into their confidence now, and give us an idea as to what they contemplate submitting. The "breathing time" which we are to have would then enable us to consider their propositions and to deal with them in the interests of Parliament and the country. I desire to call the attention of the Government to a question of administration which is of serious import to the country. I refer to the distribution of the prospecting vote. The last Parliament sanctioned a very considerable increase in the amount of that vote, and, so far as I

can see, there was an honest intention on the part of the Government to see that the vote was fairly and legitimately distributed. But I think it must be patent to every honorable member and to the Government that the distribution was a failure. The Government have now called together the prospecting boards to take counsel as to the future distribution of the vote, and I think that if the Government were to lay down the lines on which that discussion should take place, and were to formulate a policy on the subject, it would greatly help the consideration of the subject, and, in all probability, the mining interest. I would suggest whether the Premier should not consider whether the different kinds of prospecting should not be classified, and the distribution of the vote placed altogether outside political influence. What is required is a really national policy, which should include dealing with new gold-fields and auriferous leads in deep country. If the Government will turn their attention in this direction, and formulate a policy that prospecting should be carried out on certain principles, I think they will be acting wisely. The mode in which the vote has been distributed up to the present has chiefly given satisfaction to companies which have been brought to a stand-still. No doubt those companies may be legitimately assisted, but the money should be advanced subject to certain conditions as to repayment where gold has been found.

Mr. FOSTER.—So it is.

Mr. RICHARDSON.—Only in very few cases has any money been returned to the State.

Mr. FOSTER.—It is the rule in Gippsland.

Mr. RICHARDSON.—The rule is not an invariable one, and a great deal of dissatisfaction has been caused by the variable-ness in its application. Then the prospecting vote also wants to be expended in helping small companies to prospect in places which have been apparently worked out. I do not wish to extend my remarks on the subject on the present occasion, but I trust that the Premier, in the exercise of his functions as Minister of Mines, will give his best attention to it, and, when the prospecting boards meet together, will give a tone to their discussion which will benefit the mining industry and the country at large. As I have already stated, I occupy my present position more by accident than anything else. There are some questions on which I have pledged myself to my constituents in harmony with the views of the Government, and when

those questions come up for consideration, the Government shall have my support in dealing with them. Probably that will not be acceptable to some honorable members connected with the Opposition. But the position which, as a parliamentary representative, I take up is this: that while I disapprove of coalition Government, I feel bound, as an independent member, to give support to honorable members on the Treasury bench when I think they are going in the right direction. I trust that the Opposition, of which I intend to be a member, will pursue a constitutional course, and seek to retard measures only when, in their opinion, those measures are not in the interests of the country. No doubt the Government are as well disposed towards the country as we are, but they must give us the credit of being as well disposed towards the country as they are. While I take up this position I must say that I think the time has come when we should altogether cast aside the term "coalition Government." I no longer regard the present Government as a coalition Government. They must see that they have now become a consolidated Government. They are drawn from only one side of this House; and they must be prepared to stand by their own actions. I suppose the Government will state that they have been prepared at all times to stand by their own actions. However, when a majority of the members of this Chamber come to the conclusion that the Government no longer represent them or the country, the Government will have to give place to others, and we will have to make a fresh start in politics.

Mr. MADDEN.—Mr. Speaker, before this debate terminates, I desire to join with the other honorable member from the north-western part of the colony who has spoken in impressing upon the Ministry and the House the fact that the rabbit question is again assuming very serious proportions. I do not concur with the honorable member for Normanby as to the remedy which he thinks necessary. In my opinion, the principal remedy is for the Government to take the administration of the whole of the law into their own hands. That is the only way by which the plague will ever be thoroughly got rid of. One other matter I desire to refer to. The country members of this House have been favorably disposed, in the past, to the Melbourne Harbour Trust because they were of opinion that one of the works that trust would carry out was the bringing of shipping to Spencer-street, so that goods from the

country might be put on board at that point. But what do we find stated in the press recently? Why that the connexion between the State railways and the Harbour Trust works in Melbourne is to be done away with—that the railway which at present runs along the Australian Wharf is to be taken up, and that, for the future, goods which come from the country to Spencer-street will not be shipped there. This may not seem, at first sight, to be a serious question; but honorable members must be aware that the alteration means several additional handlings of goods; and the object of country members in the past has always been to secure an avoidance of those handlings. They never thought that the operations of the Harbour Trust would result in this state of things.

Mr. LANGRIDGE.—Is it not only a temporary arrangement?

Mr. MADDEN.—It is stated as intended to be a permanent arrangement; but I trust the Premier will see that no alteration of the kind is made without very serious consideration indeed.

Mr. MCINTYRE.—Mr. Speaker, I intended to have taken an earlier part in this debate, and it so happens that much of what I contemplated saying has been said already. I am glad to observe that in this new Parliament there is not to be a conspiracy of silence on the Ministerial side of the House, and that honorable members on that side are prepared to rise in their places, and express their sentiments. The honorable member who initiated this discussion called attention to the declaration made by the leader of the liberal section of the Ministry when before his constituents, and appealed to that gentleman to say why he had not called the liberal members of the House together. I submit that it was the bounden duty of the honorable gentleman to have responded to this challenge; but it would appear that the honorable gentleman is sufficiently acquainted with the ropes to feel that his policy is to say nothing. I call upon new members of the House to note that fact. I am under the impression that this debate will end, as such debates usually do, in smoke; and probably it will be alleged in the press to-morrow that those honorable members who took part in it were guilty of obstruction. But what have we obstructed? Nothing more than we had to obstruct during the last Parliament. When the Government brought before the House, last session, anything in the shape of legislation, this (the opposition) side of the House was ready to

render assistance, and that will be our course in the future. I have experienced a number of surprises this afternoon—some pleasant, and others unpleasant. I have been a straight opponent of coalition Government ever since its inception, and on the ground that a coalition Government does not perform its duty so well as a Government formed on proper party lines. For some reason or other two honorable members—the honorable member for Melbourne, and the honorable member for Castlemaine (Mr. Patterson)—have left the opposition corner and taken up their places in the Ministerial corner. Of course it is impossible to guess what their object is. But I would like to know what the Government mean by hanging a bunch of carrots before a number of gentlemen so long as they have? What do they mean by not having filled up the portfolio of Customs before this? Why has not the reconstruction of the Government, which we were assured some time since was about to take place, been effected before now? We are told, one day, that the honorable member for Castlemaine has the Customs portfolio in his pocket; and, on another, that no overtures have yet been made to the honorable member. But is it proper for any Ministry to be in this position, and especially a Ministry of all the talents? I have heard propositions, with regard to changes in the Ministry, which I would regret to see adopted. For my part I would not like to see any changes among them, because I think that, on the whole, they have filled their offices remarkably well. But I would be glad to know how long this coalition system is likely to last? Are we to have a new Government every three years, with the same two heads that we have now? Do honorable members realize the fact that under coalition Government the public expenditure amounts to £9,000,000 annually, although the population of the colony is only one million? Deducting the outlay on railways and water supply works, which is reproductive, the public expenditure amounts to £6,000,000 per annum, or £6 per head of the population. How can the country be prosperous under a Government that indulges in such an expenditure? For my part I consider the present Government to be the biggest sham ever known. Why if a party Government were in office, care would be taken that every shilling which could be saved should be saved. I believe that a Government formed on anything like respectable lines would do something in the way of keeping back

£1,000,000 of the present expenditure for the future rainy day which is bound to come.

Mr. MADDEN.—We have a surplus of £1,000,000.

Mr. McINTYRE.—And the Government are going to spend it. Not only so, but they propose to raise £1,000,000 by the sale of the lunatic asylum reserves, and to spend that too. The sooner the Government are out of office, the sooner will the country be out of the difficulty in which they have placed it. Talk about the collapse of the land boom, who brought that about? Why the present Government. (Laughter.) Honorable members may laugh, but what I state is the absolute truth. I trust that in the next Budget which the Treasurer submits to this House, he will take care to have the receipts and expenditure connected with the railways and other reproductive works set out separately from the receipts and expenditure connected with the government of the colony. Let us know what our railways cost, what revenue we derive from them, and what our indebtedness in connexion with them amounts to. Let us have a proper balance-sheet, such as a public company requires, and let us see whether the railways are yielding the profits which were anticipated when the change of management took place.

Mr. TUCKER.—What the honorable member asks for is supplied already.

Mr. McINTYRE.—The public are, so to speak, shareholders in the State railways, and also in the water supply works, and they as shareholders ought to be furnished, every year, with a balance-sheet, showing the revenue derived from those undertakings and how the money is expended.

Mr. TUCKER.—So they are.

Mr. McINTYRE.—In conclusion, I may mention that at the close of the last Parliament I gave notice of motion for leave to introduce a Bill relating to a railway in my district, and I beg to intimate that I shall renew my proposal on that subject when the House re-assembles.

Mr. BAKER.—Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that a number of new members have been returned to assist in legislating for the more effectual suppression of the rabbit plague. The honorable member for Normanby has discovered, by the addition to his district of a portion of my former electorate, what the members for the old district of the Wimmera had to contend with for a very long time. He now realizes the fact that there are rabbits in that particular part of the country. I desire to say that, while I

think the Lands department might have done more in the way of fencing, I consider it has done some excellent work in the direction of rabbit extirpation. The shires have also done excellent work. The whole machinery available has been put in motion, and, in consequence, the rabbit plague has been reduced to a very narrow limit. Therefore I feel it is not right that the statement should go abroad that we are now in the same position with regard to the rabbits, if not a worse position, than we were in before. It is not right to say anything of the kind. I admit that the rabbit pest in many parts is still very bad, but those are places where the land is still Crown land, and the Government should set to work to fence that land as quickly as possible. If the Minister of Lands will see that this is done, he will earn the gratitude of settlers who are unable to put sheep on their land because of the rabbits, and who cannot apply that land to agricultural purposes because of the wild dogs. If the Minister of Lands will deal in a drastic way with this matter—if he will relieve the shires from responsibility and take the whole responsibility upon himself—he will earn the gratitude of thousands of men, who are on the verge of ruin, in those parts of the country where rabbit extirpation has not been carried out effectually. There is one other matter which I desire to bring under the Minister's notice. Fresh legislation is needed with reference to the mallee, and I submit that if the permanent settlement of that country is desired, the legislation must be in the direction of giving freeholds to the people who have gone there in hundreds to live. Those people, under their present tenure, are not able to borrow money. They want help in that direction, and this, I am sure, the Minister of Lands will be prepared to give them. One word with respect to the outbreak of typhoid fever. I had an interview with the Premier on this subject yesterday, and I hope a big effort will be made on the part of the Government to establish permanent hospitals in the country districts, and to maintain those institutions in such a way as to fully meet public exigencies.

Mr. LAURENS.—Sir, past experience in this Chamber helps me to know that the motion now before the chair will be carried, and therefore I will take advantage of the only opportunity which I shall have for two months to call the attention of the Government to what is a source of great danger to Melbourne and the suburbs. I refer to the condition of the Moonee Ponds Creek.

I was very much pleased to notice, in the *Argus* newspaper, a sub-leader directing the attention of the Government and the colony to this matter. The other day, a very influential deputation, including the Chief Secretary, waited upon the Minister of Public Works, on the subject of the dangerous condition of the creek, and pointed out that its improvement was essentially a national work, and that the cost should be met out of the national exchequer. I trust that during the two months over which we are about to adjourn, the Government will give their attention to this matter, and not rely upon what the local municipalities can do. Those bodies might just as well be expected to remove all insanitary matter from the River Yarra. It is impossible for the municipalities abutting on the Moonee Ponds Creek to meet the large expenditure which must necessarily be incurred in putting it into such a condition that it will cease to be a source of danger to Melbourne and the suburbs.

The motion for the adjournment of the House until the 4th June was agreed to.

#### SEATS FOR MEMBERS.

The SPEAKER.—With regard to the suggestion made by the Premier earlier in the afternoon, I desire to mention that I will be glad to take all the steps in my power in order that honorable members may be comfortably seated in the House.

The House adjourned at five minutes to five o'clock p.m., until Tuesday, June 4.

### LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Tuesday, June 4, 1889.*

State Opening of Parliament by the Acting Governor—Representation of the South-Western Province—Life Assurance Companies Act Amendment Bill—Federal Council of Australasia: Victorian Representatives—Address in Reply to the Acting Governor's Speech.

The PRESIDENT (Sir James MacBain, K.C.M.G.,) took the chair at three minutes to two o'clock p.m.

#### DECLARATIONS OF QUALIFICATION.

The following members delivered to the Clerk the declarations required by the Act No. 702:—The Honorables S. Austin, J. G. Beaney, F. Brown, T. Dowling, S. Fraser, D. Ham, G. Le Fevre, J. P. MacPherson, W. H. Roberts, N. Thornley, and G. Young.

### STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Usher announced the approach of His Excellency the Acting Governor, and immediately afterwards His Excellency entered the chamber, attended by his suite.

The members of the Legislative Assembly having been summoned,

His EXCELLENCY addressed the following speech to both Houses of Parliament:—

“MR. PRESIDENT AND HONORABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL:

“MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY:

“I have called you together after the shortest interval compatible with the due preparation of measures to be laid before you. The proportion of representatives to the different parts of the country has been re-adjusted; and it may be expected that the two Houses will therefore give more complete expression to the wishes and wants of the country.

“The prosperity which this colony has so long enjoyed happily still continues, aided as it is by political quietude and prevailing public confidence.

“In the late session of the Federal Council a resolution was passed recommending that the necessary steps be taken, as provided by the Constitution of the Council, for increasing the number of its members. My advisers will take an early opportunity to invite your consideration of an address to Her Majesty on the subject.

“The energy and thoroughness with which Victoria has prepared to resist foreign aggression have attracted the warm praise of statesmen and competent critics in Great Britain. The progress made during the past year has been steady and gratifying. The re-armament of the forts has been pushed on; a new corps of Victorian Rangers has been formed from the rifle clubs in country districts; and private liberality has contributed a half-battery of horse artillery. The Easter encampment of this year was largely attended, and the manoeuvres, which were of