

**Record of the
Proceedings of the Queensland Parliament**

...
**Opening of Parliament
22 May 1860**
...

Extracted from the third party account as published in the
Moreton Bay Courier 24th May 1860

This memorable event in our history took place on Tuesday last, that having been the day fixed upon by the vice-regal proclamation. Notwithstanding a general knowledge of the fact that the formal opening of the Houses by the Governor would not take place till next week, much interest in the proceedings was manifested by the public.

THE LEGISLATIVE CHAMBERS

were, by dint of hard labour and unceasing toil, made ready for the occasion, and, although redolent of varnish, and having unmistakeable signs of newness about them, they yet presented a very creditable appearance. Indeed, any one who remembers the wretched and meagre state of that wing of the courthouse a few months ago, and compares it with its present neat and creditable aspect, cannot but compliment the Colonial Architect (Mr. Tiffin) upon the success which has attended his efforts in the difficult task of "transmogrification."

The arrangements in the Upper House are neat and effective, though perhaps there is some amount of justice in the criticism of Sir Charles Nicholson, who said that the hon. members would be sitting in a "forest of cedar." The number of pillars that have been introduced certainly give truth to the witticism, but we believe that Sir Charles and his confreres in that Chamber would be far less safe without them. Although just now assuming an appearance of ultra-respectability, the old building cannot be said to have put on juvenescence altogether, and the peers had better be content with a multiplicity of pillars than run the risk of an unwelcome crush, by the unexpected descent of our "commoners" through the flooring.

The raised seat allotted to the President is placed with its back to the entrance from Queen-street, and in a line with it is an arched screen of cedar extending along the whole width of the room. Over the chair,—which, by the way, appears comfortably cushioned enough for any napping that the President may see fit to indulge in during the dreariness of debate,—and under the canopy, are placed the royal arms in carving, and immediately in front is the table at which the clerk is to sit. On either side are ranged the seats for the hon. members, which are also of a very soporifically-inclining make. The floor within the bar is carpeted. On either side of the chamber are withdrawing and committee rooms, and the apartments necessary for conducting the business of the House.

The Lower House—that is to say, the chamber on the *upper* floor—is more plainly fitted up than the other, but yet forms as neat a house of legislature, in miniature. The ministerial benches are on the right of the Speaker's chair, and cross benches are placed on either side of the House at the end of the others. The arrangements for lighting and ventilation are here superior to those in the Upper House, as the roof has been taken advantage of to effect both objects.

THE CEREMONY

Of opening commenced with the arrival of the Commissioners appointed by his Excellency the Governor, namely—Sir Charles Nicholson, Bart., Capt. M. C. O'Connell, and J. F. McDougall, Esq. The seats on either side, with the exception of those reserved for the members themselves,

were occupied by lady visitors, who mustered in considerable force. Lady Bowen, who was also present, occupied a chair near the head of the table, and was attended by Captain Bramston, Aide-de-Camp to his Excellency, who appeared for the first time in the grey suit and black facings of the Queensland Volunteer Corps. The first members to enter were Messrs. Fullerton and Bigge, who were speedily followed by Messrs. Galloway, Yaldwyn, and Compignè, the only members absent being Messrs. Balfour, Laidley, and Massie.

Precisely at the hour fixed upon for the commencement of the proceedings,

The Clerk was called upon by the President to read the proclamation under which parliament had been called together, and which appeared in the *Gazette* of the 15th of May.

The commission upon which Sir Charles and his coadjutors were acting was then produced and read, after which the Usher of the Black Rod was directed to summon the Legislative Assembly to the bar of the House.

The members of the Lower House, headed by the three ministers (Messrs. Herbert, Mackenzie, and Pring) immediately attended, and took up the position assigned them below the bar.

Sir Charles Nicholson then informed both Houses that his Excellency the Governor had been pleased to appoint a commission consisting of himself, Captain Maurice O'Connell, and J. F. McDougall, Esqrs., to act as such in opening Parliament, and in order that the houses might be more fully certified thereof, he directed the Clerk of the Council to read the letters patent appointing the Commission.

The Clerk having read the letters patent,

Sir C. Nicholson then said, Hon. Gentlemen and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly—I have now to inform you that as soon as the members of both Houses shall have been sworn in, his Excellency the Governor will declare the reason for calling this Parliament together, and it being necessary that you, Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, should elect a Speaker, you will please to repair to your own House, and there having been duly sworn in, you will please to proceed to such election.

The members of the Legislative Assembly then withdrew, and a commission having been read empowering Sir Charles Nicholson, Capt. Maurice O'Connell, and J. F. McDougall, Esqr., to administer the oaths to members of the Council, and the Commissioners having themselves first taken the same, proceeded to swear in severally the members present, who then subscribed the roll.

An oath was also administered to—Johnson, Esq., Clerk of the House, binding him to act faithfully and diligently in that capacity.

Sir Charles Nicholson next informed hon. members that his Excellency had conferred on him the honor of presiding in the House, and the commission having been read, the hon. baronet took his seat.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE.

Captain O'CONNELL then rose to move an adjournment of the House till Tuesday the 29th instant, stating briefly the reasons which had induced the government to postpone the Assembly for business till that day. They were aware that, till the approval of his Excellency was given to the Speaker, whom the members of the House were about to elect, it was not competent to that House, nor would it be convenient for themselves, to enter upon business. As the presentation of the Speaker would take place on the next day, and the succeeding one would be devoted to the celebration of her Majesty's birth-day, and kept as a holiday, there would be only one other day in the present week on which they could meet, and it had accordingly been thought more convenient for the country and the House that an adjournment should take place till Tuesday, the 29th instant, on which day his Excellency the Governor would declare the causes for which the Parliament had been summoned. He would, therefore, move that this House do now adjourn till

Tuesday next.

Mr. MACDOUGALL seconded the motion, which was then put and carried, and the Council adjourned.

**Record of the
Proceedings of the Queensland Parliament**

...
Legislative Assembly
22nd May 1860
...

Extracted from the third party account as published in the
Moreton Bay Courier 24th May 1860

At the hour appointed for the meeting of the House on Tuesday last, the following members were present,—Mr. Fitzsimmons, the member for Port Curtis, being the only one absent—The Hon. R. G. W. Herbert (Colonial Secretary), the Hon. R. R. Mackenzie (Colonial Treasurer), the Hon. R. Pring (Attorney-General), and Messrs. G. Elliott, C. W. Blakeney, A. Macalister, R. St. George Gore, J. Watts, J. Taylor, A. D. Broughton, G. Edmondstone, C. Lilley, H. Jordan, P. O'Sullivan, F. A. Forbes, C. Coxen, J. Ferrett, G. Raff, C. J. Royds, T. de Lacy Moffatt, H. Richards, C. R. Haly, H. Buckley, G. Thorn, and Dr. Nelson.

The Serjeant-at-Arms having requested hon. members to take their seats,

Mr. Bernays, Clerk of the Assembly, read the proclamation of his Excellency Sir G. F. Bowen, announcing that the opening of the first session of the Queensland Parliament would take place on the 22nd of May instant, and requesting the attendance of hon. members for that purpose.

After the lapse of a few minutes the Usher of the Black Rod entered the chamber and informed hon. members that their attendance in the other house was requested by the Commissioners appointed by his Excellency to open the first session of Parliament, and the members thereupon proceeded to the other chamber.

On their return Mr. Herbert handed to the Clerk the Commission under the hand and seal of his Excellency the Governor, appointing himself, Mr. McKenzie, and Mr. Pring commissioners to administer the necessary oaths of allegiance, &c., to all those hon. members who might happen to be in attendance.

The Clerk then read the commission, and produced the writs affirming that the three commissioners had been duly returned for different constituencies.

These gentlemen then proceeded to swear in one another, after which they performed the same ceremony with regard to all the other hon. members in attendance.

The Clerk next read his own appointment, and having subscribed the necessary affirmations, he intimated that the business of inauguration had terminated.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER.

Mr. St. GEORGE GORE then addressing the Clerk of the House said—Mr. Bernays—I rise in the exercise of the undoubted right inherent in me, as well as in every other member of the house, to propose an hon. member to preside over our deliberations. If the house will afford my indulgence for a few moments, I will briefly explain my motives for putting myself forward on this occasion. The gentleman I intend to propose as Speaker, and who I trust will be voted into the chair by general acclamation, has been for nearly twenty years an intimate friend of mine, and if he could not look to me to propose him on this occasion, I do not know to whom he could look. Perhaps the hon. house will consider that I have another claim, which is that, excepting the hon. member for West Moreton, I am the oldest resident in the country who has a seat in the Assembly. If there were any hon. member who had been proved by long experience, and had

shewn himself to possess fitness for the responsible office which we are now called upon to fill, I should never for a moment have thought of bringing any other person forward. As to the qualifications which the gentleman I intend to propose may be deemed to possess above other untried men—for I admit him to be an untried man in a great measure—I will briefly mention them. My friend is a man of mature age, and time may be supposed to have, by its mellowing influence, corrected in him any dispositions which might impair to a serious degree the usefulness of a younger man as Speaker. Mr. Elliott has resided in the colony for nearly twenty years, is a man of unstained character, and has always held one appointment or another which has brought him into contact with official life. He has never, like many of us, been secluded from the world, and allowed his faculties to rust; so that the strict application necessary for the proper discharge of the duties belonging to the office of the Speaker would not prove so irksome to him as it would to others. Mr. Elliott is a man of independent fortune, his manners are conciliatory, and, although perhaps not personally known to many members of this House, I trust that they will shortly endear him to all. I may perhaps be allowed to express a hope that, called upon as the Speaker will often be to exert his authority, every member of the House will think it due to his own dignity to maintain that of the chair. I will not detain the House further on this occasion than to make the formal motion “that Gilbert Elliott, Esq., do take the chair.”

Mr. MACALISTER then rose and said,—Mr. Bernays, after the expressions that have been used by the hon. member for Warwick, and the reasons that he has assigned for his motion, I think I should have sufficiently performed my duty by merely seconding the nomination. My pleasure in doing so is enhanced by the fact that I am the only member of this House who had the honor of sitting with Mr. Elliott in the Sydney Legislature. From my knowledge of that gentleman, I do not believe that any better man could be found to fill the office of Speaker. I feel and know that my hon. friend too expects that the onerous duties of presiding over the House present difficulties to his accepting the office, but the orderly conduct of business, and the comfort of the House must depend upon the personal exertion of members, rather than on those of the Speaker. With these observations, I have great pleasure in seconding the nomination of Mr. Elliott as Speaker. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. ELLIOTT, whose rising was received with cheers, said—It is with much difficulty that I can find language sufficiently strong to express my sense of the distinguished honor that has been conferred on me by my election as first Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland; an honor which I had no reason to expect. That it has been conferred unanimously, enhances its value tenfold. Great as the honor is, I feel that it is accompanied with vast responsibilities and great difficulties, and, well-knowing my own short-comings it is with much diffidence that I shall enter on the duties of Speaker. But having done so I will unreservedly throw myself on the indulgence of the House, believing that if I act conscientiously, I shall receive a full measure of support from its members. (Hear, hear.) I can only say that it will be my pride, study, and anxious desire to merit that support, without which I know that the authority of Speaker will be of little or no avail. Most of the members of this House are practically unacquainted with the forms and usages of Parliament, and liable in the heat of debate to make use of objectionable phrases. For that reason, I would urge on honourable members mutual forbearance and self-control, and the necessity of not taking exception to words and expressions which might bear a very different interpretation to that which at the time they might be disposed to attach to them. (Hear, hear.) From such causes might arise long and angry discussions, which on the commencement of the legislative career of this colony it would be wise to avoid. On such occasions if they arise, I will endeavour to steer an impartial course, and I hope, with the assistance of hon. members and firmness on my part to uphold the dignity of the House, and to promote gentlemanly demeanor in all our debates. I will, as soon as possible, make myself acquainted with the laws and usages of Parliament, with a view of applying them to such circumstances as may arise. I feel it a great comfort that there will be a high authority to apply to for advice and counsel, namely, the gentleman who for such a long period, and under so many difficulties, occupied, with such honor to himself, the chair of the Legislative Council of New South Wales. I know full well that no advice that I may require from the President of the Council will be withheld. From you, Mr. Bernays, I feel

sure that I shall receive much valuable assistance in conducting the business of the House, in consequence of the acquaintance gained by you of duties which you discharged in a manner so satisfactory to every member who had business to transact with you. Before sitting down, I would desire to express my warm acknowledgments for the kind manner in which my name has been introduced, and to answer for it, that no endeavour shall be wanting on my part to realise the predictions which have been made with regard to myself. I can only conclude by submitting myself most respectfully to the will of the House. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Elliott was then inducted into the chair by his mover and seconder, amid loudly testified marks of approbation from the members. Before taking his seat, the Speaker elect said—Having now been elected to the office of Speaker, and being about to take the chair, it only remains for me to express my heartfelt thanks for the honor that has been conferred on me, and a hope that, with the support of the House, its business will be conducted in a creditable and satisfactory manner, and to the advancement of the colony.

The Speaker being seated,

Mr. HERBERT rose, and, addressing him, said—Sir, it now becomes my duty to convey, on behalf of the government, and I think I may say of the whole House, our congratulations on the high honor that has been conferred on you by your election to the office of first Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. It is a matter of great satisfaction that there should have been unanimity in the election of Speaker, and I trust that the circumstance is regarded by you in that light. I will not presume, Sir, to state in your presence my own impressions as to the admirable choice which has been made on the present occasion. It appears to me that in an Assembly constituted as this is, of members without parliamentary experience or familiarity with its usages, there must necessarily be a frequent reference to yourself; but on the other hand, in an assembly composed, as this is, of business men, and men of honorable character, that there will be no difficulty in supporting all your rulings, and that the business of the House will thus be well and satisfactorily conducted. In conclusion, I will express a hope, Sir, that you will long continue to occupy the chair to which you have been elected. It is right, before sitting down, that I should inform the House that his Excellency will receive the Speaker elect at noon tomorrow. I will therefore move the adjournment of the House till half-past eleven to-morrow.

The motion having been seconded, the House adjourned.

WEDNESDAY—(YESTERDAY.)

PRESENTATION OF THE SPEAKER.

The Legislative Assembly met pursuant to adjournment at half-past eleven yesterday morning, for the purpose of proceeding to Government House to present the Speaker to his Excellency.

The inconvenience of the large number required to constitute a quorum was experienced on this, the second occasion of the assembling of the House, as it was some time before the presence of the necessary twenty members permitted it to proceed to business. A quorum being present, and the Speaker elect having taken the chair,

Mr. HERBERT rose to move that the House should forthwith accompany the Speaker elect to Government House, to receive his Excellency's approbation of the election they had made, and to claim, through their Speaker, the undoubted rights and privileges vested in the House.

Mr. PRING seconded the motion, which was then put and carried.

The members present then proceeded with the Speaker to Government House.

After the lapse of about half an hour the House returned, and the Speaker then took the chair in his roles of office. As soon as a quorum was assembled,

The SPEAKER rose and said that he had the honour to inform the House that the

Assembly had waited upon his Excellency to apprise him that the Legislature, in the exercise of their undoubted rights and privileges, had elected a Speaker whom they then presented to him. To this his Excellency had been pleased to reply as follows:—

“Mr. Speaker—I approve and confirm on behalf of the Queen the choice which the Assembly has made in your person. It is with high satisfaction that I receive you. I congratulate you cordially that your long and honourable career in the military and civil service of your country has been crowned by the distinguished position in which the confidence of the House has placed you.”

After this he (the Speaker) proceeded to claim the rights and privileges belonging to the House, over which he had been elected to preside, and to request from his Excellency that a favourable construction might always be placed on its Acts and proceedings, to which the Governor made the following reply:—

“Mr Speaker—I further acknowledge and confirm, in the name of the Queen, the ancient and undoubted rights and privileges of the British House of Commons, which you have claimed on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.”

This announcement having been made from the chair,

Mr. HERBERT moved the adjournment of the House till Tuesday next at half-past eleven o'clock, his Excellency having declared his intention to make known on that day his reasons for calling together the Parliament. This somewhat distant date had been determined upon in order to accommodate hon. members of the house who had not yet presented themselves to take the oaths, and also because the Houses were not yet completely finished. Without being guilty of any informality, he might invite the attention of hon. members to the expediency that existed for the assembling of a quorum of members on the ensuing Wednesday. The Constitution Act, by which their proceedings were regulated, required that twenty members, exclusive of the Speaker, should be present to constitute a quorum, and they must abide by this proviso till some modification of the law had been effected. In order that a bill might be passed through its several stages on Wednesday, which should enable them to proceed to business with a smaller quorum than the one at present necessary, he trusted that all members of the House would attend on that day.

Mr. PRING seconded the motion, which was then put and carried, and the house adjourned till half-past 11 o'clock on Tuesday, the 29th instant.