

The Ministerial Crisis.

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The Ex-Attorney-General's Position.

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How the Emu Bay Co.'s Affairs Were Managed.
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[In the House of Assembly] Captain Evans who had moved the adjournment of the debate on the motion of censure on the previous evening, said he wished, by permission of the House, to take a somewhat unusual course. Instead of proceeding to address the House he moved that Mr. Clark, the ex-Attorney-General, be heard. (Cheers.) They all know why the hon. gentleman had been unable to be present in the House during the last few days—family bereavement—and so they should give him an opportunity now of making any explanations he desired. (Opposition cheers.)

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. A.I. Clark, who was received with cheers, speaking with evidently suppressed feelings, said he thanked the House for the indulgence of allowing him to speak again upon the question now under consideration. (Hear, hear.) He wished to first express regret at the statements that had been made in reference to him during the debate, and in that particular kind of political warfare that now seemed to be adopted by some of those supporting his late colleagues. (Opposition cheers.) That had compelled him at this particular time in his private affairs, to present himself in the House to answer some of the attacks which had been made upon him, upon his veracity and conduct. In regard to some of the persons who had chosen to indulge in their mode of criticisms with regard to him, he would only refer by quoting a few words of a poet whom he used to find time to read in his earlier days, before he was mixed up with this cursed political warfare—

I fight with none,

For none are worth my strife.

(Opposition cheers.) But when characters of that description succeeded in obtaining seats in the legislature of the country their words might, on that account, have some impression outside, and so one was compelled to notice them, whilst under any other circumstances it would be utterly unnecessary to do so. (Cheers.) A series of questions had been asked of Ministers in the course of this debate, and one of them, if he properly understood what was said from reading the reports, was asked by arrangement, and was answered as follows:—"To the best of my recollection, Mr. E.D. Dobbie, secretary to the Law Department, was the law officer of the Crown, together with the hon. Attorney-General, who were consulted upon and referred to in my memorandum of September 29, 1896.—E.A. Counsel, Surveyor-General." In connection with that matter, he had been charged, in his absence, with having attempted to deceive the House and the public when he made the statement he did at the table last week as to the state of his knowledge of the subject when the papers were sent to him on October 10. In the face of all that had been said in that House—before all the representatives of the people of the colony—he said that according to his full recollection, October 10 was the first occasion on which the application for a branch line was brought deliberately under his attention, and he proceeded to explain why he made that statement. His memory was a perfect blank as to the occasion when Mr. Counsel came to the Law Department, but he accepted the

memory of Mr. Counsel and Mr. Dobbie, the secretary of the department, as to what took place. What did they tell him? That Mr. Counsel discussed the matter with Mr. Dobbie in his own room, and Mr. Dobbie advised him on it, and then said, "the Attorney is in his room, let us go in and see him." They did not remember whether one or both came in, but both agreed that they were in there only two minutes, and stood, and put the bare dry point to him, and that he replied, "You are right," and they then left the room. Now he was charged with having attempted to conceal that the matter was brought before him prior to October 10. They could now see the motives for, and ground of, such a charge, resting on such a foundation. But he had more to tell the House. Mr. Dobbie said that the business which brought Mr. Counsel there was the form of an Executive minute for the Minister of Lands to present to the Executive Council. Now, see the further position in which he was placed by his colleagues. They met on the 18th September in Cabinet, and all agreed to submit the granting of this lease to the Executive Council. He received no intimation of the business transacted by the Cabinet, and yet, without telling him what had been done, the Executive minute was about to be prepared, and if the secretary had not pointed out a legal difficulty, it would have been brought up at the next meeting of the Cabinet, half-an-hour before it was presented to the Governor, and this would have been taken to the Governor without any further consultation with him. The House and every member of the Cabinet knew that, in relation to ordinary departmental matters, each Minister prepared his own Executive minutes without consultation till Ministers met on the morning on which they appeared before the Governor. Each then read his minutes to the others, and if there was any objection it was made. That was the course with ordinary departmental matters. With regard to anything special or important, so far as his experience of two Cabinets was concerned, it was the rule for the Minister to consult the others before the ordinary day arrived. He sent round and asked each Minister to read the memorandum and sign it in turn. The Premier in answer to Mr. M.J. Clarke, said he was summoned to the Executive meeting held on the usual day, but he had received no intimation of the business to be transacted. It appeared from the printed correspondence that all the Ministers present at that meeting affixed their signature to the Norton-Smith application; but why at a Cabinet meeting, at which all the Ministers were present, they adopted a method which in his experience was adopted only when the document was sent round to each Minister for his initial or signature, or to express his opinion upon the subject matter, he could not imagine. He had been nine years a member of a Cabinet, and he had never seen that course adopted on a Friday morning half an hour before Ministers went to the Executive Council. Well what state of affairs did this represent? It showed plainly that his colleagues were bent upon giving this lease to the Van Diemen's Land Co., and that they had no intention whatever—he did not attribute any motive—of deliberately requesting his opinion as to whether the proposed line was a branch under the Act or not. The correspondence showed that they had formed no intention of consulting him on the matter. He did not attribute any motive, but the fact remained. Now he was compelled in self-defence to say where the initial blunder was made in this unhappy business—by his old and respected friend the Hon. the Minister of Lands and Works. When Mr. Norton-Smith sent him this formal application for a branch line it was his duty to send the papers to the Minister with every possible information, and a sketch of the line, and ask was that such a branch as they could give under part 3 of the company's Act. But that was not done. Instead of that, as was absolutely proved, his

four colleagues made up their minds that this lease should be granted if no superior force intervened to prevent them. They were actually preparing the form of an Executive minute to give effect to the determination. But Mr. Counsel was informed that the lease could not be issued at that time. Mr. Norton-Smith was informed of it. What did Mr. Norton-Smith do? Did he continue the correspondence with the Minister to whom he had made the application? No he ignored him, and went to the Premier, for reasons best known to himself. What was the attitude of Mr. Norton-Smith in approaching him? He first received from the Minister of Lands a letter dated September 15, in which he was told that his application had been submitted to the Cabinet, and after due consideration, approved, and that it would be submitted to the Executive Council in due course, and he would be advised of the result at the earliest possible opportunity. Mr. Norton-Smith was forewarned that the Cabinet had no constitutional or legal power to grant the lease, and that it must go to the Executive Council, which had the right to give or refuse it, and when it had come before that body he would be informed of the result. That might be favourable or unfavourable. He was thus warned that the only legal and constitutional body would deal with it in due time; and, side by side, he had a note of warning of a legal difficulty, which must leave it in abeyance. With this note of warning before him, what was his attitude in going over the head of the Minister of Lands to the Premier? He practically said to the Premier "If you possibly can, wipe out the effect of these two communications I have received from your colleagues." They wanted to wipe out the effect of Mr. Counsel's intimation that there was a legal difficulty in the way. Mr. Smith wanted to go to London and show that there was no difficulty in the way, and that is what he asked the Premier to do. The Premier, so far as he could, complied with Mr. Smith's request. The moment the letter was submitted to him (Mr. Clark) for his opinion, the word abeyance was said to be an unfortunate term, and one that was calculated to give colour to the idea that the Government might reconsider their promise to grant the lease. The Premier thereby practically said that the presence of an Attorney-General in the Cabinet did not trouble him. The Attorney-General's opinion might be a myth, and that he had decided to give this lease, and the English capitalists shall know it in order that the money might be subscribed, with the assurance of certainty there will be no hitch in the matter. The papers came before him on October 10, and he had been attacked for having stated that he did not have the necessary material before him on October 10 to form an opinion as to whether this was a branch line or not, and his attention had never previously been drawn to the question. That application of Mr. Smith's, which contained a string of names such as Mount Reid, Black and Lyell, was said to contradict his (Mr. Clark's) statement. In face of that application of Mr. Smith's, in face of all that had been said, he repeated that he had not the necessary material on October 10 to form an opinion; and he was not in a position to form an opinion, and would not be expected to do so by anyone, except a bitter enemy or blatant fool, on the material which he had at that time. (Hear, hear.) The papers were sent to him for a specific object—(Hear, hear)—and he perused them with that object only in his mind. The momentous question, however, had been settled by his colleagues behind his back. (Hear, hear.) By what supernatural intuition was he to discover all that the papers contained, and then to give a correct opinion on that question, to which his attention had never been directed? (Hear, hear.) He did not expect any one of the members of his profession to attack him. He would not expect those hon. members to carry the geography of Tasmania in their brains, so that the mention of two

mountains or two rivers would enable them to seize upon their exact district and point on the compass. (Hear, hear.) He had said that he read the papers on the question about which he was asked to advise, and the string of mountains and rivers made no impression on his brain. He had been attacked by some members of the House on account of the manner in which he had separated from his colleagues. Did members assume, in reference to the amendment submitted by Captain Miles, that his colleagues had not been aware many days previously what his position was on that question. Several members seem to think that the evening when he spoke in the House was the first information he had ever given his colleagues that if they persisted in the course they were taking it would be necessary to separate. Had he acted in that manner he would have deserved all the condemnation heaped upon him. Before ever the question had been discussed in the House, either on the motion of Mr. Mulcahy or Mr. Lewis, he had told his colleagues that he would never be a party to sending the matter to the Governor for signature. (Hear, hear.) He had told them that he would have to leave the Cabinet if they persisted in doing what they were doing, and he did not think he would be doing his duty to the colony or to the House to run immediately away from his post when he saw anything like danger to the public interests. (Hear, hear.) He thought it a duty to stand at his post so long as possible, living in hope that his colleagues would yet do their duty and accept what had been said by him as the legal adviser of the Constitution. (Hear, hear.) But they said they were bound by a question of personal honour, and they were about to do something detrimental to the public interests of the colony. He hoped that he fully appreciated the sentiments of those who had a careful regard for their personal honour. With regard to what was thought to be a question of honour on the part of a Minister of the Crown or a person in authority, he gave an opinion that if a Minister makes what he regards as a personal promise under a misapprehension, a promise that he had no legal authority to make, and then persisted in endeavouring to keep it in spite of law and Constitutional usage, that person would be acting according to a code which would lead him in a direction that was the reverse of honourable. (Hear, hear.) He could not help regretting that so many members of his profession were prepared to vote against the amendment moved by Captain Miles. Every member of the House was in measure the guardian of the Constitution under which he held a seat in the House, and if there were any members who have more so than others it was the members of the legal profession. That profession had the privilege of at all times being represented by one of its members in the Cabinet and the Executive of the country; of no other section of people in the colony, or in any other colony, could it be said that they had that high honour and privilege that one of them must always be in the Councils of the Crown. (Hear, hear.) That high privilege was then cast upon the legal profession of being guardian of the honour of the country. He found that members of the legal profession took up the position that the law officers of the Crown were to be disregarded, and that the Cabinet was to act without the advice of their legal officer. Was the law officer to be scorned, and be treated as a puppet in the hands of a strong-minded Minister who, in an attempt to vindicate his own personal honour, was prepared to ignore the law and overlook the law officers of the Crown. (Applause.)

The Minister of Lands [A.T. Pillinger] said that Mr. Clark had charged him with being responsible for certain matters that had happened. He was prepared to take any responsibility that had been incurred through his action, and from what he knew of Mr.

Clark he would have thought that that gentleman was also prepared to take the responsibility of his action, and have borne the share due to him with regard to the advice given to Ministers. He had always had a high opinion of Mr. Clark and had always readily referred any matters to him where the advice of the law officers of the Crown was required. With respect to the matter in question, he had probably taken more trouble to get legal advice than for any other business that he had transacted through the Crown law officers. The letter from Norton-Smith came to him, and it was presented to the Cabinet; it might have been shown to a member of the Cabinet before. He was not sure about that, but on the ordinary day of the Cabinet meeting it was presented and discussed. Now Mr. Clark said that there was something irregular in it.

Mr. Clark: I said that it was unusual.

The Minister of Lands said there was nothing unusual in it, as it was not an ordinary Executive meeting. There was another matter of business placed before the Cabinet at that meeting, and he thought that the matter should receive the consent of Ministers by their signatures. That induced him to place the railway question before them. The correspondence showed that before the lease was issued or prepared they had decided to consult the law officers of the Crown. The first thing that occurred to him, that he must get, was the advice of the law officers of the Crown as to what must be done in the matter. He sent the whole of the papers, as he had done so on every other occasion. He had asked Mr. Counsel, the Surveyor-General, to go and explain every matter that was necessary in connection with them, and place the whole of the papers before the law officers of the Crown.

Mr. A.I. Clark: After the Executive minute was blocked. Mr. Counsel came first to consult on the form of the Executive minute.

The Minister of Lands said that he only knew that Mr. Counsel went to consult the law officers of the Crown. He came back and informed him of the result—that was that the law officers of the Crown advised that there could be no lease issued for a branch until the primary lease was issued. Mr. Clark said that the Ministry had not respected his opinion. From the day Mr. Clark gave that opinion, that opinion had been respected uniformly. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. A.I. Clark: I never said you did not respect my opinion. I said you never asked for it.

The Minister of Lands: I say you gave it.

Mr. A.I. Clark: You never asked for it.

The Minister of Lands said that Mr. Counsel, the head to the Survey Department, came back and told him that that was the advice given. Up to the present day the advice of Mr. Clark's had been respected, as it would have been upon any other point that he might give advice upon. When he sent the papers to the Crown law officers, he sent the whole of the papers. The whole of Mr. Norton-Smith's letters asking for the branch line were there. Mr. Clark never gave him any advice as to what a branch line was or he would have received his advice.

Mr. Mulcahy: You should have asked him.

The Minister of Lands said he never dreamt of asking him. Of course they had prophets after the event. The hon. member could see now why he should have asked him. He had no idea of anything of the kind. After the decision in the House that branch lines should not be restricted in length, no reasonable man could attempt to restrict them.

(Hear, hear.) He had the will of the House to guide him in the matter. When he sent the papers to Mr. Clark, he believed there was no necessity for him to ask whether the line was a branch one or not. What he wanted to prove to hon. members was that he would be the last man in the world to conceal anything from Mr. Clark.

Mr. A.I. Clark: I did not say you had concealed anything.

Mr. Fowler: Read the memo of October 10.

The Minister of Lands said he was going to. There was only one instance in which he did not follow the advice of the Attorney-General, and took it upon himself to say he would not follow that advice. He was going to ask the House whether there was any justification for the hon. member saying that he and his colleagues were bent on giving this lease to the V.D.L. Co. On October 10 he wrote to Mr. Clark, "Will you kindly advise me how the difficulty raised by Mr. Norton-Smith can be overcome." To that Mr. Clark replied, "I cannot see how a lease can be granted of land described as being shown on a plan which does not exist. But a provisional plan showing the general course of the railway might be prepared to enable the lease to be "issued."

Mr. A.I. Clark: That is the primary lease. I have already stated to the House and in the press that that memo refers to the primary lease.

The Minister of Lands said that Mr. Clark said distinctly that the primary lease could be issued. When the primary lease was issued, according to Mr. Clark, he could have gone to the Executive Council and passed the other lease. (Dissent.) The whole of the correspondence showed that the Attorney-General's advice was respected from beginning to end, except in that one matter, and he never sent that on to Mr. Norton-Smith, because it seemed better to rest on the promise of the members of the Cabinet than enter upon what seemed to him a very irregular course, and which, though in accordance with the opinion of the Attorney-General, would have been called a job and was a job. What right had Mr. Clark to say that Ministers were determined to give this lease, when the lease could have been in existence at that minute, if his advice been followed.

Mr. A.I. Clark: Not the branch lease.

The Minister of Lands said that he had explained the position as far as he knew about it. As far as honour went, it rested with individual members of the Government; that they had made a promise they considered it their duty to keep and fight for until it was shown it could not be legally carried out. They would be unworthy of the support and consideration of the House, and the people of the colony if they could lightly make promises with companies in important matters of this kind, and simply slip out of their obligations under an adverse opinion. However, whatever the people of Hobart might think, he took the sole responsibility on his own shoulders as to obtaining legal advice. He obtained what legal advice he thought necessary, and when he obtained it he respected it; except in one case, when he thought it would be injurious to the administration of the laws of the colony. Mr. Dobson had told them that they should make their own railways. It was some 12 or 18 months ago when this proposal first came before them. Considering the little development that had taken place in that part of the colony, no Government would have ventured to have brought in a proposal to make that line. He was glad for one, and he believed the Government was glad, when an opportunity offered of a foreign company opening up this valuable country. At that time he had a report from the Government Geologist, who said it was doubtful what the result of those mines would be. Even up to the present some of those mines were doubtful. He

had shown some of the reports to Mr. Bird. That was why the lease was granted. He deemed that he was granting it in the best interests of the country, and for the development of the resources of the country, and to give employment to those who were daily clamouring for work.

The Treasurer (Sir Philip Fysh) said he would have felt glad if he had been refused the liberty of speaking, because as hon. members knew he had kept out of this discussion. He had too much respect for the friend who had left them, and too much respect for those with whom he was now acting, to attempt to interfere more than was absolutely necessary, according to his lights, in the discussion taking place. He had thought it better to sit throughout, and let those who wished to speak against Ministers, and those who wished to excuse them, have their say. He had been perfectly satisfied with those friends who had taken up the side of Ministers, and that the objections raised to the course Ministers had pursued was well replied to, and he was satisfied to leave the matter where it was. He was sure that whatever he might say he would hardly make some members believe in the *bona fides* of Ministers. As to others, he trusted that he had their good opinions without seeking to secure them by speech. (Hear, hear.) He was so well known to the public that he thought he could trust his character to their hands, just as they had trusted their interests in his for all these years, and he fully believed that if his sun was to go down, it would, as the cloud passed away, rise again and place him in his proper position. He trusted to be respected by the those who appeared now to charge him with wrong doing, and by the community at large. While he regretted that Mr. Clark had found it necessary to speak against those with whom he had been so long and honourably associated, he felt compelled to rise, if only to speak in defence of his colleagues. He would like to call the attention of the House and his late colleague, and now his respected friend, to the incidents that had surrounded, for several years past, the progress of measures through the House which were identified with the disruption of the present moment. It was no new thing of that day, but of years, and involved in the question of who should bridge over certain portions of the colony where it was believed there were mineral developments to be exploited. When in 1891 it was first proposed by the Emu Bay people that they should construct a line across that place of open country, there was no objection raised by the public. The colony was then in a condition of financial adversity, with the public debt accumulating at the rate of £103,000 per annum, and the Treasury nearly depleted, until it became to be doubtful in the minds of their creditors in London whether the colony would be able to weather the storm. (Hear, hear.) Under such circumstances the Government was wholly unable to bridge the chasm themselves. That was not only the position in 1891, but also in 1892, and in the later years, when the persons promoting the railway from Waratah came to Parliament to ask for an extension of time under the conditions of their deposit, and it was unhesitatingly given to them. So it went on up to recently; and now another year having come round the Emu Bay Railway Co. had been floated, and the people on the Coast were beginning to be concerned about the company being hampered in their work, because there was not that rapid development at the Coast that was desired possible until foreign capital was introduced to carry on this particular work. Under these conditions the Government had been obliged to extend the time to the company until they came to September, 1896. For 6 years had Parliament been wanting the promoters of the railway to proceed, with the exception, perhaps of Mr.

Bird, who raised his voice last year—(Mr. Bird: Hear, hear.)—and Mr. Back, who was against these branch lines being constructed -

Mr. Mulcahy: Here's another, too.

The Treasurer: And possibly the member sitting behind him and Mr. Henry. But there was an overwhelming majority in both branches of the Legislature who wished to revive those Emu Bay Railway bills, and permit branch lines to be made. Therefore, had not Ministers a perfect right to presume that they, as the Executive, were to do what Parliament wished should be done. The Legislature had given those powers as to the branch line to the Executive in order that there should be no delay in the matter. And so Ministers, as the Executive, carried out honestly the discharge of their duties in exercising these powers; they acted with the extremest of *bona fides* when they gave Mr. Norton-Smith the promise in accordance with the powers they were called upon to exercise. (Ministerial cheers.) And that being so, he claimed that Ministers were entitled to a great deal more consideration than they had received in the matter. The promise made by the word of a Minister was on September 18, 1896, whilst it was not until November 26 of that year that the Great Western Railway Bill was passed—

Mr. Dobson: The petition was here before.

The Treasurer: Who believed the petition? (Ministerial cheers.) The Premier did not; yet he went against his own convictions, going behind himself, and almost losing his seat in the North in order to get the Great Western Bill through in the interests of Hobart and the South. Now one year after the event, when everybody had got so wise—(laughter)—because a few people in Hobart had been trying to stir up strife about this concession, but with two or three other things hidden behind it, and all now joined together to throw odium upon a Government who, in the face of trying times, had stood stronger than any Tasmanian Government he had ever known, and he had been associated with them since 1863, and had been doing as good work as any Government he had ever known, and would be able to leave the country in a better position than anyone had a right to expect by reason of their judicious management—(loud Ministerial cheers)—because Ministers in the exercise of the discretion and the discharge of their duties, with a *bona fides* nobody, not even the gentlemen in the front Opposition Bench, could dispute—because after the event, because Ministers were not prescient, only seeing the circumstances of the hour, guided by such information as men could get, agreed to give the Emu Bay people an extension to Lyell—because it was said that the concession would be a disadvantage to Hobart, not to the whole community, Ministers were to submit to this attack. They were to bear the brunt of doing what? For having acted with *bona fides* on information before them at the time—more than a year ago. Never in his experience had he known of such an outrage being perpetrated on a Ministry never so unfairly had any body of men been attacked in any community as the present Ministry had now been. He had sat there in silence night after night listening to the attack. Mr. Dobson seemed to have ransacked the dictionary for all the adjectives that could be used defamatory of the Ministry; but it all fell off him (the Treasurer) like water off a duck's back—(laughter)—the torrent of the hon. member's words bursting the dams of reflection—(laughter)—reminding him of words of Mr. Justin McCarthy's, which his late colleague (Mr. Clark) would, no doubt, remember when speaking of Sir William Harcourt in his rattling declamatory times, when he was "as stirring as drums, as fluent as the hour-glass, but, at the same time, just as empty as a drum, and just as dry as the sand

in the hour-glass.” (Laughter.) The hon. gentlemen was all sound and fury, and there was no occasion to reply to him. (“Oh” and laughter.) Such speeches as his were only a waste of public time, and worse than a waste of public time, because they stood in the way of men who came there to give their time and attention to the best interests of the country. (Hear, hear.) Every man returned to that House must come to give and not to take. No man could come to that House, and into political life—and therein was a warning to the young politicians—without making great sacrifices, and he had never known one yet who was better in pocket or purse by reason of politics. (“Hear, hear,” and laughter.) Then, in the name of all that was holy, let them in the House try to maintain a respect for each other’s integrity, and try to maintain of each other that good opinion and fair name which they all appreciated—(cheers)—leaving it to the scribblers in the press and the man in the street that which they were always ready to do—to impute bad motives. (Hear, hear.) He felt for the hon. member who had just left them, but in feeling for him, and whilst regretting his separation from them, he must not do despite to those with whom he (the Treasurer) remained. (Hear, hear.) He had thought it his duty to remain with them; he knew there were some who differed from him in the matter, but he thought it his duty to do so because he was as much responsible for putting his name to that promise as any of his colleagues. When five men were joined together as an administration it was just like the holy bands of matrimony—they were bound to agree until they became divorced. (Laughter.) The secret of his success in remaining with colleagues through three administrations was that he would not fall out with his colleagues. If he found that the majority of them had made up their minds on pursuing a certain course, unless some fundamental principle was involved, he gave way to them. He admitted there was a principle involved in his friend Mr. Clark’s case; but he was sorry that it didn’t occur to Mr. Clark before to give to his colleagues or some of them something more than his warning voice contained in that document which they had signed. He himself knew he had signed the document directly he saw it, and he remembered the circumstances; he remembered having had a conversation with the Minister of Lands and Works about it on the day previously, therefore when he came to the Cabinet he was prepared for it. And although Mr. Clark said it was unusual to put one’s name in Cabinet to a document of that kind, he saw it was a matter of importance. Mr. Clark himself would have signed the paper as a matter of course if he had been asked to do it. He only heard within the last three weeks that there was anything wrong about the matter. When people spoke to him on the subject, he said he would keep to his promise. He had gone on duplicating and reduplicating his promise. He had not only promised the Government, but reassured those concerned. The whole question, then, was, could they get out of the difficulty in which they found themselves? He thought, however, he had no right to shelter himself behind anybody’s opinion. It would have been subterfuge on his part had he done so, and if he had thought he had a sin to answer for before, he would then have known he had a still greater one to account for. He remembered distinctly saying that whatever the Ministry had promised they would grant it; but if they had acted *ullra vires* they could not.

Mr. Dobson: Well haven’t you?

The Treasurer: Up to the present time, he did not know it was illegal.

Mr. Mulcahy: Then, why not accept the amendment?

The Treasurer: The session would relieve him from his promise. If Parliament stepped in, and said he should not, why, then, he could not keep his promise. He did not want to take advantage of the motion or the amendment, and, whatever might be the loss of purse or scrip, of his position in the House or his place in the Cabinet, he would know he had done the right thing.

Source: The Mercury, 30 October 1897.