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CHAPTER XXX

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) The first Fifty Years

On 7 May 1860 the 26 members of the first Legislative Assembly of Queensland were elected. They included three Ministers of the Crown, Messrs. R. W. G. Herbert (Colonial Secretary), Ratcliffe Pring (Attorney-General), and St. George R. Gore (Secretary for Lands and Works). Parliament was summoned to meet at Brisbane on 22 May.

The colony had been divided into 16 electoral districts, three of which were entitled to return three members each, four to return two members, and nine to return one member each. Of these 26 elected members, 14 represented the pastoral interest, which was also well represented in the Legislative Council. This body consisted of 15 members, 11 nominated for five years and four for life. Members of the Lower House were elected for five years, on a property qualification. In the first thirteen years of the Colony the squatting interest dominated Parliament.

In 1860, Queensland had a population of some 28,000, somewhat more than 6,000 being located in Brisbane. Ipswich (the squatters' capital) had 3,500 inhabitants; and Toowoomba, at the summit of the Main Range, had about 1,000, as also had Warwick. Rockhampton, the northernmost port, had a population of about 700. The site of the City of Bundaberg, which now has a population of more than 20,000, was virgin scrubland. Laidley, Maryborough, Gayndah, and Gladstone were townships, but their combined populations did not exceed 1,400. Shortly after Separation, Bowen (the harbour had been discovered by Captain H. D. Sinclair the year before) was proclaimed a town, and became the administrative and legal centre for the northward-moving squatters and their flocks and herds.

Throughout the Colony a total area of some 3,000 acres of farming land was under cultivation; but the squatters already claimed 25,000,000 acres, and had sent straggling into that vast area 3½ million sheep, 500,000 cattle, and 24,000 horses. Wool was the chief export and no electric telegraphs, nor was there, except between Brisbane and Ipswich, a formed road. A small steamer ran once a fortnight between Brisbane, Maryborough and Rockhampton, and a weekly steamer ran between Brisbane and Sydney, in addition to small sailing craft used for cargo carrying.

There were forty-one schools in the Colony with a total of 1,890 pupils, but nearly half the population was uneducated.

The squatters, on the authority of a Statistical Report for Queensland in 1860, were "the only productive interest in the Colony"; they contributed 70 per cent. of the revenue and almost 94 per cent. of the exports.

The measures of 1860 included a Primary Education Act, a Grammar Schools' Act, a Discontinuance of State Aid to Religion Act, and Acts dealing with Liens on Wool.

Four Land Bills were also passed during the session. These were jubilantly described by Governor Bowen, in a letter to the Secretary of State as "The Land Code of Queensland."

To a friend in England he made the optimistic and, as events proved, entirely untenable claim that "the legislation of our First Parliament has settled the long quarrel between the pastoral and agricultural interests which has raged in all new countries ever since the days of Abel, the "Keeper of Sheep," and Cain, the "tiller of the ground." The quarrel (see Chapter XXII) was to last another twenty-five years at least!

Nevertheless, as Professor Roberts justly comments, the Aliénation Act initiated definitely-marked "agricultural reserves"; it declared in favour of "small men," its limitations "prepared the way for that ban on alienation which has typified the Northern State"; "its strict conditions started the trend which Dutton and others carried further; it gave birth to the policy of aiding immigration, so pronounced in the ensuing decades," and it largely achieved the ideal of expansion without speculation.

Certain measures in some of this land legislation were less valuable. Adult immigrants coming direct from Europe to Queensland could obtain orders up to £27. A premium was also offered for cotton growing, by issuing land orders to the value of £10 (during the next three years) and of £5 (during the two years succeeding the first three years) "for every bale of good clean Sea Island cotton, weighing 300 lb., the growth and produce of the Colony." C. A. Bernays in his "Queensland Politics during Sixty Years" comments:

"These two latter provisions led . . . to a demoralising traffic in land orders which entirely defeated the object for which they were intended."
The "cotton famine" in Lancashire, England, gave an impetus to cane cultivation. The Civil War in America, by creating a demand for sugar, fostered its production. Liberal concessions to settlers—West, South-west and North—resulted.

The Moreton Bay Tramway Bill, passed in the Session of 1861, was the preliminary to an extensive programme of railway construction which the Herbert Government began in the ensuing four years. The Moreton Bay Tramway Company was incorporated to construct a railway "from Ipswich to the interior of the Colony." The company failed, however, to raise the required capital; the project was abandoned; and it became necessary for the Government itself to undertake railway construction, if the Colony was to have railways at all. It soon did so. (See Chapter XXIV on Transport.)

First Attempts at Closer Settlement

Agitation by representatives of the towns and more populous districts for the opening of lands for agricultural settlement on the Darling Downs succeeded in inducing the Legislature in 1863 to resume several tracts of land from pastoral leaseholds, despite the hostility of the Downs squatters, who objected to closer settlement in these areas. They contended that the Downs were not suited to cultivation: one pioneer squatter had determinedly asserted a few years previously that the Downs "could not grow a cabbage!" (170)

Sections of 160 acres were made available for farmers on easy terms of quit rent. Some Downs country was included, and selections there were eagerly snapped up.

The land legislation had a stimulating effect. It was easy for any pioneer pushing out beyond occupied country to appropriate fresh runs; it was difficult, if not impossible, for any individual to hold any country at all without making good use of it. Within a reasonable time the country must be stocked with so many sheep or so many cattle; if not, it became forfeited. A great expansion of pastoral settlement—West, South-west and North—resulted.

There was corresponding activity in the coastal settlements. The sugar industry was fostered by liberal concessions in respect of land for cane cultivation. The Civil War in America, by creating a demand for "cotton famine" in Lancashire, England, gave an impetus to cotton-growing in Queensland, which was enhanced by the grant of bonuses on exportation of bales of the fibre. The same war, by compelling the sale of whole fleets of clipper ships from American to British owners, assisted to cheapen the cost of immigration from Britain and Continental countries. Immigrants poured into Queensland, the gift of land-orders, and the discovery of gold being decisive incentives. From January 1860 to September 1865 about 38,000 immigrants arrived in Queensland.

The first section of twenty-one miles of railway (the southern and western railway), from Ipswich to Bigge's Camp (now Grandchester), was opened for traffic on 31 July 1865; construction of the second section had begun.

The Colony seemed destined for an era of prosperity when its economic foundations were rudely shaken by the great financial crisis of 1866, which gripped the Mother Country as well as the Australian Colonies.

Agra and Masterman's Bank, which had engaged to furnish £50,000 a month to the Queensland Government pending the negotiation of a new loan of over £1 million stg., failed; the supply of funds was cut off; the Treasurer could not meet his obligations, and all public works in the Colony practically ceased.

Meanwhile, Mr. Herbert, who was planning to return to England, had resigned, and Arthur Macalister was Premier.

Business and trade in the Colony were paralysed, and there was widespread unemployment. More than 1,000 railway "navvies" were rendered idle; the contractors (Peto, Brassey and Co.) could not pay them their wages. Hundreds of them commandeered a train at Helidon and drove it to Ipswich, whence they marched on Brisbane like an invading army and formed an encampment on the site of the Roma Street railway station. Serious riots broke out; special constables were sworn in to assist the regular police in maintaining order. Sir George Bowen, writing to the Rt. Honourable Robert Lowe, afterwards Lord Sherbrooke, said: "Several leading members of Parliament were ill-treated in the streets, and threats were even uttered of burning down Government House..."

The Treasurer, Mr. (afterwards Sir) Joshua Peter Bell, sought to issue inconvertible legal tender notes to the value of £200,000. Cabinet approved, but Governor Bowen refused to promise the Royal Assent to the Bill if passed by Parliament. This led to the resignation of the Macalister ministry. Mr. Herbert consented to lead a stop-gap ministry which passed a measure empowering the Government to raise £300,000 by the issue of Treasury Bills bearing not more than 10 per cent, interest per annum. These were disposed of at a premium, and the credit of the Government was restored. Herbert's temporary ministry then resigned and another Macalister ministry took office.

Although the financial hurricane had blown over, its effects and consequences continued to be felt.

(170) Arthur Hodgson, at a farewell dinner given him in January 1855, before his departure for England, said, "Take, for instance, that immense tract of country known as the Darling Downs, which feeds nearly one million of sheep, exclusive of cattle and horses—who would be mad enough to attempt cultivation there? If it were practicable, do you think we would not, one and all, grow wheat for our own consumption?" To which the Courier replied with singular presence: "Time will not fail to arrive when the Darling Downs will become as famous for their agricultural produce as their wool." Quoted by William Coote, History of Queensland (1882).
Gympie saves the infant Colony

Discovery of the Gympie goldfield completely changed a dismal economic picture; there was a great revival of business and trade. The revival was quickened by two Acts (1868 and 1869) dealing with alienation of Crown lands, and resumption, which further attracted small (and large) holders.

Better days were obviously coming. As the railways edged further and further into the interior, Victorian capitalists were attracted by the potentialities of Western Queensland.

Victorian Investors

Melbourne had become the financial capital of Australia as a result of the wealth that poured from the goldfields of Ballarat and Bendigo, and there was ample money for investment. Much of it flowed into New South Wales, but some of it reached Queensland, and a Victorian invasion began.

The day of the shepherd was gone; wire fences had taken his place. Sheep that had hitherto been run in flocks of 1,500 to 2,000 (tended during the day by a man and a dog, and yarded at night) were now turned into large paddocks by tens of thousands, with only a “boundary rider” to look to the fences. By this method the carrying capacity of country was enormously increased. The best rams procurable from the Darling Downs and noted Southern studs rapidly improved the flocks. In 1873 wool rose to a price not touched for many years. A boom in Queensland stations set in, and those pioneers who elected to do so, sold out at prices that gave a rich though tardy reward for long and toilsome enterprise.

The influence of mineral discoveries and of sugar has been discussed in previous chapters.

Maritime Expansion

In the eight years of Sir George Bowen’s governorship, new ports were opened along the entire eastern coast from Rockhampton to Cape York, and also at the head of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Pastoral settlement spread throughout the entire interior. Sir George Bowen described, with apt eloquence, the opening up of this vast territory four times larger than the British Isles:

"Such are the triumphs of peaceful progress; they are victories without injustice or bloodshed; they are conquests, not over man, but over Nature; not for this generation only, but for all posterity; not for England only, but for all Mankind. . . ."

By 1870, Queensland’s population had soared beyond the 100,000 mark. There were more than 1 million cattle and 8 million sheep, which produced in that year more than 38½ million lb. of wool, valued at over £1 million. Gold had been won to the value of £351,000; by 1875 gold was worth more than £1 million. Copper production was worth £86,000.

The End of the Century

The ’Seventies, ’Eighties, and early ’Nineties covered possibly the most remarkable political era in the history of Queensland. Two of
Shearers' Strike (in the 'Nineties) Special Police in camp in Brisbane, awaiting transport to strike area.

Volunteers on Ayrshire Downs Station.

(Courtesy of C. B. P. Bell, Esq., Winton.)
Dagworth hut palisaded and guarded during shearers' strike.
(3rd Mounted Infantry and "specials.")

A gang going to work under police protection.

Ayrshire Downs Woolshed which, in spite of armed guards, was burned down during the strike.

PLATE LXVI.
(Courtesy of C. B. P. Bell, Esq., Winton.)
McIlwraith entered Parliament in 1867; Griffith in 1871. They were sitting on the same bench in Arthur Macalister's Ministry of 1874. In January 1874 the Palmer administration was displaced by one formed by Macalister. McIlwraith was entrusted with the Works Department, and Griffith was Attorney-General.

McIlwraith fostered the “great Trans-continental railway,” a project by moneyed men to construct a trunk line from a point far west from Brisbane (reached by extension of the State railway already carried past the Darling Downs in that direction), through the interior country northerly, to a port to be created on the south-western shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Compensation for the outlay on this great work was to be the granting of land in alternate sections along the entire course of the railway, to the persons undertaking its construction.

Macalister, without communicating his decision to his Cabinet colleagues, suddenly authorised the Brisbane Courier to publish his statement that he was opposed to the proposal. McIlwraith immediately resigned his portfolio.

By several reconstructions and changes in the constitution of the Cabinet, George Thorn, Jr., and, later, John Douglas succeeded to the Premiership. McIlwraith meanwhile gradually shifted from the Government cross-benches where he had seated himself on resigning his portfolio, to the front Opposition benches, and, eventually dominating his new associates, became the leader of the Opposition. From this time (1877) the antagonism between McIlwraith and Griffith can be dated. The Douglas Government fell in 1878, McIlwraith leading his Conservative party to victory.

He held power until 1883 and revived his scheme for a land grant railway to the Gulf of Carpentaria. He was able to carry through Parliament an Act empowering the Government to enter into preliminary contracts with parties willing to undertake railway construction on the land grant principle, subject to confirmation of the terms by Parliament. In pursuance of this law, arrangements were made for the Carpentaria line, and Major-General Fielding, on behalf of a group of British capitalists, came to Queensland and with a numerous entourage traversed and inspected the proposed route.

State railways had by this time been constructed, extended, or authorised, from Ipswich to Brisbane, and to Warwick on the Southern Downs; westerly to Roma on the Maranoa, and from Rockhampton to the Comet River. In 1887 further extensions and new lines were authorised from Warwick to Stanthorpe; from

(171) “McIlwraith’s was a striking presence—a big, portly frame, with a bulldog head and neck. . . Australia was unaccustomed to his type. He never thought in anything but millions of acres and millions of pounds. He should have lived in the United States...” C. A. Bernays, op. cit.
the Comet to Emerald; from Maryborough to Gympie; from Townsville towards Charters Towers; and from Bundaberg towards Mount Perry.

Some 15,000 tons of steel rails were required for these lines, and McLlwraith entered into a contract for their purchase. He also provisionally signed (in London) a contract with the British-India Steamship Company for a mail and immigrant passenger service from London via Suez and Torres Straits, to Brisbane. Both contracts were challenged by the Opposition, as having been arranged on terms disadvantageous to the Colony. The steel rails contract was the subject of stormy debate: McLlwraith was accused of having contrived to assist connections of his own in London to pocket an undue profit. By a party vote the Premier was exonerated. (172)

McIlwraith’s first Ministry (1879-1883) was also distinguished by a dramatic coup d’etat which startled the European powers and put the world spotlight on Queensland—the annexation of New Guinea. The story is told in Chapter XV.

Queensland’s “Peculiar Institution”

Coloured Labour and the “White Australia” policy

In 1883, Griffith led his Liberal Party to the Treasury benches which his Government held till 1888. The main issue of the election was coloured labour, and the Liberal victory resulted in legislation repealing the Labourers from British India Acts 1862-1882, providing for indentured Indian labour. Although this was rejected by the Council, the Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act (which restricted the entry of Chinese, and imposed a landing fee of £30) and the Pacific Island Labourers’ Act (which limited Kanaka labour to field work) were passed to protect the employment of the white worker and did so. The situation at that time has almost been forgotten, but it was acute. Apart from crude farm work large numbers of male and female kanakas were employed in the Colony as domestic servants, coachmen and “nurses.” (173) Indeed, many planters’ children had their faithful old “black mammies” in the style of the cotton and sugar plantations of South Carolina and Louisiana in the “Old South” and delighted in their exploitation at trivial wages. Emotional appeals to intellectuals and religious bodies to oppose “discrimination” were made then (and often since) by large landholders and employers whose real interests were mercenary and materialistic.

In 1885 scandalous irregularities and atrocities in the South Sea “trade,” revealed by a Royal Commission, enabled Griffith’s government to pass an Act prohibiting kanaka labour in the sugar industry after 31 December 1890. Griffith, moreover, aimed at the encouragement of local industries by giving contracts to Queensland firms for the building of all locomotive engines and iron bridgework.

The Crown Lands Act of 1884 (the celebrated Dutton Act, introduced by Charles Boydell Dutton, Minister for Public Lands) invaded the squattages beyond the old “settled districts” too, and the resumption of half each leasehold in certain localities made those areas available for selection as agricultural farms of up to two square miles.

The fee-simple could be acquired (by easy instalments) for 15/- per acre; also in grazing farms, not less in extent than four square miles and not greater than 20,000 acres. The Act formed the basis of much subsequent legislation, the principles being preserved and the details modified.

In 1888, Sir Thomas McLlwraith, heading a “National” party, swept the polls, his Ministry taking office in June, but the short session was full of surprises for on 14 September he tendered the resignations of the Ministry to the Governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave.

This followed a trivial incident, but had deeper political roots. Benjamin Kitt had been convicted of stealing two pairs of boots valued at 40/-, and was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment. The Executive recommended the application of the Offenders’ Probation Act. The Governor rejected the recommendation. Again, the Executive recommended Kitt’s release, and again the Governor declined to accept advice on the subject, disputing the right of the Executive to exercise the Royal prerogative, apart from the approval of Her Majesty’s representative. McIlwraith resigned, but subsequently withdrew the resignation after the Governor had received authority from the Secretary of State to release Kitt, the constitutional point to be decided after the correspondence reached England. Sir Anthony Musgrave died less than a month after the incident.

In 1889 McIlwraith quarrelled with his Cabinet colleagues over railway construction policy, including a proposal to spend £40,000 in building Brisbane’s Central Railway Station. McIlwraith, whose health had been impaired, resigned and went on a voyage to China and Japan, being replaced as Premier by B. D. Morehead, who had a troubled brief term of office, with a Ministry weak in personnel and rent by discord. When Sir Thomas returned from overseas, he took a position on the Opposition cross-benches where Sir Samuel Griffith was leading the Opposition, and the fall of the Morehead Ministry was only a question of time.

Opportunity was furnished by the need to make provision for another deficit. The Government only survived by two votes an amendment on its financial proposals (moved by Griffith) and as this was tantamount to a “want of confidence” motion, the Morehead Government forthwith resigned. The extraordinary outcome was a coalition government between the two great rivals—a situation which would have been impossible a year earlier. The Griffith Government took office on 12 August 1890.

The alliance between these two recognised leaders of the old
political parties in the Colony, each carrying with him a personal following, created a confused political situation, since both parties had lost their rallying cries.

The Coalition Government carried railway proposals on the Land Grant system, authorising the Government to receive offers for eleven railways.

The Great Shearers' Strike and the "New States" Crisis

In 1891, however, the Griffith-McIlwraith coalition was faced with the critical industrial upheaval known as the "Great Shearers' Strike." There were serious disturbances in the western districts, and it is no overstatement to say that Queensland was on the brink of a civil war. Shearers formed large encampments in the disturbed districts; many woolsheds were burnt; sabotage and intimidation were practised by some strikers; conditions approximating martial law were enforced by mounted police and quasi-military forces, and the leaders of the strikers suffered varying terms of imprisonment.

The "United Provinces"

Legislation providing for the creation of two separate provinces into which the colony was to be divided was debated. They were to be known as the United Provinces, with local autonomy under a central legislature. The deliberate substitution of two, instead of three provinces; the consequent elimination of Rockhampton and "Central Queensland" which remained in the Southern province dominated by Brisbane; the disappointment of various men's ambitions and the provocation of parochial jealousies between northern towns aspiring to be the capital of the new northern province, killed the proposal, as they were doubtless intended to do! (Every subsequent attempt has been sabotaged since, by some similar shrewd political manoeuvre, behind a screen of "lip service," that flatters the local enthusiasts with false hopes of success.)

The ingenious plan for a Federated Queensland mentioned above was the brain-child of Sir Samuel Griffith, who was anxious to side-track aggressive Separation movements (dating from the 'Sixties) in North Queensland, Central Queensland, and (in the 'Eighties) from the western districts. The "Separation Movement" in North Queensland was fostered feverishly by the sugar planters, who saw the very existence of the sugar industry threatened by the "abolitionist" crusade in South Queensland for the suppression of Kanaka labour.

Mackay, the largest sugar-growing district of the colony, was the "South Carolina" of a "secession party."

Shann, in his "Economic History of Australia," justly observes that on geographical and financial grounds the planters had as good a case for local autonomy as ever colonists had; indeed, after the 'Seventies they had a better case than the Darling Downs and Moreton Bay had made good in the 'Fifties. "When separated from New South Wales the infant Queensland had boasted only 28,000 white colonists. By 1871 those north of Dawes Range already numbered 27,000, and the gold and silver found inland as well as the sugar-planting that spread steadily up the coast gave every promise of further rapid growth."

The case for separation on behalf of the North Queensland planters was put to the Secretary of State, Lord Derby, in London by J. Ewen Davidson and Sir J. B. Lawes on 14 January 1885.

They proposed to make a division by a line running west from Cape Palmerston, on the east coast, in latitude 21° 30', to the eastern boundary of South Australia, separating the waters flowing north into the Burdekin and Gulf of Carpentaria from the waters flowing south. Tropical North Queensland would have an area of 249,000 square miles, a population of 50,000 and a revenue of £500,000. The list of the "secessionists"' grievances included: difficulties of administration; inadequate representation in the Legislative Assembly; unjust distribution of loan expenditure (loan indebtedness was, then, £16 million); and the diversity of interests between the inhabitants of tropical and temperate Queensland, on the question of coloured labour.

They also complained that every source of coloured labour (which, they asserted, was absolutely necessary for tropical agriculture) was denied to the inhabitants of the North—as a substitute for Polynesian labour—by the South, which had repealed the Coolie Act, relating to Indians.

However, as in the dispute in the 'Forties regarding transportation, the squatters seeking to set up a class barrier between "employer" and "worker" at servile level ("convict" then, "coolie" in the 'Eighties) were opposed by the main mass of the people. A counter-petition against the separation of North Queensland was lodged at once by the residents of Charters Towers, Ravenswood, the towns of Townsville, and other places, insisting, inter alia, that at the election of 1883 the importation of Indian coolie or other coloured labour for sugar cultivation had been the most prominent question before the electors, who, in both North and South Queensland, had decided by very large majorities against such labour and had returned as their Parliamentary representatives members pledged to oppose its introduction.

An eloquent, impassioned advocate for northern separation was...
John Murtagh Macrossan, who entered the Queensland Parliament in January 1874 as member for Kennedy. In August 1886 he moved to petition the Queen “to cause the northern portion of the Colony to be erected into a separate and independent Colony with representative institutions.”

Griffith passionately emphasised the danger of the creation of a Black State in Australia by the introduction of what was speciously called “reliable labour,” and the need to defer separation until North Queensland had reached a more advanced social status. Once “black”—swamped by Chinese, Indian, Kanaka, or other races of low standards of living—Tropical Australia, as a field for white settlement would, he considered, be lost, untied, and might well be the “Achilles heel” of some future inter-racial crisis. He was undoubtedly right. Macrossan’s motion was defeated by 40 votes to 9. Griffith was convinced that sugar-cane would eventually be cultivated successfully in tropical Queensland entirely by white labour, and time has absolutely endorsed his confidence.

Early in 1887 the North Queensland Separation League sent a delegation to Britain led by Maurice Hume Black and Isidor Lissner, Ms.L.A., which put the case for the petitioners before the Secretary of State, Sir Henry Holland. The delegation was told that Her Majesty’s Government was of the opinion that “a sufficiently strong case had not been established to justify action in the direction desired.”

**Kanakas again**

In 1892 the complex Kanaka question was the subject of what appeared to be a complete somersault in policy, by Griffith, who, in April, carried through Parliament the Pacific Island Labourers’ (Extension) Act. It reversed the decision of Parliament in 1885 to abolish Kanaka labour at the end of 1890, and permitted the reintroduction of South Sea Islanders. Little commentators, who gain a sense of stature by “debunking” great men, have revelled in presenting Griffith’s deliberate change of policy as a collapse of character. Those who will read, however, his speech of 29 March 1892 (Queensland Parl. Debates 1892, Vol. 67, pp. 8-9) will find no collapse but a confirmation of the statesmanlike qualities of this great man. He did not retreat in any way from his determined opposition to “the introduction of servile labour”; he repudiated any sense of discrimination for reasons of skin colour; he insisted that servile labour:

“tended to encourage the creation of large landed estates, owned for the most part by absentee, and worked by gang labour, and so discouraged actual settlement by small farmers working for themselves; it led to field labour in tropical agriculture being looked down upon as degrading and unworthy of the white race; and the permanent existence of a large servile population not admitted to the franchise was not compatible with the continuance of “our free political institutions.”

There were, he said, two alternatives brought about by the shortage of labour in the sugar industry caused by “men (who) will neither engage in the work themselves nor . . . allow anyone else to do so.”

These alternatives were to do nothing and to let the sugar industry slowly struggle on until the necessary European labour could be introduced and acclimatised; or, to take some action to bridge over the interval which must necessarily elapse before the change of system could be brought about. This could only be done by making immediate provision for the supply of some labour which was at once available. With such a supply he believed that in a few years the existing large plantations would be divided amongst small farmers, while large numbers of farms now held by selectors would be devoted to the cultivation of sugar-cane for sale to central mills. Polynesian labour was less open to objection than any other form of coloured labour.

The following year Griffith resigned and went to the Supreme Court.

**Crash and Chaos**

The year 1893 brought crisis and disaster. Banks throughout Australia closed their doors and there was considerable economic distress. But Queensland was the first colony to begin to feel the return of public confidence, and by the end of the century there had been a revival of trade and industry. Floods in many parts of Queensland caused great financial loss and social distress. The Brisbane River had its greatest flood on record. Victoria Bridge was destroyed and eight feet of water was registered at the Courier corner in Edward Street. Reference has already been made (see Chapter XXII) to land measures of far-reaching importance.

**The Swing of the Pendulum**

In the closing decade of the 19th Century Labour emerged as a strong political force, stimulated by the Socialist writings of William
Lane (177) in the "Worker," which was established as Labour's pioneer journal in March 1890. The shearsers' strike in Western Queensland (January to June 1891) accelerated organised political action in preference to direct industrial action, through elected representatives who were required to subscribe to a political platform framed by delegates of Labour leagues and industrial unions. At the general election of 1893 no fewer than fifteen Labour members were elected, among the newcomers being Andrew Fisher (who later became Prime Minister of the Commonwealth), Anderson Dawson (who afterwards became Commonwealth Minister for Defence), Harry Turley (who later became a Senator and President of the Senate), H. F. Hardacre (who became the first Labour Minister for Lands in 1915), Matt Reid and George Kerr.

The session of 1894 was remarkable for its turbulence. Labour members bitterly fought the Peace Preservation Bill brought in by the Ministry of Sir Hugh Nelson, who had succeeded Sir Thomas McIlwraith as Premier. At one stage, amidst an uproar, seven Labour members were expelled and forcibly removed by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

When, following the death of Sir Arthur Palmer, Sir Hugh Nelson became President of the Legislative Council, Thomas Joseph Byrnes, who had entered Parliament in 1893 as member for Cairns, and had been Attorney-General in the Nelson Ministry from October 1893 to March 1895, replaced him as Premier. Byrnes' death in 1898, in his early thirties, after a Premiership of only five months, cut short a brilliant political career.

By 1900, so far as general progress is concerned, agriculture held an important place in the State's economy; the first cargo of frozen meat had reached London by the Strathleven in February 1890; sugar was grown from Nerang in the South to Mossman in the Far North, and the Colony's fifty-eight sugar mills manufactured over 90,000 tons of sugar in 1900-01. (The first direct shipment of sugar, 9½ tons, was sent from Pioneer plantation to London in the Merkara in October 1885, and the first Brisbane wool sales were held in October 1891.)

More than one million bushels of wheat were harvested from nearly 80,000 acres in 1900-01. More than 450,000 acres were under crops, and there were over 4 million cattle and more than 10 million sheep. Wheat, maize and lucerne were ousting sheep and cattle from the Darling Downs and transforming the areas "that would not grow a cabbage" into the "Granary of Queensland."

Expansion of primary industries was accompanied by a growth of secondary industries. In 1900 there were more than 2,000 factories in the State. The population of Queensland was almost 500,000, and nearly 100,000 resided in the capital.

Labour's Six Days

The brief six-day Labour Ministry of Anderson Dawson in December 1899, followed the defeat of the Dickson Ministry. Dawson was Leader of the Opposition, the Labour Party outnumbering the Liberals on the Opposition side of the Chamber. After some abortive negotiations with members of both Chambers not belonging to his own party, Dawson formed a Ministry of Labour members exclusively. However, when the Assembly met after the customary adjournment the new Labour Government was assailed by a motion of no confidence moved by Robert Philp, which was carried by a crushing majority. Philp, being "sent for" by the Governor, formed an administration, which a few days later was joined by Dickson. The Labour Party's first real experience of office was with the Morgan Ministry of 1903-06, when a number of Government members seceded from Philp, and joined forces with the Labour Party to bring about his fall. Philp had resigned in the 1903 session when an attempt to amend the Stamp Act had been carried by only two votes. William Kidston, who had been Treasurer of the short-lived Dawson Ministry, became Treasurer in the Morgan Ministry. Other members of his Ministry were the late James Blair (later Chief Justice of Queensland and a Knight) and Thomas O'Sullivan (later Judge of the Supreme Court).

Morgan (afterwards Knighted) accepted the invitation of the Labour Party to lead a coalition, consisting of themselves and seceders from Philp (afterwards Sir Robert). Arthur Morgan had entered Parliament in November 1893 as member for Warwick.

A Dramatic Episode

One of the most dramatic episodes in the history of Queensland politics was the fortnight-long battle for survival endured by the Morgan-Labour Coalition in the critical session of 1904 against the Opposition led by Philp. The Government's majority had vanished when six members crossed to the Opposition benches.

J. C. Cribb, member for Bundamba, had moved an amendment asserting that "The administrative acts of the Governor's Advisers since the prorogation of Parliament in November do not meet with the approval of the House," and if Philp could force a vote it seemed certain that the Ministry would be defeated. The Government, however, would be saved by a majority of one, if it could hold out until William Sydney Murphy, elected to succeed (the late) W. H. Browne for Croydon, arrived from the North in time. Morgan wired Murphy that the fate of the Government depended on his vote. While Murphy burnt up the miles between Croydon and Brisbane by buckboard, special train, and steamer, Morgan, Kidston and the volcanic Bernard Joseph Lesina (Labour member for Clermont) set out to win by what Americans call a "filibuster" of continuous speech. Lesina held the floor for four and a half hours, reviving his tired audience from time to time with bursts of mordant wit. From the Opposition benches Philp, John Leahy (the member for Bulloo), with an Irish brogue and fluent but flimsy rhetoric, and David Hay Dalrymple, responded

(177) William Lane formed the Trades and Labour Council in 1885, and also the Socialist colony of "New Australia" in Paraguay, South America.
So much public interest was taken in the debate that day after day and night after night the galleries at Parliament House were packed, even standing room being at a premium. (178)

On 22 June “Kuro-Patkin” Murphy appeared at the bar of the Chamber amid a thunder of cheers from the Government benches; was taken by the arm by George Kerr, the Labour leader, and led to the Speaker’s chair, where the Oath was recited and the Roll signed.

When the vote was announced, Ayes 36, Noes 35, pandemonium ensued. Though the situation was temporarily saved, Morgan was naturally dissatisfied with his farcical majority of one, which rendered stable government impossible. He advised a dissolution, but the Governor refused and, on 23 June, he resigned.

Sir Arthur Rutledge, who had succeeded Sir Robert Philp as Leader of the Opposition, was “sent for,” but failed to form a ministry, and on 12 July, Morgan announced that the Governor had granted a dissolution, as originally demanded. The only work done, during the session, had been the passing of an Appropriation Bill.

At the next general election the Opposition was overwhelmed in a political landslide. The Morgan supporters who had deserted their leader were wiped out politically, and Morgan was given, with the help of his Labour allies, a following of 55 in a House of 72.

In January 1906, following the death of Sir Hugh Nelson, Sir Arthur Morgan resigned the Premiership to become President of the Legislative Council and Lieutenant-Governor, and William Kidston’s first ministry took office, Kidston being Treasurer as well as Premier. The first Kidston ministry lasted till November 1907.

Kidston, who had been returned as Labour Member for Rockhampton in 1896, was Treasurer in the Morgan Ministry, and leader of the Labour section of that coalition.

Kidston Breaks with Labour

At the elections of 1907, Kidston and his supporters had, however, dissociated themselves from the Labour Party. There had been considerable friction and recrimination in Parliament throughout 1906 between the two Labour groups of the Coalition. Kidston and his followers were accused of breaking their pledges and betraying Labour principles “by passing syndicate railway bills and encouraging wholesale immigration, while great unemployment existed.” The Kidston section complained that the Labour objective was socialistic. “This was a mere pretext,” wrote Larcombe, (179) “as it had been socialistic since 1893.” They also attempted to defend the sale of the public estate and to justify syndicate railways. George Kerr, leader of the Labour Party, moved a resolution at a convention at Rockhampton in March 1907 that the Labour Party support the Kidston Administration at the impending elections; and, that a combined committee be appointed to avoid clashing between Kidston Government candidates and Labour candidates. The motion was opposed by David Bowman, who moved an amendment providing that all candidates should go to the country, pledged to the platform as adopted at the Convention “and unhampered by any compact with any other party.” This was carried by 36 votes to 6, and the “1905 objective” reaffirmed, by a majority of 30 votes to 11. George Kerr (leader of the Labour Party) thereupon broke with the party and joined the Kidston Government. “Dave” Bowman succeeded him as Leader of the Labour Party. Seven members of the Kidston party were defeated at the election in May 1907, and five did not seek re-election. Kidston was re-elected for Rockhampton, but neither he, Philp, nor Bowman had a working majority. Bowman’s hostility to Kidston was now so great (says O’Sullivan) that he refused to support Kidston even in measures which actually were planks of the Labour Party’s platform.

Kidston sought an alliance with Philp, provided Philp would accept his programme. When this plan fell through he was about to resign, but another interview with Bowman resulted in a truce, the Labour leader, undertaking to support Kidston’s programme so long as it did not conflict with the Labour platform.

The Legislative Council, however, was encouraged in a policy of obstructive tactics by this chaotic situation in the Legislative Assembly. Kidston’s compromise with Bowman proved to be of an unsatisfactory character, and Kidston determined to overcome the opposition of the Legislative Council by “swamping” it with sufficient numbers to ensure the passage of the measures. He sought, particularly, to repeal the postal vote provisions of the Elections Act, and to pass amending legislation to that effect. The amending Bill was passed through the Legislative Assembly by a large majority, but the Upper House threw it out. The Councillors, mildly amused, were quite unaware that they were assisting at a critical turning point of the political history of Queensland. (1934).
Kidston’s “Duel” with Lord Chelmsford

Kidston, the sturdy, stubborn fitter from Scotland, the “bairn frae Falkirk,” decided doggedly to force the issue to a conclusion. He approached the Governor (Lord Chelmsford) and advised as alternatives his agreement to the appointment of enough additional nominees to the Council to ensure the acceptance of the Government’s measures; or, a dissolution. The Governor rather coldly rejected his advice, and on Kidston’s immediate resignation with his Ministry, sent for Philp. Philp was prevented from forming a Ministry by Kidston’s prompt alliance with Labour, and his plea to Kidston for a week’s adjournment to seek strength politically was met by a blunt refusal and a motion: “That this House is not in favour of a change in His Excellency’s Advisers.” On 13 November 1907 the motion was carried without division.

On 19th, an impotent Premier, Philp next met the House, and was deliberately defeated in whatever he proposed. When he moved for supply, Kidston proposed as an amendment an Address to the Governor setting out his scheme for overcoming the obstruction by the Upper House and begging that there be no dissolution. While a reply was awaited, the Opposition defeated the Government twice more by 37 to 27 votes; in effect, refused supply; and indicated that the House would only grant it if the Governor administered the affairs of the country in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the people’s representatives in Parliament assembled.

The Governor’s reply stunned the House. In impeccable language it refused the prayer of the address, and added that “by the exercise of the prerogative of dissolution, the people are asked to say what they wish done.” Philp was accordingly granted the dissolution, which had been refused to Kidston, although (as Judge O’Sullivan justly comments) Philp was in a minority; had been defeated several times; refused Supply; and the House had refused to do business with him as Premier. (180)

“The Czar has spoken; the Duma is dissolved!” boomed a voice in the broad Scots accent of William Kidston, obvious master of the House. A dramatic election campaign waged upon the constitutional issue, and upon the action of the Governor, swept Kidston back into power in February 1908. The House comprised 25 Kidstonites, 25 Philpites, and 23 Labourites—a majority for Kidston (with Labour support) of 22, over Philp.

A Governor Censured


Kidston was dependent for his majority in the House on the support of the Labour Party, but soon created a political sensation by breaking completely with Labour support, and forming a coalition with Philp’s party (although Philp himself did not enter the Cabinet). The coalition was, in effect, a fusion, and there were several defections from Kidston’s ranks, which swelled the strength of the Opposition cross-benches.

When the third session of the 17th Parliament opened in June 1909 the Labour Party was the official Opposition, with an independent Opposition Party of six, consisting of two former Ministers of the Kidston Government of 1906-07, and four other seceders from the Kidston Party, sitting on the cross-benches.

David Bowman moved an amendment on the Address in Reply in the form of a vote of no-confidence in the Government which was defeated by only one vote. On other occasions the Government was saved from defeat by the casting vote of the Chairman of Committees. Kidston, who found the situation intolerable, was granted a dissolution, and was returned at the elections in October 1909.

Newcomers among the twenty-eight Labour members included Thomas Joseph Ryan, a lawyer from Barcoo, and Edward Granville Theodore, from Woothakata, both able men of keen intellect but widely divergent personalities, and both destined to become Labour Premiers.

In this Parliament, the Kidston Government amended and liberalised the Workers’ Compensation Act (making Queensland, at that time, the only country in the world in which provision was made for the beginning of compensation seven days after injury). Kidston also initiated the biggest railway construction programme in the State’s history: the extension of the North Coast railway to Cairns, the construction of the Great Western Railway with connections to the coast, and seven short railways to develop agricultural districts. A Loan Act, authorising the raising of £10 million for railway construction, was passed in the second session of the 18th Parliament in 1910. In the same session, a huge Land Consolidation Act was passed, as well as an Electoral Districts Act (which redistributed
Queensland’s 72 seats and abolished double electorates); and a State Education Acts Amendment Bill which introduced religious instruction into State Schools.

Kidston was responsible also for the University Act of 1909, which established and endowed the University of Queensland; a good deal of land legislation in 1906-10 (principally the work of J. T. Bell, Minister for Public Lands); and the Parliamentary Bills Referendum Act, under which, measures rejected by the Upper House, or which the Legislative Council refused, in two consecutive sessions, to pass in the form desired by the Legislative Assembly, could be submitted to the people by way of referendum. This was the work of James Blair (later Sir James), Attorney-General and Secretary for Mines, 1903-1908. Blair had previously succeeded in an amendment of the Constitution repealing the proviso to Section 9 which required a two-thirds majority on the second and third reading of Bills to amend the Constitution.

These measures paved the way for the eventual abolition of the Upper House in 1922.

When Kidston resigned the Premiership in February 1910 to go to the Land Court, the Ministry was reconstructed under Digby Denham.

Kidston received the honorary degree of LL.D. from the Queensland University — an honour also bestowed upon the late William Forgan Smith, who resembled Kidston in many respects.

In 1912, Queensland was faced with a major industrial upheaval which developed from the Brisbane tramway strike. There were serious riots in the city, police being stoned and crowds dispersed with baton charges. A new election brought Denham back with an increased majority, but the Labour Party had gained ground and its political impact was sharpened, one immediate result being the establishment of an afternoon newspaper, the Daily Standard, which survived until July 1936.

Among new Labour members were W. McCormack and W. N. Gillies, both destined to be Labour Premiers; J. A. Fihelly (a Labour Minister for Railways); and W. Bertram (for many years Speaker). Hugh D. Macrossan (later a Judge, and finally, Chief Justice) also was elected as an Independent Member for Windsor; he was defeated in 1915 by H. G. McPhail.

The time had come for a showdown between Labour and the ill-defined and hesitant Liberals.

At the general election of 22 May 1915, Denham’s Liberal Party was routed, no fewer than six Ministers, including Denham himself, losing their seats. Labour, led by T. J. Ryan, was swept into power with a large majority. With the exception of the three years’ term of Arthur Edward Moore’s Country-National Government in 1929-1932, which broke the succession of Labour Governments, the Labour Party dominated the political stage in Queensland for the next forty-two years.