Colonial Society 1860-1890 - Queensland.

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Queensland was the last of the Australian colonies to attain independent existence, having reached that much desired end only on 10th December, 1859, and that after a long succession of petitions to the authorities in both London and Sydney. The state which has no history may well be in a state of happiness, but whether the absence of a history is the best preparation for the effective exercise of full self-government is another question, the answer to which could provide some indications of the prospects of success or failure in the future experiment. In the case of Queensland, the answer is undoubtedly that her late arrival in the family of Australian colonies left her at some disadvantage in the effort to establish her own governmental system.

In the first place, the new colony had little experience in the working of parliamentary institutions of any kind. It is true that it had been represented in the New South Wales legislature since 1843, but the representation had been neither very extensive nor, in the eyes of the northerners, very effective. Until 1851 the whole area had formed part of an electorate which included in addition the districts of Macquarie and the Upper Hunter, and it was not until 1850 that the first resident of the northern districts appeared as its member. The creation of new electorates in 1851 to provide for the return of four members encouraged the development of increased interest in elections, but the northern members found the legislature in Sydney unresponsive to its appeals, and very soon concentrated all their attention upon two demands, the spending of more government money in the north, and separation. By the Act of 1858 membership was increased to nine, but the elections did not come until the following year, by which time separation had been approved. Hence the elections of that year aroused very little interest. Thus Queensland had few experienced members to assist in shaping its new Legislature, and its first Assembly contained only three members who had served in a colonial legislature, and none of these had long experience. The Assembly was a band of enthusiastic amateurs. In the Legislative Council the lack of experience was so pronounced that Governor Bowen had to issue an urgent plea to Sir Charles Nicholson to serve for a time as President, to start the Council off on a proper track.
In selecting his Executive Council too the Governor was in difficulties. No northern representative except a Sydney man named Holt had served in the comparable body in New South Wales, and he was not a member of the new Queensland legislature. For Attorney-General he chose Ratcliffe Pring, Q.C., crown prosecutor in Moreton Bay for four years, but without any record of participation in politics. Captain Wickham, appointed to Moreton Bay in 1843 as Police Magistrate and subsequently becoming Government Resident, was invited to become Treasurer, but declined. Bowen then fell back on R. R. Mackenzie, a Burnett squatter without active participation in politics, whose qualifications were that he was "a gentleman of ancient Scotch family and one of the earliest pastoral settlers in North Australia... a man of high honour and integrity, of methodical habits of business, possessed of an extensive knowledge of the country of his adoption, and enjoying a large amount of public confidence."\(^1\)

For Premier, however, Bowen had to go completely outside the local ranks and appoint his own private secretary R. G. W. Herbert, a young man of 29 who had previously served as Gladstone's private secretary.

But the difficulties were much more fundamental than a mere lack of knowledge of techniques. In the other colonies, a long continuous and successful fight had been waged to whittle down the powers of the Governor and to advance step by step to full self-government. In that struggle Queensland had played no part. Practically from the beginning of free settlement it had exercised representative government and the advance to responsible government had come to it automatically as part of the mother colony. Thus the northern districts could have little appreciation of the real meaning of the system of government they had inherited.

In fact the manner in which separation had come militated still further against such understanding. Achievement had come not through the action of the Legislature, which had placed many obstacles in the way, but as a result of direct pressure on the...

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\(^1\) Bowen to Newcastle 2/2/1860: Governor's Despatches to Secretary of State, Vol. I, pp. 56-7.
Imperial Government. Authority then was seen as a donor of gifts and we have the somewhat paradoxical picture of a colony proud of its possession of the right to govern itself and yet at the same time tending to expect authority to shower it with further gifts, ranging from further privileges to the lavish spending of government money.

Who then were the colonists on whose shoulders rested the responsibility for making a success or failure of the new experiment? Traditionally they formed two main groups, squatters and townsmen, whose interests were at variance and who fell from the beginning into opposite political camps. At first sight it might appear that such was really the case, but a more detailed examination will show that the real situation differed quite considerably.

The circumstances of settlement appear to support the traditional picture. The squatters of the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales took almost immediate advantage of the lifting of the ban on settlement in the north, and in the next year, 1840, they appeared on the Darling Downs. Crossing the range to the Upper Brisbane Valley they moved north and by 1842 were reaching out towards the Burnett and Mary Rivers, establishing themselves on the former in 1843. But Brisbane remained closed until 1842 and it was not until 1843 that land there became available in any quantity. Thus the squatters owed nothing to Brisbane, and as early as 1841 had endeavoured to establish another port at Cleveland, because of their inability to make use of the older centre. Thus it seemed as if the division familiar in New South Wales was only being transported northwards, with added emphasis because of the mode of settlement.

Moreover the new squatters brought with them a tradition far older than that of New South Wales. Most of them were newcomers to Australia, for instance among the earliest were Patrick Leslie, who had arrived from the United Kingdom only late in the thirties, and Arthur Hodgson and H. S. Russell, who came in 1840. They came straight from the British scene, where an extraordinarily large number had come from noble or at least high-ranking families. Elliott (Hodgson's partner) was the nephew of an English admiral, R. R. Mackenzie later returned to Scotland to assume the Baronetcy of Toul, and St. George Gore of Yandilla run came from the family of the Earls of Arran. In their new homes they speedily did their best to
reproduce as far as possible the surroundings with which they were familiar. After his first tour of the Darling Downs in 1860 Governor Bowen reported to the Secretary of State: 2

"I have also found in the houses of the long chain of settlers who have entertained me with such cordial hospitality all the comforts and most of the refinements of the homes of country gentlemen in England."

This progress had not come without considerable effort. According to a contemporary account 3, in 1841 "there was but one wood and bark humpy on the Darling Downs - the hut at Toolburra. 4 Mr. Sibley was camped under a tarpaulin. Messrs. Hodgson and Elliott had a small cloth tent where we found Mr. Elliott...mixing up a damper with his sleeves rolled up and in flour up to his elbows".

They had to make all arrangements for their own transport, make their own roads, and even drive their own bullock drays, 5 this latter being the origin of many stories that wealthy squatters began as bullock drivers. No doubt they were assisted by the bounteousness of the land, but they overcame all the difficulties by their own unaided effort. Once established then, they deemed they had earned the right to take up the position of a new colonial squatterarchy. Writing to Bulwer Lytton, Bowen said: 6

"These gentlemen live in a patriarchal style among their immense flocks and herds, amusing themselves with hunting, shooting, and fishing, and the exercise of plentiful hospitality. I have often thought (especially in reading Thackeray's novel The Virginians) that the Queensland gentlemen-squatters bear a similar relation to the other Australians that the Virginian planters of a hundred years back bore to the other Americans".

4. Run occupied by the Leslie Brothers.
5. H. S. Russell: Genesis of Queensland, passim.
6. S. Lane-Toole, op.cit., p.110.
But if they lived the life of gentleman, they conceived that their position placed responsibilities upon them and from the beginning they took the lead in any projects for the betterment of the colony as a whole, and also in many cases provided the money.

After a slow start Brisbane soon began to grow, and in 1860 Bowen again found an American parallel:

"Brisbane, my present capital, must resemble what Boston and the other Puritan towns of New England were at the close of the last century. In a population of 7,000 we have fourteen churches, thirteen public houses, twelve policemen. The leading inhabitants are a hard-headed set of English and Scotch merchants and manufacturers."

In the early years these merchants had experienced a very difficult period, especially when the squatters were still being supplied with goods from Sydney business houses. But by 1860 all this was over and Brisbane bore the appearance of a very prosperous community. Bowen was quite impressed.

"Distress and pauperism, those comprehensive terms so frequently used in European politics, are unknown in Queensland. All classes of this community appear to be thoroughly imbued with the love of law and order, and the other virtues which naturally grow up with the acquisition of property, however small, and with the enjoyment of that prosperity which is the legitimate reward of honourable industry."

Like the squatters the great part of the town population had come either directly from the United Kingdom or had spent only a very short period in New South Wales. Of the total Queensland population of 31,000 shown by the census of 1861 over 14,000 had been born in the United Kingdom and only 3,000 in New South Wales. The great bulk of the migrants had come

7. *e.g.* Moreton Bay District Improvement Fund 1845, which included plans to improve the port of Brisbane.
8. S. Lane-Poole, *op.cit.*, p.111.
9. Bowen to Newcastle, 5/2/60: Governor's Despatches to the Secretary of State, Vol.1, pp.76-7; S. Lane-Poole, *op.cit.*, pp.133-4.
direct in special ships, especially from 1852 onwards. Thus most of the population knew the politics of New South Wales only at second hand, and were never vitally interested in them.

In economic matters both the townsmen and the squatters had similar ideas, for they fully endorsed Adam Smith's doctrine of the necessity to remove all obstacles which might hinder the individual in his search for personal wealth. But the squatters had a far wider view for they did make at least some attempt to provide for the welfare of the colony as a whole. Thus in the Moreton Bay Courier, then regarded as a squatter organ, A. S. Lyon objected to the Orders in Council of 1847 because they failed to offer aid to farmers as well as squatters. On the other hand, some resentment against the squatters had appeared in the towns.

Some of it was quite natural, for in the early days of Brisbane the merchants and shopkeepers passed through very difficult times until their businesses were thoroughly established and they were receiving the trade of the squatters. In those early years it was sometimes claimed there were more shopkeepers than customers in Brisbane. There was also resentment against the squatters because of the attempt to make Cleveland into a port which would take all the inland trade away from Brisbane. Moreover, Ipswich soon became the centre for the men of the inland, and in addition it began to grow at a faster rate than the older settlement, threatening to overtake and even pass it. As separation became more likely, Brisbane became even more suspicious of its rival, for each desired to be the capital, partly from the additional prestige that would be gained, but also from the increase in property values.

In themselves these were insufficient to create any very great hostility, and as more inland trade began to come through Brisbane the danger of the creation of a wide schism began to recede. But something of the old New South Wales attitude had been transferred to the north. Soon it was to be reinforced by a basis of principle. The development of the squatters into a colonial squiresarchy smacked too much of the establishment of a privileged class based on land, which was anathema.

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J. J. Knight: In the Early Days (Brisbane, Sapsford and Co., 1895), pp. 32-5.
to the English liberals of the day. All that was needed was the arrival of a new group of radicals strongly opposed in principle to such a development, and such a group was supplied by the action of Dr. Lang. In 1849 a group of new colonists specially selected by him arrived in three ships, the first of which was the Fortitude. All radicals and members of evangelical churches, these were townsmen who settled in Fortitude Valley which from that time was the home of radicalism in Queensland. A few moved to Ipswich, and before long they were challenging the squatter hold there. To a man they eagerly espoused Lang's known hostility to the squatters, and supported the cause of the small farmer. As some of them were Scots, they had inherited the opposition to sheep farming, born during the period of the Highland clearances.

The arrival of this solid aggressive group proved a turning point in the history of the colony. When they arrived the colony was in the grip of labour troubles. The pastoral industry in New South Wales had always depended on transportation for its supply of labour, but from 1840 this source had been no longer available. The position in the Middle Districts became acute, but it was worse in the north, where no pool of labour was available. Few came north to look for work, and the squatters were becoming desperate. A few Chinese were brought in from 1847 onwards, but these proved unsatisfactory and attempts to bring coolies from India failed. In the meantime the decision of the Imperial Government to send exiles to Port Curtis in 1847 had been welcomed by the northern graziers, who took the opportunity presented by the failure at Gladstone to urge that exiles should be sent to Moreton Bay. At first Brisbane too welcomed the possibility, for labour was in short supply there too.

But the Lang migrants were bitterly opposed to cheap labour of any kind; forced labour was entirely against their principles, and the thought of lower standards that would be created by the arrival of cheap coloured labour especially aroused their hostility. Hence they set to work to organise the opposition to all these new sources of labour. They were not strange to political agitation; many had experience going at least as far back as the Reform Bill agitations of 1831. From the beginning they made extensive use of the public meeting, where they proved adept at arousing the feelings.

12 e.g. v. Trundle Diaries, lent by the Trundle family of Melbourne.
of the crowds. Soon they forced the larger Brisbane employers away from support for the squatters and from 1849 to 1852 the colony was apparently sharply divided between town and squatter on the issue of cheap labour. But when it became clear in 1852 that transportation could not come while Moreton Bay was under the control of the New South Wales legislature, the division suddenly disappeared, at least on the surface. Both squatters and townsmen combined to work for separation. At first there was still the fear that the squatters hoped for separation so that the new legislature might arrange for convicts, but soon that fear was blunted by the beginning of the extensive migration direct from Britain. The squatters had always stated their preference for free labour; even in their suggestions for the sending of exiles they had asked that for every exile at least one free labourer should be sent.

In the decade 1850-1860 property became increasingly important in the towns. As we have noticed Bowen had mentioned that almost all in the colony had property of some kind even if small, and its acquisition remained one of the main springs of activity in the colony. Many of the Fortitude group were soon well on the way to becoming men of property. The Brisbane leaders always claimed to speak on behalf of the working classes but even among these the hope was to join the ranks of owners. The general attitude in the colony was that expressed in 1860 in a lecture on "The Profitableness of Labour", delivered in Brisbane by Henry Jordan, who was to become in 1861 the Queensland Emigration Agent in the United Kingdom.

"In this new colony of Queensland the man with small means can get possession of land on easy terms, with every encouragement to improve it, and the poor labourer who now starves at home, with the workhouse in prospect, may come out here and become, if he likes, a prosperous farmer, a landed proprietor and an independent man".

Thus both city men and country graziers were all interested in the acquisition of property. Though the Brisbane leaders still occasionally whipped up feeling of class against class, there was a common tie. Such differences as did arise were then caused simply by different interpretations of what property should mean.

Perhaps the heat that did arise occasionally is proof of the claim that the narrower the difference in principle, the greater the vigour of the argument, once one side or the other has determined to create a conflict. The initiative almost invariably lay with the townsmen who were never averse to the use of bitterness.

So far we have spoken as if the townsmen were a single group and the squatters another, but actually factions were appearing. The townsmen claimed to speak for the whole of the citizens and the small farmers. In fact the small farmers were a negligible quantity, despite all the propaganda. With Lang's known support of the small farmer one might expect to find at least some development near Brisbane. However, so little had been done that the Brisbane hotels had to import even all their vegetables from New South Wales. Almost the only worthwhile farming experiments were being carried on by a few Darling Downs squatters.

Although the working men usually supported the Liberals, as the town leaders were beginning to call themselves, at times they could show some restiveness, as for example on the occasion of the celebrations planned for the arrival of Governor Bowen. Headed by Jimmy Spence, foreman mason, in the brickyard of Andrew Betrie, one of Lang's 1831 Scottish mechanics, and William Murdoch, an ironworker, they protested at the omission of a workers' representative from the committee appointed to organise the welcome. When the great day came they insisted on presenting a separate address of welcome to Bowen from The Working Men of Brisbane, and in the procession they carried their own banners. During the campaign for the election of the first Queensland Parliament, the Courier published a series of letters from "Gaffer Grey", urging the election of working class representatives. Nothing was done to carry out this aim, perhaps because the working men were still hopeful of becoming property owners, but at least a claim had been made for recognition.

Some differences were also appearing among the squatters. The old-established Darling Downs squatters were the target of much envy from the towns, but also their position was somewhat resented by the northern squatters, as those around Rockhampton called themselves, and also the western squatters. These regarded themselves as the pioneers of the new period who had a definite interest in establishing themselves with a security of tenure equal to that on the Downs. The Burnett squatters were also forming a separate group though closer to those in the south. Various "bunches" were developing, much
condemned in Brisbane, though the close co-operation of the city politicians was not considered at all reprehensible by the city.

This regionalism produced another result, in a crop of claims from different towns, all demanding to be made the capital, among them being Ipswich, Gayndah, Maryborough, Gladstone and Rockhampton. The last three in particular claimed that they neither owed anything to Brisbane nor had any connection with it. In fact to reach it meant either a long difficult and often dangerous journey overland through territories where no roads existed and often hostile aborigines threatened the lives of travellers, or a sea trip to Sydney and then back to Brisbane. On one occasion the adjournment of a trial in the courts from Maryborough to Brisbane meant that both the parties and the witnesses had to undertake such a trip.

Thus Queensland in 1860 superficially presented a picture of disunity. Regionalism was rife; the other towns of any consequence were all competing with Brisbane for the honour and profit of being the capital; Brisbane was jealous of the squatters, especially those from the Downs; the outlying squatters were showing some resentment of the power of the Downs; the working men were beginning to show signs that they regarded themselves as members of a distinct class; the Fortitude migrants were continually making use of the public meeting to keep alive the differences. But there was an underlying unity; all classes were aiming at the acquisition of property and the removal of all obstacles thereto. Brisbane depended very largely on the trade of the squatters for its prosperity and was showing some reluctance to kill the goose that was laying the golden eggs. One result was seen in the list of candidates offering for the first elections in 1860. Even the most radical journals of the day could find few to be described as Conservative, and not one of these was elected. The others were all described as Liberals, or at worst Liberal-Conservatives, except for one of the Fortitude migrants who was described as a Democrat. Almost all the elected candidates were members of the Queensland Club, formed by the men of property in the colony.

Traditionally Queensland politics in the period 1860-1890 were centred on the battle between the squatters, anxious to perpetuate their hold over the land and to ensure supplies of cheap labour to augment their

own wealth, and on the other hand, a group generally referred to as the Liberals, who fought to maintain the dignity and importance of the common man against the attempt to erect a new aristocratic community of land and wealth. In the course of the conflict concessions were gained from a reluctant foe, the franchise was extended, a more equitable distribution of representation was achieved, the powers of the Legislative Council, the real citadel of privilege, were gradually reduced, the land law was liberalised, and continuing progress was made in social legislation, all on the initiative of the Liberals. During the eighties came the real organisation of parties under Griffith and McIlwraith, with the concern for social welfare the real dividing line, especially the defence of the working man against the menace of coloured labour.

In fact the picture is quite different. The Liberals—it is more convenient to accept the terminology though without necessarily accepting all the claims made on their behalf—were neither a united nor a consistent force. Nor were they the only begetters of reform, which came at least as much from their opponents. Those offering political opposition to the Liberals present too a bewildering picture of changing combinations, though perhaps not so confusing as that presented by their opponents. The whole period is one of faction among different types of property owners, rather than of growing party schism on a basis of principle.

The narrowness of the gap which separated the contending groups might perhaps be demonstrated by a glance at the careers of some of the leaders. Arthur Macalister, in pique at not being chosen as one of the first executive, assumed leadership of the Liberal opposition to Herbert. In 1861 he resigned his seat in the Assembly, claiming that constitutional government was impossible under the existing system.\(^\text{16}\) Persuaded to renominate he was returned in the by-election and within a month was in the Herbert cabinet, even becoming Herbert's locum tenens when the leader went to England for a year. He swung over again to lead a Liberal cabinet, but in 1870, despite his position as leader of an opposition equal in number to the Government party led by Palmer, he accepted the position as Speaker on a Government nomination. R. R. Mackenzie, the first Treasurer, resigned in 1862 in disappointment at the choice of Macalister to deputise for Herbert, and immediately became leader of the Liberal opposition;\(^\text{17}\)

17. Ibid., 28/7/1862; Queensland Guardian, 29/7/1862.
in 1867 he presided over a government recognized as the first that could rightly be described as "pure merino". In view of the traditional picture of hostility between the Liberals and the squatters, it is at least interesting to note that Macalister's first Liberal Government comprised himself and Charles Lilley, with the addition of three Darling Downs squatters, J. P. Bell, John Watts, and J. D. McLean. McIlwraith made his first appearance in cabinet in the Macalister Liberal Government of 1874. At the end of the period we have the famous - some said notorious - combination of Griffith and McIlwraith in the Griffith-McIlwraith, despite the decade of keen opposition between the two. Such a combination could hardly be possible if a basic difference of principle existed.

Apostasy of leaders has not of course been unknown in politics, so it is necessary to survey in more detail the whole political scene. The first election in 1860 was fought by individuals. An abortive attempt had been made by Lilley in 1859 to establish a Queensland Liberal Association, but no general agreement could be reached even in Brisbane, let alone the whole colony. The main trouble was the power of the Association by plebiscite to determine who was to stand in the election. Candidates who feared defeat in the plebiscite stated that such a procedure infringed the right of the electorate to make its own choice - in fact, some worthy gentlemen feared the loss of the honour that would accrue from membership of the colony's first parliament. However the programmes offered to electors proved generally satisfactory to even the most radical voters of the day.

Throughout Queensland the general idea of a parliament, according to all the contemporary accounts available, was a forum where all should meet with an open mind and by free discussion arrive at a just conclusion. Party was to be avoided - "the madness of the many for the gain of the few". Even Herbert's tactics of referring to the government and the opposition were regarded as dangerous, seeming to separate the colony's choice into two hostile groups. Division lists in the early period reveal that members had considerable freedom. Even on such a contentious issue as the first land code it is impossible to discern any formal groups; at times extreme Liberals and old-established squatters voted together, and on at least one occasion a Cabinet minister left the Chamber to avoid voting against a government proposal.

18. Moreton Bay Courier, 8/10/1859.
Even the vexed question of the franchise failed to create any disturbance. Prior to the election there had been considerable protest against the Order-In-Council establishing the new colony, which had returned to the property qualification of 1853 instead of the adult suffrage of 1858. But it was soon found that this made little difference. All contemporary observers are agreed that in the towns at least the old franchise was no bar, as almost all the workmen owned their own cottages or had sufficient property to enable them to qualify. Percentage of electors to total population was 19.41 as against 20.73 in New South Wales. It is true that outside the Assembly complaint continued, but when Lilley in 1861 attempted to secure in the Address in Reply promise of franchise reform he received only one supporter. Even the honesty of some of the outside critics can be doubted; the Courier for instance frequently sympathised with the workers on stations who were disfranchised by the new law, but when in a by-election in 1862 the squatters of the district found a means of giving to their workers the lodger franchise, the Courier was indignant, especially as its favoured candidate was defeated.

With the lack of principle to separate the competing groups the old regional affiliations remained prominent. The Darling Downs and Ipswich each had its own bunch, but it must be pointed out also that the Brisbane bunch was also very solid at first; in 1864 C. W. Blakeney, one of the city members, described how the seven Brisbane representatives had combined to block the proposals of the government. In this connection the dominance of the south-east is of considerable importance. The Brisbane members came from North Brisbane (3), South Brisbane (1), Fortitude Valley (1), and East Moreton (2), while Ipswich elected three members with three more from West Moreton who usually were Ipswich men. Thus 13 of the 26 members of the first Assembly were controlled by the two main towns of the colony. The full effect was delayed by the early rivalry of the two towns, but the concentration of representation in such a small area naturally produced fears in the outlying areas.

20. Bowen to Newcastle, 6/2/1860: Governor’s Despatches vol.1, p.74; Lane-Poole, op.cit., p.131.
22. Courier, 30/3/1862.
One other feature of the first Assembly should be
re- emphasised here. All the members, including those
from the city, were men of property. Even the leaders
of the Fortitude men had now fallen in that category
though their property was of a different kind from
that of their enemies, the squatters. At the Queensland
Club, they forgot all the animosities and personalities
of the debates.

But when the Brisbane members failed to gain their
will in the House they made extensive use of the mass
indignation meeting, which had been one of the features
of life in the city since the arrival of the Fortitude
men. This was also noisy and demonstrations by the
audience were encouraged. The potential audience was
increasing rapidly for migrants were flooding in from
England through the operations of the land order system.
Agricultural workers were difficult to obtain and the
new settlers were very largely town dwellers. Wages in
the colony were high: 23石emasons 11/- to 12/- a day,
Coopers 15/-, Plasterers 11/- to 12/-, in 1860, and
these continued to rise. Although the squatters were
offering £40 to £60 a year and rations for experienced
stockmen few of the newcomers would go to the country.
Brisbane's population by 1866 had leapt to 30,000,
almost one-third of that of the colony. A further
16,000 in Ipswich brought the total in these towns to
almost half the total. Other towns such as Rockhampton
were also showing rapid growth. But this was not based
on any real growth of town industry.

The main aim of the politician was the spending of
as much government money as possible in his area. The
government was borrowing and spending freely and in 1866
the inevitable crash came, 24 begun when Agra
and Mastermans' Bank suspended payment. Men were laid
off everywhere, first of all by private employers and then
by the government. Meetings in Brisbane demanded government
assistance. At first these were led by the more radical
politicians and the older labour leaders such as Spence
and Murdoch, but soon new leaders such as Eaves (or Eve)
came to the front, especially after the arrival in
Brisbane of those whose work on the railways had now
ceased. Demands were made for full wages from the

23. Pugh's Almanac 1860.
p.1168; A.C.W. Melbourne, Brisbane Daily Mail, 1/1/1927;
15/1/1927; 29/1/1927; 13/12/1927; Courier and
Guardian, July to November, 1866.
government during the workless period or alternatively free transport to New Zealand or Texas, it being claimed that the men had been brought out by the government with specific promises of employment, and these promises should be fully honoured. Relief camps were established, but the men refused to work more than part-time, as they declared the allowances were equivalent only to part-time wages. The climax came in riots, during one at least of which was heard the ominous cry of "Bread or Blood", and damage was done to a number of shops. After this the indignation meeting lost favour for a time as the propertied classes in the city came to fear a little the demon they had raised.

During one of the public meetings the refusal to go to rural employment was very forcibly put by one of the speakers, Charles Mills, who later refused to follow the more extreme leaders. He asked whether men accustomed to towns, who had left jobs in England at 6/- a day to be eagerly sought in the colony at 10/- to 12/- a day, would for £30 to £50 a year go to the country where after a couple of years they would be "imbeciles in mind or idiots for life"?

Following a temporary ministry headed by Herbert to take immediate financial measures, Macalister returned as Premier with Lilley as Attorney-General, but, as noticed earlier, with the addition of three Darling Downs squatters. Such a combination rather stunned even the politicians of those days; Macalister had never hesitated to attack the Darling Downs men, and in fact once candidly admitted that any time an audience at a political meeting was apathetic he always raised the anti-squatter cry. Hence this ministry did not last long. Nor did its successor the Mackenzie Pure Merino Ministry, which was brought down in 1868 by the desertion of the Central Queensland squatters.

The story of the formation of this ministry also reveals the lack of principle. Macalister made certain pledges to T. H. Fitzgerald, one of the leaders of the Central Queensland squatters, for their assistance in defeating Mackenzie, and when the aim was achieved promptly repudiated these pledges. Then disappointed at not being Premier he deserted to the Opposition, when he sponsored a motion of no-confidence in the ministry. Preferring to remain behind the scenes, he chose as his spokesman a Mary River squatter, W. H. Walsh, whom he had previously

treated as his worst enemy. But, following underground negotiations, Macalister returned to the ministry, bringing with him no fewer than three Darling Downs squatters, Arthur Hodgson, James Taylor, and St. George Gore. By now this "Liberal" leader was appropriately enough referred to as "Slippery Mac".

But this Liberal ministry too lasted only a little over a year. Lilley was deserted not only by his squatter adherents led by J. P. Bell, but also by some of his Liberal supporters allegedly on the ground of principle. Much hostility had been raised in Queensland by the conduct of the shipping companies, and while in Sydney Lilley was able to sign a favourable contract for the construction of ships, for the government. In addition demands for free education were increasing and Lilley endeavoured to satisfy these by establishing free education by executive action. Immediately those of his followers who had been disappointed in the race for office seized the opportunity and deserted en masse. The result was that Lilley himself had to move the Address in Reply in 1870. The motion was seconded by another cabinet member, but outside his cabinet he secured only one vote.

Palmer then formed a government, but immediately Bell deserted him, with the result that he too was defeated. But Bell's hopes were dashed for he too was unable to form a government. An election gave sixteen members to each of the two groups, but Macalister gave Palmer the majority by accepting the post of Speaker. Then the Liberals adopted a deliberate policy of obstruction and soon forced another election. This time Palmer received a majority of six in a house of 32. Again the Liberals obstructed. But during both periods of obstruction they produced interesting examples of their consistency in principle. Claiming that because they represented more persons than the government, they petitioned the Governor to dismiss the Palmer ministry, even after the election which increased Palmer's majority. Some years later Griffith, who had signed the petition, contested the constitutional and political propriety of a popular demand that his group should resign because the country at large was opposed to the policy being pursued. His situation too was very different because the administration of which he was part was nearing the end of its legal term of office.

Palmer's administration was careful and successful, but the redistribution which he carried through worked against him in the election, although the opposition had bitterly contested it on the ground that it had been designed to maintain his own supremacy. The succeeding five years present an unedifying picture of almost complete lack of principle, with the struggle for the leadership being the dominant feature. At first Macalister was at the head of the ministry but soon retired to the post of Agent-General in London, to be succeeded by Thorn, apparently an amiable nonentity but a most able intriguer. In those days a new ministry had to face immediate by-elections, and these once again showed how difficult it is to find any concrete principle. At the opening of the campaign Thorn put forward a tentative policy of caution in finance, but when this was obviously unpopular, immediately changed it to a whole-hearted advocacy of extensive public works. Soon Thorn was supplanted by Douglas who proved a more experienced intriguer than Griffith, and so the sorry farce went on. Finally, on the eve of the elections of 1878, Griffith gained the leadership. Even the newspapers normally supporting this combination were outspoken. Typical is the comment of "Bohemian" in the Week, a subsidiary of the Telegraph:

"The Liberals are always remarkable for the very liberal interpretation they give to the theory of party allegiance, on all fundamental questions of party politics. This is especially noticeable when there is the slightest prospect of winning a portfolio by a persistent and damaging opposition to their party leaders. You see the misfortune of the party is that nearly everyone of its members is fully satisfied, in his own mind, that he ought to be Premier, and will be before long, but in the meantime he must demonstrate his fitness for the post by the novelty of his views on all leading questions, the depth of his determination, and his inflexible determination to act up to his convictions, come of it what may. This is the secret of that independence of conduct which often makes the Liberal party a rope of sand when in office".

On another occasion he was more succinct:

"The Liberal party is only worthy of the name and only worthy of support as long as it is liberal of the public money."

27. Week, 15/1/1876.

* of Liberal administration
The bankruptcy of politics became more obvious because of the departure of the older leaders. Palmer was able to hold his group together but he was growing old, and looking forward to retiring. On the other side no one of his calibre had yet arisen. Macalister, with all his faults, had been able to maintain something of snarling unanimity. Lilley had except for one short interval been held in high respect, but he was too confident that all his followers were as consistent as he in their views, he was too unsuspicious of others to be able to hold together the competing elements. Griffith was still young, and had not the political experience to counter that of Thorn and Douglas.

But during this series of changes, some new and powerful interests were making their presence felt. In the north sugar was developing new areas and the planters now became an important element in the community. Mining in the north, especially alluvial mining, had brought new population which was strongly democratic in tone. To meet its needs came a new series of newspapers, of which one of the most important was the Northern Miner at Charters Towers, presided over by an erratic Irishman, Thadeus (Thady) O’Kane, who did much to popularise democratic ideals, but who also allowed his own irrational hatreds to colour the views of his journal too much. Both sugar and mining too brought again to the front the question of coloured labour.

With the development of deep mining too came another important new factor, the employment of big capital in the industry. Nor did mining speak with one voice. Perhaps an illustration may be found in John Murtagh Macrossan, who began as the darling of the pick and shovel miners, but developed into an important holder of capital invested in some of the Charters Towers deep mines. Moreover, big capital was coming into the pastoral industry. Many of the older holders of property were now departing from the scene, just at the time when Victorian capital was flowing into the colony in relatively large quantities and when land was becoming available for purchase under legislation passed by the Douglas government.

In this period religion was to become once again a most important factor in politics. In the early days of the Lang group sectarianism was rife, but it had practically died down until shortly after separation, when the colony decided to establish its education system according to the National system adopted in Ireland. This raised strong opposition from both bishops, Tufnell, the Anglican and Quinn, the Catholic, the latter of whom
acquired in 1861 the Ipswich newspaper the North Australian. In 1864 the two bishops stumped the colony with Tufnell making the speeches, but Quinn preparing the ammunition. Quinn also endeavoured to bring pressure to bear on Bowen, but without much success. 28 Agitation had ceased for a time, but new efforts, first by Palmer and then by Lilley and Griffith, had been made from 1872 onwards to introduce free compulsory and secular education. A new Act was passed in 1875, providing inter alia for the withdrawal after five years of subsidies to denominational or non-vested schools. Immediately, the Catholic vote swung to the support of McIlwraith, now coming to the lead of the Opposition. At the same time a new force appeared in Brisbane journalism. During the decade 1860-1870 nonconformists had controlled the Brisbane press, but the situation had changed, and a new and vigorous group of nonconformist ministers found themselves without a journal through which to express their views on education and on politics. Hence came in June 1875 the Queensland Evangelical Standard, the "hottest pot" of Brisbane journalism, 29 organised and for some time edited by Rev. T. T. Brentnall, later the owner of the Brisbane Telegraph and a prominent member of the Legislative Council. After him editorial control was always held by committees of nonconformist missionaries, prominent among whom were Edward Griffith, father of S. W. Griffith, B. G. Wilson, a Baptist and for long associated with the radical movements, and Arthur Rutledge, who later left the ministry for the law, and was also to hold numerous cabinet posts. This journal savagely attacked the Catholics, but its language was mild compared with that of Thadeus O'Kane, who wrote even more virulently against them in his somewhat radical journal in Charters Towers, the Northern Miner.

From the late seventies onwards came a new wave of migration, including large numbers of Irish labourers and domestic servants. But the main body of these migrants came again from the cities and towns of Britain where unemployment was rife because of the industrial crises. As before they concentrated in the towns of the colony, where they still suffered unemployment, for no major secondary industry had developed to absorb them. For a time public works kept them going, but the financial position of the government was not strong and the successive loans which had to be undertaken were not

improving it. Although the graziers were crying out for labour, they could attract few, and some who ultimately went out such as George Lansbury proved unfortunate in their employers. The flood continued in the eighties, 77,546 persons arriving between 1883 and 1888. Among them were many who were to be leaders of the labour movement. Some like Lane and Hinchcliffe had been converted to a vehement socialism, but others such as Glassey and Tunley represented rather the English trade unionist influenced by the newer trends of liberal thought in England, and such men as these were greatly in the majority.

This portion of the period also saw a considerable increase in the old regionalism. As we have seen Rockhampton had always been resentful of Brisbane's position and very early complaints had been made of the failure to meet adequately the needs of the centre. Macalister's betrayal of Fitzgerald in 1868 had done nothing to create better feelings between the south and the centre. At times attempts were made to satisfy central demands: for example, railway construction was begun. Again this was considered in many quarters as just a concession to the East Street storekeepers. As the north developed came further dissatisfaction with what was termed Queen Street control, and a fresh separation movement found much support. Decentralisation of administration was attempted but it never proved more than a palliative. All the important interests in the north grew more and more restive; the "pioneer" squatters of the north were hostile to the "cormorant" squatters of the south, the miners claimed they were not receiving due consideration, the planters objected to southern attempts to put an end to the use of coloured labour. In the eighties these interests all combined, with the result that Macrossan was able to lead a united bloc in the Assembly - the Northern Nine.

The problem of the eighties was the reconciliation of all these diverse interests, practically all concerned with property. No party organisation could be developed to hold them together, and alliance depended on finding a suitable leader. In 1879 McLwraith came into power at the head of a heterogeneous collection, squatters, especially from the north and west, sugar planters, Catholics, miners, northern separationists, and financial interests, such as shipping and the big pastoral agencies.

31. One of the main shopping streets of Rockhampton.
The only real bond was McIlwraith's personality, and even he could not prevent the rise of factious criticism. Some of the most damaging comment came from a small cave within his own ranks, comprising principally Boyd Morehead (founder of Morehead's Ltd.), and Lumley Hill, a squatter, who seemed to desire little more than to make themselves difficult. Morehead was bought off by the position of Postmaster-General, which took him up to the Legislative Council; Hill, piqued at the preference to his ally, deserted to Griffith.

But far more important breaks were to come, as a result of McIlwraith's programme of development. As a solution to the problem of unemployment and at the same time to achieve a real development of the land, he proposed to introduce the system of land grant railways. Although the first suggestion for the use of this method had come from the Liberal side as early as 1860, the opposition immediately began a strong campaign against the new proposals, urging the danger of handing over the colony's land to foreign financial interests. Apparently it was not so bad if local financial interests had a finger in the pie. For a time the Courier had supported the general idea and had even advocated a particular transcontinental line. When McIlwraith's proposal was for a line through a different area, the Courier adopted a policy of strong opposition. Moreover, members of his own party deserted him; the western squatters feared the loss of their lands, without seeing that the scheme might ultimately benefit them, and the townsmen of Rockhampton and Townsville feared that his transcontinental line would take the inland trade from them and funnel it into Brisbane.

His second proposal was even more explosive. Because of the existing difficulties of the sugar industry he proposed a revival of the plan for the importation of coolie labour. The south had always been hostile to coloured labour, and Brisbane and the neighbouring towns had always been the centres of the campaigns against it. The objection had been in part one of principle, but the main characteristic of the legislation against coloured labour in 1863 had been a desire "to protect the Polynesians from us". But the rapid influx of Chinese into the northern goldfields of the seventies had altered the situation greatly by showing coloured labour as a major threat not only to the workers but also to the merchants, shopkeepers and carriers. McIlwraith then lost much support in the south, and even in the north very strong feelings were roused. The upshot was the sweeping victory of Griffith in the 1883 elections.
But Griffith's position was no happier for he too headed a ramshackle combination of diversified groups, western squatters, city landowners, Cobdenite Free Traders, shopkeepers, small farmers, working classes, new Liberals, and dissatisfied individuals such as Lumley Hill, and he had not the personality to hold such a group for long, even if the times had been kindly. The support given to him by the western squatters meant concessions to them, and the inclusion of four of them in his cabinet angered the older group of his supporters. The concessions granted in the Land Act of 1884 and the amendments of 1886 gave to the squatters the security of tenure they had demanded and failed to advance the policy of closer settlement which had been so strongly urged. Thus the leader lost the support of the old anti-squatter group, who accused him of pandering to his traditional enemies. At the same time he offended the Brisbane landowners with his Act for the Prevention of the Undue Subdivision of Land, and his proposal for a tax on the unimproved value of land. As a sop to Darling Downs farmers he placed differential railway rates on local and imported flour to make the Adelaide product 33 dearer in western Queensland than the local product. But the Cobdenite concept of freedom of trade was not only strong but had its very efficient propaganda organs. For instance, from 1859 to 1872 the Courier, the most influential journal in the colony, had been under the control of T. B. Stephens, a friend of both Cobden and Bright, and the first secretary of the Rochdale branch of the Anti-Corn Law League, and though it was now in other hands it was still an active member of the Cobden Club. Thus the followers of the older ideas of English liberalism were alienated. But the same proposal also strengthened the claims of preference for the capital — it was pointed out that in Brisbane, Adelaide flour, still considered much superior, remained at the same price as the local product.

Griffith's advanced ideas were to result in further loss of support. He was far in advance of the old conception of the state as possessing only a negative role and looked forward to increased activity of the government in social legislation. Hence he came to be much in sympathy with the advancement of the working classes, perhaps especially because retention of their vote was necessary if the Liberals were to retain control of the government. But his predilections much disturbed the older wings of his party, especially some such as Robert Bulcock, who was the outstanding organiser of the period.
The longer he was in office the greater grew the strains, with the result that by 1888 he was the leader of a discontented, disorganised rabble. Despite his huge majority in 1883 - or perhaps because of it - he was swept from office in 1888, he himself running second to McIlwraith in North Brisbane, then a two member seat.

But McIlwraith failed to remain in office for long, for he found his group just as disunited. Soon he resigned, giving as the cause a relatively trivial issue. Later he explained his departure as a refusal to countenance the dominance in the cabinet of Mount Morganism, represented especially by Pattison, the Mount Morgan millionaire. The new ministry headed by Morehead then became one of Big Business. But the financial position of the colony was extremely serious, and in desperation Morehead resorted to a property tax. At once the whole colony was in an uproar. All the long-established journals loudly protested, the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce organised a protest meeting at which the leading Liberal members appeared on the platform, and Buzacott, then controlling the Courier, sought to bring a rapprochement between the two leaders. The result was the Grifflvraith, formed in 1890. Property was uniting in its own defence. Griffith and McIlwraith even managed to agree on the issue of coloured labour, resulting in the appearance of Griffith's famous manifesto of 1892. After all it was not as difficult as it appears at first glance; McIlwraith had always seen coloured labour as a temporary expedient to be used with great care only in one industry, and some of Griffith's earlier pronouncements showed that he was prepared to contemplate its use in the event of the failure of all other attempts to meet the needs of the colony.

A major cause of the new unity was undeniably the rise of working class organisations. The working classes had usually ranged themselves behind such leaders as Lilley and W. H. Groom, though at times they had shown signs of separate class consciousness. The unemployment and distress of the early eighties combined with the arrival of the newer men had produced a greater demand for working class representatives, one supported by men such as Carl Fulburg, editor of the Courier. A new crop of democratic papers began to appear, such as John Plumper Koolan's Mundic Miner, and, in Brisbane, the Boomerang, run by W. Lane, J. G. Drake and Gresley Lukin, previously in control of the Courier. No objections were 32. Queensland Parliamentary Debates, LXVII, 1892, pp. 8-9.
raised to the appearance of such candidates in the 1898 elections; the Courier in fact said that it was right and proper for these classes to be represented by men from their own ranks, and this journal reported their speeches very fully. However, only Glassey was returned.

The real opposition began with the organisation of the Australian Labour Federation with its very advanced programme of socialisation. Property immediately felt threatened and all branches began to draw together. When the wave of strikes began in the nineties they were interpreted as the threat of revolution.

But the programme of the Australian Labour Federation in 1890 requires further examination, for, in addition to the extreme statement came another much milder in character, the People’s Parliamentary Platform. To Lane this was only a means through which the larger objective could be attained, but to the rank and file of the working classes, it was a statement of the needs they conceived important. While Lane, Hinchcliffe, and others were declaring that they spoke for all the working classes in their demand for socialism, they were far in advance of their supporters. In other words, while the leaders and perhaps even the core of the movement were socialistic, the great body of it looked rather to a programme that could be better described as a radical modernised liberalism.

Although the whole period is a long record of faction, attempts had been made to build up party organisations, particularly on the side which adopted the name of Liberal. But none of these had very much success, despite grandiloquent claims made at various times. As we have seen, as early as 1859 Charles Lilley set out to establish — needless to say in Fortitude Valley — the Queensland Liberal Association. But the intellectual climate was far too individualistic for this to succeed. In particular the objections were centred around the power of the members of the Association to choose by plebiscite the candidate who should stand for any electorate. This, it was held, was an invasion of the right of the electorate, but it was also a danger to the hopes of some would-be members. In addition, no agreement could be reached on the programme to be supported in the new Assembly. However, the organisation without its grandiloquent name did prove a most valuable asset to Charles Lilley.

33. Courier, 14/8/1890.
In July 1870 a new move was made by three Brisbane members of the Assembly, Pugh, previously editor of the Courier, Edmondstone, a butcher, and Dr. K. O’Doherty, transported for Irish republican sympathies. Macalister objected to the creation of any formal organisation, desiring only the creation of a body to collect funds. A stronger attempt came in August of the same year, this time backed by all those prominent in politics in Brisbane, but no one from outside the city, although the expressed aim of the meeting had been to secure "the advancement of the political influence of the people throughout the colony". The meeting did succeed in forming a Queensland Reform Association with a constitution drawn up largely by the youthful S. W. Griffith, but this body soon lapsed into obscurity.

The appearance of the Evangelical Standard group in 1875 meant another strong campaign for party organisation, this time the pattern of Chamberlain's Birmingham organisation being supported. But little was achieved while the Liberals were in office; it was only the defeat of the government in the 1878 elections which once again persuaded the divergent groups of the need to work together. The result was the formation in 1879 of the Queensland Liberal Association, in which the nonconformist groups were very strong. For a short while this evoked enthusiastic response in some country districts, but this soon died away, and the Association soon reverted to its true function, the organisation of Brisbane political opinion. For this task it was better prepared than its predecessors, for one of its most important members was Robert Bulcock, who was to dominate Liberal organisation until his death at the end of the century. He soon found an able assistant in R. P. Adams, also of the Standard group, who was to remain in a key position almost until his death in 1917.

But the activities of the new organisation were concerned rather with the means of obtaining votes - and of preventing their opponents from receiving them - than with the popularisation of a particular platform. Bulcock had been overseer in a cotton mill in Lancashire and had come to Australia in 1855. Hence he was imbued rather with the ideas of Cobdenism than the newer liberalism - indeed he and Griffith were to fall out during the Liberal ministry of 1883-8. The Association

34. Queensland Express, 30/7/1870.
35. Ibid., 6/9/1870; 7/9/1870.
36. Queensland Evangelical Standard, 21/6/1879.
was active in organising public meetings on special issues, such as the Steel Rails affair in 1880, when McIlwraith was being in substance accused of using his position to help his own financial position. Moreover, it was behind the "spontaneous" demonstrations organised to meet Griffith on his return in 1881 from attending the hearings of the English Commission of enquiry into the Steel Rails Case.

But it would have nothing to do with a formal platform, despite urgings from prominent Liberal organs, such as the Telegraph and the Standard. A definite attempt was made to form a new organisation, the Queensland Political Reform League, of which Lilley was believed to be the sponsor, but even Dickson, a politician notable for fence-sitting, was sure enough of the real position to refuse to associate himself with it, using as his main excuse the fact that the platform included protection. And if the Liberals could not agree on a platform while in opposition, when they were always seen at their best, there was little chance of any success while they were in office. The truth was that too many people still felt that representative legislation and party government were a contradiction in terms.

Thus the Liberal attempts to form an organised party had failed, the symbol being the breach between Griffith and Bulcock. On the other side little attempt had been made to establish any such organisation - perhaps the Queensland Club supplied the need. In the early period, up to the defeat of the Palmer government in 1874, at least those on this side of politics had some conception of duty, and this served to hold them together far better than their opponents, the outstanding example being the solidity of Palmer's sixteen against the opposing sixteen in the years 1870 and 1871. But the development of the new interests in the seventies broke that unity, as we have seen. Again, however, this side was imbued with the hostility to party organisation and it was not until 1888 that McIlwraith produced his Australian National Party, which did issue a platform. This is worthy of quotation to demonstrate the narrowness of difference between the so-called parties.

37. Ibid., 19/2/1881.
38. Courier, 20/6/1888.
"1. The cultivation of an Australian national spirit with respect to all matters affecting education, labour, trade, and laws.

2. The federation of the Australian colonies into a United Dominion, with provision for a system of Australian national defence.

3. The energetic vindication and protection of the civil and political liberties, rights, and obligations of the people, and the adoption of the principle that laws passed by the Australian Legislatures shall not require Imperial sanction to render them operative.

4. The fostering and protection of Australian industries.

5. The exclusion from Australia of Chinese and other servile races, and the preservation of the entire continent as a home for white men.

6. The exclusion from the islands and waters of Australasia, and the Western Pacific of all foreign convicts.

7. The active promotion of all Legislative measures calculated -

   (a) To check the wasteful expenditure of public money, prevent the levying of oppressive taxation, and guard against the abuse of political patronage.

   (b) To repress injurious monopolies, allay sectional jealousies, and prevent the creation of privileged classes.

   (c) To stimulate settlement upon the land, and develop its mineral and other resources.

   (d) To carry on reproductive public works, to conserve the rainfall, improve the natural watercourses, and tap the subterranean waters of the country.

   (e) To remedy all abuses in the law, to repeal all barbarous and obsolete Acts, and to reduce the cost of law proceedings.

8. The return of members to the Legislative Assemblies pledged to carry out the foregoing principles and objects."
If the long continuance of faction among property owners of various kinds had prevented the emergence of distinct principle around which definite parties could form, and if not even formal party organisation could gain wide acceptance, what then was the real situation in those fields of political effort where credit has been claimed for the so-called Liberals? Perhaps a brief examination of some of the more important of those fields might help to clarify the matter, so some attention will be given to land, the harmonising of the legislature and the electorate, and coloured labour.

1. Land.

The first parliament, where the squatters were very strong, produced quite an advanced land code which attracted favourable comment even in some of the radical newspapers in the south. As well as making land available for farming, migration was encouraged by the issue of land orders to migrants. While later Liberal administrations multiplied the number of different types of holdings they failed to do anything very effective for the farmers, as shown by the partial breaking away of farmer groups in the nineties. Liberal legislation of 1874, 1878 (Railway Reserves Act) and 1884 had as their principal effect the consolidation of squatter land holding. Dummying, always the subject of much Liberal criticism, was worst under the Liberal-sponsored Acts especially that of 1866, and under Liberal administration.

2. Harmonising of the legislature and the electorate.

(a) Franchise: Though the subject of much agitation by the Liberals, the first expansion was granted by the Palmer government in 1872, when a form of adult suffrage was developed. The Liberals always claimed it was under their pressure, but the fact remains that Palmer's original proposals remained with little alteration despite the long period of obstruction already mentioned.

(b) Responsibility of members to constituents: This was always urged by Liberals. However in the early years it was always the squatter members who after the session called the first meetings to render account to their constituents, and it was the Liberal members who first broke with the practice, beginning in the early seventies.

39. e.g. Age, 4/3/1862.
(c) Equalisation of the electorates: While it was Charles Lilley who moved for the removal of the clause requiring a two-thirds majority for amendment of those sections of the constitution which described the Assembly, this was done while he was in opposition and it passed because the government adopted it. The Liberals persistently urged equal electorates, but the desire to gain increased representation for Brisbane and thus power for themselves was at least as important as any principle. Moreover they did little to implement it.

(d) Legislative Council: This was always the object of Liberal attack as the House of Privilege. But the first attempt at reform came from within the Council itself. Liberals after 1862 made little attempt to restrict the Council in any way, though its position was always good propaganda material, until 1885. The Council rejected a measure for payment of members but later in the same session found that the Estimates included a sum of £7,000 for such payment. It made the mistake of excising that sum, and thus created a constitutional issue which Griffith eagerly grasped. A Joint Committee of both houses produced a statement of the issue for submission to the Law Officers of the Crown in England, this statement to be the only document submitted. However Griffith forwarded a covering letter containing the words:

"I think I am right in saying that the literal interpretation of the words of the Constitution Act is regarded as a matter of small importance."

The Council on the other hand was taking its stand definitely upon the words of the Act. The result was the opinion of the Privy Council, to whom the matter had been referred, to the general effect that the Assembly was in a superior position.


The Liberals were more consistent in their policy of opposition to this than in anything else. The early agitations prior to separation laid a foundation which was never completely forgotten. Undoubtedly much of the opposition was a matter of principle, but the frequency with which the matter was brought up sometimes gives cause for at least suspicion that it was being worked to the uttermost for political ends. For instance, a public meeting called in 1862 to protest against the passage of a Militia Bill began with a scathing attack
on the government because it had suggested coolie labour. The main agitations were developed in that part of Queensland least affected, and even there, especially in Maryborough, allegations were sometimes made, and never denied, that some of the active opponents of coloured labour on the sugar plantations were themselves employing Kanakas in domestic work. Douglas did succeed, against the opposition of Governor Cairns, in placing a poll tax on Chinese, but there was no real opposition from the other important groups in the colony. When McIlwraith suggested the use of coolies, it was under strict supervision, and only where the need for labour was at its worst. Despite Griffith's passage of the Act of 1885 which provided for the ultimate abolition of the Kanaka trade, he had earlier made statements which showed him to admit the possibility of their use in case of need; and he had in 1880 refused to support an offer by McIlwraith to abolish the trade. Moreover in 1892 he was to return to his earlier views and move for the prolongation of the trade. Thus while the question of coloured labour came nearest to a principle actively dividing the two groups the whole position is by no means as clear cut as has been traditionally supposed.

The real truth of the matter is that these principles were enunciated while the Liberals were in opposition and were then used to weld them into a fighting force. In office they were a different proposition altogether, and the interests of particular groups and of individuals became predominant, with above all the insistence on the right of property. The absence of other principle stands out clearly in the period after the strikes. The old groups had already consolidated against the threat to tax property, and the new challenge from Labour strengthened the sense of unity. But the new party had little that was positive to offer. The Queensland Patriotic League was organised by Robert Bulcock to support the cause of the new party and its platform of three short items pays ample tribute to its policy of resistance to new ideas:

"1. To ensure to every man the peaceable enjoyment of his earnings and savings, and his personal liberty.

2. To uphold law and order, and oppose organised communism and socialism.

3. To protect the interests and credit of the colony."

40. Courier, 19/11/1891.