

John Douglas 1828-1904: The Uncompromising Liberal

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**Jeremy Martin Hodes (BA, H Dip Bibl,
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Abstract

Douglas was born in London in 1828 and migrated to New South Wales in 1851 where he represented both the Darling Downs and Camden districts in the New South Wales parliament before embarking on a lengthy parliamentary career in Queensland, one that culminated in the premiership from 1877 to 1879. He was subsequently appointed government resident for Thursday Island in 1885, a position he held until his death, nearly 20 years later, aged 76, in 1904. During this period he also served as special commissioner for the protectorate of British New Guinea, administering the territory prior to it being formally proclaimed a crown colony.

Douglas's involvement in Queensland public life was significant and encompassed the entire period from the colony's formation in 1859 to the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901. In this respect, his career allows, through a study of his long, eventful and varied life, for this thesis to examine aspects of the development and progression of Queensland's political system as a nascent yet robust, representative democracy, through most of the second half of the nineteenth century until the colony's incorporation in the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia.

This thesis argues that John Douglas was an uncompromising Liberal in an age of Liberalism, a principled politician in an era of pragmatic factionalism and shifting political allegiances. Perhaps because of this he was more popular with his electorate than with his parliamentary colleagues.

Douglas's contribution to Queensland life was in large measure shaped by his character and the formative influences on it. This included his aristocratic upbringing, his public school and university education, his abiding religious faith, a profound sense of fair play, and a desire to participate fully and selflessly in the life of the community he lived in, despite the vicissitudes of his personal life.

As this thesis further demonstrates, an examination of Douglas's life affords us an insight into an energetic, accomplished, erudite, and compassionate man. Yet while his intellectual curiosity, thirst for knowledge and wide-ranging interests marked him as a Renaissance man, he also had many failings, most noticeably that of extreme obstinacy. Therefore, this thesis will analyse Douglas's convictions and beliefs while examining the strengths and flaws inherent in his character. It is because Douglas lived a life characterised by complexity and contradiction, leavened by a mixture of accomplishment and failure, that his life, and the times he lived in, are worthy of examination.

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They all share in my success but any failings are my own.

Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this dissertation is, to the best of my knowledge, original and that the material has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for the award of any other degree at this or any other university.

JEREMY HODES

Canberra

March 2006

Chapter 1: Introduction

Undertaking any biography presents its own set of challenges.

Nevertheless, a biography well done can be as challenging, interesting, and ultimately as satisfying as any other historical thesis.

Biography has been described by Donald Bond, when emeritus professor of English at the University of Chicago, as:

a narrative which seeks consciously and artistically to record the actions and recreate the personality of an individual life. Unlike history it deals with the individual; unlike fiction it records a life that actually has been lived. At the same time the biographer shares with the historian a concern for truth and he shares with the novelist the ambition to create a work of art. Thus the great biographies of the world are those which have presented their subjects as they were but which have gone beyond the mere collection of facts to the creation of a living portrait.¹

Although Bond describes history and biography as being distinct disciplines, with the former focusing on events and issues and the latter concerned with the individual, the two are inseparable. And this is never more so than when undertaking biographies of influential men who lived in pioneering times and when the right man in the right place could shape society in ways simply not possible in later generations.

¹ Bond, Donald. "Biography." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 14th ed. Chicago, 1969, vol 3, p. 636

Harry Perry, a journalist and the compiler of the memoirs of Sir Robert Philp, a former Queensland premier, understood this well, reminding us 70 years ago, that:

The story of Queensland, its progress and development, is built up from the records of men in action. It is a history shorn of the glamour and the agony of war, but it is none the less glorious because of that. The genius of our pioneers has been constructive, not destructive. They have taken the raw material of nature, and from it they have built a nation.²

Perry's assertion, although couched in language that may be too "triumphalist" for refined twenty-first century tastes, accurately depicts the way most Queensland colonial politicians perceived their duty and lived their lives. Pioneers in an unexplored land that was theirs for the taking, they took it all, regardless of the costs to the environment and the indigenous inhabitants. Frequently the colony's premiers led the charge to fashion a new society modeled on the 'old country' despite it being on the other side of the world in conditions as different from those in England as one could expect to find. Democracy in the form of representative government was taken very seriously in the Australian colonies, as were colonial premiers. They were responsible for nursing economic growth and development in these vast but sparsely populated lands, which was theirs to fashion unconstrained by an inhabited past or local tradition, and whose

² Harry C. Perry. *Memoirs of the Hon. Sir Robert Philp K.C.M.G., 1851-1922*. Brisbane, Watson, Ferguson and Co. Ltd., 1923, p. x

bright future stretched as far as the endless sunlit horizon.

It is all the more surprising therefore, that, to the best of my knowledge, only one biography, either published or unpublished as a PhD thesis, has been written on any of the 15 men of Queensland who held the post of premier (or colonial secretary) during the colonial era, although six of them have been the subject of honours theses at the University of Queensland.³ The reasons why these men have not gained much scholarly attention are many and varied and include the fact that most of them, while they may have loomed large in the Queensland political arena, did not command much attention outside their own colony. However, others, who were noteworthy players in nineteenth-century Australasia, including Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, have not been the subject of biographies either. The one exception is Sir Samuel Griffith, a significant figure in Australian federation history, whose published biography in 1984 was written by the late historian, Roger Joyce.⁴

This paucity of published biographical material on or about Queensland colonial premiers raises pertinent questions for anyone wishing to redress this situation. Is the lack of published biographies

³ The six were Mcllwraith, Palmer, Douglas, Griffith, Byrnes and Macalister. Further information on these theses may be found in the bibliography. Queensland colonial premiers who have not yet been the subject of a thesis include Herbert, Mackenzie, Lilley, Thorn, Morehead, Nelson, Philp, Dawson and Dickson. While there have been a smattering of other publications about Queensland premiers and their governments, including Robert Philp's memoirs, Dawson's pioneering but all-too-brief Labor administration and the "sketches and impressions" of Thomas Byrnes, none were full-length biographies.

⁴ Roger Joyce. *Samuel Walker Griffith*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1984

on this topic a sad indication of Queensland's relative unimportance in colonial Australian history, or is it that this particular aspect of colonial history has been woefully neglected by historians?

Whatever the reasons, given that Queensland colonial premiers have been largely ignored for well over a century, a strong case can be made for resurrecting them as a fruitful source of biographical material. The 15 Queensland colonial premiers in office from 1859-1901 equates to less than three years for each incumbent. However, despite their average short tenure, Queensland politics was relatively stable during this period, demonstrating that longevity in office is no guarantee of outstanding ability or superior political contribution.⁵

Few Australian historians today would recognise the name John Douglas, and even fewer would be aware of his achievements or even able to suggest what his contribution to colonial Australia was.⁶ The relentless tide of events has largely washed away his memory and achievements, with only a few fleeting references in mainstream Australian historiography giving a glimpse of the extraordinary life he led. However, this was not the case in Australia some hundred or so years ago, when he was widely known and admired as a man of integrity, one who, during his long and varied life, had contributed much to the development of the colony of Queensland. One of the

⁵ D. J. Murphy and R. B. Joyce, eds. *Queensland Political Portraits*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1978, p. 2

⁶ Douglas is not alone in this, for "remarkably few of the politicians whose careers were transacted wholly within the colonial period have remained vivid." (D. B. Waterson. "Thomas McIlwraith: A Colonial Entrepreneur." In, D. J. Murphy and R. B. Joyce, eds. *Queensland Political Portraits*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1978, p. 119)

aims of this thesis is to rescue the man and his achievements from the obscurity of an historical backwater and to demonstrate, through a detailed examination of his life, that he was one of the driving forces in the development of Queensland during the nineteenth century.

A thorough examination of any Queensland premier is useful for a number of reasons. It might be used to examine how and why the colony developed on different lines from that of the other colonies in Australasia. Queensland covered an enormous geographical area, one that was sparsely populated, resulting in a greater reliance on primary production. The location of its capital city in the far south eastern corner of the colony resulted in Queensland's population being more evenly spread throughout Queensland than was the case with other Australian colonies, with several ports competing for trade and the attendant political and commercial influence. Perhaps this led to its political leaders requiring different skills and abilities to meet the different economic and geographical challenges facing their colony.⁷

Certainly, the model of a politician representing mainly local interests remained strong for many years, diminishing only as the population grew and political parties began to form.⁸ This emphasis on politicians representing local interests meant that their individual abilities coupled with their styles of campaigning and representing

⁷ Murphy and Joyce, (1978), pp. 1-2

their disparate electorates were important factors in Queensland colonial politics.⁹ It is also worth remembering that the premier of any colony is worthy of examination, for this is an achievement of only a select few, whatever may have been their triumphs or failures when holding such high office. Moreover, Douglas's contribution included the role he later played in the early years of colonial administration in British New Guinea and Torres Strait.

This biography attempts to analyse, demonstrate and illuminate the contribution he made to the development of colonial Queensland. As Douglas was a complex individual with varied interests and opinions, and many achievements and disappointments, this thesis will also analyse his convictions and beliefs and examine the strengths and flaws inherent in his character. While it is not always easy to strike the right balance between detail and analysis when undertaking a biography, I have attempted to find that balance - recording Douglas's life in some detail while analysing his life and demonstrating its significance against the background of his times.

For the sake of clarity and simplicity, the thesis analyses and documents Douglas's life in chronological sequence. This approach has on occasion presented its own difficulties. Many details of Douglas's life have not survived, particularly those pertaining to his early years. All too often, other facts, while available, have survived devoid of their context. In other cases, there is a surfeit of

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3

information. The challenge with the former has been to contextualise the facts and meaningfully analyse them, while with the latter it has been to sift through the wealth of material and extract that which is significant. I have attempted, wherever possible, to ensure that any speculation or supposition is based on existing facts. For as Bond has observed, “if the biographer tampers with the facts, if he omits the unpleasant, if he colours or distorts in either direction, he completely fails.”¹⁰

I have also attempted to write this biography of Douglas in the spirit with which Boswell approached his classic study of Dr. Johnson in the late eighteenth century:

And he will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write, not his panegyric, which must be all praise, but his life ... in every picture there should be shade as well as light.¹¹

John Douglas (1828-1904) came to Australia from England in 1851, settling on the Darling Downs in 1854. His involvement in public life encompassed the entire period from Queensland’s separation from New South Wales in 1859 to the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901. In this respect, his career allows us, through a study of his long, eventful, and varied life, to follow the fortunes of the colony from its beginnings as a humble, sparsely populated settlement, to a

⁹ Ibid., p. 4

¹⁰ Bond, p. 640

¹¹ Ibid. Interestingly enough, Boswell’s grandfather, Colonel John Erskine, deputy-governor of Stirling Castle, was John Douglas’s great-grandfather.

state that, thanks to its bountiful natural resources, had greater promise than any other did in the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia. Charting the course of Douglas's life allows us to follow the development of colonial Queensland throughout its four decades as a self-governing colony, because an examination of his life is inevitably an examination of colonial Queensland in microcosm.

Charles Bernays, a noted chronicler of Queensland colonial politics, recognised Douglas as a man "who had done more than the average share in political foundation laying."¹² Moreover, Douglas's varied public life, with its attendant impact on Queensland politics and society, occurred in an era when a dedicated man in the right place at the right time could have a profound influence and leave a lasting impression on the fabric of his society.

Despite being the premier of Queensland from 1877 to 1879, Douglas's greatest achievements in public life lay elsewhere, for although a career politician, he lacked the necessary qualities to succeed in that arena at the highest level. He was not, as one of Sir Henry Parkes's more recent biographers wrote of his subject: "a humbug, a hypocrite and, when... considered necessary, a blatant liar."¹³ Douglas never abused the power bestowed by official office or provided undue patronage to his supporters and constituents.

¹² Charles Bernays. *Queensland Politics during Sixty (1859-1919) Years*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1920, p. 41

¹³ Robert Travers. *The Grand Old Man of Australian Politics: The Life and Times of Sir Henry Parkes*. Sydney, Kangaroo Press, 1992, p. 7

As this thesis will clearly demonstrate, Douglas was an honest and incorruptible politician, accurately depicted by the *Queenslander* newspaper as having a “well-known character for political honesty.”¹⁴ It will depict a man who, by his actions, consistently put his colony ahead of himself, and who passionately believed that service and duty to Queen and country came before self-aggrandisement and recognition.¹⁵ Whatever benefit and pleasure Douglas obtained from his parliamentary service, financial aggrandisement was not among them, for most of his life in public service was undertaken at a time when politicians were not paid.¹⁶

As Spencer Browne, who worked with Douglas on the *Brisbane Courier* newspaper in Brisbane in the early 1880s, sagely observed:

He was not a born political leader because he always fought in the open, and his blows were never below the belt. He was not personally aggressive [and] did not possess the aggressiveness that pursues and belittles.¹⁷

The Brisbane-based Catholic newspaper, the *Australian*, claimed that Douglas had been re-elected to the seat of Maryborough in 1879 because of his “own personal merits, combining as he does, honesty

¹⁴ “Electioneering on the Downs.” *Queenslander*, 15 June 1867, p. 7. As Douglas himself once remarked, “Personal veracity counts for something in politics.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 11 November 1878, p. 2)

¹⁵ Douglas remarked in 1892 when resident on Thursday Island, that he considered a life of sacrifice to be a happy one. (Arthur Ward. *The Miracle of Mapoon or from Native Camp to Christian Village*. London, S.W. Partridge & Co., 1908, p. 93)

¹⁶ Payment for politicians who were not ministers of the crown only came into effect in Queensland in 1889. (Bernays, p. 295)

¹⁷ Spencer Browne. “Death of the Hon. John Douglas.” *Brisbane Courier*, 25 July 1904, p. 3

and candour with a genial suavity of manner.”¹⁸

Unlike many of his peers, he did not regard politics as an opportunity to press narrow self-interest. To Douglas, a seat in parliament was not an opportunity to gain privileges or bask in the recognition that power and influence bestowed. Rather, Douglas brought to parliament a “strict integrity of purpose” to serve his fellow colonists to the best of his ability.¹⁹ As early Queensland historian Isobel Hannah observed, Douglas served his country and not himself:

John Douglas, whose name is ‘written large’ in the history of our state, served his country with a patriotic zeal which politicians to-day might well emulate.²⁰

Douglas was a visionary acutely aware of Queensland’s place in Australasia, and the importance of developing the colony for the benefit of all its population, not just the local and sectional interests he represented. He once remarked that he saw Queenslanders as engaged in:

building up a state, established on principles which would be handed down to futurity, and would be the foundation of future greatness or future ignominy.²¹

This vision could be difficult to implement, for, as Douglas observed concerning the problems encountered in convincing the population of

¹⁸ *The Australian*, 15 March 1879, p. 478

¹⁹ “The New Treasurer.” *Queenslander*, 29 December 1866, p. 5

²⁰ Isobel Hannah. “The Parliamentary Representatives of S. E. Queensland: Some Electioneering Incidents.” *The Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 3 no 3, May 1944, p. 197

²¹ “Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 2

the necessity for railways to open up the wealth of the interior:

Colonists are the very last set of people to get fired by
the brilliant prospects of the future apart from the
exigencies of the present.²²

Douglas was a passionate and long-term supporter of Australian federation, and campaigned strongly for it to be initiated and completed. As early as 1859, he made his first declaration for federation²³ and, towards the end of his life, when he finally had an opportunity to vote for it, actively supported it. As he informed Thursday Island residents in an address on behalf of the Queensland Federation League in 1899:

I, for my part, am going to vote "Yes" with all my might...
If I had a thousand votes for Referendum Day they
should all be cast in the same way.²⁴

For Douglas, involvement in politics was a duty, a means whereby he could serve his country and his fellow man and a responsibility not to be shirked.²⁵ He brought to the political arena a sharp intellect, enormous energy, and an unwavering commitment to all aspects of the parliamentary process. He involved himself in most debates using speeches that were invariably well-researched, relevant, and concerned above all with the assumptions and principles underlying

²² John Douglas. "Transcontinental Railways in Queensland." *Victorian Review*, no 5, 1882, p. 498

²³ John Douglas. *Past and Present of Thursday Island and Torres Straits*. Brisbane, Outridge Printing Co., 1900, p. 12

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15

²⁵ "Mr. Douglas at Drayton." *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 26 September 1883

the issue at hand.²⁶

Douglas took his political duties very seriously, considering parliament and its associated proceedings sacrosanct.²⁷ He once rebuked a current Queensland premier who had, *sotto voce*, interrupted one of his speeches. To Douglas this interjection was undesirable, unpleasant, indecorous and not conducive to “that harmony” that should characterise parliamentary proceedings.²⁸

The fall of his government and his replacement as leader in January 1879 directly led to his retirement from politics, but by then “he had done the state good service.”²⁹ As Browne also remarked in connection with Douglas’s political career, “It always seems to me a great tribute to a political leader in a young country that his friends should be able to say: ‘he died a poor man!’”³⁰

Douglas tirelessly served Queensland in a variety of public positions for most of his adult life. These included the highest elected position in the colony, that of premier. Other notable appointments were as special commissioner for British New Guinea in its formative years

²⁶ Oscar De Satge. *Queensland Squatter*. London, Hurst and Blackett, 1901, p. 138: Mr. Foote. “Forest Conservancy.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 19, 1875, p. 1240

²⁷ Douglas once walked out of parliament in September 1863 because, as he asserted, it: “tamely submitted to the indignity of endorsing a transaction which had not the sanction of law, and thus, in my opinion, parliament sacrificed a privilege which it ought to have held superior to the interests of either ministerialists or oppositionists - it, in fact, preferred an executive decree to its own deliberate resolve.” (John Douglas, “*The Loan Bill*.” *Brisbane Courier*, 19 September 1863)

²⁸ Mr. Douglas. “Polynesian Labourers Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 6, 1868, p. 913

²⁹ Spencer Browne. “Death of the Hon. John Douglas.” *Brisbane Courier*, 25 July 1904, p. 3

under British annexation and as government resident on Thursday Island for almost two decades, overseeing the development of the pearling fisheries.

Douglas is also worthy of study for his role in curbing Chinese migration to Queensland. It was Douglas, more than any other single Queenslander, who was instrumental in restricting their presence in the colony, believing that:

the creation of a large, intelligent, docile, but servile class would ... seriously affect and change the conditions upon which our political system is founded.³¹

He harboured similar fears towards the Japanese in Torres Strait, who he considered to be:

Tireless, industrious, inventive ... They have more adaptability than their white rivals, and at least as much ability.³²

Nevertheless, Douglas, despite energetically protesting to his superiors on the dangers posed by the Japanese, was only moderately successful in halting Japanese migration to northern Queensland. Ultimately, he accepted their limited presence in the Torres Strait pearlshell fisheries.³³

³⁰ Spencer Browne. *A Journalist's Memories*. Brisbane, Read Press, 1927, p. 73

³¹ William Ross Johnston. *A Documentary History of Queensland*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1988, pp. 291-92

³² "A comment on the Japanese in the *Bulletin* of 31 August 1895." In Manning Clark, ed. *Sources of Australian History*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1957, pp. 398-99

³³ "Thursday Island. Interview with the British Resident." *The British Australasian*, 12 June 1902, p. 1005

A study of Douglas throws additional light on the complexities surrounding the development and application of the White Australia Policy in colonial Queensland from a liberal perspective for he, along with most Australians of his era, was a proponent of this article of faith: "I am really what is called a 'White Australian'- and I have endeavoured to give effect as far as possible to maintaining our white institutions." Douglas subscribed to this viewpoint because he wanted Australia "to remain what we are - a thoroughly British community."³⁴

Douglas saw his support for this policy as a way of ensuring that Queensland would continue to reflect the British values, culture and respect for the rule of law that so influenced its formative development,³⁵ and would never have thought that this attitude could possibly be construed as racist. Nor was his stance necessarily racism. He saw Queensland and Australia as British in character and wanted to keep them that way, knowing that non-European immigration would be regarded with "dread and would be strenuously resisted" by most Queenslanders.³⁶ These views were held by a majority of the Australian population at the time, a manifestation of British and Australian "race patriotism" and a desire to preserve a

³⁴ Ibid. See also John Douglas. "Asia and Australasia." *The Nineteenth Century and After*, July 1902, p. 51

³⁵ "Thursday Island. Interview with the British Resident." *The British Australasian*, 12 June 1902, p. 1006

³⁶ Ibid., p. 1005

“British-Australian nationality.”³⁷

Douglas’s role in the development of the British protectorate of New Guinea is also worthy of study.³⁸ Appointed its second special commissioner at the end of 1885, the three years he spent in this position were formative ones for the new protectorate. However, his important role in guiding the infant protectorate through this turbulent period has never been adequately examined. This included the development of Port Moresby, the encouragement of cordial relationships with the local inhabitants, the resolving of jurisdictional disputes by competing missionary organisations, and the prudent protection of its natural resources.

Moreover, a history of race relations in Queensland would be incomplete without a detailed examination of Douglas’s role in Torres Strait. His 19 years as government resident there, that is, from 1885 until his death in 1904, were of seminal importance in the history of the region and the impact of western influences on its indigenous inhabitants. Douglas established a system of government in the region and protected Torres Strait Islanders from the worst excesses

³⁷ Myra Willard. *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920*. 2nd ed. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 189. As the historian, James Morris, observed of British imperialists, “Their racialism was more ignorant than malicious.” (James Morris. *Heaven’s Command: an Imperial Progress*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, p. 538)

³⁸ New Guinea lies to the north of Australia. The island was divided between the Dutch, who were responsible for an estimated 152,000 square miles in the western portion, the Germans, where a trading company had responsibility for about 70,000 square miles of the north-east, and the British who administered over 90,000 miles in the south-east of the island. (Fred J, Melville. *British New Guinea and Papua*. London, Melville Stamp Books, 1909, p. 11)

of the pearling and *bêche-de-mer* industries. Under his paternal, though benevolent rule, the islanders were accorded higher status within Queensland than Aborigines and spared many of the latter's deprivations and sufferings. Again, the pivotal role played by Douglas in the Torres Strait during this period has evaded detailed analysis.

Douglas's attitudes towards Pacific Islanders and the colony's indigenous inhabitants is also worthy of study, providing a liberal perspective on this vexed question at odds with those who consider Europeans as invaders and destroyers of indigenous culture and society. Douglas's social conscience, religious convictions, and liberal philosophy led him in the late 1870s to legislate to ameliorate the harsh conditions under which Pacific Islanders were indentured and employed in Queensland. His attitudes to Pacific Islanders, Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines in Queensland were enlightened for his time, and stemmed from his deep religious convictions, unshakeable liberalism, and profound sense of fair play.³⁹ A Christian in more than just name, he was considered by Gilbert White, the Bishop of Carpentaria resident on Thursday Island from 1900, to be a "devout communicant,"⁴⁰ and it was these religious beliefs that informed Douglas's compassionate attitudes towards the colonies' indigenous inhabitants.

³⁹ Douglas was once described in a Queensland newspaper as possessing "very progressive sympathies." (*Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 10 March 1877, p. 499)

⁴⁰ Gilbert White. *Round about the Torres Straits: a Record of Australian Church Missions*. London, Central Board of Missions, 1917, p. 42

A staunch Anglican, Douglas nevertheless readily assisted the Presbyterian Church in setting up the Mapoon Mission for Aborigines in 1891 on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula, selecting the site and providing the missionaries with a police guard.⁴¹ The support he provided for this endeavour led to him being labelled “a man of rare humanity” by John Harrison when researching this topic in 1974.⁴²

Although sympathetic towards Aborigines, Douglas still “inherited the colonising fervour and Christian paternalism of the British upper class.”⁴³ As early as 1865, he believed that the only way to improve the lot of Aborigines in Queensland was by withdrawing the “native children, or half-castes, from the contaminating influences which surrounded them, and endeavour to Christianise them.”⁴⁴ In holding these beliefs, Douglas supported the accepted enlightened social policy of his era, as expressed by Albert Calvert, a London-based gold-mining engineer with interests in Western Australia:

Christianity demands that we should do all in our power for the amelioration of these people, whose lands we have taken ... responsibility is forced upon us by our own acts: let us not seek to evade it but ... manfully do our duty by our dark-skinned fellow-subjects.⁴⁵

⁴¹ John Harris. *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: a Story of Hope*. Sydney, Albatross Books, 1990, p. 484

⁴² John Harrison. *Missions, Fisheries and Government in Far North Queensland, 1891-1919*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1974, p. 42

⁴³ Ross Fitzgerald. *A History of Queensland: From the Dreaming to 1915*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1982, p. 205

⁴⁴ “Mr Douglas. Industrial and Reformatory Schools Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 256

⁴⁵ Albert F. Calvert. *The Aborigines of Western Australia*. London, W. Milligan and Co.,

Douglas believed that if Aborigines were to become economically productive members of society then they had to be equipped with the belief systems and skills appropriate for the changed society they were now inhabited. Western civilisation had come to Australia and he wanted Aborigines to have access to its benefits.

These attitudes and beliefs demonstrate that Douglas shared with most good Englishmen of his time a belief in the pre-eminence of the European race over indigenous peoples, a belief buttressed by social Darwinism and a simple acceptance of the British at the apex of civilisation. However, we should be wary of uncritically condemning these beliefs by the standards of our own era; it is simplistic to analyse past events by comparing them to those of the present-day.⁴⁶ Neither should we place today's emphases on yesterday's events.⁴⁷ Rather, we should endeavour to explain the past to people living in the present.⁴⁸ Moreover, Douglas, even judged by the standards of his era, was considered "always a friend of the Blacks,"⁴⁹ and under his government, some of the earliest reserves in Queensland were proclaimed to protect Aborigines from the worst

1892, p. 46

⁴⁶ Alan Arthur Morrison. "The Town Liberal and the Squatter." *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 4 no 5, December 1952

⁴⁷ Bruce Raymond. "Justice and Politics." *The Bulletin*, 20 May 2003, p. 8

⁴⁸ Marilyn Lake. "On History and Politics." In, Stuart Macintyre, ed. *The Historian's Conscience: Australian Historians on the Ethics of History*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 2004, p. 95

⁴⁹ W. M. Lees. *The Aboriginal Problem in Queensland: How it is Being Dealt with*. Brisbane, City Printing Works, 1902, p. [3]

excesses of colonisation.⁵⁰

A study of Douglas is inevitably a study of colonial Queensland society and its class structure, status and connections, because he lived in an era where who you knew was paramount. He maintained an imposing list of friends and contacts. His aristocratic pedigree meant that he was known and welcome in refined circles the length and breadth of Australia. As a Douglas, he was related to many of the scions of the Scottish upper classes residing in the dominions. The small size of the Queensland population in the first decades after separation inevitably allowed him to work or interact with almost all the notable men in the colony, and their names were frequently associated with one another throughout the course of Douglas's life.

Moreover, it was his tenure in the remote Torres Strait that helped extend these contacts. His time in New Guinea involved regular travel to various colonial capitals to secure funds for this new imperial responsibility. In Torres Strait, his position as government resident

⁵⁰ These reserves were located at Durundur, Bribie Island, Deebing Creek, Bowen and Townsville. (Rosalind Kidd. *The Way we Civilise: Aboriginal Affairs – the Untold Story*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1997, p. 26; Rosalind Kidd. *Regulating Bodies: Administrations and Aborigines in Queensland 1840-1988*. PhD thesis. Brisbane, Griffith University, 1994, p. 77; Constance Petrie. *Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Queensland*. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1983, p. 214; Archibald Meston. "Report on the Aboriginal Reserve at Durundur." Queensland State Archives, COL/140, General Correspondence Papers Re Aborigines 1896–1902, no. 15,515.) The first Aboriginal reserve was established near Mackay in 1875, with Douglas's government gazetting the others two years later. For more information, see Mark Cryle. *Duncan McNab's Mission to the Queensland Aborigines 1875-1880*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1989, pp. 59-73 & 94-106. For a detailed account of the settlement at Bribie Island, and Douglas's role in it, see Kathleen McArthur. *Pumicestone Passage: A Living Waterway*. Caloundra, Queensland, the Author, 1978, pp. 57-61

saw him constantly welcoming and entertaining those who travelled to the 'Mother Country,' because Thursday Island was a port of call for those colonists travelling to Great Britain via the Suez Canal.⁵¹

These contacts, and in many cases friendships, included governors, premiers, explorers, judges, members of the British aristocracy, politicians and the first and second prime ministers of Australia, Edmund Barton and Alfred Deakin. As Douglas himself noted, he had enjoyed a "life of active sympathy and of intercourse with many of the leading men in Australia, whether as explorers of new country or as explorers in the tangled paths of experimental politics."⁵²

A study of Douglas is also a study of the practical application of religion to daily life, so necessary for a better understanding of colonial society. For many colonists, their Christian faith was central to how they lived their lives, and Douglas attempted to live his by the *General Thanksgiving*, "nothing more, nothing less."⁵³ Bishop Gilbert White observed that Douglas was a man "whose deep interest [is] in all that has tended to the glory of God."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Kevin Mason. The Honourable John Douglas. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1969, p. 203; John Douglas to Edmund Barton, 20 July 1897. In, *Letters and Handbills Relating to Australian Federation, 1897-1898*. National Library of Australia, MS 50

⁵² John Douglas. "Imperial Federation from an Australian Point of View." *The Nineteenth Century*, no 94, December 1884, p. 854. For instance, while in Melbourne on his return to Torres Strait from England in August 1902, the then prime minister, Alfred Deakin, invited him to lunch with him at parliament house. (*Age*, 6 September 1902, p. 10; Alfred Deakin to John Douglas, 5 September 1902. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM89-3/B/5(3))

⁵³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas 11 June 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/9

⁵⁴ Bishop Gilbert White, *Carpentarian*, 1 April 1902, p. 46. Douglas's religious beliefs found

Notwithstanding Douglas's achievements, contacts, and service to his adopted colony, little information on him is readily available in the public domain. This is surprising considering that he was a seasoned politician, one who had a considered opinion on most public issues and gave lengthy expression to them at every opportunity. Although he is frequently mentioned in secondary historical sources, it is usually in a somewhat cursory manner. When his name is mentioned, he is depicted as an unsuccessful squatter, hopeless when it came to business and amassing wealth, but a good man and an ineffectual politician who was honest and scrupulous but not tough enough to profit from the inevitable political intrigues. In discussions of Douglas during his years in Torres Strait, he is generally lauded for bringing stability to the region and for successfully balancing the competing interests of its inhabitants.

There are simply no published works where Douglas is the central figure. References to him and his achievements are mainly of a

expression in practical service to the church, with the Rev. J. R. Moffat in 1869 considering Douglas to be "the best churchman they had in the colony." ("Lecture by the Hon. J. Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1869, p. 3.) In New South Wales and Queensland Douglas was involved with the Anglican Church in various capacities including serving on the building committee formed in 1854 to build the first Anglican Church in Warwick, (Maurice French. *Pubs, Ploughs & Peculiar People: Towns, Farms and Social Life*. Toowoomba, USQ Press, 1992, p. 191), and later as a warden and trustee of All Saints' Church, Brisbane. (D. L. Kissick. *All Saint's Church Brisbane 1862-1937*. Brisbane, The Church, 1937, pp. 26-27.) He was the first president of the Thursday Island Anglican Quetta Memorial Cathedral building committee, (*Carpentarian*, 1 April 1902, p. 46) and in his memory a chapel attached to the cathedral was erected with a stained glass window in the chapel depicting him as St. John. On its wall is a brass plate stating, "To the glory of God and in memory of Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G. Premier of Queensland 1877-1879, Government Resident Thursday Island 1885-1904, who entered into rest July 23rd 1904. Loved and honoured by all." (Robert Douglas, p. 13; *Carpentarian*, 11 January 1905, p. 1)

passing nature in which case he is mentioned in relation to specific events or periods in Queensland history. He rarely rates a mention for his own sake. While there is some information on Douglas in encyclopaedias and biographical compilations,⁵⁵ due to their brevity, these contain little not found elsewhere. There were also several newspaper articles and obituaries on Douglas that provide useful biographical information on him as well as information on specific events in his life.⁵⁶

The major work on Douglas is an outstanding but unpublished honours thesis written by Kevin Mason in 1969.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, over 30 years have passed since its completion, and a reassessment and reappraisal, based on information and sources Mason was not able

⁵⁵ Percival Serle. "Douglas, John." In, Percival Serle. *Dictionary of Australian Biography*, vol 1. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1949, pp. 249-50; "Douglas." In, Arthur Jose and Herbert Carter, eds. *The Australian Encyclopedia*, vol 1. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1925, p. 378; "Douglas, Hon. John, C.M.G." In, John Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time*. Sydney, Robertson, 1879, pp. 56-57; "Douglas, Hon. John." In, Philip Menzell. *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography: Comprising Notes of Eminent Colonists from the Inauguration of Responsible Government Down to the Present Time (1855-1892.)* London, Hutchinson, 1892, pp. 136-37; D. B. Waterson. *A Biographical Register of the Queensland Parliament, 1860-1929*. Canberra: ANU Press, 1972, p. 49

⁵⁶ *The Cooktown Pilot*, 30 July 1904; "Thursday Island. Interview with the British Resident." *The British Australasian*, 12 June 1902, pp. 1005-6; "Death of the Hon. John Douglas." *The British Australasian*, 4 August 1904, p. 1003; Coote, William. "Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas." *The Week*, 19 May 1877, p. 616; "Obituary. The Hon John Douglas." *The Times*, 28 July 1904, p. 8; "Death of the Hon. John Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 July 1904, p. 3; *Australasian*, vol 77, 1904, p. 278; *Argus*, 26 July 1904, p. 5; "Death of the Hon. John Douglas." *North Queensland Register*. Supplement. 25 July 1904, p. 29; "The late Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G." *The Carpentarian*, vol 4 no 16, 1 October 1904, p. 128; T. Jones. "The Late Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G." *The Church Chronicle*, 1 September 1904, p. 25; "Deaths." *Durham University Journal*, vol 16 no 8, 23 November 1904, p. 97

⁵⁷ Mason

to access, is long overdue.⁵⁸ The 12-month-time limit and the word-constraints under which Mason operated meant that he was unable to do full justice to the details of Douglas's life, and associated service. For instance, Mason did not discuss Douglas's involvement in the 1883 Queensland elections, an involvement that triggered a chain of events which 18 months later led him to become the government resident on Thursday Island.

In his study of Douglas, Mason postulated the premise of the 'flawed man' in history. To Mason, Douglas was someone who strived for the pinnacle but never quite reached it, a good but tragic figure who, at the end of his life must have ruefully reflected on what might have been. Mason, while recognising Douglas as an able politician and principled premier, believed that he had not fulfilled his potential, being compelled to accept a career in public life at the margins of society by being banished to New Guinea and the Torres Strait because his wife was unpresentable.⁵⁹ Furthermore, because there was no high school on Thursday Island, Douglas was deprived of seeing his children grow up because they were sent to boarding schools in Scotland and Sydney. Worst of all, according to Mason, was that Douglas was forced to keep working until his death because of ever present financial problems, the need to pay for the best

⁵⁸ This includes material published since 1969 as well as resources unable to be accessed by Mason due to geographical, financial and time constraints. For example, he did not consult crucial primary material found in relevant local newspapers such as the *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Examiner* and the *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*.

⁵⁹ Joyce (1984), p. 45

education for his sons that money could buy, and to financially support an estranged wife who had left him late in life.

To read Mason is to come away with an impression of Douglas as a good but tragic figure, a noble man who gave his all for society yet was never fully recompensed, one who promised so much and yet left little to show for it. Mason himself posed the question: “Why therefore was he unable to attain a prominence higher than that which he did?”⁶⁰ Mason summed up Douglas as one “dedicated to the society of his time, yet ironically from this society, he received disappointment in political life and loneliness in his closing years.”⁶¹

This Thesis will attempt to show that Mason’s thesis of Douglas, as the flawed man in history, is inappropriate, and that if one could have interviewed Douglas towards the end of his life he would by and large have been seen to be satisfied and content with his achievements. After all, he was a man who achieved the highest political office in the land. He occupied a central role in the development of Queensland as a colony and was the leading administrator in both New Guinea and Torres Strait at a time when he was able to guide and shape their destinies. By any yardstick, Douglas’s life and achievements should be adjudged to have been successful; he was not a failure.

Another substantial study of Douglas is an unpublished paper given

⁶⁰ Mason, p. ii

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 207

by his granddaughter (Eve Douglas) to the Queensland Women's Historical Society at Newstead House, Brisbane on 9 November 1961.⁶² However, this paper, while well-researched and drawing on the granddaughter's extensive collection of Douglas family correspondence, is little more than hagiography. Another grandson, Dr Robert Douglas, also wrote an unpublished paper on Douglas's life, presenting it in a lecture delivered to the Australian Town Criers at Maryborough on 2 September 1993.⁶³ Although based on Eve Douglas's paper, it contained additional information and was written in a less adulating style. The late Professor Roger Joyce wrote the entry on Douglas in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, which was published in 1972.⁶⁴ Joyce was Mason's supervisor at the University of Queensland and much of the material he used appears to have been obtained from that thesis.

But what about the background? The published material on the history of colonial Queensland in the 1860s and 1870s is surprisingly sparse. Most works accord this particular period less space than say, the creation of the colony in the late 1850s and the political and historical events of the 1880s and 1890s. They are more likely to deal well with specific aspects of Queensland history such as race relations.⁶⁵ The exception is Charles Bernays's publication,

⁶² Eve Douglas, *The Hon. John Douglas C.M.G. 1828-1904*. Brisbane, 1961

⁶³ Robert Douglas. *The Hon. John Douglas, CMG*. Unpublished, 1993

⁶⁴ Roger Bilbrough Joyce. "Douglas, John (1828-1904.)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 4. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp. 89-93

⁶⁵ The major works falling into this category are Ross Fitzgerald. *A History of Queensland: From the Dreaming to 1915*; W. Frederick Morrison. *The Aldine History of Queensland*, vol

Queensland Politics during Sixty (1859-1919) Years,⁶⁶ which covers this period in detail, and is an invaluable source of information on the political history of the colony. Therefore, much of the present information for Queensland during this period has necessarily come from newspapers, (especially the *Brisbane Courier*), archival⁶⁷ and parliamentary sources.⁶⁸

Fortunately, there are several good regional histories to supplement the newspaper accounts in Douglas's time on the Darling Downs. Foremost amongst these are the publications by Maurice French⁶⁹ and Douglas Waterson,⁷⁰ while a sound overview of the district is provided by Joseph McKey.⁷¹

The only useful publication when researching the time spent by Douglas in the Rockhampton district was that by J.T.S Bird published

1. Sydney, Aldine Publishing Co., 1888; Murphy and Joyce, (1978); Queensland Government. *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based upon Official Information*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1909; Ross Johnston (1988); W Ross Johnston. *The Call of the Land: A History of Queensland to the Present Day*. Brisbane, Jacaranda Press, 1982; Raphael Cilento. *Triumph in the Tropics: A Historical Sketch of Queensland*. Brisbane, Smith & Paterson, 1959; Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin. *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland: A History of Exclusion, Exploitation and extermination*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1988

⁶⁶ Bernays

⁶⁷ The New South Wales, Commonwealth and Queensland Government Archives.

⁶⁸ New South Wales and Queensland Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Council Journals, Votes and Proceedings and Government Gazettes.

⁶⁹ Maurice French. *A Pastoral Romance: The Tribulation and Triumph of Squatterdom*. Toowoomba, UCSQ Press, 1990; French (1992)

⁷⁰ D. B. Waterson. *Squatter, Selector, and Storekeeper: A History of the Darling Downs 1859-93*. Sydney, Sydney University Press, 1968

⁷¹ Joseph McKey. *Dawn Over the Darling Downs*. Warwick, The Warwick Newspaper Ltd., 1977

in 1904.⁷² Therefore, most of the information on Douglas for this period came from the pages of the *Rockhampton Bulletin & Central Queensland Advertiser*.

Information on Douglas's parliamentary career in Queensland is readily available and was mostly obtained from the *Brisbane Courier*, Bernays, official Queensland publications,⁷³ and, for the period of Douglas's premiership, from the Queensland State Archives and Great Britain Colonial Office documents available in Australia through the National Library of Australia Australian Joint Copying microfilm project.

Other useful minor sources of information on Douglas and his times included a 1997 PhD thesis on Queensland parliamentary history by Justin Harding;⁷⁴ an article on some nineteenth century Queensland parliamentarians by Isobel Hannah;⁷⁵ a monograph on Sir Samuel Griffith by R. B. Joyce;⁷⁶ Clem Lack's article on Queensland representatives in London;⁷⁷ another article on the same topic by

⁷² J.T.S. Bird. *The Early History of Rockhampton Dealing Chiefly with Events up till 1870*. Rockhampton, Morning Bulletin, 1904

⁷³ Such as the *Queensland Blue Books*, *Queensland Government Gazettes*, *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* and *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*.

⁷⁴ John William Justin Harding. *Crises, Deadlocks and Dissolutions: A Constitutional and Parliamentary History of Queensland, 1859-1922*. PhD. thesis. James Cook University, 1997

⁷⁵ Hannah

⁷⁶ Joyce (1984)

⁷⁷ Clem Lack. "Colonial Representation in the Nineteenth Century, part II. Some Queensland and Other Australian Agents-General." *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 8 no 1, 1965-66, pp. 81-82

Wayne O'Donohue;⁷⁸ and two articles on nineteenth-century Queensland politics and politicians by Alan Morrison.⁷⁹

Douglas's time in British New Guinea is barely mentioned in secondary sources. Information on this period comes from microfilmed copies of original archival materials located in Port Moresby and held in the National Archives of Australia, correspondence with the Colonial Office and reports on the protectorate written by him.⁸⁰

The history of Torres Strait in the late nineteenth century is well documented, especially by Stephen Mullins,⁸¹ Regina Ganter,⁸² Jeremy Beckett,⁸³ John Singe,⁸⁴ and Alfred Cort Haddon.⁸⁵ Also invaluable for the information and insights they contained are the annual reports produced by Douglas in his capacity as government resident of Thursday Island and included in the *Queensland Votes*

⁷⁸ Wayne O'Donohue. "First Agents-General: Development of the Office in London, 1860-1876." *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol 11 no 3, 1981-82, p. 59; Lack, pp. 81-82

⁷⁹ Morrison (1952); Allan Morrison. "Some Lesser Members of Parliament in Queensland." *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 6 no 3, 1960-61, pp. 557-79

⁸⁰ These were included in *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*. For more details, see the "Reports and Publications by John Douglas" in my Bibliography.

⁸¹ Steve Mullins. *Torres Strait: A History of Colonial Occupation and Culture Contact 1864-1897*. Rockhampton, Central Queensland University Press, 1994

⁸² Regina Ganter. *The Pearl Shellers of the Torres Strait: Resource Use, Development & Decline, 1860s -1960s*. Melbourne, Penguin, 1994

⁸³ Jeremy Beckett. *Torres Strait Islanders: Custom and Colonialism*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987

⁸⁴ John, Singe. *The Torres Strait: People and History*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1989

⁸⁵ Alfred Cort Haddon, ed. *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits*. 6 vols. New York, Johnson Reprint, 1971

and Proceedings.⁸⁶ Newspapers consulted for additional information on this period included *The Carpentarian*, and the *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*.

Fortunately, a substantial amount of the Douglas's family correspondence has survived. These letters help illuminate the man and his times. Over 200 Douglas family letters, a scrapbook and other documents are held in the John Oxley Library in Brisbane, while over 100 additional letters in the possession of his descendants were generously made available to me.⁸⁷

While much material about or by Douglas does exist, it is fragmented and scattered, with little of it published. Bringing it all together in this thesis will allow the study of a significant Queensland identity in the development of a frontier colony. It is to be hoped that this thesis on Douglas will make an important contribution to both Australian and Queensland historiography.

To understand Douglas's contribution to Queensland, it is necessary first to understand his character and the formative influences on them. As alluded to previously, religion was central to this, for

⁸⁶ These were included in *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*. For more details, see the "Reports and Publications by John Douglas" in my Bibliography.

⁸⁷ These papers I have called the "Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers" and the McCourt Papers after their owners. The McCourt Papers were not available to Mason. Additional official and personal correspondence by Douglas held in archives and libraries throughout Australia and Great Britain, including a wealth of official material in the Queensland State Archives, was also examined. Deciphering this material was challenging. As Douglas himself once accurately observed, "I am afraid I write a shocking bad hand." (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 1 September 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers)

Douglas was a deeply religious man, one whose faith sustained him through even the worst adversity. While it is true that he never became a longstanding premier, a governor, received a knighthood, had a presentable wife or accumulated wealth, these things, while important, were not central to his life.

What was important to him was his intense and passionate desire to live his life in accordance with his religious beliefs, to help those less fortunate than himself in accordance with his liberal tenets, to provide the best education for his sons, and to participate fully and selflessly in the life of the community he lived in. By using these yardsticks rather than the more conventional ones of political and financial success, it is evident that Douglas did indeed live a full and productive life. As his son Edward wrote to his fiancée after his father had died:

I have seen virtues exemplified in him that I never hope or expect to see equaled by any man. You may think that I exaggerate but you would not wonder if you had known as I have known that Christ like enduring patience and pity that filled his whole soul and that unflinching determination which fought and overcame difficulties which would have taxed the most valiant heart.⁸⁸

This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that Douglas was not a 'tragic man' of history, but rather one who, through his faith and liberal convictions, rose above adversity and meaningfully contributed to Queensland society.

An examination of Douglas's life affords us an insight into an energetic, accomplished, erudite, and compassionate man. While his intellectual curiosity, thirst for knowledge and wide-ranging interests marked him as a Renaissance man, he also had many failings, most noticeably that of extreme obstinacy. His life will be shown to be one of complexity and contradiction, leavened by a mixture of accomplishment and failure. Although a product of his time and class, he evidenced traits at variance with them. Douglas was a member of the British aristocracy, his uncle the Marquess of Queensberry, considered "one of the finest cultured gentlemen of his day,"⁸⁹ yet the nephew comfortably interacted with all strata and classes of society. In the 1840s, he received a superior education, attending Edinburgh Academy, Rugby School, and Durham University. He understood the importance of education, especially in the advancement of those less fortunate than himself, and he attempted wherever possible to ensure that educational opportunities were available to them.

His life reflected the complexity of his personality and the role he carved out for himself in the Australian colonies. Although involved with the Anglican Church all his life, his children were brought up as Catholics. While a man of tireless energy and vigour who served his country far beyond the call of duty, he was forced to continue working long after most others in similar positions were able to retire. Despite

⁸⁸ Edward Douglas to Annette Power, 25 July 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

⁸⁹ Thomas Hall. *The Early History of Warwick District and Pioneers of the Darling Downs*.

being born into wealth, he went bankrupt and struggled financially for most of his adult life. Moreover, as a 'squatter' and large-scale landowner, he consistently opposed the rights and privileges afforded them.

Raised as a 'Victorian gentleman' and an aristocrat, his beliefs, centred as they were on liberalism, meant that his political home was on the liberal side of politics.⁹⁰ As this thesis will demonstrate, this was due in large part to his religious upbringing and sense of duty and responsibility inculcated in him by his family and his schooling. He was an experienced politician who gained the highest office in the land yet lacked the ruthlessness needed to hold on to it, being considered of "too yielding a nature to be entrusted with the duties of public office."⁹¹

Douglas was a product of the best in Victorian society and ideals, and his deep religious convictions, solid moral conscience and unwavering ethical standards, marked him as a Christian in the true nineteenth-century meaning of the term. Douglas, as Bishop White observed:

was a man in whose heart dwelt truth and justice, religion and charity. He was no mere name of a Christian, but a devout and regular communicant, one who lived by what

Toowoomba, Robertson and Provan Press, 1920, p. 34

⁹⁰ He once referred to himself as 'soundly Liberal.' (Mr. Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 1876, p. 20)

⁹¹ W. Frederick Morrison, p. 180

he believed, and whose belief was his life.⁹²

Nevertheless, like all complex figures Douglas had his flaws. He could be tendentious,⁹³ and was widely known for his dogmatic nature, extreme stubbornness, and fierce independence. However, these were offset by his charisma, charm and personality.⁹⁴

Douglas lived his life according to Christian moral and religious principles,⁹⁵ informed by the highest ideals of liberalism and a deep commitment to service. These beliefs and values sustained him

⁹² The *Carpentarian*, vol 4, no. 16, 1 October 1904

⁹³ Douglas was once described as one who “cut blocks with a razor.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1868, p. 2)

⁹⁴ As Douglas’s son informed his fiancée on his father’s death: “Every one who came in contact with him were drawn towards him by that frank and almost boyish playfulness and that delightful charm of manner, always serene and dignified carrying himself as a natural leader of men.” (Edward Douglas to Annette Power, 25 July 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers)

⁹⁵ As Douglas instructed his son Edward; “Build a life of spiritual contemplation which will serve both body and soul ... keep your mind open to all influences. Commence with yourself and wait patiently for the guidance and instruction which will come to you. Serve your maker and serve no masters.” (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 11 June 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/9)

through both the highs and lows of a long and productive life, giving it meaning throughout. Far from being a tragic figure, his inner strength continually nourished his being while frequently inspiring those who met him. In faithfully “serving his maker and no masters,”⁹⁶ Douglas did his best to leave the world a better place. This thesis analyses Douglas’s life - his achievements and failures - through the forces and influences that motivated and shaped him.

⁹⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 11 June 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/9

Chapter 2: Early Years, 1828-51

Douglas family history

John Douglas, descended from a prominent Scottish family, was ordained to become a gentleman and an aristocrat, being born in an era when pedigree and privilege determined one's upbringing and future. Born in London on 6 March 1828,⁹⁷ his father was Henry Alexander Douglas (1781-1837) and his paternal grandfather was Sir William Douglas (1731-83), 4th Baronet of Kelhead.⁹⁸

His maternal line was equally distinguished. However, this side of the family had suffered financial misfortune after his great-grandfather, Sir Robert Dalzell the 6th Earl of Carnwath and a loyal Stuart, had his lands and title confiscated after rallying to the cause of the Old Pretender in 1715 during the first Jacobite rising at Lochmarben.⁹⁹ Douglas's mother, Elizabeth Dalzell, was born on 20 October 1792, the daughter of Robert Dalzell (1755-1808.)

The Douglas clan has a long and distinguished history in Scotland,

⁹⁷ "Births." *The Times* 7 March 1828. Douglas was baptised in St John's Church, Hampstead, London, on 11 April 1828. (*St. John's Church Baptismal Register*, 1828, p. 7, no. 48. Copy supplied by Catherine McCourt and in the possession of the author)

⁹⁸ Eve Douglas, p. 3. Sir William, who died in 1783, was member of parliament for Dumfries Burghs, 1768-80. He is not the same person as his namesake, William Douglas (1725-1810), 4th Duke of Queensberry. For more information on Douglas's grandfather, see "Douglas, William." In, Lewis Namier and John Brooke, eds. *The House of Commons, 1754-1790*. London, History of Parliament Trust, 1964, vol 2, pp. 332-33

⁹⁹ Mason, p. 2; "Deaths." *Durham University Journal*, vol 16 no 8, 23 November 1904, p. 97; Robert Douglas. *The Hon. John Douglas*, CMG. Lecture delivered to the Australian Town Criers at Maryborough, 2 September 1993, p. 1: James Balfour, ed. *The Scots Peerage*, vol 8. Edinburgh, David Douglas, 1910, p. 415

beginning with William De Douglas (1174-1213.) Douglas's immediate lineage descended from the Queensberry line and whose title originated with William Douglas (died 1639), when he was created Earl of Queensberry in 1633. His grandson William (1637-95) was created Lord Douglas of Kinmont and first Duke of Queensberry on 3 February 1683.¹⁰⁰

Douglas's great grandfather was Sir John Douglas (1708-78), 3rd Baronet of Kelhead who was member of parliament for Dumfriesshire (1741-47.)¹⁰¹ Military men were well represented in the Douglas family tree including Lieutenant General Stewart Douglas, General Sir James Dawes Douglas, Admiral Sir John Erskine Douglas and Rear Admiral Stair Douglas.¹⁰² However, John Douglas was not military minded, often saying, "those who live by the sword shall die by the sword."¹⁰³ Douglas's father was a merchant associated with the British East India Company. 1810 he had seen his eldest brother, Sir Charles, inherit the Marquisate of Queensberry

¹⁰⁰ "Queensberry, Earls, Marquesses, and Dukes of." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 14th ed. Chicago, 1969, vol 18, p. 952; Debrett's *Peerage and Baronetage*. Australian ed. London, Debrett's Peerage Ltd, 1980, p. 956

¹⁰¹ *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Peerage Baronetage and Knightage*. 104th ed. London, Burke's Peerage Limited, 1967, p. 2052: "Douglas, Sir John." In, Lewis Namier and John Brooke, eds. *The House of Commons, 1754-1790*. London, History of Parliament Trust, 1964, vol 1, p. 618

¹⁰² For a detailed genealogy of the Douglas clan, see appendix 7.

¹⁰³ Robert Douglas, pp. 3-4. Neither did John Douglas relish war, once observing that "defence as a preparation for that most hateful of all necessities – the arbitrament of force – is no child's play." (John Douglas. *Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1892-3*. *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1896, p. 510.) He also remarked, in connection with war, that "I am a man of peace, I hate soldiering." ("Commonwealth and New Year Celebrations." *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 5 January 1901, p. 2)

to become the sixth Marquess.¹⁰⁴

Douglas's family

John Douglas was thus a fully-fledged member of the British aristocracy, with titled relatives and ancestors liberally represented on both sides of the family. His eight brothers and two sisters also lived industrious lives as members of the British elite, pursuing careers in the military, commerce, politics and the Church. Several of his brothers pursued these in the British colonies, as would John Douglas. As the second youngest of eight brothers, Douglas probably felt there were more opportunities for him there than at home. It may also be that his father's career, first as an employee of the East India Company, and then as a merchant and principal of Douglas, Anderson and Co., gave John and his siblings a sense of adventure and an appreciation of the possibilities offered by a life abroad.¹⁰⁵ Certainly, John Douglas moved around frequently, with many of his places of residence being in remote locations far from the luxuries of civilisation.

It is worthwhile to have an understanding of how Douglas's siblings made their way in the world, how several of them followed their father's footsteps overseas, entering the professions or the military, and that by his 50th birthday, only two of them were still alive.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Douglas, p. 1

¹⁰⁵ By the time Douglas was born, his father was a principal in *Douglas, Anderson and Co.*, a merchant firm located in Winchester House, Broad Street, London. (*Post Office London Directory*, 1829, p. 125, 1830, p. 117 & 1831, p. 115; *Pigot's Directory*, 1828, p. 204)

John's eldest brother, William Henry Douglas (1813-36) followed his father into the British East India Company and died in Java aged only 23. Hugh Maxwell Douglas (1824-63) became a captain with the Bombay Artillery in the Indian army.¹⁰⁶ Henry Alexander Douglas (1821-75) gained a Doctorate in Divinity and was appointed Anglican bishop of Bombay in 1869.¹⁰⁷ Robert Johnstone Douglas (1814-66) married his cousin, Lady Jane Douglas, the daughter of the sixth Marquess of Queensberry. Charles Douglas (1820-45) was a lieutenant in the 2nd Madras European Regiment.¹⁰⁸ John Dalzell Douglas died as a young child in 1819 aged only three and Edward Octavius Douglas (1830-90) migrated with John Douglas to New South Wales in 1851, but returned to Scotland in 1859.¹⁰⁹ Grace Johnstone Douglas died as a young girl,¹¹⁰ while Eliza Douglas (1822-1903) married John Campbell Shairp, professor of poetry at Oxford.¹¹¹ John Douglas was the seventh son, so his parents were

¹⁰⁶ Details supplied from a biographical card index to officers of the East India Company and Indian Armies held at the National Army Museum, London.

¹⁰⁷ Thompson Cooper. *Men of the Time: A Dictionary of Contemporaries, Containing Biographical Notices of Eminent Characters of Both Sexes*. 8th ed. London, Routledge, 1872, p. 306

¹⁰⁸ Details supplied from a biographical card index to officers of the East India Company and Indian Armies held at the National Army Museum, London.

¹⁰⁹ Eve Douglas and Mason both give Edward's return to Scotland as 1861. (Eve Douglas, p. 7; Mason, p. 43.) However, he married his cousin, Hannah Charlotte Scott-Douglas, in Scotland on 3 November 1859. (*Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Peerage Baronetage and Knightage*, p. 2053)

¹¹⁰ Grace was baptised on 18 March 1826, and died before 1837.

¹¹¹ Burke's, p. 2054; Mason, p. 2; Eve Douglas, pp. 3-4. Shairp was born on 30 July 1819, at Houstoun, West Lothian, and died on 18 September 1885 in Ormsary, Argyllshire. His education included the University of Glasgow (1836-39) and Balliol College, Oxford (1840.) He was assistant master at Rugby, then Professor of Latin at St. Andrews (1861), Principal of St. Andrews University (1868-85) and Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1877-85.) The

relatively old when he was born; his father was 47 years of age and his mother 36.

Douglas orphaned

In 1837, aged nine, John Douglas had his young and sheltered life turned upside down when he became an orphan. His father died in London on 16 March aged 56, as did his mother later on that year, aged 45.¹¹² John, along with his younger brother, Edward Octavius, was taken, in a mail coach, to Scotland and brought up by two of his paternal aunts at Glenstuart House, Kinmount Estate, near Annan in Dumfriesshire, Scotland.¹¹³ The estate belonged to his father's brothers, the sixth and seventh Marquesses of Queensberry, who lived close by at Kinmount House. Kinmount was a vast estate comprising 30,000 acres of prime agricultural land.¹¹⁴ At the end of that year, the 6th Marquess of Queensberry, Sir Charles Douglas

University of Edinburgh conferred a LL.D. on him in 1884.

¹¹² Robert Douglas, p. 2; *Dumfries and Galloway Courier*, 29 March 1837. The exact date of death for Douglas's mother is not known, but it was before August 1837. Douglas's father left only £20 in his estate, for his company had failed the previous year. (*Public Record Office, England*, PROB 6/214, 1838, p. 328; Register of Commissions of Bankruptcy. *Public Record Office, England*, B4/46; "Money-Market and City Intelligence." *The Times*, 28 November 1836, p. 5, 14 December 1836, p. 2 & 18 February 1837, p. 6)

¹¹³ Mason, p. 2; "Commonwealth and New Year Celebrations." *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 5 January 1901, p. 2; Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 24 September 1894. McCourt Papers

¹¹⁴ Robert Douglas, p. 2. Kinmount Estate originated as a 12th century charter granted to the Carlyle family by William de Brus. The Douglas family had owned it since 1733 and the present Kinmount House was built in 1812 by the 6th Marquess of Queensberry to replace the previous seat, which was destroyed by fire at the turn of the 18th century. The Queensberrys sold the house to a cotton manufacturer in 1897 and its current owner is the former Olympic middle-distance athlete Steve Ovett. (*Kinmount House - an Historic Setting*. Internet file, www.britaliaplus.com/scotland/78bti.htm)

(1777-1837) died and was succeeded by his brother John Douglas (1779-1856), who became the 7th Marquess of Queensberry.¹¹⁵

This close association with the Queensberrys over the next six years¹¹⁶ enabled Douglas to grow up in an environment where he experienced stability, security and a level of material comfort far exceeding what his own parents were able to provide before their deaths.¹¹⁷ This upbringing provided a fertile field where his self-confidence, coupled with a strong belief in his own abilities, were nurtured and developed. Douglas's concern for his fellow man, which found ongoing expression in his concepts of duty and service towards them, was facilitated by his aunts' nurturing environment at Kinmount Estate. It is perhaps not surprising that throughout his life Douglas was active in supporting and assisting children who were destitute, abandoned and orphaned. As an orphan himself, he recognised his duty to help those who had suffered the same fate and whose families were unable to provide the same support and opportunities enjoyed by him.

Edinburgh Academy

Douglas attended the Edinburgh Academy, a school founded to

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 2

¹¹⁶ Eve Douglas, p. 3; Mason, p. 3

¹¹⁷ An example of the wealth of the family was that in 1858 the 9th Marquess of Queensberry, John Sholto Douglas, inherited 30,000 acres with a rent-roll of at least £20,000 per annum. (Alfred Douglas. *The Autobiography of Lord Alfred Douglas*. New ed. New York, Books For Libraries Press, 1931 reprinted 1970, p. 3)

stimulate classical learning in Edinburgh.¹¹⁸ Here, taught by a Mr Cummings,¹¹⁹ Douglas received a classical education that, in the sixth class, when aged 15, consisted of Greek, Latin, Ancient Geography, English, Greek Testament, Arithmetic, Geometry, Algebra and French.¹²⁰ This classical education broadened Douglas's horizons and enriched his adult life, for he frequently impressed his critics with his worldly knowledge and grasp of complex and often abstract issues.

In 1843, Douglas was awarded a school prize for "Best Reciter," but otherwise did not appear to have distinguished himself academically.¹²¹ These reciting skills were to stand him in good stead throughout his public life; he was once described as a man who "is rich in ideas, and eloquent to express them."¹²² Nonetheless, his presentation could leave something to be desired, with a contemporary deriding Douglas as possessing "rounded periods and sonorous voice" giving "the impression that he was always pronouncing the benediction."¹²³

Towards the end of his life when reminiscing of his time at the

¹¹⁸ Mason, p. 3; *The Edinburgh Academy: A Brief History*. Internet file (www.cybersurf.co/academy/prospect/histgen.htm), p. 1

¹¹⁹ W. T. W. Morgan. "John Douglas: An early Durham Graduate in Australia." *Durham University Journal*, vol 81 no 1, December 1988, p. 15

¹²⁰ *Annual Report by the Directors of the Edinburgh Academy to the Proprietors at their General Meeting*. Edinburgh, The Academy, 1843, pp. 14-15 (Copy held at The Academy.)

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34; *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette* 12 September 1903. Douglass prize on this occasion was "a book of Campbell's poems."

¹²² *Brisbane Courier*, 3 September 1869, p. 2

¹²³ Bernays, pp. 198 & 201

Academy, Douglas recalled that he:

had a great liking for history, and consequently for one of the teachers, a Mr. Cummings, who would at times read history to the class. He was also induced by one of the teachers to go out for walks and recite poetry on the way, to shout out to the hills of Cumberland.¹²⁴

Douglas possessed a fascination for history and geography that he retained throughout his life. As a parliamentarian, he frequently inserted into debate relevant examples from the experiences of other countries and cultures. He had a wide-ranging knowledge of geography and exploration and took every opportunity to satisfy his interest in this area through his own travels and research.

Rugby school

In August 1843, Douglas travelled by coach to attend Rugby School, in Warwickshire.¹²⁵ Rugby, an established and distinguished public school, was “an endowed place of education, of old standing, to which the sons of gentlemen resort in considerable numbers.”¹²⁶

The public boarding school system had for centuries prepared boys for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge but by the early nineteenth century the system was in disarray, with misapplied

¹²⁴ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette* 12 September 1903

¹²⁵ W. Morgan, p. 15; Letter to Eve Douglas from Rugby School, 22 July 1961. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/D; “Commonwealth and New Year Celebrations.” *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 5 January 1901, p. 2. Douglas was a boarder at School House and graduated in 1846.

¹²⁶ Michael McCrum. *Thomas Arnold Headmaster: A Reassessment*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 14. Rugby school was founded in 1567.

endowments, inefficient organisation, loose and uneasy discipline, indefensible customs, bullying, and an environment where boys, rather than masters, set the tone of the school.¹²⁷ The system was in urgent need of reform, so that its essential characteristics could be retained and many of its abuses overcome.¹²⁸ Rugby was revitalised and reformed under the headmastership of Thomas Arnold from 1828 to 1842, when he remade it into a school for 'gentlemen.'¹²⁹ The effect of Arnold's educational reforms on Rugby and therefore on the young Douglas's life were profound, conferring lifelong benefits.

Arnold believed in using the study of classics as an introduction to the study of living problems. He was a liberal by temperament, and developed methods of teaching to stimulate interest and free inquiry.¹³⁰ He achieved this by elevating a liberal education from a:

totally meaningless ritual for young aristocrats into the subject-matter of competitive advancement ... for middle-class boys ... to act as bell-weepers guiding other boys from the commercial middle class into a sanitised version of the territorial aristocracy.¹³¹

Arnold used the prefectorial system to raise the discipline and moral

¹²⁷ Briggs, pp. 148-49

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150

¹²⁹ *Rugby School*. Internet file (www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/edrugby.htm), p. 1; Thomas Arnold. Internet file (www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/edarnold.htm), pp. 1-2; "Arnold, Thomas." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 15th ed. Chicago, 1993, vol 1, p. 581

¹³⁰ E. L. Woodward. *The Age of Reform*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1949, pp. 466-67

¹³¹ Christopher Harvie. Revolution and the Rule of Law (1789-1851) in, Kenneth O'Morgan, ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 448

tone of the school, and made its chapel a centre of school life.¹³²

Above all, as an Anglican priest with a doctorate in Divinity, Arnold stressed the moral aspects of life.¹³³ His aim was to make his school a “place of really Christian education.” What he wanted was “first, religious and moral principle; secondly, gentlemanly conduct: thirdly, intellectual ability.”¹³⁴ As Squire Brown remarked, when he sent his son Tom Brown to Rugby School; “What is he sent to school for? ... If he’ll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a Christian, that’s all I want.”¹³⁵ As will be shown throughout this thesis, this sentiment encapsulated the life John Douglas lived in Australia. The English public school system also strove to inculcate in its pupils the “ideal of responsible service,”¹³⁶ and Douglas’s adult life certainly reflected this.

Durham University

Douglas should have proceeded to Oxford University after leaving Rugby in 1846.¹³⁷ However, as the Oxford Movement,¹³⁸ which

¹³² Woodward, p. 467

¹³³ Lytton Strachey. *Eminent Victorians*. London, Collins, 1918, p. 174

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 178-79. *Tom Browns Schooldays* was a novel by Thomas Hughes, first published in 1857 and based on his experiences as a student at Rugby during the Arnold era. Douglas himself said that his experiences at Rugby were similar to those recorded in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*. (“The Quetta Club.” *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 12 September 1903)

¹³⁶ Briggs, p. 153

¹³⁷ Nothing is known of Douglas’s academic achievements at Rugby, as the records have not survived.

¹³⁸ Robert Douglas, p. 3; Jones (1904), p. 25. Indeed, Caroline Douglas, the wife of Archibald William Douglas, the 8th Marquis of Queensberry and John Douglas’s first cousin,

sought to bring about a return of the Church of England to the High-Church ideals of the later seventeenth century, was active there, his family sent him instead to an “uncontaminated” establishment, Durham University.¹³⁹

Durham University was established in 1832 under the auspices of the Bishop of Durham in the Anglican Church’s hope that if Oxford should “fail in its maintenance of the faith, Durham would still bear witness to the divine truth of the Catholic tradition.”¹⁴⁰ The following year Durham became the first English university in the nineteenth century to institute a specific course in theology, one designed to improve the standard of theological attainment of ordination candidates.¹⁴¹

On 24 October 1846 Douglas was admitted to Durham University.¹⁴² He enrolled in the degree of Bachelor of Arts and entered Hadfield College, a residential college within the university.¹⁴³ Here he studied Latin, Greek, Euclid, Theology, Divinity and Ancient History, and played cricket.¹⁴⁴ In the mid nineteenth century a university

had converted to Catholicism.

¹³⁹ Durham University was established because: “The great and increasing population of the north of England, and its remoteness from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, long pointed out the expediency of establishing in that part of the kingdom an institution which should secure to its inhabitants the advantages of a sound yet not expensive academical education.” (C. E. Whiting. *The University of Durham 1832-1932*. London, the Sheldon Press, 1932, p. 32)

¹⁴⁰ Whiting, pp. 31-32

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 259. This was the Licence in Theology.

¹⁴² Robert Douglas, p. 3; W. Morgan, p. 15

¹⁴³ Mason, p. 10

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11

education was something only the aristocracy and a few privileged others could aspire to. As in all university degrees of the era, theology and study of the classics were prominent. Religious studies provided the young Douglas with an historical and theoretical underpinning to his devoutly religious observance, while his classical education instilled the thoughts and ideals of the eminent philosophers and statesmen of the ancient world. These influences were to reveal themselves throughout his life in his many published speeches and writings. Likewise, Douglas's mastery of Latin and Greek facilitated the clarity and directness of his thoughts and utterances, furthering his consummate command of the English language.

Influence of social change

While Douglas's schooling nurtured and developed his character and values, the industrial revolution and resultant urbanisation marked the first half of the nineteenth century as a period of profound social change and development in England. Douglas was deeply influenced and affected by changes resulting from the rise of the middle class and the revolutionary climate created by the dissatisfaction of the newly urbanised working class. While many of the new professional class tried to emulate the aristocracy by striving for status and upward mobility, others detested the 'aristocratic ideal' of social, religious and political domination based on rank, prescription and tradition. As their numbers and influence grew, they

successfully expressed their opposition through specific demands such as the abolition of the Corn Laws. The aristocratic elite were forced to recognise that the objectives of the middle classes could not be ignored and so they were eventually accommodated within the existing social system.¹⁴⁵

In particular, Douglas was influenced by the emergence of liberalism, which was a commitment to “freedom as a method and policy in government, as an organising principle in society and as a way of life for the individual and the community” as a social and political force in early Victorian England.¹⁴⁶

This was an age of reform beginning with the *Reform Bill* of 1832 which accorded the emerging middle classes a share of responsible government through a redistribution of seats.¹⁴⁷ This was followed by the 1833 *Factory Act*, the reform of local government in towns, the new Poor Laws of 1834, repeal of the restrictive Corn Laws in 1846, the passing of the *Ten Hour Act* in 1847 and the influence of the Chartist movement.¹⁴⁸ These reforms led to profound change in England and its gradual transformation from a society dominated by the landed classes towards one that represented the ascendancy of

¹⁴⁵ Richard Brown. *Church and State in Modern Britain 1700-1850*. London, Routledge, 1991, pp. 407-22

¹⁴⁶ Mason, p. 9: “Liberalism.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 14th ed. Chicago, 1969, vol 13, pp. 1017-18

¹⁴⁷ James Hagan, ed. *Modern History and its Themes*. Melbourne, Longman, 1978, pp. 66-71

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-76: Dorothy Marshall. *Industrial England, 1776-1851*. London, Routledge & Kegan Hall, 1973, p. 168

enterprise, industry, and the rise of the middle class.¹⁴⁹

This growth and development of the middle class led to their gaining greater political and financial status. The degree of social eminence flowing from this had an impact on the aristocracy, who were increasingly amenable to inter-marrying with the new rich, while the landed gentry were more readily prepared to accept these middle class commoners into country society.

The public school system, which John Douglas attended, played a central role in this process, as representatives of the old families now mixed with the sons of the new middle classes, for the 1840s were a period where there was a steady growth in the number of middle class boys being sent to public schools. They went because the public school system was the surest way for these sons of the middle class to assimilate the manners and customs of the classes above them, hopefully leaving as 'gentlemen.'¹⁵⁰ Douglas, who came from an impeccable aristocratic background - to all intents and purposes raised as the son of a Marquess - exemplified this process throughout his life.

¹⁴⁹ H. R. Crowie. *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Modern World*. Rev. ed. Melbourne, Nelson, 1986, p. 41

¹⁵⁰ Asa Briggs. *Victorian People*. London, Penguin, 1965, pp. 152-3; Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy. *The Old School Tie: The Phenomenon of the English Public School*. New York, Viking Press, 1977, pp. 124-25. The poet Matthew Arnold expressed this change most eloquently; "It is only in England that this beneficial salutary inter-mixture of classes takes place. Look at the bottle-merchant's son, and the Plantagenet being brought up side by side. None of your absurd separations and seventy-two quarterings here. Very likely young Bottles will end by being a lord himself."

The education that Douglas received at Rugby and Durham developed and reinforced his religious outlook, resulting in him becoming a deeply religious man and a devout Anglican. Religion was central to his family and his oldest brother, Henry Alexander, became the Anglican Bishop of Bombay.¹⁵¹ The Christian atmosphere and sense of duty so emphasised at Rugby School reinforced this Christian upbringing, for Arnold maintained that it was not necessary:

that this should be a school for three hundred or even one hundred boys, but it is necessary that it should be a school of Christian gentleman.¹⁵²

Douglas's 1849 diary,¹⁵³ which detailed his experiences at Durham University and provide us with a glimpse of what he considered to be important in his life, recorded for posterity the content of virtually every sermon preached on Sunday, in an era when going to church twice on the Sabbath was the norm.¹⁵⁴ It also recorded his general reading matter, with spiritual and religious texts such as *Aids to reflection* by Dr. Martins featuring prominently.¹⁵⁵ In 1850 Douglas taught Sunday School and came close to emulating his brother's calling and living in "some comfortable English parsonage", but instead chose to live what he would later refer to as "an active and

¹⁵¹ Robert Douglas, p. 3

¹⁵² Quoted in Briggs, p. 151

¹⁵³ John Douglas. "1849 Diary." Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State of Library of Queensland, OM 89/3/A

¹⁵⁴ Mason, p. 5; Whiting, p. 265

¹⁵⁵ Mason., p. 6

varied life.”¹⁵⁶

Douglas character and personality were shaped by his family’s aristocratic background and privileged position in society, the religious environment he grew up in, the quality of his education, and the impact of the changing society that was early Victorian England. His family background instilled in him his enduring moral and religious values, sense of duty, fair play, and gentlemanliness and a willingness to take responsibility for his conduct and actions.¹⁵⁷ The society he lived in was characterised by the emergence of liberalism as a social and political force. Influenced by this, he became a liberal and remained one all his life, his liberalism comprising the dual elements of a philosophy of freedom and a belief in progress.¹⁵⁸ Liberalism idealistically aspired to achieve a goal which espoused that:

as man is free, so too does he and his society progress.
Through this freedom and progress comes the social,
economic, moral, cultural and spiritual evolution of all
men.¹⁵⁹

From his years at Rugby, Douglas received the value of knowledge, the virtues of loyalty and moral courage, as well as the maturation of

¹⁵⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas 11 June 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/9

¹⁵⁷ Mason, pp. 9-10

¹⁵⁸ In 1883, Douglas told a public meeting “he had always advocated the principles of progress and liberality, and defied anyone to point out a single act of his which was not characterised by such principles.” (“Mr. Douglas at Drayton.” *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 26 September 1883)

¹⁵⁹ Mason, p. 10

his sense of duty and religious experience.¹⁶⁰ Rugby also developed his dominant characteristic - independence in both thought and action. This independence, along with his unshakeable principles and convictions, caused him much trouble throughout his life.

Douglas's peers frequently commented on this independence, his liberal philosophy and an unyielding commitment to his beliefs.

Known as "a hard-working man,"¹⁶¹ the *North Queensland Register* reflected that he was a gentleman who "bore a high reputation for honesty and integrity."¹⁶² Unfortunately, he was equally known for his extreme obstinacy.¹⁶³ Despite this, Douglas was recognised by his friends as having "the vision of a statesman, the soul of a patriot, and his honour always seemed to [be] something lustrous."¹⁶⁴

The family he was born into and the benefit of his education were also remarked upon. The noted pastoralist in New South Wales, James Macarthur, for instance, noted that: "Douglas is a man of old family and educated as a gentleman."¹⁶⁵ Gilbert White, the bishop of Carpentaria, remarked that Douglas was "a gentleman in the truest sense of the term,"¹⁶⁶ while Queensland political chronicler Charles

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Douglas also learnt to "take rubs with a good grace," which epitomised the "old English spirit" he was taught to cultivate at school. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1860, p. 2)

¹⁶¹ W. Frederick Morrison, p. 180

¹⁶² "Death of John Douglas." *North Queensland Register*. Supplement, 25 July 1904, p. 29

¹⁶³ Bernays, p. 57

¹⁶⁴ Browne (1927), p. 73

¹⁶⁵ J. B. Hirst. *The Strange Birth of Colonial Democracy: New South Wales 1848-1884*. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1988, p. 92

¹⁶⁶ Gilbert White. *Thirty Years in Tropical Australia*. London, Society for Promoting Christian

Bernays coined the apt phrase “Douglas the erudite,”¹⁶⁷ as befits “a man of very considerable learning.”¹⁶⁸ Spencer Browne, who worked as a journalist with Douglas on the *Brisbane Courier*, was of the opinion that:

his work was bright and scholarly, as became a Rugby boy and a university man.¹⁶⁹

In nineteenth century England, the term “Christian” signified moral values, especially selflessness.¹⁷⁰ Douglas amply demonstrated this selflessness throughout his life. Browne attested that from Douglas he “learnt the duty of real service to my country.”¹⁷¹ In his memoirs, Browne wrote about John Douglas and John Flood (a fellow journalist and editor) that, “they were above small things in working for Queensland. Where do I come in did not occur to either of them.”¹⁷² And most tellingly of all:

To me John Douglas ranks with the best of those who have led a government in this land of ours for absolute purity of motive and loftiness of aspiration. He had absolutely nothing to gain from his political service - at any rate, he gained nothing in the monetary sense. It always seems to me a great tribute to a political leader in a young country that his friends should be able to say;

Knowledge, 1919, p. 218

¹⁶⁷ Bernays, p. 28

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 41

¹⁶⁹ Browne (1927), p. 73

¹⁷⁰ McCrum, p. 4

¹⁷¹ Browne (1927), p. 73

¹⁷² Ibid.

'he died a poor man!'¹⁷³

Douglas graduated from Durham University in 1849, aged 21, with a Bachelor of Arts degree and a licentiate in Theology.¹⁷⁴ In the same year, he travelled extensively throughout England, including a long walking tour of the Lakes District. Later that year, he was a part-time tutor at Abbotsley as well as a Sunday school teacher.

Migrating to New South Wales

The young Douglas was now at a crossroads. Aged 22, he had recently graduated from university, something that few achieved in mid-Victorian England. Having decided, despite his strong religious beliefs, not to become a clergyman, he was forced to consider his future. As the seventh son in a large family, he could not rely on family wealth and property to sustain him indefinitely. He had a desire for travel and adventure, and the example of his late father and several of his elder brothers, who had fashioned careers within the British Empire, encouraged him towards a similar venture. He had also recently been jilted in love.¹⁷⁵ It was therefore not surprising that at the end of 1850 Douglas, along with his younger brother Edward, decided to migrate to the far-flung colony of New South Wales.¹⁷⁶ He,

¹⁷³ Ibid. Browne also made the pithy observation that Douglas "had abstained from; 'making good' financially - which is a contradiction in terms, while he was Premier."

¹⁷⁴ Mason, p. 14; W. Morgan, p. 15. The arts degree was conferred on him in October 1850.

¹⁷⁵ John Douglas to Edward Douglas 11 June 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/9

¹⁷⁶ Mason, p. 15

had been induced to come out to Australia by reading Haygarth's account of bush life in Australia and the description of pastoral enterprise and adventure on the Murray and Murrumbidgee. About the same time he and his brother [Edward] had met a Mr. Andrew Wauchope, who had lately returned from Australia, where he had a station in New England, and they thought it would be delightful to combine a pastoral and patriarchal life with the making of a little money, and the chance of visiting the old country when their flocks and herds had increased and multiplied.¹⁷⁷

Britain's loss was Australia's gain. Douglas's upbringing, religious beliefs and education would stand him in good stead, enabling him to lead an interesting, varied and fulfilling life in the Australian colonies. He was one of a breed of men, who, as Manning Clark observed:

apart from the incentive of material gain, the men who brought British civilisation to Australia were spurred on by two forces - their faith in God, and in the value of their civilisation.¹⁷⁸

As an immigrant to the Australian colonies, Douglas followed a route familiar to many of his colleagues. They came to "make a fortune ... or at least to better themselves in a pecuniary point of view."¹⁷⁹ Marjoribanks, a Scottish traveller in New South Wales in the 1840s,

¹⁷⁷ *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903. This book, written by Henry William Haygarth, was entitled *Recollections of Bush Life in Australia during a Period of Eight Years in the Interior* and published by John Murray in London in 1848.

¹⁷⁸ C. M. H. Clark. *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900*. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1955, p. XV

¹⁷⁹ George Nadel. *Australia's Colonial Culture: Ideas, Men and Institutions in Mid-*

believed that emigrants could be divided into two classes; “those who intend to settle permanently in their adopted country, and those who intend to return after having amassed a competency.” Among the latter were those whom Marjoribanks considered to be sons of good families who through the law of primogeniture or other causes had been deprived of the wealth appropriate to their station. These men were sent abroad by their families to recoup or make their fortunes, in preference to staying at home and being disgraced through application to industry or the lowering of the family name through comparative poverty.¹⁸⁰

This situation applied to John and Edward Douglas. Edward achieved his fortune and returned to Scotland before the decade was out,¹⁸¹ but John charted a different course and permanently settled in Australia. Not for Douglas the observation of another contemporary observer, G. C. Mundy, who remarked on:

the temporary sojourners who deliberately intended to make the colony a sponge from which to wring wealth, [who] often courted local popularity by most loudly declaiming about the stake they had in their ‘adopted country,’ while secretly counting the days until their departure.¹⁸²

Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia. Melbourne, Cheshire, 1957, p. 31

¹⁸⁰ A. Marjoribanks. *Travel in New South Wales*. London, 1847, p. 234, quoted in Nadel, p. 31

¹⁸¹ Edward Douglas married his cousin, Hannah Charlotte Scott-Douglas, an heiress worth some £90,000. (Blanche Nicholson Mitchell. *Blanche: An Australian Diary, 1858-1861*. Sydney, John Ferguson, 1980, p.238)

¹⁸² G. C. Mundy. *Our Antipodes; or Residence and Rambles in the Australian Colonies*

The Douglas brothers came to Australia with £2,000 in their possession, with which they hoped to buy a pastoral station.¹⁸³ Their adventure began when, on 23 April 1851, they sailed as unassisted passengers from Plymouth on board the *Malacca*.¹⁸⁴ And what an adventure it would have been! Voyages to the Antipodes were long, arduous and dangerous, with the possibility of shipwreck ever present.¹⁸⁵ Another traveller to the Antipodes, Rachel Henning, who sailed to New South Wales in 1854, remarked that, "If we ever survive to reach Australia, I am sure we shall stay there for life for I do not think I would undertake another voyage even to get home again."¹⁸⁶ Fortunately, the young Douglas brothers were not shipwrecked or plagued by illness and arrived in Sydney 96 days after their departure.¹⁸⁷

Douglas's dreams of a pastoral life did not immediately come to fruition due to the tumultuous events taking place in the colony

[1846-1851]. London, 1855, p. 138, quoted in Nadel, p. 31

¹⁸³ Eve Douglas, p. 4. However, this sum of money would have been patently insufficient to buy the sorts of properties they did purchase. As Mundy noted in the early 1850s, the younger sons or brothers of opulent English families who came to the Australian colonies typically invested ten or twenty thousand pounds in grazing properties. (Nadel, p. 31)

¹⁸⁴ Aileen Frindes and Pat Stemp. *Index to Unassisted Arrivals in New South Wales, 1842-1855*. 12 Microfiche. Sydney, Pastkeys, 1994; Mason, p. 17; *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, vol 8, no 385, 16 August 1851, pp. 233-34; Colonial Secretary. *Vessels Arrived*, July-September 1851. State Records New South Wales, COD 97)

¹⁸⁵ For a detailed account of just how arduous and dangerous these voyages could be, see Geoffrey Blainey. *Black Kettle and Full Moon: Daily Life in Vanished Australia*. Melbourne, Viking, 2003, pp. 66-70

¹⁸⁶ Rachel Henning. *The Letters of Rachel Henning*. Sydney, Bulletin Newspaper Co., 1952, p. 16

¹⁸⁷ Frindes; Mason, p. 17; *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, vol 8, no 385, 16 August 1851, pp. 233-34; Colonial Secretary. *Vessels Arrived*, July-September

following the discovery of gold. He did eventually become a pastoralist, but this led not to him returning to England a rich man, but rather to a life of service and sacrifice in the colony of Queensland. Douglas found adventure, fame and fortune in Australia, but he also endured bankruptcy and dishonour. Coming to Australia was the single biggest decision in his life, and one that he never regretted. England and Scotland had provided him with a privileged upbringing, and the best education money could buy. In New South Wales and Queensland, he utilised these in service to his country and his fellow man. The rest of this thesis details and analyses his life in Australia and his contribution to its development.

Chapter 3: “New Chum,” Public Servant and Squatter in New South Wales, 1851-58

A close examination of the young Douglas’s first years in the Australian colonies reveals much about his social standing, liberal beliefs and future prospects. It also allows us a greater appreciation of how the young and sometimes abrasive “new chum” found his way in a far-off colony, and established himself as an active and respected member of the Darling Downs community. Douglas realised his dream of becoming a squatter and enjoyed the associated lifestyle and privileges. Nevertheless, on achieving this goal, he found it wanting and became involved in politics, representing his community in the New South Wales colonial parliament before the end of the decade.

Douglas immigrated to New South Wales in 1851 to purchase a pastoral property and experience life and adventure in the colonies.¹⁸⁸ His was a well-worn path for those young aristocrats unfortunate enough to have older brothers and heirs. Life on the colonial frontier was a ticket to wealth, prosperity and assets on a scale that the younger sons of the aristocracy would have been hard-pressed to achieve at home. While this was true of Douglas, one

¹⁸⁸ The prospect of earning his living through commerce or trade was not one that the young Douglas would have seriously countenanced, for, as the writer Gillian Avery has noted, this would have been totally outside the social tradition of an aristocrat. (Gillian Avery, *Victorian People in Life and Literature*. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970, p. 62)

must also consider his youthful sense of adventure and a desire to travel and experience new places and cultures. This wanderlust, coupled with an ability to live on the geographical edge of society, was a recurring theme throughout his life, one that saw him living beyond the settled areas of New South Wales and Queensland as well as in British New Guinea and Torres Strait.

Discovery of gold

Douglas's dreams of owning a pastoral property in New South Wales were eclipsed by momentous events that unfolded there while he was *en route* to Sydney, for payable gold had been discovered in the central western New South Wales, the first major gold find in any British colony. As it had with the discovery of gold in California in 1848, this and other finds had profound economic and social impacts on the hitherto agrarian backwaters that were New South Wales and Victoria.¹⁸⁹ Gold quickly eclipsed wool as Australia's major export, and its discovery led directly to the granting of responsible government and the almost trebling of the population within a decade.¹⁹⁰ This increased population resulted in a much greater workforce, larger markets, an increased demand for public works, and a wider range of schools and churches for the diverse beliefs and needs of the new immigrants.

Among the immigrants was a new class of settler, independent men

¹⁸⁹ Jan Kociumbas. *The Oxford History of Australia, vol 2. 1770-1860, Possessions*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 294

out to make their fortune. They challenged the power and pretensions of the squatters and officials, for they had no ties or investment in the old convict Australia.¹⁹¹ Douglas, despite being considered an impeccable gentleman of aristocratic origin, was sympathetic to this new settler class, and when running for political office in later years would seek and receive their support.

Douglas arrived in Sydney at a fortuitous time because the remote Australian colony was at a critical juncture in its history.

Transportation of convicts had only recently ceased,¹⁹² agriculture was still the backbone of the economy, and it had yet to fully recover from the economic reverses of 1841-43.¹⁹³ The discovery of payable gold the same year he arrived in New South Wales meant that he would be fully involved in the change from an agrarian penal settlement to that of a vibrant colony, based on the extraction of vast quantities of this precious metal. In the political arena, pressure for electoral reform led, before the decade was out, to an elected and representative parliament in place of one controlled by the governor.

Ophir, near Bathurst, was the main goldfield in New South Wales, with more than 2,000 people reported at the diggings by 1 June

¹⁹⁰ Clark (1955), p. 2

¹⁹¹ Ronald Laidlaw. *Australian History*, Melbourne, Macmillan, 1991, p. 123

¹⁹² Although the transportation of convicts to New South Wales ended in 1840, the British government proposed that ticket-of-leave men still be sent to the colony. However, the New South Wales legislative council had resolved, on 1 October 1850, less than a year before Douglas arrived in Sydney, that no more convicts would be accepted. (Manning Clark. *A Short History of Australia*. Ringwood, Victoria, Penguin, 1986, p. 99)

¹⁹³ Kociumbas, p. 295

1851.¹⁹⁴ Children of a tenant farmer near Bathurst remarked that they “never thought there were so many people in the world before,”¹⁹⁵ while Thomas Icely, a significant squatter in the area, so feared the miners trudging to the Ophir field that he retreated to Sydney, in the process removing all his ‘plate and valuables’ from his residence.¹⁹⁶ Employers elsewhere in the colony were concerned that there would be no shearers or other workers available because they had all gone off to the diggings. The colonial government had no laws, policies or procedures to deal with this unprecedented situation, and was forced to come up with workable legislative solutions, because many of the remedies suggested by some settlers, such as proclaiming martial law and barring workmen from digging, proved impossible to implement.¹⁹⁷

By early 1851, gold fever had gripped the colony to such an extent that the government was forced to issue two proclamations declaring all gold found on crown land to be its property and giving it the power to control mining. A monthly licence fee of 30 shillings was payable to the government through a gold commissioner, the first of whom, J. R. Hardy, was appointed for the Ophir field.¹⁹⁸ From now on, no man could dig without permission. However, the payment of the licence fee and its subsequent issuance entitled the miner to keep the

¹⁹⁴ James Jervis. “Early Discoveries in New South Wales.” In, Charles Barrett, ed. *Gold in Australia*. London, Cassell, 1951, pp. 8-10

¹⁹⁵ Kociumbas, p. 303

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 302

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 302-3

¹⁹⁸ Jervis, p. 9

proceeds from the sale of any gold found.

The licence had to be purchased in advance and was only available to those able to prove they “were not improperly absent from hired service.”¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the required fee was beyond the means of many labourers, and was introduced in an attempt to ensure that essential labour would be retained in cities and towns, revenue raised, and the pace of the gold rush controlled.²⁰⁰ The total number of licences issued to the end of October 1851 was 12,186, including 2,094 issued at Ophir, 8,637 at the Turon and 405 at Araluen.²⁰¹

Gold was next discovered at the Turon River, north of Bathurst, in June 1851, where the town of Sofala sprung up. Numerous other gold discoveries took place in the New South Wales and Victorian colonies during this decade, acting as a magnet for those seeking their fortune.²⁰² As Catherine Spence, a Scottish visitor to Melbourne at the height of the gold fever remarked:

Religion is neglected, education despised, the libraries are almost deserted; ... everybody is engrossed in the simple object of making money in a very short time.²⁰³

Douglas had sailed to Australia to seek his fortune and purchase a

¹⁹⁹ Kociumbas, p. 303

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Thomas Richards. *An Epitome of the Official History of New South Wales From the Foundation of the Colony, in 1788, to the Close of the First Session of the Eleventh Parliament Under Responsible Government, in 1883.* Sydney, Government Printer, p. 179

²⁰² Ibid., p. 12

²⁰³ Stuart Macintyre. *A Concise History of Australia.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 89

sheep run. However, the discovery of gold during this voyage led him to postpone these plans and so it was to Turon, which had now replaced Ophir as the major goldfield, which he travelled to following his arrival in Sydney in August 1851.²⁰⁴

Douglas saw in the gold rush immense opportunities for the economic development of the colony. Although only 23 years old, he debated this point with William Charles Wentworth, leader of the New South Wales Legislative Council, whom he met in Bathurst while the latter was denouncing the evil effects of the gold discoveries on the colony because employees in the pastoral industry were flocking to the goldfields. As Douglas recounts, he (Douglas), “ventured to contest the point, not knowing what he was in for but he soon found out.”²⁰⁵ Even at this early stage in his life, Douglas evidenced a propensity to speak his mind and a willingness to enter into debate with others.

Douglas then travelled to the Darling Downs, presumably to appraise sheep properties, “calling at many stations and always being hospitably treated.”²⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Edward Douglas had entered into a partnership with Thomas Hood, who in 1852-53 held a depasturing

²⁰⁴ *Cooktown Pilot*, 30 July 1904. As Douglas later noted, “the world of Australia was turned upside down and everyone was trooping off to the diggings.” (*Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903.) Edward Douglas went straight to *Colinton Station* in Moreton Bay. (*Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903)

²⁰⁵ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903. The young Douglas told the august politician “the goldfields might attract a most enterprising population from the old country, and after all, if the worst came to the worst, the sheep would look after themselves for a while.” (Douglas (1902), p. 44)

²⁰⁶ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903

license for a 16,000 acre run, *Boree*, in the Central New South Wales Wellington district.²⁰⁷

Appointed sub-commissioner of crown lands

After his visit to the Darling Downs, Douglas was appointed sub-commissioner of crown lands for the New South Wales southern gold district, stationed at Major's Creek near Araluen.²⁰⁸ Why Douglas took up this post is unclear. Perhaps he welcomed the additional money, or was content for his brother to manage their properties while he became involved in life on the goldfields. Whatever the reason for his interest in the position, securing it would not have been difficult for a man of his background, education and pedigree, because the area was isolated, the work unglamorous, and there would have been few competitors, most aristocratic gentlemen of the day being interested in either a pastoral vocation or a senior government appointment.

This was the first of many government appointments in what would become a lifetime of public and parliamentary service. Gold had

²⁰⁷ Mason, p. 20. A depasturing licence allowed a pastoralist to run stock on a property. Eve Douglas contends that John Douglas was also involved in purchasing this property (Eve Douglas, p. 4), but while John Douglas himself stated that "he and his brother purchased a property with 15,000 sheep, at three shillings per head," it is unclear whether he is referring to *Boree* or their subsequent property, *Talgai*. (*Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903.) In late 1852 Edward Douglas also bought a large sheep run in partnership with W. Hulme from Berwickshire, who lived in Sydney and acted as agent for the joint estate. (Helen C. Mackenzie to John Macarthur, 2 December 1852. *Macarthur Papers*, MLA A2923, vol 27. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales)

²⁰⁸ *New South Wales. Government Gazette* vol 1 no 33, 26 March 1852, p. 519; *New South Wales Blue Book*, 1852, p. 306. Douglas commenced on 25 March 1852, with an annual

been discovered at Araluen, in southern New South Wales in October 1851.²⁰⁹ Araluen was 32 kilometres from Braidwood, in a narrow valley which made access difficult. Three townships sprung up in the valley, with about two hundred diggers working the field.²¹⁰ Douglas arrived there in early April 1852,²¹¹ and was mainly responsible for collecting the 30-shilling licence fee and ensuring that order on the goldfield was upheld.²¹² Living conditions were primitive, especially for a man brought up at Kinmount Estate and Durham University.

Interacting with the miners would also have been a novel experience for a cultured and erudite aristocrat used to the genteel and refined life that made up upper-class society in Great Britain. As an earlier emigrant, D. Mackenzie had noted:

The people of this colony care not one straw about the emigrant's rank or titles. Neither is this the field for display of great literary talents. The colony is yet too young either to appreciate or reward such intellectual luxuries.²¹³

Collecting and supervising miners' licences on the goldfields was no simple or routine task, for, as the historian James Jervis observed,

salary of £200.

²⁰⁹ *The Braidwood Araluen Goldfields*. Braidwood, Braidwood and District Historical Society, 199-, p. 2; Jervis, p. 12

²¹⁰ The townships were Majors Creek, Bell's Creek and the Araluen Valley.

²¹¹ Mason, p. 21

²¹² Jervis, p. 12

²¹³ F. Mackenzie. *Ten Years in Australia*. 4th ed. London, 1852, p. 105. Quoted in Nadel, p. 44

When the commissioner appeared on the scene the croak of the crow was heard. This was the signal agreed upon to warn diggers who had not paid the fee. The miners acted immediately; one shouldered the cradle and ran to earth like a fox, while his comrades dispersed themselves among the legitimate diggers and assumed the look of spectators.²¹⁴

Another contemporary account described the process thus:

The Commissioner, attended by a policeman, walks along the banks of the river, stopping where any cradles are seen at work, or persons assembled, and demands to know if any wish to take out licences. Much time is lost in discussion, and in weighing out the amount of the fee, which is often paid in gold-dust, its cleanness or freedom from “emery” being sometimes a point of debate, before the licence can be delivered to the individual.

Those who cannot pay are warned off, but of course, with so small a staff it is impossible for the Commissioner to prevent some from working clandestinely when his back is turned.²¹⁵

The fee was unpopular because it was expensive, with many struggling miners unable to afford it. Others considered the fee unjust, as it had to be paid even if no gold was found. Protests against the licence fee resulted in the burning of effigies of William

²¹⁴ Jervis, p. 11

²¹⁵ John Elphinstone Erskine. “Ophir and the Turon.” In Nancy Keesing, ed. *History of the Australian Gold Rushes by those who were there*. Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1971, p. 30

Charles Wentworth²¹⁶ at Sofala in 1853, whereupon the fee was reduced to 10 shillings a month.²¹⁷

It is unknown how Douglas managed the issuing of licences, for he merely noted “it was his duty to see that the miners had their licences” and that “in this occupation he had many varied experiences.”²¹⁸ However, in later years he remarked that the fee was “a most exorbitant tax” and that “the great objection to the tax was that it was not only heavy, but that it fell unequally, and taxed all diggers alike - whether they were successful or not.”²¹⁹

These comments suggest that Douglas found it difficult to undertake some of the more unsavoury aspects of his duties as a goldfields sub-commissioner. His sense of duty and fair play, combined with his liberal beliefs and attitudes, would have been at odds with his obligation to tax those unable to afford the licence, and was probably a factor in his subsequent resignation in June the following year.

During his seven-month tenure in 1852 as sub-commissioner for the Southern gold district, the number of miners in the district fluctuated from a high of 898 in May to a low of 560 in July.²²⁰ In May of that

²¹⁶ Wentworth, the leader of the New South Wales legislative council, was deeply unpopular with the working class at this time. (“Wentworth, William Charles.” *The Australian Encyclopedia*. 5th ed. Sydney, Australian Geographic Society, 1988, vol 8, p. 3027)

²¹⁷ Laidlaw, p. 117

²¹⁸ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903

²¹⁹ “Gold Export Duty Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 275

²²⁰ *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of New South Wales*, 1853, vol 1.

Reproduced in, Clark (1957), p. 75. The district comprised the fields of Major’s Creek, Bell’s Creek, Mongalo, Tuena and Adelong.

year, Douglas was also appointed clerk of petty sessions at Araluen.²²¹

His departure from both posts in late October 1852 was most irregular,²²² for while a letter from the colonial secretary approved his “temporary resignation,”²²³ two weeks later he was appointed sub-commissioner to the Tuena goldfield, situated at Tuena Creek, northwest of Goulburn.²²⁴ This was unusual because the normal practice would have simply been for him to have been transferred. Later that month Douglas was appointed a magistrate for the district with responsibilities for police, law and order, and the administration of justice.²²⁵ Fortunately for Douglas, Australian fields were renowned for the good conduct of the diggers, in stark contrast to the lawless state of Californian mining communities.²²⁶

The Tuena and Mongalo goldfields issued the fewest licences of any goldfield in the southern district, with 81 licences issued in April 1853, 102 in May, and 83 in June. This contrasted with 224 issued at Major’s Creek and 594 at Bell’s Creek in April 1853.²²⁷ Thus, compared to his previous position in the Major’s Creek district,

²²¹ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, vol 1 no 54, 28 May 1852, p. 847

²²² Mason, p. 22

²²³ *Colonial Secretary Letterbook*, 18 October 1852. New South Wales State Archives Ref. 254 16/10. In Mason, p. 23

²²⁴ *New South Wales Legislative Council. Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1853, p. 560

²²⁵ *New South Wales Government Gazette*, vol 2 no 114, 26 November 1852, p. 1725. Douglas received an additional £100 for these duties, which made his salary £300 per annum. (*New South Wales Blue Book*, 1853, p. 312; Mason, p. 23)

²²⁶ Jervis, p. 11

²²⁷ *New South Wales Legislative Council. Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1854, p. 1433

Douglas had fewer miners to supervise and licences to issue. This was reflected in his complement of men, which comprised himself and two troopers at Tuena, compared with a sergeant, a corporal and four troopers at Araluen.²²⁸ However, it should be remembered that being a magistrate would have entailed additional duties. Whatever the reason for his 'temporary' resignation and subsequent reappointment to another field, Douglas was not destined to remain here long either - less than eight months.

Talgai

Douglas resigned his government appointments, after a relatively brief tenure, to pursue his dreams of becoming a landholder. It appears that following his resignation Douglas joined his brother Edward at the latter's *Boree* property.²²⁹ The two brothers and Thomas Hood then moved to *Talgai* in the Warwick district on the Darling Downs around March 1854.²³⁰ The 64,000 acre station lease was purchased by them for the princely sum of £112,000 from the Gammie brothers, George and John.²³¹ In addition to purchasing the

²²⁸ *New South Wales Legislative Council. Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1853, p. 560

²²⁹ Mason, p. 24. However a letter written by John Douglas in December 1853 gives his address as the *Brymadura* property in the Molong district of Central New South Wales. (State Records New South Wales, *Colonial Secretary's Correspondence*, 1853,11552)

²³⁰ Mason, p. 24; *New South Wales Government Gazette*, no 122, 23 September 1854, p. 2083. The Douglas brothers were in residence at Talgai by 25 April 1854. (Benjamin Glennie. *Australian Diary of the Rev. Benjamin Glennie, January 16th, 1848 to September 30th, 1860*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 67-25/1, p. 18)

²³¹ "Mr Gammie's Stations." *Moreton Bay Courier*, 25 March 1854, p. 4; Eve Douglas, p. 5. As the Douglas brothers came to the colony with a reputed £2,000 left them by their aunt, Catherine Heron Douglas, the question has to be asked how they were able to buy the property. While the relevant documents no longer exist, either Hood put up most of the

Talgai lease, Hood and Douglas also purchased the adjacent 48,000-acre *Toolburra* lease.²³²

He was now free to pursue his pastoral dream. The Darling Downs was the home of what were known as the ‘pure merinos’, a powerful and exclusive squatting oligarchy that by the 1850s dominated every phase of human endeavour in the district.²³³ Douglas would have been at home here for, as the historian Duncan Waterson has observed, “the pure merinos were not Australians but transplanted Britishers who had come to the Downs to make money,” attempting to re-create a society similar to that they had left behind in Great Britain.²³⁴

However, Douglas had little idea of what was required to run a successful sheep property. Writing in 1920, Bernays observed that:

money, or, more likely, the money was borrowed, in the form of a mortgage, from Gilchrist, Watt and Co. There were actually three *Talgai* properties. The original property, purchased by Douglas and Hood, was later known as *Old Talgai*, being originally taken up by Ernest Elphinstone Dalrymple in about 1840. He died in November 1844 and the property was purchased by George Gammie in the late 1840s, although the first public tender for the property only occurred in August 1848. (McKey, p. 99.) At this time, the property consisted of 60,000 acres and the estimated grazing capacity was 16,000 sheep. (Kay Cohen. *Talgai*. Brisbane, Royal Historical Society of Queensland, 1994, p. 3; McKey, p. 101.) The second *Talgai* was known as *East Talgai*, settled by George Clark in 1867 and the Third *Talgai* was known as *West Talgai*, where Charles Clark built his house, Ellinthorpe Hall, in 1877. (Cohen, pp. 10 & 15.) The present day *Talgai* is actually *East Talgai*, and comprises some 750 acres. (Cohen, p. 16)

²³² *Toolburra* was directly to the south of *Talgai*. At the time of its purchase by Douglas and Hood, it was known as *Tulburra*. They subsequently divided it into *North Toolburra* (which was transferred to Robert Fesq, Massie and Sydney Walker on 1 September 1856) and *South Toolburra* (which was taken over by the North British Australasian Loan and Investment Company, the Aberdeen Company.) (*Register of Payment of Rent for Runs, 1847-57*. State Records New South Wales, Reel 184; Cohen, p. 10)

²³³ Waterson (1968), p. 9

In his early days he was engaged in squatting, but he was possessed of neither the capital nor stamina to make success of an occupation which in his time was more strenuous than it is in modern times.²³⁵

Prior to Hood and the Douglas brothers purchasing *Talgai* it had been managed by James Morgan, father of Sir Arthur Morgan, later the premier of Queensland.²³⁶ Douglas found working the property a challenge. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* perceptively observed, most gentlemen who come to be landlords, hoping to devote their time to leisurely pursuits, soon found that they would have to abandon their learning and elegance in a country where the desire for freehold, and thus the absence of tenants, forced everyone to work for himself.²³⁷

Fortunately for the youthful and inexperienced Douglas, the property appears to have been ably and progressively managed by Thomas Hood, who had already shown at *Boree* that he was experienced in running a successful sheep station.²³⁸ However, Douglas and Hood were not merely content to run the property in the same manner as their predecessors and it was one of the first on the Darling Downs to

²³⁴ Ibid., pp. 11-12

²³⁵ Bernays, p. 41

²³⁶ Cohen, pp. 5-6. For more information on James Morgan, see Richard Morgan. "The Life and Career of Sir Arthur Morgan." *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 19 no 11, October 2004, pp. 555-74

²³⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 October 1849, quoted in Nadel, p. 43. However there was an Aboriginal presence on the *Talgai* property, because it was reported that smallpox had broken out amongst them, with several dying. ("Domestic Intelligence: Drayton." *Moreton Bay Courier*, 8 November 1856, p. 2)

²³⁸ Mason, p. 26

import wool-washing machinery from England, leading to an increase in the price of the wool by 2d. or 3d. per lb.²³⁹

Hood and Douglas, along with many other Darling Downs squatters, enthusiastically availed themselves of the regulations granting them a pre-emptive right to convert part of their properties from leasehold land to freehold land at the cost of £1 per acre.²⁴⁰ Judicious pre-emptive purchases enabled squatters to capture the best waterholes and streams while restricting road access, thus protecting their improvements and ensuring that their remaining leasehold land was rendered useless to others, as without road access or available water, viable farming was impossible.²⁴¹

Douglas and the Darling Downs community

Kay Cohen, who has researched the history of the *Talgai* property, noted that Douglas “spent his time living the life of a country gentleman.”²⁴² However, Douglas’s beliefs and opinions were very different to those of the average squatter, as was amply demonstrated when he stood for elected office. Indeed, despite

²³⁹ Mr Douglas. “Claim of the Hon. Louis Hope.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 596. As Reverend Benjamin Glennie, of Drayton, the clergyman charged with ministering to Drayton and Warwick, observed on 26 July 1854, “Found both Douglasses at *Talgai* and a total change came over the place.” (Glennie, p. 19.) In 1860, the property had grown to 64,000 acres, assessed as being able to run 18,000 sheep and the annual rent was £45 as well as an assessment of £7-10 per 1,000 sheep. (*Moreton Bay Courier*, 26 April 1860; French (1990), p. 277)

²⁴⁰ Waterson (1968), p. 29. This was made possible by the New South Wales Orders-in-Council of March 1847.

²⁴¹ French (1992), p. 161

²⁴² Cohen, p. 6

being a squatter, his entire parliamentary career was spent in steadfastly opposing squatting interests. Douglas's sense of Christian duty and obligation coupled with his gregarious nature led him to immerse himself in the social and political life of the Darling Downs.²⁴³ Many of the men whose company he enjoyed were of similar standing, background and education, with more than a few of them coming from Scotland.²⁴⁴ While they may have been similar in many important respects, when it came to politics Douglas revealed himself as being of a different political persuasion, considered by most squatters to be a dangerous radical, the more so as he was also lauded by many of the working class who recognised him as being "one of a thousand among his class."²⁴⁵

Douglas later recalled these days as ones of "youthful exuberance," a time when he was known as young "Leather Jacket," because he "used to wear a deerskin coat which never wore out."²⁴⁶ A contemporary, Nehemiah Bartley, who met him in Brisbane, remarked on:

another young, tall, well-made, slim 'swell' of the period

²⁴³ John Watts, the owner of *Eton Vale Station*, considered the Douglas brothers to be "most charming people to know." (John Watts. *Personal Reminiscences*. Allendale, Wimborne, 1901, p. 52. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) M680)

²⁴⁴ Mason, p. 26. Douglas himself was proud of his Scottish heritage. For further information on this, see, "Mr. Douglas and the Dominion of Australia." *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1874, p. 5.

²⁴⁵ French (1990), pp. 157-58. This was to be a distinguishing feature of Douglas's politics, with the *Brisbane Courier* remarking some thirty years later: "Douglas has always exhibited a broad, unwavering sympathy with the popular cause." (*Brisbane Courier*, 4 November 1878, p. 2)

²⁴⁶ John Douglas (1900A), p. 12

was John Douglas, of Talgai; and, in his velvet coat,
Bedford cords, and boots, none might him surpass,
either.²⁴⁷

The surviving photographs of him from this period tend to back up Bartley's observations, portraying a handsome aristocratic gentleman - a dandy - who, having recently arrived from England, wore the latest fashions.

Blanche Mitchell, youngest daughter of Sir Thomas Mitchell, the New South Wales surveyor-general, mixed in the same social circles as Douglas, and her diary frequently mentioned him. Although some fifteen years younger than Douglas, the 'gallant swell' swept her off her feet and captured her heart, for she confided to her diary that Douglas was "looking so very gentlemanly" and possessing "such a nice manner."²⁴⁸ One passage in her diary is particularly poignant, and worth recounting. Douglas had left a ball following several dances with her, causing the young Blanche to confide to her diary that:

I liked him very very much indeed, in fact I wish I had never seen him, for I do not enjoy myself anywhere unless he is there and I feel my face get sad and melancholy if I do not see him ... I think of him all day. At night when I lie down and I find myself standing for hours

²⁴⁷ Nehemiah Bartley. *Opals and Agates; or, Scenes under the Southern Cross and the Magelhans: Being Memories of Fifty years of Australia and Polynesia*. Brisbane, Gordon and Gotch, 1892, p. 105

²⁴⁸ Mitchell, p. 216

thinking of nothing but him.²⁴⁹

The *Darling Downs Gazette* was the first newspaper to be published in the district. While the paper was considered an organ of the squatters, Douglas, by being involved in its establishment, demonstrated his belief in the efficacy of a vigorous free press, one that allowed for an exchange of ideas and where everyone was entitled to express their opinions.²⁵⁰ Having a paper established in the district was also a sign of advancing civilisation and permanent settlement, tangible evidence of progress.

Douglas's active involvement in the affairs of the Darling Downs community was substantial.²⁵¹ He advocated upgrading the road between Warwick and Ipswich,²⁵² was both treasurer and secretary of the Crimean War Patriotic Fund for the Warwick district, personally contributing £25²⁵³ and when Sir William Denison was appointed governor-general of the colony on 20 January 1855, he organised the sending of a congratulatory message.²⁵⁴ As well, he was involved in discussions on the separation proposal whereby a new colony, Queensland, would eventually be created out of New South

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 228

²⁵⁰ Rod Kirkpatrick. *Sworn to no Master: A History of the Provincial Press in Queensland to 1930*. Toowoomba, Darling Downs Institute Press, 1984, p. 17)

²⁵¹ Macartney, a squatter, who visited Talgai around 1857-58, described Hood and the Douglas brothers as people who "everyone knew at that time." (John Arthur Macartney. *Rockhampton Fifty Years Ago: Reminiscences of a Pioneer*. 1909, p. 12)

²⁵² *Moreton Bay Courier*, 11 August 1855, p. 3

²⁵³ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 28 April 1855, p. 4; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 2 June 1855, p. 3. Glennie observed in his diary entry for 11 May 1855: "John Douglas, who had been staying since Saturday at Canning Downs, swam across the river today and presided at a meeting of the Patriotic Fund." (Glennie, p. 22)

Wales.²⁵⁵

Douglas also travelled to Europe in 1857, although nothing is remembered about why or where he went, apart from his being in Rome that year.²⁵⁶

His commitment to the Anglican Church was also strongly in evidence and he appears to have been responsible for most church business in Warwick.²⁵⁷ The Reverend Benjamin Glennie, of Drayton, the clergyman charged with ministering to Drayton and Warwick, noted in his diary his relief when Arthur McArthur took over reading the Warwick service from Douglas in May 1856.²⁵⁸ Glennie's need to "get the affairs of the church out of his [Douglas] unbusiness-like hands," was no doubt partly motivated by Douglas's insistence in being actively involved in the day-to-day administration of the church and his tendency to quickly express his displeasure on any aspect of church conduct and administration with which he disagreed.²⁵⁹

Douglas's involvement in the temporal and spiritual affairs of the small Darling Downs community showed him at both his best and his worst. While his sense of civic duty was in the best tradition of

²⁵⁴ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 26 May 1855, p. 2

²⁵⁵ French (1990), pp. 121-22. Douglas was a member of a delegation that saw Henry Labouchere, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in Sydney on 28 April 1857.

²⁵⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 24 June 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(b)/9

²⁵⁷ French (1992), p. 191; Glennie, p. 20. Douglas was also a member of the building committee overseeing the raising of funds for the construction of a combined church and schoolhouse in Warwick. St Mark's was duly built and opened on 8 February 1857.

²⁵⁸ French (1992), p. 190; Glennie, p. 24

²⁵⁹ Glennie, p. 24. Despite this, Glennie was "sorry to lose him as a friend."

Christian service to his fellow man, Glennie saw Douglas's role in church affairs as one of excessive interference and meddling.

Nevertheless, if Douglas saw what he considered an injustice, he felt compelled to act, or at the very least make his displeasure known. In seeking justice, no stone was left unturned, no personal cost was considered too great. This dogged determination was one of his greatest assets, but also one of his biggest weaknesses when allowed to degenerate into obstinacy.²⁶⁰

In his subsequent political career, he would become popular with his constituents because of it. Unfortunately, this same trait would also gain him many enemies.

²⁶⁰ As one commentator summed up Douglas: "he will go ahead on particular points with such decision and energy as to cause one section of his opponents to cry out against his obstinacy." (*Brisbane Courier*, 4 November 1878, p. 2)

Chapter 4: Political Career in New South Wales, 1859-

61

This chapter explores Douglas's political career in New South Wales. In the 1840s the colony had a partly elected legislative council and in the early 1850s was requested by the British government to draft a constitution for representative government allowing for local parliamentary control under a system of responsible government. This was done and in 1855, the British government enacted the *New South Wales Constitution Act*, bestowing on the colony self-government along the lines of the British government.²⁶¹

Douglas had shown an interest in politics for some time and was attracted to representing his local community in parliament. In the 1855 elections, he proposed in a speech that his business partner, Thomas Hood, was a fit and proper person to represent the united district in the New South Wales legislative council.²⁶² Douglas was also the deputy returning officer for the district for this election.²⁶³

Early in 1859, Douglas was suggested as a potential nominee member of Queensland's first legislative council following the proposed formation of this new colony to come into effect at the end of that year. However, he decided to stand for the New South Wales

²⁶¹ Macintyre (1999), p. 92

²⁶² *Moreton Bay Courier*, 24 March 1855, p. 2

²⁶³ *Colonial Secretary Correspondence*, 55/3033. State Records New South Wales. Hood was successfully elected, and represented the united pastoral districts of Clarence and Darling Downs in the legislative council from April 1855 until he vacated his seat on 10 May 1861. (Richards, pp. 717 & 722)

parliament instead, given that a general election was due some six months before the mooted separation.

The Darling Downs election

Douglas's candidacy for the lower house seat of Darling Downs was rumoured as early as February 1859, but it was late March before he was formally approached to stand, mainly by Warwick voters.²⁶⁴

Douglas, now 31, accepted with alacrity. So began a political career that would eventually result in him becoming the premier of Queensland.

Douglas later airily remarked that he decided to enter politics "as a kind of relaxation."²⁶⁵ In reality, he embarked on this course of action due to his highly developed sense of duty and service, one that, in the best traditions of liberalism, compelled him to be useful to his fellow man. His faith in his own abilities was such that he unquestioningly felt that he could represent the electorate in a manner calculated to defend and advance its interests. However, he would never be comfortable as a party man, and once ran for public office so he:

might do something towards reconciling men who, forced
by party associations into opposition with one another
have yet no doubt the common good at heart.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ French (1990), p. 157

²⁶⁵ Joyce (1972), p. 89

²⁶⁶ John Douglas to William Macarthur, 24 November 1860. *Macarthur Papers*, Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML A2937, Cy Reel 1002

Douglas was never an ambitious man in the sense of wanting to accumulate fame and wealth. He reserved his energies for pursuing public office and those government appointments in which he believed he could make a positive contribution to society through putting into practice his liberal ideas and beliefs. He was reported candidly informing his constituents in 1878 when the premier of Queensland and reflecting on his parliamentary career:

He had no ambition for the office. He had a kind of ambition which had not as yet been rewarded, and, perhaps, never might be, but it was one to which all might aspire. It was simply to do his duty in a straightforward honest way, without selfish intentions, for the good of his fellow beings, and with a consciousness that he was working not only for the benefit of his fellow human beings now living, but for those which might follow.²⁶⁷

As with everything Douglas did, once he had made up his mind to run for public office, he devoted all his energies and talents to successfully achieving it. The Darling Downs electorate was a large one, and during the course of his campaign, Douglas rode, on horseback, from one end of it to the other, a distance of 800 miles.²⁶⁸

In a lengthy advertisement appearing in the *Darling Downs Gazette* in April 1859, Douglas endorsed and vigorously defended the extension of the franchise while thanking the eighty supporters who

²⁶⁷ "The Premier at Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 October 1878, p. 4

²⁶⁸ "Mr Douglas at the Albert Hall." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1883, p. 4

had requested him to run for office.²⁶⁹ Douglas, the liberal *Talgai* squatter, was seen as the front-runner in the multi-member electorate, with the battle for the electorate's second seat between William Handcock, a Drayton storekeeper, and John McLean, a founding director of the Australian Agricultural Company and owner of *Westbrook Station*.

Douglas, when nominating, gave an "elegant speech" in which he outlined his views on the major issue of the day: land selection. He believed that cheaper land was not desirable and "that land sales by public auction should be abolished." He also disagreed with Handcock's plan of "free selection of land and payments deferred."²⁷⁰ Douglas put forward a policy that further extended the franchise, supported loyalty to Britain, encouraged habits of self-reliance, and favoured enhanced progress in the Darling Downs' district.²⁷¹ He considered himself to be:

a man of progress, but of that progress only which rough

²⁶⁹ John Douglas. "To the Electors of the District of Darling Downs." *Darling Downs Gazette*, 28 April 1859, p. 1

²⁷⁰ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 22 June 1859, p. 2. French has taken this to mean, "free selection and deferred payments were anathema to him." French (1990), p. 157. This is not correct, for two weeks earlier, on 7 June, Douglas had come out strongly in favour of free selection, a position he would consistently reaffirm over the next couple of years. Douglas is actually indicating here that he was opposed to the type of free selection supported by Handcock, with Douglas preferring to have land first surveyed so that prospective selectors could see what they were purchasing. Douglas always held firm to the principles underlying free selection, namely that land should be unlocked and made available to those who wished to establish themselves on it. How that was to be done, and the price to be paid, were open to discussion and debate. Further on in this chapter free selection is discussed in some detail, for it was one of the major issues of the time.

²⁷¹ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 22 June 1859, p. 2

and difficult had an upward tendency and [he] warned the electors that there was another kind of progress which was smooth and easy but tended downwards towards ruin.²⁷²

A show of hands at the nomination meeting revealed overwhelming support for Hancock, about fifty for Douglas, and only six for McLean, who nevertheless demanded a poll. Several election meetings were therefore held over the next few weeks, McLean being shouted down at Drayton in contrast to the “three cheers for Douglas and Hancock.”²⁷³

In his nomination speech, Douglas outlined his views and ideas on the issue of central concern for him - the land question. They resonated with his constituents, for:

the politics of the second half of the century were largely the politics of the struggle for land. It seemed at times as though the desire for land had become symbolic, transcending the immediate economic experience of an urbanised community which was to draw its social message not from the city but from the bush.²⁷⁴

Douglas, although a large-scale squatter, supported the opening up of land selection on terms and conditions the ordinary man could afford and share in. This support was received favourably by the electorate, for the desire to own one's one piece of land was a

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ French (1990), p. 160

²⁷⁴ Nadel, p. 30

recurring theme running throughout Australian history.²⁷⁵

The *Moreton Bay Courier's* Drayton correspondent characterised Douglas's nomination address as "a curious document" before concluding that: "despite a few local prejudices, he will be returned as one of our members."²⁷⁶ An Ipswich paper, the *Northern Australian*, thought it an "unusual address," with no bunkum and no promises, but clearly showing evidence of responsibility. It concluded that Douglas "was the most reasonable of his class, too young to be prejudiced, yet old enough to have ascertained by self-examination that he is not infallible."

The *Moreton Bay Free Press*, too, considered him "one of a thousand among his class." The *Darling Downs Gazette* strongly recommended him as "a thinking man" with a "sensible and manly tone," although it did have some doubts about a squatter who professed a belief in liberalism and support for electoral reform and the secret ballot. The paper further considered Douglas to be one "of the upper ten thousand" who had nothing to gain from political service and would therefore represent the electorate unselfishly.²⁷⁷

The Douglas clan in Scotland were known for their compassion and generosity to those less fortunate. Lord Alfred (Bosie) Douglas could have been writing about John, his older first cousin twice removed,

²⁷⁵ See Humphrey McQueen. *A new Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism*. Melbourne, Penguin, 1970, p. 147

²⁷⁶ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 4 May 1859, p. 2

²⁷⁷ French (1990), pp. 157-58

when he stated:

From more than a thousand years of ancestors I have inherited all the instincts of the true aristocrat, the chief of which I take to be the instinct to be generous and open-handed, and to be the helper and defender of the poor or oppressed ... It has been the passion of my life to sacrifice myself for others.²⁷⁸

For John Douglas, these “instincts” were a product of his social class, education and religious beliefs, and instilled in him a profound sense of social obligation and responsibility. He was not driven by the lure of monetary gain or personal ambition. His rewards were less tangible but ultimately more satisfying for him, namely the satisfaction gained from being true to his conscience and ideals.

Following a speech by Douglas in Toowoomba, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* correspondent observed that Douglas “is very popular; and as he is a liberal, in heart as well as principle, he will be returned at the poll.”²⁷⁹ The *Darling Downs Gazette* concurred:

His pretensions are so immeasurably beyond any other candidate in the field and so fully appreciated by the thinking portions of the electorate that his election is considered a safe certainty.²⁸⁰

One elector preferred Douglas to McLean because he was “more

²⁷⁸ Alfred Douglas, p. 4

²⁷⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 June 1859, p. 2

²⁸⁰ *Darling Downs Gazette*, 9 June 1859

liberal and will not be influenced by any party.”²⁸¹

On election day, the expected landslide for Douglas failed to materialise and the final result was extremely close. This was because, despite the election being fought throughout the colony on the twin issues of electoral and land reform, on the Darling Downs it largely focussed on personalities.²⁸² Handcock was not only popular with the townspeople, but also picked up the votes of Warwick voters who resented the ‘squattocracy,’ be they liberal or otherwise.

McLean, a conservative squatter, not surprisingly attracted the bulk of the squatter and conservative votes. The election itself was a lively affair, with feelings running high and being strongly expressed. At one of McLean’s meetings, “no one could be heard above the noise of the uproar,” while “broken chairs and glasses flew about in all directions.”²⁸³ Democracy, in the form of responsible government, was in its infancy, and, particularly on the frontier, was exercised in a robust and energetic manner.

Representing Darling Downs

Douglas topped the polls with 385 votes to Handcock’s 377 and McLean 375.²⁸⁴ Douglas and Handcock were placed in a carriage

²⁸¹ An Elector. “Original Correspondence.” *Moreton Bay Courier*, 11 May 1859, p. 2

²⁸² Maurice French. “The Leading Man of Drayton; William Handcock, Frontier Storekeeper, and the Election of 1859.” *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol 13 no 3, August 1987, p. 104

²⁸³ “Drayton.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 June 1859, p. 2

²⁸⁴ Mason, p. 33. Douglas topped the poll in Clifton, Canal Creek (both near *Talgai*), Jimbour, Dalby, Cecil Plains, Maryland, and Surat on the fringes of the electorate, but failed to poll well in Warwick, the largest polling station in the district, and a Handcock stronghold.

and pulled around the town by their supporters.²⁸⁵ Hancock owed his success to his being considered the “defender of the poor,” while McLean’s loss was seen as a defeat for the squatters and a victory for the townspeople.²⁸⁶ Douglas, although a squatter, had stood as a liberal, prepared to fight the “wicked pure merinos” in the interests of the country-town radical and rural selector.²⁸⁷ Almost all those elected to parliament were large-scale property-owners, and later on, also businessmen or those from the professions, because until the 1880s parliamentarians received no payment for their services, and money was required to successfully conduct election campaigns.²⁸⁸

Duncan Waterson has observed that it was somewhat ironic that many of these squatter candidates successfully contested electorates where and when the selector-squatter controversy, carefully inflamed by them, was at its peak.²⁸⁹ However, while Douglas may have been a squatter, he was certainly no “fair-weather liberal,” for he had early on developed his liberal beliefs and held steadfastly to these throughout a long and productive life.

Unlike many of his class, Douglas was strongly in favour of an elected upper house and had no time for a “spurious colonial

(French (1990), p. 160)

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Maurice French and Duncan Waterson. *The Darling Downs: A Pictorial History, 1850-1950*. Toowoomba, Darling Downs Institute Press, 1982, p. 251

²⁸⁷ Waterson (1968), p. 217

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 216. Members of parliament were only paid in New South Wales in 1889 and in Queensland from 1886 onwards. (Mark Howard. *Shaping a New Nation: Australian History to 1901*. 2nd ed. Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1993, p. 154)

²⁸⁹ Waterson (1968), p. 217

aristocracy - a poor imitation of the English House of Lords.”²⁹⁰ As he observed, it was also a “source of gratification to him” that most men could now vote in elections. A correspondent remarked that:

This from a squatter is somewhat marvellous. I really thought there was not a squatter on the Downs who would pronounce, what our late M.P. termed the most diabolical portion of Mr. Cowper’s Reform Bill, as ‘a source of gratification to him.’²⁹¹

Another demonstration of Douglas’s liberal leanings took place in October 1858, when he chaired a meeting in Warwick to protest the exploitation of the livestock impounding laws by squatters and to consider a petition to the government for a town common.²⁹²

Douglas’s candidature and victory were exceptional, for here was an aristocrat and a squatter successfully garnering the vote of working-class people. He had won his seat by specifically attacking the squattocracy and campaigning for land and parliamentary reform. It is doubtful that a comparable victory could have been achieved in England, where class and privilege were more entrenched.

That he was a man of privileged upbringing standing for the masses against his own made him, in their eyes at least, a certainty for office. He embodied all the qualities they wanted a successful representative to have: wealth, class and connections, a superior

²⁹⁰ Mr Douglas. “Legislative Council Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 324

²⁹¹ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 4 May 1859, p. 2

²⁹² French (1992), p. 167; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 30 October 1858, p. 2

education, and independence of thought and action. He was on their side, and prepared to represent them in the parliament and act in their best interests.²⁹³ A ‘feral’ aristocrat was infinitely more preferable than one of the ‘bunyip’ variety!²⁹⁴ While the general populace welcomed Douglas’s victory, most squatters were considerably less enthusiastic.²⁹⁵

Following the election, rumours ran rife that the Downs squatters were manoeuvring to ostracise the successful and independent Douglas for displacing McLean.²⁹⁶ Most squatters found Douglas’s liberalism objectionable,²⁹⁷ but the *Moreton Bay Courier* saw greater promise:

It appears that he is a man of views far more enlightened and progressive than those of the generality of his class ... The man, thoroughly identified with squatting pursuits, who shall take his place loyally and boldly beside the political reformers of the country will, so far as the two circumstances may be compared, occupy a similar position to that of Robert Peel, when at one step he

²⁹³ There was a general acceptance on behalf of the working-class that they were best represented by “educated liberal gentlemen.” (McQueen (1970), p. 182)

²⁹⁴ The bunyip was a mythical Australian monster and the term ‘bunyip aristocracy’ was a derogatory term used to discredit William Wentworth’s proposal for a New South Wales upper house comprised of colonial nobility. (Macintyre (1999), p. 93; John Hirst. *Australia’s Democracy: A Short History*. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2002, p. 43)

²⁹⁵ Sections of the press had also misjudged Douglas, with a correspondent from the *Moreton Bay Courier* initially describing him as being unpopular on account of “his haughty, imperious manner and aristocratic notions, his disbelief in the powers of the people and his extreme squattocratic notions.” (Undated newspaper clipping, titled “Drayton.” In, Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/C)

²⁹⁶ French (1990), pp. 161-62

²⁹⁷ *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 December 1903

ascended to the very summit of popularity.²⁹⁸

However, Douglas's first period in the colonial legislature was all too brief. He and Handcock travelled from Brisbane by ship to Sydney for the commencement of parliament on 30 August 1859.²⁹⁹ Almost 60 per cent of the members of the third New South Wales parliament were new, while 38 per cent were pastoralists.³⁰⁰

Douglas supported the Cowper ministry and was, along with Moreton Bay members Richardson and Macalister, considered among those who would "stick to their business well."³⁰¹ The same could not be said of Handcock, who was frequently absent from parliament on crucial votes. After only two and a half months in parliament, Douglas resigned in protest over problems occasioned by the imminent establishment of the colony of Queensland, including the obstructionism of the assembly over border demarcation and the amount of public debt to be transferred to the new colony.³⁰²

This action by Douglas would be the first of a number of resignations from elected positions over matters of principle. On this occasion, it was of symbolic value only, for less than a month later the seat

²⁹⁸ "Fifty Years Ago" (from the Courier Files of 3 August and 6 August 1859.) *Moreton Bay Courier*, 7 August 1909. Sir Robert Peel, prime minister of England in 1834 and again from 1841-46, was the son of a wealthy textile manufacturer who, despite founding the Conservative Party, repealed the English Corn Laws in 1846.

²⁹⁹ Richards, p. 300; *Moreton Bay Courier*, 27 August 1859, p. 2

³⁰⁰ P. Loveday and A. W. Martin. *Parliament Factions and Parties: The First Thirty Years of Responsible Government in New South Wales, 1856-1889*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1966, p. 29; Mason, p. 35

³⁰¹ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 26 October 1859

³⁰² French (1990), p. 162

ceased to exist, because the electorate was included in the newly formed colony of Queensland.³⁰³ John Douglas then left Sydney for *Talgai*,³⁰⁴ but by September 1860 had returned to Sydney after commencing selling his share of the property.³⁰⁵

Douglas relocated to Sydney³⁰⁶ because he had met Mary Ann Howe there. They were married there on 22 January 1861 at St James Church.³⁰⁷ Douglas was 32 years old, Mary a year older. She was a widow, the third daughter of the Rev. William West Simpson, the

³⁰³ Richards, pp. 307 & 735

³⁰⁴ In 1860, his partner, Thomas Hood, purchased the property *Langton Downs* near Clermont in Queensland. It is possible that Douglas was involved in this purchase as well. (Eve Douglas, p. 7)

³⁰⁵ Eve Douglas, p. 7. The sale of *Talgai* was a complex one, affected in stages over two years. On 2 April 1860 Edward Douglas and Thomas Hood sold part of their equity in the property to Charles Clark for £39,000. (*Book of Stock Mortgages* no 35, 2 April 1860. Queensland State Archives, quoted in Mason, p. 43; McKey, p. 102.) By September of that year Edward Douglas had entered into a private arrangement with Hood to relinquish his share in *Talgai* and on 13 September Hood sold a quarter of *Talgai*, including a share in the stock, to Clark's partner, Thomas Hamner, for a further £9,000. (*Book of Stock Mortgages* no 106, 13 September 1860, quoted in Mason, p. 44; McKey, p. 102.) The final settlement for the sale of *Talgai* to Clark and Hamner took place on 26 November 1862 for £72,000, and was preceded by John Douglas transferring his share of the run to Hood. (Mason, p. 44; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 4 no 2, 3 January 1863, p. 10; McKey, p. 99 & 102; R. C. Sharman, Queensland State Archives, to R. B. Joyce, 26 May 1969. *Joyce Papers*, National Library of Australia, MS 7691, Box 133, Douglas folder.) Despite having sold his share of the property, Douglas was still on the Eastern Downs Electorate Roll in 1864 with his place of residence listed as *Talgai*. ("Roll of Electors in the Eastern Downs Electorate for 1864-5 no 29." Queensland State Archives *Electoral Rolls* Microfiche no 3.) Edward Douglas, having sold his share in the property, returned to Scotland with his cousin, Hannah Charlotte Scott-Douglas, whom he subsequently married, the couple settling at Killechassie, near Aberfeldy in Perthshire. (Eve Douglas, p. 7; Mason, p. 43; Burke's, pp. 2053-54)

³⁰⁶ John Douglas to William Macarthur 24 November 1860. *Macarthur Papers* vol 41 pp. 134-38, ML A2937. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

³⁰⁷ "Marriage certificate registration no. 1861/48." *New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages*; "Marriages." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 January 1861, p. 1. The Lord Bishop of Sydney, the Right Reverend Frederick Barker, officiated at the wedding.

second headmaster of King's School, Parramatta.³⁰⁸ Mary brought to the marriage the sum of £700 per annum and an infant daughter.³⁰⁹ In Mary Anne, John Douglas had found a like-minded soul, one who was dedicated to helping others less fortunate. Passionately committed to helping destitute and orphaned children, she was instrumental in the success of the Diamantina Orphanage in Brisbane later that decade.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ Eve Douglas, p. 7. Mary Ann was born in London on 25 August 1827. (Mary Douglas tombstone inscription. Toowong Cemetery, Brisbane, portion 9, section 34, allotment 5.) Her parents, William Simpson (27 June 1794-1869) and Jane (Nee Leake), along with their then eight children were unassisted passengers aboard the *Earl Grey*, which sailed from Plymouth on 29 October 1839, and arrived in Sydney on 25 February 1840. (Colonial Secretary. *Vessels Arrived*, January-March, 1840. State Records New South Wales, COD 38.) Her parents were married in London on 9 March 1824 and had a further four children after their arrival in Sydney. At the time of her marriage, Mary was living in Liverpool, Sydney. Her Christian name in the extant literature was spelt as Mary Ann until the 1860s when it changed to Mary Anne. This was her third marriage, her first being to Henry Callander on 29 November 1848. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 December 1848, p. 4) Henry, an employee of the Customs Service, died in an accident on 19 August 1852, aged 31 years. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 August 1852; "Birth certificate registration no. 1848/0 (V1848252 33B)." *New South Wales Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages*.) There were no children. She then married William Howe, of Sydney, and they had a child, Mary West Howe, born on 1 March 1857. ("Birth certificate registration no. 1857/5912." *New South Wales Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages*.) William Howe subsequently died, leaving the unfortunate Mary Ann a widow for the second time.

³⁰⁹ Mitchell, p. 262. Blanche Mitchell was very upset over this turn of events, for not only had Douglas married, but also to a woman who was a widow twice over! "Shame that the only gentleman at present in Sydney should throw himself away in such a manner."

³¹⁰ For more information on her involvement in these and related activities, see Mary Douglas. "Report of the Committee of the Diamantina Orphan School upon the Working of the Institution during the Year 1866." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 6, Session two of 1867-68, pp. 993-95; "Mrs. Douglas's Report." *Brisbane Courier*, 19 January 1866; R. F. J. Wood. "The Diam. A History of the Diamantina Hospital." *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol 11 no 3, 1981-82, pp. 147-67; Carol McMullen. "The Servants' Home." In, *Women in History: Places of Purpose*. Brisbane, Griffith University, 1994, pp. 17-21; Lorraine Cazalar. "Diamantina, Lady Bowen." In, *Women in History: Places of Purpose*. Brisbane, Griffith University, 1994, pp. 56-63; Weekly Epitome. *Brisbane Courier*, 25 September 1869, p. 5; "Presentation to Mrs. John Douglas." *Brisbane*

The Camden election

Now resident in Sydney, Douglas again pursued his interest in politics, presenting himself in November 1860 as a candidate for the seat of Camden, a conservative stronghold to the southwest of Sydney.³¹¹ Because Douglas did not reside in the electorate, it was alleged by conservatives that he had been sent by Cowper to carry the liberal banner in the seat.³¹² Douglas was characteristically modest in rebutting this allegation:

I am myself sorry to observe that my determination to come forward has occasioned remarks which gives me a prominence I scarcely deserve.³¹³

The seat of Camden was dominated by the pastoral properties of the Macarthur family, who let out the land surrounding Camden village to tenants. Previously the leading men of Camden village had routinely supported the invariably conservative candidates sponsored by the brothers William and James Macarthur.

Douglas was aware of these sensitivities and informed Sir William that:

Nothing that I shall do in my canvass will I trust be in the slightest degree other than courteous to you, and

Courier, 5 October 1869, p. 6; John Tyrer. *History of the Brisbane Hospital and its Affiliates: A Pilgrims Progress*. Brisbane, Boolarong Publications, 1993, p. 87. Mary also suffered from ill health. (See "Farewell Banquet to the Hon. John Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1869, p. 3)

³¹¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 November 1860

³¹² Hirst (1988), p. 92

³¹³ John Douglas to William Macarthur, 24 November 1860. *Macarthur Papers*, Dixon

respectful to the influence which you deservedly
posses.³¹⁴

The election of 1860 for the fourth parliament of the colony was again dominated by the issue of land, the cry being “free selection before survey.”³¹⁵ The Robertson government had recently introduced the *Crown Lands Alienation* and the *Crown Lands Occupation Bills* to allow for the conditional purchase of land and free selection before survey over all the unimproved lands of the colony. Under this proposed legislation, non-suburban land was open for selection as freehold, conditional on *bona fide* residence and certain improvement conditions. As the government’s aim was to free up land for selectors, all crown land, including that held on pastoral lease, would now be open to free selection.

However, one of the bills was amended in committee with the insertion of the words “after survey as hereinafter provided,” and this resulted in the dissolution of parliament on 9 November 1860.³¹⁶

This amendment was unacceptable to the government, for, given the supposed lack of surveyors and corruption in the survey department, free selection could have been delayed for many years. In a notice to the Camden electorate, Douglas affirmed his continuing support

Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML A2937

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Richards, p. 320. The term was a misnomer, as the land had to be purchased on deferred terms at £1 per acre. However, it was free in that a selector could choose any unalienated crown land within the colony.

³¹⁶ Richards, p. 320; Loveday (1966), p. 30

for the Cowper/Robertson administration and its land reforms.³¹⁷

Nevertheless, Douglas also sought the support and forbearance of William Macarthur in standing against his sponsored candidates, indicating that he was ready and able to accept his opposition for “I can take a licking with perfect good humour.”³¹⁸

As events transpired, Douglas was in no danger of having to “take a licking.” The principle of free selection, which enabled a person to settle anywhere, appeared to promise instant fulfilment for many who dreamed of independence on the land. Despite the reality being that the land still had to be paid for by instalment, and at the high price of £1 per acre, there was widespread enthusiasm for a bill that promised, “to give everyone everything.”³¹⁹ Free selection was even more alluring in the Camden electorate as floods had devastated the last two seasons’ crops. The liberals informed farmers whose crops had been destroyed that if they were returned to government then farmers could put their families and their possessions on drays and travel until they found suitable land on which to settle.³²⁰

Consequently, support for the liberal cause in seats such as Camden

³¹⁷ John Douglas. “To the Electors of Camden.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 November 1860, p. 2

³¹⁸ John Douglas to William Macarthur, 21 November 1860. *Macarthur Papers*, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales, A2937. In his nomination speech, Douglas was reported as having said; “no man should be a representative of the people who was not prepared to take rubs with a good face. He believed that was the old English spirit; he was taught to cultivate it when at school, and he hoped to see more and more of it in this country.” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1860, p. 2)

³¹⁹ Hirst (1988), pp. 91-92

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92

was overwhelming; because its land program offered many tantalising possibilities that they could escape from their inferior position in the social hierarchy and assert their independence from landowners like the Macarthurs, whom they currently deferred to both socially and politically. The promise of land reform was irresistible to those who wished to curb the power of the squatters as well as to tenant men who dreamt of farming their own land.³²¹ Such was the climate in which Douglas nominated, to “great cheering,” at the Camden courthouse.³²² The third of the four candidates to address the assembled voters, he was eager for continued political success:

They would understand the state of excitement in which he had been waiting, and would forgive him for saying he was rather agitated upon stepping upon a platform upon which he was to receive his sentence. There were certain duties and privileges they had to impose upon two of them and also certain disadvantages. ... but though they had to pronounce their verdict, he trusted it would not be upon him. He did not want to be politically extinguished. Let them not kill him or string him up upon this place of execution. He was young and there were others fitter to meet their fate than he.³²³

Douglas devoted most of his nomination speech to the land question, coming out strongly in favour of free selection, for “every man should have the liberty and right to go where he liked and choose where he

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 95

³²² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1860, p. 2

³²³ *Ibid.*

should make his home.” Douglas aligned himself with “hard working men,” appealing to the electorate as “a simple man amongst men.”³²⁴

He was concerned that the land bill would struggle for assent in the upper house, for “there were prejudiced men in that house, blind to the interests of the country.”

In rebutting conservative allegations that he was Cowper’s nominee in Camden, Douglas declared that:

He had never slavishly served him - nor would he do so.

He would rather serve them (the electorate) than any man.³²⁵

At the election, Douglas, along with most of Robertson and Cowper’s supporters, achieved an overwhelming victory.³²⁶ Only nine members opposed to free selection were returned while at least 45 of its supporters were successful.³²⁷ The Macarthurs were not unduly upset with the result, John Macarthur noting, “Douglas is a man of old family and educated as a gentleman.”³²⁸

Douglas, as promised, voted for the land reforms introduced by the

³²⁴ Ibid. One interjector referred to Douglas as “the poor man’s friend.”

³²⁵ Ibid. Putting party interests first never came naturally to Douglas. As Browne accurately observed, “he was always more concerned in the welfare of the country than in a small party advantage.” (Browne (1927), p. 78)

³²⁶ *The New South Wales Parliamentary Record ...* 17th ed. Sydney, Government Printer, 1950, p. 120. Over 80 per cent of the Camden electorate voted, with John Morrice and John Douglas being returned with 614 and 519 votes respectively. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 December 1860)

³²⁷ Loveday (1966), p. 32

³²⁸ James Macarthur to William Macarthur, 24 March 1861, p. 2. Macarthur Family Letters, vol 36, A2932. *Macarthur Papers*. Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales, reel 2259.

Cowper administration³²⁹ as well as for a bill to reshape the upper house,³³⁰ and was active on several committees.³³¹ The parliamentary session ended in May 1861 and on 17 July 1861, Douglas announced his resignation as member for Camden.³³² He had served his electorate, whose constituents he had assured “would not resent their choice,” for only six months.³³³ This was the end of his political and administrative career in New South Wales. Despite being only 33 years old he had gained valuable parliamentary experience representing two electorates, and had strongly pursued issues close to his heart, particularly that of land reform. The rest of his life would be spent in serving the colony of Queensland, to whose development he would greatly contribute.

³²⁹ When the parliament sat on 10 January 1861, Charles Cowper was once again holding the office of premier, John Robertson having retired in his favour. (Richards, p. 321)

³³⁰ Mason, p. 42

³³¹ New South Wales Legislative Assembly. Standing and Select Committees Appointed During the Session of 1861, pp. 1 & 3. *New South Wales Votes and Proceedings* 1861, vol 1

³³² Mason, p. 42

³³³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1860, p. 2

Chapter 5: Queensland: Campaigning for the Northern Districts, 1861-63

Queensland at separation

Queensland achieved separation from the colony of New South Wales on 10 December 1859, when the inaugural governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, was sworn in.³³⁴ The new colony included the Darling Downs district, which Douglas had represented in the New South Wales parliament. However, as outlined in the preceding chapter, Douglas did not initially seek office in Queensland, content to forge a political career in New South Wales while residing in Sydney. The first sitting of the new bicameral parliament in Brisbane took place on 22 May 1860, comprising 26 members from 16 electoral districts in the legislative assembly and 15 members in the legislative council.³³⁵ Bowen's private secretary, Robert George Wyndham Herbert, then aged just 28 and fresh from England, was the colony's first premier and colonial secretary.³³⁶

Queensland, in the early years of the colony following separation from New South Wales, was a remote and sparsely populated territory.³³⁷ Much of it was unexplored and there were few urban

³³⁴ Fitzgerald, p. 112

³³⁵ Fitzgerald, p. 112; *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based upon Official Information*, p. 164.

³³⁶ Fitzgerald, p. 113; *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based upon Official Information*, p. 164

³³⁷ In 1861, the European population of Queensland was only 30,059 people, comprising 27,133 in the south, 2,840 in the centre, and 86 in the north. (Glen Lewis. *A History of the*

centres outside of Ipswich, Brisbane and the Darling Downs in the southeast corner. There were no railways, no industry of note, and its vast mineral wealth³³⁸ had yet to be discovered. Land was the one commodity Queensland had in abundance, and pastoralism, chiefly on the Darling Downs, was the only activity that was established and generating revenue.³³⁹

At the time of separation, the pastoral industry provided 71 per cent of the new colony's revenue and 94 per cent of its export earnings. From 1860-67, following separation, the pastoral industry further expanded. The colony's progress was due to this ongoing development, coupled with an initial economic boom based on rail and construction activity.³⁴⁰

Politics in Queensland were conducted on similar lines to that of colonial parliaments elsewhere in Australia, based on the principles and ideals of British liberalism.³⁴¹ Because the squatters were the dominant group in the new colony, its parliament tended to be largely composed of property owners of different kinds, and "behind most of the major conflicts were issues concerning the dominance of special

Ports of Queensland: A Study in Economic Nationalism. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1973, p. 282)

³³⁸ There had been a gold strike at Canoona, north of Rockhampton, in 1858, but it soon petered out. (Fitzgerald, pp. 110-11)

³³⁹ Agriculture was insignificant, with only 3,353 acres under cultivation in 1860. (Fitzgerald, p. 126; *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based Upon Official Information*, p. 16)

³⁴⁰ Noel Loos. *Frontier Conflict in the Bowen District, 1861-1874.* MA thesis. James Cook University of North Queensland, 1970, p. 69; Lewis, pp. 25 & 28

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30. Queensland was the only Australian colony to begin with two houses of

kinds of property.”³⁴² Politics were parochial, with Governor Bowen remarking, “ministries are upset in Australia not so much on great principles of policy, but rather on the wrangles about the distribution of the general revenue among public works.”³⁴³ The inhabitants of Queensland, along with those in the other British colonies, believed they were duty bound to develop their country and environment in order to achieve economic progress, and this could best be expedited through large-scale immigration and railway-building directed towards more intensive land settlement.³⁴⁴

Tooloombah

This opportunity drew Douglas to the new pastoral frontier in Queensland.³⁴⁵ The Darling Downs had been on the geographical periphery of New South Wales, but following its inclusion in Queensland it was now at the heart of the new colony. Douglas sensed that there were future riches to be made in the colony’s northern districts and moved quickly, “hoping to push his fortune in the north.”³⁴⁶

In July 1860, while still living in Sydney, he purchased the property

parliament. (Fitzgerald, p. 113)

³⁴² A. A. Morrison. “Colonial Society 1860-1890.” *Queensland Heritage* no 1, 1966, p. 21, quoted in Lewis, p. 30

³⁴³ Lewis, p. 31

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ As early as May 1859 Douglas had expressed interest in leasing property in the Leichardt district, situated in present day north Queensland. However, he does not appear to have actually leased any runs in this district. (Letter from John Douglas, 17 May 1859. W. H. Wiseman Letterbook, Queensland State Archives, PRV/7208, Microfilm Z 316)

Tooloombah, north of Marlborough, in the Rockhampton district, as well as two adjacent runs, *Dundee* and *Montrose*.³⁴⁷ To pay for them he was obliged to enter into a mortgage agreement with the Sydney firm, Gilchrist, Watt & Co., for £5,000.³⁴⁸

A. H. Campbell, one of Douglas's station hands at *Talgai*, supervised the droving of some 1,500 head of cattle from *Talgai* to *Tooloombah* in 1860.³⁴⁹ While Douglas was living in Sydney and contesting the election for the seat of Camden, a cousin and close friend, David Armstrong and his wife Isabella, who was Mary Douglas's sister,

³⁴⁶"Darling Downs Elections." *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 6 March 1875, p. 2

³⁴⁷ Mason, p. 48; Lorna McDonald. *A History of the Beef Cattle Industry in the Fitzroy Region of Central Queensland, 1850s-1970s*. Brisbane, University of Queensland, 1985, pp. 156-57; "Runs Held by Members of Both Houses of Parliament." *Journals of the Queensland Legislative Council*, Session 2 of 1867-68, vol 11, p. 1046; *Queensland Government Gazette*, no 64, 20 October 1860, p. 367. *Tooloombah* was also known as *Langdale*. John Peter Campbell, an early speculator in pastoral runs, had taken up a number of leasehold blocks in the area in 1855 and applied for the land known as *Tooloombah* in July 1855. This property originally consisted of four separate pastoral runs, *Panuco*, *Tivola*, *Borenia* and *Tooloombah*. The licence was granted on 21 September 1859 and each run was twenty-five square miles (6,475.2 hectares) in area, a total of 100 square miles or 259 square kilometres. *Tooloombah* was transferred early in 1860 to J. A. Newman, who transferred it to A. P. Raymond and J. Cameron later that year. *Dundee* and *Montrose* had their licences granted on 17 October 1859. Douglas paid a combined rent of £60 per annum and an annual assessment fee of £20 for each run, £180 in total. ("Runs Held by Members of Both Houses of Parliament." *Journals of the Queensland Legislative Council*, Session 2 of 1867-68, vol 2, p. 1046)

³⁴⁸ *Mortgages no 78. Book 1*, Queensland State Archives, SCT/CD I. The mortgage was secured over 1,900 head of cattle and fifteen stock horses

³⁴⁹ Bird, pp. 176-77. Campbell spent six months working for Douglas at *Tooloombah* before working for the Archer Brothers. There appear to be inconsistencies in Bird's account. He states that Campbell, who later became the North Rockhampton Town Clerk, left *Tooloombah* after Douglas sold the property to O. C. J. Beardmore in late 1860. However, although Douglas sold the property to Charles and Frederick Beardmore, the final transaction took place in May 1868. (*Mortgages, Book VII, no 176*. Queensland State Archives SCT/CD I.) Bird also states that Campbell delivered the cattle to *Tooloombah* in late May 1860 whereas Douglas only purchased the property in July of that year.

managed the property. They ran the property until May 1868, Douglas considering Armstrong to be a steady, safe fellow, who was also “a fine man, full of fun.”³⁵⁰

After resigning the seat of Camden in July 1861, the Douglas family moved to *Tooolombah*, arriving in the district a month later.³⁵¹ A reflective Douglas later conceded that:

If he had stayed on the Downs it would have been far more in his private interest, but he went up north, thinking

³⁵⁰ Mason, p. 45; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 27 July 1898. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; McDonald (1985), p. 157. Douglas was related, for Armstrong’s father was Douglas’s mother’s uncle. Before managing the property in 1860, Armstrong and his wife Isabella, who were married in Wollongong in 1856 (*New South Wales Marriage Certificate* no 2183/1856) were living on a dairy farm in the Illawarra and prior to that were living on the Murrumbidgee, both in New South Wales. Isabella Armstrong (nee Simpson) was Mary Douglas’s younger sister. After working for Douglas at *Tooolombah*, the family settled in Maryborough where Armstrong managed a sugar estate before being appointed to inspector of distilleries and later returned to his native Scotland before returning to Brisbane where he died in 1884. (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 27 July 1898, Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers.) *Tooolombah* was not the only property Douglas purchased in central Queensland for he is recorded as transferring his leases for the *Mount Pleasant*, *Llandilo*, *Llangollen*, *Killaney* and *The Lagoons* runs in the Leichhardt district to Hood and Manning in 1860. (Transfer of Runs. *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 2, no 28, 20 April 1861, p. 224.) These holdings and the speed and manner in which they were transferred were most unusual. Douglas and Hood purchased them from Charles James Clarke of Gayndah after 1 July 1860. Before the year was out they had then been transferred to Douglas who shortly afterwards transferred them to Hood and Manning. (See Queensland State Archives CLO/N1-3, *Register of Runs-Leichardt District*, 24340, in particular nos. 60/1168, 60/1566 and 60/3004.) Why these complicated arrangements and transfers took place is unknown, as the then prevailing New South Wales Land Act placed no restriction on the acquiring of properties outside of the settled districts of the Colony. Neither did the first Queensland land legislation, the *Unoccupied Crown Lands Occupation Act*, which replaced the New South Wales legislative land arrangements and was assented to on 18 September 1860. (Bernays, p. 308.) Douglas also purchased 45 acres in the parish of Allora, between Toowoomba and Warwick, for £45 on 5 March 1860. (Queensland State Archives, 47/1, vol 1. *Deed of Grant 595 of 1860*; *Queensland Government Gazette*, no 79, 29 December 1860, p. 539)

³⁵¹ Mason, p. 46

he could do better.³⁵²

Never a hands-on squatter, he continued to leave the running of the property to Armstrong, and became involved in the social and political life of the burgeoning district.³⁵³ Rockhampton, the centre of the region, had been proclaimed a municipality only one year earlier. Governor Bowen, then on a tour of the colony, wrote of it as, “a small hamlet of wooden huts with scarcely five hundred inhabitants, who had recently settled down in the primeval wilderness.”³⁵⁴ Despite its small size and recent origin, Rockhampton was by 1861, “a stirring and lively township,” and one that “presented a busy scene, as many expeditions ... were daily starting north and west [from there] in search of country.”³⁵⁵ The district had boomed with the discovery of gold at Canoona in 1858, but although this field had been a duffer, a steady stream of pastoral speculators traversing the central and northern districts ensured Rockhampton’s continued growth and viability.³⁵⁶

Douglas continued to purchase land, paying £30 for a block at the

³⁵² “Mr. Douglas at Drayton.” *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 26 September 1883

³⁵³ Douglas was on the inaugural committee of the Rockhampton School of Arts. (Bird, p. 34; “School of Arts.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 27 July 1861; “Inauguration of the School of Arts.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 25 February 1865)

³⁵⁴ Stanley Lane-Poole, ed. *Thirty Years of Colonial Government: A Selection from the Despatches and Letters of the Right Honourable Sir George Ferguson Bowen, K.C.M.G.* London, Longmans Green. 1889. Vol 1, p. 240

³⁵⁵ De Satge, p. 138

³⁵⁶ Mason, p. 46

inaugural land sale in the new township of Bowen.³⁵⁷ It is likely that this purchase was for speculation or investment purposes only, as he never subsequently lived or spent any time in Bowen.

Douglas did not live at *Tooloombah* for long. The property was some 98 miles (159 kilometres) north of Rockhampton and travel to and from it was arduous and time-consuming. It was isolated as well, with only a fortnightly coach service from Rockhampton to the property in 1862 and a round trip of 56 miles (92 kilometres) to collect the mail at Marlborough, then the “outside post-office to the north.”³⁵⁸ His new wife Mary, who had spent all of her life in London and Sydney, may well have found the isolation and privations intolerable, despite having her sister Isabella for company. Coote, writing in 1882 about the Darling Downs in the period up to separation, has provided us with a vivid picture of what life was like for the few settlers. *Tooloombah* in 1861 would have been even worse.

The course of life was monotonous, unless a flood or a drought, or an election disturbed it. Public amusements there were none ... there must have been a good deal of self-contained life in those days. In truth there could have been little room for anything else. Travelling was slow, sometimes difficult, mostly expensive, and in wet

³⁵⁷ “Port Denison Land Sale.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 26 October 1861, p. 3

³⁵⁸ Pugh, Theophilus P. *Pugh’s Queensland Almanac*. Brisbane, 1863, p. 197. The post-office was first established at *Marlborough Station* in 1861. (*Pugh’s Almanac*, 1862, p. 126)

weather well nigh impossible.³⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Douglas certainly enjoyed it, as he wistfully told his son Edward some 45 years later:

I knew the district when the Archers first took up *Gracemere*. They were very interesting times and I was among the first out on Peak Downs. There was no payment of members then, and no railways, and no fenced in country. We rejoiced in our youth. It was a beautiful time, never to come back again.³⁶⁰

While Douglas may well have enjoyed the solitude, Mary probably found it insufferable.

It was no surprise, then, that by the end of 1861 Mary and John Douglas had left the district, taking up residence in Brisbane.³⁶¹

While Brisbane was very small compared to Sydney, having only 7,000 inhabitants in 1861, it was considerably larger than

Rockhampton, which had a mere 800.³⁶² By 1863, Douglas was

³⁵⁹ William Coote. *History of the Colony of Queensland from 1770 to the Close of the Year 1881*. Brisbane, William Thorne, 1882, pp. 234-35. For a good account of the isolation and hardships encountered by these early settlers, see Henry Ling Roth. *The Discovery and Settlement of Port Mackay, Queensland: With Numerous Illustrations, Charts and Maps, and Some Notes on the Natural History of the District*. Halifax, England, F. King & Sons, 1908, pp. 62-65

³⁶⁰ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 28 September 1897. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/15

³⁶¹ Eve Douglas, p. 7; *Queensland Post Office Directory*, 1868 & 1874. Their house was on the corner of Wickham Terrace and Lilley Street and about 1875 became the Brisbane Girls Grammar School's inaugural premises when Douglas leased it to them. The family remained in Brisbane, moving to Bartley's Hill, now the site of St Margaret's School. The Douglas's home on Wickham Terrace no longer exists.

³⁶² Frederick A. Algar. *A Handbook to Queensland*. London, 1861, p. 13

known as “a retired squatter” despite being only 35³⁶³ and still owning *Tooloombah*. Nevertheless, he continued to take a keen interest in the district and nominated to contest the parliamentary election for the seat of Port Curtis when it fell vacant in April 1863.

Douglas experienced ongoing financial difficulties with *Tooloombah*, for the interest rate on the £5,000 of borrowed money was 12.5 per cent.³⁶⁴ He was forced to rapidly stock the property to help pay for its purchase, with his herd of cattle increasing from 1,991 head in 1860 to over 6,000 in 1867.³⁶⁵ However, the financial recession of 1866 was to be his undoing. He was not alone in his predicament, for the effect of the 1866 crash on most Queensland pastoralists was profound. As a squatter at the time noted:

The panic of 1866, the influence of which was felt in Queensland for several years after, played the mischief with all pastoralists who were either largely in debt or whose credit was not good. Many good men and true went down then, and many a good property was bought for little by rising men who took their good fortune on the hop, several of these bargains leading to considerable fortunes. Large sacrifices continued to be made by sellers in the dull time between 1866 and 1872, notably in

³⁶³ “Preliminary Meeting of the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 19 April 1863

³⁶⁴ Eve Douglas, p. 7

³⁶⁵ *Mortgages no 78, Book I*, Queensland State Archives, SCT/CD I. According to the *Tooloombah Cattle Books*, the number of cattle on the property at the end of each year was: 1860, 1,702; 1861, 2,407; 1862, 3,996; 1863, 3,539; 1864, 4,461; 1865, 5,147; 1866, 6,242; 1867, 6,238.

outside stations.³⁶⁶

Douglas had the misfortune to be one of those “largely” in debt and holding an “outside station.”³⁶⁷ In 1867, he was forced to transfer the *Tooloombah* property to Gilchrist Watt & Co,³⁶⁸ who financed the purchase of the property by Fred and Owen Beardmore the following year.³⁶⁹ However, the sale of the property did not fully clear Douglas’s debt, resulting in his insolvency in 1872.³⁷⁰ As Douglas ruefully noted at the time, “he had made a little money in the country and he was sorry to say he had lost a good deal in it.”³⁷¹ Nevertheless, he could console himself with the knowledge that although he and his fellow squatters:

were all speculators, more or less, but in every instance their souls were not bound up in their breeches pockets. There were some persons who had higher ideas than that of merely making money - who desired at the same time to benefit the country in which they lived.³⁷²

³⁶⁶ De Satge, p. 203

³⁶⁷ He was not alone, with James Taylor, a squatter of thirty years experience and the member for Western Downs, informing parliament in early 1868, “Ninety-nine out of every hundred squatters in Queensland were insolvent.” (Mr. Taylor. “Pastoral Tenancy Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 6, 1868, p. 1018

³⁶⁸ *Queensland Government Gazette* vol 8, no 81, 5 October 1867, p. 900

³⁶⁹ McDonald (1985), p. 157. The final payment to Douglas took place in May 1868. (*Mortgages*. Book 7, no 176. Queensland State Archives)

³⁷⁰ *Estate of Hon. John Douglas no 818*. Queensland State Archives. Despite selling the property, he still owed money on it.

³⁷¹ “Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 2

³⁷² Mr Douglas. “Claim of the Hon. Louis Hope.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 596

Port Curtis by-election

Successfully established as a pastoralist in the district, Douglas now sought an opportunity to enter the Queensland parliament. He sorely missed politics, “that most precarious and most absorbing of all pursuits.”³⁷³ Rockhampton was included in the electoral district of Port Curtis, which in the first Queensland elections held in 1860 comprised all of Queensland north of Wide Bay. Charles Fitzsimmons, a Rockhampton resident, was its inaugural member,³⁷⁴ followed by Alfred Sandeman, a Rockhampton squatter, who resigned on 11 April 1863.³⁷⁵

The local paper, the *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, was overjoyed by this news, “Sandeman has resigned. The three words alone form by far the best editorial ever submitted to local perusal.”³⁷⁶

Sandeman’s resignation provided an opportunity for Douglas to run for parliament in an electorate where he held major property interests. That Douglas resided in Brisbane and could therefore easily attend parliament if elected also counted in his favour, especially given Sandeman’s extended parliamentary absence. Douglas was exceptionally quick in putting his hand up as a

³⁷³ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 14 February 1885. Griffith Papers. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales, MSQ 186, pp. 92-96

³⁷⁴ Waterson (1972), pp. 57-58

³⁷⁵ Bird, p. 32; Bernays, p. 9; *Statistical Register of Queensland for 1863*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1864, p. 17; Waterson (1972), p. 163

³⁷⁶ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 18 April 1863

candidate, placing a notice in the *Brisbane Courier* only two days after Sandeman's resignation and a full five days before the electors of Rockhampton read about it in their local paper.³⁷⁷

In his notice, Douglas pledged to oppose the present administration:

I shall thus be more free to act and to enforce attention
for your requirements than I would be as a mere retainer
of an incoherent ministry.³⁷⁸

Although denying rumours that he was seeking the post "to obtain a government appointment,"³⁷⁹ Douglas indicated that he could be persuaded to accept a ministerial position under certain circumstances if it was offered.³⁸⁰

Thus Douglas, while making it plain that he would oppose the government of the day, had also indicated that he would accept a position in the Herbert ministry if offered it. The *Rockhampton Bulletin* was less than impressed, preferring a candidate who would put local interests ahead of policy considerations,³⁸¹ while the *Brisbane Courier* considered Douglas's notice to be a "somewhat

³⁷⁷ Ibid. The *Rockhampton Bulletin* expressed its disapproval at this undue haste and proposed for the "present: dismissing all consideration of the subject."

³⁷⁸ John Douglas. "To the Electors of the Port Curtis District." *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1863

³⁷⁹ Ibid. Despite this disavowal, the *Brisbane Courier* noted that, although Douglas had "avowed his hostility to the present advisers of the government, it is urged in well-informed circles that he is, notwithstanding, the best favoured man (if elected) to supply the anticipated vacancy in the ministry." (*Brisbane Courier*, 18 April 1863, p. 2)

³⁸⁰ John Douglas. "To the Electors of the Port Curtis District." *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1863

³⁸¹ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 18 April 1863

inordinate affectation of disinterestedness and independence.”³⁸²

The nomination and election process for this seat is worth examining in some detail, because it illustrates how seriously colonial politics were taken despite the tiny number of electors involved.

Representative democracy in Australia was less than a decade old - a hard earned right to be cherished, nurtured and exercised.

Elections were the biggest game in town, a chance for the enfranchised to have their say on how the colony should be governed. Moreover, while the number of Port Curtis electors was in inverse proportion to the vast and isolated district,³⁸³ the stakes were high for the candidates, as careers and fortunes could be made or broken on the outcome.

A preliminary meeting was held on 18 April 1863 at the Royal Fitzroy Hotel, Rockhampton, “for the purpose of taking steps with respect to filling up the vacancy.”³⁸⁴ Several names were put forward including that of John Douglas, who was nominated by the prominent Albrecht Feez, seconded by Ranken and endorsed by Haynes. Feez reminded those present that Douglas was:

a gentleman well known in the place, He was a man of sufficient means and leisure to devote the whole of his time to their service ... He was a man of great ability, and

³⁸² *Brisbane Courier*, 18 April 1863, p. 2

³⁸³ There were some 282 freehold electors out of a total number of 1,266 electors. (Statistical *Register of Queensland for 1864*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1865, p. 18)

³⁸⁴ “Preliminary Meeting of the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 19 April 1863

had proffered his services. If he made a promise, he would stick to it.³⁸⁵

Ranken believed that “the interests of the community would be safe in Mr. Douglas’s hands,” while Haynes opined that Douglas “had so much time at his disposal that he would be enabled to devote a great portion of it to the service of the electorate,” while the fact that he was resident in Brisbane was also to their advantage.³⁸⁶ One wag wanted to know why, if Douglas “had so much time and money, he could not spare a little of the one and the other to visit his constituency?” This remark was greeted with loud applause, and the meeting broke up after those present nominated several other candidates.³⁸⁷

A leading contender for the seat was Alexander Fyfe, a squatter and auctioneer who lived in the district on the property *Wipend* and had previously been a member of the Victorian legislative assembly.³⁸⁸ 126 constituents pleaded for him to stand,³⁸⁹ but he declined, having “resolved to abstain from political life.”³⁹⁰ Unfortunately, for his supporters, Fyfe was out of town on urgent business, unaware of the

³⁸⁵ “Preliminary Meeting of the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 19 April 1863

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 18 April 1863, p. 2. Fyfe was born in 1827 in Scotland, arriving in Victoria in 1848. He married Jane Bailiff in Geelong and was member for the legislative council for the town, 1854-6 and the legislative assembly, 1856-7. He was then a pastoralist at Peak Downs in the Rockhampton district and was to represent Rockhampton in the legislative assembly from 20 June 1870 to 24 November 1873. A Presbyterian, he died at Preston, Victoria, on 1 May 1903.

³⁸⁹ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 22 April 1863

impending by-election, and unreachable. His views on the matter were not widely known, and so his nomination was put forward to the next round.³⁹¹ William Walsh, another of those nominated, also declined to stand, saying he did not wish to be “pitted” against John Douglas.³⁹² A Mr Goggs expressed an interest in contesting the seat,³⁹³ but later withdrew due to ill health.³⁹⁴ The final contender was Charles Fitzsimmons,³⁹⁵ but he, too, declined to nominate.³⁹⁶

Not one of the candidates was present at the subsequent formal nomination meeting, a matter that caused much comment. Captain Feez again nominated Douglas, noting that he was “a man of high ability and large estate” and would “carry great weight” in parliament.³⁹⁷ Concerns were expressed at the meeting about Douglas not residing in the electorate. William Rea, a prominent local identity, was also annoyed that Douglas was not personally present: “If you are worth representing at all it is worth your representative’s while to meet you face to face.”³⁹⁸

The returning officer called for a show of hands, with Fyfe receiving

³⁹⁰ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 30 May 1863

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 22 April 1863

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

³⁹⁵ Waterson (1972), pp. 57-58

³⁹⁶ “The Port Curtis Electoral Sweep.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

³⁹⁷ “Nomination of Candidates for the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.* This local parochialism was a feature of colonial politics and an obstacle Douglas would frequently encounter throughout his political career.

49 votes, Douglas eight, Walsh only four and Fitzsimmons, the inaugural member for Rockhampton, 25.³⁹⁹ Fyfe was undoubtedly the most popular candidate, for he was a local man with previous parliamentary experience. The same applied to Fitzsimmons, although he was less popular, for the electorate had had actual experience of him as their representative. Support for Douglas was paltry in comparison, despite him also having parliamentary experience in New South Wales. This was because, although he owned property in the district, he resided in Brisbane, and this was held against him.

Aware of the need to be physically present in order to shore up his vote, Douglas arrived in the district on the following day and immediately commenced campaigning; addressing his supporters that same evening.⁴⁰⁰ “I am here for the purpose of explaining my political opinions. I come here with the wish to serve your interests.”⁴⁰¹

However, he warned the crowd that if elected, he would retain the right to “the most perfect freedom of action.” Douglas opposed the present government, for:

the object of forming an opposition is in my opinion to
form a safeguard and check against the exercise of

³⁹⁹ “Nomination of Candidates for the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863. The poll was set down for 12 May 1863.

⁴⁰⁰ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

⁴⁰¹ “Mr. Douglas and the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

undue power on the part of the government. If there is not an organised opposition, a government has its opponents at its mercy, and a true opposition is simply impossible.⁴⁰²

Douglas strongly supported the development of railway and telegraph lines to the northern part of the colony.⁴⁰³ While he opposed the idea of separation, he would not rule it out if parliament continued to oppose the advancement and improvement of the northern districts. He was also not afraid to disagree with his potential constituents, telling one questioner who complained about £2,000 being spent on the Brisbane Botanical Gardens instead of roads that it was “not at all too much for the purpose.”⁴⁰⁴

The *Rockhampton Bulletin*, while still favouring Fyfe, was impressed with Douglas’s performance, and observed of him, in a humorous piece, entitled *The Port Curtis Electoral Sweep*: “He took his first pipe opener last night, and somewhat astonished those who contested that he had nothing but a turn of speed to recommend him.”⁴⁰⁵

Support for Douglas was growing in Gladstone as well, with a local correspondent correctly remarking; “At present the current feeling is in his favour in this township, and doubtless a personal visit will

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Douglas’s lifelong passion for a railway network to secure the economic development of the colony was cogently set out by him in an 1882 paper in the *Victorian Review*. (Douglas (1882))

⁴⁰⁴ “Mr. Douglas and the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

⁴⁰⁵ “The Port Curtis Electoral Sweep.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

secure him most of the votes.”⁴⁰⁶ In Douglas’s favour was that Fyfe and Fitzsimmons withdrew before election day, while Walsh declined to be nominated. The *Rockhampton Bulletin* threw its support behind Douglas, for in comparison to Fyfe, Douglas “has undoubtedly a greater diplomatic forte, a more suasive demeanour, and ... an equally honest intention.”⁴⁰⁷

By polling day, Douglas was the “only *bona fide* candidate.”⁴⁰⁸ 95 electors cast their votes in Rockhampton, 70 voting for Douglas, 24 for Fyfe and one for Fitzsimmons,⁴⁰⁹ while in Gladstone Douglas received 39 of the 42 votes, Walsh collecting the remaining three.⁴¹⁰

The *Rockhampton Bulletin* was pleased with the outcome:

We trust we have, at any rate, secured our chief desideratum, a good member, and, with the full belief that we have done so, beg to offer our sincere congratulations to Mr. Douglas.⁴¹¹

Douglas, at the age of 34, had successfully contested his third election and secured his first seat in the Queensland parliament. He

⁴⁰⁶ “Gladstone.” *Brisbane Courier*, 9 May 1863. Douglas did visit Gladstone, carrying all before him. (“Rockhampton.” *Brisbane Courier*, 15 May 1863, p. 3; “Gladstone.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1863, p. 3)

⁴⁰⁷ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 9 May 1863

⁴⁰⁸ “Rockhampton.” *Brisbane Courier*, 15 May 1863, p. 3

⁴⁰⁹ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 13 May 1863. It was just as well that neither Fyfe or Fitzsimmons did not place ahead of Douglas, as both, despite being nominated in their absence, had previously indicated that they would not be contesting the seat!

⁴¹⁰ “Gladstone.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1863, p. 3. As the Gladstone correspondent noted in relation to the poor showing by Walsh, he would “doubtless have carried the majority in this town had we not been aware that he did not wish to be ‘backed’ against Douglas.

was fortunate in that his chief opponent, Alexander Fyfe, was unable to stand due to pressure of business, for had Fyfe stood he most probably would have won.

Port Curtis election

However, on 22 May 1863, the same day Douglas left Rockhampton for Brisbane to take up his seat, parliament was dissolved, the ministry lacking sufficient support for its *Railways Bill*, and a general election was called.⁴¹² Thus, 10 days after being elected to parliament, Douglas had to recontest his seat. He was furious. In a notice to the Port Curtis electorate, he expressed his disgust at the current state of affairs contending that his constituents:

have thus, for a time, been defrauded of the increased representation which you reasonably expected, and which it would have been my privilege to have advocated.⁴¹³

Despite only being recently elected, he implored them to re-elect him, and confidently reminded them, “you already know me.” To those who were not familiar with him, he informed them that he was a:

constitutional liberal - not desiring change for the sake of change, but solicitous to secure that gradual progress which can alone give permanence and solidity to our political structure.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹¹ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 13 May 1863

⁴¹² “Epitome.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1863

⁴¹³ “To the Electors of Port Curtis.” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 May 1863

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Douglas had won the recent election because he opposed the ministry. Aware of the strong feelings in his electorate for separation from the southern part of the colony, he had cleverly, if somewhat cynically, made this the central plank in his campaign, despite having earlier indicated that he did not believe it a viable alternative.⁴¹⁵ Nevertheless, it was a popular decision, as a local correspondent noted:

We have every confidence in our envoy Mr. Douglas, and he cannot go too far in expressing our indignation at the long and patiently borne treatment we have received.⁴¹⁶

The push for separation arose due to funds being earmarked for a railway line from Ipswich to Dalby at the expense of similar infrastructure for the northern districts.⁴¹⁷ Douglas sided with his constituents and recommended that the district should “go for a railway too.”⁴¹⁸ In chairing an ‘indignation meeting’ about this matter at Rockhampton shortly after his election, Douglas incurred the wrath of the *Brisbane Courier* newspaper, who considered his address to be:

worthy of a minister of the crown, for it contained nothing, committed its author to nothing, and ended in vapour. He was not prepared to say anything, and could not even enlighten his audience as to the comparative cost of

⁴¹⁵ “Mr. Douglas and the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland*, 29 April 1863. Douglas had advised his constituents to remain part of the colony for as long “as you have a fair share” of the colony’s resources and finances.

⁴¹⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 22 May 1863

⁴¹⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1863

⁴¹⁸ “Rockhampton.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 May 1863

common roads and railways. Of his own knowledge he appeared to know nothing at all, and consequently betrayed no principles and enunciated no policy.⁴¹⁹

Douglas's strong support for separation, his opposition to the ministry that was seen by many in the northern districts as ignoring their needs, and the fact that he had only a few weeks before won the seat in a by-election, made him a near certainty to be returned in the general election for the same seat. So confident of success was Douglas that he did not return from Brisbane, to the district.⁴²⁰ As he correctly observed shortly before the polling day, "the result of the late election justifies me in claiming a renewal of that confidence which you have already bestowed on me."⁴²¹ The *Rockhampton Bulletin* newspaper concurred, believing that:

we can hardly suppose there will be a vestige of opposition to Mr. Douglas ... and his re-election will be necessarily exempt from any excitement or iteration of already known political opinions.⁴²²

Indeed, Douglas and the paper's confidence were well placed, for as the only candidate, he was duly elected unopposed.⁴²³

Douglas had now been elected to a colonial parliament for the fourth

⁴¹⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1863

⁴²⁰ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 6 June 1863

⁴²¹ "To the Electors of Port Curtis." *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 6 June 1863

⁴²² *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 6 June 1863

⁴²³ "The Re-election of Mr. John Douglas." *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 10 June 1863. The poll was set down for 9 June 1863 and the writ for the election was returned on 19 June. (*Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 4 no 48, 20 June

time. It marked his final transition from pastoralist to politician. It would lead him to the Queensland premiership and a life dedicated to public service. Few would have predicted this at the time, but, as will be seen, Douglas's performance in the upcoming parliamentary session would demonstrate to many that he was a rising star in the north, one destined for some form of future greatness in the public arena.

Chapter 6: The 'Star of the North:' Douglas and the Queensland Parliament, 1863

In 1863, there was a mood of optimism in the colony. The settlement of Somerset at the tip of Cape York had been established by John Jardine in March of that year, as had the Queensland Turf Club, while educational choices were increased by the establishment of All Hallows Convent and the Ipswich Grammar School in Brisbane and Ipswich respectively. 1863 was also the year Pacific Islanders were first brought to Queensland to work in the emerging sugar industry.⁴²⁴ The population of Queensland had doubled from 25,000 to 50,000 people since 1859, while the colony's revenue during this period had similarly increased, from £178,000 to £356,000 per annum.⁴²⁵

Politics in Queensland were in their infancy, with the new colony not yet four years old. Nevertheless, a measure of stability was provided through Governor Bowen and Premier Herbert continuing to hold office. Responsible government was still a relatively new concept, taken very seriously by all concerned. However, as the historian Manning Clark observed, responsible government modelled on the British experience and exported to the Australian colonies assumed two main political parties, each with clearly defined principles and

⁴²⁴ Geoff Gaylard. *The Moreton Bay Courier to the Courier Mail, 1846-1992*. Melbourne, Portside editions, 1992, p. 38

⁴²⁵ Bernays, p. 28

interests.⁴²⁶ This did not hold in Queensland, where there were differences of interest, but no serious differences of principles or doctrine.⁴²⁷ Consequently, parliamentarians tended to associate with men of like interest or coalesce around those with powerful ambitions and personalities for in the absence of political parties, politicians “stood out above the melee of politics.”⁴²⁸

These associations in no way resembled the disciplined political parties of today. They were fluid class based ideological groupings, bringing parliamentarians together to get a job done or to implement a program. In the absence of parties and party discipline, the loose interest groups that did form did so only because they shared some common objective, usually of limited duration.⁴²⁹ This invariably led to shifting alliances and frequent disagreements, and resulted in a more complex system than that found today.⁴³⁰ Often, men who were fiercely opposed to each other would suddenly appear together in the ministry. “Measures not men was the catchcry.”⁴³¹ This meant ministries came and went more rapidly than is the case today, and

⁴²⁶ Clark (1955), pp. 321-22

⁴²⁷ According to McNaughtan, this was because the colonies were engrossed in the tactics of getting wealth, and because the ethics underlying economic legislation came as common property from England. (I. D. McNaughtan. “Colonial Liberalism.” In, Gordon Greenwood, ed. *Australia: A Social and Political History*. London, Angus and Robertson, 1955, p. 111)

⁴²⁸ M. B. Cameron. W. H. Groom: Agrarian Liberal. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1965, p. 29

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ John Gray. Liquor and Politics 1859-1904. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1967, pp. 36-37

⁴³¹ Robyn Schmidt. Joshua P. Bell as a Reflection of the Pure Merinos in Queensland, 1860-1880. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1972, p. 24

they did not change only after an election.⁴³² This, as will be shown, all too frequently ensured that politics in Queensland under responsible government in the mid to late nineteenth century was stormy and unstable, with its parliaments divided into a number of regional and personal cliques who fought against themselves for “place and pay” or for some “fancied local advantage.”⁴³³

The main issues of the day for colonial politicians were land, railways, immigration, and ensuring that their constituents did not miss any largesse available from the colonial treasury. These issues were linked, for it was believed that economic progress would be expedited through large-scale policies of immigration and railway-building directed towards intensive land settlement.⁴³⁴ Moreover, economic progress and development was sacrosanct, for not only was development for its own sake considered important, but it was also generally believed that moral progress naturally followed on from economic success.⁴³⁵

⁴³² Hirst (2002), p. 66

⁴³³ Gray, pp. 36-37; Clark (1955), p. 322; Schmidt, pp. 22-28. As Wilson colourfully observed, parliamentary politics in Queensland was not regulated by organised political parties, but by a balance of “individual ambitions and private spites.” (M. M. Wilson. *Party Politics in Queensland, 1859-1900*. MA thesis. University of Queensland, 1938, p. 4)

⁴³⁴ Lewis, p. 31

⁴³⁵ Ibid. Douglas was a strong believer in progress, observing in Bundaberg in 1878, “Even in his short life he could look back to the time when the country was not even stocked with sheep and cattle. Now it teemed with human beings all preserving and striving to obtain a just reward for the labor.” (“The Governor at Bundaberg.” *Bundaberg and Mount Perry Mail*, 29 March 1878, p. 2)

The second parliament

It was against this background that Queensland's second parliament met on 21 July 1863, with Herbert continuing as premier after successfully contesting the seat of West Moreton.⁴³⁶ Douglas took his seat of Port Curtis, having already committed himself to opposing the premier and his ministry, for he considered them to be, "a piece of incongruous patch work."⁴³⁷

This was not surprising, as the dominant feature of Queensland politics during this period was the lack of any party organisation.⁴³⁸ This absence of political groupings meant that there was ample scope for members to display their independence and vote in accordance with their beliefs, so long as they also primed the parish-pump for the benefit of their electorate. Men like Douglas were expected to be "independent" and "to hold ideas that were very much their own," with their strength of character and attitudes to life being of major importance.⁴³⁹ However, although independent of party, they needed to be closely aligned to their constituents' interests if they wished to be re-elected to office.⁴⁴⁰

There had been a significant turnover of members in the three years between the first and second parliaments, with 12 current legislative

⁴³⁶ Bernays, p. 28

⁴³⁷ John Douglas. "To the Electors of the Port Curtis District." *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1863

⁴³⁸ Morrison (1961), p. 557

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ This was because, in the days before political parties, politicians were judged almost

assembly members, almost 50 per cent of the total, returned since the historical first sitting on 7 May 1860.⁴⁴¹ It is worthwhile to examine the characteristics of the men, and they were all men, Douglas worked with, for it offers insight into how Queensland politicians compared to Douglas.

In a religious age, they were all practising Christians. The majority, 15 of the 26, were Anglicans like Douglas. The remainder comprised five Presbyterians, two Wesleyans, a Methodist, a Congregationalist, a Baptist and William Kennedy, the sole Roman Catholic.

Not surprisingly, not one of them had been born in the colony. What was surprising was that none was born in the Australian colonies either. With the exception of Theophilus Pugh, born in the West Indies where his father was a Wesleyan missionary, all were born in the United Kingdom. The majority, 13, were born in England, seven in Scotland, three in Ireland and one in Wales. It is unknown where William Kennedy, who arrived in Queensland in 1841, was born. The Scottish influence was particularly strong, even more so when including Douglas who, although born in London, considered himself Scottish.⁴⁴²

Many of the members came from humble backgrounds. William Groom's father was a cordwainer, and Charles Lilley's father was a

solely on what they could do for the electorate. (Hirst (2002), p. 70)

⁴⁴¹ There were actually 13 changes, the thirteenth being the move of Premier Herbert from the Leichardt to West Moreton electorate.

⁴⁴² "Mr. Douglas on the Dominion of Australia." *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1874, p. 5

bootmaker. Others were the sons of farmers, merchants, clergymen or professionals. Only three, Douglas, Gilbert Elliott and Robert Mackenzie, were of aristocratic birth.

The parliament was an interesting combination of 'gentlemen' and self-made men, especially Groom, who came to Australia in 1849 as a convict sentenced to seven years transportation for stealing. Fourteen were squatters, five were in the legal profession, four were newspaper proprietors, and one was a doctor, with merchants making up the remainder. Its composition demonstrated that the 'establishment' was characterised by the possession of property and wealth rather than by birth.⁴⁴³

It was a diverse and combustible mix. Although Douglas was bound to many through common ties of country, religion and profession, in other ways his beliefs and principles were at variance with the majority, as this chapter will demonstrate. He was a squatter who supported small farmers against pastoralists. Although devoted to the Church of England, he pushed for state support of denominational schools against the wishes of the Anglican majority. An aristocrat by birth, he was a liberal, while the other two aristocrats were conservatives. Moreover, in his upbringing, manner, commitment to duty, sense of fair play and respect for decorum, Douglas demonstrated very different values and behaviour to many of the self-made men inhabiting the parliamentary benches with him.

⁴⁴³ Marion Powell. *The Rise, Causes and Consequences of the Crisis of 1866* in

As he himself once remarked to his constituents:

Whatever faults I may have, gentlemen, and I am
conscious of very many, they are not those of meanness,
or of sordid avarice based on political treachery.⁴⁴⁴

Railway policy

Douglas was delighted to again be in the political arena, representing his electorate at the very centre of power and influence. On his first day in parliament, he presented a petition from his constituents requesting that there be no railway construction in the south of the colony unless the northern districts received a railway as well.⁴⁴⁵ It was not surprising that Douglas's constituents felt this way, for there was keen competition between the various districts over the siting of the colony's first railway.

In presenting this petition, Douglas was conveying the anger of his electorate whose voters believed that parliament had neglected them when constructing a railway line from Ipswich to Dalby instead of in their northern district. The residents of Central Queensland wanted their own east-west railway from Rockhampton to Peak Downs, claiming that they had greater need than settlers on the Darling Downs did, who had grown wealthy without the necessity of a

Queensland. B.Econ Hons thesis, University of Queensland, 1969, p. 50

⁴⁴⁴ Brisbane Election. *Brisbane Courier*, 7 November 1873, p. 2

⁴⁴⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 July 1863; "Legislative Assembly, 22 July 1863." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 2nd session, 1863, p. 4. A copy of the petition can be found in *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 2nd session, 1863, pp. 599-600

railway.⁴⁴⁶ Douglas had recently chaired an “indignation meeting” at Rockhampton on just this issue. Although his views were not as stridently expressed as many others, he sagely advised them to “go in for a railway too.”

Douglas’s initial address to the Queensland parliament consisted of mercilessly criticising the Herbert ministry for alleged misconduct, due to its attempted passing of a railway Bill at the end of the previous session, an action Douglas considered unconstitutional.⁴⁴⁷

Douglas opposed the ministry throughout the life of the second parliament and continually fought for the establishment of railway lines and road networks in the northern districts. In this endeavour, the local paper, the *Rockhampton and Central Queensland Advertiser*, faithfully supported him throughout.⁴⁴⁸

Initially the railway petitions Douglas presented on behalf of his Maryborough, Rockhampton and Gladstone constituents were treated with contempt by Governor Bowen’s private secretary, Henry Pitt, who, in his reply to Douglas, suggested that the petitioners should “devote to the practical object of improving their own local institutions the energies now wasted in fruitless endeavours of this

⁴⁴⁶ John Kerr. *Triumph of Narrow Gauge: A History of Queensland Railways*. Brisbane, Booralong Press, 1998, p. 23

⁴⁴⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 July 1863

⁴⁴⁸ See, for instance, *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 3 October 1863; *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 3 November 1863 and a *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 December 1863 article lampooning the *Queensland Times* for ridiculing Douglas’s stance on this matter.

nature.”⁴⁴⁹ This response, as well as Douglas’s reply, which hinted darkly that failure to act on the petition “may lead to the disintegration of the colony,” were published in full in the local newspaper and helped cement his support in the northern electorate by demonstrating his willingness to stand up to what were perceived to be dominating southern interests.⁴⁵⁰

The Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser considered the private secretary’s remarks “indecorous and heartless.”⁴⁵¹ However, the issue did not go away, and Douglas and his Central Queensland constituents were successful the following year when a route for the great northern line out of Rockhampton was approved and surveyed.⁴⁵²

Douglas foresaw the construction of railway lines being funded on similar lines to that in America, where “railways have been constructed and are now being successfully conducted by companies largely endowed with state lands.”⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 3 November 1863; Margaret Hardy. Constitutional and Political Developments in Queensland during the Governorship of Sir George Bowen (10th December 1859-4th January 1868.) MA thesis. University of Queensland, 1972, p. 75-76

⁴⁵⁰ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 3 November 1863

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Daddow, p. 21; Kerr (1998), p. 23

⁴⁵³ “Legislative Assembly, 5 August 1863.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 2nd session, 1863, p. 8. The American government passed the *Land Grant Act* of 1850 to encourage the growth of railways and help offset the financial burden construction entailed. The price of land was US\$1.25 per acre, later raised to US\$2.50 per acre. The Act made once unwanted land valuable, and during the life of the Act, from 1850 to 1871, American railways received 131 million acres of land grants.

Railway provision in the colony, and a sustainable means of funding them through land sales, were themes to which he would repeatedly return.⁴⁵⁴ The issues neatly married his two overriding concerns in his early parliamentary career: that of opening the north for development through the use of an efficient means of transport, and of finding a way to ensure it occurred in a manner that would fund and support the growth of the colony, not bankrupt it. Douglas believed that railways should be built out of the proceeds of land sales, coining the term “land-grant lines” for this process.⁴⁵⁵ To him they were:

not so much a source of profit at the present time, but as a means of colonisation ... So far as paying for their construction was concerned, there were ample means by the sale of crown lands in districts contiguous to the lines.⁴⁵⁶

The development of railways in the young colony was deemed

⁴⁵⁴ See William Coote. “Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas.” *The Week*, 19 May 1877, p. 616

⁴⁵⁵ Allan Morrison (1961), p. 569. For a detailed exposition of Douglas’s land-grant lines philosophy, see, John Douglas (1882), pp. 484-99. The idea that money received for the land itself would fund the development of railways was a variation of a concept called, in the language of imperial economics, the *Doctrine of Sufficient Price*. This process, seen to be self-financing and self-perpetuating, was successfully used by Edward Gibbon Wakefield to found the settlement of Canterbury at Christchurch, New Zealand in the 1840s. (James Morris, p. 142)

⁴⁵⁶ “Hon. John Douglas at Warwick.” *Queenslander*, 5 January 1867, p. 6. Later on that year Douglas proposed that land be sold on the foreign market, to “revive a healthy flow of those immigrants who come out with money in their pockets.” The benefits of this would include “the money still required to complete our railway system could thus be obtained with certainty, in connection with the still greater advantages which would result from the introduction of a class of persons possessing both capital and enterprise.” (*Queenslander*, 17 August 1867, p. 5)

essential, for railways were the most important symbol of a country's industrial, economic and financial power. The more youthful or impoverished the country, the more urgently it seized on the railway as the key to progress.⁴⁵⁷ Douglas, along with every other Queenslander, understood this.⁴⁵⁸ They knew that a railway line in their district would inject enormous investment and bring lasting economic and transportation developments. The question was not whether Queensland should build railways, but rather where was the best route to reap the rewards sufficient to justify the cost and effort required to build them.

Railways were ideally suited to Queensland, given its vast spaces and the poor state of the transport network in a colony without a navigable inland river system and atrocious roads all too often washed away by floods or turned to dust by droughts.⁴⁵⁹

Unfortunately, it also ignited the fierce regionalism prevalent in the colony, and frequently resulted in bitter rivalry between the southern and northern parts of the colony.

Premier Herbert envisaged a railway system operated by private enterprise based on the economical horse-drawn tramways he had seen in England. The Moreton Bay Tramway Company was established to build tramways in the colony but struggled to attract

⁴⁵⁷ Nicholas Faith. *The World the Railways Made*. London, the Bodley Head, 1990, pp. 5 & 59

⁴⁵⁸ John Douglas (1882), p. 484

⁴⁵⁹ Fitzgerald, p. 128

sufficient financial support.⁴⁶⁰

In July 1863, Douglas presented a petition on behalf of William Coote, the late manager and engineer of the Moreton Bay Tramway Company, to inquire into negotiations between the company and the government regarding a tramway from Ipswich to Dalby.⁴⁶¹

Incorporated by an act of parliament in 1861, the company had subscribers for £53,000 worth of shares for its proposal to build a standard gauge, horse-hauled, wooden-railed tramway from Ipswich to Toowoomba.⁴⁶² The money raised was insufficient, and the company became insolvent in late 1862,⁴⁶³ with its only asset - its survey plans – being sold to the government for £3,150.⁴⁶⁴ The company's failure demonstrated that private funding of railways was not viable and that the government would have to finance their construction in the colony.⁴⁶⁵

Nevertheless, in 1863 the government still wished to have a tramway built. While it initially rejected an offer from the eventual successful tender, Tooth & Company, to build the line by funding it from a combination of land grants and government debentures, it eagerly seized on their proposal to use a narrow-gauge (3' 6") light railway

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 263

⁴⁶¹ "Mr. Coote and the Moreton Bay Tramway Company." *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1863

⁴⁶² Kerr (1998), p. 4

⁴⁶³ Daddow, pp. 6-7

⁴⁶⁴ Coote embarked on a lengthy and ultimately unsuccessful campaign to secure some compensation from a government that had since utilised his initial work in the final tramway construction. (Mason, p. 56)

⁴⁶⁵ Kerr (1998), p. 4

line as advocated by its consultant, Irish engineer, Abraham Fitzgibbon.⁴⁶⁶ Coote had nothing but contempt for a railway based on such a narrow gauge, and did not hide his strong feelings on the matter.⁴⁶⁷

Douglas asked that a select committee consider the matters raised in the petition. The motion was lost, but not before the premier, Herbert, remarked that Douglas “had been made a cat’s paw of by the audacious petitioner.”⁴⁶⁸ The timing and manner of the petition was contentious, with Coote having been an unsuccessful candidate for the seat of South Brisbane, while at least six and possibly up to nine members of the opposition were shareholders of the defunct company.⁴⁶⁹ Douglas’s championing of Coote’s cause was considered by the *Daily Guardian* newspaper to be overly ambitious. It regarded him as being “young and green,”⁴⁷⁰ while the *Brisbane Courier* considered Douglas to be neither conversant of the rules of boards nor how parliament operated.⁴⁷¹

Although hardly an auspicious start to what was to be a long and distinguished political career in Queensland, the issue of the Tramway Company gave Douglas considerable publicity and a

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 4-5

⁴⁶⁷ Daddow, p. 8

⁴⁶⁸ “Mr. Coote and the Moreton Bay Tramway Company.” *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1863

⁴⁶⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1863, p. 2

⁴⁷⁰ *Daily Guardian*, 31 July 1863, cited in Mason, p. 56

⁴⁷¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1863, p. 2. The paper now sarcastically described Douglas as a “great gun from the north” and a “star of the north,” who was now a “fallen star.”

degree of prominence.⁴⁷² While not a shareholder in the company, he supported Coote because he, too, was firmly against the introduction of a narrow-gauge railway into the colony.⁴⁷³

A week later, the *Brisbane Courier* reconsidered its attitude to Douglas following his opposition to a railway Bill introduced into parliament. The paper believed that Douglas was:

worthy of the confidence reposed in him by the northern electors. His reply to the arguments adduced in the debate was as sensible and sound as it was dignified. He refrained from indulging in facetious remarks [and] what he did state was in accordance with the high opinions which had been formed of him.⁴⁷⁴

Another issue that Douglas involved himself with was irregularities surrounding the Gladfield agricultural reserve on the Darling Downs. As the reserve fell outside the boundaries of Douglas's electorate, his raising of this matter in parliament was contentious.

Land issues

The Gladfield Reserve no. 13 was established in 1855, when part of the Gladfield run. However, in May 1863 the area of the reserve was

⁴⁷² Mason, p. 56

⁴⁷³ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1864, p. 50; "The Railway Gauge." *Brisbane Courier*, 9 September 1863. As Douglas later remarked: "It would have been desirable to have a 4 ft 8½ inch gauge, but it was better to have the narrow gauge than none at all." ("Mr. Douglas at the School of Arts." *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 22 September 1883)

⁴⁷⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 6 August 1863, p. 2

reduced from nine sections to only two.⁴⁷⁵ Douglas asked for all relevant correspondence to be placed before parliament, and demanded to know how and why this had happened, suggesting that “a great fraud had been perpetuated upon the land fund of the colony.”⁴⁷⁶ During debate on the matter, it transpired that the reserve had been reduced at the urging of the member for Warwick, Arnold Wienholt, a member of the government, who had not only owned the adjoining lands but who had then proceeded to buy up the released portions of the reserve for an undisclosed sum, under pre-emptive right.⁴⁷⁷

The colonial secretary strongly defended Wienholt, arguing that Douglas was out of order for presenting a petition from outside of his electorate. Heated debate ensued and parliament disallowed the tabling of the petition.⁴⁷⁸ Douglas considered the conduct of the government and the surveyor-general to be reprehensible,⁴⁷⁹ a position supported by both the *Brisbane Courier*⁴⁸⁰ and the *Daily*

⁴⁷⁵ “The Gladfield Reserve.” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 August 1863.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; *Brisbane Courier*, 9 September 1863; “The Warwick Representatives.” *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1863. Wienholt was born on 22 January 1826 in Wales, arriving in Sydney in 1840. In 1849, he settled the *Maryvale* and *Gladfield Stations* on the Darling Downs and represented the seat of Warwick in the legislative assembly from 10 June 1863 to 25 June 1867. With his brother Edward, he constructed a huge pastoral empire on the Downs before retiring to Switzerland where he died on 16 January 1895.

⁴⁷⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 3 September 1863

⁴⁷⁹ “The Gladfield Reserve.” *Brisbane Courier*, 17 September 1863.

⁴⁸⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1863. The mayor of Warwick and 262 residents of the district had signed the petition. They then sent it to their local member, John McLean, the member for Eastern Downs, requesting that “the Gladfield Reserve may be restored to its original dimensions.” However, mindful that McLean sided with the government, the mayor also requested; “should any cause prevent you from presenting the petition, it is the desire of

Guardian.⁴⁸¹

It had not taken Douglas long to be considered an effective political opponent, one capable of wounding the government by exposing shady deals done for the benefit of its members. Moreover, he had demonstrated that he would not confine himself to the concerns of his electorate, but would assist voters throughout the colony. This approach by Douglas endeared him to voters in electorates where politicians ignored their local members' concerns, as the member for Warwick discovered when Douglas involved himself in the Warwick Reserve extension dispute.

The mayor of Warwick along with 152 other residents had asked Douglas to present a petition to parliament for the extension of the Warwick Agricultural Reserve, as "it seems our Warwick member has totally neglected us in these matters."⁴⁸² Douglas willingly took on this task out of a "recognised desire to promote the smaller settler"⁴⁸³ and tabled it in parliament. However, the government declined to print it, because he was not the member for that district⁴⁸⁴ and a

the petitioners that you will entrust it for presentation to John Douglas." ("Warwick Agricultural Reserve." *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1863.) This was presumably done because Douglas had previously lived in the district, was known to its inhabitants and was considered sympathetic to their interests.

⁴⁸¹ *Daily Guardian*, 31 August 1863, quoted in Mason, p. 57

⁴⁸² "Warwick Agricultural Reserve." *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1863

⁴⁸³ Mason, p. 61

⁴⁸⁴ "Warwick Agricultural Reserve." *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1863; as the colonial secretary delicately put it, Douglas "had infringed upon a principle laid down by the House that any wants of a particular district should be advocated by the member for that district." Douglas was aware of the sensitivities surrounding presenting a petition for another electorate, as he had previously informed the Warwick mayor that any future petitions should

furious Weinholt criticised Douglas as one whom “said he would do a great deal, but he did nothing - he talked a great deal, but he was all show, he was a blatherskite.”⁴⁸⁵ Nevertheless, at a subsequent public meeting in the Warwick electorate,⁴⁸⁶ Douglas was praised by those present while Weinholt was roundly condemned.⁴⁸⁷

Douglas had scored a convincing victory for the opposition. He had put the government on notice that he had the ability to embarrass them not only over matters concerning his own electorate, but also on issues that concerned the entire colony. In so doing, he demonstrated the first signs of his political ability, ability that would eventually lead him to a ministerial position and finally the premiership.

By the close of the parliamentary sitting, Douglas had become a valued opposition member, one who fought hard for his and other electorates. This was only to be expected, as Oscar De Satge, a squatter and member of parliament for Clermont from 1869, noted.

No new member of the legislature was held worth his salt
by his constituents who did not try to get a dam made or
well sunk on some waterless road, to say nothing of a jail

be “first referred to the consideration of the local members.” Nevertheless, Douglas was pleased that he had been asked to present it. He later admitted “that he had been in communication with some influential inhabitants of Warwick” regarding the Gladfield Reserve, but “had no hand in getting up the requisition.” (Mr. Douglas. “Triennial Parliaments Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 257)

⁴⁸⁵ “Additional Members Bill.” *Brisbane Courier*, 10 September 1863

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 21 October 1863, p. 2

and courthouse for every opening township.⁴⁸⁸

However, this could be damaging to the electorate and the colony. A contemporary observer remarked on:

The incessant conflict between local interests and the public welfare. A shower of manna descends from the London money market. Ministers propose; rapacious electors, through their representatives dispose. A scheme of public works is drawn up. It is very soon extended through irrefutable proof that the neglected districts are as much entitled to expenditure as the favoured districts.⁴⁸⁹

This entrenched attitude of provincialism and self-interest exasperated Governor Bowen, who was led to complain once that “every member tries to get as much as he can of public money for his constituents: it is as if the fate of the entire English ministry was dependent upon the erection of a bridge in Wales, Scotland or Ireland.”⁴⁹⁰

Douglas, under the guise of equality for his electorate, ‘milked’ this for all it was worth.

Votes of money should not be extracted by threats, or by political promises, but that they should be founded on the principle of justice – on the principle that as all parts of the colony contributed towards the revenue, and were

⁴⁸⁸ De Satge, p. 225.

⁴⁸⁹ Queenslander. “Six Years of Queensland Politics.” *Victorian Review*, vol 8, May 1883, p.

61

⁴⁹⁰ Schmidt, p. 27

equally taxed, and that as they possessed a common property, their funds should be distributed in something like a spirit of fairness and equality.⁴⁹¹

In this, he was successful; having placed on the supplementary estimates £5,000 for the development of roads in his district.⁴⁹² On another occasion he was less successful failing to secure the establishment of a lands office in Rockhampton when the *Pastoral Leases Bill* was discussed, despite claiming that, “it was only by anticipating the wants of the northern districts that the increasing cry for separation would be put down.”⁴⁹³

Towards the end of the session, Douglas had another opportunity to demonstrate to the parliament and his constituents just how stubborn he could be when adhering to his principles. The second reading of the *Loan Bill* included an amount of £100,000 for emigration.⁴⁹⁴ A select committee had recently released a report into this matter, with one of its recommendations, according to Douglas, recommending the amending of a clause relating to land-orders in the *Alienation of Crown Lands Act* to “legalise the present illegal attitude of the government in connection with immigration.”⁴⁹⁵

This did not happen, so in the debate on the *Loan Bill* Douglas

⁴⁹¹ Mr. Douglas. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 1876, p. 85

⁴⁹² “The Northern Roads.” *Brisbane Courier*, 13 August 1863; “The Northern Road.” *Brisbane Courier*, 14 August 1863. This sum was added to the *Government Lien Bill* in September 1863. (“The Government Lien Bill.” *Brisbane Courier*, 18 September 1863)

⁴⁹³ “Pastoral Lease Bill.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1863

⁴⁹⁴ “Loan Bill.” *Brisbane Courier*, 17 September 1863

attempted to have the sum of £100,000 for immigration reduced to a shilling! Here too he was unsuccessful and retired in a pique of anger and frustration.⁴⁹⁶ In a letter to the *Brisbane Courier*, Douglas claimed that parliament had endorsed:

a transaction which had not the sanction of law, and thus, in my opinion, parliament sacrificed a privilege which it ought to have held superior to the interests of either ministerialists or oppositionists.⁴⁹⁷

True to his word, Douglas took no further part in the session, but this was no real hardship, for it ended less than a week later.

In only 28 sitting days, he had made a strong impact on the parliament with his maverick and uncompromising style, unwavering independence, a shared commitment to his electorate and the colony as a whole, and a refusal to sacrifice his principles on the altar of expediency. Douglas was actively involved in every issue considered by parliament. He had ended the 1863 session in a controversial manner, as he would commence the next session, attempting to amend the vice-regal speech! Not for Douglas could the following unkind charge be levied, as it was by the *Brisbane Courier* against some of his contemporaries, on the close of the session.

For a time his seat will know him no more; the soft cushions on which his aristocratic form were so frequently ensconced will be turned over to the tender

⁴⁹⁵ John Douglas. "The Loan Bill." *Brisbane Courier*, 19 September 1863

⁴⁹⁶ "Loan Bill." *Brisbane Courier*, 17 September 1863

⁴⁹⁷ John Douglas. "The Loan Bill." *Brisbane Courier*, 19 September 1863

mercies of some charwoman as zealous in the service of the public, perhaps, as a few of the gentleman who left the parliament.⁴⁹⁸

Rockhampton visit

Douglas was not to be hidden from his electorate. He made the journey from his home in Brisbane to Rockhampton following the proroguing of parliament, where he reported to his constituents at a public meeting, and attended a public luncheon given in his honour.⁴⁹⁹ At the meeting, he addressed the need for a railway and adequate parliamentary representation for the northern district. Recounting the determined although largely ineffectual role he had played in representing his constituents' interests in these matters, Douglas regretted that the "proceedings of the parliament of Queensland have not been as I, speaking as your representative, could have wished."⁵⁰⁰ He thanked those present for electing him, and believed that their confidence in him was justified.⁵⁰¹

This speech throws further light on the standards and values that Douglas believed should be held by parliamentarians - many of them observed more in the breach than in practice. A man of strong principles, Douglas had an unwavering sense of right and wrong and

⁴⁹⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1863, p. 2

⁴⁹⁹ "Mr. John Douglas and his Constituency." *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 5 December 1863; "Public Luncheon to Mr. Douglas." *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 5 December 1863

⁵⁰⁰ "Mr. John Douglas and his Constituency." *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 5 December 1863

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

expressed his convictions without fear or favour. He regretted that several members had voted in parliament “in a manner which their constituents would not have supported,” while the *Railway Bill* for the Ipswich-to-Toowoomba line had been approved due “to the treachery of certain of the members voting for it.”

His speech also explained why he considered the Herbert ministry unconstitutional. As discussed earlier, shortly after Douglas gained the seat of Port Curtis in a by-election, parliament was dissolved following the second reading of the proposed *Railway Bill*, where an opposition amendment was only defeated on the casting vote of the speaker.⁵⁰² Douglas believed the correct course of action should have been for the governor to request one of the other members to try and form a ministry.” Instead, according to Douglas, the governor,

knowing that I had been elected as your representative
and was pledged not only to oppose the bill, but also that
I carried the force of your opinion, took the course of
dissolving parliament.⁵⁰³

With this extraordinary comment, Douglas had credited himself with an importance that was in no way supported by the facts. The truth was that although Arthur Macalister,⁵⁰⁴ the colony’s first minister for

⁵⁰² Bernays, p. 25

⁵⁰³ “Mr. John Douglas and his Constituency.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 5 December 1863

⁵⁰⁴ Macalister had a lengthy parliamentary career from 1856 to 1876, including the premiership from 8 January 1874 to 5 June 1876. Knighted in 1876, from that year to 1881 he was Queensland’s agent-general in London. A Presbyterian, he died in Glasgow on 23

lands and works, had succeeded in gaining passage of the *Railway Bill* through parliament, he and the premier were unhappy with their victory resting on the narrow majority of one vote. Herbert wanted a fuller mandate on such a contentious matter, as the proposed railway was being ridiculed at public meetings and through the press, it being claimed that the preferred narrow gauge would be no more than an expensive toy.⁵⁰⁵

While it was true that in the central and northern districts there were deep-rooted concerns that the railway would impose too heavy a drain on government funds for the benefit of only those in the southern districts, Douglas was massively overstating his influence on a parliament in which he had yet to take his seat. In any event, at the subsequent election, Herbert, Macalister and every other member supporting the railway was returned.⁵⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Douglas's remarks provide a revealing insight into the importance he attached to his parliamentary duties and his central, ever vigilant, statesmanlike role in this regard.

At a public luncheon in Rockhampton held in his honour, Douglas articulated his views on the value of a parliamentary democracy.

The very centre and soul of parliamentary government
was the existence in the house of representatives of two
conflicting parties opposed to each other on minor

March 1883.

⁵⁰⁵ Vic Daddow. *The Puffing Pioneers and Queensland's Railways Builders*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1975, pp. 10-11

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

questions, yet both having the welfare of the country at heart ... the very difference of opinion that existed, tended only to the advantage and prosperity of the country.⁵⁰⁷

As to the role and conduct of parliamentarians:

personal feeling should never be suffered to preponderate in the minds of the representatives of the public, whilst engaged in the discussion of important measures⁵⁰⁸

An instance of the expression of his moral approach to conduct in the parliamentary arena came during the *Selections in Agricultural Reserves* debate in late 1867. Douglas, in replying to a parliamentarian who had said that had he not been a member of parliament, would “in a minute” have engaged in the illegal practice of dummying,⁵⁰⁹ lamented this member,

might as well indulge in smuggling. And when the world saw that a man in his high position thought nothing of setting aside the law, many others would not scruple to follow his example.⁵¹⁰

Douglas would hold steadfastly to his principles throughout his lengthy parliamentary career. They gave expression to his deeply

⁵⁰⁷ “Public Luncheon to Mr. Douglas.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 5 December 1863

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid. Douglas was known for “his unflinching courtesy.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 4 November 1878, p. 2)

⁵⁰⁹ The practice of using an agent to buy up parts of your land in order to forestall free selection.

⁵¹⁰ Mr. Douglas. “Selections in Agricultural Reserves.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 467

held moral and religious beliefs and his finely tuned sense of justice and fair play. He put into practice what had been instilled in him at Rugby School and further refined at Durham University. He believed in actively contributing to parliamentary debate, had a considered opinion on most issues of the day, and took every opportunity to express them. He was also building a reputation as a powerful public speaker, acknowledged as “a very clever, brilliant orator.”⁵¹¹

Douglas had worked hard for his electorate, fulfilled his duty to it, and consequently had become one of the senior members of the opposition. The forthcoming parliamentary session would see him continue his active involvement with the major issues of railways, land, and education. However, there was a heavy price to pay for choosing to be in opposition. Able to participate freely and fully in political debate, he was powerless when it came to having a legislative program enacted. As well, his stubbornness and independence worked against him in a parliament where political patronage and machinations were more highly prized than integrity, logic, and impartiality. As a contemporary ironically observed of Douglas:

In the first place, he is too precise and conscientious both in his language and conduct for a member of parliament.

A man who has scruples of conscience over an electioneering statement, and such a nice sense of honor as to regard his smallest word as an inviolable bond, has

⁵¹¹ Hall, p. 34.

no right to aspire to the position of a public man, much less a Queensland statesman. Then, again, he regulates his political conduct by set principles, and sticks to them with irritating pertinacity, whether his party go with him or not. He has a bad habit of thinking for himself and coming to his own conclusions on all sorts of questions. Being an educated man and a gentleman he has not the tact to disguise these misfortunes, but must let them be seen on all occasions, and so annoy other people who are not afflicted in like manner.⁵¹²

Given these 'failings,' it is perhaps a mark of Douglas's character that he achieved in politics as much as he did. The following chapter examines his political progression.

⁵¹² "Odd Notes." *Brisbane Courier*, 14 November 1873, p. 2

Chapter 7: The ‘Star of the North:’ Douglas and the Queensland Parliament, 1864-66

1864 parliamentary session

Seven months after its proroguing, parliament reconvened on 26 April 1864. The infant colony was growing rapidly, with new settlements being founded in the north that year: Cardwell in January, Townsville in July, and Somerset, on the tip of Cape York, in August.⁵¹³ In the south, work had commenced on the first railway between Ipswich and Toowoomba in February 1864.⁵¹⁴ The colony was prosperous, despite floods, the worst in living memory, ravaging Brisbane in early 1864. As Premier Herbert remarked on the forthcoming parliamentary session: “We do not anticipate a very long or exciting session, which is of course an indication of the general prosperity of the country.”⁵¹⁵

By now, Herbert considered Douglas to be “the recognised leader of the organised opposition.”⁵¹⁶ This chapter explores the development and maturity of Douglas as a politician between 1864 and 1866. Principled and motivated by lofty ideals, this period demonstrated that he was also a politician and a pragmatist. As an independent on the opposition benches, he was free to pursue issues and express

⁵¹³ Gaylard, p. 38

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Bruce Knox, ed. *The Queensland Years of Robert Herbert, Premier: Letters and Papers*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1977, p. 84

⁵¹⁶ Bernays, p. 29; “Colonial Secretary.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p.

opinions in a manner that he was unable to in later years when in or at the head of the ministry. I will use these years to explore Douglas's intense involvement in the parliamentary process, highlighting his stubborn independence, forthright sincerity and sense of fair play. I will also illustrate his propensity, as a relatively inexperienced member, to make errors of political judgement, and explore the consequences of his obstinacy.

Railways

Douglas's agitation the previous year for a railway in the northern district had paid immediate dividends. Governor Bowen, in his opening address to parliament, after drawing attention to the construction of the first railway in the colony, then announced that the government would also construct a railway to link Rockhampton with the "rich pastoral and mining territory that lies to the westward."⁵¹⁷

Douglas was stunned at this unexpected announcement – a confirmation of his success – and admitted that, "a feeling of satisfaction suffused me momentarily."⁵¹⁸ However, he soon voiced grave doubts over the viability of the project, for

however desirable a railway might be to the north, the measure proposed is not backed by any likelihood of a commensurate increase of traffic to the northern

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⁵¹⁷ "Vice-Regal Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 1

⁵¹⁸ Mr. Douglas. "Address In Answer." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 7

districts.⁵¹⁹

Rather than “squandering money” on a 20-30 mile railway line,⁵²⁰ Douglas wanted the money spent on urgent facilities and services needed for his electorate.

In so doing, he demonstrated how far removed his conduct was from most of his peers, for he resolutely refused to accept this ‘gift’ if the government had to borrow money to pay for it.⁵²¹ ‘Pork-barrelling,’ the supply of funds or projects for local improvements designed to ingratiate parliamentarians with their constituents, was foreign to his character.⁵²² While Douglas advocated his constituents’ interests as doggedly as any other parliamentarian, it was in pursuit of practical and financially realistic outcomes rather than his own political aggrandisement or to benefit his electorate.

Although in favour of railways, he was against their premature construction and therefore refused to support the government’s railway policy.⁵²³ Douglas wanted a railway, but he understood that there were other, more pressing needs in his district: “The means of crossing rivers, the formation of bridges, and numberless other wants.”⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 27 April 1864, p. 2

⁵²² The term in use at the time in Queensland for this practice was ‘log-rolling.’

⁵²³ “Mr. Douglas. “Address in Answer.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 26 April 1864, p. 7

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

The construction of a railway in the north, while desirable, would simply have to wait. This principled stand taken by Douglas was in stark contrast to his promises to his electorate, which he had energetically advocated in parliament the previous year. In an election campaign address in Rockhampton in April 1863 he had stated that “It is desirable in this, as in the southern portion of the colony, to carry out a system of railway communication.”⁵²⁵ The Rockhampton correspondent for the *Brisbane Courier* concurred and suggested that the Port Curtis electorate “should take Mr. Douglas’s advice, and ‘go in for a railway too.’”⁵²⁶

This ‘about face’ was seized upon by Herbert, who clearly remembered how strongly Douglas had supported a petition, from his electorate, in the first session of parliament, which demanded that “a line from Rockhampton to Peak Downs may be proceeded with, mile for mile, with the proposed line from Ipswich to Dalby.”⁵²⁷ As Herbert gleefully and accurately noted of Douglas:

Then he had urged this as a necessary work; now, it was not the time to deal with it. He was not now in favour of the construction of a railway; while last year he was advocating it from day to day with great animation.⁵²⁸

This erratic parliamentary behaviour, while perhaps understandable from an honest and principled man, bemused and infuriated

⁵²⁵ “Mr. Douglas and the Port Curtis Electorate.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 29 April 1863

⁵²⁶ “Rockhampton,” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 May 1863

⁵²⁷ “Railways,” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 July 1863

Douglas's opposition colleagues as well as many of his constituents. While it was accepted at that time that parliamentarians would hold "ideas that were very much their own," and that "their attitudes to life became of major importance," the inconsistent behaviour exhibited by Douglas exasperated and confounded many.⁵²⁹ Although, as Bernays observed, "he had nothing to be ashamed of in his political career," his refusal to act like a typical politician meant he often suffered accordingly, while Herbert vowed that parliament "would not forget the position that the honourable member had taken up."⁵³⁰

Why did Douglas push so hard for a railway and then reject it following its approval? An analysis of his actions provides a fascinating insight into the complexities at the heart of the man. Douglas demanded the railway while in opposition, believing it would not be approved because it was financially unviable. He pandered to the needs of his electorate assuming he would not have to face the consequences of his actions, truly the mark of a successful, if unprincipled, politician!

Nevertheless, because the demand for its construction was linked to the northern separation movement, the government believed it necessary to mollify the north by granting a railway to it in addition to the railway already approved in the south of the colony. Douglas, to his credit, in a move that set him apart from his parliamentary

⁵²⁸ "Colonial Secretary." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, pp. 8-9

⁵²⁹ Allan Morrison (1961), p. 557

⁵³⁰ Bernays, p. 40; "Colonial Secretary." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p.

colleagues, recognised this was a bad decision, despite having being its main instigator, and was principled enough to tell the government as much. While he now acted according to his principles, his electorate, having received this unexpected gift, had no such qualms. The local newspaper articulated their glee:

A railway we must have - parliament has committed the colony to the work - its speedy execution is one of the first essentials to the progress of the district.⁵³¹

Douglas, well aware of the support within his electorate for a railway, accepted its inevitability, and devised a scheme to finance it without bankrupting the colony, to be defrayed by the sale of lands in the districts through which it passed.⁵³² Moreover, he advocated the adoption of this principle throughout the colony, pointing to its successful use in America and Canada.⁵³³

He therefore introduced into parliament a *Railways Commissioner Bill*, to give legislative effect to his intent, but it failed at the second reading.⁵³⁴ Douglas's concerns proved to be well founded, for 1866 saw the abrupt suspension of railway construction in the colony

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⁵³¹ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 11 February 1865

⁵³² "Railways Commissioner Bill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 244. Douglas did not want the whole colony to pay for the railway when only the north would benefit.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 245 & 247. Douglas set out in detail how the scheme would operate under the oversight of appointed railway commissioners; "Ten miles upon each side of a railway, would give 12,800 acres for each mile of construction, to be vested in the railway commissioners, for the purpose of sale to defray the cost of such construction."

⁵³⁴ Mason, pp. 65-66; "Railways Commissioner Bill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 244

following the failure of the British Agra and Masterman's Bank, which had been financing railway construction in the colony.⁵³⁵

Having failed to persuade his colleagues to finance the railway on these terms, Douglas then actively supported its construction; even suggesting that, "It was probable that within a short period, the railway would pay its own expenses, owing to the traffic which it would receive."⁵³⁶

Once again, Douglas had done a spectacular *volte-face*. He had campaigned for a railway in the northern district, and then opposed its construction before eventually accepting its inevitability: all this within twelve months. This event provides a valuable insight into the man and his *modus operandi*. It is almost as if we can watch his mind at work, while he formulates his stance on this issue, attempting to balance principle against reality and idealism against pragmatism. Initially Douglas recognised the need for a railway and fought long and hard to have it approved. Once this was successfully achieved, he objected to its construction, considering its mode of funding to be financially irresponsible and preferring it to be funded by land sales along its route.

Parliament rejected this proposal and less than a month later

Douglas had apparently convinced himself that the volume of traffic

⁵³⁵ Fitzgerald, pp. 264 & 128-29. The company had been advancing the Queensland Government £50,000 monthly for this purpose.

⁵³⁶ Mr. Douglas. "Northern Railway." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p.

on the railway would be sufficient to defray expenses without having to resort to land sales. He now supported this 30-mile line, and hoped “that in a comparatively short period they might see railways constructed to the north and west, to the extent of two or three hundred miles.”⁵³⁷

The *Brisbane Courier* observed with some insight:

As it received the sanction of the parliament and therefore the country, he [Mr. Douglas] appears to consider that all he could do would not alter the existing state of things, and so he might as well chime in with them.⁵³⁸

Douglas’s behaviour on this matter was at variance with how parliamentarians routinely behaved. Few if any advocated strongly for projects, only to reject them when approved. His unorthodox approach confounded his fellow parliamentarians and confused many of his constituents. That Douglas’s parliamentary career progressed as far as it did was because he learned from these experiences and over time became more orthodox in his approach. Although he steadfastly continued to hold to his beliefs and principles, he also became more pragmatic and realistic. It was this political maturation, a mix of idealism and experience, which enabled him to succeed.

Douglas learnt that while idealism and good intentions were laudable

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 February 1866

objectives, in the reality problems were rarely black or white. They were all too often coloured in various shades of grey, and finding solutions invariably involved compromises to achieve what was possible rather than what was desirable. Douglas's effectiveness as a politician was achieved through recognising this and, wherever possible, acting accordingly. Nevertheless, he would occasionally continue to refuse to compromise on a matter of principle.

Despite, or perhaps because of the contradictions inherent in his actions, Douglas was popular with his constituency. A principled populist, his beliefs and interests were broadly aligned with those of his electorate, who took comfort in the knowledge that he would not only fight for what he believed in, but would also recognise and represent the interests of his electorate even when not fully agreeing with them.

The *Brisbane Courier* also paid tribute to this relationship, noting after his resignation that:

The electors of Port Curtis have lost a valuable representative ... he has honestly and unflinchingly advocated the claims of the northern districts.⁵³⁹

The paper saw Douglas as a man who "was dignified and courteous, well educated, intellectual, fair-minded and honest."⁵⁴⁰ It was these characteristics that appealed to his constituents, and which enabled him to play a prominent role in the political and administrative life of

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Serle, p. 250

the colony.

Not content with objecting to the proposed northern railway, mooted by the governor in the vice-regal speech at the commencement of the 1864 session, Douglas also took the highly unusual step of trying to have a portion of it amended.⁵⁴¹ In a lengthy editorial, the *Brisbane Courier* displayed its displeasure at the introduction of this “injudicious amendment” by Douglas, preferring that there be no opposition to the vice-regal address.⁵⁴² Nevertheless, it was only the intention to amend the vice-regal address rather than the content of Douglas’s speech that was unsatisfactory to the paper, for it also noted with pleasure that Douglas had:

made some trenchant remarks upon the railway policy of the government, ... and charged them with a grievous omission in not referring to the financial condition of the colony in the opening speech.⁵⁴³

The paper soon changed its position on Douglas’s attempt to amend Bowen’s speech, for it observed a couple of weeks later that Douglas had merely “offered some opposition without any intention of persevering in it; and, as a matter of form, moved what amounted to a mere verbal amendment on the address.”⁵⁴⁴ It is possible from

⁵⁴¹ Douglas impertinently requested the “omission of the fifth and sixth clauses altogether, as committing the house to a policy, of the details of which they are entirely ignorant; and the adoption of a paragraph that appeared in last year’s address in reply to the speech.” (Mr Douglas. “Address in Answer to the Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 8)

⁵⁴² *Brisbane Courier*, 30 April 1864

⁵⁴³ *Brisbane Courier* 17 May 1864

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

these conflicting accounts to gain some insight into the role and nature of colonial politics in an infant colony. While based on the parliamentary principles and institutions of England, in Queensland these standards and conventions were being tested and consolidated. What was unacceptable in the first instance could be airily dismissed “as a matter of form” a couple of weeks later. The attempted amendment by Douglas demonstrated his willingness to not only challenge the conduct of government business but also its associated conventions if he considered it necessary.

Land

As he had the previous year, Douglas again introduced land bills into parliament. These were the *Reservation of Agricultural Lands* in order to provide “for the future settlement of an agricultural population”⁵⁴⁵ and the *Alienation of Crown Lands Amendment Bill*,⁵⁴⁶ “a Bill to facilitate the sale of land in the unsettled districts.”⁵⁴⁷

Douglas wanted regions set aside for use as agricultural reserves and to ensure that pastoralists did not abuse their existing pre-emptive right, as had already occurred on the Darling Downs. There, many pastoralists, including Douglas when he owned *Talgai*, had taken up water frontage under this right, thereby rendering large

⁵⁴⁵ Mr. Douglas. “Reservation of Agricultural Lands.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 330

⁵⁴⁶ Mr. Douglas. “Alienation of Crown Lands Amendment Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 332

⁵⁴⁷ Mason, pp. 66-67

tracts of land unavailable by others.⁵⁴⁸

Douglas again displayed a tendency to appreciate both sides of the argument, observing that while the principle of pre-emptive right was “valuable,” it had been badly exercised.⁵⁴⁹ This action by him also demonstrated that although he was prepared to use the existing laws for his own benefit, if they were subject to abuse then he would try to fix it.

The government attacked Douglas by portraying him as a former Darling Downs squatter who, having “sold his run, and perhaps regretted having done so now desired to injure the Darling Downs squatter.”⁵⁵⁰ Douglas denied the anti-squatter accusation, noting that he had no interests in the Darling Downs.⁵⁵¹ Nevertheless, in the face of sustained opposition, he was forced reluctantly to withdraw the *Reservation of Agricultural Lands Bill*, while the *Alienation of Crown Lands Amendment Bill* was defeated at the second reading.⁵⁵² Despite his failure in successive years (1863 and 1864) to convince parliament to open up land for agricultural purposes and promote the needs of the smaller settler, Douglas continued to agitate for the

⁵⁴⁸ Mr. Douglas. “Reservation of Agricultural Lands.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, pp. 330-31

⁵⁴⁹ Mr. Douglas. “Alienation of Crown Lands Amendment Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 333. This ability of Douglas’s was once described as, “He appears to balance the *pro* and *con* of every question so evenly in his mind that a decision either way would be possible, according to his reasoning.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 30 August 1876, p. 2)

⁵⁵⁰ “Reservation of Agricultural Lands.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 331

⁵⁵¹ Mr. Douglas. *Ibid.*, p. 332

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*; Mason, p. 67

interests of farmers over those of squatters.⁵⁵³

Education

Douglas believed that the best way to improve people and society was through education. He was committed to improving the education of working-class men,⁵⁵⁴ for few of them in colonial Queensland possessed more than the most rudimentary learning. Douglas had benefited from a first-class education and, in the best traditions of liberalism, wanted others to receive learning opportunities as well. In strongly supporting free, compulsory and secular education for all, he played an active role in the development of education in the colony.⁵⁵⁵

Before separation, education was not a high priority and Queensland's literacy rate was correspondingly low. In 1859, following separation, there were six Church of England schools, four Catholic, some thirty private and two state-maintained schools in the colony.⁵⁵⁶ The new government, in establishing an education policy, opted for an extension of the state or national system, operating through a Board of National Education, with a place reserved for denominational schools, subject to the control of the board. In

⁵⁵³ Mason, pp. 60-61

⁵⁵⁴ And women! Douglas believed in women also receiving an education, once remarking, "It was of the utmost importance that women should be educated on a par in every respect with men." (*Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1877, p. 5)

⁵⁵⁵ Robert Douglas, p. 5

⁵⁵⁶ Ross Johnston (1988), p. 101. The two state maintained schools were at Drayton and Warwick. (*Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based Upon Official Information*, p. 78)

practice, however, religious schools did not receive favourable consideration, for many parliamentarians believed that “dogmatic religious instruction is the business not of the state, but of the several churches.”⁵⁵⁷ These beliefs led to a campaign by the Anglican and Catholic Churches to seek additional government support for their schools.⁵⁵⁸

Douglas had been appointed a member of the Board in 1863 but resigned the following year over the failure of the government to support denominational schools financially.⁵⁵⁹ He attempted to rectify this by introducing into parliament a resolution censoring the Board for failing to frame regulations to give effect to the *Education Act* of 1860 “sufficient to provide for the promotion of primary schools in Queensland.”⁵⁶⁰

Unfortunately, although Douglas wanted direct recognition by the state of denominational schools, he was perceived to be assailing the existing national system⁵⁶¹ and was portrayed as a sectarian who

⁵⁵⁷ Sheridan Wayne Gilley. *Catholic Social and Political Attitudes, 1879-1900*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1966, p. 106

⁵⁵⁸ Ross Johnston (1988), p. 101

⁵⁵⁹ “National Education.” *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 23 April 1864. Douglas was unhappy at the approach the Board had taken in withholding aid to primary schools under the non-vested system, believing that they “in his opinion, had failed to do their duty.” (Mr Douglas. “Inspection of Primary Schools.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 512)

⁵⁶⁰ “Board of General Education.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, pp. 285-90; J. R. Lawry. “Bishop Tufnell and Queensland Education 1860-1874.” In, E. L. French, ed. *Melbourne Studies in Education 1966*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 195

⁵⁶¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 17 September 1864. As a critic noted, Douglas, “who is very eccentric on ‘great public questions,’ opened the campaign with columns of statistics which, as he

distorted the facts, resulting in the failure of his resolution.⁵⁶² The prevailing view was that the government should adopt “a policy of complete neutrality” regarding religious education,⁵⁶³ whereas Douglas believed in supporting all denominations equally instead of supporting none.

Douglas had more success in gaining a £500 grant in aid for the Rockhampton School of Arts.⁵⁶⁴ School of Arts institutions were close to his heart for he saw them as valuable educational institutions to “help those who help themselves.”⁵⁶⁵ His involvement in these institutions during this period included one as inaugural president of the Brisbane-based Milton Mutual Improvement Association, a body established by local residents to promote public instruction,⁵⁶⁶ president of the North Brisbane School of Arts for 13 years from 1872⁵⁶⁷ and inaugural president of the Rockhampton School of Arts.⁵⁶⁸

thought, went to prove the inefficiency of the present system.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 24 August 1865, p. 2)

⁵⁶²“Board of General Education.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 290. The vote was 14 to eight against.

⁵⁶³ Janice Hunt. Church and State in Education in Queensland. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1959, p. 8

⁵⁶⁴ Mason, p. 68

⁵⁶⁵ “Ipswich School of Arts.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 188

⁵⁶⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 May 1863, p. 2

⁵⁶⁷ James Cleary. The North Brisbane School of Arts, 1849-1899. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1967, p. 135. Douglas was also instrumental in establishing the Brisbane Technical College in 1885. (“The Technical College at the School of Arts.” *The Week*, 18 April 1885, pp. 366-67)

⁵⁶⁸ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 25 February 1865. However, Douglas relinquished the post shortly afterwards, recognising that he was unable to attend their meetings, as he was now residing in Brisbane. (“Inauguration of the School of Arts.”

Although a strong supporter of these institutions, he refused to endorse a matching grant of £500 by parliament for the Spring Hill Mechanics' Institute in 1865, despite noting, "he should naturally feel inclined" to vote for it.⁵⁶⁹ This refusal was because if funding were granted to this institute, then a precedent would be set for others to request matching funding. Unfortunately, for the Spring Hill Mechanics' Institute, Douglas was prone to putting principle before inclination.

Douglas found the 1864 session of parliament frustrating. He was a hard-working, conscientious parliamentarian who had now put forward several bills and spoken at length on the pros and cons of others, and whose speeches were invariably well-researched and full of reasoned, logical arguments. However, being a member of the opposition meant he rarely saw any of these initiatives come to fruition. The solution was obvious: join the government or else wait patiently for his side of politics to come to power. However, Douglas was not prepared to cross the floor, and despite these frustrations, participated fully in the 1864 session as well as being deeply involved in the social life of Brisbane.

Proud of his Scottish heritage, he was a vice-president of the Caledonian Society⁵⁷⁰ as well as a member and later president of the

Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser, 25 February 1865)

⁵⁶⁹ Mr. Douglas. "Mechanics' Institute, Spring Hill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 474

⁵⁷⁰ "The Caledonian Society." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 May 1864, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 26 September 1863, p. 2

Johnsonian Club.⁵⁷¹ He also found time to serve as a committee member of the Brisbane Lying-in Hospital.⁵⁷² In 1864, he joined the Brisbane Provincial Grand Masonic Lodge, later transferring to the Scotch Constitution, Lodge St. Andrew number 435.⁵⁷³ A cricket player at university, he was on the committee of the Brisbane Cricket Club and on the organising committee of the grand intercolonial cricket match, New South Wales against Queensland, in June 1864.⁵⁷⁴

Douglas's civic responsibilities demonstrated his strong commitment to the society he lived in. Rugby School inculcated in him a sense of civic duty and responsibilities, resulting, like so many of his class in him being imbued with a sense of public spirit and a "willingness to take on work for the good of the community."⁵⁷⁵ He strived to make Queensland a better place through both his parliamentary service and his civic duties in Brisbane.

⁵⁷¹ Mason, p. 62; Robert Douglas, p. 5. The Johnsonian Club, which no longer exists, was based on a philosophy that embraced an appreciation of music, art, drama, science and literature. Douglas was president in 1880. (See the *Johnsonian Club Inc. Handbook*, pp. 4 & 15, a copy of which is held in the John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland)

⁵⁷² *Pugh's Almanac*, 1865, p. 101. As a member of the hospital, Douglas demonstrated his compassion towards 'fallen' women, once informing a select committee enquiring into the hospital that: "no distinction is made between married or single women, I am happy to say; and no enquiries are made as to their previous conduct ... the mere fact that a woman is *enceinte*, and possesses a subscriber's ticket, is considered sufficient for her admission." (John Douglas. "Evidence to the Select Committee Enquiring into the Hospitals of the Colony." Quoted in Pamela Masel. *Government Funded Hospitals and the Brisbane Community (1848-1923.)* BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1976, p. 97

⁵⁷³ *Pugh's Almanac*, p. 88 and 1866, p. 88

⁵⁷⁴ Mason, p. 63

⁵⁷⁵ Avery, p. 35

Deeply religious, it was during this period that John Douglas began his lifetime involvement with the All Saints' Church in Wickham Terrace, Brisbane.⁵⁷⁶ As befitted his previous involvement in church matters on the Darling Downs, he did far more than simply attend Sunday worship. He was a committee member, a warden, and a trustee of the church and after parishioners raised concerns over the future use of the church building, chaired an 'indignation' meeting which took the Queensland Anglican Bishop, Edward Wyndham Tufnell, to task over this and other matters.⁵⁷⁷

1865 parliamentary session

Disillusioned with his experience in the parliament in the previous two sittings, Douglas was far less active during the third session,⁵⁷⁸ for he introduced only two petitions, three motions and no bills, although he did sit on two parliamentary committees.⁵⁷⁹ Although less

⁵⁷⁶ Douglas was on the Brisbane diocesan church society committee from 1863; was appointed warden at All Saints Church in October 1864, and in December that year was also made a trustee of the church, a position he held until his death forty years later. (Kissick, pp. 26-27 & 30; *Brisbane Courier*, 25 August 1863.) Douglas attempted to relinquish the position of churchwarden in 1866, citing his frequent absences and the need for a "little fresh blood." However, no parishioners came forward and so he continued in the position, informing them that as "the duty had been imposed on him, he would perform it to the best of his ability." ("Church of England, Wickham Terrace." *Brisbane Courier*, 17 April 1866.) In 1867, he was on a Queensland committee "to examine the forms of church government in Australia and to report to a conference concerning the advisability of forming synods." Following on from its recommendations, the first Anglican synod was held in 1869 and for many years he was a synodsmen whose "special gifts and his power to influence others were at all times devoted to the service of his church." (Kissick, pp. 29, 44-45)

⁵⁷⁷ Kissick, p. 21. Subsequent to the 'indignation' meeting, steps were taken to reduce the church's debts, the Rev. Tomlinson resigned and trustees appointed.

⁵⁷⁸ Bernays, p. 31. The third session of parliament sat from 2 May to 14 September 1865.

⁵⁷⁹ Mason, pp. 68-70. While this session was noted for the 22 bills that were assented to,

energetic as a legislator than in previous years, Douglas still contributed actively to parliamentary debate. The *Additional Members Act* of 1864, resulted in the appointment of Charles Fitzsimmons to the newly created seat of Rockhampton, which reduced the size of Douglas's electorate and the population he represented.⁵⁸⁰ This made his job as member for Port Curtis easier, for it allowed him more time to represent the interests of his remaining constituents. Other reasons as to why he was less trenchant in his opposition to the ministry during this session included, in Douglas's opinion, that the "organised opposition was dead"⁵⁸¹ and the government's innocuous legislative program:

there was nothing in it that he [Douglas] could take hold of, nothing that he materially objected to, and much that he cordially approved of.⁵⁸²

This was very different from Douglas's previous protestations two years earlier that the very same government was "a tottering administration ... defective in construction, irresolute in council, and dissolute in finance."⁵⁸³ This reflected not only a greater maturity on

including a *Hospitals Act*, a *Cemetery Act*, a *Larceny Act*, the *District Courts Amendment Act* and the *Criminal Practices Act*, none of these appeared to have greatly interested Douglas. (Bernays, p. 31)

⁵⁸⁰ *Statistical Register of Queensland*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1867, p. 27. Charles Fitzsimmons, 1802-76, was born in Ireland, arriving in New South Wales in 1824. He acquired *Lotus Creek Station* in 1860 and the *Nebia Plantation* in Mackay in 1871. A sugar planter, he represented Port Curtis from 4 May 1860 to 3 September 1861, Rockhampton from 1 February 1865 to 27 June 1867 and Claremont from 1 July 1867 to 11 May 1868.

⁵⁸¹ Mr Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 8

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

⁵⁸³ "To the Electors of Port Curtis." *Brisbane Courier*, 26 May 1863

Douglas's part, but also an increased confidence in Queensland's parliamentary institutions and activities since separation from New South Wales six years earlier. This confidence was expressed in a most concrete way with the laying of the foundation stone for the new parliamentary building in George Street.⁵⁸⁴ Since separation in 1859, the population of Queensland had increased from 25,000 to 90,000 people, while trade and revenue had more than trebled.⁵⁸⁵ The development of land had been actively encouraged, so that by 1866 the settled area of the colony had more than doubled.⁵⁸⁶

Nevertheless, Douglas was concerned at how this growth had been achieved. While noting that the governor, in his opening speech, had spoke glowingly about rapid and solid progress in Queensland, Douglas believed that this progress had come at a heavy price - namely through excessive government expenditure.⁵⁸⁷

He was proved correct twelve months later, when funds dried up after the 1866 English bank crash which exposed the reliance of the colony on pastoralism as its main source of revenue. The subsequent depression, following on the heels of drought, saw expansion and development halted in most parts of the colony.⁵⁸⁸

Douglas was personally affected, informing parliament in 1865 that:

⁵⁸⁴ Bernays, p. 33. The foundation stone was laid on 14 June 1865

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 6 & 31

⁵⁸⁶ Fitzgerald, p. 126

⁵⁸⁷ Mr Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 10

⁵⁸⁸ Fitzgerald, p. 143

experience had told him that his own progress had been neither rapid nor solid, and he had no doubt that many honourable members could say the same.⁵⁸⁹

The economy remained depressed and Douglas had no choice but to sell *Tooloombah* in 1868. However, selling the pastoral property did not clear his debts, and he became insolvent in 1872.

Douglas's concerns notwithstanding, the 1865 parliamentary session was one of consolidation, with legislation promulgated in response to existing needs instead of bold new developments. The issues close to his heart - education, railways, land – had been dealt with in previous sessions. This, coupled with his reduced electoral responsibilities, allowed for his greater involvement in Brisbane social and community events.⁵⁹⁰ On 27 September 1865 Douglas had the satisfaction of being present when Governor Bowen turned the first sod at Rockhampton for the northern railway from Rockhampton to Peak Downs.⁵⁹¹ Despite his reservations as to its manner of financing and doubts over whether the volume of traffic in the district was sufficient to justify its existence, he, due to his incessant lobbying and agitation in 1863, had been largely responsible for the government approving its construction.⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ Mr Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 10

⁵⁹⁰ Douglas continued his association with the Brisbane Lying-in-Hospital and was a committee member of the Brisbane Hospital and Benevolent Asylum. (*Pugh's Almanac*, 1866, p. 95)

⁵⁹¹ Kerr (1998), p. 24; Bird, p. 337; Daddow, p. 23

⁵⁹² The railway was approved in 1864, tenders were called for in August 1865 and the first section of 53 kilometres to Westwood was opened on 17 September 1867. In many ways,

Douglas's contributions to this session were solid if not spectacular. He presented four petitions to parliament urging it to reject the Bill to regulate the affairs of the Anglican Church, for he was opposed to the government regulating matters concerning church governance.⁵⁹³ His parliamentary committee service consisted of membership of the joint steam postal communications committee and one set up, on his own urging, to investigate the alleged misconduct of the master of the *Commodore Perry*, Thomas Davis, who was found to be regularly intoxicated when in command of a passenger ship on a voyage between London and Brisbane.⁵⁹⁴ Douglas also introduced three motions during the session.⁵⁹⁵

his concerns were justified. Press comment at the time was that "the short section to be built was practically useless and was only a placatory gesture to the 'noisy north.'" (Daddow, pp. 21-23.) The opening was a low-key affair as "politicians had little desire to publicly associate themselves with what was obviously going to be a financial embarrassment." (Kerr (1998), p. 25.) By then, Douglas was no longer representing the electorate. This line later became celebrated as "two sticks of rust leading to a gum tree." (Ross Johnston (1988), pp. 81-82)

⁵⁹³ Mason, p. 69. For more information on this debate, see "Church of England Bill."

Queensland Parliamentary Debates, vol 2, 1865, pp. 24-32 & 64-84. Douglas's contribution is on pp. 68-73. This Bill subsequently lapsed following its second reading.

⁵⁹⁴ "The 'Commodore Perry'." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 536;

"Report of the Select Committee on Alleged Misconduct of the Chief Officer of the Commodore Perry." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1865, p. 691

⁵⁹⁵ Douglas unsuccessfully requested £2,000 to conduct inspections of non-vested (private) primary schools not under the control Board of General Education, a matter that had led to his resignation from the board the previous year. (Mr Douglas. "Inspection of Primary Schools." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, pp. 508 & 21; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 4 no 8, 28 January 1863, p. 69; Rockhampton *Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 23 April 1864.) The second motion unsuccessfully requested compensation for Maurice O'Connell, the late government resident at Port Curtis, following the abolition of his seat. Douglas raised this issue because O'Connell, despite being the president of the legislative council, was a constituent of his. ("Claims of the Late Government Resident at Port Curtis." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, pp. 592-93.) The third motion, also defeated, requested that the parliament pay Dr Lang £1,000

The Douglas trait of doggedly adhering to what he considered was the right course of action was again in evidence. On one occasion, he completely misunderstood the procedure associated with the withdrawal of a motion to have a petition printed. Douglas strenuously objected to a member who after introducing it had then withdrawn the petition on receiving a satisfactory response. Douglas objected on the ground that any petitions presented to the parliament should be printed, irrespective of whether they were withdrawn or not.⁵⁹⁶ Douglas learnt much from this and other incidents. The experience he gained and the maturity he developed from them stood him in good stead later on. By the end of the session, Douglas was wiser and more experienced, having endured three frustrating but character-building years (1863-65) occupying the opposition benches for the Port Curtis electorate.

Despite residing in Brisbane he visited his isolated and far-flung northern electorate as often as he could and was considered to be a popular and capable member, one respected for his principled approach to issues, even if at some political cost to himself.⁵⁹⁷

in recognition of his services to the colony (as this sum had been placed on the 1864 supplementary estimates for this purpose, but never paid out.) ("Services of Dr. John Dunmore Lang in the Cause of Separation." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, pp. 629-31)

⁵⁹⁶ Mr Douglas. "Power to Withdraw a Motion." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, pp. 23-24. The speaker, Gilbert Elliott, was so exasperated with the stance taken by Douglas that he observed: "It shows the evil of not stopping at the beginning; - this matter might have led to a debate, and no question before the house."

⁵⁹⁷ "Inauguration of the School of Arts." *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 25 February 1865. For instance, Douglas once remarked "he had been told that unless he obtained £1,000 [from parliament] for the road to Auckland Point, Gladstone, he

Douglas eventually mastered the cut and thrust of political life, despite such behaviour being foreign to his nature. He believed in upholding the dignity and decorum of parliament, and while there were times when his feelings got the better of him, he always attempted to express his anger and displeasure in a measured and dignified way.

A useful illustration of this was his response to ministerial support for a railway line from Ipswich to the Condamine River on the Darling Downs. Douglas accused the ministry of pandering to its supporters by accepting a motion it had earlier denounced. To Douglas, this smacked “of double-dealing, of time-serving,” tantamount to, “to use a colloquial expression - a very short word, which he only used in a metaphorical sense, a lie.”⁵⁹⁸

The reaction to impugning the ministry’s honour was such that he was forced to comprehensively apologise and defend his actions.⁵⁹⁹

This incident encapsulates Douglas’s approach to politics and his parliamentary conduct. Despite his anger, he conducted himself in accordance with the established norms of gentlemanly behaviour and decorum expected by those of his social standing. His command of

should not be elected again.” Douglas refused, insisting that the local community should pay for works carried out within a municipality. (Mr Douglas. “Bridge Over Drayton Creek.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 561)

⁵⁹⁸ Mr Douglas. “Railway to Condamine.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 162

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165. Despite a fellow member opining that, “he had never heard such violent language used as he had heard from the honourable member for Port Curtis,” he correctly noted that Douglas was generally, “a man of mild and gentlemanly temper.”

the English language and his ability to use it as an effective weapon were already well in evidence. He also demonstrated an ability to apologise and eat ‘humble pie’ if he believed he had debased the high standards he set himself.

Nevertheless, while prepared to apologise on this occasion over a matter of language, Douglas was less willing to compromise, much less apologise, over facts and principles. As will be shown later in the thesis, this almost led to his arrest in parliament in 1879 as well as a lifelong reputation for extreme obstinacy and stubbornness.⁶⁰⁰

Douglas quickly learnt how to give a speech without saying anything of substance or confusing the message through contradictory statements.⁶⁰¹ These parliamentary examples illustrate how men of steadfast principles and good intentions adapted to the adversarial environment of Queensland politics. Douglas learned early that to prosper in this environment, he needed to ‘play the game’ and abide by its rules and conventions. Nevertheless, he refused to compromise on his core principles and beliefs. Indeed, he appeared at times to enjoy the cut and thrust of politics, using his superior command of the English language, coupled with his ability as an

⁶⁰⁰ For an excellent account of Douglas’s stubbornness, and his inability to realise when he was in the wrong, see William Coote. “Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas.” *The Week*, 19 May 1877, p. 616

⁶⁰¹ An illustration of his abilities in this regard is the debate on the *Claims of the Northern Districts* in parliament on 28 June 1865. (Mr Douglas. “Claims of the Central and Northern Districts.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 285.) Douglas also mastered the arts of sarcasm and irony and on one occasion facetiously observed of Ratcliffe Pring, the member for Ipswich, that he had “cast away the works of darkness and was about to become a child of light.” (Mr Douglas. “Proposed Increase to Auditor-General’s Salary.”

orator, to his advantage.

By the end of the 1865 session Douglas was an experienced parliamentarian who had presented and supported petitions, served on and chaired committees, introduced legislation, and debated in detail the merits or otherwise of bills and legislation.⁶⁰² Like any opposition politician, he had his share of failure, because many of his initiatives and members' petitions were ignored or derided, while none of his introduced bills made it past the second reading stage.

Douglas was now established as a politician who took his parliamentary duties seriously; an honest and principled man who fought staunchly for what he believed in. Although an outstanding orator, all too often his speeches, despite being well researched, were dense, tendentious, and pedantic. Douglas was aware of this, once informing parliament that "he feared that he should be tedious, although he would strive to be as concise as possible."⁶⁰³ Despite this, he was considered worth listening to, a man of genuine intelligence, possessing reasoned and constructive solutions to the challenges facing the young colony.⁶⁰⁴ Although lacking the 'killer instinct' considered necessary to succeed in the parliamentary arena,

Queensland Parliamentary Debates, vol 2, 1865, p. 640)

⁶⁰² Mason, p. 70

⁶⁰³ Mr Douglas. "Inspection of Primary Schools," *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 508. Not everyone found his speeches so dull, with one writer waxing lyrical about the "beautiful speeches he can make on any and every subject that turns up ... I never thoroughly understood his argument in his big speeches in the house - they were far beyond my depth - but as far as I could follow him, I used to think they were delightful." (A Bohemian. "Odd Notes." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 November 1871, p. 2)

⁶⁰⁴ Coote (1877), p. 616

he was, observed Bernays, “a clever political wire-puller.”⁶⁰⁵ He was respected as a gentleman of noble background, well educated, industrious, and one who actively represented his electorate. As a parliamentary colleague observed, Douglas was “a member of well known ability, and one who was so fully conversant with the proceedings of the House.”⁶⁰⁶

Thus by the mid 1860s Douglas had finally found his vocation in life. He had considered a career in the clergy, but became a pastoralist before successfully making the transition from squatter to politician. As Mason perceptively noted, Douglas turned to politics to satisfy the dominant traits of his character - his sense of duty and the need to serve his country.⁶⁰⁷ The lure of political life was one he would keep returning to, eventually achieving the highest elected office in the colony.⁶⁰⁸ It was time for Douglas, the opposition member, to move on and harness his talents in the service of the colony. The government of the day concurred, believing it preferable to have Douglas with it rather than against it.

This chapter has traced the development of Douglas as a politician in opposition - his development and maturation and how he dealt with the needs and desires of his constituents. He had found his vocation

⁶⁰⁵ Bernays, p. 41

⁶⁰⁶ Mr Walsh. “Gratuity to the Rev. Dr. Lang.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 543

⁶⁰⁷ Mason, p. 47

⁶⁰⁸ Douglas once referred to politics as “that most precarious and most absorbing of all pursuits.” (John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 14 February 1885, Griffith Papers. Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales, MSQ 186, pp. 92-96.)

in life, yet life in opposition was proving frustrating to a man of his talents and energies. Douglas was now ready to exercise the political duty, responsibility and influence that could only be found within the restraints of government. The following chapter will explore his ascension to the ministry, the challenges posed, and how Douglas responded to them.

Chapter 8: The Ministry, 1866-69 (Part 1)

In 1866, although the pastoral sector was still the mainstay of the economy, the drought, which had commenced the previous year and that would only break that year, caused severe hardship throughout the colony.⁶⁰⁹ The latter half of the 1860s was a time of political turmoil in Queensland. The years of relative stability under Herbert (1860-65) gave way to an ongoing political and economic crisis, with the government having incurred debt to support railway construction and a vigorous immigration program. Although the fiscal crisis was somewhat ameliorated by the discovery of payable gold in Gympie, governments came and went in rapid succession, and the colony displayed all the characteristics of a raw young democracy experiencing growing pains.

Douglas played a leading role in the democratic process during this period. Never far from the levers of power, he was both an instigator and a victim of political intrigue. In the Queensland parliament, as in all the other Australian colonies, allegiances were fluid, constantly changing, and involving vicious internecine struggles. During this period, Douglas struggled to remain true to his principles in an environment where the ends seemed to justify the means and the spoils of power usually flowed to those most covetous.

⁶⁰⁹ Marion Powell, pp. 5 & 10

Appointment to the ministry

The fourth session of the second parliament commenced on 10 April 1866. During the recess, Herbert had resigned as colonial secretary⁶¹⁰ and Arthur Macalister, an Ipswich solicitor and minister for public works, succeeded him as premier and minister for lands.⁶¹¹ A surprise inclusion in his ministry was John Douglas as a responsible minister of the crown, without portfolio, conducting government business in the legislative council.⁶¹²

Douglas's appointment was unexpected, because in opposition he had been a trenchant opponent of the government. Now he was in a ministry with Macalister, Robert Ramsay Mackenzie, Charles Lilley and Joshua Bell, some of his erstwhile adversaries.⁶¹³ Why was Douglas, who had been a senior member of the opposition and an outspoken critic of Macalister, offered the position, and what made

⁶¹⁰ Bernays, pp. 34-35

⁶¹¹ "Weekly Epitome." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 February 1866, p. 5

⁶¹² "Appointments to the Legislative Council." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1866. This was a position previously occupied by John Bramston, who had also tendered his resignation. Governor Bowen approved Douglas's appointment on 22 February, to come into effect on 1 March. Douglas resigned his Port Curtis seat and was succeeded by Arthur Hunter Palmer on 19 March 1866. (*Statistical Register of Queensland*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1866, p. 27)

⁶¹³ De Satge, pp. 228-29. Henry Bates Fitz, a member of the legislative council, later remarked, "some members of the present government, not only politically, but personally, detested each other." (H. B. Fitz. "Appointment of Postmaster-General." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, p. 43.) While Douglas was to have many disagreements with Macalister over the latter's politics, which Douglas considered "unstable," Douglas and Macalister remained friends. (Mr. Douglas. "Want of Confidence Motion." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 1876, p. 222)

him accept it? Politics can make for strange bedfellows, one reporter cryptically remarking before the announcement that while Douglas:

would hardly work under such a leader as Mr. Macalister in the assembly, but we see no improbability in the report that he is about to join a coalition ministry.⁶¹⁴

Changing one's allegiance in parliament was not unusual in an era of factional alliances and no organised political parties. While parliament was split overall along liberal/town/small business and squatter/country/conservative lines, passage of legislation was dependent on deals between small cliques, ostensibly to obtain benefits for members and their constituencies. These cliques, whether liberals or squatters, were willing and able to work with each other, resulting in frequent changes to ministries.⁶¹⁵

The *Brisbane Courier* supported Douglas's appointment.

The Walhalla in which Mr. Douglas will now appear as legislator, is a place we should imagine, after his own heart. The members of that august body have received in time a congenial acquisition.⁶¹⁶

It appears that Macalister had reluctantly been 'persuaded' by Robert Mackenzie to include Douglas.⁶¹⁷ Mackenzie, leader of the

⁶¹⁴ Rockhampton Bulletin, 23 January 1866

⁶¹⁵ Gray, p. 38

⁶¹⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 February 1866. The *Warwick Argus* also gave its support: "The ministry has a powerful and able auxiliary in the Hon John Douglas." *Warwick Argus*, 20 February 1866, p. 2

⁶¹⁷ "Ministerial Statement." *Brisbane Courier*, 12 April 1866, p. 3; Mason, p. 72; John Douglas. "Appointment of Postmaster-General." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, pp. 40-41

opposition in the previous parliamentary session and now the colonial secretary, had insisted on Douglas being included as the price for his support.⁶¹⁸

Douglas and Macalister disagreed on many issues, including railways and education policy. Nevertheless, Douglas was prepared to modify his views and put aside his disagreements for the sake of a ministerial position. He declared that he would work with Macalister for the benefit of both himself and the colony. Douglas the principled had become Douglas the pragmatist, reluctantly prepared to compromise for the sake of the country. However, this did not come naturally to him and it could not and did not last. Try as he might to accommodate and compromise, at heart he was still a maverick, possessing core beliefs on fairness, honesty, prudence, probity, and honour that he could not abandon, no matter what the cost.

Thus, we now find Douglas noting that, on the question of building the northern railway in central Queensland, because it had “been decided by the voice of the country,” he would not now oppose it.⁶¹⁹ As to his disagreement with Macalister over education, Douglas now let it be known that “the difference was not so wide as some persons imagined.”⁶²⁰ Moreover, as for his previously adversarial relationship

⁶¹⁸ John Douglas. “Appointment of Postmaster-General.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, p. 40. It is difficult to surmise why Mackenzie wanted Douglas in the ministry, although he was probably influenced by Lilley and Bell who believed that Douglas would be a valuable addition, for he was a hardworking and popular parliamentarian who held similar liberal beliefs to themselves (Mason, p. 72)

⁶¹⁹ “Ministerial Statement.” *Brisbane Courier*, 12 April 1866, p. 3

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*

with Macalister, he now conceded that Macalister was “a gentleman of great sagacity.”⁶²¹ Nonetheless, these words of endearment could not hide the reality that Douglas held differing views to his ministerial colleagues on a range of issues.⁶²²

Acceptance of this ministerial post demonstrated Douglas’s continued political maturation and his effectiveness in challenging and embarrassing the government from the opposition benches. He saw it as a reward for past parliamentary performance and an opportunity to make a greater contribution to the colony within, rather than outside, the citadel of power. Nevertheless, unlike most politicians, he accepted the position out of duty and service, rather than simply for personal aggrandisement or due to overweening personal ambition. Nonetheless, while Douglas was prepared to compromise, he still reserved the right to say what he believed, irrespective of the consequences for both himself and his parliamentary colleagues.

In March 1866, Douglas was appointed postmaster-general of Queensland at a salary of £600 per annum.⁶²³ This decision by

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² “Hon. John Douglas at Warwick.” *Queenslander*, 5 January 1867, p. 6

⁶²³ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 February 1866, p. 5; *Statistical Register of Queensland for the Year 1866*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1867, p. 66; “Minute of Executive Council Respecting the Postmaster-General.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9, 1866, paper no 7. The reason Douglas had been appointed a minister without portfolio and then three weeks later as postmaster-general was that he was originally to be appointed minister for lands. This portfolio was then responsible for both lands and works, but Macalister decided to split them, with Douglas having responsibility for the lands component. However, Douglas objected, believing “that no authority had been provided for the change by the parliament.”

Macalister was controversial, for the previous incumbent, Thomas Lodge Murray Prior, had been appointed as the permanent head of the department,⁶²⁴ and many were opposed to a political appointment.⁶²⁵ To those who believed that Douglas was not qualified to administer the post, the *Brisbane Courier* directed this barbed observation:

We believe that, when it is required of him, he will prove perfectly competent to administer the most insignificant details connected with his department; and his undoubtedly vast store of theoretical knowledge will not be useless.⁶²⁶

As a member of the legislative council,⁶²⁷ Douglas actively participated in its affairs,⁶²⁸ although it was not possible for him to

(John Douglas. "Appointment of Postmaster-General." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, p. 40)

⁶²⁴ John Douglas. "Appointment of the Postmaster-General." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, p. 41; "Position of the Postmaster-General." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9, 1866, paper no 7; Thomas Murray Prior. "Appointment of the Postmaster-General." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, p. 42

⁶²⁵ *Queenslander*, 11 August 1866, p. 5

⁶²⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 February 1866, p. 4

⁶²⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 April 1866. The fourth session of the second Parliament commenced on 10 April 1866. However, Douglas was appointed to the legislative council by writ of summons dated 1 March 1866 as approved by the Executive Council on 22 February 1866. ("Minutes of Executive Council Respecting Appointments to the Legislative Council." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9, 1866, Paper no 6.) Through the appointment Douglas became the first salaried minister to sit in the council, a measure the upper house had long championed. (Harding (1997), p. 166; Hardy, p. 140)

⁶²⁸ Douglas was conscientious in his attendance in the council, being present on 27 of the 28 sitting days. He was responsible for the *Opening of Roads* and the *Inquests of Death Bills*, and was a member of the *Standing Orders*, *Joint Library* and *Joint Parliamentary Buildings* Committees. (John Douglas. "Defences of the Colony." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, pp. 88-89; "Register of Bills Originated in the Queensland Legislative Council-Session of 1866." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9, 1866, p. 161;

have the same profile and exposure that he enjoyed in the legislative assembly.⁶²⁹ He was also responsible for initiating and chairing an inquiry into the defences of the colony which recommended an increase in the volunteer artillery, the need to train seamen in the use of weapons, and a recommendation that the imperial government provide additional defence funding and assistance.⁶³⁰ However, there were storm clouds gathering on the horizon, with the Macalister ministry shortly to be swept from office by a financial crisis not entirely of its own making and occasioned by forces in large part beyond its control.

Financial crisis

From separation in 1859, successive Queensland governments had been spending beyond their means. The revenues received by them were insufficient to pay for their policies of development, especially the huge sums needed to build railways. In 1862, the Herbert

"Register of Attendance of Members of the Legislative Council during the Session of 1866." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9, 1866, p. 169; "Select Committees Appointed during the Session of 1866." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol, 1866, pp. 167-69)

⁶²⁹ See "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Councils," no's 1-28. *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9, 1866, pp. 1-75. However, Douglas found his duties and responsibilities as postmaster-general onerous, for he was responsible for all aspects of the department.

⁶³⁰ "Report of Select Committee on Defence of the Colony." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9, 1866, Paper 34, p. 3. In relation to colonial defence, Douglas made the interesting observation that Queensland: "Is probably the only colony which has been founded and organised without cost to the mother country. Moreover, Queensland provides for the defence of the settlers against the Aborigines, by a local force, maintained entirely at the expense of the colonial treasury, whereas such internal protection has hitherto been afforded chiefly at the cost of the imperial treasury, in the two other colonies, namely - New

government had negotiated a local loan of £123,800 at six per cent, followed by a further loan of £707,500 in 1863.⁶³¹ In 1864, parliament had been forced to approve an additional loan of over £1 million in order to finance its expenditure, and had requested that the Union Bank of Australia place the debentures. However, the bank was only able to place £300,000 worth by the end of 1865.⁶³²

The Macalister government therefore inherited a situation where a £1 million loan, negotiated by the previous government with the Union Bank and handled in London, had failed. Even worse, the bank had made substantial advances to the government against the dubious security of these unsold bonds.⁶³³ A further £250,000 worth of bonds were sold in early 1866 at a discount of five per cent on the original price, adding to the government's financial problems.⁶³⁴ The treasurer, Joshua Peter Bell, attempted to rein in new expenditure and considered increased taxation measures.⁶³⁵ However, the government felt that it had no option but to continue its program of public works because it provided employment for many recent migrants.⁶³⁶ Therefore, and in spite of its failure to place all the 1864 debentures, in May 1866 a new loan of £1,170,950 was authorised

Zealand and the Cape - where the Aborigines are numerous and frequently hostile."

⁶³¹ Alexander C. V. Melbourne. "Queensland History no. 44: The Financial Crisis of 1866, part 1." *Daily Mail*, 1 January 1927

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ S. J. Butlin. *Australia and New Zealand Bank: The Bank of Australasia and the Union Bank of Australia Limited, 1828-1951*. London, Longmans, 1961, p. 170

⁶³⁴ Alexander C. V. Melbourne. "Queensland History no. 45: The Financial Crisis of 1866, part 2." *Daily Mail* 15 January 1927

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

by the government.⁶³⁷ Although Douglas had reservations about this additional debt, he supported it as a “matter of actual necessity.”⁶³⁸

With the government already indebted to the Union Bank for nearly £500,000, advanced against the unsold debentures of 1864, the bank now refused any further advances against similar security. The government, in need of ready cash, eagerly accepted an offer from the Sydney agents of the Agra and Masterman’s Bank to place a loan on its behalf in London. Accordingly, debentures worth £500,000 were sent to Sydney for transmission to London, whereupon the Union Bank relented and agreed to advance another £100,000.⁶³⁹

Events soon took a turn for the worse when the Agra and Masterman’s Bank became involved in the failure of the British firm Overend, Gurney and Co, before the Queensland debentures had been placed.⁶⁴⁰ The news reached Brisbane on 10 July 1866 and the government was informed that arrangements concerning the new loan and temporary assistance could not be carried out.⁶⁴¹ The

⁶³⁶ Butlin, p. 179

⁶³⁷ Melbourne (1927A)

⁶³⁸ John Douglas. *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, p. 270

⁶³⁹ Melbourne (1927A.) The Union Bank agreed to advance the £100,000 for current expenses, repayable from the new loan, on the strength of this arrangement with Agra and Masterman’s Bank. Agra and Masterman’s were keen to do further business in Australia, and were already using the Sydney and Melbourne branches of the Oriental Bank to raise deposits for its business in India. (Butlin, p. 179)

⁶⁴⁰ Melbourne (1927A.) Overend Gurney and Co. collapsed due to the over-development of dubious railway projects in England and Spain. (Faith, p. 93)

⁶⁴¹ Melbourne (1927A); R. B. Joyce. “George Ferguson Bowen and Robert George Wyndham Herbert: the Imported Openers.” In, D. J. Murphy and R. B. Joyce, eds.

Union Bank then treated its arrangement to advance £100,000 as cancelled⁶⁴² and disallowed government cheques presented for payment.⁶⁴³

Macalister and his treasurer reacted to this sudden and dramatic crisis by announcing that, as credit could not be procured from other banks, the government would issue unsecured government notes.⁶⁴⁴ This caused consternation in Brisbane business circles and amongst squatters who feared it would give “countenance to the economic fallacy that any government can make money to an indefinable amount with the aid of the printing press”⁶⁴⁵ and generate rampant inflation.⁶⁴⁶ Governor Bowen announced that he would disallow any legislation sanctioning unsecured notes.⁶⁴⁷ Adding to the crisis, the Bank of Queensland, established only three years earlier, also

Queensland Political Portraits. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1978, p. 37

⁶⁴² Butlin, p. 179

⁶⁴³ *Brisbane Courier*, 13 July 1866. The dishonouring of cheques only occurred in a few isolated incidents and when brought to the attention of the manager of the bank, he instructed that no further cheques were to be dishonoured. However by then the damage had been done. (“Weekly Epitome.” *Brisbane Courier*, 14 July 1866, p. 6)

⁶⁴⁴ Paul Wilson. “Arthur Macalister.” In, D. J. Murphy and R. B. Joyce, eds. *Queensland Political Portraits*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1978, p. 50; Bernays, pp. 35-36. The failure to secure additional credit came about because the banks insisted on drastic cuts to what they considered were extravagant public works while they also demanded increases in taxation. The other option open to the government was to issue treasury bills. (Butlin, p. 179)

⁶⁴⁵ Queensland Government. *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based Upon Official Information*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1909, p. 35

⁶⁴⁶ Fitzgerald, p. 128

⁶⁴⁷ Wilson (1978), p. 50. Bowen compared the proposed inconvertible legal tender notes to the assignats of the French Revolution or the greenbacks of the United States Civil War (Bernays, p. 35.) Debate also raged as to whether the governor had exceeded his powers by threatening to disallow a bill that he had not yet seen and attempting to interfere with the freedom of action of his ministry. For more information, see Marion Powell, pp. 81-88

collapsed.⁶⁴⁸

Macalister took an uncompromising stand on this issue, and as Bowen also refused to give way, the government, including John Douglas, resigned on 17 July 1866.⁶⁴⁹ Bowen, however, refused to accept the resignations, declaring he had not intended to dictate to the ministry and reserved any expression of his opinion on the proposed unsecured government notes until the proposed bill came before him.⁶⁵⁰ The ministry therefore withdrew their resignations, but shortly afterwards Macalister received another communication from Bowen accusing him of financial mismanagement and attempting to dictate to him.”

This prompted a second resignation by Macalister on the evening of 18 July,⁶⁵¹ which was accepted by Bowen who then called on Herbert, who had not yet departed for England, to form a government again.⁶⁵² The financial crisis had thus resulted in the resignation of Douglas as a member of the executive council of Queensland and postmaster-general of the colony, the latter a position he had held for less than five months. Nevertheless, he retained his seat in the legislative council.

⁶⁴⁸ Butlin, p. 180

⁶⁴⁹ Wilson (1978), p. 50

⁶⁵⁰ “Financial and Ministerial Crisis.” *Brisbane Courier*, 19 July 1866, p. 4

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵² *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 68, Friday 20 July 1866, p. 625; “Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly no 42, 20 July 1866, p. 1.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1866, p. 183. For a detailed account of what transpired, see Alpheus Todd. *Parliamentary Government in the British Colonies*. 2nd ed., London, Longmans & Green,

Although Macalister's government had resigned, the crisis remained. While Herbert immediately appointed a commission to resolve the government's fiscal crisis,⁶⁵³ because members of the ministry were gazetted members of the executive council, their resignations meant they would be unable to pass through both houses of parliament the necessary bills to resolve the crisis. To overcome the problem the resignation of the Macalister ministry was not gazetted (despite it having already been accepted) until the required bills were passed. Only then were the resignations of the old ministry and the composition of the new one gazetted.⁶⁵⁴

A Bill providing for the issue of treasury bills to the value of £300,000 at 10 per cent interest was passed "in double quick time" through both houses on 20 July, but not before 12 Macalister supporters left in protest over members of the proposed Herbert ministry sitting in the chamber before seeking re-election.⁶⁵⁵ Herbert's announcement that he and George Raff were assisting the governor in managing public affairs until the formation of a new government:

excited the deepest indignation of many members of the house, who deprecated the carrying out of business by irresponsible advisers.⁶⁵⁶

1894, pp. 185-87

⁶⁵³ "Ministerial Crisis." *Brisbane Courier*, 20 July 1866, p. 2

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid. Or, as Douglas diplomatically put it on 19 July, "I have but to mention that we are holding office only until our successors are appointed." (John Douglas. "Resignation of the Ministry." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 3, 1866, p. 531)

⁶⁵⁵ Bernays, p. 36

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

Douglas was one of those expressing their indignation. Unable to sanction what he believed were “unconstitutional acts,” he opposed the suspension of standing orders necessary to allow the passage of the *Treasury Bills* Bill in one day.⁶⁵⁷ This was a deeply divisive stance, as parliamentary standing orders could only be suspended by unanimous consent. Douglas therefore reluctantly withdrew his opposition, aware that the urgent release of the funds contained in the Bill was necessary to restore financial confidence in the colony.⁶⁵⁸

In accepting the suspension of standing orders, Douglas put his duty to the colony ahead of his concerns over how it would be achieved. Although a stubborn and principled man, he recognised that the welfare of the colony was paramount. On withdrawing his opposition, the standing orders were suspended, the Bill passed, and the financial crisis addressed. The new ministry lasted less than three weeks, due to Herbert having to return to England. Despite being “palpably only a makeshift,” it had defused the financial crisis facing

⁶⁵⁷ “Parliament.” *Brisbane Courier*, 21 July 1866, p. 5. As Douglas informed the house: “he would oppose the motion, even if he did it singly. He felt that he would not be justified in absolutely ignoring the constitution. In his hand he held a *Gazette*, which contained the appointment of an essentially irresponsible commission to govern the colony. He would be no party to such proceedings; and, although he was taking a great responsibility upon his shoulders, he would oppose the motion. Even if a foreign enemy were invading the country, he would feel himself compelled to oppose unconstitutional acts such as those now occurring. He considered that the arrangement now inaugurated was nothing less than irresponsible despotism. The people of the colony valued their liberties sufficient to justify him in the conduct which he now assumed.”

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

the infant colony.⁶⁵⁹ But what was the effect of the crisis on Queensland and how were its deleterious effects overcome?

It had soon become evident that the financial crisis was not as serious as first thought, because on 22 July 1866 a telegram was received from the Agra and Masterman's Bank stating that it would now be able to carry out its original agreement with the government.⁶⁶⁰ As well, local banks had come to the rescue and the issuing of treasury bills had further alleviated matters.⁶⁶¹ Despite this, existing public works were halted, including the laying of the Ipswich to Toowoomba railway line and the construction of the new parliament house. The consequent unemployment caused great distress, exacerbated by 156 bankruptcies that year,⁶⁶² resulting in widespread dissatisfaction and unrest. Immigration ceased, and there was a drift of unemployed workers to southern states.

The resultant recession only ended following the discovery of gold in what is now Gympie late the following year, where 15,000 diggers, many of them unemployed, converged.⁶⁶³ Moreover, for the pastoral industry, which had been reeling from the effects of drought, the 1866 crash was equally serious, with prices and profits not

⁶⁵⁹ Bernays, p. 37

⁶⁶⁰ Alexander C. V. Melbourne. "Queensland History no. 46: The Financial Crisis of 1866, part 3." *Daily Mail*, 29 January 1927

⁶⁶¹ For instance, the Union bank assisted in disposing the unsold portion of the 1864 loan. (Butlin, p. 180)

⁶⁶² Alexander C. V. Melbourne. "Queensland History no. 47: The Financial Crisis of 1866, part 4." *Daily Mail*, 10 February 1927

⁶⁶³ Melbourne (1927C); Fitzgerald, pp. 129-30

recovering until the early 1870s.⁶⁶⁴ John Douglas was himself a casualty, and was forced to sell *Tooloombah* in the second half of 1867.⁶⁶⁵ With the worst of the crisis over, Herbert then followed up on his earlier pledge that as soon as financial provision had been made, he and his ministry would resign and seek re-election.⁶⁶⁶

1866 elections

Douglas was quick to contest a parliamentary seat once the elections were called.⁶⁶⁷ This meant he had to relinquish his seat in the legislative council. Macalister and his backers had successfully prevailed upon him to contest a targeted lower house seat, thereby assisting their return to government. Douglas willingly obliged, because his five months in the legislative council had been a frustrating experience, one that failed to involve him in the decision-making and political-influencing he had experienced when in the legislative assembly.

The *Brisbane Courier* supported Douglas's candidature, reporting, even before parliament had been adjourned, a rumour that Douglas intended to contest Eastern Downs, held by John McLean, the new

⁶⁶⁴ Fitzgerald, pp. 129 & 143-45; De Satge, p. 203

⁶⁶⁵ Despite this forced sale, Douglas was unable to clear all his debts, and he was declared insolvent in 1872. It was the interest rate of 12.5 per cent on the money he borrowed to purchase *Tooloombah* that crippled him.

⁶⁶⁶ Melbourne (1927B)

⁶⁶⁷ Douglas's manifesto, appearing in the *Brisbane Courier* on 26 July 1866, was the first the paper published, appearing even before the gazettal of a notice of election for his seat! (John Douglas. "To the Electors of the Western Downs." *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p. 1; *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p 2)

colonial treasurer. The paper believed Douglas would perform strongly there, for he was well known in the district and when in opposition had assisted its constituents with various land matters.⁶⁶⁸ However, when Douglas did stand for election, it was in the electorate of Western Downs rather than Eastern Downs.⁶⁶⁹ The incumbent, John Watts, had six days earlier been appointed secretary for lands and public works in the Herbert ministry. Judging by subsequent events, it appears that Macalister had convinced Douglas to stand for this particular seat.⁶⁷⁰

In his election manifesto Douglas claimed that Watts, a “large pastoral landowner on the Darling Downs,”⁶⁷¹ was the wrong man for the position, while himself affirming that the Darling Downs should be available to “farmers or other resident and improving tenants” rather than squatters.⁶⁷² In persuading Douglas to contest this seat, Macalister sought to unseat a squatter, who, in the previous session of parliament, had helped prevent his government from implementing its land reform measures.⁶⁷³ Unfortunately for Douglas the electorate was one dominated by squatters.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁶⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 July 1866, p. 2

⁶⁶⁹ John Douglas. “To the Electors of the Western Downs.” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p. 1; *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p. 2. In order to contest the seat, Douglas resigned his position in the legislative council, doing this on 25 July. (Queensland Government Gazette, vol 7 no 75, 28 July 1866, p. 673)

⁶⁷⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p. 2

⁶⁷¹ John Douglas. “To the Electors of the Western Downs.” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p. 1

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ Wilson (1978), p. 50. For example, only two weeks previously, the Macalister government, debating the issue of the upset price of alienated land, a measure in *The Crown*

His address, which concluded that he wanted to oppose Watts on political rather than personal grounds,⁶⁷⁵ read as if his heart was not in it. Why then was he contesting the seat? The Macalister ministry, by resigning over the financial crisis the previous week, had forced the members of the incoming Herbert ministry to recontest their seats.⁶⁷⁶ Herbert was departing for England in August and, if his ministers could be defeated at the polls then Bowen would have to request Macalister to form government. Douglas was the trump card for the Macalister team. Being in the legislative council, he was the only member of the previous ministry able to contest one of these seats and was well known and respected in the colony.⁶⁷⁷ Watts, however, was derided as being “imbued with deep-seated party views and feelings, and adverse to the growth of any new interest,” a man afraid to meet his constituents.⁶⁷⁸

Douglas knew that he was contesting the wrong seat, because he would have been almost certain of victory in Eastern Downs due to the large number of settlers at Allora and Warwick, as well as the manifest unpopularity of the incumbent, John McLean.⁶⁷⁹ But with

Lands Sale Bill, had been defeated by four votes.

⁶⁷⁴ “Toowoomba.” *Brisbane Courier*, 1 August 1866, p. 3

⁶⁷⁵ John Douglas. “To the Electors of the Western Downs.” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p. 1

⁶⁷⁶ The Herbert Ministry was described as: “that they do not, and are never likely to, possess the confidence of the country.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 24 July 1866, p. 2)

⁶⁷⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 22 December 1866, p. 4

⁶⁷⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 July 1866, p. 2

⁶⁷⁹ “Toowoomba.” *Brisbane Courier*, 1 August 1866, p. 3. The paper hoped that “Douglas will permit himself to be put in nomination for the Eastern Downs, where we are confident his success is a certainty.”

the seat of Western Downs unwinnable, Douglas did not even visit the electorate. He was never comfortable with this type of 'wheeling and dealing,' a situation in which the spoils of office were carved up in back rooms behind closed door. Subsequent events demonstrated the truth of this observation, with Douglas - an active, if somewhat unwilling, participant - shortly afterwards receiving a ministerial office.

The elections were staggered, with the first contest taking place at Ipswich. There a member of the new ministry, Ratcliffe Pring, was defeated, resulting in the resignation of Herbert and his ministry, and Macalister was then requested by Bowen to form a government.⁶⁸⁰ In so doing, Macalister amply displayed why he was known by the sobriquet 'slippery Mac,'⁶⁸¹ for it contained several surprises, including the inclusion of two members of the former Herbert ministry - John Watts, and John McLean.⁶⁸² Douglas was not included. Macalister had included Watts and McLean in order to bolster his political fortunes, in the same manner that he had brought Mackenzie and Douglas into his previous ministry. While the *Queenslander* believed that their inclusion was the price Herbert had demanded of Macalister for his resignation, it was concerned that their inclusion would lead to "doubt and distrust."⁶⁸³

⁶⁸⁰ *Queenslander*, 11 August 1866, p. 9; Wilson (1978), pp. 50-51

⁶⁸¹ See Wilson (1978), p. 45. Macalister gained this political nickname because he was notorious as a breaker of promises.

⁶⁸² *Queenslander*, 11 August 1866, p. 9

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

This development left Douglas in an intolerable position, because he was a member of the previous Macalister ministry, now contesting a seat against a sitting member of Macalister's new ministry! A deeply disappointed Douglas withdrew his candidature the following day.⁶⁸⁴ Even worse, he was now no longer a member of parliament, having resigned from the legislative council to contest the seat.⁶⁸⁵ This episode raises many questions. Why was he omitted from the ministry? Was he 'double-crossed' by Macalister? Why did he contest the unwinnable seat of Western Downs when he could have easily defeated McLean in Eastern Downs?

Macalister persuaded Douglas to challenge Watts because no one else possessed the necessary credentials and popularity on the Darling Downs to defeat him. However, Herbert had insisted that Macalister include both McLean and Watts in the ministry and Douglas therefore lost both his seat in the legislative council and his position in the ministry.⁶⁸⁶ Douglas then withdrew from contesting the seat of Western Downs on the understanding that he would be

⁶⁸⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 August 1866, p. 3; *Queenslander*, 11 August 1866, p. 5; John Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 4, 1867, p. 49

⁶⁸⁵ John Douglas. "Western Downs Election." *Darling Downs Gazette*, 14 August 1866, p. 2. Always the gentleman, Douglas was characteristically sanguine about the situation, remarking in a published letter to Watt's nominator, James Taylor, that he was "most sincerely glad that a compromise has been affected."

⁶⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Macalister and Douglas remained political allies and shortly afterwards Douglas accompanied him to New South Wales to inspect the railway system there. (*Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1866, p. 2; Paul Wilson. *The Political Career of the Honourable Arthur Macalister, C.M.G.* BA Hons thesis, University of Queensland, 1969, p. 106)

included in the ministry at the earliest possible opportunity.⁶⁸⁷ He had plenty to keep him busy while he waited for the expected vacancy for his community duties continued to be extensive, and he was actively involved with a number of Brisbane organisations.⁶⁸⁸

Appointed a minister

A ministerial vacancy occurred at the end of the year when McLean died from injuries sustained after being thrown from a horse.⁶⁸⁹ Douglas was quickly appointed treasurer and a member of the Queensland executive council.⁶⁹⁰ The *Queenslander* welcomed the appointment as “one of the best that could have been made.”⁶⁹¹ The ministerial position was also warmly welcomed by a cash-strapped Douglas, because it carried with it an annual salary of £1,000.⁶⁹² As

⁶⁸⁷ *Queenslander*, 17 November 1866, p. 4. McLean remarked soon after the reconvening of parliament that because he lived in Sydney, his tenure in the ministry would be brief.

⁶⁸⁸ These included the presidency of the Milton Mutual Improvement Association, vice-president of the Brisbane Philharmonic Society and the Caledonian Association of Queensland, a committee member of the Brisbane Diocesan Church Society, the Brisbane Hospital and Benevolent Asylum and the Brisbane Lying-in Hospital, and a warden and trustee of All Saints' Church, Brisbane. Douglas was also actively involved with the Freemasons, being on the executive of the Provincial Grand Masonic Lodge, Brisbane and the Scotch Constitution. Lodge St Andrew's no. 435, Brisbane. For further details on these memberships, see Appendix 2.

⁶⁸⁹ “Death of the Hon. J.D. McLean.” *Queenslander*, 22 December 1866

⁶⁹⁰ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 163, 19 December 1866, p. 1265

⁶⁹¹ *Queenslander*, 22 December 1866, p. 4. The paper supported the appointment because: “Douglas does not distinctly belong to any particular section of the house. He is a resident in Brisbane, pecuniary interested in the northern districts, whose cause he ably advocated as member for Port Curtis, and he will be representative of a Darling Downs constituency. At the same time his intimate knowledge of the requirements of the country will preserve him from being made the tool of the inside squatters.”

⁶⁹² Statistical Register of Queensland for the Year 1867. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1868, p. 54

Douglas was not a member of parliament, he had to be elected as soon as possible, despite parliament being in recess.⁶⁹³

Douglas contested McLean's old electorate of Eastern Downs,⁶⁹⁴ and exhorted his constituents to ratify his appointment. However, the *Queenslander* was now hesitant to recommend as treasurer a man who freely admitted "no pretensions to any special financial skill,"⁶⁹⁵ and who, the paper believed, had been appointed "more by political considerations than by personal fitness for the duties to be performed."⁶⁹⁶

At a meeting between Douglas and his Eastern Downs electors at the Warwick courthouse, Richard St. George Gore, postmaster-general and a member of the legislative council, directly addressed the issue of Douglas being appointed treasurer without being a member of parliament. Gore denied that this action was unconstitutional, because:

The Queen, through her representatives, had power to appoint anyone she pleased. This had been done, and it

⁶⁹³ This was the first time in the short history of the Queensland Parliament that a non-parliamentarian was appointed a minister. ("The Colonial Treasurer at Warwick." *Queenslander*, 12 January 1867, p. 4)

⁶⁹⁴ John Douglas. "To the Electors of Eastern Downs." *Brisbane Courier*, 20 December 1866; John Douglas. "To the Electors of Eastern Downs." *Queenslander*, 22 December 1866, p. 1. Douglas, as was his style, was quickly into election mode and addressed the electors of Eastern Downs just two days after McLean's death and only the day after his appointment to the treasury position.

⁶⁹⁵ John Douglas. "To the Electors of Eastern Downs." *Queenslander*, 22 December 1866, p. 1

⁶⁹⁶ "The New Treasurer." *Queenslander*, 29 December 1866, p. 5

became their duty to ratify it.⁶⁹⁷

Faced with no opposition, Douglas was duly elected,⁶⁹⁸ the first time he had been elected unopposed to parliament. When parliament reconvened, the opposition were determined to get rid of the government which they believed had “ruined the prospects of the colony.”⁶⁹⁹ They succeeded beyond all expectations, because the session lasted only 10 sitting days, with Douglas at the centre of the storm leading to its dissolution.⁷⁰⁰

Douglas’s principles and sense of probity soon caused tensions between himself and the ministry regarding continued financial implications over the use of land-orders to induce a large influx of immigrants to Queensland.⁷⁰¹ Because the colony was in debt due to the financial crisis the previous year and the effects of a prolonged drought, Douglas believed that the government could no longer afford to encourage the ongoing use of land-orders to facilitate immigration. He therefore tendered his resignation.⁷⁰²

Macalister, who did not want Douglas opposing his ministry from the

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ *Queenslander*, 5 January 1867, p. 4; “Electorate of Eastern Downs.” *Warwick Argus and Tenterfield Examiner*, 5 January 1867, p. 2

⁶⁹⁹ *Warwick Argus and Tenterfield Examiner*, 7 May 1867, p. 2

⁷⁰⁰ Bernays, p. 39. The session commenced on 7 May 1867 and came to an untimely end on 23 May 1867.

⁷⁰¹ For a detailed account on land-order abuses, see Bernays, p. 310

⁷⁰² “Mr. Douglas at Warwick.” *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 7. The land-order system was originally conceived as a means of attracting labour to Queensland without any up-front financial expenditure, and to ensure that these immigrants would remain in the colony. (Andrea-Rebecca Howell. *The Formulation and Functioning of the Queensland Immigration Regulations 1859-1900*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1986, abstract)

opposition benches, refused to accept it, instead offering him the position of minister for works and the freedom to express his views on land-orders and immigration whenever they were raised in parliament.⁷⁰³ Douglas, who had never appeared comfortable as treasurer, accepted Macalister's offer and rescinded his resignation.⁷⁰⁴ This action on the part of Douglas demonstrated an increasing political maturity on his part. A younger Douglas would not have accepted an alternate ministerial position, instead demanding the abandonment of the land-order policy as the price for his support. However, Douglas had now developed a keener sense of what could and could not be achieved. He understood the maxim that politics is the art of the possible and that there were limits to what could be achieved. Douglas therefore remained in the ministry, which soon ried the constitutional crisis arising from Macalister's magnanimity.

Appointed secretary for public works,⁷⁰⁵ Douglas came under trenchant attack from the opposition, who insisted that he could not switch portfolios without again standing for re-election. William Henry Walsh further demanded to know how Douglas could agree "to a bill as Secretary for Works when he could not agree to it as

⁷⁰³ "Mr. Douglas at Warwick." *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 7; Mr. Walsh. "Ministerial Changes (Privilege.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 4, 1867, p.180

⁷⁰⁴ Arthur Macalister. "Memorandum by Ministers for His Excellency's Consideration. Dissolution of Parliament." *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 6; Beverley Kingston. *Land Legislation and Administration in Queensland, 1859-1876*. PhD thesis. Melbourne, Monash University, 1968, pp. 151-52

⁷⁰⁵ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 8 no 39, 21 May 1867

Colonial Treasurer?"⁷⁰⁶

Nonetheless, Douglas believed that he had acted correctly and noted that there were no precedents to force him to the polls.⁷⁰⁷ Despite this, the government lost an opposition motion that declared his seat vacant and forced the government to resign. A general election was called.⁷⁰⁸

Through his refusal to countenance the further issuing of land-orders, Douglas had inadvertently brought down the government of the day and forced the colony to the polls. Nevertheless, with the exception of the *Warwick Argus*,⁷⁰⁹ he received widespread sympathy and support for his position from within both his electorate and the press.

Campaigning for Eastern Downs

Douglas now contested Eastern Downs for the second time in less than sixth months.⁷¹⁰ Although not yet 40 years of age, he was a veteran parliamentarian and campaigner, as this was his sixth

⁷⁰⁶ Mr. R. Cribb. "Ministerial Changes (Privilege)." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 4, 1867, p. 177; Kingston (1968), p. 152

⁷⁰⁷ Mr. R. Cribb. "Ministerial Changes (Privilege)." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 4, 1867, p. 177; Arthur Macalister. "Memorandum by Ministers for His Excellency's Consideration. Dissolution of Parliament." *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 6

⁷⁰⁸ "Ministerial Explanation." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 4, 1867, pp. 178 & 189-90 & 202; Harding (1997), pp. 101-5. For an entertaining account of what transpired see, *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past, Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men*. Brisbane, W .H. Wendt & Co., 1900, pp. 139-40

⁷⁰⁹ *Warwick Argus and Tenterfield Examiner*, 28 May 1867, p. 2

⁷¹⁰ *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867. The election date for Douglas's now vacant seat of Eastern Downs was set for 21 June 1867. Despite his seat having been declared vacant by parliament, Douglas insisted that: "he still held his seat according to the constitutional law of the country." ("Mr. Douglas at Warwick." *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 7)

election campaign and he had yet to taste defeat.⁷¹¹ At a public meeting at a crowded Warwick Court House,⁷¹² Douglas explained that he had acted honourably in tendering his resignation as treasurer in order to accept the post of secretary for the department of works and that he could not join the opposition because of their land policies.⁷¹³

As he had in his previous campaign for this seat a few months earlier, Douglas again concentrated on land matters, calling for changes to the *Leasing Act* so that squatters would no longer be the principal beneficiaries.⁷¹⁴ In advocating a liberal land policy that unlocked land reserves and encouraged small agriculturalists, he pitted himself against squatter interests and their squatter candidate, a Mr Green of *Goomburra*.⁷¹⁵ Douglas, while a squatter himself, never identified with the squattocracy. As he himself once explained, “he had never during his political career acted with the extreme squatting party ... he was not one of them - he had never been one of them, and he was not likely to be one of them.”⁷¹⁶ Douglas also observed how, as a young aristocrat, he was influenced by liberal ideals:

When in Scotland, a mere youth, he was even then much

⁷¹¹ In chronological order, they were Darling Downs, Camden, Port Curtis twice and Eastern Downs twice.

⁷¹² Mr. Douglas at Warwick. *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 7

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁴ “Mr. Douglas at Warwick.” *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 7

⁷¹⁵ Mason, p. 92; *Warwick Argus and Tenterfield Examiner*, 28 May 1867, p. 2

⁷¹⁶ “Mr Douglas at the School of Arts.” *Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1873, p. 3

impressed with a great gathering of tenantry to meet their landlord, Fox Maule, the present Lord Penmure, and in addressing them, that nobleman said that it was not of the extent of his landed property that he felt proud, but of the farmers and tenants whom he had been the means of raising up around him, and to support him.⁷¹⁷

Douglas wanted to use the *Leasing Act* to ensure that yeoman and small farmers would be able to purchase land for the benefit of themselves and the colony.⁷¹⁸

The election took place amidst high excitement, as this account of polling at Leyburn on the Darling Downs demonstrates:

This has been one of the most exciting days ever witnessed in this town; gaily decorated traps with their respective mottoes, and the partisans of the rival candidates were to be seen continually driving to and from the polling place, as usual on those occasions. Angry and not very complimentary epithets were freely exchanged.⁷¹⁹

Douglas won the election by a landslide.⁷²⁰

The day after the new parliament (with Macalister as colonial secretary and Douglas secretary for public works) commenced, Robert Ramsay Mackenzie moved a motion of want of confidence

⁷¹⁷ "Mr. Douglas at Warwick." *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 7

⁷¹⁸ "Mr Douglas at the School of Arts." *Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1873, p. 3

⁷¹⁹ "Leyburn." *Queenslander*, 29 June 1867, p. 6

⁷²⁰ Douglas's winning margin of 69 votes was a landslide, for of the 302 registered voters, only 223 (74 per cent) voted. ("Warwick." *Queenslander*, 6 July 1867, p. 7; *Statistical Register of Queensland for the Year 1867*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1868, p. 26)

against the ministry.⁷²¹ Although it was defeated, the vote was so close that the government declined to carry on.⁷²² Mackenzie formed a ministry, and once again, Douglas found himself in opposition.⁷²³ Douglas's appointment as secretary of public works in May 1867 had resulted in the downfall of the previous Macalister Ministry and the calling of a general election. On the resumption of parliament, the opposition had continued where they had left off before the last election and attacked at length his appointment as minister for works.⁷²⁴

A parliamentary opponent, Ratcliffe Pring, had attacked Douglas personally, criticising him "for busying himself in various philanthropic ways about orphans."⁷²⁵ In reply, Douglas had shown great dignity, defending the government's program and declining to stoop to Pring's level of personal vilification.⁷²⁶ This attack on Douglas by the opposition allowed them to attack the government through a perceived weakness in the Macalister ministry. They detested the government because of its land policies and, by targeting Douglas, an aristocrat and squatter regarded by them as a 'class traitor' due to

⁷²¹ Bernays, p. 43

⁷²² *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 8 no 51, 29 June 1867: Mason, p. 93

⁷²³ *Queenslander*, 17 August 1867, p. 7; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 8 no 66, 15 August 1867; Bernays, p. 43. This was a double blow for Douglas, demoted to the opposition benches and losing his ministerial salary of £1,000 per annum.

⁷²⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 August 1867, p. 3

⁷²⁵ "Mr. Pring." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 8 August 1867, p. 60. For information on Douglas's advocacy of orphanages in Queensland, including his opposition to them being run on denominational lines and his desire to see orphans placed with foster parents in private homes, see J. Pearson. *The Growth and Development of Social Services in Queensland*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1953, p. 22

his liberal views, they besmirched his reputation and brought down a government intent on reducing the power of the squattocracy and opening up land for selection.⁷²⁷

Because Douglas had held three ministerial positions in only 18 months - that of postmaster-general, colonial treasurer, and public works,⁷²⁸ he was unable to make a lasting contribution in terms of policy development and legislation. Douglas found this deeply frustrating, because he had entered politics to serve society. He had also made little impact regarding his twin passions of land reform and improved transport infrastructure.

The loss of the postmaster-general position, through no fault of his own, resulted in Douglas's departure from parliament. Returning after being offered the treasury portfolio, he moved to public works over a point of principle - an action that resulted in the colony being forced to the polls. Despite the successful return of the government, Douglas again found himself on the outer, as the ministry, of which he was a senior member, lacked a sufficient majority to govern effectively. Political factors ended each of his ministerial positions while the loss of his ministerial salary exacerbated his financial problems, and helped force the sale of *Tooloombah*.

Nonetheless, Douglas had won two elections in only four months:

⁷²⁶ Hon. John Douglas. *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 8 August 1867, p. 66.

⁷²⁷ *Queenslander*, 17 August 1867, pp. 4 & 7

⁷²⁸ The dates were; postmaster-general, March to July 1866, colonial treasurer, December 1866 to May 1867, and public works, May to August 1867.

one unopposed, the other by a landslide. He was popular with his constituents and had served two years in parliament, including leading the government in the legislative council. Now 39 years of age, Douglas was a very experienced politician.

Chapter 9: The Ministry, 1866-69 (Part 2)

In opposition

After the long Herbert administration, the Macalister governments were marked by brevity and instability. The new Mackenzie administration was somewhat more stable, lasting until November 1868. Douglas was a trenchant opponent of this openly pro-squatter 'Pure Merino' government comprised of the squattocracy and their supporters.⁷²⁹ Land was the dominant issue in the colony, and he opposed the government's pro-squatter land policies at every turn.

Douglas was anti-squatter but pro-selector. Like many liberals, he believed that agriculture represented an advance on pastoralism.⁷³⁰

Moreover, liberals believed, in the words of Charles Lilley, that:

the state is not a merchant selling land, but a trustee holding it for equitable distribution among the people, so that it may be occupied and cultivated.⁷³¹

Douglas's electorate was situated on the Darling Downs, where the conflict between squatter and selector was especially intense.

Ranged against the squatter government of Mackenzie, and on the side of the selectors was a group of parliamentarians including Douglas, and the 'town liberals,' an anti-squatter group who endorsed agriculture by advocating closer settlement throughout the

⁷²⁹ Wilson (1978), p. 51

⁷³⁰ Fitzgerald, p. 189; Wilson (1978), pp. 65-66

⁷³¹ McQueen (1970), pp. 171-72

colony.⁷³² These town liberals used the expansion of agriculture to political advantage in gaining urban anti-squatter support.⁷³³

During the parliamentary recess, Douglas was offered the position of chairman of parliamentary committees. However, he declined the offer, not wanting to be compromised when representing his constituents or opposing the government on the 'land question.'⁷³⁴ He would not be 'bought.' Nevertheless, it must have been particularly gratifying for him to be recognised, recognition earned through diligent participation in the parliamentary process, his principled conduct within the chamber, and his eloquence, erudition and sense of fair play. Unfortunately he somewhat spoiled the moment by nominating Macalister in his place, a candidate promptly rejected by Mackenzie.

The response to Douglas's nomination of Macalister offers insights into the parliamentary process at that time and the attitude of his opponents. Charles Fitzsimmons, for instance, was disappointed at Douglas for declining the position,⁷³⁵ while others, including Joshua Bell and George Thorn, were less complimentary and accused him of seeking to become leader of the opposition.⁷³⁶

⁷³² Fitzgerald, p. 189

⁷³³ Wilson (1978), p. 65

⁷³⁴ Mr. Douglas. "Election of Chairman of Committees." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 129

⁷³⁵ Mr. Fitzsimmons. "Election of Chairman of Committees." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 130

⁷³⁶ Mr. Bell. "Election of Chairman of Committees." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 131; Mr. G. Thorn. "Election of Chairman of Committees." *Queensland*

A disappointed Gordon Sandeman recognised Douglas's skills and experience for the position, believing that his "talents could have been rendered far more useful to the house, and more creditable to himself, as Chairman of Committees, than as a leader of any political party."⁷³⁷

"Dummying"

Having placed the interests of his constituents ahead of his own, Douglas was free to focus his undivided attention on 'the land question.' Land, especially how to distribute and use it, was the dominant issue in Queensland as pastoral settlement spread rapidly in the country.⁷³⁸ During the colonial period, there was ongoing tension between liberals and conservatives over what the ideal land settlement for Queensland should be. Squatters wanted their pastoral holdings protected and extended, while liberals and townspeople wanted agricultural development through closer settlement.

Mackenzie moved swiftly on behalf of the squatters. During the parliamentary recess, only one day after coming to power,⁷³⁹ he instructed the surveyor-general, Augustus Charles Gregory,⁷⁴⁰ to

Parliamentary Debates, vol 5, 1867, p. 133

⁷³⁷ Mr. Sandeman. "Election of Chairman of Committees." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 133

⁷³⁸ Fitzgerald, p. 133

⁷³⁹ Mr. Douglas. "Selections in Agricultural Reserves," *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 453

⁷⁴⁰ Augustus Charles Gregory was born in 1819 in England and arrived in Western Australia in 1829. A famous explorer and surveyor, he was the Queensland surveyor-general from

issue new regulations permitting unsurveyed portions of agricultural reserves to be opened up.⁷⁴¹ While making this land available was similar to what Douglas had advocated, the intent could not have been more different for it resulted in a decrease rather than an increase in the number of selectors⁷⁴² and further encouraged 'dummying'⁷⁴³ on a spectacular scale. The *Queenslander* called land purchased in this way as fit only for "sheepwalks,"⁷⁴⁴ and observed that the regulations were designed to assist the squatters consolidate their land holdings.⁷⁴⁵

The pioneer squatters on the Darling Downs regarded selectors as intruders and were determined to lock them out of any land ostensibly released for agricultural purposes. Squatters were able to overcome restrictions preventing the purchase of such land by dummying their runs. They lodged land claims using the name of a family member or employee to purchase vital reserves and prime

1863-79 and sat in the legislative assembly from 1882-1905. Knighted in 1903, he died in Brisbane on 25 June 1905.

⁷⁴¹ Mason, p. 97. These regulations were published in the press on 17 August 1867.

⁷⁴² "Mr. Douglas at Warwick." *Queenslander*, 1 June 1867, p. 7. In his election address at Warwick, Douglas had promised not to "step back one inch" in his endeavour to open up land for agriculture and increase the number of selectors.

⁷⁴³ Dummying is defined as an "Agent of squatter buying best part of run to forestall free selectors." (*Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 321.) The regulations gave any man who could pay the deposit the right to select this agricultural reserve land. Squatters hired people, known as dummies, to select land on their behalf. They were given money by the squatter to pay for the land they had selected and once they had acquired it they handed it over to the squatter. (Hirst (2002), p. 60)

⁷⁴⁴ *Queenslander*, 7 September 1867

⁷⁴⁵ Waterson (1968), p. 40

agricultural lands. In so doing, they thwarted both selectors and the opposition's plan for closer settlement in the colony.

Douglas opposed this unscrupulous practice because he considered it illegal, immoral and inimical to the colony's progress. He believed that a "deteriorating effect on the public mind morally" would occur if laws were circumvented or flouted.⁷⁴⁶ Douglas's attack on dummyming was calculated. Aided by his first-hand knowledge of pastoralism and supported by the *Warwick Argus*, he initiated the first serious attempt to check the squatting monopoly on the Darling Downs.⁷⁴⁷ He forced parliament to table all instructions given to the land agents,⁷⁴⁸ presented a petition from his electorate,⁷⁴⁹ and successfully demanded a select committee to investigate dummyming.⁷⁵⁰ Douglas insisted that the limited surveying of agricultural land was the major cause of dummyming and supplied specific examples, including a transaction involving 24,000 acres of land on the Eastern Downs.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁶ Mr. Douglas. "Selections in Agricultural Reserves." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 467

⁷⁴⁷ Denis Cryle. *The Press in Colonial Queensland: A Social and Political History, 1845-1875*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1989, p. 109

⁷⁴⁸ Mason, p. 98

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 98. In this petition, members of Douglas electorate were, "alleging their rights by priority of selection to certain lands in the neighbourhood of Warwick which have been allotted by the Survey Department to other persons."

⁷⁵⁰ Mr. Douglas. "Selections in Agricultural Reserves." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, pp. 453-54. Douglas, in advocating a select committee, strongly attacked the government for issuing these regulations during the recess, claiming it was unscrupulous and acting in an illegal and unconstitutional manner.

⁷⁵¹ Mr. Douglas. "Selections in Agricultural Reserves." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, pp. 453-54

He chaired the Select Committee on *Selections in Agricultural Reserves under the Notification of 17th August Last*, derided by its opponents as the “Mare’s Nest Committee”.⁷⁵² However, only one of the 17 witnesses was prepared to admit that he had *prima facie* been involved in dumming and claimed to have only done so following legal advice.⁷⁵³ The concerns of Douglas’s petitioners were discounted, because they had apparently erred by applying for land already selected.⁷⁵⁴ It was hardly surprising therefore that the committee was unable to find much evidence of dumming. Nevertheless, it observed that land was being purchased for speculative reasons rather than with “the intention of *bona fide* settlement,” and recommended that it be sold only through auction or leased for pastoral purposes.⁷⁵⁵

The findings of the committee were sufficiently disappointing for Douglas that he, despite being its chair, dissented from its findings.⁷⁵⁶ It had been his sustained attack on the practice of

⁷⁵² Secretary for Public Lands. “Selections in Agricultural Reserves.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 5, 1867, p. 467; Mason, p. 101. Mare’s nest was a term first used in 1619 in a phrase “to have found a mare’s nest,” meaning “to imagine that one has discovered something wonderful.” (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. 3rd edition. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973, vol 1, p. 1279.) The opposition probably used this epithet for this select committee because they and everyone else knew that while dumming was an ongoing practice, it would take more than a select committee report to halt it.

⁷⁵³ “Report from the Select Committee on Selections in Agricultural Reserves under the Notification of 17th August Last; Together With Minutes of Evidence and the Proceedings of the Committee.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings* 1867, vol 2, p. 910

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 909

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 910

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Douglas signed as “J. Douglas [dissentient], Chairman.”

dumming that led to the establishment of the committee in the first place. Unable to substantiate the allegations, Douglas then took the extraordinary step, as its chairman, of dissociating himself from its findings and recommendations.⁷⁵⁷ He considered the findings especially galling, as he, along with everyone else, knew the practice of dumming to be rife. Nevertheless, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had attempted to curb it on behalf of his constituents, and the government subsequently acted on the committee's recommendations and introduced some measures to address the problem.

Douglas was frustrated by the government's indifference to the needs of selectors, selectors that he represented. At an electorate meeting in Warwick, Douglas castigated the 'Pure Merino' government for their failings. "Free selection before survey" was the instrument he used to bludgeon them, describing those engaged in dumming as "robbers of the public estate."⁷⁵⁸

Douglas was consistent in his opposition to free selection before survey, because throughout his political career he advocated closer settlement to encourage the development of agriculture. For this he received widespread support from those affected by the pro squatter provisions of the legislation then in place. Douglas, the aristocrat and former Darling Downs squatter, was seen as a champion of the common man. He concluded his electorate address by informing the

⁷⁵⁷ Morrison (1961), p. 567

audience that he was considering resigning his seat at the end of the next session.⁷⁵⁹

Douglas found being in opposition frustrating, and by July 1868 had made up his mind to leave politics. It is characteristic of him that he informed his electorate of his intentions in advance. Another consideration would have been his financial position, because he had recently sold *Tooloombah* for less than he owed his creditors. Parliamentary backbenchers received no salary, and as he was verging on bankruptcy, an unpaid parliamentary position was not viable.⁷⁶⁰

East Moreton election

In August 1868, the opposition forced Mackenzie to the polls following a successful no-confidence motion.⁷⁶¹ The *Brisbane Courier* found little to lament in this decision, noting that the government was moribund and “walking about merely to save funeral expenses.”⁷⁶²

Douglas decided not to stand for office due to a planned vacation to

⁷⁵⁸ “Mr. Douglas at Warwick.” *Brisbane Courier*, 17 July 1868, p. 3

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid. Douglas did resign his seat at the end of the next session. Nevertheless, despite his best-laid plans, he remained in parliament, eventually receiving a prized ministerial position.

⁷⁶⁰ Douglas declared himself bankrupt in 1872. He listed as his creditors, Gilchrist Watt & Co., who had advanced him sums of money between 1860-69 to purchase and stock *Tooloombah*. He still owed £6,767 15 shillings and 9 pence by 1872, the reason being given as “depreciation in value of pastoral property.” (Queensland State Archives, SCT/CB 90, File no. 310 of 1872)

⁷⁶¹ De Satge, p. 238; *Brisbane Courier*, 27 August 1868, p. 3

⁷⁶² *Brisbane Courier*, 27 August 1868, p. 3

England.⁷⁶³ The *Brisbane Courier* observed that his decision was “almost calamitous at a time like the present.”⁷⁶⁴ However, Douglas’s trip to England did not eventuate, and he was successfully persuaded by members of the East Moreton electorate to contest that seat.⁷⁶⁵ This despite the other candidates, Robert Cribb and Arthur Morley Francis, being not only the former and sitting members respectively, also aligned with the liberal side of politics.⁷⁶⁶ Macalister, the titular head of the opposition, then personally endorsed the sitting members ahead of Douglas.⁷⁶⁷

Macalister encouraged Douglas to nominate for West Moreton instead and informed him that if he did so, “he should be brought in with flying colours.”⁷⁶⁸ However, Douglas declined.⁷⁶⁹ The opposition was not the only one wooing Douglas, the *Brisbane Courier* disclosing that the government was prepared to give him the lands ministry in exchange for his support.⁷⁷⁰ Douglas was

⁷⁶³ *Brisbane Courier*, 21 September 1868, p. 2

⁷⁶⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 1 September 1868, p. 2

⁷⁶⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 21 September 1868, p. 2. What the trip to England was for and why it did not eventuate is unknown, the *Courier* merely informing its readers that: “Douglas would probably have been elected for eastern Downs without opposition, if he had not declined to stand because of his having to visit England. A day or two ago it became known that his arrangements in this respect were changed, and that he is not leaving the colony.”

⁷⁶⁶ Queensland Parliamentary Library. *Queensland Parliamentary Handbook: The 48th Parliament*. Brisbane, Queensland Parliamentary Library, 1997, p. 287, 302 & 402

⁷⁶⁷ “East Moreton Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1868, p. 2. , Macalister believed that to do otherwise “was to play into the hands of the enemy.”

⁷⁶⁸ “Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1868, p. 2

⁷⁶⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 2

⁷⁷⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1868, p. 2; See also, The Colonial Treasurer. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1868-69, p. 46

astonished at this brazen offer, because he had vigorously opposed almost all their land measures.⁷⁷¹

Douglas, although having a “personal regard for Mackenzie,⁷⁷² would never forsake his principles for the baubles of office, as his morality was not of the ‘fair weather’ kind. Given the choice, he chose to remain in opposition rather than be compromised by accepting a ministerial position, especially one responsible for land matters.⁷⁷³ Being principled was what made Douglas so popular in the electorate and such a thorn in the side of his political opponents. His commitment to principle was unusual for politicians of his time. Although it was acceptable that men “held ideas that were very much their own,” party politics was in its infancy and members frequently changed sides.⁷⁷⁴ Douglas’s refusal to accept a ministerial post in exchange for his support was especially unusual given that he desperately needed the accompanying ministerial salary.

Having decided to stand for East Moreton, Douglas did his prospects no favours by being the only candidate absent at the nomination meeting.⁷⁷⁵ At a subsequent meeting in the Brisbane Town Hall, with

⁷⁷¹ “Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 2: Mr. Douglas. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1868-69, p. 23

⁷⁷² “Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 2

⁷⁷³ John Douglas to Arthur Palmer, undated. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, Queensland State Library, OM 64-19/160

⁷⁷⁴ Morrison (1961), p. 557

⁷⁷⁵ Despite his absence, Douglas was successfully nominated by A. J. Hockings, the mayor of Brisbane, and seconded by George Grimes.

the mayor chairing proceedings,⁷⁷⁶ Douglas set out his opposition to the government over land and the issue of representation. He pointed out that East Moreton, with a population of 14,000, returned two members to parliament, the same as Western Downs, whose population was only 2,284 people, while West Moreton, with half the population of East Moreton, returned three.⁷⁷⁷ As he explained, “it was ridiculous to say that property, income, and revenue could be made the test.”⁷⁷⁸

In rejecting representation based on privilege, Douglas demonstrated his liberal convictions. Not for him the conservative argument that representation based on population would result “in all sorts of anarchy.”⁷⁷⁹ He concluded with a prophetic warning that although he supported Macalister, he reserved the right to oppose any measures as he saw fit.⁷⁸⁰ In its editorial on polling day, the *Brisbane Courier* soundly endorsed him, reminding its readership that if Douglas was not returned then he would once again be lost to parliament altogether, which would be a “national loss.”⁷⁸¹

East Moreton returned two candidates, with Douglas winning the second seat.⁷⁸² Yet again, he had been returned to parliament, this

⁷⁷⁶ “Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 2

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid. Douglas rejected these fears, having “great faith in the people,” who responded with loud cheering.

⁷⁸⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 September 1868, p. 4

⁷⁸¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1868, p. 2

⁷⁸² “East Moreton Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 30 September 1868, p. 3. For a breakdown of the returns, see “East Moreton Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 29 September 1868, p. 3.

time vowing to put the public welfare before the “ties of party or the ties of personal obligation.”⁷⁸³ Moreover, it would not be long before Douglas, acting in what he perceived to be the public interest, attacked his fellow liberals.

Mackenzie ministry

The fourth Queensland parliament was characterised by extreme turbulence and antagonism, and the Mackenzie government was forced to resign only a week after it commenced.⁷⁸⁴ A contemporary newspaper account vividly captured the mood:

Responsible government indeed! Why, the very words now stink in the nostrils of every respectable, honest man. We here confess candidly that we could almost make up our minds to form one of a mob to drive the present miserable horde of so-called representatives of the people from the precincts of the people’s chamber which they so wantonly pollute.⁷⁸⁵

Into this cesspit of intrigue and duplicity, Douglas fearlessly waded, and was soon hopelessly mired. His independent streak manifested itself through him verbally savaging the opposition, criticism then used by the government to discredit and embarrass them. Douglas was especially scornful of Thomas Fitzgerald, a leading member of the opposition, who Douglas accused of being unfit to hold high

The election was held on 28 September 1868, with two candidates to be elected. Francis received 460 votes, Douglas 393 and Cribb 287.

⁷⁸³ “East Moreton Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 30 September 1868, p. 3

⁷⁸⁴ Bernays, p. 49

office, responsible for “many of the evils connected with the *Land Act*,” and not to be trusted with the finances of the colony.⁷⁸⁶

It is difficult to know what Douglas was trying to achieve, for Fitzgerald was poised to become premier and, like Douglas, aligned with the liberal side of politics. Moreover, despite desperately needing the income a ministerial position would have provided, Douglas, through these remarks, had seemingly ruled himself out of any potential ministerial positions.⁷⁸⁷ One can only assume that this was Douglas speaking from the heart without fear or favour. He genuinely believed that Fitzgerald was unsuited for the position of premier and was prepared to put the interests of the colony ahead of those of the liberal group. Douglas was a politician who consistently attempted to put Queensland first. As the journalist Spencer Browne would later observe, he brought to the parliament an “absolute purity of motive.”⁷⁸⁸

This episode stamped Douglas as a politician unique among his peers, one whose morality and concern for the public good overrode all else. However, in the real world of politics, inhabited by men possessed of fragile, overblown egos and venal ambition, people who frequently lusted after power, this principled stand was a recipe calculated to make enemies and damage the opposition. As Douglas

⁷⁸⁵ Quoted in Bernays, pp. 49-50

⁷⁸⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 19 November 1868, p. 2; Mr Douglas. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, pp. 26-27

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26

⁷⁸⁸ Browne (1927), p. 73

later recalled, “he made many political enemies, although no personal ones, by invariably fighting in the liberal ranks.”⁷⁸⁹

However, being a maverick went down well with the electorate, who recognised his honesty and determination to do what was best for the colony rather than for himself. Nevertheless, the government made political capital out of Douglas’s comments by gleefully supporting his observation that the opposition were unfit for office.⁷⁹⁰

However, Douglas believed he had done his duty by his electorate and the parliament in publicly raising his concerns.⁷⁹¹

The Lilley ministry

Following the resignation of the Mackenzie ministry,⁷⁹² Charles Lilley became premier.⁷⁹³ Douglas was not included, which was hardly

⁷⁸⁹ “Hon John Douglas C.M.G.” *Torres Strait Daily Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 December 1903

⁷⁹⁰ Mr Forbes. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, p. 29; The Colonial Secretary. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, p. 46. Douglas had talked openly about the antagonism between Fitzgerald and Macalister. (Mr Douglas. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, p. 26; The Colonial Secretary. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, p. 46)

⁷⁹¹ The Postmaster-General. “Ministerial Statement.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, p. 80

⁷⁹² The Colonial Treasurer. “Resignation of the Ministry.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, pp. 75-76

⁷⁹³ Mason, p. 106; John Douglas. “Change of Ministry.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, p. 79; “Ministerial Changes.” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 November 1868, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 1 December 1868, p. 4. The announcement of a Lilley government was treated with dismay by some conservative sections of the electorate. For instance, this observation by Walter Cunningham Hume, a Darling Downs surveyor with marked squatter sympathies: “such a set of wretches never sat in a cabinet before, and it’s to be hoped will not again.” As for the members of the ministry; he portrayed Lilley as a “confirmed

surprising given the remarks made by him in parliament the previous week. What was surprising was that it fell to Douglas to announce the new ministry in parliament. The *Brisbane Courier* saw this as recognition of Douglas's influence, although, given that he had missed a ministerial post, the paper was astonished that he had consented to be their spokesman.⁷⁹⁴

Entrusting Douglas with the honour of announcing the new ministerial arrangements in parliament clearly indicated that the government needed Douglas more than he needed them, for he was by now a very popular politician, with a well-deserved reputation for honesty and integrity. It was therefore in the new government's interest to have him onside. However, although Douglas's penchant for independence, coupled with a tendency to speak his own mind, greatly concerned Lilley, nevertheless, the latter correctly deduced that having Douglas onside was preferable to having him in opposition. After all, it was Lilley, who in March 1866 had given Douglas his first ministerial position.

The best way to keep Douglas onside was to include him in the ministry. However, this was fraught with danger, because Fitzgerald,

drunkard," Macalister "a clever but totally unscrupulous man, also given to drinking too much," Taylor, "a perfect beast in every way," Stephens, "a double faced politician who nobody appears to like," and Hodgson, "a confirmed humbug." Douglas got off relatively lightly, Hume labelling him "an honest but unwavering and misguided man." (Nancy Bonin, ed. *Katie Hume on the Darling Downs: A Colonial Marriage. Letters of a Colonial Lady, 1866–1871*. Toowoomba, Darling Downs Institute Press, 1985, p. 177)

⁷⁹⁴ "Ministerial Changes." *Brisbane Courier*, 26 November 1868, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 1 December 1868, p. 4

who Douglas had so recently savaged, was colonial treasurer, and Macalister, who had had disagreements with Douglas over the East Moreton election, was minister for lands and works. Nevertheless, the position of postmaster-general was vacant, and it was to Douglas that Lilley turned. Douglas, not considered a candidate, was, to the surprise of many, given this position.⁷⁹⁵ He was also appointed to the legislative council to represent and lead the government there.⁷⁹⁶ Political necessity can make for strange bedfellows and given Douglas's recent savage criticism of his colleagues, few were stranger than this.⁷⁹⁷

In summing up this episode, the *Brisbane Courier* concluded with some observations on Douglas's political career, the impact of his recent parliamentary behaviour, and his future prospects in the Lilley ministry:

The day of Mr. John Douglas's influence as a leading politician has passed away, and we fear is not likely to return ...owing to some surprising exhibitions of indiscretion ... He can no longer make or mar a government; he will not help an iota to keep the present ministry in office, unless his wisdom in council greatly surpasses his judgement in debate.⁷⁹⁸

As this thesis will show, subsequent events proved the newspaper wrong on all counts.

⁷⁹⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 1 December 1868, p. 4

⁷⁹⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 December 1868, p. 2

⁷⁹⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 December 1868, p. 2

Legislative council

On moving to the legislative council, Douglas resigned his seat of East Moreton.⁷⁹⁹ He had held it for less than three months and for most of that time parliament had not sat. Lilley brought Douglas into the ministry to counter the ambitions of Fitzgerald and Macalister. That Douglas had recently upset both of them ensured that he would be relatively impartial when the two feuded - a likely scenario given that during the past month they had both attempted to become premier at the other's expense.

In appointing Douglas to the upper house, Lilley consigned Douglas to a chamber in which any comments he made would be less damaging. The position of postmaster-general involved managing a complex department and the expenditure of considerable time and energy, and by assigning him this responsibility Lilley hoped Douglas would have less time and energy to devote, either deliberately or inadvertently, to destabilising the ministry.

When Douglas's appointment was announced, the *Brisbane Courier* marvelled that "the suasion and blandishments to induce" Douglas and Fitzgerald to work together were "inconceivable."⁸⁰⁰ What were these "suasion and blandishments"? While not made public at the time, the journalist William Coote later revealed that Douglas:

would undertake the leadership of the upper house for a

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 December 1868, p. 2

session; but he must be compensated. At the close of that session he must have the immigration agency in London.⁸⁰¹

This arrangement suited both men.⁸⁰² Douglas needed an ongoing salaried position to service debt incurred when selling his *Tooloombah* property, and welcomed the status and prestige the position would bring.⁸⁰³ Despatching Douglas to Britain benefited Lilley as well, for it removed him from the Queensland political arena. Rather than having Douglas inside the cabinet in preference to having him cause damage from the backbenches or as a member of the opposition, Lilley cleverly engineered a plan to remove him altogether. This arrangement was never made public.

Douglas duly took his seat in the legislative council and Lilley's faith in him was amply repaid, for he conducted government business there in exemplary fashion, exhibiting none of the characteristic independence that had caused his colleagues so much anxiety when

⁸⁰¹ William Coote. "Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas." *The Week*, 19 May 1877, p. 616; "Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Petition of Mr. John Douglas, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 811. Douglas kept details of the deal secret when the appointment was officially announced, disingenuously observing that his appointment to this position was "far from being expected." ("Farewell Banquet to the Hon. John Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1869, p. 3)

⁸⁰² Douglas later confirmed this arrangement and also revealed that, at various times, Mackenzie, Fitzgerald and Lilley had all offered him the post of agent-general for immigration. However, Mackenzie's government fell before Douglas could accept, while he declined Fitzgerald's offer.

⁸⁰³ As Coote observed, Douglas possessed a "tolerably strong dash of ambition." William Coote. "Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas." *The Week*, 19 May 1877, p. 616

he was in the assembly.⁸⁰⁴ As Douglas himself observed, regarding his conduct in the council, “there was nothing to be gained by ... ripping up old sores.”⁸⁰⁵ In large measure, this was because the opportunities for debate and confrontation in the upper house were limited in comparison with the lower house. As postmaster-general, Douglas concentrated on improved postal services to the colony by developing an effective mail service to Europe via Torres Strait, and the establishment of a telegraph link with Europe through the Gulf of Carpentaria.⁸⁰⁶

Agent-general

On 31 August 1869, Lilley appointed Douglas Queensland agent-general for immigration and agent for the colony. He would be based in London.⁸⁰⁷ The *Brisbane Courier* supported the appointment, predicting that he would be a “great advantage to the colony.”⁸⁰⁸ A tumultuous period in Douglas’s career was now closing. In a time of

⁸⁰⁴ “Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Wednesday, 16 December 1868.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 13, 1869, p. 15. In addition to being postmaster-general, Douglas was appointed a member of the executive council and leader of the government in this chamber.

⁸⁰⁵ The Postmaster-General. “Adjournment - Detention of the Western mail for the Warrego Election Writ.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 8, 1869, p. 188

⁸⁰⁶ For mail services to the colony, see Postmaster-General. “Postage Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, pp. 509-10. For the telegraph link, see “Telegraph Communication to the Gulf of Carpentaria.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, pp. 281-83. For the mail service via Torres Strait, see “Mail Communication with England via Batavia.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, pp. 877-78

⁸⁰⁷ Hon. G. Harris. “Instruction to Agent-General for Immigration.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, p. 873; *Brisbane Courier*, 1 September 1869, p. 2; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 10, no 95, 25 September 1869, p. 1300

⁸⁰⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 1 September 1869, p. 2

great political instability, marked by frequent change of ministries, Douglas's involvement had been central.

Along the way, he had become one of the more experienced politicians in the colony, respected by the public for his independence and incorruptibility, while considered by his colleagues as somewhat unpredictable. Douglas's resilience and stubbornness had also been prominent, as Coote so eloquently observed:

In some things he is consistent to the verge of obstinacy, but he begins without counting the cost, and when he finds himself disappointed he calmly does not accept defeat, but ascribes the failure to unhappiness of circumstance, to unexpected fatalities, or to a superior authority; and, having gilded his pill, swallows it as an appetiser, and goes serenely on his way.⁸⁰⁹

Sending Douglas to represent Queensland in England was a masterstroke by Lilley and his government. Not only would Douglas represent them and his country to the best of his undoubted ability; he would also be far removed from the everyday cut and thrust of politics in Queensland and therefore unable to destabilise the government through speaking his mind, regardless of the consequences.

Douglas's undoubted intellect and public speaking skills, combined with an aristocratic background, would be put to great effect in attracting immigrants to the colony and advancing Queensland's

⁸⁰⁹ William Coote. "Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas." *The Week*,

interests.⁸¹⁰ In 1851, he had left the 'mother country' as a young man seeking his fortune. Now, eighteen years later, and only 41, he was returning in triumph. However, as the next chapter will demonstrate, the hubris generated by his indomitable spirit, iron will, and fierce independence would follow him to his new post, with consequences that would inevitably reverberate half way around the world to Queensland, where they would again embroil him in controversy.

19 May 1877, p. 616

⁸¹⁰ As the *Brisbane Courier* aptly expressed it; "To meet and mix with the best in the land will be Mr. Douglas's right as a well-born and accomplished gentleman, and in such circles he will hold his place, and will do credit to this colony." (*Brisbane Courier*, 3 September 1869, p. 2)

Chapter 10: Queensland's Representative in London, 1869-71

Immigration was critical to Queensland's success because the young colony had a vast area and a sparse population. In December 1860, Governor Bowen remarked that the "most pressing need of Queensland is an accession of population to develop the rich and varied resources and capabilities of our vast territory."⁸¹¹

Queensland's population at separation from New South Wales in December 1859 was 23,520.⁸¹² By the end of 1861, there were 30,059, compared with 360,860 in New South Wales, 538,628 in Victoria, 126,830 in South Australia and 89,977 in Tasmania. Only Western Australia had fewer people (15,593), and there was a pressing need to attract more people to the nascent colony to exploit its resources to generate wealth and prosperity.⁸¹³

Henry Jordan, Queensland agent-general

Accordingly, in late 1860, Henry Jordan was appointed Queensland agent-general to Great Britain, tasked with encouraging immigration to Queensland to aid its growth and development.⁸¹⁴ This he did by successfully depicting the colony as a 'workers' paradise', and 'new

⁸¹¹ Joyce (1978), p. 28

⁸¹² Postmaster General. "Immigration Bill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, p. 379. This figure did not include most of the indigenous population.

⁸¹³ Wray Vamplew, ed. *Australian Historical Statistics*. (Australians: A Historical Library.) Sydney, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987, p. 26

⁸¹⁴ O'Donohue, p. 59; Lack, pp. 81-82

chums' flocked to the colony at the rate of a thousand a month, over 50,000 by the end of 1865.⁸¹⁵

Jordan's achievements were spectacular, because net immigration to Queensland for the period 1861-65 was 52,855,⁸¹⁶ against only 11,562 in New South Wales, 5,656 in Victoria, 16,263 in South Australia, and 4,165 in Western Australia.⁸¹⁷ But, although successful in encouraging immigrants to come to Queensland, Jordan experienced considerable difficulties in performing his duties.

This was due to a "ensorious, pettifogging, and unreasonable attitude" by Queensland authorities, who failed to appreciate the problems besetting Jordan. These included having to frequently lecture on the benefits of immigration to Queensland; being forced to raise funds in England so that passengers could be adequately equipped according to the regulations; inadequate staff to handle requests for information and associated correspondence; and, being subjected to complaints and accusations of deception from immigrants.⁸¹⁸

In 1864, the Queensland government abandoned the land-order system of immigration, whereby 15 acres of land could be selected

⁸¹⁵ Fitzgerald, pp. 127 & 305

⁸¹⁶ By 1864, the Queensland population was 61,467 persons, increasing to 99,901 by 1868 and 120,104 persons according to the 1871 census. (Vrampley, p. 26)

⁸¹⁷ Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics. *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia Containing Authoritative Statistics for the Period 1901-1920 and Corrected Statistics for the period 1877-1900*. Melbourne, Government Printer, 1921, p. 1142. Net immigration is the excess of arrivals over departures.

⁸¹⁸ Lack, pp. 81-82

immediately and a further 12 acres after two years, due to its high cost and its inability to create a small land-owning class. Jordan, as the agent-general, was blamed for this failure⁸¹⁹ and accused of having a private financial arrangement with the shipping line handling the transportation of immigrants to Queensland.⁸²⁰ An angry Jordan resigned in 1864 and returned to Queensland to defend himself.⁸²¹ A select committee subsequently cleared him of wrongdoing, but rebuked him for his premature return to the colony!⁸²²

Returning to London, Jordan continued in office until 1866 when the Queensland government, due to the ensuing financial crisis, ceased assisted immigration, cancelled his appointment, and downgraded the London office.⁸²³ Jordan was bitter over his treatment, and predicted that “my successor ... will find his task herculean, and to a great extent, necessarily unsuccessful.”⁸²⁴ The position of agent-

⁸¹⁹ Fitzgerald, p. 127. Land-orders were worth £15.

⁸²⁰ O'Donohue, p. 63; Joyce (1978), p. 28

⁸²¹ O'Donohue, p. 63

⁸²² Ibid.

⁸²³ Ibid. However, Jordan had independently tendered his resignation, which the government readily accepted. Despite his resignation, James Wheeler continued to remain at 2 Old Broad Street, London, as clerk in charge of the Queensland emigration Office. (“Correspondence between the Government and the agent-general for emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 125.) Although the 1866 bank crash was the reason for halting all assisted immigration into the colony, the rate of immigration was also unsustainable. As Douglas noted: “in 1865 they were introducing into the colony population, by immigration, at the rate of 11,000 souls per annum from Europe. That was at a time when they had a population of 87,000, and the result of that was that the power of the country to absorb such a large immigration was greatly overtaxed.” (Postmaster General. “Immigration Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, p. 380)

⁸²⁴ Lack, p. 86. Despite the criticisms of his time in office, Jordan had despatched 85 ships to Queensland conveying 36,063 persons.

general was not re-introduced until Douglas's appointment in late 1869, by which time Jordan's contribution had been recognised and valued, the *Brisbane Courier* remarking that:

it will take Mr. Douglas a good while to get into working order as effective a system as that of his predecessor.⁸²⁵

It had been hoped that Jordan would encourage prospective English yeomen to aid the development of agriculture in the colony, but this was not possible because of the geographical isolation of Queensland and its distance from England compared to Canada and the United States, countries that were also actively encouraging immigration. Prospective immigrants to Queensland received inducements in the form of land-orders worth £15, whereby 15 acres of land were immediately available for selection with a further 12 acres after two years.⁸²⁶ However, those with agricultural experience not only found the unfamiliar conditions daunting, but also had a very real fear of Aboriginal resistance and were not willing to undertake backbreaking and intensive labour when they could simply oversee sheep.⁸²⁷

Instead, such men wished to set up business as "their own masters."⁸²⁸ They were materialistic and ambitious, imbued with a

⁸²⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 18 September 1869, p. 2

⁸²⁶ Fitzgerald, p. 127

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*; Mary Pescott. *The Land of Promise: Images of Australia in Immigrant Propaganda, 1860-1870*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1981, p. 48

⁸²⁸ A. A Morrison, "Queensland: A Study of Distance and Isolation," *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1960-61, pp. 195-96, quoted in Fitzgerald, pp. 304-5

strong petit-bourgeois ideology and a striving to succeed.⁸²⁹ By 1869, assisted immigration had been suspended for over two years,⁸³⁰ and it was generally agreed that it should now recommence.⁸³¹ This resulted in the enactment of a new Immigration Bill and Douglas's appointment as agent-general.⁸³²

Douglas's relocation to England

Douglas's appointment received ringing endorsement from parliament and the press. In discussing his appointment and recent parliamentary career, the *Brisbane Courier* neatly encapsulated his strengths, achievements, and the reason for his popularity: "Mr. Douglas has sometimes seemed a very inconsistent politician, but we know of no public man in Queensland who has, on the whole, better preserved and deserved the respect of the public."⁸³³

A farewell banquet in the Brisbane Town Hall was held for Douglas

⁸²⁹ Fitzgerald., pp. 304-5. The thriving trade in land-orders evidenced this. A migrant recounted how, in the early 1870s, on emigrating from England, he and his fellow passengers sold their land-orders: "These grants, by the way, were promptly disposed of to an agent for £7 each on arrival in Brisbane." (Frederick Raymond. *Queensland in the Seventies: Reminiscences of the Early Days of a Young Clergyman*. C.A. Ribeiro and Co., Singapore, 1928)

⁸³⁰ Despite Douglas's appointment to the position late in 1869, immigration to Queensland had actually recommenced in 1868. (Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas. *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 129)

⁸³¹ In the words of William Thornton, a member of the legislative council, "the time had arrived when there should be a renewal of immigration; and the statistics ... proved, that with immigration, the prosperity of the colony increased." (Hon. W. Thornton. "Immigration Bill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, p. 387)

⁸³² This was the Immigration Act of 1869

⁸³³ *Brisbane Courier*, 31 August 1869, p. 2

on 21 September 1869.⁸³⁴ The governor - noting that the *Times* newspaper in London had written that, "Queensland wanted population and England wanted to get rid of their paupers. Queensland had plenty of land and England had plenty of people to live upon it," - hoped that Douglas would send "the proper kind of people."⁸³⁵ In his reply, Douglas endorsed these sentiments, expressed his pleasure at being appointed to the position, and explained why he believed immigration was so important to the development and progress of Queensland:

the pursuit of the happiness which might be found in a free and almost independent community - that happiness which, in this era of the world, might be found by the adaptation of those vast waste countries which God had prepared for the use and benefit of mankind to that purpose.⁸³⁶

Douglas's appointment as agent-general in London saw him return to the land where he was born, bred, and educated. Nevertheless, his allegiance was now to Queensland, the country he had come to love and call home.⁸³⁷ Douglas had come to the colonies to:

combine a pastoral and patriarchal life with the making of

⁸³⁴ Farewell Banquet to the Hon. John Douglas. *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1869, p. 3

⁸³⁵ Ibid. Douglas agreed, for in a letter to the *Times* shortly after arriving in England, he indicated that he wanted "all classes," not just poor people. (John Douglas. "Emigration." *The Times*, 3 March 1870, p. 6)

⁸³⁶ Farewell Banquet to the Hon. John Douglas. *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1869, p. 3. Douglas expounded further on this at a Masonic banquet in his honour, informing those present that he and his wife "both regretted leaving [and] fervently hoped they might come back and resume their place again." (Masonic Banquet. *Brisbane Courier*, 5 October 1869, p. 6)

a little money, and the chance of visiting the old country
when their flocks and herds had increased and
multiplied.⁸³⁸

However, although unsuccessful as a pastoralist, he did marry and found his calling in life as a politician in the service of his country. Along the way, he had become an Australian. Now he was returning to his birthplace, to the land that his compatriots fondly called home, to extol Queensland's virtues and assist others settle halfway around the world, as he had.

The Douglasses continued to be feted prior their departure.⁸³⁹ John Douglas, his wife Mary, her daughter, and their servant, left Brisbane on 30 September 1869,⁸⁴⁰ and arrived in London on 9 December 1869.⁸⁴¹ Here Douglas immediately set about making his mark. He saw himself primarily as the agent-general for Queensland rather than merely for immigration, and accordingly changed the name of the *Queensland Government Emigration Office* to the *Queensland Government Offices*.

⁸³⁷ Farewell Banquet to the Hon. John Douglas. *Brisbane Courier*, 22 September 1869, p. 3

⁸³⁸ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 28 November 1903. I assume the patriarchal reference meant he hoped to marry and raise a family in Australia.

⁸³⁹ Mary Douglas was presented with a silver salver by the governor in recognition of her work with the Diamantina Orphanage, and John Douglas was given a solid gold jewel by the Masonic fraternity and an illuminated address by the All Saint's Church congregation, which is reproduced at Appendix 3. (Weekly Epitome, *Brisbane Courier*, 25 September 1869, p. 5; *Brisbane Courier*, 27 September 1869, p. 3; Lecture by the Hon. John Douglas. *Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1869, p. 3; Presentation to Mrs. John Douglas. *Brisbane Courier*, 5 October 1869, p. 6; Masonic Banquet. *Brisbane Courier*, 5 October 1869, p. 6)

⁸⁴⁰ "Shipping." *Brisbane Courier*, 1 October 1869, p. 2. The ship was the *Florence Irving*.

⁸⁴¹ "Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 129

Douglas also relocated the office from 2 Old Broad Street to 32 Charing Cross.⁸⁴² The new location, opposite the Admiralty and just above Whitehall, was in the same district as most of the other colonial offices, raising the status of the Queensland office and its agent-general in the eyes of the British authorities.⁸⁴³ A portent of things to come, Douglas displayed his independence by not seeking authority or approval from the Queensland government for this action, merely informing it after the event.⁸⁴⁴ What the government in Brisbane thought of this is unknown, but it was the opening salvo in a drama of increasing bitterness unfolding between the government and its agent-general in London.⁸⁴⁵

Agent-general in London

The Queensland government was well aware of the problems Jordan had faced and did not want to see them repeated. Aware, too, of Douglas's penchant for following his own wishes, it wanted him to fill the role in a manner best calculated to prevent undue embarrassment or expense to it or the colony. Accordingly, it issued him with a comprehensive list of instructions. These instructions were drawn up after Douglas's appointment and sent to the London

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 130-31. At 2 Old Broad Street, Douglas had been sharing a room with the emigration clerk on the fourth floor.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 131

⁸⁴⁴ "Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, pp. 130-31

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 131

office in late December 1869.⁸⁴⁶

The *Instructions to the Agent-General for Immigration to Queensland* set out in clear and unambiguous terms the responsibilities of the office and contained instructions on the type of emigrants required, inducements to be offered; associated charges; an injunction for Douglas to lecture; and to use only those forms contained in the schedule of the Act.⁸⁴⁷ Before his departure, Douglas had received verbal instructions to terminate the existing shipping contract with Messrs. Mackay, Baines, and Co⁸⁴⁸ and this Douglas did shortly after his arrival in London, with six months' notice given.⁸⁴⁹

Douglas arranged for the printing and distribution of handbills that extolled the virtues of emigration to Queensland, and the cost for a passage for single adult men at £4 (not £8 as the Act stipulated.)⁸⁵⁰ This met with a swift reaction from the Queensland government, who demanded that he “comply strictly with the letter of the Act, until further instructed.”⁸⁵¹ Further instructions followed informing him that failure to comply with the legislation “will be considered as wholly

⁸⁴⁶ Instructions to the Agent-General for Immigration to Queensland. *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 16, 1871, pp. 47-48

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47. Among the instructions was that Douglas would “carry out the provisions of the *Immigration Act of 1869* and to do all in his power to promote and encourage immigration to Queensland, in accordance with the provisions of the Act.”

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁹ Correspondence Between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas. *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, pp. 129, 135-36. The termination letter was dated 31 December.

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 132

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*

unauthorised on your part.”⁸⁵²

While the charge under the Act was £8, in practice one free passage was granted for each assisted passage. Instead of continuing this practice, Douglas simply charged everyone £4. Nevertheless, the government interpreted what to Douglas was a sound administrative arrangement that streamlined existing practices, as a violation of the Act.⁸⁵³

Although two months later Douglas reluctantly adjusted the rate back to £8, that was not the end of the matter. Six weeks later, he was notified that, as 73 assisted emigrants on the *Indus* had been charged £4 instead of £8, the difference, some £292, would be deducted from his salary.⁸⁵⁴

Why had Douglas not charged the fee as stipulated in the Act? The explanation lies in political developments taking place in Queensland at that time. Douglas vehemently disagreed with the practice of charging £8 per single man. A man of strong principle, one used to exercising his discretion and getting his own way, he simply ignored the government’s instructions, aware that the colonial secretary, Charles Lilley, a political ally, would support him if necessary.

Douglas’s actions demonstrated the lengths he would go to

⁸⁵² Ibid., p. 133

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 132-34. This sum was never paid by Douglas, the debt being written off due to his insolvency in 1872. (“Report of the Auditor-General on Public Accounts for the Year 1870.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, pp. 442-43)

implement his liberal beliefs and principles. A man of vision and compassion, he had little time for bureaucrats and their regulations. He considered legislation to be there to give expression to a government's programs and reforms, to facilitate the implementation of government policy. Therefore, as the responsible government official, any legislation at variance with his goals, he simply ignored. As long as the liberal side of politics remained in power, Douglas - by virtue of his position, influence, and experience - could get away with this unorthodox approach.

Agent-general for the Palmer ministry

However, in April 1870 the Lilley ministry fell, replaced on 3 May by one led by Arthur Hunter Palmer, the new premier cum colonial secretary.⁸⁵⁵ Palmer, who had first entered parliament as member for Port Curtis following Douglas's move to the legislative council, was a conservative. He distrusted Douglas, convinced, despite the latter's explicit denials, that he was still in communication with the ousted Lilley and his erstwhile treasurer, Thomas Blackett Stephens.⁸⁵⁶

This distrust saw relations between Douglas and the government deteriorate rapidly, exacerbated by ongoing problems, many of them petty. As Douglas later remarked, he now "received short, sharp,

⁸⁵⁵ For more information see H. J. Gibbney, "Charles Lilley: An Uncertain Democrat." In, D. J. Murphy and R. B. Joyce. *Queensland Political Portraits*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1978, pp. 78-79

⁸⁵⁶ J. X. Jobson. A Biography of Sir Arthur Hunter Palmer. BA Hons thesis. University of

thoughtless and reckless telegrams which brought things to a standstill.”⁸⁵⁷ For instance, Douglas received instructions not to “give free passages to any but female domestic servants”⁸⁵⁸ while requests to employ an immigration agent in Italy to secure migrants were summarily refused.⁸⁵⁹

Following his arrival in London, Douglas had obeyed instructions and terminated, with six months’ notice, the shipping contract between the Queensland government and Messrs. Mackay, Baines and Co.⁸⁶⁰ Henceforth tenders were to be invited for each shipment of emigrants.⁸⁶¹ Nevertheless, as Mackay, Baines and Co. was interested in continuing its arrangement with the government, Douglas retained their services.⁸⁶² He did this because he had insufficient funds to enter into new contracts, a condition of which was “payment of the first moiety in cash after the embarkation of the emigrants.”⁸⁶³

Queensland, 1960, p. 51

⁸⁵⁷ “Mr. Douglas at the Victoria Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1871, p. 3

⁸⁵⁸ “Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 135. Douglas unsuccessfully protested that this measure would result in immigration to the colony being “considerably diminished.”

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-38

⁸⁶⁰ This was due to the *Immigration Act* of 1864 being repealed, and therefore authority no longer existed to issue either land-orders to ship-owners, or debentures, the two forms of passage money payment under that contract. (“Instructions to the Agent-General for Immigration to Queensland.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 16, 1871, p. 71)

⁸⁶¹ “Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 138.

⁸⁶² “Correspondence between the Government and the agent-general for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, pp. 139-41

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 141

This arrangement was rejected by the government, which argued that “the first moiety of the passage-money could be paid by drafts on the treasury at thirty days sight.”⁸⁶⁴ Douglas was reluctantly forced to cancel his arrangements with the existing shipping line, despite negotiating, in good faith, an improved service at lower cost.⁸⁶⁵ The government further insisted that he use only “ships classed A1 at Lloyd’s,”⁸⁶⁶ but rescinded this instruction when Douglas informed them that no mail steamers met these criteria!⁸⁶⁷

Douglas had to field numerous government complaints about medically-unfit passengers including following the return to England of two patients, at government expense, because the medical examination failed to detect that they were suffering from heart disease and epilepsy.⁸⁶⁸ In his defence, Douglas produced detailed testimonials and reports from their employers, householders, surgeon, magistrate and minister, all indicating that these were not pre-existing conditions.⁸⁶⁹

Problems arose over the discovery of three cases of gonorrhoea and syphilis aboard the *Flying Cloud*, and Douglas was rebuked for allowing these passengers to immigrate to the colony.⁸⁷⁰ An

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 139

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 141

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 142

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 143-44

⁸⁷⁰ “Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 180

incensed Douglas then cabled this withering reply.

No legal powers exist which would authorise me to secure an effectual personal inspection of the full-paying passengers and the crew. In the absence of such general powers, I decline to undertake the application of inquisitorial tests, of such a nature as would alone be adequate, to either the free or the assisted emigrants, who, if respectable males, or modest females, would, I trust, decline to accept any favors from the government of Queensland on the condition of being subject to such gross indignities.⁸⁷¹

A furious Palmer considered these remarks “a gratuitous impertinence, utterly uncalled for.”⁸⁷²

Disagreements continued to poison the relationship between the government and its agent-general. Douglas was chastised for the way he exercised his discretion in arranging payment for the *Flying Cloud*, sending too many emigrants on one ship,⁸⁷³ not supplying enough domestic servants,⁸⁷⁴ and using the incorrect form when

⁸⁷¹ “Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 102

⁸⁷² *Ibid.* It was left to the clerk of the Queensland executive council, Albert Victor Drury, to couch Palmer’s remarks in more diplomatic terms, tactfully and approvingly noting that, “It appears to the colonial secretary that had it not been for the resignation of the previous day, it is a piece of fine writing which would hardly have been indulged in by Mr. Douglas.”

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 154

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158

issuing land-order warrants.⁸⁷⁵ To this last criticism, Douglas pointed out that the Act in question prescribed no particular warrant form.⁸⁷⁶

These criticisms were not confined to Douglas, for his predecessor, Henry Jordan, had endured similar difficulties.⁸⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Douglas found these petty criticisms and incessant carping frustrating. He was responsible to a government, on the other side of the world, which plainly did not appreciate the difficulties he faced in procuring a steady supply of suitable immigrants for Queensland. Two of Douglas's immediate successors, Daintree and Macalister, also had these problems, the former being involved in a bribery scandal implicating his staff and the latter having strained relations with his office secretary, Thomas Hamilton, over tender irregularities.⁸⁷⁸ Indeed, the first four Queensland agent-generals all resigned over government misunderstanding, interference, or political considerations, with three departures resulting in government enquiries.⁸⁷⁹

Although the Lilley government had also appointed Douglas agent for the colony of Queensland replacing the existing crown agents, Palmer rarely called upon him to perform this role.⁸⁸⁰ One of the few exceptions involved Douglas in negotiations with the British and

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 155

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ Lack, pp. 82-83

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 89-94

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid. While Douglas did receive instructions, these were vague and ill defined, resulting in differences of interpretation.

⁸⁸⁰ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 10 no 95, 25 September 1869, p. 1300

Australian Telegraph Company and the Dutch government over a proposed telegraph line linking Singapore, Java and Queensland, Douglas travelling to The Hague in September 1870 for discussions with the Dutch minister for the colonies.⁸⁸¹ The government's refusal to support Douglas consistently in this role was one of the main reasons for his eventual resignation.⁸⁸²

German migration

Other factors beyond Douglas's control also affected the performance of his duties, with the difficulties besetting immigration from Germany a case in point. Douglas was instructed to arrange 1,500 emigrants from Germany in his first year.⁸⁸³ While numerous delays were caused through the imposition of strict conditions by the North German Confederation,⁸⁸⁴ the first ship, the *Humboldt*, finally left Hamburg on 14 July 1870, a few days before the Franco-

⁸⁸¹ See, "Proposed Submarine and Land Telegraph between Singapore and the Australian Colonies." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1870, pp. 417-32. The telegraph line was never built.

⁸⁸² Douglas expressed his disappointment to Palmer as follows, "I am sorry you are going back to the crown agents. They are very good people, but, whether you retain me here or not, you must have somebody here who ought to be able to do anything you require to be done. The agents for the other Australian colonies - Vendon, Dutton and Maguire - do everything of that kind." (John Douglas to Arthur Palmer, 2 September 1870, quoted in Jobson (1960), p. 51)

⁸⁸³ "Instructions to the Agent-General for Immigration to Queensland." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 16, 1871, p. 47; "Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 131. Douglas appointed W. Kirchner as his agent for German emigration, based in Frankfurt.

⁸⁸⁴ "Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, pp. 160-65

Prussian War broke out.⁸⁸⁵ The outbreak of hostilities led to a blockade of the river and its port, Hamburg, by the French, resulting in the indefinite stranding of some 900 engaged passengers.⁸⁸⁶

This greatly distressed Douglas, because many of the emigrants were from Switzerland, and could not return home having already disposed of their homes and possessions. He prevailed on the British Foreign Office to intercede on his behalf, requesting the French government to “allow the departure of the emigrants without vitiating the blockade,” but they rejected his pleas.⁸⁸⁷ The war had a deep personal impact on Douglas, who confided to Lewis Bernays, chairman of the Queensland Commissioners for the International Exhibition to be held in London in 1871.

God knows what will be the events of 1871. It seems rather like fiddling when Rome is burning to talk of exhibitions when the whole structure of European society is shaken to the foundation.⁸⁸⁸

Douglas experienced this conflict at close quarters. In Scotland when the war broke out, he immediately sailed for Cologne where, although seeing German troops crossing the Rhine, he could do nothing to assist the stranded immigrants.⁸⁸⁹ They remained

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 164

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 172

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 173

⁸⁸⁸ “London International Exhibition of 1871.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 121; John Douglas. “An Australian Nation.” *The Melbourne Review*, vol 5 no 17, January 1880, p. 4

⁸⁸⁹ “The Quetta Club.” *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 12 September 1903; John Douglas to Arthur Palmer, 11 July 1870. Mcllwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley

stranded for two months, when the *Reichstag* was finally able to leave Hamburg, following the ending of the blockade.⁸⁹⁰

Douglas's resignation

Despite Douglas's many differences with the Queensland authorities, it was a relatively minor dispute over lecturing that precipitated his resignation. Jordan was noted for his fine lectures, with the success of the colony's immigration program in large part due to his oratorical abilities.⁸⁹¹ Douglas was therefore instructed by Lilley to promote emigration through lectures extolling the benefits of the colony.⁸⁹² However, Douglas ignored this instruction, claiming lecturing was no longer required, for people in England knew about the colony.⁸⁹³ He preferred to promote immigration by visiting the principal agencies and publishing handbills and pamphlets.⁸⁹⁴ The government, aware that no lecturing was taking place, instructed Douglas, to commence lecturing forthwith.⁸⁹⁵ This was the 'final straw' for Douglas, who

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⁸⁹⁰ "Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 179. However, most of the passengers were from Denmark and Scandinavia, for no German males between six and forty years of age were allowed to leave during the war.

⁸⁹¹ Postmaster General. "Immigration Bill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, p. 382

⁸⁹² "Instructions to the Agent-General for Immigration to Queensland." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 16, 1871, p. 47

⁸⁹³ Postmaster General. "Immigration Bill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 9, 1869, p. 382

⁸⁹⁴ "Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Petition of Mr. John Douglas, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 817

⁸⁹⁵ "Correspondence between the Government and the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr.

promptly resigned.⁸⁹⁶ He had occupied the post for little over a year.

There were three reasons why he resigned: his inability to perform the duties of the office effectively; his non-utilisation in the role of agent for the colony in England; and his refusal to lecture.⁸⁹⁷

Douglas further informed Palmer that his continuation in the post would lead to him “compromising my own self-respect.”⁸⁹⁸ His resignation was accepted,⁸⁹⁹ but he stayed on in the post until 24 April 1871, when Archibald Archer finally replaced him.⁹⁰⁰

Douglas believed he had conscientiously applied himself to the position, under trying circumstances, despite being denied the requisite flexibility and latitude. As he observed:

Instances innumerable have arisen, and will continue to arise, tending to shew that unless a fair latitude of discretion is allowed to an agent acting in England on behalf of the government, his office must be a thankless one - unsatisfactory both to himself and his principles.⁹⁰¹

Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1871, p. 181

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 184

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.184-85. “Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 104. In his defence, Douglas later noted that nowhere in the Act is “reference made therein to lecturing as one of his duties,” and therefore any such instructions were invalid as they “appear to have been issued without the authority of the Governor in council.”

⁸⁹⁸ “Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 104

⁸⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁰ “Resignation of Mr. Archibald Archer as Agent-General for Emigration.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, pp. 107-9

⁹⁰¹ “Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 103

Had Douglas not resigned over the issue of lecturing he could have enjoyed a much longer term in the position. It is ironic that, while he criticised the government for its inflexible application of the Act and associated instructions, he was equally inflexible on the issue of lecturing. Despite this, Douglas had successfully delivered to Queensland a steady stream of immigrants from the British Isles and Germany during 1870.⁹⁰²

By acting as the *de facto* ambassador for Queensland, Douglas had extended the duties and influence of the position,⁹⁰³ an approach welcomed by the British authorities and sanctioned by the Lilley government. It was in this capacity that Douglas corresponded with the Colonial Office regarding communications with the colony, the Foreign Office over the French blockade of Hamburg, meeting the president of the Poor Law Board to discuss pauper immigration, and writing to the *Times* on telegraphic communications.⁹⁰⁴ As Barbara Atkins remarked, Douglas had “recognised and appreciated the need for a more imaginative, adventurous and mature approach.”⁹⁰⁵

Unfortunately, for Douglas, he set a standard the Palmer government

⁹⁰² Ibid., p. 104. In 1870, Douglas dispatched to Queensland, 2,527 immigrants, comprising 610 full-paying passengers, 1,121 assisted and remittance passengers, and 796 free passengers. Douglas had proposed to send out an additional 2,000 German immigrants to Queensland but this was abandoned by his successor, Archibald Archer. (Archibald Archer to Arthur Palmer, 19 May 1871. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/43)

⁹⁰³ Barbara Atkins. *The Problem of Representation of Australia in England: The Origins and development of the Australian Agencies-General during the Nineteenth Century*. MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1959, p. 118. She is better known as Barbara Penny.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid. John Douglas. “Telegraphic Communication.” *The Times*, 14 January 1871, p. 10

refused to countenance. That Palmer had not appointed him meant the government watched his activities with increasing suspicion and alarm. They did not want a former opposition cabinet member strutting the world stage as a self-appointed ambassador for their government,⁹⁰⁶ and it was only a matter of time before Douglas fell foul of them. His principles and stubbornness ensured this would be sooner rather than later, but if Palmer thought the matter ended with Douglas's resignation, he was mistaken.

Douglas and his family left England on 20 May 1871, sailing from Liverpool⁹⁰⁷ and arriving in Brisbane on 14 August 1871.⁹⁰⁸ Although Douglas enjoyed his posting in the old country, he considered himself a Queenslander.⁹⁰⁹

⁹⁰⁵ Atkins, p. 122

⁹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121

⁹⁰⁷ Archibald Archer to Arthur Palmer, 19 May 1871. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/43

⁹⁰⁸ The Douglas family first sailed to New York, where they undertook an extensive rail journey across America to San Francisco. They then returned to Queensland, via Honolulu, New Zealand and Sydney; a taxing voyage involving a "great knocking about." ("Report from the Royal Commission on Railway Construction in Queensland: Minutes of the Evidence ..." pp. 6-9. *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1872; *Brisbane Courier*, 15 August 1871, p. 2; John Douglas to Thomas Phillips, 3 September 1871. Aborigines Protection Society Papers. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M2426, C39/102; John Douglas to Frederick Chesson, 3 September 1871. Aborigines Protection Society Papers. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M2427, C133/15; John Douglas to Arthur Palmer, 7 August 1871. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/68.)

⁹⁰⁹ As Douglas wrote to an English colleague, "after all the wanderings we are glad to find ourselves at home [Brisbane] of our trusty old friends in the country where we have shared many happy years." (Douglas to Thomas Phillips, 3 September 1871. Aborigines Protection Society Papers. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M2426, C39/102)

Defending his reputation

Shortly after his return, Douglas received a copy of the *Minutes of Proceedings of the Executive Council*, on 2 March 1871, on the Subject of the Resignation of the Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. John Douglas.⁹¹⁰ Forwarded to Douglas in London in March 1871, it arrived after he had departed.⁹¹¹ This minute set out Palmer's response to Douglas's letter of resignation, strongly criticising his performance:

It would appear that he imagined, not that he was bound to administer the *Immigration Act*, but that he has the power to override it, and do exactly as he pleased.⁹¹²

As for Douglas not being utilised as agent for the colony in England, Palmer claimed that Douglas had not been appointed at all, for this role was not explicitly mentioned in the letter of appointment.⁹¹³

However, Palmer was subsequently informed by Douglas's successor in London, Archibald Archer, that he:

had not been many days here before I found out that the agent-generals as administered by Douglas and in fact by the agents of all the colonies, was more, or at least as much, of a diplomatic character as that of agents for immigration.⁹¹⁴

⁹¹⁰ "Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 102

⁹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103

⁹¹² *Ibid.*

⁹¹³ "Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 103

⁹¹⁴ Archibald Archer to Arthur Palmer, 19 May 1871. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley

Palmer was especially critical of Douglas's refusal to lecture, considering his behaviour to be an inexplicable dereliction of duty.⁹¹⁵

Palmer believed that Douglas had accepted the post, "with his mind made up to disobey instructions."⁹¹⁶

Determined to defend his good name, Douglas sent a lengthy memo to Palmer strenuously and comprehensively rebutting these accusations. He was particularly upset that Palmer denied that he had been appointed to the position of agent-general for the colony, for it had been a gazetted position, with official correspondence addressed to him as the agent-general for Queensland. He also vehemently rejected accusations that he had never agreed to lecture. Palmer's reply to Douglas's memo was dismissive, suggesting that it was Douglas's "constant aim to make his appointment a diplomatic one."⁹¹⁷

Palmer refused to believe that Douglas's motives were not political and denigrated the latter's efforts to raise the profile and standing of Queensland in the eyes of the British authorities.⁹¹⁸ These exchanges soured their personal relationship, Douglas confiding to his son Edward, on Palmer's death in 1898, that he regarded him as little more than a "glorified bullock driver ... arrogant and haughty in

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⁹¹⁵ "Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 103

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 103-5

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105

manner.”⁹¹⁹

Douglas considered Palmer’s remarks provocative, staining his honour, dignity and reputation. Nevertheless, Douglas may well have let the matter lapse, had not Palmer, several months later, in answering a parliamentary question on immigration, contended that Douglas had:

thought fit to override an Act of parliament by taking £4 as the sum paid by assisted passengers instead of £8, as required by the law.⁹²⁰

Douglas, now attempting to resurrect his parliamentary career, had little choice but to respond. In a letter to the *Brisbane Courier* in June 1872, he refuted Palmer’s accusations and revealed his anger, frustration and despair:

I served him faithfully, as I was bound to serve him, when ... he became my master. But ‘thy servant is not a dog,’ and I surrendered my office when I found that I could no longer consistently serve the country under such a master ... I grudge to him nothing of all he seems to have, yet he will not ‘let me alone,’ and still pursues me with a stupid personal malice.⁹²¹

⁹¹⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 26 March 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(B)/6

⁹²⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 13 June 1872, p. 3: Archibald Archer to Arthur Palmer, 19 May 1871. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/43

⁹²¹ “Mr. Douglas’s Explanation.” *Brisbane Courier*, 18 June 1872, p. 3

Select committee established

Douglas then petitioned parliament, detailing his complaints against the premier and asking them to investigate Palmer's allegations that he had overridden the Act.⁹²² This was a serious matter, for Douglas believed that Palmer's comments dishonoured and discredited both him and the public service.⁹²³ In his petition, Douglas denied he had acted dishonourably and requested the appointment of a select committee to investigate the matter.⁹²⁴

As Douglas had been in the previous Lilley ministry, most of whose members were now in opposition, it was inevitable that events surrounding his petition would become politicised and the subject of heated debate, the more so as his grievance was with the premier and colonial secretary.⁹²⁵

Several members in the legislative council endorsed Douglas's attempts to have parliament investigate the matter, with the presenter of the petition, Eyles Browne, reminding his colleagues that Douglas was requesting that parliament

be his judges between him and the colonial secretary,
and the house should not refuse his request.⁹²⁶

⁹²² "Late Agent-General for Emigration." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 27 June 1872, pp. 418-24

⁹²³ "Mr. John Douglas. "Late Agent-General for Emigration. (Petition.)" *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 737

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁵ "Late Agent-General for Emigration." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 27 June 1872, p. 419

⁹²⁶ Hon. E. I. C. Browne. "Late Agent-General for Emigration." *Queensland Parliamentary*

Only Thomas Murray-Prior and Louis Hope voted against the establishment of a joint select committee to enquire into this matter.⁹²⁷

Opposition member Samuel Walker Griffith championed Douglas's cause in the legislative assembly. On Douglas being surcharged £1,400 over discrepancies relating to the fee set for assisted immigrants, Griffith demanded to know why Douglas was not (if he had acted illegally), charged over this matter.⁹²⁸

After spirited debate, the legislative assembly agreed to investigate this matter, with four of its members joining the joint select committee.⁹²⁹ This committee then interviewed Douglas, his predecessor, Henry Jordan, and Thomas Blackett Stephens, the acting colonial secretary when Douglas received his agent-general

Debates, 27 June 1872, pp. 423-5

⁹²⁷ *Ibid.* Members of the committee appointed from the legislative council were Thomas Murray-Prior, Henry George Simpson, Henry Bates Fitz and Eyles Irwin Caulfield Browne as chairman. ("Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Petition of Mr. John Douglas, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 802)

⁹²⁸ "Mr. John Douglas." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 4 July 1872, p. 499

⁹²⁹ "Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Petition of Mr. John Douglas, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 805. The legislative assembly members appointed by ballot were Samuel Griffith, Charles James Graham, Robert Ramsay and Edward Wienholt. Murray-Prior and Ramsay took the government line, both being in the Palmer Ministry. Griffith and Browne, as members of the opposition, supported Douglas. Fitz and Simpson had spoken in favour of establishing the committee. Graham, the member for Clermont, was new to the parliament, while Wienholt, a squatter representing Western Downs, supported the Palmer ministry. It was therefore not surprising that the committee's findings would not be unanimous.

commission and associated instructions.⁹³⁰ Stephens confirmed that Douglas accepted the position on the understanding that he would be crown agent, resulting in “a notice being sent to the crown agents at home, to discontinue acting for the colony.”⁹³¹

In his evidence, Douglas vigorously and comprehensively rebutted all Palmer’s charges. He provided evidence that he was the agent-general for the colony as well as agent-general for emigration, quoting from correspondence in which Governor Blackall had informed the secretary of state for the colonies that the colony had only one representative in Great Britain, “the agent-general for emigration.”⁹³²

It was the non-recognition of this post by Palmer that most angered Douglas and which drove him to clear his name and maintain his honour. Asked why his instructions had mentioned “agent for the colony” instead of agent-general, Douglas’s comments were revealing:

I did not examine it specially, or take notice. I had claimed simply to be called agent. Agent-general is a very long-sounding name, which I really did not care a fig about; but I did care about the reality.⁹³³

⁹³⁰ “Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Petition of Mr. John Douglas, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, pp. 806, 808-10 & 830

⁹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 831

⁹³² *Ibid.*, p. 812

⁹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 814

Douglas saw his position as a diplomatic appointment and his focus was on the efficient discharge of his duties. Concerning monies surcharged against him for undercharging passengers, Douglas passionately defended himself, explaining that he was simply carrying out an existing practice and had discontinued it when instructed by the government to do so.⁹³⁴

In defending his refusal to lecture, Douglas informed the committee that he would probably not have accepted the position had he known he would have to lecture.⁹³⁵ He saw the post as a diplomatic one, and therefore considered it personally demeaning to have to lecture, preferring a more dignified approach to encouraging migration to Queensland.

Douglas concluded his testimony with a plea for clemency. He claimed to have put the public good ahead of his own, and if his name was not cleared, then “I shall feel that I can never voluntarily, at any rate, attempt to take my share in public matters again.”

Douglas’s testimony provides an insight into his character not found elsewhere and at variance with his public *persona*. Despite many of his letters, speeches, public pronouncements and writings surviving, most were written in the passive tense and couched in the language

⁹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 816-17

⁹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 820-21. Several years later, the editorial writer for the *Brisbane Courier* made this sardonic observation in connection with Douglas’s refusal to lecture; “Mr. Douglas has a considerable gift of oratory, and (except during the time when he was specially committed to exercise it in the mother-country for our benefit) has generally availed himself of his opportunities for displaying his powers.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 23 April 1875, p.2)

and conventions of the time.⁹³⁶ However, his spoken testimony to the committee was recorded *verbatim*. From it emerges an articulate man, quick on his feet, passionate and animated in reply, one who displayed candour and demonstrated a deep understanding of politics and the political process.

In handing down its report, the committee found Douglas had been appointed sole agent of the colony. While finding that Douglas indeed erred in reducing the amount asked from assisted passengers, it conceded that he maintained the relative proportions of free and assisted passengers, resulting in the Act being more effective. The committee recommended that the government write off the non-collected funds surcharged on Douglas.⁹³⁷

However, they were not so forgiving about Douglas's refusal to lecture. He had been instructed to lecture and "no private opinion of his own ... justified his setting aside that instruction." Nevertheless, they did not agree that Douglas had intentionally disobeyed instructions in this regard.⁹³⁸

The committee also noted that Douglas:

had great difficulties to contend with in carrying the Act into efficient operation, as, in consequence of the great commercial losses which had been suffered in

⁹³⁶ In the case of his parliamentary utterances, they are paraphrased by third parties.

⁹³⁷ "Report from the Joint Select Committee on the Petition of Mr. John Douglas, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 807

⁹³⁸ *Ibid.*

Queensland, this colony was, at the time of his appointment and arrival in England, in great disrepute.⁹³⁹

Thus, Douglas was largely vindicated and exonerated by the committee, which found he was appointed as the sole agent for the colony, and that surcharging him was wrong. That he had acted incorrectly in this matter would have been of minor concern to Douglas, because he believed he had acted honourably. Douglas believed that his role was to ensure that enough suitable immigrants came to Queensland, and this he achieved in spite of the Act.

Douglas felt the same way about lecturing. He had expanded the colony's immigration program not through lecturing but by printing and distributing pamphlets and handbills, coupled with extensive travels and discussions with his British agents. The committee's recognition of the difficulties and obstacles encountered by him in discharging his duties was therefore especially gratifying.

Although the report was tabled and adopted without dissension in the upper house,⁹⁴⁰ it received a very different reception in the lower one. There, after Griffith moved its adoption, Palmer denigrated the report and its findings and accused Douglas of a personal vendetta against him. As far as Palmer was concerned, he simply expected "every government officer to do his duty."⁹⁴¹ Perhaps, but by this

⁹³⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁰ "The Late Agent-general for Emigration." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 12 August 1872, p. 840

⁹⁴¹ The Colonial Secretary. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 15 August 1872, p. 889

stage there was certainly no love lost between the two political adversaries.

Palmer continued to deny that Douglas had been appointed sole agent for the colony, despite it having been explicitly mentioned in the relevant *Government Gazette*. Furthermore, Palmer doubted Douglas's ability even to act as agent-general for emigration, being of the opinion that he was "fully determined to disobey his orders not to lecture."⁹⁴²

The opposition rallied in support of Douglas, with William Miles stating that this "milk-and-water report" handed down by the committee had prejudiced Douglas's performance as agent-general.⁹⁴³ William Henry Groom, in defending Douglas, considered him "a gentleman of whom any constituency in the colony would be proud to have to represent it."⁹⁴⁴ He also prophetically observed that Douglas "would yet live to be a thorn in the side of those honorable members who had cast such slurs on his character."⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴² The Colonial Secretary. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 15 August 1872, p. 889

⁹⁴³ Mr. Miles. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 15 August 1872, p. 890; Thomas Blackett Stephens believed this occurred because the committee was "appointed by ballot, and they all knew that committees appointed in that way were packed committees." (Mr. Stephens. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 15 August 1872, p. 890)

⁹⁴⁴ Mr. Groom. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 15 August 1872, p. 890

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Although a 'milk-and-water' report, it had substantially vindicated Douglas, both in the parliament and in the colony, as this letter to the *Brisbane Courier* demonstrated:

I cannot understand how the government can make a charge against the late agent-general ... he was the right man in the right place, having been a long resident in the colonies, and able to give all information from his own experience.⁹⁴⁶

Thus yet another turbulent period in Douglas's life ended. On his appointment, he has been feted in Brisbane and had gone to London determined to do justice to the position. This he did, until a change of government in Queensland made it progressively more difficult through the restrictions and strictures imposed on him.

Nevertheless, given Douglas's penchant for independence and a stubborn insistence on doing things his way, it is reasonable to assume that, even if there had not been a change of government, there would eventually have been a falling out between him and the authorities.

Returning to Queensland, Douglas had refused to accept the criticisms delivered by government members in relation to his conduct in the position, successfully petitioning for a select committee into the matter. It delivered a report that, although somewhat hobbled by the bipartisan composition of its members, largely vindicated Douglas, reserving its criticism of him to the

⁹⁴⁶ "The Charges against Mr. Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 29 August 1872, p. 5

relatively minor charge of refusing to lecture. Exonerated, and his name, reputation and honour upheld, Douglas again pursued a parliamentary career.

Chapter 11: In the Political Wilderness, 1871-75

This chapter examines Douglas's life following his return from England and the United States. Although he had been away from the colony for less than two years, there had been a change of government in his absence, and he found it difficult to resume a career in public life. Nevertheless, he doggedly persisted until success came his way, success that would eventually land him the coveted premiership of the colony. Douglas also faced the challenge of overcoming bankruptcy and adjusting to a rapidly changing political landscape where political factions were evolving into organised groupings around liberals and conservatives. Douglas, a maverick and a naturally independent-minded politician, struggled to adapt to this changed world.

Douglas returned to Queensland in August 1871, having reluctantly resigned the London-based position of agent-general for emigration. He had been involved by this time in colonial politics for 12 years and, since the sale of *Tooloombah*, had known no other life. It was therefore inevitable that, when an opportunity presented itself, he attempted to resurrect his political career and seek a seat in parliament.

However, winning a parliamentary seat proved surprisingly difficult. The liberal side of politics was in opposition; he had the resignation of the agent-general post hanging over his head, and had been away from the colony for two years, having played no part in its political life

and development. In his own words, he had “lost the thread.”⁹⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Douglas persevered, eventually winning a parliamentary seat. This resumption of his political career would allow him again to play an active role in the political life of the colony, one leading all the way to the premiership.

East Morton by-election

Douglas’s first chance to stand for parliament presented itself shortly after his return to Brisbane, when, on 20 October 1871, the seat of East Moreton fell vacant following the resignation of Henry Jordan.⁹⁴⁸

It was Douglas’s old seat and therefore presented an excellent opportunity to resume his political career. As usual, he quickly announced his candidature, his election advertisement appearing in the *Brisbane Courier* the day after Jordan’s resignation.

In it, Douglas extolled his previous political achievements and set out his views on the major issues of the day, namely the push for separation by the northern part of the colony and demands by the electorate for increased parliamentary representation.⁹⁴⁹ Rather than advocating separation, Douglas sought, given the rapid growth of the colony, to have more power devolved to local authorities.⁹⁵⁰

He supported increased parliamentary representation, to be achieved

⁹⁴⁷ Mason, p. 128

⁹⁴⁸ *Queensland Parliamentary Handbook*, 1997, p. 402

⁹⁴⁹ John Douglas. “To the Electors of East Moreton.” *Brisbane Courier*, 21 October 1871, p.

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⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

by creating additional seats to increase the representation of new and existing districts whose populations were growing. In a personal plea to the voters, he reminded them of his previous service as their member in 1868.⁹⁵¹

In his first address to the electorate, Douglas informed them that the reason he was standing for election as an independent was to be “free from any defined connection with any party.”⁹⁵²

However, instead of supporting separation for that portion of the colony north of Rockhampton, Douglas made a passionate, and, for the time, far-sighted plea, for unity rather than disunity, for federation rather than separation, noting that the “different colonies should be united under a federal government.”⁹⁵³ It was, to his mind “absurd that a country possessing such a geographical unity as Australia should be so divided into separate states.”⁹⁵⁴

It is evident that his time in London as agent-general had profoundly influenced his thinking on this matter. Rather than supporting and promoting the popular push for separation as he had done when the member for the Port Curtis electorate in the mid 1860s, Douglas now perceived Australian politics as “assuming a national character [and] that separation would be most undesirable at the present time.”⁹⁵⁵

Douglas believed in federation rather than separation, unity ahead of

⁹⁵¹ Ibid.

⁹⁵² “Mr. Douglas at the Victoria Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1871, p. 2

⁹⁵³ Ibid.

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid.

fragmentation, and a united Australia instead of a collection of competing colonies.⁹⁵⁶

Douglas called for an additional members' bill or a redistribution of seats bill to correct representation anomalies. He also opposed the practice of bringing Pacific Islander labour into the colony, noting that there had been "a great deal of kidnapping going on," and that this was having a deleterious effect on relations with "their fellow countrymen in England." He promised, if elected, to work towards repealing the *Polynesian Labourers Act*, thereby halting any further importation of Pacific Islanders into Queensland. Nevertheless, Douglas would permit those already in the colony to remain.⁹⁵⁷

Douglas, the first aspirant to declare his candidature for East Moreton, had indicated to the electorate a willingness to act as an independent, and had passionately and eloquently opposed separation and the importation of Pacific Islander labour while also calling for electoral reform. Nevertheless, the *Brisbane Courier*

⁹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁵⁶ I will further explore Douglas's longstanding support for Australian federation in chapter 18 and his part in the successful move to federate Australia at the end of the nineteenth century.

⁹⁵⁷ "Mr. Douglas at the Victoria Hall." *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1871, p. 2. While in England, Douglas refused to encourage or support the importation of Pacific Islander labour to Queensland: "If ... I had addressed myself to the praises of capital, to be increased and multiplied by the employment of Polynesian laborers, I should have felt that such exercises were foreign to my nature, and further, that they were not in unison with English sentiment, which is quite opposed to the development of any form of predial service in a vigorous Anglo-Saxon community." ("Additional Correspondence between the Government and the Late Agent-General for Emigration, Mr. Douglas." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, p. 105.) The *Polynesian Labourers Act* was enacted by the Queensland parliament in 1868.

sounded a warning over Douglas's determination to retain an independent stance, noting that if he wanted to implement his platform, "he will find party union not the least indispensable preliminary to their attainment."⁹⁵⁸

However, Douglas's main barrier to electoral success was another liberal candidate; William Hemmant, a 33-year-old draper shop-owner, who, like Douglas, opposed Palmer, but, unlike Douglas, had also the explicit and unqualified support of the leader of the opposition, Charles Lilley.⁹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, for Douglas, standing against a candidate expressly backed by his former political colleagues considerably reduced his chances. That both men's campaigns were largely indistinguishable - for Hemmant also supported emigration, additional representation based on population, and the cessation of Pacific Islander importation - did not help either. Where they differed was that Hemmant, unlike Douglas, loyally supported the liberal opposition.⁹⁶⁰

In an address to the electorate, Hemmant belittled Douglas's declaration of independence and warned of dire consequences if it returned an independent candidate. The seat of East Moreton

⁹⁵⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 October 1871, p. 2

⁹⁵⁹ Waterson (1972), pp. 82-83; William Hemmant. "To the Electors of East Moreton." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 October 1871, p. 1; "The East Moreton Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 October 1871, pp. 2-3

⁹⁶⁰ William Hemmant. "To the Electors of East Moreton." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 October 1871, p. 1. Hemmant assured the electorate that if elected he would "give hearty, cordial, and loyal support to the opposition." ("The East Moreton Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 October 1871, p. 2)

returned two members to parliament and both Henry Jordan and Robert Travers Atkin, the previous incumbents, supported the opposition.⁹⁶¹ Hemmant used this to illustrate his point that if Douglas was returned, then one member would be supporting the opposition and one would be on the cross-benches as an independent. This would create an intolerable situation, with the government able to say:

that East Moreton had re-considered its decision, and that it had withdrawn its support from the policy of the opposition ... and how the hands of the government would be strengthened thereby there could be no doubt.⁹⁶²

In supporting Hemmant at the meeting, Lilley reminded the electorate of Douglas's previous speech to them where he had proclaimed that after a two-year absence from the colony he:

scarcely felt warmed up into that fervid state of mind which no doubt was a characteristic evidence that party-feeling was running very high⁹⁶³

To the delight of the crowd, Lilley lampooned Douglas, thereby extracting political capital from these remarks:

And in drawing-room tones he [Douglas] said, 'Well, now, my good fellows, you are very warm; you have been engaged, I am told, in a fervid struggle; pardon me, my good fellows, I don't feel quite so warm myself, you

⁹⁶¹ "The East Moreton Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 October 1871, p. 2

⁹⁶² Ibid.

⁹⁶³ "Mr. Douglas at the Victoria Hall." *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1871, p. 2

know.’ [Mr. Lilley here put an eye-glass to his eye, and continued in an assumed voice, which created roars of laughter.] ‘You can hardly expect that sort of thing from a gentleman like me. It is not the thing for a gentleman like me to get too excited, and we had better take political matters coolly. If you will honor me with your confidence, I will go into the House and I will exercise impartial judgement between the contending factions.’⁹⁶⁴

While this may have been great theatre, the important question behind it was why did Lilley and the liberal side of politics not support Douglas? The answer lay with Douglas’s insistence on being an independent. It must be remembered that Lilley, in order to counter Douglas’s propensity for independence in the assembly, had, when he was the premier, consigned him first to the upper house and then to England.

Lilley refused to have a maverick such as Douglas again cause mayhem on the liberal side of politics. A strong supporter of the party system, Lilley had unsuccessfully attempted to establish a Queensland Liberal Association as early as 1859.⁹⁶⁵ He wanted loyal party men supporting him in the parliament, and therefore preferred the loyal Hemmant to the independent-minded Douglas.

Having two liberals with similar policies contesting the election caused difficulties for Douglas.⁹⁶⁶ The crowd assembled at the

⁹⁶⁴ “The East Moreton Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 27 October 1871, p. 3

⁹⁶⁵ Mason, pp. 131-32

⁹⁶⁶ “East Moreton Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 30 October 1871, p. 5. *The Brisbane Courier*

nomination meeting knew which liberal they would support, for when Douglas nominated, it was to loud groans and frequent interruptions.⁹⁶⁷ Douglas was left in no doubt of the enormity of the task facing him, observing that when he had last stood for the seat he was opposed by the then leader of the opposition, Arthur Macalister, and now he was opposed by the current leader of the opposition, Charles Lilley. Douglas publicly mused on why this was so: what had caused such noted liberals to oppose him so trenchantly?⁹⁶⁸

Douglas was too independent and an independent candidate could not be a loyal party man while steadfastly and dogmatically maintaining the right to be independent under all and any circumstances. It was ironic that his opponent, Hemmant, had unknowingly but accurately pinpointed this terminal defect in Douglas's political character, as well as its solution, when observing, in relation to his own candidacy, that:

In every party government there were always a certain number of open questions upon which every man may fairly hold his own opinions, and his pledge would only require that he would give a hearty and zealous support to the policy of the opposition, and in every way forward the interests of the party.⁹⁶⁹

agreed, noting, "we are unable, however, to see any real difference in the principles professed by the two candidates." (*Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1871, p. 2)

⁹⁶⁷ "East Moreton Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 30 October 1871, p. 5

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁹ "The East Moreton Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 October 1871, p. 2

Until Douglas learnt to acknowledge and accept the limitations of his independence in relation to party interests, something that the younger Hemmant had evidently done, he would continue to be rejected by the current political leadership. Unfortunately, for Douglas, he did not learn this lesson in time for this election.

Nevertheless, the *Brisbane Courier* came out strongly in support of Douglas precisely because he was an independent liberal, noting that while Hemmant's liberalism had progressed from "the exponent of principle to the adherent of a party," it preferred a "man of experience, tried consistency, and greater political weight, whose influence rests on his career, and is independent of recommendation."⁹⁷⁰ Others supported Douglas for the same reason, with one commentator declaring, "Lilley objects to Douglas's independent attitude in politics just now, but I don't."⁹⁷¹ These comments demonstrated the fluid nature of party politics in the colony. The early 1870s were a transition period from fluid factions based on expedience and self-interest to formalised groupings based on political conviction. While Douglas, along with many others, resented and resisted this trend, he was increasingly in the minority.

Douglas's fears were realised on election day (4 November 1871), when Hemmant comprehensively out polled him 906 votes to 155.⁹⁷²

This crushing defeat marked the first time Douglas had lost an

⁹⁷⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1871, p. 2

⁹⁷¹ A Bohemian. "Odd Notes." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 November 1871, p. 2

⁹⁷² "East Moreton Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 6 November 1871, p. 2

election. Hemmant graciously but inaccurately attributed his victory to Douglas's absence from the colony and colonial politics. Douglas, sanguine but shocked by the size of the defeat, ruefully declared that, "he was quite prepared to take his licking like a man."⁹⁷³

He had remained steadfast to his principles despite being "told over and over again that if he had come forward under the wing of the Liberal Party without expressing any opinions he would have been returned." Nevertheless, Douglas refused to be a 'party pawn' and had serious reservations about the party system. He:

thought that the belief in, and identification with, clearly defined principles was far better than any party combinations that could be formed, and therefore he had not seen the necessity of adhering to any party.⁹⁷⁴

Douglas resisted embracing the slow but gradual move towards party groupings as an integral part of Queensland politics. Nevertheless, in losing the election, he grudgingly conceded its inevitability and that he would have to accommodate it if he was ever to again enter parliament. While not compromising his beliefs, Douglas would have to accept the reality of the changing political landscape, for the electorate had clearly told him "that what they wanted was a thorough-going party man."⁹⁷⁵

⁹⁷³ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Insolvency

1872 was a traumatic year for Douglas financially. Successful in public life, he never evidenced anywhere near the same level of success in business affairs. He had come out to Australia in 1851 as a wealthy young man but, despite investing in property, had been unable to capitalise on the inherent financial benefits routinely available to those born into a privileged class. As Bernays perceptively remarked, “The only million John Douglas ever saw was in a bad dream after a late sitting of the House.”⁹⁷⁶

In 1868, Douglas was forced to sell his pastoral run, *Toooloombah*, due to high interest rates and depressed property values caused by the 1866 recession. Despite this sale, he was unable to clear the outstanding debt and with it attracting a high rate of interest, it was financially ruinous. As agent-general in London, Douglas could service the debt repayments because he drew the considerable salary of £1,000 per annum. However, on returning to Queensland effectively unemployed, he experienced severe financial difficulties and, when forced to apply for insolvency, was adjudged an insolvent by the Supreme Court.⁹⁷⁷ Douglas, whose occupation was listed in

⁹⁷⁶ Bernays, p. 41

⁹⁷⁷ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 13 no 26, 9 March 1872; “*Estate of John Douglas*.” Queensland State Archives, SCT/CB 90, File no 310 of 1872; *Brisbane Courier*, 23 April 1872, p. 2. A certificate of discharge was granted to Douglas on 22 April 1872, with the matter finalised on 28 May 1873. Three allotments of land owned by Douglas at Broadsound, valued at £20, a portion of land at Bowen valued at £100, as well as £86, one shilling and three pence, being the proceeds of the sale of his books and ornaments, were returned to him.

the insolvency papers as a “gentleman,” had been left with no other choice, because he was saddled with a debt of more than £6,500, an impossible amount for him to pay off.⁹⁷⁸

For a man of Douglas’s standing and position in society, insolvency was a heavy blow and resulted in severe embarrassment and shame. While colonial society witnessed frequent bankruptcies and cases of economic hardship, individual cases were believed to be the result of psychological or moral ‘flaws’ in the bankrupt.⁹⁷⁹ For a contemporaneous account of this stigma, this pitiful diary entry by a Victorian farmer’s wife, Annie Dawbin, on her husband’s insolvency while residing in Victoria in August 1861 is instructive:

I kept on thinking of my poor husband’s thin face and haggard look, and am so very sorry for his losses! I only trust we may be able to weather the storm, and pay all their dues, and if we have but a few pounds to begin with, we shall be free from debt; which is the greatest blessing. I am sure I don’t know what we shall do, but I hope we may leave this colony, and go somewhere where nobody will know us.⁹⁸⁰

Nonetheless, Douglas’s friends and family must have rallied around him, for he continued to live in his Wickham Terrace home, and,

⁹⁷⁸ “*Estate of John Douglas.*” Queensland State Archives, SCT/CB 90, File no 310 of 1872. On the *Insolvents Balance Sheet*, Douglas listed a debt of £6,767, 15 shillings and nine pence owed to Gilchrist, Watt and Co., who had financed the mortgage to *Tooloombah*. His assets were listed as land valued at £100 and “a few books and ornaments; value about £20.”

⁹⁷⁹ Fitzgerald, p. 317

⁹⁸⁰ Lucy Frost, ed. *The Journal of Annie Baxter Dawbin: July 1858-May 1868*. Brisbane,

despite having no known income, maintained his involvement in the social and communal life of Brisbane.⁹⁸¹

The question needs to be asked why Douglas was not a financial success. Why did he not take advantage of the financial opportunities that must have come his way and which many of his parliamentary colleagues availed themselves?⁹⁸² Why was he not financially astute? It seems that there were two reasons. Firstly, money, and the making of it, was not a major concern of his. He invested in pastoral properties because he wanted to live on the frontier, not because he wished to make money out of them.

Douglas was a dreamer and an idealist. He devoted his time and energies to helping people and society rather than amassing riches.

As he later told his son Edward:

I was never taught the value of money. Not that it is necessarily a good thing to be rich, but it is good to cultivate habits of strict economy.⁹⁸³

To Douglas, duty, service and church came ahead of Mammon.

Spencer Browne, who knew him well, wrote this epithet of Douglas following his death:

“It always seems to me a great tribute to a political leader

University of Queensland Press, 1998, p. 226

⁹⁸¹ For instance, Douglas was reappointed vice president of the Caledonian Society in 1872. (*Brisbane Courier*, 26 April 1872, p. 2)

⁹⁸² For example, in 1896/7, the Queensland National Bank could boast as shareholders eleven members of the Queensland legislative council and seven members of the assembly. (Fitzgerald, p. 311)

⁹⁸³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 22 May 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(2)/16

in a young country that his friends should be able to say;
 'he died a poor man!'"⁹⁸⁴

Douglas's attitude to money was atypical for the period. As Fitzgerald remarked of the young colony's inhabitants, they were uniformly wedded to "above all, materialist values and an untiring quest for prosperity."⁹⁸⁵ Moreover, when Douglas did have money, he generously gave it away or spent it on those less fortunate.⁹⁸⁶ As his second wife, Sarah, lamented to Edward, "he is very careless in money matters and could fritter away anything he can lay his hands on."⁹⁸⁷

Douglas's strong religious beliefs and involvement in the Church helped sustain him during this dark period of his life. By 1872, he had been elected to the newly formed All Saints' Church Parochial Council, and actively assisted in experimental services at Petrie Terrace.⁹⁸⁸ A devout Christian, the Church was his solace in both good times and bad, giving him the strength and courage to fight and survive adversity and dishonour.

⁹⁸⁴ Browne, p. 73

⁹⁸⁵ Fitzgerald, p. 308

⁹⁸⁶ During a 12 month period (1899-1900) when living on Thursday Island, and despite being chronically short of money, Douglas donated the following sums of money; three guineas to the "Patriotic Fund;" two guineas to the Torres Straits Rifle Club prize fund and the same amount for the highest scorer; offered £10 to cope with plague on the island, and £5 to award as prizes for the best gardens on Darnley Island. (*Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 18 November 1899, p. 2; 17 February 1900, p. 2; 5 May 1900, p. 2; 10 November 1900, p. 2 and 17 November 1900, p. 2)

⁹⁸⁷ Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 2 August 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(2)/11

⁹⁸⁸ Kissick, p. 52. These services were designed for the "large poor population," behind Petrie Terrace and on Paddington Heights in Brisbane, who found it too far to travel to the All

As previously discussed, 1872 was also the year that Douglas petitioned the Queensland Parliament for a select committee into his role as agent-general for emigration. Its report, handed down on 30 July 1872, largely exonerated him, and allowed him to put this traumatic period in his life behind him. However, Douglas had to wear the odium of his insolvency being aired in parliament when Palmer tactlessly remarked of Douglas:

He never yet knew a man of whose talents for business the Assembly had such a poor opinion.⁹⁸⁹

Douglas's allies in the assembly sprung to his defence, with William Henry Groom, the member for Drayton and Toowoomba, noting that Douglas:

... was not the first gentleman who had figured in the Insolvency Court, for even in the House of Lords, many members had taken refuge in that court under circumstances far less honorable.⁹⁹⁰

Another member of the opposition, Thomas Blackett Stephens of South Brisbane, felt that "a grosser insult ... could not have been offered than to drag into the question the matter of Mr. Douglas's insolvency."⁹⁹¹

Saints' Church in Wickham Terrace.

⁹⁸⁹ Colonial Secretary. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1872, p. 889

⁹⁹⁰ Mr. Groom. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1872, p. 890.

⁹⁹¹ Mr. Stephens. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1872, p. 890. Palmer was forced to deny that his remarks referred specifically to Douglas's insolvency. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1872, p.

This exchange demonstrated the personal nature of politics in Queensland at this time. While supposedly gentlemen who abided by the rules and went to great lengths to ensure a modicum of civility to each other, the urge for parliamentarians to attack their opponents was too great a temptation to resist whenever the opportunity presented. Fortunately, for Douglas, his allies in parliament came to his defence, and defended his reputation and honour in an age when honour and reputation meant a lot more than it does today.⁹⁹² This parliamentary exchange also demonstrated that, despite his financial difficulties, Douglas could continue to count on the support of friends and colleagues. This support helped sustain his determination to win a parliamentary position.

Moreover, despite his failure in East Moreton, Douglas was still a serious contender for a parliamentary seat. In July 1872 it was rumoured that Edmond Lambert Thornton was planning to sell up and retire to England with Douglas considered the logical successor for his seat of Eastern Downs. However, Thornton remained in the colony and Douglas had to wait until the dissolution of the sixth parliament in 1873 for an opportunity to contest again a parliamentary seat.

Brisbane election

Douglas contested the seat of Brisbane because there was a

890)

⁹⁹² Mr. Groom. "Petition. (Mr. John Douglas.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 1872,

genuine vacancy, it being newly created.⁹⁹³ Douglas had learnt from his previous election experience that independent candidates were out of favour and therefore announced that if elected he would be “a decided and moderate member” of the opposition.⁹⁹⁴

In his initial campaign address, Douglas touched on several themes. These included opposing the importation of Pacific Islander labour, supporting ongoing immigration to the colony, again pledging to look after the interests of his electorate “on a footing apart altogether from party politics,” and supporting government funding of secular, not religious education in primary schools. He concluded his address with the astonishing remark that:

although he would not be disappointed if he were rejected in favor of a more suitable candidate, as he had lost most of his former love of political life, still he would do his best to serve them faithfully and disinterestedly if they put their trust in him.⁹⁹⁵

It was astonishing, because Douglas was desperately keen to get back into politics. Nevertheless, it appears from these remarks that he was now more worldly wise and politically aware. Douglas was now less idealistic and all too aware from bitter personal experience of the level some politicians could stoop in pursuit of self-interest, power, patronage, and privilege. Douglas the idealist was fast

p. 890

⁹⁹³ *Queensland Parliamentary Handbook*, 1997, p. 388

⁹⁹⁴ Mr Douglas at the School of Arts. *Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1873, p. 2

⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3

becoming Douglas the realist - but never Douglas the pragmatist. For even now, after all he had endured and suffered at the hands of his fellow parliamentarians, he remained true to his core principles. Douglas may have been bowed and bloodied, but he unwaveringly believed in liberalism, a sense of fair play, and service to his fellow man until his death.

Douglas also reconsidered his earlier position in relation to political parties, because “without this you cannot have good parliamentary government.”⁹⁹⁶ Douglas the independent liberal was slowly developing, much against his will, into Douglas the party liberal.

Nevertheless, sections of the electorate refused to support him as the liberal candidate.⁹⁹⁷ The Brisbane electorate was home to many of the city’s businessmen and, as a recent insolvent, Douglas was considered by many to be a most unsatisfactory candidate, manifestly unable to manage his financial affairs. A delegation of 25 prominent Brisbane businessmen persuaded one of their own, Robert Muter Stewart, to contest the seat against Douglas.⁹⁹⁸

Stewart, the owner of a merchant establishment, described himself as a “liberal, and always had been.”⁹⁹⁹ Douglas, having no expertise in “mercantile matters” and campaigning against a fellow liberal, was forced to appeal for support from the business community on the

⁹⁹⁶ “Brisbane Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 7 November 1873, p. 2

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹⁸ “The North Brisbane Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 10 November 1873, p. 3

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

somewhat lame grounds of “being pretty well acquainted with mercantile matters from the political point of view.”¹⁰⁰⁰

In an editorial on polling day, the *Brisbane Courier* refused to recommend one candidate above the other, contenting itself with the observation “that both gentlemen cannot be returned will be the only real cause of regret.”¹⁰⁰¹ Stewart’s mercantile backers proved decisive and Douglas lost an extremely close election by six votes.¹⁰⁰²

Douglas had lost another election, although this defeat was not nearly as heavy as previously. Nevertheless, he was devastated by the result, for his dream of representing his countrymen in parliament remained unrealised. Douglas continued to play an active role in the communal life of the city while he waited for another opportunity. In early 1874, the liberal side of politics finally regained control of the parliament and Macalister replaced Palmer, following the latter’s resignation.¹⁰⁰³

Education royal commission

On 11 August 1874, Douglas, a keen believer in and supporter of government-funded education, was appointed one of six members of the *Commission Enquiring into the Working of the Educational*

¹⁰⁰⁰ John Douglas. “To the Electors of Brisbane.” *Brisbane Courier*, 13 November 1873, p.

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¹⁰⁰¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 14 November 1873, p. 2

¹⁰⁰² “Brisbane Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 15 November 1873, p. 5. Stewart polled 221 votes and Douglas 215.

Institutions of the Colony.¹⁰⁰⁴ Their task was to inquire into educational matters in the colony following the introduction by Samuel Griffiths of a parliamentary bill terminating aid to non-vested schools.¹⁰⁰⁵ (Non-vested was the term used to describe non-government or private schools, usually established and run by religious organisations, and vested the term for public, or government, schools.) The Bill was strongly opposed in the legislative council, leading Macalister to establish a royal commission chaired by Lilley.¹⁰⁰⁶

Douglas believed that the future prosperity of Queensland depended upon its people being educated. As a firm believer in the value of a literate and educated populace, he had long been involved with educational matters in Queensland. Not only was he was president of the North Brisbane School of Arts, but as early as 1863 had been appointed one of six members to the first permanent Board of General Education in Queensland.¹⁰⁰⁷ Then he was considered a supporter of the national system of education, with its intention to

¹⁰⁰³ Bernays, p. 77

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 15 no 110, 11 August 1874, p. 1634. For the report and the commissions' deliberations see, "Report with Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Educational Institutions of the Colony." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 23 part 1, 1875, pp. 507-855. For a succinct summary and analysis of the report, see E. R. Wyeth. *Education in Queensland: A History of Education in Queensland and in the Moreton Bay District of New South Wales*. Melbourne, ACER, 195-, pp. 121-24. The main thrust of the report was that education be secular, compulsory and free.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Wyeth, p. 118. For additional information, see Bernays, p. 421 and the *Brisbane Courier*, 6 May 1875.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Wyeth, p. 118

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96. Douglas was appointed to the position on 24 January 1863.

maintain non-vested schools only until sufficient vested schools were established.¹⁰⁰⁸ However, in April 1864, Douglas resigned from the board in protest against its refusal to provide funding to any new non-vested schools, for the board only agreed to continue funding those already in existence.¹⁰⁰⁹ In August 1864 and again in August 1865 he unsuccessfully requested parliament to provide additional funding and support for non-vested schools.¹⁰¹⁰

Douglas supported state aid for these schools due to his strong and sincere religious beliefs and his close ecclesiastical relationship with Bishop Edward Wyndham Tufnell, the Anglican bishop of Brisbane and a prime instigator of state aid and support for non-vested schools.¹⁰¹¹

It was therefore somewhat surprising that when the royal commission handed down its report, Douglas, along with other members of the commission, had unequivocally endorsed free, secular, non-denominational, vested education.¹⁰¹² What happened in the intervening 10 years to so change his mind? In the first place, students attending school from 1870 could do so without charge,¹⁰¹³ and therefore the need for religious schools, which never charged to

¹⁰⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 103

¹⁰⁰⁹ Wyeth, p. 103; J. R. Lawry. *Some Aspects of Education in Queensland, 1859 to 1904*. PhD thesis. Melbourne, Monash University, 1968, pp. 99, 105 & 113

¹⁰¹⁰ Wyeth, pp. 100 & 107

¹⁰¹¹ Anne McLay. *James Quinn: First Catholic Bishop of Brisbane*. Rev. ed. Toowoomba, Church Archivists' Society, 1989, pp. 131 & 178

¹⁰¹² Rupert Goodman. *Secondary Education in Queensland, 1860-1960*. Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1968, pp. 82-83

¹⁰¹³ Wyeth, p. 109

enable children to attend, was not as great as before.¹⁰¹⁴ Douglas did not object to denominational schools;¹⁰¹⁵ indeed, he was a lifelong supporter of them. Nevertheless, he believed that the state should be primarily responsible for primary school education.

Douglas opposed government funding of any activities that could promote sectarian differences by propagating “religious opinions in conflict with one another, and possibly even in conflict with some of the primary obligations of the citizen to the civil government.”¹⁰¹⁶

To Douglas, religious equality was a cornerstone of “political existence” in Queensland, this being best achieved through the adoption of a secular education system that ensured “complete impartiality” through not funding any denominational schools or religious groups.¹⁰¹⁷

However, as usual, he had a balanced approach; a firm supporter of removing state support for non-vested schools, yet he believed that the government “should refrain from attempting to impart religious instruction.” Furthermore, Douglas, a deeply religious man, also recognised the value, in a religious age, of religious instruction in

¹⁰¹⁴ Once education became free, the number of schools increased rapidly. For instance, the 89 existing schools in 1869 was 89 had increased to 111 the following year. (Wyeth, p. 112.) By May 1875, there were 203 schools in Queensland. (*Brisbane Courier*, 5 May 1875, p. 3)

¹⁰¹⁵ “Mr Douglas at the School of Arts.” *Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1873, p. 3

¹⁰¹⁶ Report with Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Educational Institutions of the Colony. *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 23 part 1, 1875, p. 529

¹⁰¹⁷ *Ibid.*; John Douglas. ([*Pamphlet Containing Douglas's Hansard Comments on the State Education Bill.*] Queensland, 1875, p. 1. National Library of Australia, FER F9947

schools, advocating that a portion of the scriptures be “read, with becoming solemnity, every day, in every public school, by the headmaster.”¹⁰¹⁸

Douglas’s actions demonstrated that he was now comfortable with the education system he so strongly opposed a decade earlier.¹⁰¹⁹

His actions mirrored the broader struggle for state funding between the denominational and national systems of education in Queensland, resulting in the triumph of the latter.¹⁰²⁰

Darling Downs election

The next opportunity for a parliamentary seat came in the form of the Darling Downs electorate in March 1875, following the resignation of Edward Wienholt over, amongst other things, dummying irregularities.¹⁰²¹ The liberal side of politics was expected to retain government following the upcoming general election. Douglas’s years in the political wilderness had made him an older and wiser man. No longer did he trumpet his independence as loudly as

¹⁰¹⁸ Report with Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Educational Institutions of the Colony. *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 23 part 1, 1875, p. 550. McLay eloquently summarised Douglas’s contemporaneous stand; “the state should not interfere with religious instruction in schools, but should also ensure that such instruction was given. (McLay, p. 178.) Douglas and Lilley, alone among the commissioners, also called for the establishment of a university in Queensland. (Report with Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Working of the Educational Institutions of the Colony. *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 23 part 1, 1875, pp. 547-48)

¹⁰¹⁹ “Darling Downs Election.” *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 6 March 1875, p. 2

¹⁰²⁰ Hunt, p. 53

¹⁰²¹ Waterson (1968), p. 219; John Douglas. “To the Electors of Darling Downs.” *Darling Downs Gazette*, 17 March 1875, p. 2

before. In his absence, politics had evolved to the stage where political representatives now aligned themselves with nascent parties (parties in all but name) representing liberals or conservatives. It was more important than ever that representatives supported their groups on matters of national importance and it was a measure of Douglas's political maturity that he understood this and was prepared to abide by it.

The Downs electorates were known for returning conservative men to parliament and for their hostility to any candidate who was not "a local man, and presumably unacquainted with the inhabitants and their needs."¹⁰²² Although Douglas once lived in the area and represented it in parliament, that was over 15 years ago and he was now perceived as a Brisbane resident contesting the seat against a local candidate, William Graham, who had settled in the district in 1855. Graham exploited this advantage, informing the electorate that they should select "a local man, and not a stranger," one who was not "a resident of Brisbane."¹⁰²³ His accurate labelling of Douglas as the nominee of the anti-squatting government further assisted his cause.¹⁰²⁴

Douglas, in his electoral manifesto, strongly supported free selectors against the 'squattocracy' and raised a recent case involving Wienholt and others in dummying irregularities before announcing

¹⁰²² Waterson (1968), p. 256

¹⁰²³ William Graham. "To the Electors of Darling Downs." *Darling Downs Gazette*, 17 March 1875, p. 2

that he was “no friend of dummies, past, present, or future, and I ask none of them or of their friends to vote for me.”¹⁰²⁵ This remark demonstrates that Douglas was not a populist politician, one prepared to garner votes at the expense of his beliefs. He held strong views on a number of issues, including dummifying, and refused to modify his views to gain additional votes. While many candidates expressed firm opinions on the campaign trail, Douglas was unusual in that he maintained them once the election was over; the electorate could vote for him confident that his convictions would not change once elected.

The *Brisbane Courier* believed that Douglas’s return was “pretty certain.”¹⁰²⁶ However, he had to contend with some opposition from Catholics because he firmly refused to endorse the use of state funding for Catholic schools.¹⁰²⁷ This opposition firmed following a dispute at an election meeting held by him in the Warwick Town Hall. Asked by the Rev. S. H. McDonough if he was in favour “of continuing the present system of non-vested schools,” Douglas refused to pander to the crowd and replied that he wished to see the end of the non-vested system. McDonough then cogently presented his reasons for differing with Douglas on the “education question,”

¹⁰²⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁵ John Douglas. “To the Electors of Darling Downs.” *Darling Downs Gazette*, 17 March 1875, p. 2

¹⁰²⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 March 1875, p. 2

¹⁰²⁷ Waterson, pp. 260-61. In Douglas’s words, “they must not look to him for any further development of the system of connection between church and state applied to education.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1873, p. 3)

and this altered the tone of the meeting to the extent that when the vote of confidence in Douglas was called for, only 25 people of the 300 present assented.¹⁰²⁸

Election day saw Graham poll four more votes than Douglas.¹⁰²⁹

However, the declaration of the poll was delayed because there were four more ballot papers cast than had been ticked off by the returning officers. It was not possible to ascertain which ballot papers were the excess ones or which candidate they were cast for. Nevertheless, if all four had been in favour of Graham, then Douglas and Graham would each have received an equal number of votes.¹⁰³⁰ The returning officer, Sandy Creek grazier George Affleck, was in a quandary, and appealed to the attorney general for advice.¹⁰³¹

However, before a reply was received, other events came into play and the poll was never formally declared.¹⁰³²

¹⁰²⁸ Darling Downs Election, *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 6 March 1875, p. 2. Waterson claims that Douglas lost this election because he failed to secure the votes of those Catholics who wanted their schools funded by the government. (Waterson, pp. 260-61.) However, James Morgan, the member for Warwick, asserted during the debate on the 1875 *Education Bill* that his Catholic constituents, "did not care one snuff how he voted" on the question of state funding for denominational schools, being "far more interested in the settlement of the land question and in getting their roads and bridges improved." (Queensland Parliamentary Debates, vol 19, p. 871, quoted in Lawry (1968), p. 251)

¹⁰²⁹ *Warwick Examiner and Times*, 27 March 1875, p. 2. Douglas strongly out polled Graham in Warwick by 178 votes to 82. However, the result in Leyburn, although in Douglas's favour, was much closer, the margin being just six votes, 44 to 38, while in Jondaryan and Cambooya, Graham won handsomely, 36 to 0 and 65 to 36 respectively. Yandilla and Cecil Plains also went to Graham, 34 to 22 and 29 to 0 respectively.

¹⁰³⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 31 March 1875, p. 2

¹⁰³¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³² Parliament reconvened on 27 April 1875, with the seat still vacant, as no writ had been returned. On 4 May 1875, parliament resolved that Graham had been duly elected to represent the seat, and he was sworn in the following day. ("Election for the Darling Downs.")

Maryborough election

Douglas's political salvation came in the form of the seat of Maryborough, a timber and sugar-growing town on the banks of the Mary River 220 kilometres north of Brisbane. With a week to go before nominations closed – none having been received¹⁰³³ – the local mayor, Edward Booker, a butcher and prominent property-owner, nominated, following a request from several electors to do so.¹⁰³⁴ 37 electors opposed to Booker then telegraphed Douglas in Brisbane agreeing to act as his committee if he would nominate as the ministerial candidate.¹⁰³⁵ Douglas readily agreed, much to the delight of the conservatives on the Darling Downs, who gleefully predicted that:

with his elastic principles, and the absolute necessity, under existing circumstances, of returned for somewhere, we have no doubt that he will receive a certain amount of support.¹⁰³⁶

However, the conservative *Maryborough Chronicle*, which represented plantation owners, was not as impressed, believing that Douglas was “not one of us. He can have no acquaintances whatever with our wants.” The paper also urged its Catholic readers

Queensland Parliamentary Debates, vol 18, 1875, pp. 82-85; *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, p. Iv.) For a detailed account, see Waterson (1968), pp. 243-44

¹⁰³³ *Maryborough Chronicle*, 25 March 1875, p. 2

¹⁰³⁴ “To Edward Booker, Esq. JP.” *Maryborough Chronicle*, 27 March 1875, p. 5; “Mr Booker’s Reply.” *Maryborough Chronicle*, 27 March 1875, p. 5

¹⁰³⁵ “The Maryborough Election.” *Maryborough Chronicle*, 5 April 1875, p. 3; “Douglas for Maryborough.” *Maryborough Chronicle*, 30 March 1875, p. 2

¹⁰³⁶ *Warwick Examiner*, 3 April 1875, p. 2

not to vote for Douglas, darkly claiming that he was the “nominee of the Orange Institution” and therefore could not be trusted, bound, as he must be, by secret loyalties to them.¹⁰³⁷ This accusation was a deliberate attempt to fan sectarian division because it was widely known that Douglas had recently, when a member of the education commission, recommended against continuing state support for Catholic schools. Nevertheless, the assertion that Douglas, a staunch Anglican, would join an Orange Lodge defied credulity, and Catholics rejected this “damaging fact.”¹⁰³⁸

Another of Booker’s supporters observed that Douglas was a man, “stained with a series of humiliating defeats” who had experienced, “signal failures as a public man in every relation of political life.”¹⁰³⁹ To the disappointment of many of his supporters, Douglas did not travel to Maryborough during the campaign.¹⁰⁴⁰ Nevertheless, despite his absence from the electorate and a concerted campaign against him by the *Maryborough Chronicle*, he was victorious on election day, gaining 348 votes to Booker’s 308.¹⁰⁴¹

Douglas was elated. In the four years since his return to

¹⁰³⁷ *Maryborough Chronicle*, 30 March 1875, p. 2. In 1880, John Macrossan, then a member of the McIlwraith ministry, also accused Douglas of aiding and abetting the Orangemen. (Harrison Bryan. *The Political Career of John Murtagh Macrossan*. MA thesis University of Queensland, 1954, p. 170; *Brisbane Courier*, 2 September 1880: *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 541)

¹⁰³⁸ Wyeth, p. 122; John Douglas. “Mr. Douglas and the Orange Society.” *Brisbane Courier*, 1 July 1876, p. 5. For more information on the role of the Orange Society in the education debate, see Hunt, pp. 96-99.

¹⁰³⁹ “Election Gossip.” *Maryborough Chronicle*, 30 March 1875, p. 3

¹⁰⁴⁰ “The Maryborough Election.” *Brisbane Courier*, 5 April 1875, p. 3

Queensland, he had contested four elections without success. At 47, he was no longer a young man. Now he made the most of his opportunity. Aligned with the government, he played the loyal party man all the way to the premiership. Many newspaper editorials expressed relief that Douglas had finally re-entered parliament, one noting that “he is wanted in the house,”¹⁰⁴² and another asserting that “a gentleman of such proved fitness for parliamentary duties has been too long out of parliament.”¹⁰⁴³

Nevertheless, the *Maryborough Chronicle* was unrepentant, claiming that Booker had been beaten in a fight far from fair, crushed by the combined weight of a “secret organisation” and government influence; Douglas was living proof that a “man must go outside his own country to be accounted a prophet,” the paper concluded.¹⁰⁴⁴

The paper’s conservative backers had reason to be worried.

Douglas’s trenchant opposition toward the importation and employment of South Sea Islanders was well known, and the region’s planters feared the damage he could do to their interests.

As a subsequent chapter will show, their concerns were well founded.

Douglas, cognisant of these deeply held concerns by sections of the

¹⁰⁴¹ *Maryborough Chronicle*, 3 April 1875, p. 2

¹⁰⁴² “The Late Election.” *Darling Downs Gazette*, 7 April 1875, p. 3. There were six informal votes cast.

¹⁰⁴³ *Brisbane Courier*, 13 April 1875, p. 2

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Maryborough Chronicle*, 3 April 1875, p. 2; *Maryborough Chronicle*, 6 April 1875, p. 2

electorate, quickly travelled to Maryborough¹⁰⁴⁵ and held several meetings, including one where he received a response “favourable in the extreme” from the 600 people present. At the meeting, in a promising sign of bipartisanship and a healing of the divide, Booker, who was still mayor of the town, presided in the chair.¹⁰⁴⁶ Douglas denied being influenced by the “Orange Movement” and expressed a desire to represent his constituents to the best of his ability.¹⁰⁴⁷

The time Douglas spent in the town following the election, and the many meetings he held to acquaint himself with his new constituents successfully won over many of the conservatives who had opposed his candidacy as well as those who had demanded the election of a local candidate. As the Maryborough correspondent of the *Brisbane Courier* remarked, “the great majority of people here are well pleased that he was elected,”¹⁰⁴⁸ while his paper editorialised that Douglas had “not lost much time in giving his constituents a taste of his quality.”¹⁰⁴⁹

However, some were not prepared to give up without one last fight. After Douglas had strongly criticised Palmer for placing seven of his supporters in the legislative council shortly before leaving office,¹⁰⁵⁰ rumours began to spread querying his validity, it being alleged that

¹⁰⁴⁵ “Maryborough.” *Brisbane Courier*, 15 April 1875, p. 3

¹⁰⁴⁶ “Maryborough.” *Brisbane Courier*, 19 April 1875, p. 3; *Maryborough Chronicle*, 13 April 1875, p. 2

¹⁰⁴⁷ *Maryborough Chronicle*, 13 April 1875, p. 2

¹⁰⁴⁸ “Maryborough.” *Brisbane Courier*, 19 April 1875, p. 3

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 April 1875, p. 2

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

the previous member for the seat (Berkeley Basil Moreton), was the legitimate member; having placed his resignation with the colonial secretary, to be used at the latter's convenience.¹⁰⁵¹ For a resignation to be effective, it needed to be placed on record in the speaker's office, and this had not been done.¹⁰⁵² This dispute was finally settled on the opening day of the new parliament, when it was decided that Douglas was indeed the legitimate member, as the governor, being satisfied that Moreton had resigned, had then authorised the issuing of the writ for the election.¹⁰⁵³

Douglas's return to parliament was a rocky one, and many a time he would have despaired at ever being returned to the political fray.

¹⁰⁵¹ This was a common practice at the time. As the *Brisbane Courier* remarked, Moreton "placed his resignation in the hands of the colonial secretary to be used when it might suit the convenience of his chief - an objectionable proceeding, but one commonly practised." (*Brisbane Courier*, 24 April 1875, p. 4)

¹⁰⁵² *Brisbane Courier*, 24 April 1875, p. 5; "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 May 1875, p. 3

¹⁰⁵³ "The First Day of the Session." *Brisbane Courier*, 28 April 1875, p. 3. It was officially recorded that Moreton resigned the seat of Maryborough on 23 April 1875. (*Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, p. iv.) Booker and his supporters had earlier agreed that were the election declared invalid they would not oppose Douglas's re-election. ("Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 May 1875, p. 3)

Now, after several unsuccessful attempts, he had finally achieved this goal. The following chapter will demonstrate how he gave parliament a 'taste of his quality' as well!

Chapter 12: Politics and the Land Question, 1875-77

This chapter traces the events and influences that shaped Douglas from 1875 to 1877: from backbencher, to minister of the crown, and finally to premier. 1874 to 1876 saw a more mature Douglas realising his parliamentary potential. He became the government's leading political performer, albeit greatly assisted in that role by the dearth of talent in the ministry. Douglas had the satisfaction of piloting legislation through parliament that resolved many of the concerns held by Queenslanders over land distribution and ownership. However, while he tasted parliamentary and ministerial success, his private life was devastated by the tragic and untimely death of his wife Mary.

1874-75 parliamentary session

Parliament resumed sitting on 27 April 1874, with Macalister at the head of the government.¹⁰⁵⁴ Douglas took his seat as a supporter of the government mainly because it was prepared to address the land question "in a manner which circumstances demanded."¹⁰⁵⁵

In his contribution to the address-in-reply to the opening speech of the governor, Douglas flagged his priorities for the session. His speech, like most throughout his parliamentary career, was notable

¹⁰⁵⁴ "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 May 1875, p. 3; "Opening of Parliament." *Brisbane Courier*, 28 April 1875, p. 3

¹⁰⁵⁵ John Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, p. 30. It was Douglas who, in the following year, would consolidate the government's work in this area with the introduction of the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* of

for being considered, thoughtful and polite, and comprised ample dollops of erudition and well-researched scholarship. However, as was often the case with many of his parliamentary speeches, it was also long-winded and contained unnecessary detail. A tendency to pedantry in his speeches often prevented Douglas from his arriving at a satisfactory conclusion, which frequently left his listeners confused as to its purpose.¹⁰⁵⁶

Douglas's top priority was land reform, with an emphasis on ensuring actual land settlement by removing dummying practices still taking place on the Darling Downs.¹⁰⁵⁷ Other goals included extending the colony's rail network by "making the land pay for the cost,"¹⁰⁵⁸ and introducing a comprehensive education bill incorporating the findings of the royal commission on which he had sat.¹⁰⁵⁹

Douglas saw these priorities addressed primarily because he took an active role in achieving their implementation. The *Education Act*, passed in September of that year, largely contained the measures he and his fellow commissioners had recommended, while Douglas

1876.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Coote once remarked on this aspect of Douglas's oratory: "he goes round and round a subject as if he was convincing himself, and found the process difficult." (William Coote. "Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas." *The Week*, 19 May 1877, p. 616.) Furthermore, Douglas's oratory was delivered with "rounded periods and sonorous voice ... [as if] pronouncing the benediction!" (Bernays, pp. 198 & 201)

¹⁰⁵⁷ John Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, pp. 30-31

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32; Mr Douglas. "Continental Railway Bill." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, p. 242

¹⁰⁵⁹ John Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, p. 32

himself was the minister responsible for the carriage of new land legislation the following year. The *Western Railway Act*, providing for the reservation of land for 50 miles on either side of a straight line drawn from Dalby to Roma in Western Queensland, and for the sale of such lands to pay for its construction, passed in 1875. This brought Douglas great satisfaction because he had advocated the financing of railways in this manner since first entering parliament in 1863.¹⁰⁶⁰

During all his years in the Queensland parliament, this was the first time Douglas had been a backbencher when the liberal side of politics was in government.¹⁰⁶¹ This anomalous situation nearly changed shortly after the session commenced when Thomas Blckett Stephens resigned, due to ill health, as secretary for public lands.¹⁰⁶² Macalister offered the position to Douglas who declined “from personal reasons, and personal reasons only.”¹⁰⁶³

What these ‘personal reasons’ were, is unknown, but they would have been compelling. It almost defies credulity that Douglas could or would have refused any ministerial position, especially one encompassing lands. The *Brisbane Courier* had earlier in the month speculated that the position could have gone to any one of four

¹⁰⁶⁰ Mr Douglas. “Continental Railway Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, pp. 242-47 & 366. Indeed Douglas believed that making the land pay for the railway’s cost was the “most important principle involved in the bill.” (Ibid., p. 243)

¹⁰⁶¹ Mason, p. 139

¹⁰⁶² *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, p. iii

¹⁰⁶³ Colonial Secretary. “Ministerial Arrangements.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, p. 282

government members, with the successful candidate invariably incurring the wrath of the other three, but that appears hardly a likely reason for Douglas turning it down. Neither is it plausible that Douglas declined the honour because he did not want to sit in the same ministry as Macalister. The decision is even more puzzling in that it carried a salary with it of £1,000 per annum, money that a financially impoverished Douglas would have warmly welcomed. Nor was it due to his workload, for he continued to represent his electorate energetically in the parliament and he accepted a position as a trustee of the Brisbane Grammar School shortly afterwards.¹⁰⁶⁴

Whatever the reason, Douglas remained a loyal government supporter. This session of parliament was not disturbed by any of those outbreaks of obdurate impenitency or dogged independence that were so damaging to both him and his party in earlier parliaments. In this session, Douglas confined himself to contributing solidly to debate and to representing his constituents to the best of his ability. He was now steady, rather than spectacular, with persistence replacing obstinacy. For Douglas, politics was no longer a vocation but a career. After languishing in the political wilderness and finding it so difficult to be re-elected, he was determined to make the most of this opportunity and capitalise on what hard work, sound policy formulation and good fortune could bring.

Forestry conservation

¹⁰⁶⁴ Queensland Government Gazette, vol 16 no 65, 29 May 1875

One of the minor contributions Douglas made during this session is worth examining, because he championed a cause that later generations would see as one worthy of support - forest conservation. Throughout the 1860s, the Acclimatisation Society of Queensland became increasingly concerned at the loss of forest cover in southeast Queensland, the possible effects of deforestation on the climate, and the requirement for some sort of conservation measures. In 1873, the society convened a conference to highlight the need for forest conservancy.¹⁰⁶⁵

At this conference, John Jardine, a colleague of Douglas from his Rockhampton days and now the gold fields commissioner for that district, read a paper eloquently capturing the mood:

The indiscriminate destruction of the forest trees of Queensland has long been a cause of regret ... a process of extermination has been adopted, alike destructive of the beauty and comfort of the umbrageous landscape, the fertility of the soil, and the natural source of wealth wherewith Queensland has been so largely favoured.¹⁰⁶⁶

Douglas, as a member representing a timber constituency, acted on this and related concerns, including those voiced by the head of the

¹⁰⁶⁵ Judith Powell. *People and Trees: a Thematic History of South East Queensland with Particular Reference to Forested Areas, 1823-1997*. Canberra, Forests Taskforce, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 1998, p. 24

¹⁰⁶⁶ John Jardine. "Conservation of Forests." Paper presented to the *Queensland Acclimatisation Society*, 8 May 1873. *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1875, p. 1212

Queensland Botanic Gardens, Walter Lumley Hill.¹⁰⁶⁷ He proposed and then chaired a select committee charged to “consider and report upon the best means to be adopted in order to preserve and promote the growth of timber trees, and to conserve forests for useful purposes.”¹⁰⁶⁸

Douglas, in a passionate parliamentary speech, referred to “a shameful waste of valuable timber [and] that this waste is still going on.”¹⁰⁶⁹ The select committee made seven recommendations, including that export of timber be prevented, except on “conditions much more favourable to this colony;” increasing the portion of crown lands as forest reserves, managed in perpetuity; imposing cutting girth limits; prohibiting ringbarking; appointing forest rangers; and establishing a forest conservancy board.¹⁰⁷⁰

These recommendations, particularly the one stating that forest reserves should be for long-term management and not merely for government supply purposes, demonstrated Douglas’s love of nature and his recognition that if Queensland forests were to survive it would only be through ongoing government intervention and management. Unfortunately, while some recommendations were heeded and incorporated into legislation the following year, by 1881 it was clear that the “land had won over forests and the present over

¹⁰⁶⁷ Judith Powell, p. 24

¹⁰⁶⁸ Ibid. For the full report of the select committee, which sat from 17 June to 31 August 1875 see, “Forest Conservancy.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1875, pp. 1207-88

¹⁰⁶⁹ “Forest Conservancy.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1875, p. 1224

the future.”¹⁰⁷¹

The 1875 session revealed the maturation of Douglas as a seasoned and experienced politician, one who not only understood how politics was conducted, but who could progress his career by adopting its rules and conventions. Although singled out as a “rising star” on entering the Queensland parliament in 1863,¹⁰⁷² his parliamentary career had waxed and waned over the years. Now it was again on the ascendancy, and was soon to become the brightest in the parliamentary firmament.

Macalister’s resignation

However, while Douglas was ably fulfilling the role of a loyal party supporter and effective parliamentary performer, events were not going nearly as well for his leader. When parliament resumed, Macalister announced his retirement on 2 June 1876,¹⁰⁷³ and was replaced by George Thorn.¹⁰⁷⁴ Macalister was shortly afterwards appointed agent-general to London, in what opposition leader Arthur Hunter Palmer contended was a reward from Thorn in return for Macalister’s resignation.¹⁰⁷⁵ What were the factors leading to Macalister’s resignation, a decision that would lead indirectly to

¹⁰⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷¹ Judith Powell, pp. 26-27

¹⁰⁷² *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1863, p. 2

¹⁰⁷³ Wilson (1969), pp. 196-97; Wilson (1978), pp. 57-58

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 3 June 1876, p. 4

¹⁰⁷⁵ Wilson (1978), p. 58; Mr. Douglas. “Address in Reply to Opening Speech.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 1876, p. 20

Douglas becoming premier the following year?

Two factors led to the demise of the Macalister government. The first was that the ministry appeared tired and bereft of vision, enveloped by a general feeling of torpor and malaise.¹⁰⁷⁶ Macalister and his liberal ministry had been in power for over three years, and it was widely felt that they had run out of energy. Legislative initiatives, especially over land reform, had stalled, with the secretary for lands, Fryar, facing probable impeachment charges over irregularities in the lands administration.¹⁰⁷⁷

The second was that Macalister was known to be in poor health and wanted to return to England, where it was believed the cooler climate would be more beneficial.¹⁰⁷⁸ That the colonial treasurer, William Hemmant, was rumoured to be going to England as well further undermined confidence in the government.¹⁰⁷⁹ These factors meant there was little point in Macalister remaining at the head of his ministry, especially at a time when the colony needed strong leadership to address the many problems facing it. These problems included the issue of Chinese immigration and the widespread belief that the importation of South Sea Islanders was the cause of a

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 22 May 1876, p. 2; 23 May 1876 and 29 May 1876, p. 2

¹⁰⁷⁷ Wilson (1969), pp. 200-01; *Brisbane Courier*, 25 May 1876, p. 2

¹⁰⁷⁸ It was widely known that Macalister was in poor health, with one account referring to him as a "partially invalided premier." (*Queenslander*, 13 May 1876)

¹⁰⁷⁹ Mr. Douglas. "Want of Confidence Motion." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 1876, pp. 216-17

marked increase in rural unemployment.¹⁰⁸⁰

It was John Murtagh Macrossan, the member for Kennedy, who brought the matter to a head when he moved a vote of no confidence against the government in connection with its proposed extension of the southern railway line from Warwick to Stanthorpe.¹⁰⁸¹ Debate raged for several days, with Douglas at one point expressing a lack of confidence in the Macalister ministry! It was not uncommon during this period for members to put the interests of their faction ahead of the party. As the historian Fowler eloquently summed up this period of political life in Queensland; “faction not principle, men not measures, cliques not parties.”¹⁰⁸²

When the vote was taken, the ministry hung on by three votes, 20 to 17.¹⁰⁸³ On this occasion, Douglas excused himself from the house and did not vote, later giving as his reason that, while he had reservations about the ministry, he could not censure them because of his loyalty to the party.¹⁰⁸⁴

This action by Douglas is further evidence of his political maturation. It is the first instance of Douglas demonstrating loyalty to a party and

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 1876, p. 88

¹⁰⁸¹ Governor Cairns to Colonial Office. *Despatch no. 10,188*, 14 June 1876, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) CO reel no. 1930.

¹⁰⁸² John Fowler, *Queensland 1860 – 1888: Political, Social and Religious Comments*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1962, p. 61

¹⁰⁸³ *Brisbane Courier*, 1 June 1876, p. 2

¹⁰⁸⁴ Mr. Douglas “Want of Confidence Motion.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 1876, p. 217

abstaining from a motion with which he agreed.¹⁰⁸⁵ The approach he took was recognised as the action of a principled politician, one able to weigh up competing interests for the benefit of the colony. A letter to the *Brisbane Courier* observed a few days later that, “Mr. Douglas is a high class politician, and would be creditable to any government.”¹⁰⁸⁶

Despite having won the no-confidence vote, Macalister could now only hold on through the “sufferance of the opposition,” which he considered an untenable situation.¹⁰⁸⁷ He therefore resigned and did not recommend a successor.¹⁰⁸⁸ William Hemmant was requested by Cairns to form a ministry, but declined.¹⁰⁸⁹ George Thorn, as the only remaining member of the ministry, was the obvious candidate, despite being considered manifestly unsuitable.¹⁰⁹⁰ Samuel Griffith was a rising star, but was, at age 30, believed to be too young. Douglas was also a contender, one “to whom public opinion almost universally pointed,” but being from outside the ministry, he was never seriously considered, especially as he declined to push his

¹⁰⁸⁵ According to Douglas the reason the ministry fell was because “two of its prominent members were about to retire [as well as because of] the defects disclosed in their policy. (“Mr. Douglas at Maryborough.” *Brisbane Courier*, 26 June 1876, p. 3)

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Queenslander*. “The Political Situation.” *Brisbane Courier*, 5 June 1876, p. 3

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 29 May 1876, p. 2

¹⁰⁸⁸ Governor Cairns to Colonial Office. Despatch no. 10,188, 14 June 1876, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), CO reel no. 1930. In accepting Macalister’s resignation, Governor Cairns informed the Colonial Office that he had done so “on account of the known unsatisfactory connection of his health,” and considered the resignation to be a “retirement.”

¹⁰⁸⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 3 July 1876, p. 2

¹⁰⁹⁰ For a damning critique as to Thorn’s unsuitability, see, *Queenslander*. “Six Years of Queensland Politics.” *Victorian Review*, vol 8, May 1883, p. 63

claims.¹⁰⁹¹

Thorn ministry

Thorn was the new premier, yet there was little doubt that Douglas was the kingmaker, with the former beholden to the latter for advice and assistance. This is evident when observing the make-up of the new ministry. Griffith, the attorney general, was clearly too young at this time to play a pivotal role (his turn would come later.) The colonial treasurer, James Robert Dickson, and Robert Muter Stewart, the colonial secretary, had both been in parliament for less than three years, while Charles Stuart Mein, the postmaster general, was appointed to the legislative council, the previous year. Thorn himself was first elected to parliament some four years after Douglas.

It was no wonder then that Governor Cairns observed that, “the ministry is not a strong one, but it represents the strongest party.”¹⁰⁹²

Douglas received the position of secretary for public lands. This was considered the most challenging portfolio “and in that sense it may be considered a post of honor.”¹⁰⁹³ Furthermore, Douglas was considered the “only element of stability or Liberalism” the ministry

¹⁰⁹¹ Queenslander. “Six Years of Queensland Politics.” *Victorian Review*, vol 8, May 1883, p. 63. As a contemporary observed, Douglas “has hesitated to assume the status of leader, for reasons no doubt entirely satisfactory in his own judgement.” (Queenslander. “The Political Situation.” *Brisbane Courier*, 5 June 1876, p. 3)

¹⁰⁹² Governor Cairns to Colonial Office. Despatch no. 10,188, 14 June 1876, Australian Joint Copying project (AJCP) CO reel no. 1930. For a scathing analysis of the inability of this ministry to adequately govern the colony, given their collective lack of experience and business acumen, see the *Brisbane Courier*, 30 August 1876, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹³ *Brisbane Courier*, 5 June 1876, p. 2

possessed.¹⁰⁹⁴

The Thorn ministry was constituted on 5 June 1876, and parliament was immediately prorogued so that its members could, hopefully, be re-elected.¹⁰⁹⁵ In a speech to his electorate at Maryborough, Douglas focused on land policy, also hinting that the government's rail program would probably include the construction of a line from Maryborough to Gympie, the cost being recouped by the sale of adjoining land.¹⁰⁹⁶ Being the only nominee, he was duly returned.

The Thorn ministry faced difficulties throughout the session.

Although it survived a vote of no confidence against it by only three votes on 19 July 1876, the following day William Henry Walsh resigned as speaker, unable to "secure for the chair that proper amount of respect which its occupant should always command."¹⁰⁹⁷

Not for nothing did Bernays refer to Thorn's ministry as "more or less as a humorous production," while McIlwraith contemptuously referred to the portly premier as "a lump of blubber."¹⁰⁹⁸ Short-lived entertainment it may have been, but Douglas at least was to make the most of the opportunity afforded him, comprehensively revamping the colony's land laws.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Warwick Argus*, 29 June 1876, p. 2

¹⁰⁹⁵ The seats were declared vacant on 7 June 1876 and Douglas and all his ministerial colleagues were successfully re-elected. (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1876, vol 1, pp. 24 & 27)

¹⁰⁹⁶ "Mr. Douglas at Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 26 June 1876, p. 3; "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 June 1876, pp. 2-3 & *Brisbane Courier*, 2 August 1876, p. 2

¹⁰⁹⁷ Joyce (1984), p. 44. Walsh was replaced by Henry Edward King.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Bernays, p. 79; Thomas McIlwraith to Robert Watson, 12 June 1876. McIlwraith /

Land legislation

Land - or 'the land question' as it was called - was the major issue in the colony, and had been since its creation in 1859, for the competing demands of squatters and selectors caused perennial conflict. In order to promote selection, in 1860 the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* had been enacted to set aside agricultural reserves in the settled districts and to allow for selectors to purchase up to 320 acres at 20 shillings an acre. In 1863, the squatters managed to have this act diluted with the passing of the *Agricultural Reserves Act* under which restrictions, in the form of development conditions, were imposed on any land that had been taken up under the 1860 Act. This Act established in Queensland the principle of permanent land settlement under conditional purchase.

In 1868, all lands legislation was consolidated and updated under the *Consolidating Land Act*, which allowed for resumptions from pastoral holdings, restricted selection areas, and set out the manner in which selections could be occupied and improved.¹⁰⁹⁹ The following year squatting interests again triumphed with the *Pastoral Leases Act*, which enabled them to purchase and convert up to 2,560 acres of their pastoral leases to freehold status.¹¹⁰⁰

Much of the best land in the colony was subsequently converted to freehold status by squatters under this Act. As well, extensive

Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, *State Library of Queensland*, OM 64-19/138

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Our First Half-Century*, p. 57

¹¹⁰⁰ Cilento, pp. 278-79

dumming and other irregularities on their part continued to undermine those provisions designed to protect the small farmer, with agricultural reserves set aside by government often falling into the hands of squatters and speculators.¹¹⁰¹ The Lilley and Macalister ministries attempted, without much success, to make the land laws fairer and less open to abuse by squatters.¹¹⁰² These failures were the prime reason for the disillusionment expressed by the electorate over the performance of the Macalister ministry.

The *Brisbane Courier* accurately reflected this public mood:

The patience of the country has really been exhausted by the delays and shuffles which have, session after session, been interposed to excuse the non-effectment of some intelligible law to suit the altered circumstances of the colony with regard to its estate.¹¹⁰³

Two main issues needed to be addressed; firstly, the manner in which land for settlement should be provided; secondly, the method to adopt in populating it.¹¹⁰⁴ Douglas wanted to raise revenue from the sale of public lands while ensuring actual settlement on “real and *bona fide* homestead areas” that in the past had been stymied by dumming and ‘peacocking.’¹¹⁰⁵

He moved quickly, introducing into parliament an amending and

¹¹⁰¹ Fitzgerald, p. 189

¹¹⁰² For more details, see Bernays, p. 318

¹¹⁰³ *Brisbane Courier*, 17 June 1876, p. 4

¹¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰⁵ “Maryborough.” *Brisbane Courier*, 21 June 1876, pp. 2-3

consolidating land bill, which was passed as the *Crown Lands Alienation Act* of 1876.¹¹⁰⁶ The Act, designed to curb the power of the squatters, limited selection of land to 5,120 acres, provided for 10 year leases and ensured that homestead areas selection was limited to 80 acres with residency made compulsory. Improvements of 10 shillings per acre were necessary before the property could become freehold, and homesteads were protected against claims for debt.¹¹⁰⁷

In framing this Act, Douglas incorporated many of the measures he had long and consistently advocated to facilitate the development of small-scale agriculture in the colony.¹¹⁰⁸ Agrarian reserves for public purposes were finally created, something he first advocated in his unsuccessful 1863 Bill.¹¹⁰⁹ The practice of dummyming was firmly addressed through a provision that occupancy had to be by the selectors themselves, and not their nominees,¹¹¹⁰ while unlimited speculation was also checked, despite the best efforts of the squattocracy, through their representatives on the opposition benches, to prevent its passage. The Act was assented to on 27 November 1876.¹¹¹¹

¹¹⁰⁶ Mason, p. 142. This Act, which was 105 sections in length, repealed all provisions of the existing 1868 Alienation Act and its 1872 and 1875 amendments. It was introduced to parliament on 20 July 1876, and received assent on 29 November 1876.

¹¹⁰⁷ *Our First Half Century*, p. 59

¹¹⁰⁸ Neil Byrne. Bishop Robert Dunne: A Study of his Attempts to Implement Catholic Social Policy in Southern Queensland 1863-1885. MA thesis. University of Queensland, 1981, p. 29

¹¹⁰⁹ Mason, p. 143

¹¹¹⁰ Fitzgerald, pp. 189-90

¹¹¹¹ Bernays, p. 318

The Act made provision for two classes of settler - the larger, conditional purchasers, who bought at auction; and the smaller and, to Douglas, the more important, agricultural homesteaders, who alone could select in the Darling Downs, the garden of the colony – and who only had to pay one quarter as much.¹¹¹² Encouraging agriculturalists resulted in increased and closer settlement in the colony.¹¹¹³

The other Bill introduced and enacted by Douglas was the *Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act*.¹¹¹⁴ Although comprising only nine sections, its importance lay in the way it allowed for the continuation of the leasing provisions of the Crown Lands *Alienation Act* of 1868. As leases expired, the new Act allowed them to be offered at auction for a further lease at a rental of not less than £2 per square mile.¹¹¹⁵

Douglas had consolidated and improved the land legislation of the colony by placing all settlers, past and present, under one set of regulations and by repealing the number of preceding Acts still in operation, Acts that had made for chaos and inefficiency in administration.¹¹¹⁶ His achievements in the areas of land management and administration reform were widely recognised and

¹¹¹² Stephen H. Roberts. *History of Australian Land Settlement, 1877-1920*. Melbourne, Macmillan, 1968, p. 263

¹¹¹³ *Ibid.*; The Governor. "Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 23, 1877, p. 3; *Brisbane Courier*, 19 April 1877, p. 2

¹¹¹⁴ This Act was introduced to parliament on 20 July 1876, and received assent on 18 October 1876.

¹¹¹⁵ Bernays, p. 319; *Our First Half Century*, p. 59; Roberts, p. 262

¹¹¹⁶ Cameron, p. 32

applauded, and he was considered a 'shining light' in an otherwise weak and lacklustre ministry.¹¹¹⁷ As Mason correctly observed, it was "Douglas the individual rather than the Thorn government as a whole," who deserved full acknowledgment for reforming land legislation in the colony.¹¹¹⁸ Douglas's vision was to encourage and support farming and closer settlement in the colony by favouring selectors at the expense of the squatters. In achieving this, he demonstrated his ability to put plans into actions and words into deeds when required.

However, Douglas's success was bittersweet, for it occurred in the same week that he was devastated by a personal tragedy that utterly changed the course of his life.

Death of Mary Douglas

By late 1876, Douglas had been happily married to his wife Mary for over 15 years. Mary Ann Douglas was well known throughout Brisbane for her charitable works, prominent in the management of the Brisbane Servants Home, the Lady Bowen Lying-in Hospital, and

¹¹¹⁷ As Governor Cairns correctly observed: "The great measure of the session has been the *Crown Lands Alienation Bill*." (Cairns to Colonial Office, 6 December 1876, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) CO 234/36, p. 473), while William Henry Traill, the editor of the *Darling Downs Gazette*, believed that "there is no enactment which is likely, for the next few years, to engage the attention of the public of Queensland in an equal degree to the *Land Act of 1876*." (William Henry Traill. *A Plain Explanation of the New Land Act of 1876, and Regulations: Specially Designed for the Information and Guidance of Selectors in Every part of the Colony*. Toowoomba, 1877, Preface. Copy in National Library of Australia, call no. FER F9947)

¹¹¹⁸ Mason, p. 143

a founder of the Diamantina Orphanage, all situated in Brisbane.¹¹¹⁹ She had been by her husband's side throughout his political career in Queensland, from the highs of his ministerial and agent-general posts, to the lows of his traumatic bankruptcy. Deeply religious, she was his bedrock and foundation, always present to listen, to offer advice and to comfort him if need be. They shared many of the same interests and passions and faced the world together, united by a sense of duty and purpose.

On the morning of 23 November 1876, Mary, her daughter Mary Howe, and a friend, Miss Perry, were travelling by horse and buggy from their home at Bartley's Hill along the Sandgate Road into Brisbane. They had just crossed the Breakfast Creek Bridge, when their pony shied at a dray wheel, and, running up the steep bank on the north side of the creek, overturned the vehicle. Mary Douglas was thrown underneath and the carriage landed on top and crushed her. She was taken to her home, and Doctors Hobbs and Bancroft summoned. However, she lost consciousness at 4.30 in the afternoon and died that evening around ten o'clock,¹¹²⁰ with John

¹¹¹⁹ Tyrer, p. 87; *Warwick Argus*, 30 November 1876, p. 2. Mary Douglas was honorary secretary of the Lady Bowen Lying-In Hospital from 1865-7. (Patrica Elizabeth O'Shea. *Duty of Care: Lady Bowen Lying-in Hospital, 1864-1889*. Post Graduate Diploma in Arts. University of Queensland, 1997.) Until October 1876 she was the lady superintendent of the orphanage on a salary of £70 per annum. (*Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1876*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 34)

¹¹²⁰ *Warwick Argus*, 30 November 1876, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 24 November 1876, p. 2; *Queensland Times*, 25 November 1876; *Brisbane Courier*, 27 November 1876, p. 2; *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 25 November 1876, p. 319

Douglas and her daughter at her bedside.¹¹²¹

The funeral, attended by nearly all the leading members of the community, including the governor, the ministry, bishops and clergymen, and most of the parliament, was held in the Toowong Cemetery, Brisbane, on Saturday 25 November 1876.¹¹²² There was a genuine sense of loss in the city, with the *Brisbane Courier* calling it, “one of the saddest incidents in the social annals of our community it has ever been our lot to record.”¹¹²³ The *Queensland Times* considered Mary to be, “in the highest sense of the word a lady, and her untimely end will be deeply felt by all who had the privilege of her acquaintance.”¹¹²⁴ A writer to the *Queensland Evangelical Standard* described her as “the kindly benefactress of the poor,” and the orphanage’s loss to be irreparable.”¹¹²⁵

John Douglas was devastated. He had an imposing mausoleum erected at the cemetery, with a lengthy message written on three of its sides.¹¹²⁶ This extraordinary epitaph indicates the extent of his

¹¹²¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 August 1887. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/6

¹¹²² *Brisbane Courier*, 25 November 1876, p. 1. Mary Douglas was buried at Toowong Cemetery, portion 9, section 34, allotment 5. (*Toowong Cemetery Burial Register, Queensland Death Index* no 76/000812)

¹¹²³ *Brisbane Courier*, 27 November 1876, p. 2. The paper also informed its readers that Mary Douglas had, “by a life of active and wise benevolence, become known and respected far and near for superior attainments and qualities of mind devoted to purposes the most worthy.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 24 November 1876, p. 2)

¹¹²⁴ *Queensland Times*, 25 November 1876

¹¹²⁵ Archer Bowman. “In Memoriam.” *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 2 December 1876, p. 329

¹¹²⁶ The writing on the three sides is as follows:

loss, as well as throwing some light on both the depth of his religious belief and his Masonic leanings. He also financed the building of the stone pulpit at their place of worship, Holy Trinity Church in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.¹¹²⁷ Douglas found some comfort in his religion, and it enabled him to continue performing his ministerial duties.

Douglas was left with Mary's daughter, Mary West Howe, aged

He who afflicts me knows what I can bear, and when I fall and can endure no more, will mercifully take me to himself. So through the cloud of death her spirit pass into that pure and unknown world of love. Her injury cannot come and here is laid her mortal body. Thrice happy, then the mother may be deemed, the wife from whose consolatory grave return, that we in mind might witness where and how, her spirit yet survive on earth.

If suffering be indeed our law of life, if this world through our father's sin and ours, may not be perfect any more until the slow development of centuries do bring to birth a higher race than we, it is so much the more a fitting school of patience for the time we must remain of charity towards fellow wayfarers beside us, bearing each his human CROSS, in secret or in sight, but each his own; and furthermore of hope, the unblamed hope of the new world where all things are new.

The ultimate symbol of divinity how can we dream of? We have got no sense whereby to seize it; but in the CROSS we find the ultimate symbol of HUMANITY. HUMANITY, that touches the divine by some fine link intangible to us. Upon that side of mortal consciousness that looks towards death; and we must pass the gates of death linked with him, holding by the hand our BROTHER gone before.

¹¹²⁷ The Douglasses originally worshipped at All Saints Anglican Church at Wickham Terrace, but moved to the Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Fortitude Valley when it was built. The stone pulpit dedicated to Mary Douglas is still in use, and bears the inscription, "In Memory of Mary Douglas, who died on 25th November 1876, aged 49. Much endeared to many, she lived an unselfish life, and died in the blessed realisation of the divine presence."

I had wondered what was meant by this, until I came across a letter from John Douglas to his brother Edward, in which he wrote, "Mary, when she was dying, and just before she passed into that wonderfully ecstatic state which proceeded her death asked us to say 'Safe in the arms of Jesus.' It is in moments such as these that I have felt drawn nearest to our blessed Lord, nearer and dearer to us than any earthly brother. May he be ever present to us, nearer to us now, and nearer to us when our last hour calls. (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 August 1887 Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/6)

19.¹¹²⁸ As a minister of the Crown he would have been too busy, as well as incapable, of doing household duties. Besides, this was an age when no self-respecting gentleman would have considered undertaking domestic work.¹¹²⁹ Douglas needed a 'live in' housekeeper, and Mother Bridget Conlon - mother superior and principal of Brisbane All Hallows Catholic School and Convent (1865-78) and a friend of the Douglas family - was approached to find a suitable person. She arranged for a Sarah Hickey to be employed in this capacity.¹¹³⁰

Little is known about the early life of Sarah Hickey other than that she was baptised on 25 March 1844, in County Cork, Ireland, the daughter of Michael Hickey and Margaret Coffey.¹¹³¹ A devout Roman Catholic, she may have been a national school teacher in Ireland before coming to Queensland sometime in the late 1860s or early 1870s and working as a teacher at All Hallows. Sarah and Mother Bridget had their differences, leading the former to leave the

¹¹²⁸ Mary Howe was the daughter of Mary Douglas's second husband, William Howe. She married Charles George Holmes A'Court (1843-1924) the following year, on 12 April 1877. (*Queensland Marriage* no 77/B 006683.) Holmes A'Court was private secretary to Governor Cairns until 1 March 1877, and then clerk assistant to the legislative council. (*Queensland Blue Book*, 1877, p. 10 & 1878, p. 12.) They had three children, Harold Charles (1878-82), Reginald Albert (1879-1973) and Alan Worsley (1887-1957.) Mary died in Toowoomba on 29 October 1889, aged only 32.

¹¹²⁹ Janet Roebuck. *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, pp. 23-24

¹¹³⁰ Conversation with Sybil Douglas, Sarah Hickey and John Douglas's granddaughter, Brisbane, October 2000

¹¹³¹ Details from the *Register of Baptisms* kept at St John's Church, Cratloe, County Clare, Ireland, and supplied by Father Liam Enright, November 2000. Sarah's name on the register was recorded as Sara.

convent school and work as a governess on a Queensland station property.¹¹³² After being approached by Mother Bridget, she returned to Brisbane to keep house for John Douglas and his stepdaughter.¹¹³³ The arrival of Sarah Hickey at the Douglas household changed both of their lives forever, as subsequent chapters of this thesis will demonstrate.

Change of ministry

Parliament was prorogued on 1 December 1876. The session had lasted over six months, the longest thus far in the history of the colony, and Douglas had been the government's standout performer. His land legislation, a major improvement on the 1868 Act, was considered the most important business the parliament had conducted since the advent of the Thorn ministry.¹¹³⁴ He had decisively broken the shackles that had plagued his predecessors when it came to land reform. Douglas was now regarded as an experienced and successful politician, one who had "some weight in the eyes of the country."¹¹³⁵

The same could not be said of his leader, who was scathingly depicted in the press as one whose only talent was that of "saying the wrong thing in the wrong place [and] and being reticent when he

¹¹³² Where this property was is unknown.

¹¹³³ Cecilia Douglas. *And Long Ago it Was*. Unpublished manuscript, Brisbane, the author, circa 1933. Cecilia Douglas (Nee Beirne) was Sarah's daughter-in-law, having married Henry Douglas in 1914.

¹¹³⁴ "Land Acts." *Queensland Times*, 25 November 1876, p. 2

¹¹³⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 30 August 1876, p. 2

should have been candid and communicative.”¹¹³⁶ It was inevitable that eventually doubts would be raised about Thorn’s fitness to remain as premier, as well as who should be the best person to succeed him.¹¹³⁷

When this occurred, Thorn was replaced by Douglas. This was due to a combination of factors: his experience, the decisive manner in which he successfully reformed land ownership and administration, and the inescapable fact that Thorn, although a genial and pleasant man, was deemed incapable of effectively governing the country.¹¹³⁸

Thorn was a poor public speaker, and the ministry believed that holding one’s own in debate on the floor of parliament was a prerequisite for success as a premier.¹¹³⁹

Following much intrigue amongst his ministry, Thorn was therefore replaced as premier in March 1877.¹¹⁴⁰ Although details of this dissension first appeared in the press towards the end of February, they were immediately denied by those close to him.¹¹⁴¹ While the

¹¹³⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 1 December 1876, p. 2; Bernays, p. 79

¹¹³⁷ The doubters extended all the way to the governor, with Cairns noting on 6 December 1876: “I do not doubt, however, that some pretext will be sought during the recess for getting rid of Mr. Thorn, or, at least, for reconstituting the ministry so as to place Mr. Douglas or Mr. Griffith at its head.” (Cairns to Colonial Office, 6 December 1876, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), CO 234/36, pp. 472-73)

¹¹³⁸ One commentator observed of Thorn that, “as a minister he was useless, and as prime minister he was ridiculous.” (Queenslander. “Six Years of Queensland Politics.” *Victorian Review*, vol 8, May 1883, p. 63)

¹¹³⁹ *Queensland Times*, 8 March 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁴⁰ For an account of this intrigue, see Joyce (1984), p. 44

¹¹⁴¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 February 1877, p. 4 & 8 March 1877, p. 2; *Queensland Times*, 8 March 1877, p. 2. When Thorn did resign, it was widely reported that he had done so voluntarily. However, this was incorrect. If he had had his way, he would have continued as

attorney general, Samuel Walker Griffith, clearly coveted the post, he was considered too young¹¹⁴² and it was rumoured that the honour would fall to Douglas.¹¹⁴³ Thorn reluctantly resigned¹¹⁴⁴ and the governor then requested that Douglas form a ministry.¹¹⁴⁵ Douglas accepted the governor's invitation with alacrity and secured, a day after his 49th birthday, the ultimate political prize in the colony.

Rarely had anyone ascended to the premiership of Queensland with such universal acclamation and goodwill from all sides. As one paper noted:

He is beyond all comparison the most competent and experienced member of his party. ... He has the confidence and respect of his own party.¹¹⁴⁶

Another paper observed that there were no politicians whose "claim to statesmanship can be compared to him."¹¹⁴⁷ That Douglas's wife had died tragically less than six months earlier also generated considerable sympathy, as was evidenced by the size of her funeral and the glowing tributes in the press.

premier.

¹¹⁴² Griffith was 32 years old. His turn came later, for he was premier from November 1883 to June 1888 and again from August 1890 to March 1893.

¹¹⁴³ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 February 1877, p. 4.

¹¹⁴⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 March 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁴⁵ Joyce (1984), p. 44; Roger Joyce. "Samuel Walker Griffith: A Liberal Lawyer." In, D. J. Murphy and R. B. Joyce, eds. *Queensland Political Portraits*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1978, p. 151

¹¹⁴⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 March 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁴⁷ *Warwick Argus*, 15 March 1877, p. 2. As this comment from the *Queensland Patriot* attests: "As a debater the new premier is amongst the foremost orators who have ever stood on the floor of the Queensland House of Assembly; as a departmental minister he has long been acknowledged to have no superiors, and as a leader we believe he will be as

Yet, less than two years later Douglas's reign as premier was over.¹¹⁴⁸ This was due to a number of factors, some beyond his control, some of his own making. Nevertheless, while his term as premier was brief, he made the most of his opportunity in terms of his legislative program and the lasting impact he left on the colony in several important areas. His achievements as premier from 1877 to 1879, largely overlooked by historians, will be analysed in the following two chapters.

successful as the best of his predecessors." (*Queensland Patriot*, 10 March 1877, p. 180)

¹¹⁴⁸ In welcoming Douglas's ascendancy to the premiership, the *Townsville Herald* hinted at problems to come, observing that Douglas is "credited with a tendency to theory rather than practice, and with a difficulty in making up his mind on alternative courses." (*Townsville Herald*, 14 March 1877, p. 2)

Chapter 13: The Premiership, 1877-79 (Part 1)

This chapter examines the impact Douglas had on Queensland when premier and how successfully he managed the major issues concerning the colony, especially the effect of Pacific Islander and Chinese migration. What was his impact and how successful was he in performing his duties and responsibilities? Why did he lose the premiership within two years? What was his legacy? The last point is especially pertinent, for partly due to the relatively short period of his premiership, there has never been a detailed analysis of his achievements and legacy. Although his failures while Queensland premier have been acknowledged by historians, his achievements have not.¹¹⁴⁹

Douglas's grief and loss following the death of his wife was in the short term somewhat ameliorated by his subsequent relationship and eventual marriage to his Irish Catholic 'live-in' help. Unfortunately, the scandal this generated when made public became a factor in his loss of the premiership. By the time he became premier, Douglas's hair was snow white and curly with an abundance of ringlets, and he had a long full grey beard. But, a tall man, he had yet to assume the bulk he would attain in later years.¹¹⁵⁰ A contemporary described him as "a man of commanding presence, with a splendid classical head."¹¹⁵¹

¹¹⁴⁹ Harding (1997), p. 203

¹¹⁵⁰ There is a portrait of Douglas in the *Australasian Sketcher*, 29 September 1877.

¹¹⁵¹ Jones (1904), p. 25

Douglas assumed the premiership at a time when Queensland was doing relatively well economically. Returning during this period following an absence from the colony, a Brisbane resident was moved to observe of his town:

One sees many more pretentious towns than the capital of Queensland, that have not a stretch of business places such as we now see.¹¹⁵²

Industry appeared to be flourishing: gold yields were up, sugar and general agriculture were improving, and the pastoral industry was prospering.¹¹⁵³ Treasury returns for the period July 1876 to March 1877 showed a “considerable improvement” in the financial position of the colony, while railway receipts increased.¹¹⁵⁴ However, there was concern that the colony was not progressing to the same extent it had in previous years, for business activity was beginning to slow down and associated failures picking up.¹¹⁵⁵ In the late nineteenth century it was widely believed that economic slowdowns could be averted through aggressive government action such as increased

¹¹⁵² Queenslander. “After but a Short Absence.” *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1877, p. 3

¹¹⁵³ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 April 1877, p. 2. There was a severe drought in northern New South Wales and parts of southern and western Queensland that destroyed wheat crops on the Darling Downs and decimated stock in the settled districts. Nevertheless, the colony weathered the effects far better than it had during the devastating drought of the mid 1860s, thanks mainly to the flourishing sugar industry, the ongoing boom in the gold mining industry, and the development of the pastoral industry beyond the settled districts. The drought appeared to break in January 1877, but the rains were not consistent, and it continued until good rains fell in September 1877. (*Brisbane Courier*, 25 January 1877, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 5 September 1877, p. 2; “The Drought.” *Brisbane Courier*, 8 September 1877, p. 3; Thornhill Weedon. *Queensland, Past and Present: An Epitome of Its Resources and Development*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1896, p. 23)

¹¹⁵⁴ “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 21 June 1877, p. 6

¹¹⁵⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 April 1877, p. 2

expenditure on public works, and therefore the advent of the Douglas ministry was eagerly awaited in the hope that it would quickly introduce the sort of legislation and policies needed to prevent an economic downturn.¹¹⁵⁶

Chinese in Queensland

Douglas wanted to maintain the colony's current prosperity. He saw his government as "that of earnest men desirous of doing the best they can for the country which they are called upon to govern."¹¹⁵⁷

They were soon to have that opportunity in connection with the Chinese, there being deep concern over their numerical preponderance on the Palmer River Goldfield in far north Queensland. It was widely felt that they were taking jobs from Queenslanders, leading to increasing "complaints of want of employment."¹¹⁵⁸ Chinese had come in large numbers to New South Wales and Victoria since the first gold rushes in 1851, and this had frequently led to resentment and outright hostility toward them, culminating in the Lambing Flat riots near Young, New South Wales, in 1860-61.¹¹⁵⁹

Douglas was initially in favour of Chinese immigration to Queensland, and in 1865, it was reported that:

¹¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁷ The Premier. "Address in Reply to the Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 23, 1877, p. 1

¹¹⁵⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 April 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁵⁹ "Lambing Flat Riots." *The Australian Encyclopedia*. Sydney, Australian Geographic

He did not think it probable that such immigration would take root in this country - that a race of Asiastics would settle down in any country governed by European laws. Still he could see no reason that ... the two races should not harmoniously amalgamate.¹¹⁶⁰

However, this was before the Chinese arrived on the Queensland goldfields in large numbers. By 1870, there were more than 2,000 Chinese miners scattered throughout the colony,¹¹⁶¹ and rioting occurred over the presence of Chinese miners in Gympie in 1868.¹¹⁶² Despite this, by 1874 the Queensland government was prepared to countenance the importation of indentured Chinese labourers by sugar growers.¹¹⁶³ However, the discovery of gold on the Palmer River caused a rapid expansion of Chinese immigration, and in a three-week period in April 1875, 3,272 Chinese disembarked at Cooktown, the port of entry to the Palmer.¹¹⁶⁴ By 1877, there were an estimated 17,000 Chinese on the field, comprising some 10 per cent of the colony's population.¹¹⁶⁵

Douglas was concerned that the Chinese would dominate the

Society, 5th ed., 1988, vol 5, p. 1721

¹¹⁶⁰ Mr Douglas. "Address in Reply to Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 8

¹¹⁶¹ Evans (1988), p. 254

¹¹⁶² Fitzgerald, p. 221; Evans (1988), p. 280

¹¹⁶³ Willard, pp. 38-39

¹¹⁶⁴ Evans (1988), p. 255

¹¹⁶⁵ Willard, p. 40. At the 1876 census, the population of Queensland was 173,283 people. (Vamplew, p. 26.) 17,000 was also about the number of the estimated European population for the whole of north Queensland at that time. (Rolls, p. 211)

northern part of the colony.¹¹⁶⁶ Queenslanders were well aware of what was occurring in America, where, following the Californian gold rush, Chinese goldminers had settled in large numbers in that state, and were afraid that what had happened there would also happen here.¹¹⁶⁷ This 1877 observation by explorer and bushman Christie Palmerston articulated the fears of many:

When once the Chinese swarm a goldfield, they overrun it as a horde of locusts do a wheat crop. They are of no earthly use to Queensland, which they rob annually of much wealth, without yielding any reciprocal revenue or helping to develop the productive resources of the colony.¹¹⁶⁸

Queenslanders had a stake in the future of their vast, sparsely populated colony, demanding to settle and develop it as they saw fit. They wanted it peopled by men who subscribed to British values and who embraced the British way of life. The *Brisbane Courier* insisted that, “Australia cannot be both Chinese and British; it must be one or the other.”¹¹⁶⁹ The determination of many Queenslanders to halt Chinese immigration was compared to the actions of an earlier generation of Australian colonists who refused to receive

¹¹⁶⁶ John Douglas. “Adjournment.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 23, 1877, p. 34

¹¹⁶⁷ Willard, pp. 41-42. For more details on the Chinese in California, see *Brisbane Courier*, 31 March 1877, p. 2.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Queensland Figaro*, 5 February 1877, quoted in Fitzgerald, pp. 224-25. For an analysis of European attitudes to the Chinese and their perceived threat to the colony, see Evans (1988), pp. 254-318. For another letter that is easily as strident as the one penned by Palmerston, see “Outside Ideas.” *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1877, p. 5. However, there were also voices in favour of the Chinese, including; “The Chinese Question in a New Light.” *Brisbane Courier*, 8 September 1877, p. 3

convicts.¹¹⁷⁰ Not only did they believe the comparison with convict labour was apt; they also believed that this was the gravest issue to have arisen in Australia since the abolition of convict transportation in Western Australia in 1868.¹¹⁷¹

It is difficult to analyse this strong antipathy to the Chinese in Queensland using contemporary constructions of race and racism. What to us appears outright racism would not have been recognised as such by Queenslanders in the 1870s. While there was most certainly an element of racism, it would be simplistic to suggest this was the sole or even dominant factor.¹¹⁷² Rather it was a complex mix of racial superiority, patriotism,¹¹⁷³ a clash of civilizations, the right to determine what sort of country Queensland would become, social Darwinism,¹¹⁷⁴ and fear – the fear of disease,¹¹⁷⁵ fear of miscegenation,¹¹⁷⁶ fear of opium,¹¹⁷⁷ and, above all, fear of invasion.

¹¹⁶⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 31 March 1877, p. 4

¹¹⁷⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 April 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁷¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 May 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁷² One of the few admissions to racism at the time appeared in the *Brisbane Courier*, 23 November 1878. "Let us begin by candidly confessing that in our opposition to them there is something of sentiment and of prejudice too. We have not arrived at that sublime pitch of perfection, that total absence of partiality in which socially and industrially, we can like a Negro or Mongolian as well as we do men of European blood." (Quoted in Evans (1988), p. 235)

¹¹⁷³ Patriotism had a somewhat different meaning in the late nineteenth century than it does today. For a contemporaneous definition, see Edward Westermarck. *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*. 2nd Ed. London, MacMillan and Co., 1917, p. 167

¹¹⁷⁴ See Evans (1988), pp. 241-45

¹¹⁷⁵ Smallpox had recently been encountered aboard ships plying the China route, leading to a mandatory 16 day quarantine for these vessels.

¹¹⁷⁶ See Evans (1988), pp. 293-99. As the *Northern Miner* noted on 26 May 1877, "There is no affinity between them and men of the Caucasian race, and miscegenation of races so physically antagonistic must inevitably degrade the higher race." (Quoted in Evans (1988),

Queenslanders were resolute in their resolve to ensure that Northern Australia would not become another Hong Kong or Singapore, containing a servile class. They would do whatever it took to prevent what had happened in California from happening here.

Perhaps they are best regarded as having been British race patriots, precursors of the 'White Australia' policy of subsequent generations, buttressed by a pervasive fear of the 'Yellow Peril.' As a traveller to the Australian colonies from England observed, many colonists despite respecting and admiring the Chinese, feared their immigration would "prevent the rising Australian nationality"¹¹⁷⁸ and undermine wages.¹¹⁷⁹

The Thorn government had moved swiftly, introducing in 1876 the *Goldfields Act Amendment Act*, in order to restrict Chinese immigration through the imposition of a heavier licence fee to mine or to carry on a business on a Queensland goldfield.¹¹⁸⁰ Governor Cairns was concerned with the contents of this bill, for it appeared to be opposed to international comity, to be inconsistent with Britain's obligations under current Chinese treaties, and to be harsh and

p. 261)

¹¹⁷⁷ Douglas considered the scourge of opium to be "A terrible curse to a nation ... Worse even than whisky. Worse than gin or rum or brandy or any other spirits." (John Douglas to Robert Douglas, 19 May 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers.)

¹¹⁷⁸ Geoffrey Blainey, ed. *Greater Britain, Charles Dilke Visits her new Lands, 1866 & 1867*. Sydney, Methuen, 1986, p. 130

¹¹⁷⁹ As Windshuttle has remarked, this was seen as having the potential to create an "impoverished, racially segregated, social underclass." (Keith Windschuttle. "Racist Essay is From the Left, not the Right." *The Australian*, 29 September 2005, p. 12)

¹¹⁸⁰ Willard, p. 42

unjust to those Chinese in the colony who were British subjects.¹¹⁸¹

He referred it to the secretary of state for the colonies, the Earl of Carnarvon, who upheld Cairns's concerns. Nevertheless, by the time this correspondence had been received in the colony and made public, Thorn was no longer premier and it fell to Douglas to resolve the crisis.

Douglas had already taken practical steps to restrict Chinese immigration into the colony. As he later recounted:

Dear old Charley Mein¹¹⁸² and I had to bear the brunt of the first great Chinese invasion into Queensland. We tried legislation, but the Colonial Office would not have it. Then we had recourse to a ruse; we proclaimed the Chinese empire in quarantine, it was a sublime piece of cheek, and it was effective. At one time we had some thousand Chinamen in Queensland at Fitzroy Island.¹¹⁸³ O'Connell was acting governor at the time. He signed the proclamation¹¹⁸⁴ like a lamb, and that killed the

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid.; Robert Tan. *The Chinese Question in Queensland During the Nineteenth Century: A Brief History of Racial Conflict*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1958, pp. 107-8; Eric Rolls. *Sojourners: Flowers and the Wide Sea*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1992, p.207

¹¹⁸² Charles Stuart Mein was the postmaster general and leader of the government in the upper house at the time.

¹¹⁸³ Fitzroy Island, off Cairns, was used as a quarantine station for Chinese disembarking at Cooktown, the port of entry for the Palmer River goldfield. For more information on the Fitzroy Island quarantine station and the Chinese who were held there, see Dorothy Jones. *Trinity Phoenix: A History of Cairns*. Cairns, Cairns Post, pp. 92-93 and "Fitzroy Island." *Brisbane Courier*, 30 June 1877, p. 5

¹¹⁸⁴ This proclamation appeared in the *Government Gazette*, vol 20 no 52, 29 March 1877, p. 971, and gave the government the power to detain the ships *Kat* and *Brisbane* as well as any other vessel for quarantine purposes. The standard period in quarantine was 16 days.

invasion. It never got ahead again.¹¹⁸⁵

Carnarvon, unaware of Douglas's motives, duly replied to the Queensland governor expressing his reservations. He suggested that the Bill be modified to make it "less directly and exclusively aimed at the subjects of a friendly power," as well as "less calculated to injure British subjects of Asiatic or African origin."¹¹⁸⁶

Not surprisingly, the disallowance of this Act was met in the colony with a burst of indignation, for Queenslanders considered it an infringement of their powers of self-government. The *Brisbane Courier* urged that the government "should not quietly submit to the defeat which they have sustained."¹¹⁸⁷ Douglas needed no prompting, pointing out that Britain should recognise and uphold the power of the Queensland parliament to pass whatever laws it deemed necessary for the welfare of the colony, and that the only limit to its authority should be those imposed by Royal instructions to the governor.¹¹⁸⁸ Douglas was also upset that "the existence of international obligations between Great Britain and the Empire of China should be allowed to be a pretext for forcing upon us a

¹¹⁸⁵ John Douglas. "Thursday Island and the Japanese." Port Darwin, 5 June 1895. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales, Ad 39; "Japanese Invasion." *Bulletin*, 31 August 1895; Alfred Stephens. Diary. Fryer Library, University of Queensland, UQFL 2/2835, pp. 37-39; Douglas (1902), p. 47

¹¹⁸⁶ Willard, pp. 43-44; "Chinese Immigration." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1877, pp. 289-90.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 April 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁸⁸ Willard, p. 46; The Premier. "Address in Reply to the Opening Speech." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 23, 1877, p. 1

Chinese population against our wishes or interests.”¹¹⁸⁹

Douglas wrote to the premiers of the other Australian colonies as well as New Zealand, seeking their support and co-operation to preserve the rights of self-government, as the Queensland government understood them to be.¹¹⁹⁰ His “novel and exceptional” action was roundly supported.¹¹⁹¹ The following quote is a representative comment on colonial feelings towards the Chinese and their support for Douglas’s attempts to halt Chinese immigration:

The premier appears to have made up his mind to grapple forcibly with the Yellow Agony question, and he means to make assurance doubly sure by getting the co-operation of the other colonies in some decided action. The fact is, Mr. Douglas wants to tell our dear maternal relatives at home that we don’t want Chinkies, and that we won’t have them. We want Britons, and Germans and Scandinavians – good solid beef-eaters, and axemen, etc. So the Chows must go out, my Lord Carnarvon, and depend upon it Douglas knows the right string to pull.¹¹⁹²

Douglas’s two dispatches, one to the agent-general in London,¹¹⁹³ the other to the Australasian colonial chief secretaries, outlined, as he saw it, the colonies’ right to make their own decisions in this and

¹¹⁸⁹ Henry Hall. *Australia and England: A Study in Imperial Relations*. London, Longmans, 1934, p. 209

¹¹⁹⁰ John Douglas. “Chinese Immigration.” *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1877, vol 1, pp. 533-34. It was also reproduced in the *Brisbane Courier*, 8 May 1877, p. 3

¹¹⁹¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 May 1877, p. 2

¹¹⁹² “Topics on the Pavement.” *Brisbane Courier*, 12 May 1877, p. 3

other matters. As he noted:

We have been accustomed to consider our rights of self-government as second to no other rights which we possess as British subjects. We are not unjustly proud of the civilisation which has been established here by our energy. But we fear that both our rights and our civilisation may be compromised, and that our social and political systems may be imperilled, if on any plea whatever a Chinese immigration is forced upon us against our wishes and our interests.¹¹⁹⁴

While New Zealand declined to comment on the constitutional question involved, Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales all expressed their support for Douglas's position.¹¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, if the Queensland Government wished to have its anti-Chinese legislation enacted, then it would have to amend it, despite any objections held by it. Despite this, Douglas was loath to amend the Bill, believing that Queensland must be able to control its own destiny in this matter. Accordingly, he amended the Bill in the most minimalist way; replacing the term, "Asiatic and African aliens" with

¹¹⁹³ Colonial Office, CO 234/37, *Memo no 7403*, 19 June 1877, pp. 491-92

¹¹⁹⁴ John Douglas. "Chinese Immigration." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1877, vol 1, p. 534

¹¹⁹⁵ For a detailed account of what transpired, see Willard, pp. 47-50; Todd, pp. 187-91 & Rolls, pp. 207-8. For the Victorian response, see Graham Berry. "Further Correspondence Respecting "the Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill of 1876." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1877, vol 1, p. 537. For the South Australian position and response, see *Brisbane Courier*, 29 June 1877, p. 2 & Queensland State Archives COL/13, no. 3075, 4 June 1877. For the Tasmanian response, see Queensland State Archives COL/13, no. 2996, 28 May 1877. Western Australia was not consulted, as it was not yet a self-governing colony. For a contemporary analysis of the various colonies responses, see the *Brisbane Courier*, 25 August 1877, p. 4.

the less specific “any person.” The amended Bill was then passed by the Queensland parliament in June 1877.

The new Queensland governor, Sir Arthur Kennedy, was most surprised at how few changes had been made to the amended Bill, and was inclined to reserve it as well.¹¹⁹⁶ However, he was under considerable pressure. As Harding remarked, “It was a classic example of the governor’s duties as an imperial agent coming into conflict with the system of responsible government in the colonies.”¹¹⁹⁷ Attorney general Griffith applied further pressure to the hapless governor in July and August 1877, arguing that there was no legal objection to his assenting of the Bill.¹¹⁹⁸ Douglas, frustrated by Kennedy’s reluctance to assent to the Bill, threatened to resign and force the dissolution of parliament. Kennedy knew that an election fought over this issue would overwhelmingly vindicate the stance of Douglas and his ministry, and he therefore requested that the British government telegraph him explicit instructions to either assent or reserve the Bill.¹¹⁹⁹ Approval was swiftly granted, and Kennedy assented to the legislation on 27 August 1877.¹²⁰⁰

¹¹⁹⁶ Kennedy to Colonial Office, 6 June 1877, CO 234/37

¹¹⁹⁷ Harding (1997), p. 205

¹¹⁹⁸ Griffith, in his original objection to Governor Cairns reserving this bill the previous year, had asserted that, “the competency of the Queensland legislature to deal with the question appears to be one supported both by principle and precedent.” (Griffith to Cairns, *Colonial Office 234/36*, Despatch no. 80, enclosure no 2, pp. 291-95)

¹¹⁹⁹ Kennedy to Colonial Office, 11 August 1877, CO 234/37

¹²⁰⁰ Harding (1997), p. 205. Greenwood accurately summed up this episode as follows: “Assent to the Queensland *Gold Fields Amendment Act* of 1876 was withheld chiefly on the grounds that it injured, not only aliens, but British subjects of Chinese origin, and that it was inconsistent with the agreements between Britain and China under the Treaty of Tientsin

Douglas's actions over the anti-Chinese legislation were a watershed in the relationship between the Queensland government on the one hand and the governor and the British Colonial Office on the other. For the first time in its short history, the government had successfully prevented the governor's exercise of his independent discretion. In bowing to Douglas, the Colonial Office conceded that the governor's exercise of his personal discretion in accordance with British government instruction or policy was unable to prevail over a ministry determined to use its majority in parliament to force legislation through it.¹²⁰¹

Douglas was buoyed by this result, for Queensland had prevailed and the Chinese threat effectively addressed. Always a man of principle, he had forced the governor to place the interests of the colony above those of Britain. Douglas's transformation from a British aristocrat to a Queensland nationalist was now complete. The successful resolution of this thorny issue also demonstrated the power that Douglas wielded as premier. However, this power was now at its zenith, for in a couple of months he would be beset by a personal scandal, one from which he struggled to recover.

(1858) and the Convention of Peking (1860.) When the colony showed itself determined, however, a new bill was allowed to go through with verbal amendments which did not remove either objection." (Gordon Greenwood. *Australia: A Social and Political History*. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1977, p. 135)

¹²⁰¹ Harding (1997), pp. 205-6. The significance of this was recognised at the time, with the *Brisbane Courier* editorialising that the assent of the Bill; "is one of the most important in the history of parliamentary legislation in Queensland, or, indeed, in all the colonies ... [it] throws a new light on the relations of these colonies with the imperial government and establishes a precedent which may prove extremely valuable at a future time." (*Brisbane Courier*, 25

That was in the future. In the meantime, Douglas passed additional legislation further limiting Chinese immigration to the colony: *The Chinese Immigration Restriction Act*, which restricted the number of Chinese immigrants to one for every 10 tons of a ship's capacity, and imposed a £10 entrance tax on each Chinese arrival.¹²⁰² As a further incentive to encourage Chinese not to settle permanently in the colony, the tax was refunded if they left within three years of arrival and had committed no crimes or not caused the colony any expense through confinement in hospital or an asylum.¹²⁰³ The following year, the Act was amended further, to exclude Chinese from mining areas for the first three years after a discovery of gold there.¹²⁰⁴

These Acts restricting Chinese immigration were extremely popular and effective. Only 500 new Chinese arrived in the colony between mid 1877 and 1881.¹²⁰⁵ Thus the legislation enacted by the Douglas ministry effectively curbed Chinese immigration into Queensland from this point onwards. A brief perusal of the press for this period attests to the popularity of this measure. Queenslanders most certainly did not want the Chinese on their goldfields or in the colony and would have gone to great lengths to stop them. Nevertheless,

August 1877, p. 4 and also the *Brisbane Courier*, 2 November 1877, p. 2)

¹²⁰² Evans (1988), p. 268. This Bill was assented to before the *Goldfields Act Amendment*, making the latter superfluous.

¹²⁰³ Rolls, p. 210

¹²⁰⁴ Fitzgerald, p. 225. As a further disincentive, the status of a field as new could be further extended by proclamation, whenever the government desired. (Rolls, p. 210)

¹²⁰⁵ Willard, p. 51. For example, In Cooktown in the four months following the passing of the Act, only £20 was received, half of which was paid back. ("News of the Week." *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 29 December 1877, p. 308)

how did Douglas himself feel about the Chinese as people? Did he have any regrets in restricting their presence?

Douglas was a committed liberalist and respected the Chinese, considering them “industrious, frugal and law-abiding.”¹²⁰⁶ They were, he informed his fellow parliamentarians in 1876, “as intelligent as themselves.”¹²⁰⁷ He supported the appointment of a Chinese consul to Queensland,¹²⁰⁸ and regarded the respected Chinese Australian, Quong Tart, as a personal friend.¹²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Douglas believed that they were inappropriate as colonists:

They do not bring their women with them; or, if they do, the women who immigrate belong for the most part to an immoral class. They come and go, carrying back with them the proceeds of their industry.¹²¹⁰

Douglas was also concerned that an influx of Chinese could entirely supplant European labour, leading to a society that could “seriously affect and change the conditions upon which our political system is founded.”¹²¹¹ Douglas was in the fortunate position where his views as premier, the policy of his party, and the concerns of the Queensland electorate were largely in alignment. Furthermore, he

¹²⁰⁶ Ross Johnston (1988), pp. 291-92

¹²⁰⁷ John Douglas. “Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 20, 3 August 1876, p.381, cited in Evans (1988), p. 255

¹²⁰⁸ John Douglas to the Governor, 5 August 1878. Queensland State Archives, COL A/651, in correspondence no 02800 dated 12 March 1891. This support was in response to the Colonial Office seeking views on the desirability of appointing Chinese consuls to the British Empire.

¹²⁰⁹ John Douglas to Robert Douglas, 19 May 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹²¹⁰ Ross Johnston (1988), pp. 291-92

¹²¹¹ *Ibid.*

had achieved a historic victory over the imperial government, which was obliged to assent to his amended legislation even though it did not address its concerns. That New South Wales and Victoria supported his position was immensely gratifying to Douglas. Although he remained loyal to queen and empire, he now put Queensland first. Moreover, Douglas truly believed in the threat the Chinese posed to his beloved colony, as evidenced by this private communication to the New South Wales premier, Sir Henry Parkes:

The invasion which causes us the greatest anxiety at the present time is the Chinese inroad. It is a serious affair you will find. Sir Arthur Kennedy remains to be satisfied that the Queen's Government will not give way about it, and that they will insist upon Chinamen being placed on an equality with our own people. I think that they will not insist but in the meantime we are in a fix.¹²¹²

In halting continued Chinese immigration to Queensland, Douglas achieved what he believed was a good outcome for Queensland. He passionately believed in the superiority of British civilization, the primacy of British values, and the efficacy of British institutions, and refused to have them subordinated to what he considered an alien culture.¹²¹³ A strong believer in the British Empire, Douglas did what he could to ensure that Queensland remained in 'the family.'¹²¹⁴ For

¹²¹² Douglas to Parkes, 4 June 1877. *Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence* vol 11, A881, CY reel 33, pp. 122-26 & 141-44. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

¹²¹³ For more on the superiority of British civilization, see Walter Mills. *The Struggle for Existence*. Chicago, International School of Social Economy, 1904, p. 545 & Evans (1988), pp. 256-57

¹²¹⁴ As Douglas later remarked: "The right of parliament to legislate on a matter which so

once, his stubbornness and refusal to deviate from principle were assets and, faced with this refusal to budge, Kennedy and the Colonial Office had no alternative but to concede. Nevertheless, Douglas never saw this victory as a personal triumph. Rather, it was a victory for British values and for Queensland, a colony that would now remain white and European.¹²¹⁵

Pacific Islanders

There were other non-Europeans in Queensland whose presence was also generating concern. The importation of South Sea Islanders to the colony to work as indentured labourers, mainly in the sugar industry, had long been controversial.¹²¹⁶

In 1863, Captain Robert Towns first brought Pacific Islanders to Queensland as indentured coloured labourers.¹²¹⁷ Queensland, a nascent colony extending into the tropics, was considered ripe for development and exploitation, with plentiful land and a government keen to develop agriculture. However, it was generally believed at the time that outdoor work in the tropics could only be performed by non-white labour. There were numerous examples elsewhere in the

closely affected the future of the country was resolutely maintained, while, at the same time, the requirements of the imperial government were respected." (John Douglas. "To the Electors of Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 5 November 1878, p. 7)

¹²¹⁵ I am well aware of the contradiction inherent in this statement, given Queensland's large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, but at the time, they were considered to be in an entirely different category.

¹²¹⁶ South Sea Islanders were also known as Polynesians, and I will therefore use the term Pacific Islander to avoid confusion. The term Kanaka, which was also used, is now considered derogatory. The preferred contemporary term is Australian South Sea Islanders.

British Empire - such as Mauritius, Jamaica and British Guiana - where cotton and sugar were grown on plantations using non-white labour. Once sugar and cotton were shown to grow well in Queensland, the rush was on.¹²¹⁸

The growing demand for Pacific Islander labour led to their importation on a large scale, including the kidnapping or “blackbirding” men from the Pacific islands. While 67 Islanders arrived in 1863, in 1867 the number of arrivals was 1,237, and over 900 arrived in the first four months of 1868.¹²¹⁹ In that year the government attempted to regulate this trade through the *Polynesian Laborers Act*.¹²²⁰ However, this failed to halt the worst excesses, and following ongoing criticism from England and other Australian colonies, Queensland belatedly appointed government agents to supervise and regulate Island recruitment,¹²²¹ while the British government passed the *Pacific Islanders’ Protection Act* with the avowed object of preventing kidnapping.¹²²²

¹²¹⁷ Willard, pp. 138-39

¹²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135

¹²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141

¹²²⁰ This Act attempted to secure fair recruiting in the islands, adequate accommodation on the voyage, humane treatment in Queensland, and certainty of return. It also required that no Islanders could be introduced into the colony except under government licence. There had to be a certificate from a consul, missionary or other known person, in the island from which they came, to the effect that they had come voluntarily after thoroughly understanding the agreement. Nevertheless, the Act was inadequately enforced, thereby encouraging abuses. (Willard, pp. 145-47 & p.153)

¹²²¹ Willard, p. 137. Government agents were appointed in December 1870 to all vessels recruiting and returning Islanders to their homes.

¹²²² *Ibid.* For details of this Act, which was passed in 1872, see Willard, pp. 157-60.

Douglas strongly supported the Act. (Douglas to F. W. Chesson, 27 November 1872.)

Pastoralists also relied heavily on Pacific Islander labour and by the beginning of 1868 employed 697 of the 2,017 Islanders in the colony.¹²²³ In the 1860s and early 1870s, the pastoralists and planters who controlled the Queensland Parliament encouraged the importation of Pacific Islander labour, but opposition in parliament by the liberal side of politics to this traffic steadily increased. An editorial in the *Brisbane Courier* articulated the reasons why:

Queenslanders are, indeed, placed in a very unpleasant position by the maintenance of the Polynesian labor system at the present time. A considerable portion of the western world looks upon them as slaves, and persists in attaching to us the odium of being connected to a system of slavery, whilst we feel to our cost that the presence of the slaves is anything but beneficial to the majority of us, and is even a danger, as well as a pecuniary loss, to many of our people.¹²²⁴

Workers in the colony believed that Pacific Islander labourers, by accepting lower wages and inferior conditions, unfairly competed against them in the labour market.¹²²⁵ They demanded a halt to continued islander recruitment, in order to prevent a “partial displacement of the working classes of European descent by the substitution of an inferior race.”¹²²⁶ As well, there was also widespread concern, particularly in Douglas’s Maryborough

Aborigines Protection Society. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M2427, C133/15)

¹²²³ Willard, p. 141

¹²²⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 5 May 1877, p. 2

¹²²⁵ Willard, p. 161

¹²²⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 April 1877, p. 2

electorate, over sporadic 'rampages' and outbreaks of violence, leading to calls for all Pacific Islanders to be disarmed.¹²²⁷

In 1876 Thorn promised to restrict Pacific Islander immigration but lost power before introducing any legislation and it was left to Douglas to act. What were his feelings on this matter? As a man who espoused a liberal philosophy, Douglas had grave misgivings about the way Pacific Islanders were brought into the colony, their treatment, especially on pastoral properties in the interior of the colony and the obvious and odious comparisons to slavery, a practice that had been outlawed and abolished throughout the British Empire by 1840.¹²²⁸

His concerns were shared by many others in the colony, people who were deeply ambivalent about its value, and acutely aware of the iniquities of the system and the growing foreign disapproval of the trade.¹²²⁹

On coming to power, Douglas therefore moved quickly to restrict Pacific Islander immigration while protecting those Pacific Islanders already residing in the colony. In a government gazette notice, it was promulgated that henceforth,

¹²²⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 5 May 1877, p. 2

¹²²⁸ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 June 1877, p. 6; Douglas (1902), p. 46; John Douglas to Thomas Phillips, 26 December 1871, *Aborigines Protection Society*. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M2426, C39/103; F. W. Chesson. "The South-sea Island Slave Trade." *The Times*, 2 December 1871, p. 5

¹²²⁹ Douglas also had strong support within his party, for Griffith's objection to the South Sea Islander trade was easily as strong as his own. (Fitzgerald, p. 247)

no licences for the introduction of Polynesians will be granted to any persons except those engaged in tropical or semi-tropical agriculture, nor will any transfer of islanders to persons engaged in other occupations be permitted.¹²³⁰

In taking this action, Douglas acted in an unorthodox manner, for parliament had yet to reconvene.¹²³¹ Instead of waiting for the legislature to repeal or amend the *Polynesian Laborers Act*, he modified the Act's administration.¹²³² There was strong support for the way Douglas had acted, the *Brisbane Courier* noting that by his actions he had cut "the Gordian knot."¹²³³ Others were not as convinced of its efficacy, one commentator wryly observing: "this will smite the squatters hip and thigh, and will open the door for a little fancy farming."¹²³⁴

While Douglas was determined to halt all Pacific Islander immigration, there was widespread concern that the prohibition would lead to the imminent collapse of the colony's burgeoning sugar industry. The sugar plantation owners demanded the continued importation of Pacific Islander labour, albeit for their industry only,¹²³⁵ and the conservative opposition in parliament eagerly championed

¹²³⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 17 April 1877, p. 2

¹²³¹ Parliament reconvened on the 15 May 1877

¹²³² *Brisbane Courier*, 5 May 1877, p. 2

¹²³³ *Ibid.* As the paper noted, "when the interests of the colony required prompt and vigorous action, they have not hesitated to assume an unusual responsibility."

¹²³⁴ "From the Pavement." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 June 1877, p. 6

¹²³⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 18 June 1877, p. 2 & 20 June 1877, p. 5. Douglas made his position very clear, demanding in parliament that: "Polynesian labor should be done away with altogether."

their cause.¹²³⁶

Douglas and the 1877 parliament

Parliament reconvened on 15 May 1877.¹²³⁷ Before then, on 17 April 1877, Douglas resigned his Maryborough seat, for on being appointed as premier he had also taken on the position of vice-president of the executive council and was still the minister of lands.¹²³⁸ He immediately announced his intention to re-nominate for the seat, and his subsequent nomination, being the only one received, resulted in him being re-elected unopposed on 27 April 1877.¹²³⁹ Douglas's decisive actions in addressing the Chinese and Pacific Islander issues meant that by the time parliament opened it was widely considered that the new ministry would implement the previous Thorn ministry's program in an energetic and determined manner.¹²⁴⁰

This confidence was somewhat diminished when the ministry released its Treasury estimates the following month. Concern was

¹²³⁶ For a detailed account of the differing attitudes, including Douglas's, on this matter, see Patricia Mercer. *An Analysis of Racial Attitudes towards Melanesians Expressed in the Queensland Legislative Assembly and Newspapers, 1877-92*. BA Hons thesis. James Cook University, 1972, pp. 47-61

¹²³⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 14 May 1877, p. 2. Bernays incorrectly gives the date as 24 April. (Bernays, p. 79)

¹²³⁸ *Queensland Government Gazette Extraordinary*, vol 20 no 30, 8 March 1877; "The Acceptance of the Premiership by Mr. Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 20 April 1877, p. 3; "Topics of the Pavement." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 June 1877, p. 6

¹²³⁹ "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 April 1877, p. 5; Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 May 1877, p. 3. While members were forced to re-contest their seats on accepting offices of profit under the crown, it was usually a formality, with few ever being opposed.

¹²⁴⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 14 May 1877, p. 2

expressed over the increase in departmental expenditure for loans to pay for projects that were considered incapable of generating sufficient revenue to repay the outlay expended on them.¹²⁴¹

Moreover, the business community was concerned over Douglas's proposal to pay for ongoing railway construction by land sales along their routes,¹²⁴² preferring them to be paid for through loans.¹²⁴³

This led to the Douglas ministry being perceived in some quarters as incapable of administering the finances of the colony.¹²⁴⁴ Douglas ignored this disquiet and announced that all six proposed railway lines would go ahead.¹²⁴⁵ There was widespread support for this expenditure, although the *Brisbane Courier* fretted over whether Douglas had the "firmness to practice the economy in administration." As the paper presciently noted, if he did not, then "it will destroy his ministry and his reputation as a politician."¹²⁴⁶

The parliamentary session of 1877 was the longest parliamentary session in the colony so far, sitting for almost six months.¹²⁴⁷ While

¹²⁴¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 June 1877, p. 4

¹²⁴² *Ibid.*

¹²⁴³ *The Telegraph*, 5 November 1877, p. 2 & *Brisbane Courier*, 22 October 1877, p. 2. As the *Brisbane Courier* remarked, Douglas should "at once boldly ask for a loan for the full amount which will be required to secure the money while the times permit." The paper was sceptical that land sales could generate sufficient funds, within a reasonable time, to pay for the proposed railway constructions. (*Brisbane Courier*, 9 June 1877, p.4)

¹²⁴⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 June 1877, p.4

¹²⁴⁵ The cost was £720,000. For a detailed account see, *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past, Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men*, p. 148 & *The Telegraph*, 5 November 1877, p. 2

¹²⁴⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 August 1877, p. 2. See also *Brisbane Courier*, 20 August 1877, p. 2

¹²⁴⁷ *The Telegraph*, 5 November 1877, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 2 November 1877, p. 2.

However, the second session of 1867 had more actual sitting days, 89 compared with 80 in

Douglas had restricted Chinese immigration and innovatively funded the construction of railways, it was generally felt that the government's accomplishments were "not commensurate with the number or length of sittings."¹²⁴⁸ Much of the blame for this was laid at Douglas's feet,¹²⁴⁹ the *Telegraph* newspaper devastatingly observing that Douglas was simply too nice and too much of a gentleman to control his party and belittle the opposition.

The premier's gentlemanly courtesy, great patience and forbearance, and incessant efforts to conciliate individuals on the opposite side and retain supporters who were suspected of being slippery was carried to an excess which amounted to a serious blunder.¹²⁵⁰

Douglas possessed the requisite ambition, experience, knowledge and social standing to be a successful premier. Unfortunately, he lacked the ruthless ambition and desire to win at all costs by advocating his own agenda at the expense of all others; the admirable qualities that raised him to the premiership could not keep him there. He had "premier material, but not party calibre."¹²⁵¹ A

1877. (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1878, p. 346)

¹²⁴⁸ *Queensland 1900*, p. 148; *Brisbane Courier*, 2 November 1877, p. 2 and 8 September 1877, p. 6

¹²⁴⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 22 October 1877, p. 2

¹²⁵⁰ *The Telegraph*, 5 November 1877, p. 2. As Charles Buzacott, a leader writer for the *Brisbane Courier* observed; "Mr. Douglas, despite scholarship and long parliamentary experience, was not a success as leader of the house. There was little point in his speeches and it was often difficult to understand to which side of a question he leaned, until the vote came. He was so scrupulously anxious to do the right thing and avoid the wrong." (Quoted by Roger Joyce. *The Papers of R. B. Joyce (1928-1984)*, National Library of Australia, MS 7691, Box 105, chapter 5, p. 297)

¹²⁵¹ Mason, p. 162

different set of skills was required to hold power, and Douglas lacked them. Palmer and Macalister had them in abundance, but not Douglas. He was unable to disregard his convictions as Macalister did, or subscribe to views not sincerely or conscientiously held as Palmer did.¹²⁵² Douglas, in many ways, was the wrong man for the job.¹²⁵³ He did his best, governing according to his ideals and his principles, but it was not enough.

Despite this, the session was seen as a victory for Douglas and his government. As the *Brisbane Courier* remarked, any session which passed both ground-breaking legislation restricting Chinese entry to the colony and an innovative *Railway Reserves Bill* - legislation, "which will leave its mark on the Queensland of the future" - had to be considered a successful one.¹²⁵⁴

One day after the parliamentary recess, Douglas restructured his ministry, transferring Thorn from public works to the secretary for lands.¹²⁵⁵ Douglas vacated this post in order to take up the post of colonial secretary, which William Miles had left to succeed Thorn as secretary of public works.¹²⁵⁶ Thorn was thus relieved of the

¹²⁵² Ibid.

¹²⁵³ As Coote remarked on his expectations after Douglas ascended to the premiership; "I can readily suppose him to be courteous in manner; and imbued with a proper sense of the decorum due to his position, and I believe that whatever may be his inconsistencies, he will not be untruthful, in which he will furnish a strong contrast to some of his predecessors." (William Coote. "Our Leading Public Men. No. 1. The Hon. John Douglas." *The Week*, 19 May 1877, p. 616)

¹²⁵⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 2 November 1877, p. 2

¹²⁵⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 November 1877, p. 2

¹²⁵⁶ Governor Kennedy was pleased with this arrangement, especially with Douglas

responsibility for railway expenditure, the government believing him incapable of effectively and impartially managing the large expenditures involved.¹²⁵⁷ As the *Brisbane Courier* delicately put it, the problem with Thorn was “that he was not unlikely to be influenced by political motives in dealing with demands for the expenditure of public money.”¹²⁵⁸ These changes were favourably received and were widely seen as strengthening the ministry.¹²⁵⁹ On 6 February 1878 Thorn, in order to travel to England, resigned from his post and was succeeded by James Francis Garrick.¹²⁶⁰ Again, this replacement was seen as strengthening the government.¹²⁶¹

Douglas’s marriage

Douglas’s private life exploded into the spotlight towards the end of 1877, the details salaciously splayed across the broadsheets of the colony. This ‘scandal’ rocked the country and destroyed any hopes he may have entertained of a knighthood or governorship. Its importance here lies not only in demonstrating the kind of man Douglas was, but also in illustrating how the contemporary sources illuminated and informed social standards, mores, and behaviour of society in the Australian colonies to a degree that was rarely observable in the public domain. Victorian sensibilities and

becoming colonial secretary. (Kennedy to Colonial Office, 7 November 1877, CO 234/37)

¹²⁵⁷ *The Australasian*, 19 January 1878, p. 86

¹²⁵⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1877, p. 2

¹²⁵⁹ “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 5 December 1877, p. 3; *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1877, p. 2

¹²⁶⁰ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1899*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1900, p. 6

¹²⁶¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 5 February 1878, p. 2

defamation laws usually precluded the airing of high-class 'dirty linen' in public.¹²⁶²

The 'scandal' concerned Douglas's relationship with Sarah Hickey following the sudden death of his wife, Mary, on 23 November 1876. Cecilia Douglas, Sarah Hickey's daughter-in-law, wrote in her memoirs that Douglas, by this time a widower, first met Sarah when she was a governess on a station property somewhere in the colony.¹²⁶³ However, contemporary accounts suggest otherwise, that Sarah came to live in the Douglas household, probably as his housekeeper, on the recommendation of Sister Bridget Conlon of the All Hallows Convent in Brisbane.

Cecilia Douglas described Sarah as an Irish-Spaniard, black-eyed and black-haired, very good looking, tall, and possessed of a flashing smile. It was said that she held herself like a queen. But she could also be ruthless, hard as granite, fiery-tempered and utterly unpredictable.¹²⁶⁴ Moreover, when her temper was stoked by alcohol, as it all too frequently was in later years, rage and violence often resulted.

¹²⁶² An example of unacceptable conduct not being reported would be one of Douglas's political adversaries, Ratcliffe Pring, who was notorious for womanising. He was once forced to resign as attorney general after an editor for The *Telegraph*, "saw Mr. Pring on the top of a woman on board of a steamer up north, and told the then ministry of it and caused Mr. Pring to resign." This matter was never reported in the press. (William Pettigrew to Thomas McIlwraith, 1 July 1879. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/2)

¹²⁶³ Cecilia Douglas, p. 30

¹²⁶⁴ Ibid. Sarah once destroyed a letter from John's sister, "all for some trivial expression which did not please her." (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 9 October 1897. Douglas

Whenever and however they met, and in what capacity she came into his life - he the 48-year-old premier of Queensland, aristocrat, devout Anglican, widower in mourning for his beloved recently departed - she a beautiful, highly intelligent, fiery and headstrong 33-year-old Irish Catholic who had once intended to become a nun – it soon turned into something deeper and stronger. For by February 1877, barely two months after the death of Mary Douglas, Sarah was pregnant.

This of itself was perhaps not that unusual. Men in high places sometimes did have affairs and relationships and sired illegitimate children of those in their employ. Moreover, although the titillating details may have endlessly circulated about the colony fuelled by gossip and a pungent whiff of scandal, they were never officially acknowledged and certainly never recorded. As a contemporary wrote of the colonial press:

In all the papers, more or less, 'social columns' are available for those who wish to make public display of their frocks and entertainments, but the old-fashioned lover of domestic privacy may count on being left alone.¹²⁶⁵

However, the circumstances surrounding Sarah were most unusual. To understand just how unusual this was, it is worth exploring the influence of class, religion and social standing in the Australian

Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(a)/16)

¹²⁶⁵ Ada Cambridge. *Thirty Years in Australia*. Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1989, p. 250

colonies. Far from being an egalitarian society, class distinctions and divisions were alive and well in Queensland. People knew their 'place' in society, with those from a higher class rarely fraternising with those below them.¹²⁶⁶ Charles Dilke, who visited Australia around 1867, recalled how

a government clerk in one of the colonies told me that the last three ministers at the head of his department had been so low in the social scale, that my wife could not visit theirs.¹²⁶⁷

Thorvald Weitemeyer, a Danish emigrant and a carpenter, described his experiences in Brisbane in the late 1870s, noting; "the greatest possible social distinction between such people as, say a bank clerk, or even a grocer's clerk, and a tradesmen or a labourer; so it is between a music-teacher, shopgirl, dressmaker or a servant."¹²⁶⁸ He also observed how the life of a servant in Brisbane was far from pleasant, for they were overworked, used by their employers as "a coat-of-arms wherewith to set themselves off," and treated as "slaves and fools."¹²⁶⁹ There was little intermingling or marriage between working and middle classes, and even less between the working

¹²⁶⁶ As Rachel Henning observed after emigrating to Queensland from England; "It is curious that in these republican countries where 'Jack is as good as his master,' and much better in his own estimation, there is a much wider gap between class and class than there is in England." (Quoted in Michael Cannon. *Life in the Country. Australia in the Victorian Age*, vol 2. Melbourne, Nelson, 1973, p. 153)

¹²⁶⁷ Blainey (1986), p. 115

¹²⁶⁸ Thorvald Peter Ludwig Weitemeyer. *Missing Friends: Being the Adventures of a Danish Emigrant in Queensland (1871-1880.)* London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1908, pp. 272-73

¹²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 272

classes and the nobility and gentry.¹²⁷⁰

As a station governess, Sarah would have inhabited an entirely different social order and class than that of a servant. Governesses most sought after were those who had been teachers in Britain, and these included Sarah. In addition, many governesses married lesser squatters.¹²⁷¹ However, at the time of her employment in the Douglas household, Sarah was not a teacher or a governess, but a housekeeper.

Douglas, having commenced a relationship with his housekeeper that resulted in her becoming pregnant, would have been keenly aware of the choices facing him, and the implications flowing from whatever course of action he took. He could banish Sarah, as was the usual practice for men in these situations, or he could marry her and face the consequences. Douglas was a man who held true to his principles and followed his conscience, and his actions in this matter were no different. Ever the gentleman, he acted honourably and did what few in his position did. On 30 July 1877, James Quinn, the Catholic Bishop of Brisbane, married John Douglas and Sarah Hickey in a private wedding ceremony.¹²⁷²

Moreover, John Douglas did not marry Sarah Hickey primarily out of duty or pity, or even because his principles and conscience told him it

¹²⁷⁰ Cannon, p. 242

¹²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190

¹²⁷² James Quinn (1819-81) was the Roman Catholic Bishop of Queensland and Brisbane from 1859 until his death. He married the couple at his residence, 'Dara,' in Fortitude Valley,

was the right thing to do. They married because they loved each other. They may have come from different religions, social strata and backgrounds, but these could be overcome. Nor was their adherence to different faiths an insurmountable barrier. Although he was a devout Anglican and she a fervent Catholic, Douglas had been for many years a High Anglican parishioner,¹²⁷³ and was no sectarian.¹²⁷⁴ Class and social status concerns could also be rationalised away. Born and raised an aristocrat, he had a lifelong belief in liberalism and the goodness of his fellow man. She, for her part, was an Irish nationalist who had no time for the English ruling classes.¹²⁷⁵ Not only was she beautiful, but judging by her extant letters and the observations of those who knew her, also his intellectual equal.¹²⁷⁶

That both sides compromised is without question. What Sarah thought of his freemasonry can only be guessed at,¹²⁷⁷ while he

Brisbane.

¹²⁷³ All Saints Church, Wickham Terrace, Brisbane, where Douglas worshipped for many years, was described as “a leading centre of the Catholic revival within the Anglican church.” (www2.eis.net.au/~domusmea/01_about/about.htm)

¹²⁷⁴ As Douglas once remarked, “he did not pretend to be a strong secularist, but he was strongly unsectarian.” (Mr. Douglas. “Orphanages Bill.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 29, 1879, p. 776)

¹²⁷⁵ See Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 8 September 1894. McCourt Papers. Some excerpts from this letter illustrate her attitude in this regard: “I always say the Irish are the finest people in the world,” and, “There is not a man in a public position in Queensland but has come from the people, made his own position, and they are generally the best men ... I don’t want you to fall back on the Douglas prestige unless you fall back on the good Lord James who fought with Bruce.”

¹²⁷⁶ Personal conversation with Sybil Douglas, Brisbane, November 2000.

¹²⁷⁷ A committed mason, Douglas became, on 6 January 1879, the Queensland Provincial Grand Master of the Scottish Constitution. (*Pugh’s Almanac*, 1879, p.159.) It is not

knew that she would be considered unacceptable, for 'behaviour mattered' in the social circles in which he frequented.¹²⁷⁸ Perhaps they believed love would conquer all, but the reality was that over time these compromises became harder to manage, tearing at the ties that bound their marriage and resulting in sadness, bitterness, anger and ultimately separation.

Their first son, Edward Archibald Douglas, was born on 2 November 1877 and baptised a Catholic.¹²⁷⁹ The marriage, being a private ceremony, was not reported in the press. Neither was Edward's birth. However, Bishop Quinn failed to register the marriage and he was subsequently prosecuted, this being an offence under the *Marriage Act* of 1864. Quinn was fined £10 after pleading guilty.¹²⁸⁰ The conviction was significant in that the press could now publish the details if it so wished. Even so, it would have taken a bold and brave newspaper editor to print what would have been considered by many unprintable.¹²⁸¹ The main opposition paper, the *Telegraph*, quick to seize any opportunity to discredit Douglas and his ministry, took up the challenge.¹²⁸² An article appeared that same evening, presenting

surprising that he clung to his freemasonry, for being a mason was considered *de rigour* for many successful politicians in colonial Australia.

¹²⁷⁸ Beverley Kingston. *The Oxford History of Australia, vol 3, 1860-1900: Glad, Confident Morning*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 287. For an example of how Sarah's unsuitability compromised Douglas's career, see the *Telegraph*, 29 March 1879.

¹²⁷⁹ Cecilia Douglas, p. 31. Edward was baptised on 16 January 1878.

¹²⁸⁰ Deposition and Minute Book, Police Court, Brisbane, CPS1/AW27, 20 December 1877, p. 474. Queensland State Archives, PRV 6316

¹²⁸¹ For an interesting discussion on this matter from a contemporary perspective, see the editorial in the *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 26 December 1877, p. 2

¹²⁸² The *Telegraph*, 20 December 1877, p. 2. It then appeared in the *Week*, the weekly

the bald facts but eschewing additional detail or comment.¹²⁸³

Nevertheless, the story was out, presenting a unique opportunity for the colonial press to report, comment and editorialise on something that was rarely, if ever, written about.

The news was scandalous on several levels. Sarah was an Irish Catholic. She was pregnant with his child at the time of the marriage, and not only was she from a lower social class, but Douglas had employed her in a domestic capacity. Any one of these factors was enough for her to be judged utterly unsuitable to be his wife, and so news of the union was received with a mixture of astonishment and disbelief. Given that Douglas was the incumbent premier of Queensland, it is hardly surprising, considering the social standards and mores of late Victorian society, that when details of the marriage were made public, it was so fervently discussed.

In analysing public reaction to the marriage, one also needs to take into account the esteem and affection still held for Douglas's recently departed first wife Mary. As one paper eloquently stated following her death:

The name of Mrs. Douglas has become quite a household word in the mouths of the people of Brisbane. The deceased lady has been more or less connected with every charitable institution in the city. She initiated the Diamantina Orphanage and was very prominent in

edition of the *Telegraph*, on 22 December 1877, p. 776.

¹²⁸³The full notice is reproduced in Appendix 4.

the organisation of the servant's home and other kindred institutions in this locality.¹²⁸⁴

If Sarah had married John a couple of years after Mary's death, then the union may have been more palatable to the public. However, Mary was 'not even cold in her grave' when Sarah fell pregnant.

Other papers followed the *Telegraph's* lead, albeit somewhat tentatively.¹²⁸⁵ An illustrative example of how the press handled the delicate sensitivities involved is provided by the *Rockhampton Bulletin*. It first ran an article the day after the court case, merely reporting, "Bishop O'Quinn was fined £10 and costs in the police court to-day for neglecting to register a marriage in accordance with law,"¹²⁸⁶ with no mention being made as to whose marriage it was.¹²⁸⁷ However, five days later it reprinted the *Telegraph* article verbatim, under the headline "The Premier's Marriage," with an accompanying article outlining its reasons for publishing, as "In regard to the public actions of public men, we have always held that the truth should be told impugn it whoso list."¹²⁸⁸ The following week the paper finally editorialised on the matter:

¹²⁸⁴ *Warwick Argus*, 30 November 1876, p. 2

¹²⁸⁵ See *Bundaberg and Mount Perry Mail*, 28 December 1877, p. 2; "Latest Telegrams." *Cooktown Courier*, 22 December 1877; *Townsville Herald*, 22 December 1877, p. 2

¹²⁸⁶ *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 21 December 1877, p. 2.

¹²⁸⁷ Papers in Sydney and Melbourne also took this course of action. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 December 1877, p. 5; *The Age*, 21 December 1877, p. 3; *The Argus*, 21 December 1877, p. 5)

¹²⁸⁸ *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 26 December 1877, pp. 2 & 3. The *Argus* in Melbourne also provided more detail in a subsequent article, mentioning Douglas by name, and stating that the "prosecution had been instituted by the registrar-general." (*The Argus*, 22 December 1877, p. 5.) The *Cooktown Courier* went so far as to provide Sarah's maiden name. ("Latest

The fact of the premier's private marriage on 30th July last was made public last week through the prosecution of the officiating minister – the Right Rev. Dr. Quinn – for breach of the law in neglecting to register the marriage, which, it has also transpired, has already proved fruitful. The transaction has given rise to endless gossip throughout the colony.¹²⁸⁹

Several newspapers, mainly those aligned with the liberal side of politics, remained defiantly and determinedly mute. The *Brisbane Courier* never once mentioned, reported on, or editorialised about the marriage and the scandal enveloping it and the government. Despite this, the paper reported on the other cases that took place in the same court on the same day. Other papers, including the *Queenslander* (the weekly edition of the *Brisbane Courier*), and the *Patriot* declined to print the details.¹²⁹⁰ Other reportage was supportive and sympathetic, with a correspondent in the *Queensland Times* observing that:

The Premier has been having a rough time of it lately in the papers one way and another. His private and public

Telegrams." *Cooktown Courier*, 22 December 1877)

¹²⁸⁹ "The Month." *Morning Bulletin*, 3 January 1878, p. 2. (The paper changed its name from the *Rockhampton Bulletin* to the *Morning Bulletin* on 2 January 1878 [William Ross Johnston and Margaret Zerner. *A Guide to the History of Queensland*. Brisbane, Library Board of Queensland p. 14].) These comments were roundly condemned by the *Wide Bay News*, which classed the *Bulletin* as among the "carrion crows of the opposition who gloat over the thought that the premier has committed a *faux pas*." (*Rockhampton Bulletin*, 8 January 1878, p. 2)

¹²⁹⁰ *Rockhampton Bulletin*, 26 December 1877, p. 2. Of the major published newspapers in Brisbane at the time, three government-aligned papers refused to publish the details, while two opposition papers went ahead and printed the story.

affairs are both made public property.¹²⁹¹

The *Cooktown Courier* aptly summed up the prevailing mood:

Why Mr Douglas got married the way he did, is, I fancy,
his business – although of course the fact is made the
foundation for a pretty superstructure of yarns, and it has
set the tongues of all the old women of both sexes
wagging furiously.¹²⁹²

The *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, a Brisbane Protestant paper, ignored Douglas, attacked the press for inaccurate reporting, and comprehensively condemned the Catholic bishop who married them.¹²⁹³ The paper asserted that the marriage certificate, rather than being sent in a day late as claimed in court, had not been sent at all.

An untruth was at somebody's instigation deliberately
uttered in a police court to palliate an offence to which
the bishop of the Roman Catholic Church had pleaded
guilty.¹²⁹⁴

Why was Bishop Quinn prosecuted, and why was it subsequently reported in the colonial press? Although the relevant official records have not survived, a contemporary Catholic paper, *The Australasian*, detailed what it considered were the reasons for pursuing the bishop.

¹²⁹¹ "Metropolitan Jottings." *Queensland Times*, 31 January 1878

¹²⁹² "Brisbane." *Cooktown Courier*, 9 January 1878, p. 3

¹²⁹³ This condemnation of Bishop Quinn was in keeping with the paper's aims "to lift parochial prejudices to the high plane of the international conflict between Catholicism and protestant Liberalism." (*Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 10 June 1875, quoted in Gilley, p. 108)

¹²⁹⁴ *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 29 December 1877, p. 304

The registrar-general is an ultra-Protestant of the aggressive type, a shining light at tea fights and so forth.¹²⁹⁵ Consequently his soul lusted to get at the R. C. bishop, and Mr. Douglas being far away (although telegraphed after) at Thursday Island, he wrote demands for explanation to the ecclesiastic, who took no further notice than sending his chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Cani, to explain. The Registrar-General, however, longed to see the proud prelate humiliate himself and bow down before him, and the end was that the Right Rev. Dr. Quinn, Roman Catholic Bishop of Brisbane, was ignominiously summoned to appear at the Brisbane Police Court for neglect to register, and by that lofty tribunal was fined £10.¹²⁹⁶

It is difficult, well over a century later, to determine the veracity of this attack against the registrar-general, Henry Jordan. There is no extant evidence to indicate any animosity or antipathy towards Douglas. Both served their country in London, where they vigorously promoted immigration to the colony, both strongly opposed the South Sea Islander labour trade, and both men aligned themselves with the liberal side of politics during their long parliamentary careers.

However, the religious accusations against Jordan are more

¹²⁹⁵ The registrar-general was Henry Jordan, a dentist, Wesleyan and the father of 11 children. He was Queensland's first emigration agent in London, and a member of parliament (1860, 1868-71, 1873 & 1874), before his appointment to the registrar-general post in 1875.

¹²⁹⁶ *The Australasian*, 19 January 1878, p. 86. The prosecutor for the registrar-general's office was Ratcliffe Pring, a long time political adversary of Douglas. ("Bishop O'Quinn fined." *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 22 December 1877, p. 295)

convincing, for he was a devout Methodist.¹²⁹⁷ The son of a Wesleyan minister, he was sent by the Wesleyan Missionary Society to South Australia, where he performed missionary duties at the Mission for Aboriginals at Mount Barker before moving to Queensland.¹²⁹⁸ Moreover, he had clashed with Bishop Quinn before. As the Queensland immigration officer in London from 1861, Jordan was responsible for encouraging immigrants, a task he energetically pursued.

Quinn believed the government's immigration policies discriminated against the Irish, and so he took the unusual step of setting up his own Irish immigration scheme, founding the Queensland Immigration Society in 1862.¹²⁹⁹ From 1862-65, when the scheme ended, some 4,000 Irish Catholics entered the colony under the auspices of Quinn's society.¹³⁰⁰ Quinn's sponsored migration, while receiving the co-operation of the Queensland government, eventually ceased following strong opposition in the colony, especially from the press and Protestant sects,¹³⁰¹ with one Baptist minister attacking the scheme as a "plan to bring £4,000 worth of Roman Catholic wives to

¹²⁹⁷ As Spencer Browne described Jordan's faith, "without being particularly narrow he was of the Puritan type." (*Browne* (1927), p. 165)

¹²⁹⁸ Alan Arthur Morrison. "Henry Jordan." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 4. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1972, p. 491

¹²⁹⁹ Patrick O'Farrell. *The Irish in Australia*. Sydney, New South Wales University Press, 1986, p. 107

¹³⁰⁰ Fitzgerald, p. 127. For information on Irish settlers in Queensland and the abject poverty they fled from, see, P. F. Connole. *The Christian Brothers in Secondary Education, 1875-1965*. MA thesis. University of Queensland, 1965, pp. 40-41

¹³⁰¹ Fitzgerald, p. 127; O'Farrell (1986), p. 107. The press opposition was from the *Brisbane Courier* and its rival, the *Guardian*

Queensland.”¹³⁰² Nowhere was the opposition stronger than from Jordan, who not only opposed all private migration organisations, but also objected to the government’s approval of Quinn’s society.

Jordan argued that as agent for the colony he should supervise all immigration arrangements, and claimed that Quinn’s scheme would open the door to all the worst characteristics of “bounty migration and pauper traffic.”¹³⁰³

The *Australasian* also commented on why the *Telegraph* had printed the news of Quinn’s conviction for failing to register Douglas’s marriage in time. It contended that one of the directors of the *Telegraph*, a grocer, had recently lost a contract for supplies to the Woogaroo Lunatic Asylum in Brisbane to a Catholic competitor and believed that this was due to “irregular pressure by ‘the clergy’” on Douglas owing to the “existing peculiarly intimate relations.” The director then allegedly pressured the *Telegraph* editor “to publish facts damaging to the Premier, in order to avenge the grocer’s grudge against that most unfortunate gentleman.”¹³⁰⁴

Again, while it is impossible to confirm this colourful scenario, the truth was probably less dramatic, for the *Telegraph*, being a supporter of the parliamentary opposition, in all likelihood printed the story in order to embarrass Douglas and his government.

¹³⁰² Keith Rayner. *The Attitude and Influence of the Churches in Queensland on Matters of Social and Political Importance*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1951, p. 81

¹³⁰³ T. P. Boland and O. K. Oxenham. “The Queensland Immigration Society: A Notable Experiment in Irish Settlement.” *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol 7 no 2, 1963-64, p. 319

While sectarianism is a theme intertwined throughout Australia's nineteenth century history, it was less prevalent in Queensland than the other Australian colonies during this period, because Catholics in Queensland had a stronger sense of involvement in colonial growth and progress than elsewhere. They were also more integrated into the colony's social fabric, due mainly to Queensland lacking the entrenched and dominant Protestant ascendancy of the other colonies.¹³⁰⁵ However, the corollary to this state of affairs was that it could have made Protestants even more concerned about the role and influence of Catholics in the colony. The fact that Douglas was a High Anglican may have exacerbated the concerns of Low Church Anglicans and Protestants.

Whatever its motives for publishing the news of Bishop Quinn's conviction over failing to register Douglas's marriage in time, the *Telegraph* felt compelled to justify its actions in some detail, maintaining that while it had "no taste for prying into the affairs of public men," it had no choice, for this case "is likely to have public consequences."¹³⁰⁶ These "public consequences" had the greatest impact on Douglas, his standing within the government he led, and the public he served. For once, friend and foe agreed that the scandal would adversely affect not only Douglas's own career but also that of his government.

¹³⁰⁴ *The Australasian*, 19 January 1878, p. 86

¹³⁰⁵ Patrick O'Farrell. *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia: A History*. Melbourne, Thomas Nelson, 1977, pp. 130-32

¹³⁰⁶ *The Telegraph*, 22 January 1878, p. 2. For an attack on *The Telegraph's* stance, see

The *Telegraph* noted that he “had seriously impaired his position in the country,” having “alienated many of his friends, and given his enemies the opportunity they needed” to make political capital out of his “matrimonial eccentricities.”¹³⁰⁷ It concluded that it was up to Douglas himself to consider “how far his position is affected.”¹³⁰⁸

Even the normally sympathetic *Wide Bay News* contended that Douglas had committed a *faux pas*,¹³⁰⁹ while the *Australasian* ruefully conceded that Douglas had made “a monumental mistake which has alienated shallow friends and distressed true friends beyond measure.”¹³¹⁰

Nevertheless, despite these dire predictions, it was only a temporary setback for Douglas and his government. It was true that in an era when one’s personal morality and social standing in the community were of paramount importance, Douglas’s had tarnished his reputation, for until this episode was made public, he had been considered a man of “unblemished private character and high social standing.”¹³¹¹ Fortunately, for him, the parliamentary recess until 23 April 1878 provided sufficient time to ameliorate “the shock now

The *Queensland Times*, 31 January 1878

¹³⁰⁷ The *Telegraph*, 22 January 1878, p. 2

¹³⁰⁸ Ibid. The *Queensland Patriot* took this comment as a call for Douglas to resign, and suggested that the *Telegraph* editor was using this as a cynical opportunity “to give his new friends on the squatting side of the house a lift towards power.” (*Queensland Patriot*, 24 January 1878, p. 2)

¹³⁰⁹ *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*, 8 January 1878, p. 2

¹³¹⁰ *Australasian* 19 January 1878, p. 86

¹³¹¹ Ibid.

given to the public mind.”¹³¹² Douglas, for his part, firmly believed he had done no wrong, and resolutely continued as premier.

No minister dared depose him, because, with the exception of Griffith, they were too inexperienced and lacked sufficient support from their colleagues. Griffith, ambitious though he was, was forced to bide his time, as the toppling of Douglas would have led to not only the fall of the ministry but also a probable change of government,¹³¹³ for the government was coming under pressure from many quarters during the long recess.

It lost a valuable vote when the seat of Brisbane changed hands during the parliamentary break.¹³¹⁴ Some government supporters in the parliament disapproved of the workings of Douglas’s 1876 *Land Act*; others were dissatisfied with the way railway policy was being implemented; while one was annoyed by the manner in which Pacific Islander trade was regulated. However, they were not sufficiently disaffected to join the opposition, and continued to support it on the major issues before the parliament.¹³¹⁵

The government was still considered too strong for the opposition, which was unable to capitalise on the controversy surrounding Douglas’s marriage and the disaffection among some of his

¹³¹² *The Telegraph*, 22 January 1878, p. 2

¹³¹³ *Brisbane Courier*, 15 January 1878, p. 3. It was also rumoured that Griffith would leave parliament to take a seat on the judiciary.

¹³¹⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 20 March 1878, p. 2. Ratcliffe Pring replaced Robert Stewart in a by-election on 12 February 1878

¹³¹⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 20 March 1878, p. 2

parliamentary supporters. This was due mainly to its own state of chronic disorganisation, with its leader, Palmer, frequently hinting at resigning, which he finally confirmed when parliament resumed.¹³¹⁶ Palmer's resignation was considered a blow to opposition prospects,¹³¹⁷ despite his being replaced by Thomas McIlwraith, who was universally considered to be a born leader with a commanding personality, a man of grand ideas and unbridled ambition and who would prove himself to be determined, autocratic, energetic and shrewd.¹³¹⁸

Thus by the time parliament reconvened, the scandal had petered out and the government suffered no lasting damage. Douglas had weathered the close public examination of his private life, albeit at some cost, because his new wife was considered unpresentable. For example, at the governor's levee in 1878, attended by 600 selected men and women to celebrate Queen Victoria's 59th birthday, Douglas and his wife were conspicuous by their absence.¹³¹⁹

Douglas was relieved when Palmer, the archconservative leader of the 'squattocracy,' retired,¹³²⁰ for he preferred McIlwraith, a lapsed

¹³¹⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 April 1878, p. 2. Parliament resumed on 24 April 1878

¹³¹⁷ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 20 April 1878, p. 6

¹³¹⁸ Wilson (1938), p. 74; *Brisbane Courier* 25 April 1878, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 25 April 1878, p. 2; Waterson (1978), p. 126; John Vockler. Sir Samuel Walker Griffith. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1953, p. 102; Alfred Deakin. *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause, 1880-1900*. J. A. La Nauze, ed. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1963, p. 11

¹³¹⁹ "The Queen's Birthday." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 May 1878, p. 5

¹³²⁰ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 26 March 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(B)/6; "Mr. Douglas at the Victoria Hall." *Brisbane*

liberal who he respected and believed he could work with. Douglas expressed his pleasure at McIlwraith becoming the leader of the opposition, while McIlwraith intimated that he would offer the government “every possible assistance” while discouraging “factious obstruction.”¹³²¹

Having survived the scandal of his marriage, Douglas now faced the new parliamentary session with renewed optimism and vigour. He had outlasted his old adversary, Arthur Palmer, and in Thomas McIlwraith now had a more congenial opponent.

However, within a year Douglas would no longer be premier, his party having been trounced at the polls. The following chapter charts the events leading to the general election of 1878, the reasons for his government’s defeat, and assesses the successes and failures of his two-year premiership.

Courier, 24 October 1871, p. 2

¹³²¹ “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 18 May 1878, p. 6

Chapter 14: The Premiership, 1877-79 (Part 2)

Travel to Torres Strait

Douglas was hard at work during the parliamentary recess. On 8 November 1877, five days after the birth of his son Edward, he travelled by steamer to Somerset and Torres Strait¹³²² to ascertain, now that a settlement on Thursday Island had been established, whether the government should continue with Somerset as an administrative centre.¹³²³ Douglas had always taken an interest in Torres Strait. He later remarked that he regarded himself as “the founder and originator of this settlement,” for it was while he was postmaster-general that the Torres Strait mail service first commenced,¹³²⁴ and it was also due to his efforts that the settlement

¹³²² During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the region was known as Torres Straits, but for the sake of clarity, I have used the contemporary spelling.

¹³²³ *Brisbane Courier*, 7 November 1877, p. 2; “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 5 December 1877, p. 3. For a detailed account of Douglas’s trip, see “Our Northern Outposts.” *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1877, p. 6. It was reproduced in Peter Prideaux. *From Spear to Pearl-Shell; Somerset, Cape York Peninsula, 1864–1877*. Brisbane, Boolarong Publications, 1988, pp. 159-64. Douglas’s trip directly led to the abandonment of Somerset as an administrative centre.

¹³²⁴ John Douglas to the Home Secretary, 24 January 1902. Queensland State Archives, Hom/A39; Douglas (1902), p. 45; Douglas (1900A), p. 10. The mail service commenced when the steamer *Souchays* departed Brisbane in January 1866. However only two voyages were undertaken to Batavia to connect with the British India Line mail steamers there, as the service was considered too slow. (Ian Nicholson. *Via Torres Strait: A Maritime History of the Torres Strait Route and the Ships’ Post Office at Booby Island*. Nambour, Queensland, Roebuck, 1996, p. 238; James Turnbull. *The Postal History and Postal Markings of Thursday Island*. Melbourne, The Royal Philatelic Society of Victoria, 1990, p. 9.) Turnbull incorrectly referred to the *Souchays* as the *Souchaya*.

at Thursday Island had been established earlier in the year.¹³²⁵

Douglas was much taken with Thursday Island. He found the view from the resident magistrate's house of the surrounding islands to be "very charming," while the house itself, built on a "commanding knoll about fifty-feet above high water ... has a very pleasing appearance, with its trim flagstaff and terraced slopes."¹³²⁶ Little would he know that in a few years' time this house would become his home for almost 20 years.

Also travelling around the colony were the treasurer, James Dickson, and the postmaster general, Charlie Mein. On 18 November 1877, they arrived at Salisbury, informing the large crowd assembled there that it had now been proclaimed a sub-port and henceforth would be known as Port Douglas, in honour of the premier. The announcement was "well received."¹³²⁷

Visit to Maryborough

On 20 March 1878, Douglas accompanied the governor on a visit to Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Rockhampton. They arrived at

¹³²⁵ John Douglas to the Home Secretary, 24 January 1902. Queensland State Archives, Hom/A39; "Thursday Island. Interview with the British Resident." The *British Australasian*, 12 June 1902, p. 1005. The settlement at Thursday Island officially commenced on 19 July 1877, with Henry Marjoribanks Chester, the police magistrate at Somerset, appointed to the same position on Thursday Island. Chester had moved to the island by September 1877.

¹³²⁶ Prideaux, p. 161

¹³²⁷ "Port Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 8 December 1877, p. 3. Douglas first visited the town on 2 December 1877, on his return from Torres Strait. (*Brisbane Courier*, 4 December 1877, p. 2)

Maryborough on 21 March, where a salute was fired from guns in the botanic gardens.¹³²⁸ The previous year, Douglas and Chester, while on Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait, came across one of these guns. It was an old one-pounder brass cannon found buried on the beach. Douglas had the cannon cleaned and sent to Brisbane, where it was extensively restored. Douglas had the cannon mounted and presented as a Christmas gift to the people of Maryborough,¹³²⁹ for use as a time gun, in response to criticism that the town had no clock. The *Cooktown Courier* was unimpressed with this largesse.

Is it true that Douglas found the time gun which he has presented to Maryborough up at Thursday Island? If so it is another case of robbing the north to satisfy the cravings of the 'cormorant' south. Demand again the Flagstaff Hill.¹³³⁰

On 23 March, Governor Kennedy turned the first sod of the Maryborough-to-Gympie railway.¹³³¹ Douglas received a warm welcome in Maryborough because, with the notable exception of

¹³²⁸ "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 22 March 1878, p. 2

¹³²⁹ Tony Matthews. *River of Dreams: A History of Maryborough and District*, vol 2. Maryborough, Maryborough City Council, 1995, p. 571; *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 22 December 1877, p. 296; *Maryborough Chronicle*, 29 January 1878; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 30 June 1899. OM 89-3/b/2/(c)/11. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

¹³³⁰ "Brisbane." *Cooktown Courier*, 9 January 1878, p. 2. Flagstaff Hill overlooks Cooktown, and the town wanted a time gun of its own located there.

¹³³¹ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 March 1878; "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 March 1878, p. 2. Among the assembled throng were 300 Aborigines, who regaled Douglas with "For he's a jolly good fellow."

employers of South Sea Islander labour, he was considered to have done “common justice” to Maryborough, which, before his election as its local member, was widely believed to have been “systematically held back and defrauded of its rights.”¹³³² The reason for this warmth and generosity lay in Douglas approving the railway from Gympie to Maryborough.¹³³³

Pacific Islanders

Many South Sea Islanders were employed in the Maryborough district. Douglas was well-known for his opposition to the way they were recruited and employed and was forced to defend his actions to the district’s sugar planters, who were the major employers of indentured South Sea Islander labour, and also to the islanders themselves. Both groups were upset over a government decision, issued via proclamation, to prohibit the exportation of arms and ammunition by Pacific Islanders.¹³³⁴

Douglas had acted following a letter from Bishop George Selwyn, of the Anglican Melanesian Mission, who was concerned that one of the main reasons for Pacific Islanders coming to work in Queensland

¹³³² “Maryborough.” *Queensland Times*, 7 March 1878, p. 4. For more comments in a similar vein, see “Maryborough.” *Queensland Times*, 14 March 1878, p. 4

¹³³³ At Rockhampton, Douglas was less cordially received because he declined to guarantee them a railway.

¹³³⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 January 1878, p. 2; “Deputation to the Colonial Secretary.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 January 1878, p. 3; *Queensland Evangelical Standard*, 12 January 1878, p. 332; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 32 no 5, 8 January 1878, p. 69

was their desire to purchase firearms.¹³³⁵ Kay Saunders has recounted how one islander “candidly confessed his object to be a gun to shoot at his neighbour” and that new recruits departing the *Spunkie* in 1872 stated they had come to Queensland “to get a gun and a tomahawk.” It was also recognised that “Guns and ammunition form [a] very large, if not the chief proportion of articles of trade to the islands ... more highly prized by the natives than any other.”¹³³⁶

Many parties opposed this proclamation. The *Brisbane Courier* preferred to have the problem addressed through legislation rather than by *ad hoc* regulation.¹³³⁷ Others believed the proclamation would not stop the trade in arms and ammunition because Pacific Islanders would simply buy them elsewhere to the detriment of Queensland traders and the Queensland economy.¹³³⁸ Despite these objections, Douglas refused to rescind the proclamation. He consistently put humanitarian concerns first, even if, as was the case here, they clashed with powerful economic and conservative interests.¹³³⁹ Indeed, the *Brisbane Courier*, while disagreeing with

¹³³⁵ Willard, p. 160. For a copy of the Bishop's letter, see “Prohibition of Firearms to the South Seas.” *Bundaberg Star*, 26 January 1878, p. 2

¹³³⁶ Kay Saunders. *Workers in Bondage: The Origins and Bases of Unfree Labour in Queensland, 1824-1916*. Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1982, p. 33

¹³³⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 January 1878, p. 2

¹³³⁸ “Metropolitan Jottings.” *Queensland Times*, 31 January 1878. There was concern that Sydney or Fijian traders would then supply the ‘trade.’ (Saunders (1982), p.33.) For more contemporary accounts, see Willard, p. 160

¹³³⁹ Douglas informed a deputation on this matter “in reference to ‘trade,’ that so long as he

his actions in regards to Pacific Islanders, noted that he was “animated by the highest and most honorable motives.”¹³⁴⁰

The planters were also upset by a recent government circular that imposed on employers a payment of 15 shillings a quarter for each Pacific Islander employed from the time of his original agreement.¹³⁴¹ It was no surprise, therefore, that when Douglas met by a delegation of planters, they complained bitterly over the imposition of the new tax and its financial impact on their businesses.¹³⁴² Douglas informed the deputation that, while he was not opposed to the sugar industry, his government was concerned for the welfare of Pacific Islanders, and he admonished them over the high mortality rate suffered by Pacific Islanders in the Maryborough district, “it was quite impossible to permit such a thing as that 25 per cent of islanders who come here should not return.”¹³⁴³

was in office, he should not countenance it.” (“Deputation to the Colonial Secretary.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 January 1878, p. 3)

¹³⁴⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 2 April 1878, p. 2. The circular was dated 28 February 1871.

¹³⁴¹ *Ibid.* The circular was issued after the sub-immigration agent at Mackay drew to Douglas’s attention alleged irregularities in the importation of Pacific Islanders. (William T. Wawn. *The South Sea Islanders and the Queensland Labour Trade: A Record of Voyages and Experiences in the Western Pacific from 1875 to 1891*. London: Sonnenschein, 1893. Reprinted edition. Pacific History Series no. 5. Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1973, pp. 152-53.) In protesting this impost, planters in Mackay presented a memorial to Douglas stating that the enforcement of these regulations would cost them £10,800. (*Brisbane Courier*, 2 April 1878, p. 2; R. Newman. “The Sugar Planters and Government by Regulation.” *Brisbane Courier*, 25 March 1878, p. 3)

¹³⁴² “Deputation to the Premier.” *Brisbane Courier*, 27 March 1878, p. 4

¹³⁴³ *Ibid.*

The *Brisbane Courier* was less than impressed by Douglas's approach, observing that he was using "sensational arguments" against the employment of Pacific Islanders.¹³⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the figures were appalling, with the average mortality on plantations in the Maryborough district for the five years ending March 1880 being 92 per thousand, compared to 13 per thousand for the rest of the colony.¹³⁴⁵ To Douglas and other like-minded men opposed to the trade on humanitarian grounds, this was unacceptable and ample justification for restricting or eliminating this trade in human traffic.

While visiting the *Magnolia* plantation in Maryborough, Douglas was confronted by 200 Pacific Islanders, wishing to speak to the "big fellow master," and wanting to know "what for no let him boy take him gun along of island?" Again, Douglas was resolute, informing them that while those who already possessed firearms would be allowed to retain them, no new weapons could be purchased. This announcement was met with general displeasure, a Pacific Islander spokesman declaring that, "No more boys come along of Queensland. Boys altogether go Fiji. Plenty of guns along of Fiji."¹³⁴⁶

Douglas's position on these matters, while popular with white workers, liberals and concerned citizens, was received with anger

¹³⁴⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 2 April 1878, p. 2

¹³⁴⁵ Willard, p. 167

¹³⁴⁶ *Warwick Argus*, 11 April 1878, p. 2

and dismay by conservatives, sugar planters and Pacific Islander labourers and was vividly reflected in a contemporary shanty, sung to the tune of “The fine old English gentleman,” about a visit to the Mackay district in the north of the colony by the Maryborough immigration agent investigating alleged ill-treatment of Pacific Islander labourers there.¹³⁴⁷

Severe and grave of aspect, from Maryborough town
He came, with book and pencil, and with dark official
frown.

He shuddered as he dwelt upon the horrors of Mackay,
And when he met a coloured gent, in dulcet tones would
say-

“Have you got your ki-ki? Do you like him tea?
Suppose him overseer fight, just talk alonga me
Do you like him hard work, or plenty walk about;
Big massa Johnny Douglas, he plenty good, look
out.”¹³⁴⁸

He wandered through plantations, and he fossicked
through the cane,

With tales of dread atrocities still flitting through his
brain.

At last he met a sable youth from Tongoa’s sunny isle,
Who greeted his inspector with a mild fraternal smile-

“Yes, me got me ki-ki. What for you no can see?

¹³⁴⁷ Wawn, pp. 153-54

¹³⁴⁸ A rough translation of this stanza is; Have you food, is it good? Tell me if your boss is mistreating you. Are you a hard worker or a laggard? The premier, John Douglas, is a good man who will protect your interests.

Overseer bery good; no fight alonga me
 But wine, blancmange, and oyster sauce me nebber yet
 enjoy:
 Big Massa Johnny Douglas, plenty gammon, longa
 boy.”¹³⁴⁹
 The stern official closed his book and shed a silent tear,
 And thought of rosy billets with six hundred pounds a
 year.
 Then, rolling up his humble swag, he quickly sped away,
 And standing on the steamer’s deck he warbled forth
 this lay-
 “Yes they’ve got their ki-ki, as I can plainly see;
 Election times are drawing nigh – the game is up with
 me
 From the Logan to the Pioneer the cry is still the same-
 Big Massa Johnny Douglas must try some other
 game!”¹³⁵⁰

Parliamentary session

On returning to Brisbane, Douglas prepared for the next session of parliament, which began on 24 April 1878. He and his ministry were

¹³⁴⁹ A rough translation of this stanza is; Yes, I have my food, can’t you see? My boss is very good, and treats me well. However, fine food I do not enjoy, for John Douglas has deceived us with false promises.

¹³⁵⁰ A rough translation of this stanza is; I can see they have their food. Throughout Queensland, the belief is that Douglas should retire from politics. I am indebted to Dr Anna Shukul for her assistance in translating these verses. Another example of this opposition was a letter to the *Brisbane Courier* penned by a planter, Mr. B, on behalf of a Polynesian worker, Oma-Tika, that included this memorable assessment of Douglas; “That big man Mr. Douglas no good for thinkie. He only good for grow sugar. Overseer on plantation make Mr. Douglas workie workie. That very good.” (Oma-Tika. “New Kanaka Bill.” *Brisbane*

still in a strong position,¹³⁵¹ and although the government and the opposition strongly disagreed over the employment and treatment of Pacific Islanders, they embraced many similar policies and ideas.¹³⁵²

As the *Brisbane Courier* said:

The opposing parties in the legislature both advocate the same measures: the opposition has demanded them, and the ministry have promised to introduce them.¹³⁵³

The major planks of Douglas's legislative program in this session were bills to improve electoral representation in the colony¹³⁵⁴ and extend local government in the colony.¹³⁵⁵ Both were successfully enacted, the former increasing the number of members from 43 to 55, including 13 two-member electorates,¹³⁵⁶ while the latter consolidated and amended existing legislation and provided for the extension of local government to the country districts.¹³⁵⁷ As well, Douglas introduced the *Polynesian Laborers Bill* to repeal and replace the existing Act, and to give legislative effect to the

Courier, 29 June 1878, p. 6)

¹³⁵¹ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 18 May 1878, p. 6

¹³⁵² *Brisbane Courier*, 20 March 1878, p. 2

¹³⁵³ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 April 1878, p. 2

¹³⁵⁴ This involved repealing the *Electoral District Act of 1872* and replacing it with a new Act.

¹³⁵⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 April 1878, p. 2

¹³⁵⁶ Bernays, pp. 289-90. This Act was the *Electoral Districts Act, 1878*, which received assent on 9 July 1878. (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1878, p. 331)

¹³⁵⁷ Bernays, pp. 394-96; *Our First Half-Century*, p. 71; "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 18 May 1878, p. 6. This Act was titled *An Act to Consolidate and Amend the Laws Relating to Municipal Institutions, and to Provide More Effectually for Local Government*, commonly known as *The Local Government Act, 1878*. It received assent on 3 September 1878. (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1878, p. 331)

regulations framed earlier in the year.¹³⁵⁸ However, it foundered at the second reading stage.¹³⁵⁹

On 6 July 1878, the new leader of the opposition, Thomas Mcllwraith, audaciously attempted to secure approval for a loan of £3 million to complete and extend the colony's public works.¹³⁶⁰ Douglas, who was seeking approval for £1,080,000 for the government public works program, took this as a vote of no confidence in his government and, following protracted debate, defeated it by the barest of margins - one vote - with one opposition member absent from the house.¹³⁶¹ Mcllwraith's actions damaged the government because it was no longer seen to be in control of parliamentary business. Worse still, Douglas now faced an opposition advocating increased spending on public works, a move welcomed in many electorates who were anxious for progress and development. Douglas countered Mcllwraith by advocating a

¹³⁵⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 June 1878, p. 2

¹³⁵⁹ Clive Moore. *Kanaka: A History of Melanesian Mackay*. Port Moresby, University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985, p. 140; Wilson (1938), p. 71. This was due to strong political opposition, with Douglas observing, "he failed to get support from his own followers which he expected, and there was a certainty of opposition among the squatting party." ("The Premier at Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 October 1878, p. 4.) However, disclosures of disgraceful conditions on certain plantations compelled the incoming conservative Mcllwraith government to enact new legislation, *The Polynesian Labour Act*, in 1880. (Willard, p. 162)

¹³⁶⁰ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 10 August 1878, p. 6

¹³⁶¹ For more information on this incident, see the *Brisbane Courier*, 17 July 1878, p. 2; 22 July 1878, p. 2; "The Press and the Three Million Loan." *Brisbane Courier*, 24 July 1878, p. 5; *Brisbane Courier*, 25 July 1878, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1878, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1878, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 1 August 1878, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1878, p. 2

program encouraging measured development.¹³⁶²

General election

The parliamentary sitting ended on 10 September 1878¹³⁶³ and a general election was called for the following month.¹³⁶⁴ Due to parliament being so finely balanced, it was widely expected that the elections would be close, and because the government and the opposition largely had similar policies, the election itself was not solely contested on well-defined party lines.¹³⁶⁵

Candidates, while nominally aligned with Douglas or McIlwraith, campaigned strongly on matters of local concern; railways - with the government advocating developing branch lines, and the opposition main lines - and, as always, public works.¹³⁶⁶ As one commentator cynically, but rather accurately observed.

There are now no political questions in agitation which the differences between Mr. Douglas's policy and Mr. McIlwraith's - if there are any difference - may be displayed. To all appearances the policy of both parties

¹³⁶² John Douglas. "To the Electors of Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 15 November 1878, p. 7

¹³⁶³ *Brisbane Courier*, 10 September 1878, p. 2

¹³⁶⁴ *Our First Half-Century*, p. 171. Parliament was dissolved on 2 October 1878 and this election was the first to be held under the new electoral laws, with 55 seats being contested for the eighth parliament, twelve more than had sat in the previous parliament.

¹³⁶⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1878, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 9 October 1878, p. 2; "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 4 December 1878, p. 4

¹³⁶⁶ Donald Dignan. Sir Thomas McIlwraith: His Public Career and Political Thought. BA Hons thesis University of Queensland, 1951, p. 59

is the same. Their candidates will pledge themselves to the construction of every railway or other local work that every constituency may demand, and the probability is that both will, if they get into office, show an equal capacity for eluding the fulfilment of these pledges; the fulfilment of which would probably ruin the colony.¹³⁶⁷

Douglas had spent an eventful 18 months as premier. He had successfully curbed Chinese immigration, overseen electoral and local government reform, and ameliorated the worst excesses associated with Pacific Islander employment. The opposition was in disarray, because its leader, Arthur Palmer, had resigned only a few months before. Nevertheless, it was generally believed that the Douglas ministry would struggle to retain office. There were no obvious reasons for this although,

The country is tired of the present ministry ... They have not committed any glaring wrong, but they have, in one way or another, failed to satisfy the perhaps not perfectly reasonable expectations of all their former supporters ... an impression appears to prevail in many constituencies that it would be advisable for a change.¹³⁶⁸

The liberal side of politics had been in power since January 1874. First Macalister, then Thorn, and now Douglas, had carried the torch

¹³⁶⁷ *Warwick Argus*, 5 September 1878, p. 2

¹³⁶⁸ *Warwick Argus*, 8 August 1878, p. 2; Francis Ivory to Thomas McIlwraith, 8 December 1878. *McIlwraith / Palmer Papers*, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/1

on its behalf. This had been the first parliament in the history of the colony to last its normal term,¹³⁶⁹ but Douglas and his supporters would struggle to retain control of government in the next. Macalister commenced his term of office with a vigorous program, but found that retrenchments were necessary to ensure the ongoing welfare of the colony. Thorn was a 'stopgap' premier, incapable of satisfying public expectations for public works while balancing the budget. It had been Douglas's misfortune to become premier at the end of a long political struggle, when politics "were comparatively flat and uninteresting."¹³⁷⁰ Inheriting a wafer-thin majority, a budget deficit, and having to contend with the economic and social impact of a lengthy drought compounded his problems. Furthermore, Douglas refused to add to the public debt and spend his way out of trouble, and so slowly but surely, imperceptibly at first and then with gathering speed, the reins of power slipped from his grasp.¹³⁷¹

Douglas had not done anything wrong; indeed he had done many things right, but he had failed to inspire the electorate. Although a powerful and convincing orator, he relied on intellect and ideas rather than passion and emotions to get his message across to the

¹³⁶⁹ Wilson (1938), p. 73. Up until 1873, the average duration of parliament was two years and four months, but this parliament had lasted nearly four years and ten months. (*Brisbane Courier*, 11 September 1878, p. 2)

¹³⁷⁰ Wilson (1938), p. 73

¹³⁷¹ *Ibid.* This was best illustrated over the funding of railways. McIlwraith proposed to add to government debt, while Douglas favoured the cost being borne by private enterprise or loan grants. For a detailed discussion of this, see Wilson (1938), p. 72 and Harding (1997), pp. 225-26

public. While the electorate respected him, too many wanted more. Despite delivering them land reform, railway construction, and electoral and local government reform, Douglas was now seen as having little new to offer. Tides advance and then retreat. This tide had turned for his government and, try as he might, Douglas's character was such that he was unable to reverse it, for he was widely seen as being too accommodating and pragmatic on issues not involving the compromise of his principles, yet too dogmatic and obstinate on those that did. As a contemporary observed,

Mr. Douglas's character for honour and integrity stands as high as that of any Australian public man. He is remarkable for courtesy and gentleness of manner. Unhappily these qualities, if unsupported by firmness and strength and purpose, are apt to injure rather than to benefit a colonial premier ... Although Mr. Douglas is a good man, he makes a very indifferent premier. Like all such men, he was weak in the wrong place and strong in the wrong place. Firmness was represented by obstinacy, and just concession by easy compliance.¹³⁷²

Nor was Douglas helped by the quality of his ministry, because, as the *Warwick Argus* tellingly observed, with the obvious exception of Griffith, its members have "earned their promotion neither by length of service nor conspicuous ability."¹³⁷³

¹³⁷² Queenslander. "Six Years of Queensland Politics." *Victorian Review*, vol 8, May 1883, pp. 63-64

¹³⁷³ *Warwick Argus*, 26 September 1878, p. 2

The public were ready to give the conservatives a chance, now that Palmer, the archconservative representative of the 'squattocracy,' was no longer its leader. From now on, differences between the liberal and conservative sides of politics would not overwhelmingly be about land, but railway construction, financial settlements and South Sea Islander legislation.¹³⁷⁴

Once parliament was dissolved, Douglas faced ministerial disaffection over his decision to change his ministry. The secretary for public works, William Miles, reluctantly resigned after refusing a transfer to the department of lands, causing Douglas to add this portfolio responsibility onto Griffith's broad shoulders.¹³⁷⁵ This dispute received wide publicity in the press and damaged Douglas politically, especially as Miles wrote to several newspapers complaining about this treatment, and insisting that he did not resign of his own free will.¹³⁷⁶

Samuel Griffith's politics

Samuel Griffith was a 'shining light' in the Douglas ministry and a man destined to be a dominant figure in Queensland and Australian politics. Born in Wales in 1845, his family came to Queensland in

¹³⁷⁴ Wilson (1938), p. 74

¹³⁷⁵ *Warwick Argus*, 26 September 1878, p. 2; Harding (1997), pp. 225-26; *Brisbane Courier*, 20 September 1878, p. 2

¹³⁷⁶ Joyce (1984), p. 45; *Warwick Argus*, 26 September 1878, p. 2. For a detailed explanation, from both Douglas and Miles, as to what actually transpired, see *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 29, 1879, pp. 2-5

1854 where his father was the Congregational minister at Ipswich. A brilliant student, Griffith went to Sydney University where he graduated with an MA degree in 1870 and earned first-class honours in mathematics and classics. He was admitted to the Queensland Bar in 1867 where he soon earned a reputation as an outstanding lawyer. Entering parliament on the liberal side of politics in 1872, he combined a successful political career with his work as a barrister. In 1874 and not yet 30 years of age, he entered the ministry as attorney general.¹³⁷⁷

Griffith, although young, was eager for greater success. As the journalist William Coote observed, he possessed a “certain form of character strengthened by no small amount of self-opinion”¹³⁷⁸ and desired to be premier as early as 1876, but was overlooked in favour of George Thorn. In 1877, he again missed out to Douglas.¹³⁷⁹ On 20 September 1878, he tried once more. Following an early morning cabinet meeting, where Griffith had “resolved on Douglas’ resignation,”¹³⁸⁰ Douglas was forced to ask the governor, whether, in the event of him resigning, would he request Griffith to form a government.¹³⁸¹

¹³⁷⁷ Roger Bilbrough Joyce. “Griffith, Sir Samuel Walker.” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 9. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp. 112-13

¹³⁷⁸ William Coote. “Our Leading Public Men: The Hon. S. W. Griffith.” *The Week*, 7 July 1877. In, *Coote Papers*, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 92-74

¹³⁷⁹ Joyce (1983), p. 113

¹³⁸⁰ Vockler, p. 105

¹³⁸¹ Kennedy to Colonial Office, 21 September 1878. CO 234/38

Governor Kennedy replied that he would not, and informed the Colonial Office that,

Douglas did not inform me of his reasons for taking the step he proposed but I feel assured that he was pleased with the decision I arrived at, though he did not express himself in words.”¹³⁸²

Griffith’s diary entry for this day is revealing, “Governor refused to accede to our proposition.” Later he wrote; “went to Cabinet. Offered my resignation, which was not accepted.” He had also visited Miles at his Dalby property just before these events, presumably to shore up support for his actions. Griffith was finally challenging for the premiership.¹³⁸³ While Griffith respected Douglas, the former was a man of “vaulting ambition” who possessed a brilliant mind, was extremely capable, and firmly believed that the government was doomed so long as Douglas remained at the helm. Although Griffith had the numbers to force Douglas to go to the governor, for several supporters were upset with Douglas’s ministerial reshuffle,¹³⁸⁴ Griffith knew that Kennedy would be most unlikely to replace a premier between a parliamentary dissolution and an imminent general election. Thus, it was only

¹³⁸² Ibid. In this memorandum, Kennedy gave a detailed explanation as to why he would refuse to replace Douglas with Griffith.

¹³⁸³ Joyce (1984), p. 45. For a detailed account of Griffith’s undermining of Douglas, see Mason, pp. 159-60

¹³⁸⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1878, p. 2. Of the six members of the cabinet, Dickson supported Douglas, while Garrick, Miles and Mein sided with Griffith. Even with the removal of Miles, Griffith still had the numbers (Papers of R. B. Joyce (1924-1984.) MS

proper that Griffith should have offered his resignation after his unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Douglas.

Why did Douglas not accept it? The simple reason was that Douglas needed Griffith to have any chance of winning the forthcoming election. For if Griffith was forced out, other members of the ministry might also leave. Disunity in politics, then as now, was seen as a sure way to political suicide and so for the sake of the liberal side of politics, Griffith stayed, and even assumed Miles' ministerial responsibilities.¹³⁸⁵

News of what occurred soon leaked out. The *Telegraph* reported, "there can be no disproving the proposition that ... [Griffith] will be the leader of the Liberal party in the immediate future,"¹³⁸⁶ while the *Brisbane Courier* pointedly asked, "how far is Mr. Griffith involved in the designs of his disloyal admirers?"¹³⁸⁷ Douglas, as leader, therefore went into the campaign hampered by "an insubordinate spirit among the rank and file."¹³⁸⁸ With his party divided, he was forced to fight the elections as best he could aware that his ministry's loyalty, and with it the governments' chances of re-election, was collapsing. Douglas was well aware of the challenge facing him, promising his electorate that:

7691, Box 105, Chapter 5, p. 300)

¹³⁸⁵ This now left Griffith as attorney-general, secretary for public instruction, and secretary for public works. (*Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1878, p. 2)

¹³⁸⁶ *Telegraph*, 26 September 1878. Quoted in Joyce (1984), p. 45

¹³⁸⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 September 1878

Whether in or out of office, whether as a ministerial supporter or in opposition, I shall endeavour, if elected, to maintain the honor of parliament, and to advise to the best of my ability for your welfare and the welfare of the people.¹³⁸⁹

The government ran a strange and confused election campaign. On the one hand, there was Douglas, the nominal head of the government, and on the other, Griffith, the brash young pretender, barnstorming the colony as if he was its leader.¹³⁹⁰ The result was a caretaker government effectively without leadership or agreed policies.¹³⁹¹ Douglas' talents for administration, while recognised, were not rewarded. The man who a year earlier "began a great party fight with an enthusiasm and vigour,"¹³⁹² had, in a few short months, almost faded away, his party "apparently worn out and demoralised."¹³⁹³

Not that this spectacle, as the *Brisbane Courier* reminded its readers, was unusual in the short history of the colony.

Whether the premier be a Lilley or a Macalister, a Thorn or a Douglas, it is very soon discovered by intractable

¹³⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁸⁹ John Douglas. "To the Electors of Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 15 November 1878, p. 7

¹³⁹⁰ Vockler, p. 107. Griffith campaigned as if "in a groove apart from his colleagues and ... his policy on the whole far more resembles that of the opposition leader's than that of the premier." (*Brisbane Courier*, 23 October 1878)

¹³⁹¹ Vockler, p. 109

¹³⁹² *Brisbane Courier*, 4 November 1878, p. 2

¹³⁹³ *Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1878, p. 2

supporters that nothing can preserve or regenerate the party but the decapitation of its head. Thus within the last decade the country has seen each liberal leader successively deposed, or his deposition only averted by abdication.¹³⁹⁴

What was unusual was how openly and energetically Griffith, in his campaigning, undermined Douglas. Indeed, Griffith's "insubordinate spirit" became a major election issue and damaged the government's chances of re-election.¹³⁹⁵

At a mayoral dinner in Rockhampton in October 1878, Griffith gave a speech in which he outlined his railway policy. This policy was so different to the stated ministerial policy, and so similar to that of the opposition, that it was widely reported that he would willingly serve in a McIlwraith ministry.¹³⁹⁶ The *Brisbane Courier* roundly condemned it as "political treachery."¹³⁹⁷ Although Griffith rejected these accusations,¹³⁹⁸ the liberals were damaged by his actions,¹³⁹⁹ and the opposition capitalised on it, especially their candidate in

¹³⁹⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 September 1878, p. 2

¹³⁹⁵ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 9 October 1878, p. 4

¹³⁹⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1878, p. 2. Griffith's problem with his party's policy was that he did not believe it worthwhile to buy the support of the agricultural districts by promising what he considered to be uneconomic branch lines. (Dignan, pp. 65-66)

¹³⁹⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1878, p. 2

¹³⁹⁸ Charles Hardie Buzacott. "Mr Buzacott in Reply." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 October 1878, p. 3. Griffith followed this denial with a detailed rebuttal when addressing his electorate the following week. ("North Brisbane Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 30 October 1878, p. 5)

¹³⁹⁹ Charles Hardie Buzacott. "Mr Buzacott in Reply." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 October 1878, p. 3. Douglas's bid to retain power was damaged because there was now general agreement that the party had little hope of finding an "honorable basis for concerted action."

Rockhampton, John MacFarlane, who told his supporters that on the question of railways:

It is now impossible to state what their present policy is, as the ministerial statements showed that the members of the cabinet were hopelessly at variance.¹⁴⁰⁰

Damaging revelations from Rockhampton continued to surface, one eyewitness informing the press that “the impression left in the minds of all of us was that Griffith was endeavouring to work round to McIlwraith and certainly anxious to get rid of Douglas and the other members of the government.”¹⁴⁰¹

The *Brisbane Courier* continued its scathing criticism of Griffith’s actions, reminding its readers that when Douglas,

took the lead of his party and its government, it had begun to die; it has since been kept alive chiefly by his efforts. His reputation still keeps it together, in its broken and demoralised condition; and if the adherents of the liberal party lose that support, they will not find themselves compensated for it by the attorney-general’s capacity for party manoeuvres.¹⁴⁰²

Despite Griffith’s actions, the paper believed that the government’s cause was not yet hopeless and that it could still win the election.¹⁴⁰³

¹⁴⁰⁰ “Rockhampton.” *Brisbane Courier*, 31 October 1878, p. 2

¹⁴⁰¹ William Pattison. “Mr. Griffith at Rockhampton.” *Brisbane Courier*, 4 November 1878, p. 3

¹⁴⁰² *Brisbane Courier*, 8 November 1878, p. 2

¹⁴⁰³ *Brisbane Courier*, 2 November 1878, p. 2; “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 6

Maryborough election

The elections were held over a six-week period and the nominations for Douglas's seat of Maryborough closed on 12 November 1878.¹⁴⁰⁴

There were three candidates contesting the two seats in the electorate: Douglas, Barkley Basil Moreton, and the parliamentary speaker, Henry Edward King.¹⁴⁰⁵ Elections in provincial Queensland were frequently vigorous affairs:

... not decided by argument, or on the subjective merits of the cases presented by the several candidates, but are entirely an affair of free buggies, free drinks, flaring placards, bands of music and casks standing on tap in the street in the most unblushing manner, for the refreshment of the free and independent.¹⁴⁰⁶

Douglas addressed his Maryborough electorate in its town hall.¹⁴⁰⁷

At one of the largest election meetings held in the town up to that time, he spoke for over two hours, explained his party's policy on railways, and justified his position on Chinese and Pacific Islander labor. As he informed the sugar-growing town:

he would far rather have never seen a single South Sea Islander brought to the colony, even if it had been at the

November 1878, p. 3

¹⁴⁰⁴ "The General Elections." *Brisbane Courier*, 15 November 1878, p. 6

¹⁴⁰⁵ "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 14 September 1878, p. 6

¹⁴⁰⁶ "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 7 December 1878, p. 6. See also Hirst (2002), pp. 68-69

¹⁴⁰⁷ "The Premier at Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 October 1878, p. 4

sacrifice of never growing sugar.¹⁴⁰⁸

The substantial Irish Catholic vote in the Maryborough district had to be courted by any politician seeking election or re-election there. As a local commentator cryptically observed, Douglas was fortunate that he had married an Irish Catholic.

Sectarian antagonism – the old sore of Maryborough – will re-assert itself as a commanding factor in the issue; and in respect of at least one of the three candidates, on rather whimsical grounds.¹⁴⁰⁹

As it turned out, Douglas (and King) did capture the Catholic vote, despite his administration being seen as having “dealt most unfairly with Catholics” in relation to funding of Catholic schools.¹⁴¹⁰ Douglas also secured the German vote¹⁴¹¹ and on polling day the liberals were comfortably returned: Douglas first with 704 votes, King closely

¹⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰⁹ “Maryborough.” *Brisbane Courier*, 14 September 1878, p. 6. All three candidates were members of the Church of England.

¹⁴¹⁰ *The Australasian* 15 March 1879, p. 478. This organ of the Catholic Church gallantly declared that Catholic’s voted for Douglas “on his own personal merits, combining, as he does, honesty and candour with a genial suavity of manner which has endeared the honourable gentleman to all who have come into contact with him.” However, his marriage to Sarah, with Catholic rites, would not have done him any harm either.

¹⁴¹¹ “Maryborough.” *Brisbane Courier*, 7 December 1878, p. 6. Douglas was genuinely popular among German voters. (Alan Corkhill. *Queensland and Germany: Ethnic, Socio-cultural, Political and Trade Relations, 1838–1991*. Melbourne, Academia Press, 1992, pp. 114-15.) An instance of Douglas’s pro-German stance is in a letter objecting to the halting of German immigration in 1879; “We have always got full value from our German and Scandinavian immigrants. They do not leave the colony; they buy our land; they cultivate that land; and they become good and useful members of our community.” (John Douglas. “Stoppage of Immigration.” *Brisbane Courier*, 6 March 1879, p. 3)

behind on 699, and Moreton trailing badly with 306 votes.¹⁴¹²

Despite Douglas successfully retaining his seat, as the elections continued it gradually became clear that his party would struggle to form a ministry in the new parliament. By 4 December it was considered that the opposition conservatives were slightly ahead, and would have a majority of four or five seats.¹⁴¹³ As the results continued to trickle in, it became obvious that Douglas did not have the 'numbers,' and that his ministry would fall when parliament next sat.¹⁴¹⁴

The eighth parliament met for the first time on 14 January 1879. McIlwraith moved a vote of no confidence in the Douglas ministry two days later, which he won 30 to 16.¹⁴¹⁵ The following day, Douglas resigned as premier, and McIlwraith became the new premier on Tuesday 21 January 1879.¹⁴¹⁶ The conservatives were back in office, and it would fall to Griffith to oppose them.

Douglas's premiership analysed

So how successful was Douglas as premier, and what caused his demise? The few historians who have examined this era have been

¹⁴¹² "Maryborough." *Brisbane Courier*, 16 November 1878, p. 2

¹⁴¹³ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 4 December 1878, p. 3

¹⁴¹⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 7 December 1878, p. 2

¹⁴¹⁵ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 29, 1879, p. 66

¹⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68. While Douglas resigned on 17 January, it was recorded in the *Government Gazette* as being on 21 January. (*Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 24 no 14, 21 January 1879, p.173

less than impressed by his performance. Harding, for instance, considered that Douglas, along with his predecessor Thorn, “were two of the most undistinguished premiers in Queensland’s history.”¹⁴¹⁷ However, the facts suggest that Douglas, for all of his shortcomings, does not deserve this epithet.

There were many reasons why Douglas failed to hold onto the reigns of power, including the length of time the liberals were in power (almost five years), the failure of Douglas to stamp his authority on his party and inspire the electorate, and the destabilising influence of Griffith. None of these factors was in itself sufficient to cause his downfall, but together they were a lethal combination. Douglas inherited liberal ballast in his saddlebags on becoming premier following the failures of his two liberal predecessors, and all through his ministry’s final session was constrained by a wafer-thin parliamentary majority.¹⁴¹⁸ Yet, a more ambitious, ruthless and unscrupulous politician could perhaps have withstood these setbacks and possibly even turned them to his advantage.

Douglas assumed the premiership towards the end of the liberals’ political dominance. He thoroughly deserved it, being easily the most experienced politician on his side of the house. An

¹⁴¹⁷ Harding (1997), p. 203

¹⁴¹⁸ As one commentator remarked, Douglas “had to take up the growing tangle produced by the continuance of a weak government, apt to evade rather than meet difficulties, and to consider the postponement of a danger the highest exercise of political foresight.” (*Brisbane Courier*, 8 November 1878, p. 2)

experienced leader of the opposition, the former premier, Arthur Palmer, initially opposed him. However, Palmer performed poorly against Douglas, resigned, and was replaced by McIlwraith, a more moderate man and one acceptable to the many conservatives opposed to the squatters Palmer represented. Douglas, in turn, would suffer a similar fate, replaced by Griffith - a casualty of an inevitable desire for change from the voters and his inability to constrain or accommodate Griffith's ambitions.

The demise of Palmer and Douglas led to a changing of the guard and an ushering in of new, fresh talent, remarkable talent. Griffith and McIlwraith would bestride the Queensland political stage, displaying "brilliance in political leadership rarely equalled then or since."¹⁴¹⁹ It was to be a brilliance that utterly eclipsed Douglas and his achievements, as the premiership passed between the two no less than five times in the 1880s and 1890s. As the *Brisbane Courier* presciently noted in relation to Douglas's premiership: "It is like the story of those later Roman emperors, who by their efforts delayed the doom of the empire, and who are forgotten because they came too late to avert its inevitable fate."¹⁴²⁰

Griffith, a man possessed of a brilliant mind and even keener ambition, had continually undermined Douglas's premiership. He

¹⁴¹⁹ P. S. Callaghan. *Political Alignments in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, 1878-99*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1968, p. 24

¹⁴²⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 8 November 1878, p. 2

wanted to replace him, both as leader of the party and premier. Yet, despite by September 1878 being strong enough to defeat Douglas in the cabinet room, the governor refused to arrange an orderly transfer of power to him. Griffith was rejected by the governor, and when the actions of the former became publicly known, the whiff of betrayal and the stench of disunity helped sentence the liberals to five years of opposition. To the voters the issue was not so much Griffith's disloyalty (for he had also intrigued against Thorn), but rather Douglas's inability to control him. The factional system then operating in the colony was predicated on shifting loyalties and allegiances, and it took strong, ambitious and ruthless politicians to keep recalcitrant members within the party, particularly when they had competing interests.

Unfortunately for the liberals, Douglas, despite his strong personality, had not the right temperament necessary for political leadership, as this perceptive assessment demonstrates.

Conspicuously fair in debate, he appeared invariably to feel the force of his opponents' arguments more than those on his own side of the house, and therefore his leadership wanted decision.¹⁴²¹

Douglas was also unable to keep control over his party and the intriguers within it. As he possessed an independent mind, it was perhaps not surprising that under his premiership members felt even

¹⁴²¹ *Our First Half-Century*, p. 23

freer to similarly hold and express independent views. Douglas was dedicated to the office of premier and determined to do his best, but, as Mason astutely observed, he:

failed because of his own character. He fell because in the political life of the 1870's Douglas maintained high views on political duty and a desire to conciliate and reconcile rather than exploit political differences.¹⁴²²

Previous studies of Douglas as premier and his involvement in the Queensland parliamentary process have overlooked just how unorthodox his leadership style was. He failed to attack his political opponents at every opportunity and gave them many opportunities to succeed. Two examples illustrate this unorthodoxy. In Maryborough, in March 1878, Douglas was urged to conserve the colony's timber resources by imposing an export duty levy on log cedar. Despite this being a measure he himself had advocated some three years earlier when chairing a select committee on forest conservancy, Douglas informed the deputation that the government was too busy to respond to this issue and suggested that if he initiated a private members Bill, then the government would support it.¹⁴²³

This was not an isolated example. In June that same year, the opposition demanded that the government introduce a volunteer defence bill, spurred on by concerns amongst the electorate over the

¹⁴²² Mason, pp. 162-63

threat of war with Russia.¹⁴²⁴ Douglas, having made no provision for such a bill, invited Palmer to introduce it, promising the government's support!¹⁴²⁵ The bill was duly introduced by the opposition, supported by the government, and assented to on 27 August 1878.¹⁴²⁶ These actions, coupled with McIlwraith's audacious attempt to wrest control of the government's public works program, was proof to many in the electorate that the Douglas ministry was losing control of its political program. As the *Telegraph* newspaper caustically remarked, "The Liberal ministry is merely a contrivance for giving to the opposition all they want without any responsibility."¹⁴²⁷ The *Brisbane Courier*, as usual, emphasised the benefits of this approach:

The opposition leaders have been allowed to shape the legislation of the colony, but they have not been permitted to grasp the reins of power.¹⁴²⁸

The scandal surrounding Douglas's marriage, while not central to his demise, undoubtedly offended sections of the electorate. As Buzacott noted, "the premier committed an indiscretion which,

¹⁴²³ "Deputations to the Premier." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 March 1878, p. 4

¹⁴²⁴ Russia and Turkey were at war, (the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78) and it was feared that Britain would become involved. However, this scenario was averted after the cessation of hostilities following the Treaty of Stan Stefano, and the decisions flowing from the Congress of Berlin.

¹⁴²⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 14 June 1878

¹⁴²⁶ *Pugh's Queensland Almanac and Directory*, 1903, p. 98; *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1878, vol 1, p. 331; Jobson (1960), p. 116

¹⁴²⁷ *The Telegraph*, 7 August 1878, quoted in Vockler, p. 105

¹⁴²⁸ *Brisbane Courier*, 11 September 1878, p. 2 & 4 November 1878, p. 2

although credible to his conscientiousness, gave the finishing touch to the life of the ministry,”¹⁴²⁹ while another observer believed that his actions “played into the hands of the illiterate, scurrilous and unscrupulous *canaille*.”¹⁴³⁰

Despite losing power, Douglas had achieved much during his time as premier. Although he was the dominant figure in the Thorn ministry, his ministry was no mere continuation, because Douglas provided a new emphasis and direction to liberal policies. He had halted Chinese migration to Queensland and curbed the worst excesses associated with Pacific Islander immigration, issues that the Thorn ministry had been unable to resolve.¹⁴³¹ The Douglas ministry also brought a new vitality to parliament, with some 40 Bills introduced in the first session alone.¹⁴³² Legislative achievements included enactment of the *Railway Reserves Bill*, the *Local Government Bill*, the *Government Loan Bill* and an *Electoral Districts Bill*.¹⁴³³

While Douglas’s legislative program was productive, his control of his party, and ultimately of government, was not. He was unable to convince the electorate that he was, in the immortal words of Sir

¹⁴²⁹ Papers of R. B. Joyce (1924-1984.) National Library of Australia, MS 7691, Box 105, Chapter 5, p. 300

¹⁴³⁰ Queenslander. “Six Years of Queensland Politics.” *Victorian Review*, vol 8, May 1883, p. 64

¹⁴³¹ Mason, p. 146

¹⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 147. Almost half of these Bills became law.

¹⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 153. For more details see Bernays, pp. 289-90

Henry Parkes, “the man for the hour.”¹⁴³⁴ Douglas paid the ultimate price for putting principle before politics, duty ahead of ambition, and fair play instead of ruthlessness. He was a gentleman politician who played by the rules, while others played to win. An average premier, he would have made an outstanding governor. Relieved of the premiership by Griffith and McIlwraith, the circumstances of his marriage would forever deny him a governorship.

¹⁴³⁴ Loveday (1966), p. v

Chapter 15: Life after the Premiership, 1879-85

This chapter explores the six years of Douglas's life after he lost the premiership in January 1879. It concerns his time in parliament on the backbench, the frustrations he experienced there, and his subsequent retirement from parliamentary life in November 1880. His career as a journalist and his unsuccessful attempt to re-enter the parliamentary arena are also examined. In many ways this period (1879-85), during which three of his four children were born, was an interregnum between his life as a politician, which spanned 22 years (1858-80), and his future life as an administrator, which would cover almost 20 (1885-1904.)

While gradually drifting out of political life as a participant, Douglas continued to be involved as a commentator and interested bystander in the political affairs of the colony. He saw first hand the rivalry for the premiership between Griffith and McIlwraith, and the reshaping of Queensland colonial politics through the formation of organised political factions under Griffith and McIlwraith. By 1879, the Queensland political scene had changed and Douglas was only able to report on it while others shaped it.

President of the legislative council

Parliament was prorogued on 22 January 1879 - the day after McIlwraith was installed as premier - to allow time for his ministry to contest by-elections. During the recess, on 23 March 1879, the

president of the legislative council, Sir Maurice Charles O'Connell, who had held the post since August 1860, died.¹⁴³⁵ In replacing him, it was important that the 'right' person be appointed, for in the absence or death of the governor, they would assume those duties. The *Telegraph* paper suggested that Douglas would be a suitable choice: "The colony at large would have gladly seen Mr. Douglas in the presidential chair; the post is one for which he is eminently fitted."¹⁴³⁶

Unfortunately, for Douglas, two factors were against him. The first was that the Liberals were in opposition, and, as the paper glumly observed, it would be "Too much to expect a political party to display such a refinement of Christian spirit as to hand over its first plum to a political opponent."¹⁴³⁷

Despite this, any decision by McIlwraith and his ministry not to recommend Douglas would have been a difficult one, because if Douglas were selected then McIlwraith would have "gracefully disposed of one of the ablest of the opposition and a formidable adversary."¹⁴³⁸

The second factor was equally insurmountable and concerned the unsuitability of Douglas's wife. As the Colonial Office assistant

¹⁴³⁵ *Queensland Parliamentary Handbook*, p. 349

¹⁴³⁶ The *Telegraph*, 29 March 1879

¹⁴³⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴³⁸ *Toowoomba Chronicle*, 1 April 1879; *Darling Downs Gazette*, 1 April 1879

under-secretary, John Bramston, remarked to Governor Kennedy:

I see that Mr. Douglas is mentioned in the slips, but his appointment would for social reasons have been a serious mistake.¹⁴³⁹

The position went to Joshua Peter Bell, a squatter and the member for Northern Downs, in a decision that met with general approval.¹⁴⁴⁰

Less than a year later he spent eight months as the administrator of Queensland.¹⁴⁴¹

When parliament reconvened, Douglas announced his retirement as leader of the opposition and Griffith succeeded him.¹⁴⁴² However, the reality was somewhat different, for at a meeting of the members of the opposition,¹⁴⁴³ Douglas had voluntarily resigned rather than be summarily deposed.¹⁴⁴⁴ The *Brisbane Courier* lamented Douglas's departure as leader of the opposition,¹⁴⁴⁵ but William Coote, writing in the *Week*, believed that Griffith was the right choice - a younger man, with a clear head, a cool cautious temperament, and more energy. As for Douglas, Coote noted that he was:

Scarcely the man to be the successful leader of a

¹⁴³⁹ John Bramston to Kennedy, 7 June 1879, *Colonial Office* 234/39

¹⁴⁴⁰ The *Telegraph*, 29 March 1879; *Darling Downs Gazette*, 1 April 1879

¹⁴⁴¹ *Queensland Parliamentary Handbook*, p. 195

¹⁴⁴² Mr. Griffith. "Address in Reply." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 29, 1879, p. 9; Douglas to Griffith, August 1879. Griffith Papers. Dixon Library, State Library of NSW, MSQ 185, p. 170a

¹⁴⁴³ *Brisbane Courier*, 27 March 1879, p. 2

¹⁴⁴⁴ Bohemian. "Odd Notes." *The Week*, 29 March 1879

¹⁴⁴⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 28 March 1879, p. 2

turbulent political party in a parliament where personal feeling as well as party spirit runs high.¹⁴⁴⁶

Douglas was too principled and even-handed to be a successful factional leader and lacked the necessary ambition and ruthlessness to counter McIlwraith, traits Griffith had in abundance. Douglas, relieved of the leadership, thereafter exercised in parliament a “liberty of action and freedom of expression and opinion” free of factional constraints.¹⁴⁴⁷

Douglas now acted as an ‘independent Liberal’ and expressed his own thoughts and opinions while acting in the best interests of Queensland. He was never a strong supporter of political factions, considering it undesirable for parliament to “absolutely divide into two hostile camps.”¹⁴⁴⁸

‘Steel rails’ controversy

The colony soon found out just how independent an ‘independent Liberal’ was. It concerned the ‘steel rails’ petition of William Hemmant, a former colonial treasurer and prominent merchant now resident in London. Samuel Griffith presented it in parliament on 6 July 1880.¹⁴⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴⁶ Bohemian. “Odd Notes.” *The Week*, 29 March 1879

¹⁴⁴⁷ Mr. Douglas. “Address in Reply.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 29, 1879, p.39

¹⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴⁹ *Queensland 1900: A Narrative of Her Past, Together With Biographies of Her Leading Men*, p. 149. The petition was “Making Certain Statements with Regard to Contracts

This petition, relating to the purchase and delivery of railway lines to Queensland, generated immense controversy and intrigue throughout the colony. In January 1880 the Queensland government had invited tenders for 15,000 tons of steel rails, with the Haslam Engineering Company obtaining the contract at £9 18s 6d per ton. William Henry Ashwell, executive engineer to the Queensland government, was a shareholder in this company, and McIlwraith had travelled to London specifically to negotiate the contract. Two of the largest manufacturing firms had not been asked to tender, one of whom was manufacturing the same rails at £6 per ton. It was further alleged that the Haslam Engineering Company were not rail makers, and were obtaining the rails elsewhere at £8 per ton.¹⁴⁵⁰

Tenders were also invited for the conveyance of the rails to the colony on the condition that tenders would only be accepted if they were for “full ships direct.”¹⁴⁵¹ This was an unusual stipulation, for it was well-known that ships carrying other cargo, in addition to rails, would have quoted a lower price. The successful tenderer was

Recently Entered in England for the Purchase of Steel Rails for the Queensland Government, and Praying Inquiry.” (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1880, p. 405.) The original correspondence, (Hemmant to Griffith 17 April 1880, pp. 184-98 & 30 April 1880, pp. 200-2,) is held in the Griffith Papers, Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales, MSQ 185.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Queenslander. “Six Years of Queensland Politics.” *Victorian Review*, vol 8, June 1883, pp. 160-61; Bernays, p. 87; Fitzgerald, pp. 312-13

¹⁴⁵¹ Queenslander. “Six Years of Queensland Politics.” *Victorian Review*, vol 8, June 1883, p. 160

Messrs. McIlwraith, McEachern and Co, a company owned by the premier's brother Andrew, one in which the premier was a shareholder. It also had the contract for conveying immigrants to Queensland.¹⁴⁵² A further irregularity was that, despite the price being negotiated on the condition that the ships only carried steel rails and not any other cargo, this never happened. As well, there was a serious conflict of interest because the premier, the colonial secretary, Arthur Palmer, and Mr. Ashwell, were registered as joint owners of shares in several of the vessels executing the contract, including the *Scottish Hero*.¹⁴⁵³

Based on this information, William Miles, a member of the opposition, had writs issued in the Supreme Court against McIlwraith and Palmer, for "illegally holding their seats, they being registered shareholders in vessels under contract to the Queensland government for the conveyance of cargo." If found guilty, the penalty was £500 per day for anyone "proved to sit in the house after he has entered into such a contract."¹⁴⁵⁴

The allegations that McIlwraith and members of his ministry had acted illegally and made enormous profits at the colony's expense led to bitter controversy that was exploited by the opposition for all it

¹⁴⁵² Bernays, p. 87

¹⁴⁵³ Queenslander. "Six Years of Queensland Politics." *Victorian Review*, vol 8, June 1883, pp. 160-61; Bernays, p. 87; Fitzgerald, pp. 312-13

¹⁴⁵⁴ "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 7 August 1880, p. 6. Miles subsequently lost this court action. (See, "Our Queensland Letter." *Town and Country*, 10 September 1881,

was worth.¹⁴⁵⁵ A select committee was appointed to investigate the alleged scandal, with the majority dismissing the allegations.¹⁴⁵⁶ The opposition strenuously objected to these findings, the result of which was a royal commission being established in London,¹⁴⁵⁷ where, despite Griffith personally travelling to London during the parliamentary recess and acting as honorary consul for Hemmant, McIlwraith was exonerated.¹⁴⁵⁸

Douglas's involvement in the scandal was through his membership of the select committee,¹⁴⁵⁹ whose hearings were held in secret and to which the press was not admitted.¹⁴⁶⁰ This course of events was

p. 494; Dignan, p. 96)

¹⁴⁵⁵ Bernays, p. 87; "Summary for Europe." *Brisbane Courier*, 7 August 1880, p. 6; "Six Years of Queensland Politics." *Victorian Review*, vol 8, June 1883, pp. 160-61. Three evenings of the debate on the address of the governor were entirely devoted to this subject, with the vice-regal speech scarcely rating a mention and the government's policy agenda ignored.

¹⁴⁵⁶ "Report of the Select Committee on the Contract for, and Carriage of Steel Rails: Mr Hemmants Petition, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1880, pp. 760-956

¹⁴⁵⁷ "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Take Further Evidence in England to Report on the Allegations Contained in Mr. Hemmant's Petition and all Matters Connected Therewith, Together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendices." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1880, vol 2, pp. 403-801

¹⁴⁵⁸ "Six Years of Queensland Politics." *Victorian Review*, vol 8, June 1883, p. 160; Bernays, p. 87; *Our First Half Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based Upon Official Information*, p. 24

¹⁴⁵⁹ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1880, p. 407. Its full title was the *Select Committee on Contract for, and Carriage of Steel Rails, Mr. Hemmant's Petition, Queensland Parliament*, and it was established on 15 July 1880.

¹⁴⁶⁰ "Six Years of Queensland Politics." *Victorian Review*, vol 8, June 1883, pp. 161. On 23 July 1880 a reporter from the *Telegraph* had asked to be admitted but was refused. ("Report of the Select Committee on the Contract for, and Carriage of Steel Rails: Mr Hemmants Petition, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee and the Minutes of Evidence." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1880, p. 760)

strongly opposed by Douglas, who believed that the deliberations of select committees should be open to both the public and the press. In his words, “if freedom of reporting was allowed in the house [then] it should be in committees.”¹⁴⁶¹

On 29 July 1880, he introduced a resolution in parliament to this effect, but it was lost by 24 votes to 12.¹⁴⁶²

For most people this would have been the end of the matter, but not Douglas. He believed that the public interest was paramount, and therefore the public had a right to know the committee’s deliberations. Accordingly, on 2 August 1880 he submitted, through a letter to the *Brisbane Courier*, a transcript of the report of the proceedings of the committee.¹⁴⁶³ This action contravened standing order No. 161 and resulted in a breach of parliamentary privilege.¹⁴⁶⁴

¹⁴⁶¹ Mr. Douglas. “Privilege.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 269

¹⁴⁶² Mr. Douglas. “Select Committees.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 247. The motion moved by Douglas was, “that in the opinion of this house, it is desirable that the proceedings of select committees, except when deliberating, should be open to the public.” (Mr. Douglas. “Privilege.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 269)

¹⁴⁶³ John Douglas. “The Steel Rail Committee.” *Brisbane Courier*, 2 August 1880, p. 3. The full letter is reproduced in Appendix 5. The précis of proceedings was for Friday 23 July 1880. Not surprisingly, the *Brisbane Courier* weighed in with a lengthy editorial supporting both Douglas’s and its own actions. (*Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1880, p. 2)

¹⁴⁶⁴ The Premier. “Privilege.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 268. McIlwraith moved the motion that Douglas, “having wilfully disobeyed a lawful order of this assembly, is therefore guilty of contempt.” (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1880, p. 59.) Standing order no. 161 stated that, “the evidence taken by any select committee of this house, and documents presented to such committee, and which have not been reported to this house, shall not be published by any member of such committee, not by any other person.” (The Premier. “Privilege.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol

During a lengthy debate the following day, parliament deliberated on the question of whether or not Douglas was guilty of contempt.

Douglas was prepared for this, for in his letter to the paper he had averred that:

If its publication is a breach of privilege I accept the consequences, and shall endeavour to maintain my position thus asserted in the cause of truth and of honest administration, which is now in grievous peril.¹⁴⁶⁵

And this he did, informing the parliament that:

It was preferable to break the standing orders of the house itself rather than yield to what I believe to be a course which might imperil the public interest.¹⁴⁶⁶

Despite a strong and spirited defence by Griffith and the rest of the opposition, Douglas was found “guilty of contempt” for having “wilfully disobeyed an order of this assembly.”¹⁴⁶⁷ The next day he continued his defiant stance. While he conceded that he might have broken the “doubtful interpretation” attached to the standing orders, Douglas did not believe that he was guilty of contempt.¹⁴⁶⁸ Instead,

32, 1880, p. 268)

¹⁴⁶⁵ John Douglas. “The Steel Rail Committee.” *Brisbane Courier*, 2 August 1880, p. 3

¹⁴⁶⁶ Mr. Douglas. “Privilege.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 269

¹⁴⁶⁷ “Privilege.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 286; Bernays, p. 88.

The vote was 19 to 13 against Douglas, and he was found guilty of contempt under standing order 103. The standing order stated that: “Any member or other person who shall wilfully disobey any lawful order of the assembly, and any member or other person who shall wilfully or vexatiously interrupt the orderly conduct of business of the assembly shall be guilty of contempt.” (The Premier. “Privilege.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 268)

¹⁴⁶⁸ Mr. Douglas. “Contempt.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 291

he argued that “he had a right to do what he did: and on no other grounds could he justify to his conscience the action he had taken.”¹⁴⁶⁹

It was hardly surprising then, that, when asked by the speaker to apologise for this breach of standing orders, he refused to do so. It was Douglas at his most obstinate and independent. In many ways, it was also Douglas at his best. He stood by his beliefs, no matter how dire the consequences. It would have been a stirring sight to see the patriarch of the parliament – for he was then its longest serving member¹⁴⁷⁰ - defy the speaker and the house, once more putting principle before politics. Nevertheless, while it may have been noble it was also futile, because he was bound to fail. Standing orders are employed by parliaments for sound reasons. Without them, parliaments would descend into chaos, their democratic values threatened.

This episode clearly demonstrated that the Queensland parliamentary system as then constituted was unable to accommodate adequately a principled politician such as Douglas. He would have been the first to recognise this, and would also have understood, and accepted, that the institution of parliament was greater than any individual. As for his actions in this matter, Douglas

¹⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 292

¹⁴⁷⁰ Mason’s research revealed that not one of the men who sat with Douglas in his first session in the Queensland parliament in 1864 were still members in 1880. (Mason, p. 176)

considered that being censured by the parliament for breaching its standing orders was sufficient punishment for his actions.

As he himself had observed in 1865 in parliament, when the member for Mitchell, John Gore Jones, apologised to parliament after being found in breach of parliamentary privilege for publishing a stinging attack on remarks made in parliament by a fellow member:¹⁴⁷¹

Supposing that the honourable member for Mitchell did add to this insult the further injury of refusing to admit that he has been wrong, could we place ourselves in a better position by sentencing him to a fine, or imprisonment for a week or a fortnight, or anything of that kind? Would that be a stronger condemnation than what we have passed? The honourable member is not punishable by this House by fine and imprisonment, if he is not punished now. He is, and I trust deservedly, punished by the censure the House have passed on him.¹⁴⁷²

It would have come as a shock then, when the premier moved a motion that Douglas “Be committed into the custody of the sergent-at-arms for removal from the house.”¹⁴⁷³

An active and animated debate followed,¹⁴⁷⁴ with Griffith spiritedly,

¹⁴⁷¹ “Question of Privilege,” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, pp. 502-8

¹⁴⁷² John Douglas. “Question of Privilege,” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 2, 1865, p. 507

¹⁴⁷³ The Premier. “Contempt.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 292

¹⁴⁷⁴ Bernays, p. 88; “Contempt.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, pp. 291-

eloquently and passionately defending Douglas, and with the attorney general, Henry Rogers Beor, expressing the view that Douglas could not be punished because “the fault was committed outside the house.”¹⁴⁷⁵ Accordingly, McIlwraith had no choice but to withdraw his motion and Douglas survived to fight another day.¹⁴⁷⁶

While the *Brisbane Courier* portrayed Douglas’s actions as a victory for freedom and for the right to have open select committee enquiries,¹⁴⁷⁷ to all extents and purposes this event signalled the end of Douglas’s political career, although he still contributed to the parliament, for example calling for a royal commission to investigate the conduct of the native police towards Aborigines.¹⁴⁷⁸ The parliamentary session ended soon afterwards, concluding what had been “a very angry and personal session.”¹⁴⁷⁹

Resignation from parliament

Douglas abruptly resigned his parliamentary seat the following week,

¹⁴⁷⁵ “Contempt.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 32, 1880, p. 296

¹⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. Despite his censure by parliament, Douglas continued to vigorously prosecute this matter. He enquired of McIlwraith whether he had authority to act as premier while in England (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1880, p. 743), and asked numerous questions about the *Scottish Hero*. (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1880, pp. 741-42)

¹⁴⁷⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 5 August 1880, p. 2

¹⁴⁷⁸ “The Native Police.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 33, 1880, pp. 1130-45; Henry Reynolds. *An Indelible Stain: The Question of Genocide in Australia’s History*. Melbourne, Viking, 2001, pp. 106-7; William Ross Johnston, *The Long Blue Line: A History of the Queensland Police*. Brisbane, Boolarong Publications, 1992, p. 97. This royal commission was not established and the debate was adjourned to a future date.

¹⁴⁷⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 19 November 1880, p. 3

after having represented Maryborough for five and a half years.¹⁴⁸⁰

So abrupt was his resignation that he apparently did not even bother to inform the leader of his faction, Samuel Griffith.¹⁴⁸¹ Never again would he sit in parliament, although he would attempt once more, in 1883, to gain a seat in the legislative assembly. The *Brisbane Courier* was disappointed to see him go, noting that the opposition:

will be considerably weakened, as he was an able and polished speaker, and always commanded the attention and respect of the house.¹⁴⁸²

Other papers expressed similar sentiments. The conservative-leaning *Maryborough Chronicle*, the voice of the local sugar planters, sincerely regretted his “abrupt departure for a quieter sphere;”¹⁴⁸³ the *Wide Bay & Burnett News* noted the “honesty, independence and ability”¹⁴⁸⁴ which he had brought to the position; while the *Week* believed him to be “one of the very few public men in our midst whose services the colony cannot afford to lose.”¹⁴⁸⁵

Regrettable though Douglas’s retirement was, to this paper it was perfectly understandable. It is worth quoting its comments in full, for they offer some understanding not only of the viciousness with which politics was conducted in colonial Queensland during this period, but

¹⁴⁸⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 November 1880, p. 2

¹⁴⁸¹ “Our Brisbane Letter.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 1883, p. 4

¹⁴⁸² “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 27 November 1880, p. 6

¹⁴⁸³ “Local and General.” *Maryborough Chronicle*, 25 November 1880, p. 2

¹⁴⁸⁴ “The Representation of Maryborough.” *Wide Bay & Burnett News*, 27 November 1880, p. 2

the personal price Douglas paid in participating in them:

Some people are rather surprised that Douglas has cut his connection with politics, but I cannot conscientiously say that I am. A man of education and refinement who has been accustomed to associate with gentlemen among whom the ordinary courtesies of civilised life are rigidly observed, soon begins to feel lonely when he gets among men who scorn to be bound to the observance of any such rules towards those who presume to differ from them in opinion. A man who retains any vestige of self-respect, and who values his character, will naturally enough, shrink from placing himself in any position in which a deliberate and persistent attempt is made to destroy both by low coarse insults and foul abuse, and when it is levelled at him through his family, as has been the case with Mr. Douglas, it is less endurable than ever. To be sure "Hansard" has not reported the worst of these insults, but they have been indulged in night after night and week after week with wonderful persistence, nevertheless. No, I am not a bit surprised that Douglas has come to the conclusion that he has had enough for the present.¹⁴⁸⁶

A career in journalism

Around 1880 Douglas and his family moved to *Clayton* in

¹⁴⁸⁵ "Resignation of Mr. Douglas." *The Week*, 27 November 1880, p. 513

¹⁴⁸⁶ Bohemian. "Odd Notes." *The Week*, 27 November 1880, p. 517. Bohemian was almost certainly the *nom-de-plume* of Douglas's friend William Coote.

Toowong,¹⁴⁸⁷ before moving to Wickham Terrace around 1882.¹⁴⁸⁸ By April 1883, they had purchased a house in the Brisbane coastal suburb of Sandgate.¹⁴⁸⁹ His second son, Henry Alexander, named after Douglas' father, was born on 8 April 1879. Hugh Maxwell was born on 21 May 1881, followed by Robert Johnstone on 13 April 1883. Douglas needed a regular income to support his family, because he had not drawn a salary since losing the premiership. He became a leader writer for the *Brisbane Courier* and the *Queenslander*¹⁴⁹⁰ from 1881 to 1885, and was the Brisbane correspondent for the Sydney based *Town and Country Journal* from November 1879 to December 1883.¹⁴⁹¹ Spencer Browne, a journalist who worked alongside Douglas, noted that:

his work was bright and scholarly, as became a Rugby boy and a university man; there was the keen inside knowledge of one who had so lately been at the head of the government, and there was a splendid breadth of

¹⁴⁸⁷ For information on *Clayton*, see John Pearn. *Auchenflower: The Suburb and the Name. A History of Auchenflower, Brisbane, Australia*. Brisbane, Amphion Press, 1997, pp. 45, 53, 252-53; Helen Gregory, ed. *Arcadian Simplicity: J. B. Frewing's Memoirs of Toowong*. Brisbane, Library Board of Queensland, 1990, p. 28. Douglas Street in the Brisbane suburb of Milton is named after John Douglas because of his ownership of *Clayton*. The property is no longer in existence.

¹⁴⁸⁸ *Queensland Post Office Directory, 1883*. The house at Wickham Terrace was on the corner of Wickham Terrace and Berry Street, next to Bayview House, a ladies' boarding school.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Around this time, Douglas also purchased a block of land in the new Barolin township, 14 km east of Bundaberg. (*Planter and Farmer*, vol 2 no 3, March 1883)

¹⁴⁹⁰ Browne (1927), p. 73; *Brisbane Telegraph* 30 July 1904. In "Douglas Cutting Book," Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/E, p. 49

¹⁴⁹¹ A collection of Douglas's articles is held in a cutting book in the Douglas Papers. John

treatment.¹⁴⁹²

Douglas, for his part, enjoyed the work, reflecting that:

writing for the press made me at one time, and gave me a confidence and a mastery of subjects which, I should never have attained without it. When I proved that I could write and write so as to influence people I felt stronger in every way.¹⁴⁹³

Contesting a parliamentary seat

Douglas had successfully made the transition from politician to journalist. While he enjoyed the work, he clearly missed his old vocation. In May 1882, a political opportunity presented itself with a by-election called for the Brisbane seat of Bulimba. Douglas was requested by “some influential gentlemen” to stand for the seat once the by-election was declared, but unsure whether or not he had sufficient support, published a lengthy advertisement in both the *Brisbane Courier* and the *Queensland Punch* obliquely canvassing the electorate.¹⁴⁹⁴ In this unusual communication he reiterated his achievements in the political arena, offered a manifesto of what was still required, and indicated that if elected he could work with the

Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/E

¹⁴⁹² Browne (1927), p. 73

¹⁴⁹³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 18 September 1899. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(c)/19

¹⁴⁹⁴ John Douglas. “To the Electors of Bulimba.” *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1882. No page no., but it is in the advertisement section at the back of the issue; John Douglas. “To the Electors of Bulimba.” *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1882, p. 3

Liberals, but as an advisor rather than a member.¹⁴⁹⁵

Douglas was diffident in the extreme in this tortuous call for electoral support:

I do not seek for the responsibility of a seat in parliament, and yet I am presumptuous enough to believe that I might be of some service in assisting to formulate the principles upon which we ought to be governed.¹⁴⁹⁶

The *Queensland Punch* was unimpressed with Douglas's attitude, likening it to:

an unmarried lady who, while too maidenly to propose on her own account, has yet no objection to let it be known that she is willing to be asked.¹⁴⁹⁷

The necessary support did not eventuate, and Douglas therefore decided not to nominate.¹⁴⁹⁸

The following year (1883) saw a general election and this time Douglas, as a former career politician, was unable to resist. The election was called following McIlwraith's inability to gain support for a transcontinental railway funded through land grants, a policy

¹⁴⁹⁵ John Douglas. "To the Electors of Bulimba." *Brisbane Courier*, 23 May 1882, p. 3

¹⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹⁷ "The passing Show." *Queensland Punch*, 1 June 1882, p. 129

¹⁴⁹⁸ Bulimba Election. *Brisbane Courier*, 12 July 1882, p. 3; Bulimba Election. *Brisbane Courier*, 14 July 1882, p. 3. When nominations took place on 13 July 1882, John Francis Buckland was the only candidate and was elected unopposed.

Douglas enthusiastically supported.¹⁴⁹⁹ It was widely expected that Griffith and the liberal faction would easily win the general election,¹⁵⁰⁰ as they would be aided by disaffection in the ministerialist ranks over the transcontinental railway, economic contradictions in government policy, and the push in the north of the colony for regional separatism.¹⁵⁰¹ The election itself was fought predominantly over the issue of Pacific Islander labour, and McIlwraith and his faction were, as expected, buried under a Griffith liberal avalanche.¹⁵⁰²

Douglas chose to stand as an independent, a fatal mistake in an era increasingly dominated by ruthless, political factional groupings. Although still widely admired by the electorate for his honesty and integrity and still able to draw large and enthusiastic crowds to his campaign speeches, his attempt to secure a parliamentary seat was now peripheral to the general election outcome and the voters reacted accordingly.¹⁵⁰³ Nevertheless, Griffith and his faction were to find out how just how much pain a dogged, independently minded

¹⁴⁹⁹ "The Hon. John Douglas and the Transcontinental Railway." *The Queensland Guardian*. 15 February 1883, p. 14; Douglas (1882); Bernays, pp. 91-92. The *Transcontinental (Land Grant) Railway Bill* was defeated by 11 votes (27 to 16) on 3 July 1883.

¹⁵⁰⁰ As a contemporary sarcastically observed, "the people of Queensland will deserve all that will assuredly await them if they give another term of power to the McIlwraith Ministry." (*Queenslander*, p. 169)

¹⁵⁰¹ Waterson (1978), p. 126

¹⁵⁰² *Ibid.*; Fitzgerald, p. 248; Cilento, p. 394

¹⁵⁰³ The *Brisbane Courier* accurately summed up the support Douglas would receive as follows: "most people will accord their sympathy if not their assent." (*Brisbane Courier*, 3

former liberal premier could cause them.

Before the writs for the new general election were announced, Douglas wrote to Griffith announcing that he would be standing against him, as an independent for the latter's seat of North Brisbane, the "premier electorate of the colony."¹⁵⁰⁴ In reply, Griffith expressed his regret at Douglas's proposed course of action, and intimated that if Douglas successfully contested another seat then he would be offered the speakership.¹⁵⁰⁵

It is difficult to understand why Douglas did not accept this offer if he was serious about resuming his parliamentary career. The liberals were almost certain to be elected, and had Douglas aligned himself with them then a safe seat would have been found and the considerable resources of the liberal faction put at his disposal. There was also the lure of drawing the speaker's salary, this in an era when backbenchers received no payment.¹⁵⁰⁶

However, because Douglas was actuated by loftier motives than personal aggrandisement, he declined the offer.¹⁵⁰⁷ His opinions on

August 1883, p. 4)

¹⁵⁰⁴ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 13 August 1883. Griffith Papers, MSQ 185, pp. 353-57. Dixon Library, State Library of NSW; *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1883, p. 4

¹⁵⁰⁵ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 23 August 1883. Griffith Papers, MSQ 185, pp. 359-62. Dixon Library, State Library of NSW; "The Douglas-Griffith Controversy." *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 12 September 1883

¹⁵⁰⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1883, p. 4. The speaker's salary was £1,000 per annum. (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1884, p. 43)

¹⁵⁰⁷ In Douglas's words; "I myself have never regarded that office as one to which I might aspire." (John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 23 August 1883. Griffith Papers, MSQ 185, pp.

the Liberal faction were made public when he used his election notice to warn voters that “the inevitable result, if Mr. Griffith succeeds at the polls, must be utter rout to the really progressive party. I claim to speak for that party.”¹⁵⁰⁸

On a more practical note, Douglas also had irreconcilable differences with Griffith over land-grant railways. Griffith opposed them, whereas Douglas had passionately supported them.¹⁵⁰⁹ In 1878, when premier, he had successfully piloted the *Railway Reserves Bill*, based on land-grant principles, through the parliament. Now he was again advocating them, this time as the central plank of his election manifesto. Douglas saw land-grant railways as a land issue, a way to break down existing land monopolies.¹⁵¹⁰

This support for land-grant railways appeared to align him with

359-62. Dixson Library, State Library of NSW.) Others considered Griffith's offer to be a bribe. (“The Douglas-Griffith Controversy.” *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 12 September 1883.) As for the loftier motives, Spencer Browne observed of Douglas: “he was always more concerned in the welfare of the country than in small party advantage.” (Browne (1927), p. 78)

¹⁵⁰⁸ John Douglas. “To the Electors of North Brisbane.” *Brisbane Courier*, 2 August 1883, p. 6; John Douglas. “To the Electors of North Brisbane.” *Queensland Figaro*, 4 August 1883, p. 542

¹⁵⁰⁹ Douglas's support for land-grant railways had been cemented by what he saw on his visit to America in 1871. (“Report from the Royal Commission on Railway Construction in Queensland: Minutes of the Evidence ...,” pp. 6-9. *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1872)

¹⁵¹⁰ *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1883, p. 4; John Douglas. “To the Electors of North Brisbane.” *Brisbane Courier*, 2 August 1883, p. 6; “Mr Douglas at the Albert Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1883, p. 4

Mcllwraith, because he and the current premier were in complete agreement on the necessity for large railway schemes financed through land grants.¹⁵¹¹ Mcllwraith wanted to build a transcontinental railway from Brisbane to the Gulf of Carpentaria financed through land-grant sales.¹⁵¹² However, his supporters quickly let it be known that Douglas would not be welcome as their candidate, because he had refused to pledge himself not to vote against them in any want-of-confidence motions.¹⁵¹³

Douglas's employer, the *Brisbane Courier*, enthusiastically supported his candidacy, maintaining there was a need:

for a real Liberal party: one not composed of mere political nonentities, but of men who can be of assistance to their leader in debate, and whose wise counsels he dare not reject.¹⁵¹⁴

Despite the paper extolling Douglas as a candidate who is “now in the very ripeness of intellectual maturity, and yet is troubled with no diminution of vigour,” the liberal faction and its supporters considered Douglas a ‘turncoat’,¹⁵¹⁵ while others were simply

¹⁵¹¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1883, p. 4; Douglas to Mcllwraith, 18 January 1882. Mcllwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/12, letter no. 342

¹⁵¹² Fitzgerald, p. 313; Douglas to Mcllwraith, 18 January 1882. Mcllwraith / Palmer Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/12, letter no. 342

¹⁵¹³ *Brisbane Courier*, 2 August 1883, p. 2. Douglas let it be known that the issue of land-grant railways was the only point of agreement between him and Mcllwraith. (“Mr Douglas at the Albert Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1883, p. 4)

¹⁵¹⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1883, p. 4

¹⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

confused. As William Hemmant wrote to Griffith from London on 19 October 1883, “Whatever can have induced John Douglas to act as he has done? I thought he was driven from parliament by the low Blackguardism of the supporters of McIlwraith, and now he comes to their rescue.”¹⁵¹⁶

In his speech to the electorate Douglas defended his decision to stand in North Brisbane, expressed admiration for Griffith, supported McIlwraith’s push for land-grant railways, and called for the current balance between European and non-white labour in the colony to be maintained through regulation, despite not being “prejudiced against any man, white or black.”¹⁵¹⁷ As far as Douglas was concerned, the principle of nationality could not be tampered with, and he saw no contradiction in being a humanitarian and yet at the same time restricting entry to the colony on the grounds of race or colour.

On 8 August 1883, an article appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, where its Brisbane correspondent, Frederick Thomas Brentnall, criticised Douglas’s decision to contest the election, ridiculed his election manifesto, and, in dismissing his chances, revealed information that could only have been obtained through Griffith supplying Brentnall with the contents of Douglas’s recent

¹⁵¹⁶ William Hemmant to Samuel Griffith, 19 October 1883. Griffith Papers. MSQ 185, pp. 363-68. Dixson Library, State Library of NSW

¹⁵¹⁷ “Mr Douglas at the Albert Hall.” Brisbane Courier, 3 August 1883, p. 4: “Our Queensland Letter.” Town and Country Journal, 8 September 1883, p. 459”

letter.¹⁵¹⁸ Douglas was incensed at the leaking of what he considered “a private and personal communication,” wrote to Griffith accordingly and concluded with the ominous warning: “As I feel that confidence has not been kept with me, I reserve to myself the right of publishing if necessary.”¹⁵¹⁹

Although Griffith did eventually apologise, by then Douglas had imprudently admitted the existence of the correspondence to Bobby Byrne, who promptly demanded through his paper, *Queensland Figaro*, that Griffith confirm or deny whether Douglas had been offered the speakership.¹⁵²⁰ Griffith replied that:

the statement is a deliberate falsehood. It must have been imagined.¹⁵²¹

This emphatic denial by Griffith forced Douglas to release the relevant correspondence,¹⁵²² humiliating Griffith and forcing him to back down publicly.¹⁵²³ As one paper accurately summed up the disagreement between Douglas and Griffith:

¹⁵¹⁸ “Our Brisbane Letter.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 1883, p. 4. The revealing sentence was, “He did inform Mr. Griffith of his intention to come out for the city.”

¹⁵¹⁹ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 13 August 1883. Griffith Papers, MSQ 185, pp. 353-57. Dixson Library, State Library of NSW

¹⁵²⁰ “Will Mr. Griffith Answer This?” *Queensland Figaro*, 18 August 1883, p. 578

¹⁵²¹ “Own up Sam.” *Queensland Figaro*, 1 September 1883, p. 623

¹⁵²² “Mr. Douglas at the Albert Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 20 August 1883, pp. 4-5; “The Douglas-Griffith Controversy.” *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 12 September 1883

¹⁵²³ *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1883, p. 4; “Mr. Griffith in Explanation.” *Brisbane Courier*, 11 September 1883, p. 3; *Brisbane Courier*, 11 September 1883, p. 4; John Douglas. “Mr. Douglas in Reply.” *Brisbane Courier*, 11 September 1883, p. 5

The former has always been looked upon as a gentleman, and a man of truth. The latter seems to be in danger of losing both reputations.¹⁵²⁴

Griffith was furious, coldly “wishing Mr. Douglas joy of his new allies and associates.”¹⁵²⁵ Nevertheless, however embarrassing and demeaning this episode may have been for Griffith, he was never in any danger of losing his seat.¹⁵²⁶ North Brisbane sent two representatives to parliament, and the real contest was for the second position. Douglas, campaigning as an independent, had little chance against the second liberal faction candidate and sitting member, William Brookes. He had indicated in his public meetings that he could not support either faction,¹⁵²⁷ so what was the point of voting for him? Douglas himself recognised this dilemma, but believed there was no other option open to him:

He had such confidence in what he felt to be right that he should despise himself if he did not take that independent course.¹⁵²⁸

As the anonymous Brisbane correspondent for the *Sydney Town and Country Journal*, Douglas had the rare luxury of commenting on own his candidacy! Again, he appears to have recognised the hopelessness of his position:

¹⁵²⁴ “The Douglas-Griffith Controversy.” *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 12 September 1883

¹⁵²⁵ “Mr. Griffith in Explanation.” *Brisbane Courier*, 11 September 1883, p. 3

¹⁵²⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1883, p. 4

¹⁵²⁷ “Mr. Douglas at the Albert Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 20 August 1883, pp. 4-5

As a Liberal, and that he really is, Mr. Douglas would have come in easily enough, but he does not choose, it appears, to be regarded as a Liberal of the recognised pattern at present in fashion, so he stands a good chance of being defeated.¹⁵²⁹

Douglas, as he himself predicted, was soundly defeated, polling 640 votes while Griffith received 1,118 and Brookes 972.¹⁵³⁰ His supporters were in no doubt as to why he had lost:

Against him were arranged the strong party feelings of the more unintelligent voters, the whole influence of Mr. Griffith – who asked for his defeat as a personal favour from the constituency – and all the electioneering devices which a liberal expenditure of money could procure.¹⁵³¹

However, an interjector in the crowd at the declaration of the poll best summed up the sorry saga: “You should have stuck to your old friends, John.”¹⁵³²

Why did Douglas stand against Griffith in North Brisbane? After all, they were both liberals, and Griffith had been his deputy when he was premier. Was it revenge for Griffith’s disloyalty in the 1878 election? If so, it would have been out of character for Douglas, as there is no evidence elsewhere that he harboured deep-seated

¹⁵²⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵²⁹ “Our Queensland Letter.” *Town and Country Journal*, 8 September 1883, p. 459

¹⁵³⁰ “The General Elections.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1883, p. 3

¹⁵³¹ “Douglas Defeat.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1883, p. 2

grudges. Douglas played his politics fairly, and this occasion was no different. The North Brisbane seat returned two candidates to the parliament so Douglas could have justified his actions by explaining that both of them could be returned. If he did believe this then he displayed a remarkable naivety, for everyone else would have seen it as a direct challenge to Griffith. Whatever his motives, the fracas over the speakership would have afforded Douglas a certain satisfaction, even if it did Griffith and his faction little good. This incident illustrates how fortuitous it was that Douglas was unsuccessful in obtaining a seat at this time. The political environment in 1880s was markedly different to that in the 1860s and 1870s. Politics and the political process in the colony had changed. Factional men beholden to political groupings had replaced independent men with short-lived shifting allegiances. There was now simply no room for a maverick such as Douglas, and even though he did not realise this, the electorate did and voted accordingly.

Although Douglas lost in his bid to win a seat in North Brisbane, he, supremely confident in his abilities, craved another opportunity to convince an electorate of his value. The elections were held over a 10 week period,¹⁵³³ and he, after being persuaded to stand

¹⁵³² "The General Elections." *Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1883, p. 3

¹⁵³³ "Our Brisbane Letter." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 August 1883, p. 4

elsewhere,¹⁵³⁴ nominated for the Darling Downs seat of Drayton and Toowoomba¹⁵³⁵ against the sitting members, William Henry Groom and Robert Aland, both members of the liberal faction. Griffith quickly travelled to Toowoomba to lend support to his colleagues' campaigns,¹⁵³⁶ while Douglas arrived shortly afterwards.¹⁵³⁷

Douglas launched into an energetic campaign and addressed several meetings in the district where he espoused the same views as when he had campaigned in North Brisbane, and, mindful of the significant Germanic population residing in the electorate, championed his role in bringing German migrants to the colony.¹⁵³⁸ Nevertheless, Douglas's cause was hopeless, and he knew it. Again, he permitted himself the luxury of reflecting on his campaign for the benefit of the *Town and Country Journal* readers:

[Douglas] with a pertinacity which is almost incomprehensible, still sticks to the land grant railway projects as a sufficient solution for everything... people regard his opinions on this subject as a sort of craze, but Mr. Douglas, with a kind of quixotic obstinacy, still sticks

¹⁵³⁴ "Queensland News." *Brisbane Courier*, 30 August 1883, p. 5: "Queensland News." *Brisbane Courier*, 15 September 1883, p. 5: "Our Queensland Letter." *Town and Country Journal*, 13 October 1883, p. 699

¹⁵³⁵ "General Election." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 September 1883, p. 6

¹⁵³⁶ "Important Arrival." *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 12 September 1883; "Mr Griffith at Toowoomba." *Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1883, p. 5

¹⁵³⁷ "Queensland News." *Brisbane Courier*, 17 September 1883, p. 5

¹⁵³⁸ "Mr. Douglas at Gowrie Road." *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 26 September 1883; "Mr Douglas at Drayton." *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 26 September 1883; "Mr. Douglas Defence of German Immigration." *Darling Downs*

to his universal remedy which some one told him the
 other day he regarded as a kind of political hop
 bitters.¹⁵³⁹

On polling day, Douglas again lost heavily.¹⁵⁴⁰ It was the last time he contested an election. In his words, his candidacy “had been a demonstration, and perhaps not much more.”¹⁵⁴¹ A man as principled as himself was now an anachronism in a new political age when strong leaders enforced loyalty through the factional machine. It is doubtful that Douglas saw it this way, for if he did, he would not have stood for parliament. Nevertheless, whatever the reasons for his defeat, he understood well enough the consequences. Forlornly reflecting on his defeat, Douglas solemnly informed his *Town and Country Journal* readership: “It is thus that our great ones perish.”¹⁵⁴²

With politics now closed to him, Douglas sought other avenues of employment. The Queensland civil service was one option, but the very idea was anathema.¹⁵⁴³ A man used to leading and governing, one who made the rules and interpreted them, he did not follow

Gazette and General Advertiser, 26 September 1883

¹⁵³⁹ “Our Queensland Letter.” *Town and Country Journal*, 13 October 1883, p. 699

¹⁵⁴⁰ “The Elections.” *Brisbane Courier*, 2 October 1883, p. 5; “The General Election.” *Darling Downs Gazette and General Advertiser*, 3 October 1863. Aland and Groom both retained their seats, with 874 and 854 votes respectively, with Douglas a distant last, polling only 410 votes.

¹⁵⁴¹ “Our Queensland Letter.” *Town and Country Journal*, 13 October 1883, p. 699

¹⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 4 September 1898. *Douglas Papers*, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(b)/14

them. As a former premier, he perceived working for the government in a lowly civil service capacity to be degrading and humiliating, and injurious to his honour and reputation. Douglas may have believed in service and duty, but it had to be at the appropriate level. None of the other Queensland premiers had worked in the colony's public service following their premierships - and neither would he.

New Guinea

However, a colonial governor or administrator position was a perfectly acceptable form of employment, one eminently suited to his talents, abilities and standing in society. As explained below, such an opportunity - administering New Guinea - was in the offing.

Douglas, along with many other prominent Australians, had long had an interest in this large island to their north.¹⁵⁴⁴ In 1875, he urged the Queensland parliament to annex New Guinea,¹⁵⁴⁵ and, shortly after becoming premier, wrote to both the Queensland governor and the New South Wales premier seeking their support for Britain to

¹⁵⁴⁴ For example, in 1874 the New South Wales premier, Sir Henry Parkes, urged the British to colonise New Guinea. (Henry Parkes. *Fifty years in the Making of Australian History*. London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1892, pp. 135 & 412-13.) See also John Conley. "Australia in New Guinea Prior to Annexation." *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 6 no 2, 1959-60, pp. 428-29; "The Annexation of New Guinea." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1876, pp. 15-19

¹⁵⁴⁵ "Annexation of New Guinea." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 18, 1875, pp. 498-502; H. C. Brown. *Queensland's Annexationist Ambitions in New Guinea 1859-1884*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1968, pp. 26-27; Wilson (1969), pp. 190-91)

annex the coast of New Guinea not already claimed by the Dutch, as well as those islands in the Torres Straits not already part of Queensland.¹⁵⁴⁶ As the premier visiting Thursday Island, in November 1877, Douglas instructed the police magistrate, Henry Chester, to travel to the New Guinea coast and report to him,¹⁵⁴⁷ and he also appointed William Bairstow Ingham as a government agent of the colony and gold fields warden in New Guinea.¹⁵⁴⁸ Britain, however, was lukewarm to any annexation, sceptical of the claim that other foreign powers were interested in the island, but it did appoint a high commissioner for the Western Pacific,¹⁵⁴⁹ while the northern and eastern islands in the Torres Straits were subsequently incorporated into Queensland.¹⁵⁵⁰

¹⁵⁴⁶ John Douglas to the Colonial Secretary, NSW, 28 April 1877. "A Circular 'Secret' Despatch Relative to the Annexation of New Guinea." Queensland State Archives, COL/1 (Colonial Secretary's Office); John Douglas to Arthur Kennedy, 29 April 1877. Queensland State Archives, COL/1 (Colonial Secretary's Office.) Also reproduced in: *The Torres Strait Boundary Report by the Sub Committee on Territorial Boundaries of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. Volume II. Appendix IX to the Report, Historical Documents Relating to the Maritime Boundary of Queensland.* Canberra, Government Printer, 1976, pp. 139-141; Mullins (1994), p. 141

¹⁵⁴⁷ Henry Marjoribanks Chester. *Narrative of Expeditions to New Guinea, in a Series of Letters Addressed to ... the Colonial Secretary.* Brisbane, Government Printer, 1878

¹⁵⁴⁸ John Douglas to W. B. Ingham, 1 June 1878. Queensland State Archives, A/71730; Geoffrey Bolton. *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920.* Canberra, Australian National University Press, p. 141; Clive Moore. "Queensland's Annexation of New Guinea in 1883." *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 12 no 1, 1984, p. 35. The gold field was at Laloki.

¹⁵⁴⁹ Paul W van der Veur. *Search for New Guinea's Boundaries: From Torres Strait to the Pacific.* Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1966, p. 15

¹⁵⁵⁰ Douglas (1884), p. 859. The relevant correspondence is reproduced throughout the *Torres Strait Boundary Report by the Sub Committee on Territorial Boundaries of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. Volume II. Appendix IX to the Report,*

Douglas's successor, Thomas Mcllwraith, held similar views to Douglas. On 24 February 1883, he dispatched a cable to London instructing his agent-general to urge Lord Derby, the British colonial secretary, to "annex New Guinea to Queensland."¹⁵⁵¹ Without waiting for a reply, Mcllwraith then instructed Henry Chester to sail from Thursday Island to New Guinea to annex the eastern portion of New Guinea.¹⁵⁵² On 4 April 1883 Chester duly raised the British flag in Port Moresby and formally annexed eastern New Guinea to Queensland.¹⁵⁵³

The reason given by Mcllwraith for this decision was that he feared Germany was preparing to annex the island.¹⁵⁵⁴ Another, unstated reason was the desire to recruit New Guineans for the Queensland

Historical Documents Relating to the Maritime Boundary of Queensland. Canberra, Government Printer, 1976, and in "The New Maritime Boundary of Queensland." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, First Session, 1879, pp. 39-41. See also Jean Farnfield. "The Moving Frontier: Queensland and the Torres Strait." In, *Lectures in North Queensland History*. Townsville, James Cook University, 1974, pp. 68. By the time the islands were formally annexed by Queensland, in August 1879 (*Queensland Coast Islands Act 1879*), Douglas was no longer premier.

¹⁵⁵¹ Moore (1984), p. 40; Peter Overlack. "Queensland's Annexation of Papua: A Background to Anglo-German Friction." *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, vol 10 no 4, 1978-79, p. 131

¹⁵⁵² Moore (1984), p. 40

¹⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 26; Veur (1966A), p. 15; "The Annexation of New Guinea: Further Correspondence Respecting." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, Session of 1883-84, pp. 207-45. As Steve Mullins has pointed out, Mcllwraith later indicated that he was more concerned that New Guinea be in British or Australian hands rather than under Queensland control. (Steve Mullins. "Queensland's Quest for Torres Strait: The Delusion of Inevitability." *Journal of Pacific History* vol 27 no 2, 1991, p. 166)

¹⁵⁵⁴ Veur (1966A), p. 15; Bernays, p. 92; Overlack, pp. 130 & 133

labour trade.¹⁵⁵⁵ As the Queensland governor later informed the Colonial Office in a confidential memorandum:

It is useless to disguise from ourselves the fact that in Australia the black races are regarded much in the same light as the African Negroes were regarded by the Jamaica planters a hundred years ago; and not much doubt is entertained by those who know most about the matter that the annexation of New Guinea was intended to supply black labour for the sugar planters.¹⁵⁵⁶

This unauthorised annexation of New Guinea was enthusiastically supported by the various Australian colonies,¹⁵⁵⁷ but the British took a very different position, ostensibly disallowing the annexation because it would not be regarded as a friendly act by rival powers.¹⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, they were alarmed by what had taken place,

¹⁵⁵⁵ Moore (1984), pp. 41-50

¹⁵⁵⁶ Governor Musgrave to the Secretary of State fro the Colonies, 13 January 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, pp. 176-77 (Australian no 112a)

¹⁵⁵⁷ Bernays, p. 93; Conley, pp. 430-32; Overlack, p. 133. Douglas, for his part, viewed the annexation as an “exciting demonstration that will be recorded in our history as a dashing exploit carried out at the instigation of one who had a comprehensive grasp of the situation.” (Douglas (1884), p. 859)

¹⁵⁵⁸ Overlack, p. 133; Luke Trainor. *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 44-46. The other power was Germany, and Lord Derby was, “perpetrating a bargain ... with Bismark which [would] give the Germans their slice of New Guinea, and gave Great Britain a free hand in Egypt.” (Douglas (1900A), p. 12.) The British Government was also concerned that making New Guinea part of Queensland would “remove from Imperial control the labour trade around New Guinea, as it would then become a coasting trade subject only to Queensland laws.” (Moore (1984), p. 42.) Other reasons given by Lord Derby were that New Guinea was too large, it was too little known, the native population was too numerous, the cost of administration would be too great, and that Queensland, with its comparatively small resources, could not be

considering it, “very cocky” and the actions of a “cheeky young colony.”¹⁵⁵⁹

The official British position was not supported by the majority of its own citizens.¹⁵⁶⁰ It was also resented by many in Australia,¹⁵⁶¹ leading McIlwraith to call for the establishment of the first Australian Intercolonial Convention¹⁵⁶² held in Sydney in November and December 1883.¹⁵⁶³ This inaugural convention, with the new premier, Griffith, as the Queensland representative following a change of government in this colony, strongly endorsed McIlwraith’s action and urged the British government to act immediately to make New Guinea part of the British Empire.¹⁵⁶⁴ It was now increasingly evident that Britain would formally have to intervene in New Guinea on behalf of Queensland and the other Australasian colonies, one

entrusted with such an onerous responsibility. (Alexander C. V. Melbourne. “The Relations between Australia and New Guinea up to the Establishment of British Rule in 1888, part 1.” *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal*, vol 12, part 5, 1927, p. 308.) See also William Ewart Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 13 June 1883, *Cabinet Reports by Prime Minister of the Crown*. National Library of Australia, Microform G18363

¹⁵⁵⁹ Edward Robert Drury (Queensland agent-general in London) to Thomas McIlwraith, 20 April 1883. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/158

¹⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶¹ Overlack, p. 133; Douglas (1884), p. 860

¹⁵⁶² Alexander C. V. Melbourne. “The Relations between Australia and New Guinea up to the Establishment of British Rule in 1888, part 2.” *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal*, vol 13, part 3, 1927, pp. 145-49; Deakin, p. 155

¹⁵⁶³ Overlack, pp. 133-34

¹⁵⁶⁴ Veur (1966A), p. 16; “Intercolonial Convention, 1883: Report of the Proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention held in Sydney in November and December 1883.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, Session of 1883-84, pp. 247-382; Trainor, pp. 41-42

way or another.¹⁵⁶⁵ Douglas perceived a potential employment opportunity and decided to travel to England to advance personally his claims for any position created to administer the island.

Visit to England

Douglas sailed to England on 22 February 1884.¹⁵⁶⁶ It was 13 years since he had last been in the mother country, and he spent time with family and friends in England and Scotland. However, the primary purpose of this visit was to secure a paid position, specifically heading up any proposed New Guinea administration.

Griffith would have been pleased to have Douglas as far away as possible after the embarrassment the latter caused him in the 1883 election. He therefore strongly supported Douglas's attempts to gain an administrative position and instructed his agent-general in London to lobby Earl Derby, secretary of state for the colonies, on Douglas's behalf.¹⁵⁶⁷ However, Griffith's support of Douglas was more than simply a desire to have him far enough away to do no

¹⁵⁶⁵ As the Queensland agent-general informed his premier, following the annexation, "I saw Herbert [Colonial Office] before the news became public. I told him that we should take New Guinea. He said I believe you will. Did not either seem much concerned about it. I see the Victorian government back you up and hope you have got the other colonies to do so. We must not go back one single step." (Edward Robert Drury to Thomas McIlwraith, 20 April 1883. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/158)

¹⁵⁶⁶ *Queenslander*, 1 March 1884, p. 325; "Shipping." *Brisbane Courier*, 23 February 1884, p. 4. Douglas sailed to Sydney on the *Maranoa*, intending to take the first *Orient* steamer from there to London.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Samuel Griffith to William Hemmant [Queensland agent-general in London] 26 February

political harm to himself or his government. Griffith strongly opposed any attempts by Queensland planters to “blackbird” New Guineans, and knew that if Douglas was in charge of New Guinea he would curb this odious practice.¹⁵⁶⁸

Douglas arrived in London in April 1884 and stayed with his cousin, Helen Mackenzie.¹⁵⁶⁹ He wasted no time staking his claim for employment, and met with the secretary of state for the colonies early the following month.¹⁵⁷⁰ The Queensland government helped where it could, with its agent-general, William Hemmant, calling on Lord Derby and requesting that a suitable position be found for Douglas.¹⁵⁷¹ While the Colonial Office was sympathetic, there were

1884. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), reel no 1938, CO 234/45, folio 461

¹⁵⁶⁸ Although the desire for New Guinea labour was only one of McIlwraith’s reasons for annexing the island, it was one of the main reasons for Griffith, then opposition leader, opposing it. For a detailed account of the New Guinea labour trade, and Griffith’s ultimately successful attempts to curb it, see Edward Wybergh Docker. *The Blackbirders: The Recruiting of South Seas Labour for Queensland, 1863-1907*. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1970, pp. 169-226 & Trainor, pp. 41-44. Douglas was appalled by this labour trade, and wanted it stopped. (Douglas to F. W. Chesson, [Secretary, Aborigines Protection Society, 1866-1888], 23 June 1884. *Aborigines Protection Society*. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M2427, C133/19; Edward Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby (1826-1893.) Diary entry for Friday 2nd May 1884, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), reel no 1972)

¹⁵⁶⁹ Helen Mackenzie to F. W. Chesson, 28 May 1884. *Aborigines Protection Society*. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M2428, C141/179. Helen Mackenzie (1819-1910) lived at 12 Argyll Road, Kensington, London, and was Douglas’s second cousin once removed. A noted author, her father was Admiral John Erskine Douglas, and her late husband, who had died three years earlier, was Lieutenant-General Colin Mackenzie.

¹⁵⁷⁰ John Douglas to the Earl of Derby (Secretary of State for the Colonies) 30 April 1884. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), reel no 1931, CO 234/45: Edward Henry Stanley, Earl of Derby (1826-93.) Diary entry for Friday 2nd May 1884, Australian Joint Copying Project, reel no 1972.

¹⁵⁷¹ Colonial Office Minute, May 1884. Australian Joint Copying Project, reel no 1931, CO

concerns over Douglas's age - he was now 56 - and the unsuitability of his wife. As a Colonial Office official delicately put it:

Mr. Douglas is a man of ability and high character and though he could not now take a junior subordinate appointment, he would do well in many places as the head of a department on temporary service.¹⁵⁷²

By May 1884, the British government had reluctantly agreed to annex New Guinea, providing the Australasian colonies contributed £15,000 to the cost of its establishment.¹⁵⁷³ In July 1884, the Australasian colonial governments informed the Colonial Office that the money would be forthcoming,¹⁵⁷⁴ leaving Gladstone, the British prime minister, to announce the establishment of the protectorate,¹⁵⁷⁵ and it was formally proclaimed by Commodore James Elphinstone Erskine, of *H.M.S. Nelson*, at Port Moresby, on 6 November 1884.¹⁵⁷⁶

234/45

¹⁵⁷² Ibid. It was because Sarah Douglas was considered to be unsuitable that the Colonial Office would, as outlined in this minute, only consider Douglas for "temporary service." (James Francis Garrick to Samuel Griffith, 1 January 1886. Griffith Papers. MSQ 186, p. 264-68. Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales; Robert Herbert, 20 May 1887. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), reel no. 2686 CO 422/3/9629)

¹⁵⁷³ "Annexation of New Guinea." *Brisbane Courier*, 2 July 1884, p. 5; "The Annexation of New Guinea (Further Correspondence Respecting.)" *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1884, part one, pp. 279-80

¹⁵⁷⁴ "The Annexation of New Guinea (Further Correspondence Respecting.)" *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1884, part one, pp. 280-82

¹⁵⁷⁵ Melbourne (1927E), p. 152; William Ewart Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 7 August and 8 October 1884, *Cabinet Reports by Prime Minister of the Crown*. National Library of Australia, Microform G18363

¹⁵⁷⁶ B. Jinks, P. Biskup and H. Nelson, eds. *Readings in New Guinea History*. Sydney,

Douglas continued to push his claims for the post of New Guinea administrator, informing Griffith that:

I have some hopes of being appointed, though I hear
that General Scratchley is first favourite.¹⁵⁷⁷

Major-General Peter Henry Scratchley was a formidable rival for the post. A soldier and military engineer, in 1878 he was appointed commissioner of defences for the Australian colonies. Retiring from active military service with the honorary rank of major general, he returned to England in 1883 to consult the British War Office on a general colonial defence plan.¹⁵⁷⁸ Unfortunately for Douglas, Scratchley's wife, Laura Liliias, was eminently presentable, being the son of a ship's captain and squatter, and sister to the noted author, Thomas Alexander Browne.¹⁵⁷⁹

It therefore came as no surprise when Scratchley was appointed special commissioner for the New Guinea protectorate.¹⁵⁸⁰ A deeply

Angus and Robertson, 1973, pp. 36-40

¹⁵⁷⁷ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 14 August 1884. Griffith Papers. MSQ 186, pp. 14-25. Dixon Library, State Library of NSW

¹⁵⁷⁸ Roger Joyce. "Scratchley, Sir Peter Henry." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 6. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp. 98-99

¹⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.; T. Inglis Moore. "Browne, Thomas Alexander." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 3. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp. 267-69

¹⁵⁸⁰ "Appointment of Major-General Scratchley as Special Commissioner for the New Guinea Protectorate, and Request for Further Contributions from the Australasian Colonies Towards the Maintenance of the Protectorate." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1884, part one, p. 285. The original is to be found in, "Correspondence Re Annexation of New Guinea." Queensland State Archives, Col 2 (also numbered as PRV 7192.) Scratchley's appointment came into effect on 17 November 1884 and his salary was £2,500 per annum. (Great Britain. Parliament. Accounts and Papers, vol 10. *Council Papers*, vol 54, 1884-85, p. 297)

disappointed Douglas, who had returned to London after visiting his family in Scotland,¹⁵⁸¹ sailed home empty-handed, arriving back in Brisbane in early 1885.¹⁵⁸²

Having failed to secure employment administering New Guinea or indeed any other colonial post, Douglas swallowed his pride and sought Griffith's assistance. He had a family to support and needed a decent livelihood, one more secure than "the uncaring and uncertain nature of literature and the press."¹⁵⁸³ Two days after returning to the colony, he asked Griffith to secure him a position.¹⁵⁸⁴

It was only 18 months since Douglas had campaigned against Griffith for the seat of Bulimba, and the embarrassment and pain he had then caused Griffith still rankled. Securing paid employment for Douglas, preferably as far away from Brisbane as possible, would help distance him from the political life of the capital, and make him less of a danger to Griffith and his faction come the next election.

Torres Strait appointment

The settlement of Thursday Island in the Torres Strait was established in 1877 as a port to cater for the increasing number of

¹⁵⁸¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 August 1887. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/6

¹⁵⁸² "Shipping." *Brisbane Courier*, 13 February 1885, p. 4

¹⁵⁸³ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 14 February 1885. Griffith Papers. MSQ 186, pp. 92-96. Dixon Library, State Library of NSW

¹⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

steamships on the expanding Queensland overseas mail routes.¹⁵⁸⁵ The new settlement grew slowly but steadily in size and importance. The police magistrate at Thursday Island was the autocratic Henry Chester. Appointed in 1877, he had regularised the administration of the fisheries in the region was therefore roundly disliked by many pearl-shelliers in Torres Strait for ruling over the island “like a king,” failing to keep the peace between the white pearl-shelliers and their coloured employees, and allegedly slandering the residents at every opportunity.¹⁵⁸⁶ It was feared that there would be riots on the island if the situation was not remedied, and a petition to this effect was sent by the pearl-shelliers to the government, requesting Chester’s removal from the island.¹⁵⁸⁷

Replacing Chester with Douglas was a neat solution to two problems. Douglas could be trusted to restore peace to the region,

¹⁵⁸⁵ John Foley. *Timeless Isle: An Illustrated History of Thursday Island*. Thursday Island, Torres Strait Historical Society, 1982, p. 12

¹⁵⁸⁶ “Growl from Thursday Island.” *Figaro*, 28 February 1885, p. 285; Margaret Lawrie. *Thursday Island: One Hundred Years*, unpublished manuscript, no date, p. 297. *Margaret Lawrie Collection*, MLC 1791-355. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. As the historian, Geoffrey Bolton remarked: Chester “had a good conceit of his office which at times verged on the pompous and autocratic.” (Geoffrey Bolton. “Chester, Henry Marjoribanks.” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 3. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp. 386-87)

¹⁵⁸⁷ Petition from Thomas McNulty, 13 October 1883. Queensland State Archives, COL/A370/5183; “Growl from Thursday Island.” *Figaro*, 28 February 1885, p. 285; “Anticipated Riots at Thursday Island.” *Figaro*, 25 April 1885, p. 515; Henry Chester to R. Gray, 29 September 1884. Queensland State Archives, COL/A450. For other problems besetting Chester’s administration, see William Robert Mogg. “Strange Doings at Thursday Island.” *Queenslander*, 11 April 1885, p. 567 & Kookamon. “The Recent Government Land Sale at Thursday Island.” *Queenslander*, 11 April 1885, p. 567.

and Thursday Island was so remote that he would pose no threat to Griffith at subsequent elections. However, Douglas, as a former premier of Queensland, could not possibly be appointed to the lowly position of police magistrate with its meagre salary of £450 per annum.¹⁵⁸⁸ The solution was to create the position of government resident of Thursday Island with a salary of £700 per annum, as well as a special allowance of £200 per annum and furnished quarters valued at £150 per annum.¹⁵⁸⁹ It was only the third time a government resident post had been created in Queensland; the previous two were abolished when Queensland became a separate colony over 25 years earlier.¹⁵⁹⁰ Then the term had signified, in the words of the New South Wales premier, Sir Henry Parkes, “a kind of deputy governor,” with the earlier posts created because the locations were geographically remote from the colony’s capital city,¹⁵⁹¹ conditions similar to those in Torres Strait.

On 13 April 1885 Douglas was appointed government resident and police magistrate of Thursday Island.¹⁵⁹² The appointment was

¹⁵⁸⁸ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1884*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1885, p. 32

¹⁵⁸⁹ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1885*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1886, p. 123

¹⁵⁹⁰ The two previous government resident positions were Captain John Clements Wickham, appointed as government resident for Moreton Bay on 7 April 1853 and Maurice Charles O’Connell, appointed government resident for Port Curtis, 1 January 1854. (*New South Wales Government Gazette*. Vol 35 no 1, 3 January 1854, p. 1.) John Jardine is frequently described in the literature as a government resident for Somerset from 1863 to December 1865. However, this title was never officially bestowed. (Prideaux, p. 188)

¹⁵⁹¹ Parkes, p. 91

¹⁵⁹² *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 36 no 6, 14 April 1885, p. 1250. See also “Extract of Minutes of the Executive Council, 2 October 1894.” Douglas Papers, John Oxley

welcomed by much of the press, which congratulated the government for replacing Chester and recognising the increased importance of Torres Strait, considered now to be “a great deal more than an outlying bit of Queensland,” as well as being the gateway to New Guinea.¹⁵⁹³ However, the Brisbane newspaper *The Figaro* saw Douglas’s appointment for what it really was, an “honorable exile.”¹⁵⁹⁴ To the paper, Douglas’s departure from Brisbane was a tragedy, for none “can surpass the honorable gentleman who is now so quietly put aside. In the estimation of the Queensland public he is still a very leading man.”¹⁵⁹⁵

Douglas himself was ambivalent, despite admitting that he “should like the post very well.”¹⁵⁹⁶ After all, a reasonable and regular income was what he needed; the region was a place of “increasing importance;” and when visiting the island in 1877 he had thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful scenery.¹⁵⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Douglas knew that it was not a suitable location for his young family and would have preferred a post in Brisbane so that it could remain together.

However, this was the only position ‘on offer’, and therefore, as he

Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5 (G.) Douglas was entrusted with the following powers: “General control and supervision of the government departments and officers – thereat, and in Torres Straits.”

¹⁵⁹³ *Brisbane Courier*, 14 April 1885, p. 4; “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 22 April 1885, p. 6

¹⁵⁹⁴ *Figaro*, 14 April 1885, p. 486

¹⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 11 April 1885. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/4/4/1

remarked to his brother, Edward, “I do not grumble, though I think I am fit for something better.”¹⁵⁹⁸

Once appointed, events moved quickly for Douglas. 10 days later, on 23 April, he was on board the *Alexandra en route* to Thursday Island. His family remained in Brisbane,¹⁵⁹⁹ while Douglas arrived at his new home on 1 May 1885.¹⁶⁰⁰ His departure was so sudden that there was not even time to organise formal farewells, his friends having to do with saying goodbye at an “ordinary luncheon” at the Johnsonian Club.¹⁶⁰¹ The reason why Douglas departed Brisbane so hurriedly is difficult to establish. Perhaps it had to do with Chester, who after nearly eight years in the position was transferring to Cairns, and with the need to resolve the festering problems and complaints emanating from the district.¹⁶⁰² However grave the situation on the island actually was, Douglas appeared to defuse it,

¹⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹⁹ “Shipping.” *Brisbane Courier*, 24 April 1885, p. 4; “The Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G.” *The Week*, 2 May 1885, p. 415

¹⁶⁰⁰ “Queensland News.” *Brisbane Courier*, 6 May 1885, p. 5; Wanderer. “Thursday Island and its Surroundings.” *Queenslander*, 4 July 1885, p. 14

¹⁶⁰¹ “Departure of the Hon. John Douglas.” *Brisbane Courier*, 24 April 1885, p. 5. Douglas’s departure to Thursday Island was so sudden that he actually arrived in the region before Sir Peter Scratchley, the new special administrator of New Guinea, despite the latter being appointed to the post on 22 November 1884. Scratchley only arrived in Port Moresby on 28 August 1885 after being held up in Melbourne procuring a suitable vessel. (Great Britain. Parliament. Accounts and Papers, vol 10. *Council Papers*, vol 56, 1889, pp. 303 & 309-10; “Summary for Europe.” *Brisbane Courier*, 20 May 1885, p. 3)

¹⁶⁰² In the same *Government Gazette* announcing Douglas’s appointment, it was announced that Chester would be the police magistrate at Geraldton (now Innisfail.) However, on 23 April, he was appointed police magistrate in Cairns, and that was where he

because the threatened riots never eventuated.

Thursday Island

In 1885, Thursday Island was a remote and sparsely populated island, over 2,000 kilometres from Brisbane, and lacking many basic amenities, not to mention the luxuries that a family of Douglas's standing were accustomed to in their Brisbane home. Nevertheless, his family followed him to the island shortly after. What Sarah thought of the conditions can only be imagined. The English travel writer, Lady Brassey, who visited the island in August 1887, left a vivid depiction of the tiny settlement:

The chief building material used in the settlement is corrugated iron, embellished by verandas supported on wooden posts and nattily painted, making the little dwellings both pretty and comfortable. The residency is a larger bungalow on the top of a little hill, and half a dozen fairly good houses cluster around it. There comes a row of stores along the sea-face, and a few more houses stand at the back. A soft sandy track runs in front of the stores, but there are no roads, and consequently no vehicles, and no draught beasts. There is no communication, except from the visits of occasional steamers, nor are any provisions available except canned meats and fruits. The vegetables are grown by the invaluable Chinese, on some of the islands opposite.

Even the water, of which the supply is scanty, is condensed. The only servants available are people of colour. The ladies have to do everything for themselves.¹⁶⁰³

It was, as one long-time resident remarked, “a hard rough life” for all who resided there.¹⁶⁰⁴ There was also the incessant wind. As Lady Brassey observed:

The residency is a pleasant house, open to every breath of wind that blows; of which, according to our experience of these parts, there is plenty...it roars and whistles and shakes the house like an incessant hurricane.¹⁶⁰⁵

Expedition to New Guinea

In July 1885, an Australian geographical party from Victoria, led by Captain Henry Charles Everill and including the botanist William Bauerlen aboard the *Bonito*, arrived at Thursday Island on its way to New Guinea. Bauerlen dined several times with Douglas at the residency and considered him “a fine thorough gentleman.” Douglas

¹⁶⁰³ Annie Brassey. *The Last Voyage to India and Australia in the ‘Sunbeam.’* London, Longmans, 1889, p. 405. For further descriptions and illustrations of life on the island during this period, see Wanderer. “Thursday Island and its Surroundings.” *Queenslander*, 4 July 1885, pp. 13-14; “The Ministerial Northern Tour.” *Queenslander*, 22 May 1886, pp. 806-7 & *Town and Country Journal*, 19 April 1884, p. 744

¹⁶⁰⁴ Brassey, p. 406

¹⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 405. The one attraction of the house was sitting on its verandah with its commanding view over the surrounding archipelago. (John Douglas. “Thursday Island and the Japanese.” Port Darwin, 5 June 1895. Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales, Ad 39.) Douglas bought three allotments of land at a Thursday Island government auction on 29 June 1885. (“Sale of crown Land at Auction.” Queensland State Archives, LAN AB/46, also on microfilm at Z1547)

subsequently accompanied them on the trip to New Guinea, travelling in a separate vessel with Samuel McFarlane in the London Missionary Society yacht, *Mary*. It was his first trip there and Everill named a bend in the Strickland River on the New Guinea mainland the Douglas Bend, in his honour.¹⁶⁰⁶ On 23 July 1885, Douglas left the group¹⁶⁰⁷ and returned to Thursday Island on the Queensland government schooner, the *Mavis*, but the ship was wrecked on Dungeness Reef in early August, and Douglas had to be rescued by another vessel.¹⁶⁰⁸ The loss of the *Mavis* meant he was unable to travel about the Torres Strait and henceforth was confined to Thursday Island.

This was a serious setback to his administration of the islands.

Furthermore, Douglas enjoyed travelling and possessed a curious

¹⁶⁰⁶ William Bauerlen, p. 7; Wanderer. "Thursday Island." *Brisbane Courier*, 31 July 1885, p. 3; John Douglas to Chief Secretary, 3 August 1885. Queensland State Archives, COL/A434/6069. For information on this expedition, see "Special Record of the Arrangements for the Exploration of New Guinea." *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. New South Wales Branch*. Vols. 3-4, 1885-86, pp. 105-64 and "Exploration of New Guinea. Capt. Everill's Report." *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. New South Wales Branch*. Vols. 3-4, 1885-86, pp. 170-87

¹⁶⁰⁷ It was feared that Bauerlen and his party had been massacred, but after four months incommunicado, they steamed back to Thursday Island. (John Douglas to Edward Douglas 10 December 1885. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/2; "Report of Special General Meeting Held on Friday, 20th November, 1885." *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Victorian Branch*, vol 3, 1885, pp. 89-101.) Douglas landed in New Guinea for the first time on 17 July 1885. (John Douglas. "Islands in Torres Straits." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1885, p. 1047)

¹⁶⁰⁸ Queensland State Archives, Col A/443 no's 5740 (6 August 1885) and 6121 (21 August 1885)

and enquiring mind. He wanted to acquaint himself personally with the Torres Strait and its inhabitants; the grounding of the *Mavis* denied him this opportunity. Douglas was always happiest when travelling. Frequently living or working on the frontier, he was a man of action who preferred to visit or explore rather than occupy a desk.

On his way to New Guinea Douglas had called in at Murray Island to conclude a matter commenced by Chester. In 1882, the island had been reserved by Queensland government proclamation for use by Torres Strait Islanders, leading to the subsequent removal of a number of South Sea Islanders already resident there. Despite this, by 1885, 13 South Sea Islanders had again taken up residence and the Murray Islander chief asked Chester to remove them. Chester sought advice from Griffith, who agreed to their removal from the island.¹⁶⁰⁹ Chester then drew up a notice giving the South Sea Islanders 30 days notice to remove themselves.¹⁶¹⁰ However, it fell to Douglas to implement this and he arranged for their relocation to Darnley Island.¹⁶¹¹ Douglas was impressed with the Murray Islanders, believing they “deserve and are entitled to all their

¹⁶⁰⁹ Henry Chester to Colonial Secretary, 12 March 1885. Queensland State Archives, COL/A417; C. Pennefather to Colonial Secretary in-letter 3261 of 1882, Queensland State Archives, COL/A339

¹⁶¹⁰ John Douglas to Colonial Secretary, 6 August 1885. Queensland State Archives, COL/A434

¹⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*; John Douglas. Report of Mr. Douglas on a Visit to Murray Island. Queensland Votes and Proceedings, vol 2, 1885, pp. 1083-85. Douglas arrived at Murray Island on 28 July 1885 and gave his reasons for removing the Pacific Islanders as “My duty was to evict the intruders in virtue of the notice and to sustain the authority of the superior government.”

privileges as Queensland subjects.”¹⁶¹²

In line with his liberal beliefs, Douglas also arranged for boats to be presented to the chiefs of Darnley, Saibai, Stephens and Mabuiag Islands to allow, in the words of his successor, Hugh Milman, under whose rule the boats were delivered, “an opportunity or means to work for themselves, and emulate or copy the white men.”¹⁶¹³

In October 1885 Sarah Douglas fell seriously ill, an illness made worse by the absence of a resident doctor on the island.¹⁶¹⁴ Dr Arthur Edward Salter was belatedly appointed as the health officer, and sent to Thursday Island but, as there was no accommodation available, he had to live with the Douglas family.¹⁶¹⁵

Douglas’s first six months in the Torres Strait had been eventful, especially Sarah’s illness. As he informed his brother Edward, “I have had really hard times of it at home. Much trouble ... I have had a deal of worry”¹⁶¹⁶

Fortunately, for him, things were looking “brighter now, brighter than

¹⁶¹² Douglas (1885A), p. 1083

¹⁶¹³ Hugh Milman. “Annual Report of the Acting Government Resident at Thursday Island.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1886, p. 494

¹⁶¹⁴ John Douglas to Chief Secretary, 30 October 1885. Col A/443 no 8826, Queensland State Archives.

¹⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*; Douglas (1885), p. 4. The residency comprised four bedrooms, a dining room, drawing room, veranda, front and back hallways, a kitchen and pantry, a bathroom and a servant’s room. (Queensland State Archives, QS 788/1)

¹⁶¹⁶ John Douglas to Chief Secretary, 30 October 1885. Col A/443 no 8826, Queensland State Archives; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 10 December 1885. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, Queensland State Library, OM 89-3/B/4/2

they have been for some time.” In this letter he scorned the administration of nearby New Guinea:

New Guinea has been messed over. I could govern
New Guinea from here for one half the £15,000 which
the colonies allow to the Colonial Office for mismanaging
it.¹⁶¹⁷

Unbeknown to Douglas, he soon had the opportunity to put his theories into practice for, on 2 December 1885, the special commissioner for New Guinea, Sir Peter Scratchley, succumbed to malaria, dying at sea between Cooktown and Townsville.¹⁶¹⁸

This chapter so far has traced Douglas’s life from the fall of his premiership to his appointment as government resident on Thursday Island to administer Torres Strait on behalf of the Queensland government, his relocation to the island, his first six months there, his travel to several Torres Strait islands, and the resolution of a complex dispute on Murray Island. His transition from politician to administrator was complete. Douglas had gained experience as a journalist, now had four children, and had travelled back to the country of his birth where he had the pleasure of being reunited with family and friends. While living on Thursday Island was not his first choice, his family had joined him, his boys were attending the newly

¹⁶¹⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 10 December 1885. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, Queensland State Library, OM 89-3/B/4/2

¹⁶¹⁸ “Poor New Guinea.” *Week*, 5 December 1885, p. 541; Joyce (1976), p. 99

established Thursday Island school,¹⁶¹⁹ his wife's health appeared to be improving, and the Brisbane *Week* newspaper considered that Douglas was administering the region well: "so far good has followed the appointment."¹⁶²⁰

Douglas was soon to be appointed to a new post, a post he had previously unsuccessfully sought, that of administrator of New Guinea. However, it was a position that contained more than its fair share of challenges and privations, and he soon yearned for his Thursday Island home, a home, an island, and a people that he had quickly grown to love.¹⁶²¹

¹⁶¹⁹ Douglas had chosen the site of the school during his 1877 visit. (Douglas (1900A), p. 11.) The school itself opened on 13 July 1885 with an enrolment of 23 children, 12 boys and 11 girls. (Tenth Report of the Secretary for Public Instruction for the Year 1885. *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1886, pp. 790-91)

¹⁶²⁰ "The Year 1885." *The Week*, 2 January 1886, p. 13

¹⁶²¹ "The Ministerial Northern Tour." *Queenslander*, 22 May 1886, pp. 806-7

Chapter 16: New Guinea, 1886-88

This chapter explores Douglas's career as an administrator in New Guinea, including his appointment to the post, achievements while in the position, and the influence he exerted on the protectorate's nascent administration. Douglas's sparsely documented time in New Guinea provides an insight into the establishment of a remote colony cum protectorate. Also discussed are the hardships, privations and dangers Douglas faced and his frequent trips away from Port Moresby, the seat of his administration. Australian interest in New Guinea and the establishment of the protectorate by Great Britain over part of the island are not examined, having been analysed in some detail in the previous chapter.

Appointing a special commissioner

Under Sir Peter Scratchley's administration, the new British protectorate of New Guinea had slowly begun to develop in 1885. Despite being there for only 12 weeks in late 1885, Scratchley had made an energetic start, undertaking a couple of trips into the interior and along the coast. However, his premature death aboard ship off the north Queensland coast meant that a successor had to be appointed as a matter of urgency, so that the momentum would continue, and the gains he made not be lost. Finding and appointing a successor to Scratchley unleashed intense machinations and manoeuvrings in Brisbane, with much of it 'leaked' to the press.

There were two frontrunners for the post of administrator of British New Guinea: Douglas and John Bates Thurston, deputy governor of Fiji and consul-general for the Western Pacific.¹⁶²² Despite lobbying for the post in England the previous year, a more experienced Douglas now expressed only a lukewarm interest in the position, entertaining doubts as to New Guinea's viability. "What we, or what anybody else will be able to make out of New Guinea is another question."¹⁶²³

Thurston, who was keen to secure the promotion the post afforded, had reservations of his own, considering the push by Queensland to annex New Guinea as a case of "colonial jingoism."¹⁶²⁴ While supporting annexation, provided it occurred under the auspices of England instead of Queensland, Thurston was almost contemptuous of its inhabitants, dismissively declaring, "a governor, a judicial officer, a chief of police and an expert hangman are all that is necessary to start with."¹⁶²⁵

During Scratchley's administration, Douglas, owing to his residing so close to New Guinea, had gradually been drawn into the affairs of

¹⁶²² Smith, George, ed. "Thurston, Sir John Bates (1836-1897)." *The Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, vol 19, 1964, pp. 837-38. At this time, Thurston was the acting governor of Fiji. ("Conference on New Guinea Matters." *The Week*, 19 December 1885, p. 587)

¹⁶²³ John Douglas. "Our Queensland Letter." *Town and Country Journal*, 28 April 1883, p. 794

¹⁶²⁴ John Thurston to his sister Eliza West Moreton, 12 August 1883. Thurston Papers, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Australian National University, PMB 1142, reel 1

¹⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*

the protectorate. As early as June 1885, Scratchley had appointed him to act on his behalf in the western district,¹⁶²⁶ and in October 1885 he appointed Douglas as government agent for the protectorate “with the permission of the Queensland Government.”¹⁶²⁷ Because Douglas lived in the region, Griffith and the Queensland government considered him the obvious choice to succeed Scratchley, but the Colonial Office and Victoria both supported Thurston.¹⁶²⁸ Thurston had impressed the Colonial Office when he had gone to England, in March 1885, as the British Commissioner to the Anglo-German commission appointed for discussing the question of land claims in Fiji and conflicting territorial claims in the South Pacific.¹⁶²⁹ There was also the ongoing problem for the Colonial Office of Douglas’s ‘unpresentable’ wife.¹⁶³⁰ Meanwhile Thurston, as he confided to his family, was informally approached by the Colonial Office: “H. M. Government desire to

¹⁶²⁶ Douglas held this post from 10 June 1885, receiving an honorarium of £100 per annum. (John Douglas to Edward Stanthorpe, 28 August 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, pp. 133-34. (Australian no 119.) For additional insights into how closely the two men collaborated and supported each other, see Peter Scratchley to John Douglas, 1 July 1885. National Archives of Australia, G23, Item 1

¹⁶²⁷ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 37 no 59, 2 October 1885, p. 1163; John Douglas to Peter Scratchley, 10 September 1885. National Archives of Australia, G9, Item 229/85

¹⁶²⁸ James Service to Samuel Griffith, 17 December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives. The London correspondent for the *Telegraph* newspaper went so far as to predict that Thurston would get the position. (“Death of Sir Peter Scratchley.” *The Week*, 12 December 1885, p. 558

¹⁶²⁹ Smith (1964), p. 838

¹⁶³⁰ James Francis Garrick to Samuel Griffith, 1 January 1886. Griffith Papers. MSQ 186,

confide that great mass of tropical savagery and malarial fever to my keeping.”¹⁶³¹

However, Griffith was determined that this time Douglas’s claims to the position would prevail. He wanted Douglas to combine the two posts and oversee New Guinea from his Thursday Island headquarters. He also knew that with Douglas in charge, there would be no trafficking of labour from New Guinea to Queensland, and that Douglas would tenaciously use his considerable influence to convince the other colonial premiers to fund their share of the cost of maintaining the protectorate. The *Brisbane Courier* strongly supported Griffith, explicitly endorsing Douglas’s claims in an editorial only two days after Scratchley’s death. It also pertinently noted, “our money will be saved and the work better done if a colonist be employed.”¹⁶³² In a hint of the fight to come, the paper demanded that Australia, and not only the Colonial Office, should have a say in the appointment.¹⁶³³

On 7 December 1885, only days after Scratchley’s death, Griffith wrote to the Victorian and New South Wales premiers asking them

p. 264-68. Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

¹⁶³¹ John Thurston to Arabella Thurston, 24 January 1886. *Collections held by Gloucestershire Records Office Relating to Australia and New Zealand*. Australian Joint Copying project (AJCP), M2290

¹⁶³² *Brisbane Courier*, 4 December 1885, p. 4

¹⁶³³ *Ibid.* However, the rival paper, the *Week*, disagreed, contending that the “imperial government should have the exclusive right to appoint governors.” (“A Vacancy.” *The Week*, 12 December 1885, p. 564)

to support Douglas's candidature. Such support was quickly forthcoming.¹⁶³⁴ Sir James Garrick, the Queensland agent-general in London, was instructed by Griffith to advance Douglas's claims with the Colonial Office, and this he energetically did.¹⁶³⁵ Colonel Frederick Stanley, the secretary of state for the colonies, was extremely reluctant to consider Douglas for the post, for the same reason that Douglas was not seriously considered for appointment as special commissioner in the first place – namely that his wife was unpresentable. Stanley convened a meeting of the Australian agents general in London to discuss the matter,¹⁶³⁶ and Garrick supported Douglas and most of the others, including R. Murray Smith, the Victorian agent-general, supported Thurston.¹⁶³⁷

Sir James Service, the Victorian premier, then telegraphed his agent-general instructing him to support Douglas.¹⁶³⁸ This intervention by Service was crucial for Stanley then had to

¹⁶³⁴ Samuel Griffith to James Service and George Dibbs, December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives; George Dibbs to New South Wales Agent-general, 10 December 1885. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, p. 112 (Australian no 112a.) National Library of Australia microfilm no G7447. The Victorian premier remarked of Douglas: "personally I think he would be an excellent choice," while his New South Wales counterpart considered Douglas to be a "highly suitable man, and "a compliment to the colonies."

¹⁶³⁵ Samuel Griffith to James Garrick, 9 December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives; "New Guinea Commissionership." *The Week*, 19 December 1885, p. 586

¹⁶³⁶ "Conference on New Guinea Matters." *The Week*, 19 December 1885, p. 587

¹⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶³⁸ James Service to Samuel Griffith, 17 December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives.

recommend Douglas to the British cabinet as the Australian colonies' choice.¹⁶³⁹ However, Douglas would not be permanently appointed to the post because of "private reasons," a euphemism for his wife, Sarah, being considered unpresentable.¹⁶⁴⁰ A compromise, acceptable to the British cabinet was therefore reached whereby Douglas was appointed in a temporary capacity, pending the protectorate of New Guinea becoming a colony.¹⁶⁴¹

Meanwhile, Douglas, who had become aware of efforts by Griffith to secure the post on his behalf, informed him that he would not accept the position unless New Guinea was "placed under the supervision [of] either Queensland or federal Australia if necessary."¹⁶⁴² Given Douglas's previous propensity for unpredictability, both Griffith and Garrick were understandably alarmed by this turn of events. Garrick quickly negotiated with the Colonial Office for Douglas to take instructions from the governor of Queensland, who would in turn

¹⁶³⁹ James Garrick to Samuel Griffith, 1 January 1886. Griffith Papers, MSQ 186, pp. 264-68. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales. On 20 December 1885, in a meeting with Stanley, both Smith and Saul Samuel, the New South Wales agent-general, supported Douglas's candidature. ("New Guinea Affairs." *The Week*, 26 December 1885, p. 611.) Thurston himself anticipated this, noting, "the Australians want a man of their own and not an imperial officer." (John Thurston to Arabella Thurston, 24 January 1886. *Collections held by Gloucestershire Records Office Relating to Australia and New Zealand*. Australian Joint Copying project (AJCP) M2290)

¹⁶⁴⁰ James Garrick to Samuel Griffith, 1 January 1886. Griffith Papers, MSQ 186, pp. 264-68. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales

¹⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*; James Garrick to Samuel Griffith, 11 December 1885 and to Anthony Musgrave, 22 December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives; "Cablegrams." *The Week*, 2 January 1886, p. 11

¹⁶⁴² John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 19 December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives

consult with his executive council.¹⁶⁴³

On 26 December 1885 Douglas was formally appointed “Her Majesty’s Special Commissioner for the Protected Territory in New Guinea” on a salary of £2,500 per annum¹⁶⁴⁴ and the title of ‘His Excellency.’ Douglas reluctantly accepted, spurred on by Griffith’s admonishment: “You are bound to accept the acting appointment under the circumstances.”¹⁶⁴⁵ Nevertheless, not only did Douglas want to remain the government resident, he also insisted on returning to Thursday Island upon completion of his acting appointment in New Guinea.¹⁶⁴⁶

Douglas’s position was an interim appointment pending the British government and the Australasian colonies agreeing on their respective contributions to finance the proposed colony’s ongoing administration and agreeing on an interior boundary between the

¹⁶⁴³ James Garrick to Samuel Griffith, 1 January 1886 & 31 December 1885, p. 23. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives. For further information see, Samuel Griffith. “Memorandum.” New Guinea, *Queensland Legislative Journals*, vol 2, 1886, pp. 162-65; Colonial Office to Major-General Scratchley, 17 November 1884. “New Guinea Protectorate.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1885, pp. 1011-12

¹⁶⁴⁴ *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea (In Continuation of [C.-4584] August 1885.)* London, Houses of Parliament, 1890, p.7; “New Guinea.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1886, p. 997

¹⁶⁴⁵ Samuel Griffith to John Douglas, 24 December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives; Governor Musgrave to the Secretary of State fro the Colonies, 13 January 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, pp. 176-77 (Australian no 112a

¹⁶⁴⁶ John Douglas. Annual Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island, *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1890, p. 169

German and British portions of the island.¹⁶⁴⁷ All parties underestimated the time needed, and Douglas remained in the position for almost three years.¹⁶⁴⁸

The £2,500 per annum salary Douglas received as special commissioner was a significant sum; sufficiently large that Griffith objected, preferring it to be only £1,500.¹⁶⁴⁹ It is hardly surprising that Griffith complained about how much Douglas was paid, for at the time his salary was only £1,000 per annum.¹⁶⁵⁰ However, Douglas did not consider his salary “excessive.” He believed that the responsibilities and “demands made upon his judgement” to be equal to those of the other Australian colonial governors and entailing considerable interaction with the local populace in a

¹⁶⁴⁷ James Garrick to Samuel Griffith, 31 December 1885, p. 4. Col/3, New Guinea Correspondence, Queensland State Archives; Conley, p. 433; Colonial Secretary, New South Wales to Samuel Griffith, 12 January 1886. Col/4, New Guinea Correspondence, *Queensland State Archives*. The Germans had annexed the north-eastern portion of New Guinea on 3 November 1884.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of Queensland, 16 January 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, p. 140 (Australian no 112a); John Douglas. “British New Guinea. Report for the Year 1886, by Her Majesty’s Special Commissioner for the protected Territory.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1887 vol 3, p. 631; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 37, no 38, 22 March 1886, p. 1106. Although Douglas was appointed to the position on 26 December 1885, he was unable to take up the post until his commission arrived from London. Hugh Hastings Romilly had been appointed acting special commissioner following Scratchley’s death, and continued acting until Douglas formally took up his duties on 27 February 1886. He served as Douglas’s deputy until the colony was proclaimed in September 1888, and then became British consul for New Hebrides.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Samuel Griffith to the Administrator of Queensland, 20 May 1886. “New Guinea.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1886, p. 1003

¹⁶⁵⁰ *Blue Book of Queensland 1886*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1887, pp. 12 & 24. Governor Musgrave’s salary was £5,000 per annum.

manner not encountered elsewhere,¹⁶⁵¹ as Basil Thomson, accompanying Douglas's successor on a trip around the island discovered:

I was asked the other day if I had come down from heaven but instead of worshipping me the flippant old man who asked me poked me in the ribs to see if I was solid. However, I lit my pipe which so awed him that he found I was supernatural after all and ran away.¹⁶⁵²

Another example of the unusual duties associated with the post concerned a visit to a village where, as described by one of the party, they found:

A few natives completely naked, grouped in front of a large house, the principal of whom was an old white-headed man, intelligent looking, to whom Mr. Douglas, with his usual good nature, immediately gave a new suit of serge clothes, and assisted him to don them.¹⁶⁵³

Shortly afterwards Douglas discovered that this man, the village chief, had attacked mission teachers the previous month intending to make "bacon or 'long pig' of them, wild pigs being uncommonly scarce that season!"¹⁶⁵⁴ This encounter demonstrates the

¹⁶⁵¹ John Douglas to the Administrator of Queensland, 21 April 1886. "New Guinea." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 2, 1886, pp. 165-66

¹⁶⁵² Basil Thomson to his father, 17 November 1888. *Thomson Papers*. National Library of Australia, MS 7028, folder no 14.

¹⁶⁵³ "Exploration of New Guinea. Capt. Everill's Report. *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. New South Wales Branch*. Vols 3-4, 1885-86, p. 173

¹⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

challenges and dangers Douglas faced in administering the fledgling protectorate and he later informed his brother that, "I have myself often of late had to face several risks to my own life."¹⁶⁵⁵

Douglas's salary remained at £2,500 per annum, and he was able to use the extra income to buy two plots of land on Thursday Island as well as a property at Tenterfield, a small town in northern New South Wales, the following year.¹⁶⁵⁶ In March, April and May 1886, Douglas travelled to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne to discuss the administration and funding of New Guinea with the Queensland, Victorian and New South Wales governors and premiers.¹⁶⁵⁷ This set a pattern whereby Douglas spent more time outside the protectorate than in it, and when he did reside in New Guinea, he was frequently away from Port Moresby travelling and exploring.¹⁶⁵⁸

¹⁶⁵⁵ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 August 1887. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/6

¹⁶⁵⁶ Arthur Palmer to Granville, 21 May 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, p. 139 (Australian no 118.) National Library of Australia microfilm no G7448]; Samuel Griffith to John Douglas, 14 April 1886. National Archives of Australia, G9, Item 23/86.) Douglas purchased the properties on Thursday Island in early 1886. (List of Owners and Occupiers, Thursday Island, 22 March 1886. Col/077, Queensland State Archives.) He purchased the Tenterfield property, a house and half lots on either side, on 4 March 1887. (John Douglas. 1887 Diary. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/A/2)

¹⁶⁵⁷ John Douglas to Granville, 20 May 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, p. 136 (Australian no 118.); "The Ministerial Northern Tour." *Queenslander*, 22 May 1886, pp. 806-7

¹⁶⁵⁸ Patricia Ann Prendergast. A History of the London Missionary Society in British New Guinea, 1871-1901. PhD thesis. University of Hawaii, 1968, p. 336; Mason, p. 187; "The Commissioner in New Guinea." *Brisbane Courier*, 22 July 1886, p. 6. For a detailed account of Douglas's first trips around New Guinea, see John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 1 July 1886, Griffith Papers. Dixson Library, NSW State Library, MSQ 186, pp. 419-29; 3 July

It was intended that Douglas would live on Thursday Island and combine both his New Guinea and Torres Strait posts,¹⁶⁵⁹ but as this proved unrealistic,¹⁶⁶⁰ Hugh Miles Milman, the police magistrate at Cooktown, was appointed acting police magistrate on Thursday Island in May 1886 and then acting government resident in September of that year.¹⁶⁶¹ By then Douglas had relocated to Port Moresby, arriving on 28 June 1886, almost six months after he was appointed to the post,¹⁶⁶² and some time after Sarah and the children had departed Thursday Island to the family home in Sandgate.

Douglas faced many difficulties in administering New Guinea. His post was a temporary one, he had few staff to call on, the protectorate was remote and unexplored, and he had to expend considerable time and energy ensuring that the promised colonial financial contributions were paid. Despite this, he achieved moderate success in some areas because he kept the nascent administration functioning, oversaw the development of its capital

1886, pp. 434-37; 14 July 1886, pp. 445-57 & 9 August 1886, pp. 513-17

¹⁶⁵⁹ Samuel Griffith to John Douglas, 24 December 1885. Col/3, New Guinea

Correspondence, Queensland State Archives; Samuel Griffith to John Douglas, 14 April 1886. National Archives of Australia, G9, Item 23/86

¹⁶⁶⁰ Barry Scott. *The Governorship of Sir Anthony Musgrave, 1883-1888*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1954, p. 22; Musgrave to Colonial Office, 13 January 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, pp. 176-77 (Australian no 112a)

¹⁶⁶¹ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 38 no 77, 22 May 1886, p. 1845 & vol 39 no 48, 11 September 1886, p. 969

¹⁶⁶² Douglas (1887), p. 660. Douglas first reached the New Guinea coast on 13 June 1886,

Port Moresby, and ensured that the promised financial contributions from several Australian colonial administrations were paid.

Douglas administered the protectorate at Port Moresby, with Milman, the acting government resident on Thursday Island, responsible for the Western district of New Guinea. An agent of the Burns Philp Company looked after the Motu station at the mouth of the Williams River, 100 kilometres to the west of Yule Island; Rigo, to the east of Port Moresby, was the responsibility of one George Hunter; while a government official was responsible for Dinner Island, also known as Samarai, which was located further east.¹⁶⁶³ However, the assistance provided Douglas by these men was limited. They rarely if ever travelled far from their headquarters, and consequently the control they exercised over the surrounding inhabitants was extremely tenuous.¹⁶⁶⁴

Port Moresby

Douglas has been described as the founder of Port Moresby,¹⁶⁶⁵ for

and then spent two weeks cruising along the coast, visiting the country and its inhabitants.

¹⁶⁶³ John Mayo. "The Protectorate of British New Guinea 1884-1888: An Oddity of Empire." In, *The History of Melanesia; Papers Delivered at a Seminar Sponsored Jointly by the University of Papua and New Guinea, the Australian National University, and Administrative College of Papua and New Guinea, and the Council of New Guinea Affairs, and Held at Port Moresby from 30 May to 5 June 1968*. 2nd Waigani Seminar, Port Moresby, University of Papua and New Guinea, 1969, p. 28; William Parker Morrell. *Britain in the Pacific Islands*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960, pp. 404-5

¹⁶⁶⁴ Mayo, p. 28

¹⁶⁶⁵ Ian Stuart. *Port Moresby Yesterday and Today*. Sydney, Pacific Publications, 1970, p. 41; Nigel Denis Oram. *Colonial Town to Melanesian City: Port Moresby, 1888-1974*.

it was he who chose its new site on the narrow saddle between Touagaba and Paga Hills. Known as Paga Point,¹⁶⁶⁶ Douglas relocated it from its existing location at Hanuabada, because, alongside the small European settlement, the New Guineans were burying their dead in shallow graves inside their village there.¹⁶⁶⁷ Douglas had sound reasons for relocating the small European township:

Port Moresby is a fever trap. The native village under the nose of the mission station is a festering mess of putrid abominations enough to infect a regiment of men or missionaries. I don't go near the place and don't intend to. The first thing I intend to do is build a lock-up to secure order and obedience to sanitary regulations.

¹⁶⁶⁸

Douglas employed Walter Cuthbertson, a surveyor from Adelaide, to design and lay out the new township.¹⁶⁶⁹ Douglas Street, one of the main streets, was named for him, as had also been the main street on Thursday Island when surveyed by Howard St. John Wood in

Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1976, p. 21

¹⁶⁶⁶ Douglas (1888), p. 228

¹⁶⁶⁷ Douglas (1887), p. 225

¹⁶⁶⁸ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 3 July 1886. Griffith Papers, Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales, MSQ 186, pp. 434-37. Douglas was also moved to describe the village as a "festering piggery." (John Douglas to Earl Granville, 25 September 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea (In Continuation of [C.-4584] August 1885.)* London, Houses of Parliament, 1890, p. 72.) Musgrave described the conditions in the village as being in "an absolutely pestilent state." (Douglas (1887), p. 657)

¹⁶⁶⁹ Stuart, p. 41

1877.¹⁶⁷⁰ While Douglas was able to improve the sanitary conditions for the 700 people in the village by piping in water,¹⁶⁷¹ he was powerless to eradicate the malaria prevalent there. The disease afflicted many of its inhabitants, including Douglas.¹⁶⁷²

The adults in the village offended Douglas's Victorian sensibilities, as this observation, recorded shortly after his arrival, attests:

The children are nice bright little things and they are fond of ornamenting themselves with flowers. The men and women are not pretty. The women wear petticoats made of grass, but most of the men wear nothing at all. They are a very uncivilised and dirty people.¹⁶⁷³

Douglas did what he could to 'civilise' the embryonic township, setting up a reading room containing "The *Times*, the illustrated papers, the leading Australian journals, and a few periodicals."¹⁶⁷⁴ Nevertheless, despite occupying a government bungalow positioned on "a healthy eminence commanding a magnificent view of the

¹⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 43; Lawrie, p. 290. Both streets have survived as main roads up to the present day, retaining the names Douglas Street.

¹⁶⁷¹ John Douglas. British New Guinea. Report for the year 1887 by Her Majesty's Special Commissioner for the Protected Territory. *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1888, p. 229; Stuart, p. 46. Shortly after arriving in Port Moresby, Douglas made the village chief, A-U-to, promise "to make the village clean." (John Douglas to his children, 8 July 1886. McCourt Papers)

¹⁶⁷² John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 13 July 1887. Douglas Papers. John Oxley library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/5; Stuart, p. 50. See also Douglas's diary for 1887, especially the entries for 10 & 14 October, 11, 15, 23 & 27 November, 18 & 26 December. (Douglas Papers. John Oxley library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/A/2)

¹⁶⁷³ John Douglas to his children, 8 July 1886. McCourt Papers

¹⁶⁷⁴ Douglas (1888), p. 228

surrounding country,”¹⁶⁷⁵ he was happiest when away from Port Moresby and travelling to Australia to be on official business and visit his family or exploring the coastal reaches of the protectorate.¹⁶⁷⁶

Funding the protectorate

Much of Douglas’s time and energy was taken up with ensuring the Australasian colonies paid their promised annual dues. Douglas travelled frequently to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, holding discussions with the premiers and governors residing there, as well as with Rear-Admiral George Tryon in Sydney, the commander-in-chief of the British government’s ships and vessels on the Australian Station.¹⁶⁷⁷ Some colonies were less willing to discharge their responsibilities, leading somewhat inevitably, given Douglas’s persistence and stubbornness, to rancour and recrimination.

¹⁶⁷⁵ John Douglas to Earl Granville, 29 July 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea (In Continuation of [C.-4584] August 1885)*. London, Houses of Parliament, 1890, p. 73

¹⁶⁷⁶ For information on his extensive travel in and around the protectorate, see: John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 1 July 1886, Griffith Papers. Dixson Library, NSW State Library, MSQ 186, pp. 419-29; 3 July 1886, pp. 434-37; 14 July 1886, pp. 445-57 & 9 August 1886, pp. 513-17; Douglas (1888), pp. 237-41; John Douglas to Stanhope, 23 September 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea (In Continuation of [C.-4584] August 1885)*. London, Houses of Parliament, 1890, pp. 82-83. Douglas described his government residence as “a most unpretentious building.” (John Douglas. “The Sudest Rush. Lecture by Hon. John Douglas.” *Telegraph*, 22 October 1888”

¹⁶⁷⁷ Details of Douglas’s travel are contained in his 1887 diary (Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/A/2.) Tryon was appointed commander of the Imperial Squadron in Australian waters in December 1884. (B. N. Primrose. “Tryon, Sir George (1832-1893.)” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 6. Melbourne, Melbourne

It had earlier been agreed that all the Australian colonies, as well as New Zealand and Fiji, would each contribute up to £15,000 per annum for three years to help fund the cost of the protectorate, with the amount owing by each colony calculated on a proportional basis according to their population.¹⁶⁷⁸ When Douglas asked the New Zealand government for their annual contribution for the year ending June 1886, he was told that instead of the period of their contribution ending in June 1886, it would in fact only commence from that date.¹⁶⁷⁹ Douglas refused to accept this unilateral amendment to the original agreement, and a lively correspondence followed, with a decidedly reluctant New Zealand government eventually paying its share after the Colonial Office intervened in support of Douglas.¹⁶⁸⁰

South Australia refused, from July 1886 onwards, to contribute its agreed share.¹⁶⁸¹ Douglas therefore demanded that the remaining contributors make up the shortfall.¹⁶⁸² Victoria's premier took umbrage at his choice of words, especially Douglas's claim that South Australia had "failed to act up to what I believe to be a debt of

University Press, 1976, pp. 305-6)

¹⁶⁷⁸ Douglas (1888), p. 237

¹⁶⁷⁹ William Jervois to John Douglas, 30 June 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, p. 4 (Australian no 120)

¹⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7 & 29; Roger Bilbrough Joyce. *The Administration of British New Guinea, 1888-1902*. M.Litt thesis. Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1953, p. xvi (Appendix to chapter 2)

¹⁶⁸¹ Mayo, p. 25; Douglas (1888), p. 237; John Douglas to Edward Stanhope, 24 February 1887. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, p. 77 (Australian no 120)

honour, and this default ... will remain on record as a warning that cannot be despised.”¹⁶⁸³

As Premier Gillies informed the governor, these were “derogatory statements,” couched in language “wholly unwarranted,” inferring that the colonies were “not to be trusted.”¹⁶⁸⁴ In a detailed reply and rebuttal, Douglas justified his actions,¹⁶⁸⁵ but this failed to mollify the aggrieved premier, leading to a further round of correspondence.¹⁶⁸⁶

While both sides expressed deep regret over their differences, neither side retreated from its position, although Victoria did subsequently contribute the additional amount sought by Douglas.

These incidents demonstrated how seriously Douglas took his duties regarding the protectorate. In his view, the Australian colonies had agreed to pay a set annual amount to ensure the maintenance of the protectorate – and pay they would, and, indeed pay they eventually did. Recalcitrant colonial premiers were not the only ones to incur his displeasure, Douglas taking a particular dislike to those explorers who somewhat shamelessly expected to be compensated with large tracts of land in grateful recognition of their exploits within the protectorate.

¹⁶⁸² Ibid.

¹⁶⁸³ Ibid., p. 78

¹⁶⁸⁴ Gillies to Henry Loch, 7 March 1887. Ibid., p. 133

¹⁶⁸⁵ John Douglas to Henry Loch, 25 May 1887. Ibid., pp. 133-35

¹⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 145-47

Relations with explorers

An explorer who ran foul of Douglas was Theodore Bevan, who had established a store and a base camp in Port Moresby. He was a contentious figure, detesting missionaries and creating controversy and animosity wherever he went.¹⁶⁸⁷ Bevan undertook several explorations of New Guinea, and, mindful of the need to befriend authority, on one of them renamed the Aird River the Douglas River. However, Douglas objected to Bevan having “unjustifiably tampered” with the river’s name, and also rejected Bevan’s request for 254,080 acres of land in recognition of his services and the value of his discoveries, claiming he had no authority to do so.¹⁶⁸⁸ An angry Bevan then retained the original name of the river on his maps and disparaged Douglas in his published memoirs.¹⁶⁸⁹

Bevan displayed a talent for shameless self-promotion, once describing his explorations as having “elicited world-wide astonishment and approval.”¹⁶⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Douglas, for his part, displayed an equal felicity of language, dismissing Bevan’s

¹⁶⁸⁷ Stuart, p. 51

¹⁶⁸⁸ Theodore Francis Bevan. *Fifth Expedition to British New Guinea*. Government Printer, Sydney, 1888, pp. 46-47

¹⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 47; Theodore Francis Bevan. *Toil, Travel and Discovery in British New Guinea*. London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1890, pp. 282-83; John Douglas to Lord Knutsford, 7 May 1888. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting British New Guinea*, pp. 47 & 81 (Australian no 127

¹⁶⁹⁰ Bevan (1888), p. 47; John Douglas. “Mr. Bevan and New Guinea.” *Sydney Echo*, 25 May 1888. In, Bramston to Lord Knutsford, 17 August 1888. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), reel 2686, CO 422/4

explorations as having

been exceeded in extent and importance by almost every *bêche-de-mer* explorer on the coast of New Guinea, and they have become celebrated only because Mr. Bevan has considered them worthy of celebration.¹⁶⁹¹

Bevan complained to the Colonial Office, who declined to act, beyond noting that Douglas “ought not to have published” these comments!¹⁶⁹²

Another explorer to incur Douglas’s displeasure was Captain John Strachan. Like many others, Strachan had sought employment from Douglas, in his case as assistant commissioner, but was rejected, Douglas noting that:

I was too well aware of his character and antecedents to think of entrusting him with any duties under me. On one occasion, when mad drunk, he was arrested here, and placed in the lock-up for safety.¹⁶⁹³

Strachan was incensed when Douglas refused to grant him land concessions in recognition of his explorations¹⁶⁹⁴ and in his published account of his time in New Guinea unflatteringly and

¹⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹² Ibid.

¹⁶⁹³ John Douglas to Lord Knutsford, 4 April 1888. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting British New Guinea*, p. 61 (Australian no 127); John Douglas to Henry Parkes, 27 July 1887. *Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence* vol 51, A881, CY reel 73, pp. 570-78. Dixson Library, State Library of New South Wales

¹⁶⁹⁴ John Douglas to Lord Knutsford, 7 April 1888. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting*

inaccurately portrayed Douglas's appointment and tenure in New Guinea:

Douglas received an acting commission, on receipt of which he quickly gave evidence that he was the last man in Australia fitted to guide the fortunes of a newly acquired territory where there were so many conflicting interests. A man without confidence in himself, he naturally leaned on others who led him as their interests or inclinations prompted. The result was that he succeeded in estranging many of his best friends. He insulted the heads of several of the colonial governments for which he apologised, and after a short reign of eighteen months was compelled to resign to make room for a better and an abler man.¹⁶⁹⁵

Not only was Strachan incorrect over how long Douglas had acted in the position, he was also incorrect in claiming that he had resigned or estranged his friends. As well, Douglas was a man who had supreme confidence in his own abilities, and while his relations with some colonial government heads in relation to financially supporting the protectorate were strained, he did not consider his actions inappropriate and certainly never apologised for them. It was hardly surprising therefore, that Douglas considered these comments vindictive and libellous, and written by a "half cracked" man "not worth powder and shot." He promptly launched legal action against

British New Guinea, p. 68 (Australian no 127)

¹⁶⁹⁵ John Strachan. *Explorations and Adventures in New Guinea*. London, Sampson Low,

the publishers and the book was withdrawn.¹⁶⁹⁶ Douglas's actions in relation to these two men once again illustrate his sense of duty and the lengths he was prepared to go to uphold his reputation against those deemed to have impugned it.¹⁶⁹⁷

Maintaining justice

In New Guinea, Douglas was forced to tread a fine line between looking after the welfare of the local inhabitants and punishing those responsible for frequent hostilities. When outbreaks of violence occurred, Douglas attempted, wherever possible, to establish individual rather than collective responsibility, and to apprehend the actual offenders rather than rely on reprisals against the whole community.¹⁶⁹⁸ This was seldom easy, as Douglas informed his brother, Edward, after an incident at Joannet Island resulted in the

1888, p. 170

¹⁶⁹⁶ Stuart, p. 41; John Douglas to Lord Knutsford, 23 September 1888. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), reel no 2680, CO 422/4/21737; John Douglas to Henry Parkes, 27 July 1887. *Sir Henry Parkes Correspondence* vol 51, A881, CY reel 73, pp. 570-78. Dixon Library, State Library of New South Wales. Whilst I am unable to independently verify Stuart's assertion regarding the withdrawal of Strachan's book by his publishers, I believe it to be a reasonable assertion.

¹⁶⁹⁷ Unfortunately for Bevan, Strachan and others, permission was needed from Douglas to visit, reside or explore the protectorate. This permission was not always granted. For examples of permissions granted, as well as instructions to leave the protectorate, see "Permission Granted to Albert Ross Hovel to Reside and Trade at Port Moresby, 10 January 1887." National Archives of Australia, G12, Item 1; "Memorandum of Conditions Under Which Permission is Granted to Christie Tarflotte, Ernest Pries, Albert Tuckbusch and John Schluter to the Purpose of Collecting Copra etc. at Gilli Gille, Milne Bay, National Archives of Australia, G13, Item 1; "Nicholas Minister – Warning to Leave Protectorate Waters etc., 19 April 1887. National Archives of Australia, G124, Item 3

¹⁶⁹⁸ John David Legge. *Australian Colonial Policy: a Survey of Native Administration and*

death of six Europeans and three Malays:

It is a most difficult thing, to measure out justice in these cases. The real offenders are sure to make themselves scarce. They easily get out of reach of any men-of-war, and what is to be done but to make reprisals on people who may be perfectly innocent?¹⁶⁹⁹

Maintaining justice was further complicated by Douglas's belief that attacks were mainly the result of European provocation, leading to reprisals that were required by native custom. In these instances, Douglas was loath to deal severely with any offenders identified and arrested.¹⁷⁰⁰ The exception was an attack on a South Sea Island teacher murdered at Motu Motu in 1887, where Douglas, in order to demonstrate the government's power and authority, sanctioned a reprisal raid on two villages.¹⁷⁰¹ As he explained:

It is necessary that the white man should, under proper limits, assert his power and I should not myself hesitate to take life in order to vindicate justice, but I am most desirous to avoid not only the appearance but the reality of practices which are as barbarous as the native themselves.¹⁷⁰²

European Development in Papua. Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1956, pp. 41-42

¹⁶⁹⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 22 November 1886. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/3

¹⁷⁰⁰ Legge, pp. 43-44

¹⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p. 44; "Massacres in British New Guinea." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1888, pp. 263-69

¹⁷⁰² John Douglas to H. O. Forbes, 16 February 1887. "Massacres in British New Guinea." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1888, pp. 263-69

Family

While diligently carrying out his duties to the best of his ability, Douglas's mind was frequently on his family. He missed them greatly, wrote to them regularly, and visited them whenever possible. In March 1887, he helped relocate them from their Brisbane home to a property they purchased at Tenterfield on the soon to be completed Brisbane-to-Sydney railway line. Why Sarah and the four boys settled there is unknown, although it is probable that she had relatives in the district.¹⁷⁰³ Before their relocation, he brought his oldest son, Edward, with him on official business to Sydney, and in November 1887, it was Hugh's turn, the latter being treated with a visit to the zoo.¹⁷⁰⁴ On that occasion, Sarah also accompanied them. Wracked with fever, caused by previously contracting malaria in New Guinea, Douglas spent his time alternating between official business, when he visited the premier, the admiralty and government house and inquiring, with Sarah, about educational opportunities for the children at St. Ignatius' College, Riverview and St Joseph.¹⁷⁰⁵ Returning to Tenterfield, Sarah appeared to be ill for most of December, while Douglas taught the children horse-riding, took them for drives and went walking with them.¹⁷⁰⁶

¹⁷⁰³ Presumably, the boys went to the local Catholic primary school, but the school registers for St. Joseph's Primary School in Tenterfield for this period have not survived.

¹⁷⁰⁴ John Douglas. Diary, 19 January & 30 November 1887. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/A/2

¹⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., November & December 1887

¹⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., December 1887

Seeing his family at infrequent intervals made him miss them even more when they were apart and his letters to them and his brother Edward in Scotland provide a rare insight into his feelings and emotions. Like most middle and upper-class Victorian men, these were hidden and never displayed in public. However, in his letters a different Douglas appears, a loving, tender and affectionate father:

I shall often look at the stars and think of you all. You will not hear again from me for some time, very likely not for six weeks, but I shall often be thinking of you all. Be good boys, and do what mother tells you, and always speak the truth. May God bless you dear boys, all of you. My love to all of you.¹⁷⁰⁷

23 November 1886 was the 10th anniversary of the death of his first wife, Mary. Douglas, then on board a ship in the South China Sea, informed his brother about his feelings: "A memorable anniversary this for me. Ten years ago. What vicissitudes. Nicer then!"¹⁷⁰⁸ Douglas immersed himself in his duties, but he found it difficult to be so far away from those he loved,¹⁷⁰⁹ especially as these duties frequently placed him in harm's way: "I have myself often of late had to face several risks to my own life, and I have felt as I have never

¹⁷⁰⁷ John Douglas to his children, 9 June 1886. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/3; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 1 June 1887.

Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/4

¹⁷⁰⁸ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 22 November 1886. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/3

¹⁷⁰⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 13 July 1887. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/5

felt before.”¹⁷¹⁰ At times like these, Douglas found solace in his religion¹⁷¹¹ and his young family.¹⁷¹²

Selecting a replacement

Douglas’s appointment to New Guinea was of an interim nature pending the proclamation of the colony. For a variety of reasons, this took much longer than anticipated, with the outstanding matters - mainly financial - between the colonies and the imperial authorities taking almost three years (1886-88) to resolve.¹⁷¹³ This delay meant that Douglas’s administration was, through no fault of his own, largely ineffectual, because it was difficult for him to act decisively and plan for the future of the protectorate pending the proclamation. Despite this state of affairs resulting in anger and frustration within Queensland, colonies such as New South Wales had now lost interest in administering the protectorate, causing even further delays.¹⁷¹⁴

Douglas was less than impressed by the recalcitrant actions of some of the Australian colonies: a lack of interest by New South Wales, a

¹⁷¹⁰ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 August 1887. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/6

¹⁷¹¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 August 1887. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/6

¹⁷¹² John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 19 September 1887. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/7

¹⁷¹³ A detailed analysis of the many reasons for this delay is beyond the scope of this thesis. For more information, see Joyce (1953), Appendix – Causes of Delays 12/1884 – 9/1888.

¹⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xv

refusal by South Australia to pay its dues, and by Victoria and New Zealand haggling over their liability or the size of the bills.¹⁷¹⁵ For Douglas believed that when it came to New Guinea, no less than the honour of Australia was at stake. Moreover, it was the colonies who had demanded that New Guinea be annexed, with Great Britain reluctantly agreeing, despite there being no support for that position within the imperial government. Douglas believed that through Britain's actions, the Australian colonies had "gained a great protection for its northern frontier," and he was angered over the various colonies begrudging the financial obligations this protection entailed.¹⁷¹⁶ Douglas also recognised that by the colonies uniting to finance the administration and development of New Guinea, they had developed a coherent foreign policy position that would stand them in good stead come federation.

For his part, Griffith, still irritated over the size of Douglas's salary, took this opportunity to settle some old scores when he informed the Queensland parliament that:

I do not think it at all justifiable that the money contributed to the colonies should be frittered away in the payment of a salary of a commissioner who has no function or authority whatsoever.¹⁷¹⁷

¹⁷¹⁵ John Douglas. "Sudest and the Louisiade Archipelago." *Proceedings and Transactions of the Queensland Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia*. 4th Session, 1888-89, vol 4, p. 15

¹⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷¹⁷ Joyce (1953), pp. xiv-xv

There was also the matter of choosing Douglas's replacement to govern the new colony on its eventual proclamation. Because Douglas's appointment was, due to his wife's evident unsuitability, of a temporary nature, the Colonial Office would not permanently appoint him to the post. Griffith therefore sought out a permanent replacement. At the annual meeting of the federal council in Hobart in 1886, he struck up a friendship with William MacGregor, the colonial secretary for Fiji.¹⁷¹⁸ The following year, in London for a colonial conference, Griffith strongly recommended MacGregor to Lord Knutsford, the secretary of state for the colonies.¹⁷¹⁹ Griffith's influence carried the day, and MacGregor was offered the New Guinea appointment in July 1887, a promotion he eagerly accepted.¹⁷²⁰

Word of Macgregor's appointment leaked out before it was officially announced, provoking anger in the Queensland parliament that Douglas had been overlooked. However, Griffith defused it by disingenuously declaring that he was not in a position to say anything, despite being well aware that MacGregor had already accepted the post.¹⁷²¹ Robert Herbert, the permanent under-secretary in the Colonial Office, also had his regrets:

¹⁷¹⁸ Roger Bilbrough Joyce. *Sir William MacGregor*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 97-98; Roger Bilbrough Joyce. "MacGregor, Sir William (1846-1919.)" *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol 5

¹⁷¹⁹ Joyce (1971), p. 101

¹⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102

¹⁷²¹ 'Supply.' *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 52, 1887, pp. 520-23

Mr Douglas, who is an officer of high standing and ability, will no doubt be much disappointed at his supersession in favour of Dr Macgregor, but we cannot avert this. I wish a colonial secretaryship or other good employment could be found for him in a colony in which it should not be disadvantageous that he has an unpresentable wife. (I believe, though, he might leave his wife in Australia.) He should I think on retirement be offered K.C.M.G., which he may not feel able to accept.¹⁷²²

Lord Knutsford was of a similar mind, observing: "I should be glad to promote Mr Douglas if the difficulty (family) can be surmounted."¹⁷²³

Herbert could not have been more wrong over his remark about Douglas being disappointed, but he was on firmer ground about Douglas refusing a knighthood were it offered. In August 1887, Douglas confided his true feelings about his time in New Guinea to his brother Edward: "I am rejoiced to say that I see a prospect soon of my time here coming to an end."¹⁷²⁴

Douglas had little time, either, for knighthoods. When Griffith received one, Douglas, although congratulating him, let him know that he did not believe in them,¹⁷²⁵ and expressed admiration when

¹⁷²² Robert Herbert, 20 May 1887. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), reel no. 2686. CO 422/3/9629

¹⁷²³ Ibid.

¹⁷²⁴ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 August 1887. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/6

¹⁷²⁵ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 9 August 1886. Griffith Papers. Dixson Library, NSW State Library, MSQ 186, pp. 513-17

Alfred Deakin declined his.¹⁷²⁶

More than a year passed between MacGregor accepting the position of administrator of New Guinea and his arrival there. During this time, Douglas became increasingly frustrated. An extract from one of his letters accurately portrayed his life in Port Moresby and the extent of his boredom:

There is little or nothing to do. I get up at daylight, most times before. Anthony, my servant, who does everything for us, brings a cup of cocoa and we endeavor to amuse ourselves by doing something in the cool of morning. There are eight naked savages from a place called Keile whom we shepherd, teaching them to hoe and make paths through the long grass, or perhaps we go across to Paga Point in the boat and look round. Then we have breakfast at 8 o'clock. Breakfast, which consists of porridge and powdered milk, some tinned fish, boiled rice and honey. Then there is a long day indoors from 8 to 4 o'clock. There are perhaps a few official letters to write, not many, some few accounts to post. I read, and write and walk up and down the spacious verandah overlooking our glorious harbour, but really it is very slow work. At 4 o'clock we sally forth for a ride or a walk, or we go out in the boat over to Paga Point. In the evening we have Maka the interpreter up to give us a lesson in the Motu language. Then smokes in the verandah and

¹⁷²⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 24 May 1899. Douglas Papers. John Oxley, State Library of Queensland, OM 89 -3/B/2(c)/7

to bed at 9 o'clock. Sometimes the monotony is varied
by a game at dummy whist.¹⁷²⁷

Fortunately, for Douglas, the imperial government and the Australian colonies eventually resolved their differences, allowing MacGregor to proclaim British sovereignty over the colony of New Guinea on 4 September 1888.¹⁷²⁸ Douglas returned to Thursday Island, following a stint in Brisbane to write up the annual report on British New Guinea and a visit to the centennial international exhibition in Melbourne.¹⁷²⁹

During his time in New Guinea Douglas experienced danger, frustration, deprivations, loneliness and recurrent bouts of malaria. He was separated from his family and, due to the interim nature of his position, constrained in what he could achieve. Despite this, Douglas's achievements, limited though they were, were surprisingly substantial and wide-ranging. In overseeing the development of Port Moresby, regularly patrolling the coastline, encouraging cordial relationships with the local inhabitants, resolving jurisdictional disputes by competing missionary organisations¹⁷³⁰ and prudently regulating the exploitation of the protectorate's natural resources,

¹⁷²⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 1 June 1887. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/4/4

¹⁷²⁸ Joyce (1974), p. 159

¹⁷²⁹ "British New Guinea." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 1 September 1888

¹⁷³⁰ Douglas was generally supportive of missionary work in the protectorate. (John Douglas. "The Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G." In, Church of England. *Papers Read at the Church Congress held at Sydney on the 30th April, 1st, 2nd and 3rd May 1889*. Sydney, Joseph Cook & Co., Sydney, 1889, p 197)

Douglas had laid much of the preparatory work for the launch of the new colony.¹⁷³¹ More was now known about its inhabitants, their traditions and customs, while they in turn had a greater understanding of the nature and influence of the colonial government.¹⁷³² Griffith's faith in Douglas's abilities had been vindicated, for the latter had kept unscrupulous Europeans out of the protectorate, while safeguarding its inhabitants from exploitation in the Queensland labour trade.

¹⁷³¹ An indication of this commitment was the dedication of a Burns Philp & Co. booklet to him. (Burns, Philp & Co, Limited. *British New Guinea*. Sydney, John Woods and Co, 1886. Copy held at the Noel Butlin Archives, Australian National University, N115/583. I am indebted to Dr Anna Shnukal for alerting me to the file's existence.)

¹⁷³² John Douglas. "The Sudest Rush. Lecture by Hon. John Douglas." *Telegraph*, 22 October 1888

Chapter 17: Torres Strait, 1888-1904

No study of Douglas would be complete without examining his profound influence in Torres Strait, for it was here that he devised, implemented and maintained an administrative apparatus for the indigenous inhabitants that was personal, benevolent and autocratic. In the words of the distinguished British historian, Jan Morris, recalling the annexation of the Punjab by the British Raj, these imperial administrators were guided by “providential duty, the destiny of race, and the other lofty abstractions of late Victorian imperialism.”¹⁷³³

Douglas ruled Torres Strait as his own personal fiefdom for the benefit of its inhabitants according to his own liberal beliefs, tenets and values, an episode unprecedented in Queensland colonial history. Although he was aided and abetted in this by the geographical remoteness of Torres Strait, he largely succeeded because of his undoubted administrative ability coupled with his extensive political connections and experience.

Douglas brooked no interference in his domain, and indeed encountered little, being largely left to his own benevolent devices by his grateful political masters in far off Brisbane. Moreover, he left a legacy whereby Torres Strait Islanders came to be considered a race apart in comparison to the mainland Aborigines - protected and allowed to reside and prosper on their traditional islands. Unlike

¹⁷³³ Morris, p. 181

Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders were never consigned to a life of servitude and despair which rendered them fit only for the ministrations of the clergy who so dutifully and earnestly ‘smoothed the pillow’ of a race widely believed doomed to extinction.¹⁷³⁴

Douglas ensured that Torres Strait Islanders received an education and were governed by their own kith and kin.¹⁷³⁵

It was in this remote colonial backwater that Douglas achieved the pinnacle of his power and achievement. It is unfortunate that these achievements, so obvious then to all who visited this grand, white-bearded elder statesman¹⁷³⁶ securely ensconced in his government residency on his beloved Thursday Island, have been obscured under the bureaucratic hand of the racial policies and regulations of successive Queensland government protectors’ of Aborigines.

Douglas’s successful governance of Torres Strait was founded and consolidated through a mixture of successful ideas, initiatives and achievements, and underpinned and buttressed by an unshakeable and indomitable will. His administration was deeply and

¹⁷³⁴ Barbara Lockley. *Queensland Native Policy 1897-1939*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1957, pp. 75-76. Douglas himself also believed that Aborigines were a dying race. (“Colour at Thursday Island.” *Brisbane Courier*, 8 May 1901, p. 4)

¹⁷³⁵ “Ipswich School of Arts.” *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 1, 1864, p. 188

¹⁷³⁶ An example of an eminent visitor was the former Queensland treasurer and future Queensland premier, Sir James Dickson, who visited the island on returning from a visit to London and who penned in his diary: “Hon John Douglas to his residence Vivian Point, and breakfasted with him.” (James Dickson, Diary entry, 31 October 1891. *Dickson Papers*. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 67-13/3.) Other visitors were the artists Tom Roberts and Ellis Rowan in 1892. Roberts painted Douglas’s portrait on Thursday Island. (Ellis Rowan. *A Flower-Hunter in Queensland and New Zealand*. London, John Murray, 1898, pp. 134-35; Humphrey McQueen. *Tom Roberts*. Sydney,

passionately rooted in liberalism, nurtured by profound Christian belief, strengthened by a lifetime of experience, and cemented by an indefatigable quest to unswervingly fulfil his duty to his maker, his sovereign and his country - and last, but certainly not least - the native subjects entrusted to his care.

Douglas returned to Thursday Island in November 1888 after completing the annual report on British New Guinea in Brisbane.¹⁷³⁷ Very little had changed in his absence, and he effortlessly slipped back into his old role as government resident responsible for the region, the welfare of its inhabitants, and the regulation of its fisheries.

Torres Strait Islanders

One of Douglas's major duties as government resident was overseeing the welfare of the indigenous inhabitants of Torres Strait. The situation in the region in the late nineteenth century was very different from today. From around 1870, large numbers of Pacific Islanders and Asians had come to Torres Strait to work in the region's fisheries. The descendants of these pioneers, who within a generation intermarried into the Torres Strait community, are today not only considered to be Torres Strait Islanders but have assumed

Macmillan, 1996, p. 363)

¹⁷³⁷ John Douglas. "Annual Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1890, p. 207. It would be four long years before he again visited Brisbane. (John Douglas to his children, 14 July 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers)

positions of leadership and prestige.¹⁷³⁸

However, in Douglas's day this was not the case. Indeed, there was frequent antagonism between the two groups. Furthermore, on the west coast of Cape York resided Aborigines known by the derogatory term as 'Binghis.' While very different from Torres Strait Islanders, the two groups were frequently grouped together in the contemporary literature and it is often difficult to separate them out. In a society obsessed with class and status, Pacific Islanders were ranked above Torres Strait Islanders while Aborigines occupied the very bottom of the scale.¹⁷³⁹

Douglas, in accordance with the prevailing social Darwinist orthodoxy of his day, clearly believed that Aborigines and Islanders were inherently different and able to be ranked accordingly within colonial society.¹⁷⁴⁰ Nowhere was this more evident than in his attitude towards the enactment of legislation regulating the colonies' Indigenous inhabitants, the *Queensland Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*. It was mainly due to Douglas's strenuous belief that Torres Strait Islanders displayed "marked mental superiority over the mainland native," that led to the

¹⁷³⁸ Singe, p. 66

¹⁷³⁹ P. P. Outridge to the Colonial Treasurer, 2 November 1896. "Correspondence etc. re Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-mer Fisheries, 01/01/1892-31/12/1897." Queensland State Archives TRE/30

¹⁷⁴⁰ This was also the view of the 1897 commission enquiring into the workings of the Torres Strait fisheries industry. ("Report, Together with Minutes of Evidence and Proceedings, of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the General Working of the Laws Regulating the Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-mer Fisheries in the Colony." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1897, vol 2, pp. 1337, paragraph 90)

former being exempt from its provisions during his lifetime.¹⁷⁴¹

As Douglas informed the Queensland government in 1896 after receiving a draft copy of the Bill:

'Native Labourers.' I suggest any Aboriginal natives of Australia. As for the natives of our islands (Torres Straits) they are quite capable of looking after themselves, and are not in need of any special protection.¹⁷⁴²

Although Thursday Island was first visited by European explorers in 1606, it was not until the early nineteenth century, when the strait became an important navigation route that interaction with Torres Strait Islanders increased.

The discovery of commercial quantities of *bêche-de-mer* and pearl shell in the 1860s led to a rapid influx of fishing interests and the beginning of colonial occupation. Islanders were decimated by introduced diseases. Christianity was adopted; Pacific Islanders and other foreigners who crewed the fishing boats settled and married local women, while many islanders needed to work the boats to pay for dowries and European goods.¹⁷⁴³

Torres Strait Islander habitation was scattered across the strait, despite there being only a dozen or so permanently habitable islands among the scores of islands found there. By the end of the

¹⁷⁴¹ Beckett, p. 45; John Douglas to the Under Secretary, Home Office, 29 August 1896. Queensland State Archives, TRE/30

¹⁷⁴² Ibid.

nineteenth century, approximately 400 people were living on Murray Island, 250 on Darnley Island, 200 on Saibai Island, 130 on Badu, 100 on Mabuiag, and 50 each on Stephen, Moa and Prince of Wales Islands.¹⁷⁴⁴

Douglas saw his role towards Torres Strait Islanders as one of benevolent paternalism. Steeped in liberalism, he sought to bring them the benefits of British civilization, including government, education, and protection from unscrupulous exploitation by other groups (including Pacific Islanders.)

As a deeply religious man, Douglas wanted Torres Strait Islanders to receive the same benefits of Christianity he inculcated in his own children:

And seek first the Kingdom of God. That priceless motherhood which gives such freedom and confidence to those who become possessed of its privileges. The franchise is a very wide one and may be secured without money and without price.¹⁷⁴⁵

It was evident that Torres Strait Islanders held a special place in Douglas's heart, as this impassioned plea in an address given in 1900 demonstrated:

¹⁷⁴³ Beckett, pp. 33-34 & 38

¹⁷⁴⁴ William Edward Parry-Okeden. "Report on the North Queensland Aborigines and the Native Police, with Appendices." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1897, p. 32. The vast majority of these people, with the exception of Darnley Island, where Pacific Islanders were in the majority, were Torres Strait Islanders. There were also 1,500 people living on Thursday Island in 1899.

¹⁷⁴⁵ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 11 September 1899. Douglas Papers. John Oxley

The native-born population are British subjects. They are civilised people; they are being educated, and they are entitled, and I say, should be treated as British subjects. Still they are not enumerated even in the census. I hope that in any future census notice will be taken of them ... The natives of the islands of Torres Strait are capable of exercising all the rights of British citizens, and they ought to be regarded as such.¹⁷⁴⁶

As early as 1891 Douglas had informed the Queensland parliament in relation to Murray Islanders that:

I regret to say that ... [they] were not enumerated in conformity with the census requirements. Morally, socially, and industrially they are entitled to be enumerated as an integral and permanent portion of the population. I trust, therefore, that they will, when the next census is taken, be accorded their rights in this respect.¹⁷⁴⁷

Moreover, Douglas understood the importance of island custom and tradition. As the anthropologist, Dr Jeremy Beckett, observed, while Douglas may have suppressed practices he found offensive, he wanted Torres Strait Islanders “to live in a manner appropriate to their presumed stage of cultural evolution” and preferred to document and record island custom than suppress it.¹⁷⁴⁸

Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(c)/19

¹⁷⁴⁶ John Douglas. “The Islands and Inhabitants of Torres Strait.” *Queensland Geographical Journal*, 15th session, 1899-1900, p. 35.

¹⁷⁴⁷ John Douglas. “Condition of Aboriginal Natives of Murray: Report by Government Resident, Thursday Island.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 4, 1891, p. 67

¹⁷⁴⁸ Beckett, pp. 7 & 31

The introduction of Christianity to Torres Strait by the London Missionary Society in 1871 had a profound impact on Torres Strait Islanders. It not only inaugurated a new temporal and moral order, protected them against oppression by foreign seamen, and put an end to warfare and the old cults, but also persuaded them to accept the “whole colonial experience,” leading to them taking responsibility for themselves as individuals and communities.¹⁷⁴⁹ Douglas played a major role in cementing this new order through his governance and educational initiatives and his humane approach to Torres Strait Islanders:

They marry and they are given in marriage. They live in good houses ... they are human beings; they are our own flesh and blood; they are born under our jurisdiction; and they are entitled, I maintain, to the privileges we enjoy.¹⁷⁵⁰

This positive support of Torres Strait Islander society by Douglas was one of his enduring achievements in Torres Strait, for it directly led, in the early and mid twentieth century, to the development of a “special relationship” between Islanders and the Queensland government whereby the former were administered through a system of elected councils. As Beckett, reminds us, this, “was not only in striking contrast to its autocratic treatment of Aborigines, but without parallel in Australian colonial practice anywhere.”¹⁷⁵¹

¹⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 24 & 40

¹⁷⁵⁰ Douglas (1900), p. 35

¹⁷⁵¹ Beckett, p. 17

The legacy of the missionaries and the government in Torres Strait in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was significant. Although they exercised high levels of control over aspects of the Torres Strait Islanders' religious, social, cultural, economic and political lives, nevertheless, in establishing local institutions such as churches, councils and courts, they enabled many existing traditions, customs, language, and land tenure to survive, including traditional adoption and fishing practices.¹⁷⁵²

By 1890, its conversion work in Torres Strait largely completed, the attention of the London Missionary Society had shifted to Papua New Guinea.¹⁷⁵³ Douglas filled this administrative vacuum by sending teacher-supervisors to the larger Torres Strait communities, including Murray Island. These teacher-supervisors overrode the authority of the existing pastors and their church courts.¹⁷⁵⁴

Torres Strait island administration

While the establishment of island administrations run by a chief, or mamoose, with responsibility for law and order, was inaugurated by Chester on Murray Island in 1878, and subsequently extended to Darnley, Stephens, Saibai and Mabuiag Islands in the early

¹⁷⁵² Alan Williamson. *Schooling the Torres Strait Islanders 1873-1941: Context, Custom and Colonialism*. Adelaide, Aboriginal Research Institute Publications, Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, University of South Australia, 1994, p. x

¹⁷⁵³ Douglas (1891), p. 67. As Douglas remarked, "The Islanders of the Straits proved themselves to be most receptive and gladly welcomed their instructors." (John Douglas (1889B), p. 197)

¹⁷⁵⁴ Beckett, p. 44; Archibald E. Hunt to Thompson, 28 February 1890. London Missionary Society. *Papuan Letters*. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), M95

1880s,¹⁷⁵⁵ it reached its completion under Douglas's administration. As government resident, Douglas stamped his own unique brand of easygoing paternalism across Torres Strait and filled the gap left by the increasingly Papua-bound white missionaries.¹⁷⁵⁶ As Bishop Gilbert White would later note, Douglas "had the good of the natives at heart, and spared no trouble to secure them justice."¹⁷⁵⁷

Under Douglas's system of governance, the mamoose of each island, who was usually the leader of the most powerful or numerous clans residing there, was installed as the chief magistrate. He received a Queensland ensign as an insignia of office, and assigned native police to uphold his authority, and suppress crime or disorder.¹⁷⁵⁸ Court proceedings were recorded and all fines remitted to Thursday Island where, under Douglas's direction, they were used to benefit the Torres Strait Islander community.¹⁷⁵⁹

Queensland Commissioner of Police, William Parry-Okeden, observed that while this system of government "may be perhaps somewhat *ultra vires*," he believed it to be "the only rational attempt to govern natives by means of natives that has been known in

¹⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 41; Lawrie, pp. 294 & 400(2); Hugh Milman. "Visit of Inspection to Various Islands, in the G.S.S. "Albatross." " *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1886, pp. 1028; Williamson, p. 8

¹⁷⁵⁶ Beckett, p. 45

¹⁷⁵⁷ White (1917), p. 42

¹⁷⁵⁸ William Edward Parry-Okeden. "Report on the North Queensland Aborigines and the Native Police, with Appendices." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1897, p. 32

¹⁷⁵⁹ Ibid. The monies were, according to Parry-Okeden, "devoted to various purposes of benefit to Islanders, such as the purchase of medicines."

Australia.”¹⁷⁶⁰

In many ways, this system of administration was a response, on behalf of Chester and Douglas, to the poorly developed administrative infrastructure in Torres Strait and the limited resources at their disposal.¹⁷⁶¹ In late 1899, Douglas instituted an elected Council of Advice on Murray Island to both advise the European teacher and counter the influence of a rival church court.¹⁷⁶² This development occurred following a visit to the island the previous year when Douglas was furious to discover that the London Missionary Society’s Samoan pastor resident there, Finau, had installed his own magistrates in opposition to Douglas’s elected mamoose. Douglas considered Finau’s magistrates to “have seriously interfered with the ordinary administration of justice, have levied fines, and have on several occasions intimidated persons who were in the peaceful enjoyment of their rights as inhabitants of the island.”¹⁷⁶³

Douglas called a public meeting at the courthouse, where he informed the pastor, in the presence of the island’s inhabitants, that:

I did not interfere in church matters and that if he

¹⁷⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶¹ Williamson, p. 11

¹⁷⁶² Beckett, p. 45; Lawrie, p. 400(b), note 15; Alfred Cort Haddon. *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits. Vol VI. Sociology, Magic & Religion of the Eastern Islanders*. New York: Johnson Reprint, 1908, reprinted 1971, pp. 178-79

¹⁷⁶³ John Douglas to Rev James Chalmers (Tamate), 27 November 1898. London Missionary Society. *Papua Letters*. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) M98

interfered with me in the administration of justice, or if he caused disaffection, he would be punished and removed from the island.¹⁷⁶⁴

Douglas, in order to prevent similar problems arising in the future, took the radical step of drawing up a constitution for an elected council to advise the mamoose. He instructed the European teacher on Murray Island, John Stewart Bruce,¹⁷⁶⁵ to submit it to the islanders, and, if accepted, then to “give it effect.” Douglas also informed the London Missionary Society that he expected its cooperation in this matter.¹⁷⁶⁶

Following its acceptance, a Murray Island council was established and served as a model for island councils elsewhere in Torres Strait. These councils upheld a system of local justice exercised through each island’s secular courts under the direct supervision of a white teacher who occupied the position of magistrate.¹⁷⁶⁷ Douglas’s actions in this matter were without precedent in colonial Australia¹⁷⁶⁸ and demonstrated the faith he put in Torres Strait Islanders’ abilities, his liberal beliefs, and his respect for democratic institutions. In 1885, he had removed Pacific Islanders from Murray Island to protect the Torres Strait Islanders residing there; 13 years later, he again intervened on their behalf. Douglas regarded and treated

¹⁷⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶⁵ Bruce first arrived on Murray Island in August 1881. (“Obsequies: John Stewart Bruce.” *Torres Straits Daily Pilot*, 23 September 1930)

¹⁷⁶⁶ John Douglas to Rev James Chalmers (Tamate), 27 November 1898. London Missionary Society. *Papua Letters*. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) M98

¹⁷⁶⁷ Williamson, pp. 12 & 51

Torres Strait Islanders and the region's other non-European inhabitants as deserving of all the benefits and protection Queensland law could provide. In this regard, he made no distinction between them and European Queenslanders. While many of his contemporaries professed to hold similar beliefs, Douglas was unusual in that he applied them day after day, year after year, without fear or favour in his role as government resident and police magistrate.

The introduction of government teachers into Torres Strait communities from the 1890s onwards tended to detract from the status of the mamoose, for the teachers, in particular John Bruce on Murray Island, became unofficial government representatives. Consequently, direct communication between the mamoooses and Douglas became less frequent, and the teacher often acted as an intermediary.¹⁷⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the introduction of the white teachers by Douglas had a profound impact on how Torres Strait Islanders were governed *vis-a-vis* Aborigines in the colony of Queensland. It was considered necessary to place Aborigines under the guidance and protection of white officers, resulting in the former being confined on reserves under the management of protectors. This was not possible in Torres Strait because Douglas had installed teacher-residents on the islands rather than reserve managers, and was yet another example

¹⁷⁶⁸ Stuart Kaye. *Torres Strait*. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1997, p. 42

of how his influence in Torres Strait influenced subsequent government attitudes to Torres Strait Islanders, and that resulted in them being treated differently to, and having more rights and privileges than, Aborigines.¹⁷⁷⁰

Education in Torres Strait

Douglas was particularly impressed with Torres Strait Islanders' thirst for education and knowledge:

They are a growing and intelligent people, and they want to be educated. They want to be educated even more than our own people. They show an inclination for education which often exceeds that of our own white population. This is not an extreme statement. It is a true statement, which I can prove by facts, and I am quite sure that anyone who saw these people would be quite convinced that what I have said is true.¹⁷⁷¹

Douglas wanted to educate Torres Strait Islanders in Western ways rather than protect them from Western civilization: he envisaged them as citizens and workers, not mendicants. While at the time it was widely believed that Australian Aborigines would die out, Douglas refused to countenance this happening to Torres Strait Islanders and pointedly informed the Queensland government that, "There is no reason why the native population of the islands should

¹⁷⁶⁹ Lawrie, p. 398

¹⁷⁷⁰ For examples of this see Jeremy Hodes. "Anomaly in Torres Strait: Living 'Under the Act' and the Attraction of the Mainland." *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 64, 2000, pp. 166-172

¹⁷⁷¹ Douglas (1900), p. 35

not increase in numbers.”¹⁷⁷²

The London Missionary Society was the first to establish schools in the Torres Strait, beginning with a mission school on Darnley Island in August 1873.¹⁷⁷³ The society began schooling in Torres Strait in order to evangelise Torres Strait Islanders and establish model Christian communities for them to reside in.¹⁷⁷⁴ The emphasis was on literacy training, so that Torres Strait Islanders would be able to read and study the scriptures.¹⁷⁷⁵

The London Missionary Society used Pacific Islander teachers. Although some of them achieved good results, many more were inadequately trained and unable to enforce regular attendance. This failure, coupled with the abandonment of the society’s headquarters on Murray Island in 1890,¹⁷⁷⁶ caused Douglas to intervene and by the turn of the century a chain of government schools existed, where attendance for all Torres Strait Islander children between the ages of six to 12 was compulsory.¹⁷⁷⁷ Douglas achieved this by instituting a system of European teacher-supervisors to the major islands.¹⁷⁷⁸ As

¹⁷⁷² John Douglas. “Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1900.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1901, p. 994

¹⁷⁷³ Williamson, p. 37

¹⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8

¹⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35

¹⁷⁷⁶ Douglas (1891), p. 67

¹⁷⁷⁷ Beckett, pp. 88-89; John Douglas to Alfred Cort Haddon, 22 May 1890. *Haddon Papers*, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) M2728, Box 1, 3. In 1898, the Home Secretary, Justin Fox Greenlaw Foxton, when visiting the Torres Strait, sanctioned the establishment of schools on Darnley, Saibai, Yorke and Badu Islands. (Williamson, p. 62)

¹⁷⁷⁸ Beckett, pp. 88-89. This began with Murray Island in 1892 and signalled the end of the missionaries’ stranglehold on educating Torres Strait Islanders. For more information, see

early as 1886, he wanted to establish a decent education system for the over 100 children then residing on Murray Island:

Why should they not have a schoolmaster to teach them English? They are fine bright little people – obedient and well behaved. They get some schooling but not enough. ... They were Queensland subjects in every respect, and entitled to the privileges of our education system.¹⁷⁷⁹

While Douglas encouraged islanders to participate in Western education, he not only wanted to civilise them, but also, as Williamson observed, prepare them for participation in the Torres Strait fisheries:

He wanted an intelligent and tractable indigenous labour force to counter the need to recruit cheap labour from elsewhere and was not averse to Islanders becoming self-employed in the pearl shell and *bêche-de-mer* industries.¹⁷⁸⁰

Douglas achieved this by insisting that instruction in the government schools be based on the Queensland state school syllabus and conducted in English.¹⁷⁸¹ His appointment of European teacher-residents in Torres Strait¹⁷⁸² would be the forerunner of the

Williamson, pp. 45-47 & 51

¹⁷⁷⁹ John Douglas. "The Islands of Torres Straits." *Proceedings of the Queensland Branch of the Geographical Society of Australasia*. 1st Session, vol 1, 1885-86, pp. 82-83; Douglas (1889B), p. 198

¹⁷⁸⁰ Williamson, pp. 13 & 58; Douglas (1891), p. 68

¹⁷⁸¹ Ibid. Previously the missionary teachers had taught in the vernacular (Williamson, p. 51)

¹⁷⁸² Around 1890-91, John Bruce, the first of the European teacher-residents in Torres Strait

Queensland government's involvement in the schooling of Torres Strait Islanders, an event without parallel in the history of educating indigenous peoples in colonial Australia, as their schooling, if provided, was under the auspices of various religious denominations.¹⁷⁸³

However, in Torres Strait Douglas insisted that as Torres Strait Islanders were considered different to Aborigines, they therefore warranted a different type of schooling.¹⁷⁸⁴ It was due solely to his influence, authority, indomitable will, and belief in the ability of Torres Strait Islanders that the foundations of a school system for them that combined elements of Queensland's provisional schools and the needs of the local population were laid.¹⁷⁸⁵

Douglas single-handedly established in Torres Strait a comprehensive school system that was government-funded, administered, and modelled on the system of provisional schooling

was somewhat unwillingly persuaded by Douglas to become the temporary government teacher on Murray Island following the departure of Archibald Hunt in February of that year. Bruce's appointment was then ratified by the Queensland government in 1892.

("Obsequies: John Stewart Bruce." *Torres Straits Daily Pilot*, 23 September 1930)

¹⁷⁸³ Williamson, pp. 53 & 56; *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1897, p. 129. As Williamson explained, schooling in mainland Australia was the responsibility of Christian missions. For instance, in 1907, the six Aboriginal Reserves in Far North Queensland were all under the control of missions to whom the government paid small subsidies for education.

¹⁷⁸⁴ Raymond Evans, Clive Moore, Kay Saunders *et al.* *1901- Our Future's Past*. Sydney, MacMillan, 1997, pp. 63-4

¹⁷⁸⁵ Williamson, pp. 53 & 56. In 1900, the Queensland Department of Public Instruction handed over responsibility for these schools to the Queensland Home Secretary's Department. The Department of Public Instruction had responsibility for provisional schools in Queensland, while the Home Secretary had responsibility for the colony's state schools.

provided for European children on the mainland. This contrasted sharply with schooling of Aborigines in the same period, which was a missionary responsibility with minimal government support or involvement.¹⁷⁸⁶

Douglas's education policy underpinned his vision for Torres Strait Islanders. An instance of how seriously Douglas took the education of Torres Strait Islanders is provided in this account from Iotama, the Samoan teacher on Darnley Island in 1893:

When the British Governor [John Douglas] came for a visit to this island, I told him of the children's reluctance to attend school. The children of this island are very undisciplined unlike the children of Samoa. The whole population gathered and the governor told them that they must bring their children to be taught by me. To guarantee this, they were made to swear oaths. The governor further explained the penalty for any boy who misses school. He will spend one day carrying stones for the wharf. The parents accepted the regulation. These days, all the boys and girls attend school. When anyone fails to attend, I apply the Governor's regulation.¹⁷⁸⁷

Douglas wanted to prepare Islander children for Queensland citizenship through an education similar to that found elsewhere in

¹⁷⁸⁶ Williamson, pp. 65-66

¹⁷⁸⁷ Uili Feleterika Nokise. *The Role of London Missionary Society Samoan Missionaries in the Evangelisation of the South West Pacific: 1839-1930*. PhD thesis. Australian National University, 1983, p. 346. I am indebted to Dr Anna Shnukal for providing this reference to me.

the colony.¹⁷⁸⁸ Having an education would also allow Torres Strait Islanders to work productively in the region's fisheries, both as workers on boats¹⁷⁸⁹ and owning boats through co-operative commercial ventures, such as that which occurred in 1896 when Mabuiag Islanders, with the assistance of the missionary Frederick Walker, purchased a lugger to work the fisheries.¹⁷⁹⁰

The success of this policy had lasting implications. Following Douglas's death in 1904,¹⁷⁹¹ Torres Strait Islanders were brought under the same draconian legislation endured by Aborigines, legislation designed to implement the Queensland government's protection and segregation policies for Indigenous Queenslanders.¹⁷⁹² However, not only did the local educational and administrative systems instituted by Douglas counter any tendencies for subsequent government policies and administrative practices to

¹⁷⁸⁸Williamson, p. 58

¹⁷⁸⁹ Douglas (1901), p. 994

¹⁷⁹⁰ John Douglas. "Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1894-95." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1896, p. 506; "Report, Together with Minutes of Evidence and Proceedings, of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the General Working of the Laws Regulating the Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-mer Fisheries in the Colony." *Queensland Votes and proceedings*, 1897, vol 2, p. 1346; Douglas (1889B), p. 198

¹⁷⁹¹ As John Bruce acknowledged, "The straits natives lost a good friend when Mr Douglas died. He looked well after their welfare." (John S. Bruce to Professor Alfred Cort Haddon, 3 November 1904. *Haddon Papers*, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) M2739, 1052)

¹⁷⁹² Following Douglas's death in 1904, Hugh Milman was appointed the government resident. In 1906, he was informed by the government that: "in order to secure uniformity of practice throughout the state, the local protector of Aborigines, M. C. D. O'Brien, will in future perform all duties which appertain to the position of protector under the *Aboriginals Protection Act*." This communication signalled the end of an era in Torres Strait, for the protector, not the government resident, was now responsible for Torres Strait Islanders in Torres Strait. (Queensland Under Secretary W. H. Ryder to Hugh Milman, Government Resident, Thursday Island, 21 March 1906. Queensland State Archives, A/69463. General

become hegemonic;¹⁷⁹³ they also encouraged Torres Strait Islander resistance to increased government control, culminating in the 1936 strike, where Torres Strait Islanders refused to work on government boats for several months.¹⁷⁹⁴

Japanese in Torres Strait

The major industry in Torres Strait was centred on the exploitation of its fisheries, especially pearl shelling, trochus and *bêche-de-mer*. Europeans who employed Pacific Islanders initially controlled it, but over time, the growing numbers of Japanese attracted to the industry increasingly threatened their dominance and control.

The first Japanese came to Torres Strait in the late 1870s seeking work in the pearling industry.¹⁷⁹⁵ Employed as divers, they were so successful that European employers increasingly preferred them to others. From 1891, Japanese merchants facilitated worker migration, resulting in increased numbers coming to Torres Strait.¹⁷⁹⁶ On Thursday Island, the Japanese population grew from 22 in 1890 to a peak of 619 in 1898, when, for the first time, they outnumbered the European population.

This rapid growth and dominance of the Torres Strait fisheries by non-Europeans at the expense of Europeans greatly concerned

Correspondence (Aboriginals - Protectors-Torres Strait, 1906-7)

¹⁷⁹³ Williamson, p. 67

¹⁷⁹⁴ For information on this strike, see Beckett, pp. 51-55

¹⁷⁹⁵ Ganter (1999), p. 100

¹⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-4

Douglas and other like-minded Queenslanders, who saw Japanese as a threat to both their livelihood and their British way of life.¹⁷⁹⁷

Douglas's remarks about Japanese residing on Thursday Island, in 1895, reveal his reasons, for:

they have their own shops, their own boat building slip
... it will very soon be a case, I fear, of the survival of the
fittest, and if things go on as they are doing, the
Caucasian will be played out.¹⁷⁹⁸

Although Douglas had nothing against individual Japanese, he believed that collectively they posed a danger to the European way of life on the island:

I have really a great respect for the Japanese and a
great admiration for their physical and mental capacities;
all the same, I think we shall have to look out.¹⁷⁹⁹

Moreover, as a group he regarded them as “a positive menace” to the British way of life on Thursday Island.¹⁸⁰⁰ Douglas's beliefs in this regard had not deviated since his successful efforts at halting Chinese immigration to Queensland almost two decades previously. He continued to believe in:

maintaining the idiosyncrasy of the races from which we

¹⁷⁹⁷ John Douglas. “Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1892-3.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1894, p. 909. For reaction to the influx of Japanese to Torres Strait, see John B. Armstrong. *The Question of Japanese Immigration to Queensland in the Nineteenth century*. MA thesis, University of Queensland, 1970, pp. 63-70

¹⁷⁹⁸ John Douglas. “Thursday Island and the Japanese.” 5 June 1895. Dixson Library, *State Library of NSW*, AD 39

¹⁷⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰⁰ “The Japanese Question.” *Brisbane Courier*, 12 May 1897, p. 4

derive our origin – We must, through the length and breadth of Australia, be commandingly European.¹⁸⁰¹

Most Queenslanders wanted Queensland society to be based on British values and customs, not Asian ones. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that Douglas and others became increasingly alarmed over Japanese entrenchment in the pearling industry in Torres Strait in the mid 1890s.¹⁸⁰²

Douglas kept the Queensland government well informed as to the numbers of Japanese arriving and the impact their presence was having on the fisheries and the Thursday Island community - and consistently demanded that it take action to restrict their migration to Torres Strait.¹⁸⁰³ He complained that Japanese women were brought to the island as prostitutes and that the number of Japanese men arriving was too great to be absorbed into the local fishing industry.¹⁸⁰⁴ Douglas also believed it unfair that aliens, who would never settle permanently in Torres Strait, were allowed to exploit the fisheries.

¹⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰² John Douglas. "Asiatic Aliens in Torres Straits," p. 2. 13 January 1895. Queensland State Archives, PRE/105

¹⁸⁰³ "Précis of Papers Dealing with Necessity for Restricting Japanese Immigration." Queensland State Archives, PRE/105. See also a debate on Douglas's actions on this matter in "Thursday Island." *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol Lxxix, 1898, pp. 529-35; "In the Gallery." *Brisbane Courier*, 15 September 1898, p. 5

¹⁸⁰⁴ "Précis of Papers Dealing with Necessity for Restricting Japanese Immigration." Queensland State Archives, PRE/105; John Armstrong. Aspects of Japanese Immigration to Queensland before 1900." *Queensland Heritage*, vol 2 no 9, November 1973, p. 5; John Douglas. "Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1894-95." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1896, p. 502; John Douglas. "Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1896 and 1897." *Queensland Votes and*

I hardly think that British fisherman, with all their pluck and indomitable love of freedom, would as cheerfully invite their French or Dutch neighbours to share in the privileges of their home fisheries as we do when we license Japanese or Malays to fish within the limits of our maritime boundary.¹⁸⁰⁵

Nevertheless, his concerns were lessened somewhat by his belief that, being fishermen, most Japanese would not settle permanently on Thursday Island as they desired to return to Japan, while the liberal in him admired them as “a hardworking people, tractable, inoffensive, and reasonable.”¹⁸⁰⁶

The Queensland government, always receptive to Douglas’s concerns, acted quickly. It voiced its opposition to the flow of migration from Japan to Torres Strait and in 1897 appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate the matter. The commission’s findings led to the amendment of the relevant Act, resulting in Japanese being prohibited from renting boats or acquiring boat licenses in the colony.¹⁸⁰⁷ These restrictions, together with the active involvement of the Japanese government in restricting immigration of its nationals to Queensland¹⁸⁰⁸ and the federal

Proceedings, vol 1, 1898, p. 425

¹⁸⁰⁵ Douglas (1894), p. 4; Douglas (1901), p. 992

¹⁸⁰⁶ John Douglas. “Asiatic Aliens in Torres Straits,” 13 January 1895, p. 13. Queensland State Archives, PRE/105

¹⁸⁰⁷ “*Report, Together with Minutes of Evidence and Proceedings, of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the General Working of the Laws Regulating the Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-mer Fisheries in the Colony.*” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1897, vol 2, pp. 1301-52

¹⁸⁰⁸ See, Yuichi Murakami. *Civilised Asian: Images of Japan and the Japanese as viewed*

government's *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901, halted the influx of Japanese to Torres Strait.

Nonetheless, resentment towards the Japanese took time to settle, as this observation in 1899 in the local newspaper, the *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, attests.

The Japanese, despite his industry and his cleverness, is not liked and is not trusted. The race are personally agreeable, but they get everything into their own hands, both by underselling, mysterious, and unfathomable systems of combination. Japanese were first brought to Thursday Island as divers. Then they got to own boats and then combined in the ownership of boats ... subsequently they took to building boats ... The 30 or 40 White men who formerly worked at boat-building and repairing work are no more.¹⁸⁰⁹

By the late 1890s, Douglas was satisfied that the threat had been reduced, observing in 1901, that, as Japanese arrivals to the island had “dried up” almost completely, the “Japanese problem” was being “solved”.¹⁸¹⁰ Nevertheless, despite the ‘White Australia’ policy now in force, Japanese and other non-Europeans were still needed in the pearling industry. Douglas recognized that while “White men can do well as divers,” they refused to do this sort of dangerous work, and

by Australians from the early Nineteenth Century to 1901. PhD thesis. University of Queensland, 1999, chapter 5 & Willard, pp. 116-18

¹⁸⁰⁹ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 30 September 1899, p. 2

¹⁸¹⁰ “Colour at Thursday Island.” *Brisbane Courier*, 3 May 1901, p. 4; John Douglas.

“Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1899.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1900, p. 1059; Douglas (1901), p. 1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May

he therefore accepted the need for Japanese to have an ongoing involvement in the industry, if only as “auxiliaries.”¹⁸¹¹ For him, the solution was obvious, namely increased employment of Torres Strait Islanders and Papua New Guineans in the Torres Strait fisheries.¹⁸¹²

Douglas was initially intent on capping Japanese immigration and influence. On achieving this, he was in later years more concerned with ensuring that Japanese abided by the regulations and legislation governing the pearl-shelling industry. As a police magistrate, he was involved, on a daily basis for almost two decades, in upholding the peace and meting out justice, and this he did without fear or favour. Non-Europeans were accorded a measure of dignity and respect, fairness frequently espoused elsewhere but rarely put into practice as it was on Thursday Island.

One instance of Douglas’s impartiality in dispensing justice concerned the arrest of a Japanese diver, Nakane, for indecency and resisting arrest on Thursday Island in January 1898. The arrest was made under what appeared to be difficult circumstances, with 200 of his countrymen present, while the case itself, heard before Douglas over four days, was attended by several hundred Japanese. Although Douglas found that Nakane was indeed guilty of indecent exposure for urinating in public on a Saturday afternoon in the main

1901, p. 4

¹⁸¹¹ *The Age*, 6 September 1902, p. 10; John Douglas. “Asiatic Aliens in Torres Straits,” 13 January 1895, p. 3. Queensland State Archives, PRE/105

¹⁸¹² Douglas (1901), pp. 3-4. This is what subsequently happened, with some 200 New Guineans employed in the industry by late 1903. (“The Hon. John Douglas. Visit to

thoroughfare whilst under the influence of liquor, he called for discretion on the part of police, as not only were there no urinals there, but he himself had

urinated in a public street, though of course in a quiet corner, and never felt that I had committed an act of indecency.¹⁸¹³

Despite finding that Nakane had resisted arrest, Douglas refused to record a conviction on this count and instead criticised the police for their excessive use of force as the constable had “downed him [Nakane] a second time in a rather inhuman manner, and knocked him senseless.”¹⁸¹⁴

Douglas’s verdict was controversial, the local paper taking an opposing position when it reported on the case. As its title subheading exclaimed:

A charge of Indecency: Extraordinary decisions: The police snubbed: The lawbreakers complimented.¹⁸¹⁵

While the paper may have adopted a populist position, Douglas’s impartial actions in this and other cases demonstrated his respect for the rule of law and helped ensure relative peace and stability between diverse groups on a small and remote island.

Brisbane. An Interesting Interview.” *Brisbane Courier*, 11 December 1903, p. 5)

¹⁸¹³ “A Charge of Indecency.” *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 29 January 1898

¹⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸¹⁵ Ibid. For a similar account, see Old Colonist. “*Reminiscences of Half a Century and Present-day Politics.*” Record Printing Company, Rockhampton, 1898, pp. 66-67

Other Asian groups in Torres Strait

Douglas's attitude to the other Asians on Thursday Island was very different, for, being fewer in number, they never threatened the European way of life on the Island. To Douglas, the major problem with Chinese residents was their opium smoking, a vice he considered far worse than alcohol.¹⁸¹⁶ As well, he disapproved of their gambling and condemned many of them as "insatiate gamblers."¹⁸¹⁷ By 1899, there were two wholesale and eight retail opium dealers on the island with a clientele including Malays and Europeans.¹⁸¹⁸

The two other main Asian groups living and working in Torres Strait were the Filipinos and Malays. Filipinos, known as Manila men, were brought, like Malays, to Torres Strait from Singapore on three-year agreements to work in the fisheries.¹⁸¹⁹ By 1885 there were 147 Filipinos in Torres Strait, but in subsequent years their numbers declined and there were rarely more than 100 in any given year. Some settled permanently on Thursday Island, married women selected for them in the Philippines, and acquired boats of their

¹⁸¹⁶ John Douglas to his children, 7 September 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas. "Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for 1898." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1899, p. 900.

¹⁸¹⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 7 October 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹⁸¹⁸ Douglas (1899), p. 900; *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol LXXXII, 1899, p. 338

¹⁸¹⁹ John Douglas. "Asiatic Aliens in Torres Straits." 13 January 1895. p. 1. Queensland State Archives, PRE/105

own.¹⁸²⁰

As naturalized British subjects, Filipinos were considered to be the “only fully-integrated Asians” on the island.¹⁸²¹ Nevertheless, being identified as Asian still made them the object of racial hostility by Europeans: the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate* expressed alarm over “hordes of Asiatic aliens”¹⁸²² when an additional 150 Filipinos arrived on the island in 1899. Douglas, however, viewed Filipinos in a different light, and considered them the most settled of the Asians, “good residents” who circulated their money on the island.¹⁸²³

Douglas was also impressed with Malays and regarded them as having “furnished both good crews and good divers” for the Torres Strait fisheries. However, unlike Filipinos, most Malays returned home at the end of their agreements.¹⁸²⁴ Douglas was particularly moved by the plight of a Malay leper consigned to the leprosarium on Dayman Island in Torres Strait and remarked that he was “an intelligent man, who, in spite of his troubles, contemplates life with

¹⁸²⁰ Ibid., p. 2; Douglas (1902), p. 51

¹⁸²¹ Renato Perdon. *Brown Americans of Asia*. Sydney, Manila Prints, 1998, p. 116; Douglas (1896), p. 2. Douglas was a strong supporter of naturalisation. (Douglas (1898), p. 425)

¹⁸²² Quoted in Perdon, p. 121

¹⁸²³ John Douglas. “Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-mer Fisheries Commission,” p. 2. In, *Report, Together with Minutes of Evidence and Proceedings, of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the General Working of the Laws Regulating the Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-mer Fisheries in the Colony*. Queensland Votes and proceedings, 1897, vol 2, p. 1720

¹⁸²⁴ John Douglas. “Asiatic Aliens in Torres Straits,” 13 January 1895, p. 2. Queensland State Archives, PRE/105

equanimity.”¹⁸²⁵ Douglas’s views towards the Malay and Filipino populations on the island were enlightened for the period. Malays were believed capable of running amuck at any time, while Manila men carrying sharp knives were routinely seen as dangerous, and were forever tainted with the murder of Senior Constable William Conroy by one of their number, Frank Tinyana, on Thursday Island in 1896.¹⁸²⁶

Douglas did his best to keep the peace on the island. In 1892, he was able to observe with some satisfaction “that among this motley population very fair order is maintained,” with no serious crimes recorded in the previous five years.¹⁸²⁷ However, this state of affairs could not last indefinitely. Early in 1901, an organized fracas occurred between Pacific Islanders and Manilamen, leading to one dead, several seriously injured, and the shop of the leading Filipino on the island, Heriverto Zarcas, being extensively damaged.¹⁸²⁸ Douglas took immediate steps to prevent any further outbreak of violence, swearing in special constables and imposing a curfew,

¹⁸²⁵ Douglas (1890), p. 174. For further information on the Leprosarium, see Raymond Evans. *Charitable Institutions of the Queensland Government*. MA thesis. University of Queensland, 1969, pp. 209-18 & 231-35

¹⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; F. Urquhart to John Douglas, 24 July 1895. Queensland State Archives, PRE/105. For details on the murder of Conroy, see Police Commissioner’s Staff Files, File 300 AF [re William Conroy]. Queensland State Archives, A/38748. I am indebted to Dr Anna Shnukal for alerting me to the file’s existence.

¹⁸²⁷ John Douglas. “Annual Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1892, p. 1031

¹⁸²⁸ “Brown and Black.” *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 January 1901, p.

during which the police and military patrolled the streets.¹⁸²⁹

Despite this melee, there was, considering the small size of the island, its tropical climate and isolated location a surprising degree of tolerance and harmony. Economic interdependence required a degree of cooperation between all sectors of the community, which in turn led to the development of a cosmopolitan and relatively stable society. As Douglas proudly observed of his beloved island in 1902:

We have all the essentials which may be regarded as appertaining to a white Australia: we have the same all-pervading British law, applicable to Asian and Australian alike, the same English language, and the same forms of social intercourse which prevail in southern Australia: our churches and schools are an exact counterpart on a small scale of what they are in Melbourne or in Brisbane.¹⁸³⁰

Douglas was government resident during the formative stages of the development of Thursday Island as a thriving multiracial community. However, the introduction of the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 following federation forever changed the nature of the fisheries in Torres Strait, changes that in turn affected the makeup and composition of the Thursday Island community. By the time of Douglas's death in 1904, aliens, as authorized under the Act, were brought in as indentured labour under articles and only allowed to set foot ashore on Thursday Island for a short period twice a

¹⁸²⁹ Ibid; "The Pearl Shelling Industry." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1901, p. 4

¹⁸³⁰ Douglas (1902), p. 51

year.¹⁸³¹

The society in Torres Strait that developed and was nurtured under Douglas's benevolent administration was atypical for its time, a testament to his liberal beliefs and unflinching respect for British values and the rule of law. The aftermath of Douglas's death would see steady erosion in the freedoms enjoyed by non-Europeans in Torres Strait and increased restrictions and prohibitions imposed by the Queensland government.

Aborigines

Douglas was also responsible for overseeing and regulating Aborigines, drawn from the Aboriginal tribes in western and northern Cape York, working in the Torres Strait fisheries. Many of them had been kidnapped,¹⁸³² and in 1884 it was estimated that half of the 500 or so men employed in the *bêche-de-mer* fishery on Murray, Darnley and Yorke Islands were Aboriginal.¹⁸³³

Some went voluntarily, seeking adventure in the new world; some were kidnapped and forced to work as divers; many were sold for a bag of flour by tribal elders, who themselves were exploiting the young men.¹⁸³⁴

Douglas was in no doubt that this "scandalous traffic" had led to

¹⁸³¹ Hugh Milman. "Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island for the Years 1904." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1905, p. 26; Ganter (1999), p. 107

¹⁸³² John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 22 October 1885. Queensland State Archives, COL A/443 letter 8225: Lockley, p. 34

¹⁸³³ Ganter (1999), pp. 43-44

¹⁸³⁴ Harris (1990), p. 483

Cape York Aborigines being hostile towards the fisheries industry.¹⁸³⁵ This hostility was further fuelled by fishery crews who often stole Aboriginal women and spread venereal disease through the communities, causing immense social disruption and disintegration.¹⁸³⁶ In 1891, Douglas assisted Moravian missionaries to establish the Mapoon mission, the first mission settlement on western Cape York. He selected a site for them on the Batavia River, and, on the missionaries' arrival at Thursday Island, prepared two luggers to transport them and their supplies. He also provided a police guard.¹⁸³⁷

Douglas saw it as his duty to protect Aborigines from the depredations of the fisheries' owners and consequently refused to issue permits for the employment of Aboriginal children or women.¹⁸³⁸ His religious and social code reinforced a deeply felt sense of fair play, which was genuinely offended when marginalised groups were harshly treated.¹⁸³⁹

¹⁸³⁵ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 22 October 1885. Queensland State Archives, COL A/443 letter 8225. Despite Douglas's anger, he recognised that in many of these cases: "it cannot, however, be contended, that any legal offence has been committed, either under the kidnapping Acts of 1872 and 1875 or under the *Native Labourers Protection Act of 1884*."

¹⁸³⁶ Ibid.; Gaynor Evans. Thursday Island 1878-1914: A Plural Society. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, p. 73; Lockley, p. 34

¹⁸³⁷ Harris (1990), p. 484; Ward, pp. 46-47 & 65-68

¹⁸³⁸ Shirleene Robinson and Kay Saunders. '*One Long Record of Brutal Cruelty, Bestiality and Debauchery: Aboriginal Workers in Queensland's Pearling and Bêche-de-Mer Industries in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth centuries*'. Unpublished article, Brisbane, 2003, p. 9. Despite this, Douglas had to frequently return Aboriginal "boys and girls of tender years" to the Batavia River area. (Douglas (1894), p. 914

¹⁸³⁹ Roebuck. p. 35

This was poignantly illustrated in 1890 when, after a lugger had been stolen, two Aborigines from the Batavia River region were captured by pearl-shelliers and brought to Thursday Island to stand trial.

Douglas wrote to the colonial secretary in London:

I felt some sympathy for them – they looked like frightened wild things who were in mortal terror of their lives. It is difficult to know what to do with them. We are trying to find an interpreter who understands their language. They have offended no doubt, but what possible conception can they have of our forms of law.¹⁸⁴⁰

On another occasion, following the theft of a boat, Douglas dismissed it as being prompted “on the part of some hired blacks, merely by the desire to return home as their period of service had expired.”¹⁸⁴¹ Douglas’s role in protecting Aborigines from the worst abuses of the pearl-shelliers was resented by employers,¹⁸⁴² as was his support for the Mapoon mission. Fisheries employers were concerned that many Aborigines living and working on the mission and coming under the influence of missionaries would refuse to work

¹⁸⁴⁰ John Douglas to the Colonial Secretary, 27 August 1890. Queensland State Archives, COL/A629/9587. Quoted in Gaynor (1978), p. 74. There were also several murders of pearl-shelliers by Aborigines. For more information on these, see Ward, pp. 139-48; Gaynor (1978), p. 75; “Murder by Gulf Natives.” *Queenslander*, 18 November 1893, p. 1000; “Suspected Murder by Blacks.” *Queenslander*, 2 December 1893, p. 1096; Noel Loos. *Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal - European Relations on the North Queensland Frontier 1861 - 1897*. Canberra, ANU Press, 1982, pp. 138-41

¹⁸⁴¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 6 April 1891, p. 4

¹⁸⁴² For a further example of attempts by Douglas to ensure that Aborigines were paid fair wages and protected from abuses, see Walter Roth to Colonial Secretary, no date but around May 1898. (Queensland State Archives, COL/142 no 6944/1898 (QSA Z1608)

in the fisheries.¹⁸⁴³

Douglas's support for the mission extended to his penning an anonymous article in the *Queenslander* newspaper in which he refuted all the complaints made against it by the pearl-shellers.¹⁸⁴⁴

Despite Douglas being a thorn in their side, the pearl-shellers did - and, indeed, could do little about it. As a visitor to Thursday Island in 1894 recorded in his diary, Douglas was:

a very worthy man, most conscientious and strict ... The inhabitants, we were told, or at least many of them, want to get rid of him, the real objection I believe being that he is too upright for them.¹⁸⁴⁵

On northern Cape York, Douglas did what he could to improve conditions for Aborigines. He wanted to set up a system similar to that of the Mamoose in Torres Strait, and arranged for Yarra-Ham-Quon and Tong-Ham-Blow, the chiefs of the Jardine River and Seven Rivers tribes, to visit Thursday Island. There they experienced "something of the customs and laws of the Whites," agreed to govern their community in a similar manner, were given farm and household implements, and installed as 'Kings.' However, Douglas believed that no "lasting beneficial results" would occur until a "sufficiently disinterested" European was prepared to live among

¹⁸⁴³ Ward, p. 136. As Douglas informed his sons, employers opposed the missionaries "because they did a good deal to put an end to the nefarious trade in natives which had been going on." (John Douglas to his children, 22 January 1895. McCourt Papers)

¹⁸⁴⁴ Ward, p. 144

¹⁸⁴⁵ Rev. Fred Chatterton. *Rough Notes of a Trip from Nelson New Zealand to England*, 21 April 1894, p. 42. Copy held in the National Library of Australia, Mfm M1953

the tribes on a permanent basis.¹⁸⁴⁶ Moreover, despite his support for the Mapoon Mission, by 1903 Douglas despaired of countering the pernicious effects of European contact on the Aboriginal population of the Cape York Peninsula: “The poor things ...It is very difficult to save them.”¹⁸⁴⁷

Douglas clashed with the pearl-shellers over other matters as well. In 1898, when nearly 300 Aborigines were employed in the industry,¹⁸⁴⁸ he recommended to the government that it prohibit pearl-shellers from recruiting additional Aboriginal labour from the Albatross Bay and Embley River areas of western Cape York.¹⁸⁴⁹ In the following year Douglas also established a regulatory system to ensure that employers complied with the provisions of the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* 1897, designed to protect Aborigines in employment.¹⁸⁵⁰

When petitioned by the pearl-shellers in January 1893 to lower the minimum size of pearl-shell allowed to be harvested (from six inches to five inches), Douglas informed the government that he did not support the request, arguing instead for the existing limit to be

¹⁸⁴⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 6 April 1891, p. 4

¹⁸⁴⁷ “The Hon. John Douglas. Visit to Brisbane. An Interesting Interview.” *Brisbane Courier*, 11 December 1903, p. 5

¹⁸⁴⁸ C. B. Marrett, Inspector of Police, Cooktown, to Commissioner of Police, Brisbane, 19 March 1898. Queensland State Archives COL/142/5931/1898 (QSA Z1609)

¹⁸⁴⁹ John Douglas to the Under Secretary, Home Office, 13 April 1898. Queensland State Archives, HOM/A18. This area was south of the Mapoon Mission and the where the Aurukun Mission would be established in 1904.

¹⁸⁵⁰ John Douglas to the Under Secretary, Home Office, 20 January & 20 October 1899. Queensland State Archives, HOM/A22

retained in order to conserve pearl-shell stocks.¹⁸⁵¹ On another occasion a deputation of pearl-shellers complained to Douglas that the new inspector, Frederick Urquhart, insisted on them having their licenses and ships papers present on their luggers. Douglas backed his inspector, and the delegation departed, “partially satisfied but growling a bit, and mentally wishing that there were no new brooms who would insist upon clean sweeps.”¹⁸⁵²

The almost absolute power wielded by Douglas, coupled with his strong support for Aboriginal, Pacific and Torres Strait Islanders’ welfare - which he frequently put ahead of the fishery-owners’ business interests - was deeply frustrating to the pearl-shellers. Their only consolation was that, if they could persuade him of their merits of their case, then Douglas had sufficient influence with the government in far-off Brisbane to ensure that action would be forthcoming. This occurred with the restriction of Japanese employment in the pearling industry, and the waiving of the provision that pearling boats must return to port every three months to pay their crew.¹⁸⁵³

Since his appointment in April 1885, Douglas had been responsible for all government matters in Torres Strait.¹⁸⁵⁴ However, the

¹⁸⁵¹ John Douglas to the Colonial Secretary, 7 July 1893 & 23 November 1896. Queensland State Archives TRE/30. As was usually the case, Douglas got his way and the existing size restrictions were retained.

¹⁸⁵² John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 1 September 1894. McCourt Papers

¹⁸⁵³ John Douglas to the Colonial Secretary, 7 July 1893. Queensland State Archives TRE/30

¹⁸⁵⁴ Douglas, according to the relevant executive minute, was responsible for the “general

expressly dismissed as an over-reaction and Douglas continued to take a keen interest in the island's defences.¹⁸⁵⁸

In 1899, an unnamed Sydney journalist insightfully captured the power that Douglas exercised over Thursday Island and the inhabitants of Torres Strait:

As regards the township, Mr Douglas is a constitutional sovereign ... over the shifting population and the Aboriginal population, his moral authority if not his statutory power is unbounded ... he rules by suasion and example as much as anything else.¹⁸⁵⁹

This chapter has explored Douglas's roles and responsibilities towards Torres Strait and his administration of its diverse inhabitants. His legacy was a thriving polyglot community on Thursday Island, buttressed by the rule of law and supported by commercial enterprise, and an Indigenous community in Torres Strait that retained significant aspects of its culture and traditions. The following chapter will trace Douglas's local involvement and contributions to significant regional, colonial and empire events, namely the celebration of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia following a successful referendum on federation. In so doing, Douglas's

¹⁸⁵⁸ Colonel Gunter to Chief Secretary, 29 August 1896. Queensland State Archives HOM A/1, letter no 11579

¹⁸⁵⁹ "Constitution and Government." *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 30 September 1899, p. 2

character, the power he wielded in the region, and the legacy he left, will be further examined.

Chapter 18: Torres Strait Milestones, 1890-1901

This chapter investigates two significant milestones that occurred while Douglas was resident in the Torres Strait. The central part Douglas played in each of them demonstrates the seminal role of his administration in Torres Strait while his actions help illuminate his character. Together they provide a snapshot of life on remote Thursday Island in the late nineteenth century, a community with Douglas as its apex.

Queen Victoria's jubilee

As the head of the British Empire, Queen Victoria was revered by many of her subjects, most of whom, given her longevity on the throne, had known no other monarch. 21 June 1897 was the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession to the British throne, and Thursday Island, like most other population centres in the far-flung empire, joyously celebrated this momentous occasion. It fell to Douglas to oversee the celebrations on this tiny and isolated island, a task he accepted with alacrity.¹⁸⁶⁰ It is worthwhile to examine the nature and occurrence of this celebration for what it tells us about this remote island community, its strong commitment to empire, and the petty squabbles that can undo well-meaning intentions and plans.

¹⁸⁶⁰ Douglas had first seen the then Princess Victoria many decades previously, riding on a donkey on the sands of Brighton. ("Commonwealth and New Year Celebrations." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 5 January 1901, p. 2)

A committee was established, and under Douglas's chairmanship, detailed planning for this auspicious occasion commenced.¹⁸⁶¹ The celebrations were on a grand scale, with bonfires on the hilltops of Thursday and surrounding islands,¹⁸⁶² a regatta, an athletics carnival, a feast for the 'Bingis' who reciprocated with a corroboree, and separate children's and adults' calico balls. As well, the occasion was commemorated through the establishment of a benevolent society and the erection of a clock tower.

For its part, the Queensland government arranged for a commemorative medal to be issued to all children in the colony. Unfortunately, by the committee's second meeting the discussions had already assumed "an acrimonious nature," there being strong disagreements over the amount of money to be expended on the various activities. The meeting was suspended when Douglas, on being outvoted, left, and he only returned after several other committee members agreed to support his plans for the celebration.¹⁸⁶³ These included a picnic, which was the only opportunity for revellers to toast the queen,¹⁸⁶⁴ and a theatrical

¹⁸⁶¹ "Diamond Jubilee Celebrations on Thursday Island." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 15 May 1897, p. 2

¹⁸⁶² Those islands that participated were Goode, Horn, Hammond and Prince of Wales islands.

¹⁸⁶³ "The Diamond Jubilee." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 22 May 1897, p. 2; "Torres Strait Diamond Jubilee Benevolent Society." *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 2 March 1901, p. 2

¹⁸⁶⁴ Sarah Douglas did not attend the picnic on Goode Island, for she did not "feel able to knock about on the boats." (Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, undated, but written between the end of June and the beginning of July 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/20)

performance organised by the island's Japanese inhabitants.¹⁸⁶⁵

The celebrations for this momentous day went off smoothly, with most of the areas' inhabitants in attendance, including some 400 'native warriors' with their wives and children; Aborigines from Red Island and northern Cape York, and the Torres Strait Islanders from Prince of Wales Island. Both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contingents regaled the crowd with highly successful, if somewhat exotic, corroborees. A local paper marvelled at:

the fantastic headgear, shields etc of the islanders and their contortionate exercises, were wonderful and amusing, yet withal there was a sense of veneration observed by the onlookers for the gyrations of the performers ... the Binghis also carried on their curious dance with zest, but their clothing was scantier than that of the islanders, - if, indeed the covering of their loins could be called clothing - and a great number of people congregated around them, drawn by the peculiar sharp, screechy sounds they utter as part of their corroboree. All the natives were rendered happy and contented by plenty to eat and drink.¹⁸⁶⁶

The celebratory bonfire was also spectacular, as this letter from

¹⁸⁶⁵ "Jubilee Celebrations." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 June 1897, p. 2.

The Japanese community celebrations were warmly welcomed by the local paper, which predicted that it "should meet with a good deal of appreciation." The theatre program concluded with cheers in honour of the queen and Toragario Satow, a leading member of the island's Japanese community, wrote a letter to the local paper on its behalf to "express their extreme pleasure" in celebrating her diamond jubilee. (Toragario Satow. "To the Editor." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 26 June 1897, p. 2)

¹⁸⁶⁶ "Queen's Diamond Jubilee." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 26 June 1897, p. 2

Douglas to his son, Edward, attests:

It was a dark night and the first rocket went up from inside the residency office at 7.30. This was answered from the Albatross with their rocket roman candles and coloured lights, blue green and red were kept going until 8 pm. The big bonfire was lighted, we had rather great pains with it. Bob Black and Carter between them had built up a huge pyre, about 25 feet high. All the old zamia trees on the rough ground opposite the lock up had been cut down and then we made our great bonfire. All the old rubbish in the town had been collected and these were bundled in three carts of billet woods the whole being saturated with tar and kerosene. You can imagine what a grand blaze it made. We lighted it from the top. It was answered at once with responding fires from the battery and from Milman Hill. Then Hammond took it up, followed by Prince of Wales Island and Friday Island. It was quite something as the fires were sped from Island to Island.¹⁸⁶⁷

Douglas had earlier addressed the crowd, reminding them of the importance of this special anniversary day, “the greatest occasion which we have ever assembled to celebrate.” Having personally arranged for the Islanders and Aborigines to be present, he reminded them that Queen Victoria ruled for all of them, “young and old, rich and poor, black and white.” Douglas concluded his address with the heartfelt sentiment that although the island comprised a

¹⁸⁶⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 25 June 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/8

“wonderfully mixed assemblage,” nowhere:

were more loyal hearts and true to be found than on this
little sentinel island, the extreme outpost of Australian
civilisation.¹⁸⁶⁸

The American sailer, Joshua Slocum, who arrived at Thursday Island shortly before the celebrations commenced while undertaking the first successful solo circumnavigation of the globe, has left us an independent account of the festivities. He was most impressed, especially with the corroboree, which he considered a “howling success.” As he observed, “When they do a thing on Thursday Island, they do it with a roar.”¹⁸⁶⁹ Douglas had organised a spectacular celebration to mark a singular important event in the history of the British Empire. His devotion to his Queen and her realm was such that no matter how geographically remote from the centres of power he insisted on celebrating important occasions with all the energy and resources at his disposal. As well, Douglas ensured the celebrations included all the Queen’s subjects, with both Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders participating.

And that should have been where it ended; loyal subjects proudly celebrating 60 years of their queen’s reign. However, the handing out of the commemorative medals to the island’s children led to much division and rancour within the small island community.

¹⁸⁶⁸ “Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.” *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 26 June 1897, p. 2

¹⁸⁶⁹ Joshua Slocum. *Sailing Alone Around the World*. Edited and introduced by Tim Flannery. Melbourne, Text Publishing, 2003, p. 203

It had earlier been decided to give a medal to every child residing on the island at the time of the jubilee. Accordingly, money had been raised, and 200 white medals had been requested from the authorities in Brisbane; 150 oxidised medals for the white children and 50, cheaper, non-oxidised medals for the 'coloured' children.¹⁸⁷⁰ Unfortunately, due to cost constraints, not enough medals had been requested, there actually being 313 children residing on the island at the time, and so many did not receive one. The medals did not arrive in time for the jubilee, and because there were too few of them, it was decided that only the schoolchildren in attendance at the island's two schools on the day before the jubilee would receive them. After they were distributed, there were 59 medals left over.¹⁸⁷¹

It was unacceptable that some children had not received a medal,¹⁸⁷² and the island's jubilee committee instructed Douglas to distribute the remaining medals. This he did, much to the ire of the local paper, which resented:

the humiliating position in which Mr. Douglas, the highest official on the island, had been placed, tramping around the island with a black bag distributing the medals, because the committee had asked him to get rid of them.

¹⁸⁷⁰ "Jubilee Medals." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 4 September 1897, p. 2; "Jubilee Medals. Public Meeting." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 11 September 1897, p. 2

¹⁸⁷¹ "Jubilee Medals." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 4 September 1897, p. 2; "Jubilee Medals. Public Meeting." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 11 September 1897, p. 2

¹⁸⁷² "Jubilee Medals." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 14 August 1897, p. 2

Nonetheless, despite the handing out of the remaining medals, there were still children without one, and the only solution was to order more medals. These bore a unique Thursday Island ‘superscription’ rather than the generic Queensland one used for all the other jubilee medals presented to the colony’s children. Daisy Simpson finally presented the ‘Thursday Island’ medals to those children who had previously missed out.¹⁸⁷³ This was almost five months after the jubilee celebrations,¹⁸⁷⁴ and Douglas was in no doubt as to who was to blame for this fiasco, informing his eldest son that:

the medal agitation all came out of Daisy Simpson and Madge Atkinson not getting medals, not at the time being school children. I was away when they were distributed and Salter made rather a mess of it.¹⁸⁷⁵

The saga of the medals to celebrate Queen Victoria’s 60th anniversary illuminates the petty jealousies and small-town antagonisms present on the island. As always, Douglas played a central role, a practical administrator who was involved in almost every event or activity undertaken on the remote small island.

Federation

¹⁸⁷³ Daisy Simpson was the first child born of white parents on Thursday Island.

¹⁸⁷⁴ “Jubilee medals.” *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 6 November 1897, p. 2; “Wybena Cycle Sports Club.” *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 13 November 1897, p. 2

¹⁸⁷⁵ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 29 September 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/15; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 13 September 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(2)/(a)

In 1899, Queensland, along with the other colonies, took part in a referendum on federation. For Douglas, the success of this referendum, and the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, were the culmination of a life-long goal and one in which he played a significant, although largely unrecognised role.¹⁸⁷⁶ As Douglas informed Sir Samuel Griffith, who was one of the founding fathers of a federated Australia: "I lift up my voice for union."¹⁸⁷⁷

To Douglas and most of his contemporaries, federation would occur under the umbrella of Great Britain. Loyal to Great Britain, the Empire and the Queen, the colonies would remain so once united.¹⁸⁷⁸ Federation, insofar as Douglas was concerned, was not

¹⁸⁷⁶ As Katie McConnell, a PhD student on Queensland federation, points out, it is quite probable that Douglas was Queensland's longest advocate for federation. To Griffith the glory, but Douglas was always there making supportive speeches or statements. It is interesting that Douglas advocated federation when it was not trendy or popular, yet when discussed in detail in the 1890s he was, with the exception of his work on Thursday Island, largely silent, preferring to work behind the scenes. (Personal communication, June 2003.) A resident of Thursday Island in 1900, George Smith, considered Douglas "almost as the father of this movement for federation. When Mr. Douglas was first elected to parliament he spoke in favour of a United Australia." ("The Australian Commonwealth." *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 22 December 1900)

¹⁸⁷⁷ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 27 August 1896. Griffith Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, MSQ 189, pp. 503-8; For further examples of Douglas's involvement see, John Douglas to Edmund Barton, 20 July 1897. In, *Letters and Handbills Relating to Australian Federation, 1897-1898*. National Library of Australia, MS 50; John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 1 September 1900. Griffith Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, MSQ 190, pp. 35-44

¹⁸⁷⁸ As Douglas informed Edmund Barton, he wished to see the preamble of the constitution containing "a declaration of indissoluble union founded upon an assumption of supreme authority vested in the name and person of the queen or king of Great Britain." (John Douglas to Edmund Barton, 20 July 1897. In, *Letters and Handbills Relating to Australian Federation, 1897-1898*. National Library of Australia, MS 50)

about republicanism, but about the colonies coming together for the greater good. He saw a federated Australia as a bastion of 'Britishness,' something that was positive and beneficial, and where the sum was greater than its parts.

As early as 1859, even before the creation of the colony of Queensland, when standing for election to the New South Wales parliament, Douglas had boldly called for a "United Australia."¹⁸⁷⁹ In 1868, when discussing how to persuade reluctant Englishmen to migrate to Australia rather than the United States of America, Douglas suggested that it:

could best be done by all the Australian colonies acting in concert. Would it not be possible for them to appear in the home country as one people upon that question? They must have their own interest, no doubt; at one time one colony might be able to absorb more than another, but, union upon that point, if properly worked, would prove beneficial to all the colonies.¹⁸⁸⁰

Furthermore, Douglas hoped that before long there would be "united action on the part of the Australian colonies" to achieve this.¹⁸⁸¹ His views on the desirability of federation was further influenced by the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1870-71¹⁸⁸² and his trip to America in 1871, where, reading tombstone inscriptions of men who had died in

¹⁸⁷⁹ Douglas (1900A), p. 12

¹⁸⁸⁰ "Mr. Douglas at the Town Hall." *Brisbane Courier*, 23 September 1868, p. 3

¹⁸⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸² Douglas observed the Franco-Prussian conflict at close quarters. He, along with many others, keenly felt the need for a strong, united Australia had Britain joined the conflict.

the American Civil War brought home to him the power inherent in the “sentiment of union.”¹⁸⁸³

That same year Douglas again made a passionate, and, for the time, far-sighted plea for unity rather than disunity, for federation rather than separation, noting that the “different colonies should be united under a federal government.”¹⁸⁸⁴ It was, to his mind, “absurd that a country possessing such a geographical unity as Australia should be so divided into separate states.”¹⁸⁸⁵

It is evident that his time in London as agent-general had further influenced his thinking on this matter. In 1874, in an address to the Darling Downs Caledonian Society in Toowoomba, Douglas again called for the creation of a “Dominion of Australia,” despite recognising that it was an idea whose time had not yet come:

Colonists seem to be content to continue their revolutions around the central source of power in England, rather than to effect a change in the centre of gravity among themselves.¹⁸⁸⁶

Douglas understood that in a land of opportunity, at peace with itself, federation would only be possible if championed by politicians, and he deeply regretted the lack of leadership on their part.¹⁸⁸⁷ He

(Douglas (1880), p. 4)

¹⁸⁸³ Ibid., p. 13

¹⁸⁸⁴ “Mr. Douglas at the Victoria Hall.” *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1871, p. 2

¹⁸⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸⁶ “Mr. Douglas and the Dominion of Australia.” *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1874, pp. 5-6

¹⁸⁸⁷ Douglas also recognised the challenges facing those who wished to see a federated

himself did what he could to advance the cause, but recognised all too well that:

It is not in times of difficulty or of danger that serious constitutional questions such as these are best considered.¹⁸⁸⁸

In 1879, when Sir Henry Parkes suggested that New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, but not Queensland, come together in a confederacy, Douglas had been quick to respond. In an article in the *Melbourne Review*, he not only insisted that an Australian federation should include all the colonies, but also set out a model markedly different to Parkes's minimalist "Dominion Parliament" approach:

A supreme legislature and administration is required in order to enable the united colonies to deal with those matters which are relegated to it by the provincial and dependent legislatures.¹⁸⁸⁹

Douglas recognised the importance of the colonies in any new arrangement, and the primacy of their rights. He believed that while they would not readily relinquish these to form one legislature, the colonies would be willing to cede responsibility for foreign affairs and defence to a federal legislature provided they could retain responsibility for their day-to-day affairs.¹⁸⁹⁰

Australia; "Any change in things as they are will always be resisted: and a change so great as this would, of course, be stoutly resisted." (John Douglas. "Australian Federation." *Brisbane Courier*, 27 March 1875, pp. 5-6)

¹⁸⁸⁸ "Mr. Douglas and the Dominion of Australia." *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1874, pp. 5-6

¹⁸⁸⁹ Douglas (1880), p. 12

¹⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8

The disavowal in 1883 by Great Britain of Queensland's annexation of New Guinea in an attempt to forestall German colonization there, coupled with the political activities of the French in the New Hebrides, provided a further impetus for supporters of federation and once again stirred Douglas to put the case for federation, this time in the *Nineteenth Century* magazine.¹⁸⁹¹

BY 1889, Douglas, from his perspective of now having spent several years in the tropics, called for the creation of an additional state, Northern Australia, comprising the northern part of Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and north Queensland, with its legislature at Port Darwin.¹⁸⁹² As well, throughout his time in New Guinea and Torres Strait, Douglas consistently, if unsuccessfully, urged that the boundary between Queensland and British New Guinea be moved south to allow for the transfer of the northern Torres Strait islands to New Guinea.¹⁸⁹³

¹⁸⁹¹ Douglas (1884)

¹⁸⁹² John Douglas. "United Australia: Memo Addressed to the Honourable B. D. Morehead, Chief Secretary, Queensland." Brisbane, Ferguson and Co., 1889

¹⁸⁹³ John Douglas. "Thursday Island: Report of the Government Resident for 1885." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1886, p. 493. However, despite the support of the Queensland government and the Colonial Office, the proposal was never implemented, and, following federation, was eventually abandoned. For more information see, Douglas (1892), p. 1033; Douglas (1894), p. 913; Douglas (1896), p. 506; John Douglas. "Maritime Boundary of Australia." *Queensland Geographical Journal*, vol 19, 1903, pp. 32-36; "Maritime Boundary of Queensland: Paper by the Hon. John Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 26 December 1903, p. 14; Veur, (1966A), pp. 24-32; Douglas (1886), p. 80-82; Paul W van der Veur. *Documents and Correspondence on New Guinea's Boundaries*. Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1996; James Griffin, ed. *The Torres Strait Border Issue: Consolidation, Conflict or Compromise*. Townsville, Townsville College of Advanced Education, 1976, pp. xv-xviii; Farnfield, pp. 69-71; "The Hon. John Douglas. Visit to Brisbane. An Interesting Interview." *Brisbane Courier*, 11 December 1903, p. 5; *The Torres*

In the 1890s, Douglas again took an active role in promoting federation. He wrote to both Griffith and Barton offering advice and comments,¹⁸⁹⁴ and addressed a meeting on the subject at the Sydney Town Hall in 1896.¹⁸⁹⁵ However, Douglas's influence was limited, as the idea of federation did not consume any significant public attention in Queensland until 1899. Furthermore, the principal advocates in the federal movement were contemporary politicians and Douglas had by this time long since retired from active politics.

During the 1890s, Queenslanders displayed a complex mix of indifference, hostility and enthusiasm towards the idea of federation. Indifference was widespread for, with the possible exception of Sir Samuel Griffith, there were no outstanding advocates for federation in the colony.¹⁸⁹⁶ The southern portions of the colony, fearing economic competition from New South Wales, was strongly opposed, while the central and northern districts, traditionally anti-Brisbane and pro-separation, were generally supportive of joining

Strait Boundary Report by the Sub Committee on Territorial Boundaries of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. Canberra, Government Printer, 1977, pp. 16-20

¹⁸⁹⁴ John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 27 August 1896. Griffith Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, MSQ 189, pp. 503-8. Another example of Douglas's involvement was that when James Thomas Walker, a New South Wales delegate to the 1897 and 1898 Australasian Federal Conventions visited Thursday Island in 1898, he gave Douglas "a lot of papers connected with the convention and the referendum vote which lately has been taken in New South Wales." (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 13 June 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/b/2/b/8)

¹⁸⁹⁵ "A New View of Federation." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1896, p. 5

¹⁸⁹⁶ Duncan Waterson. "The Absentees from North of the Tweed." *The New Federalist*, no 1, June 1898, p. 29

the proposed federation.¹⁸⁹⁷ Moreover, and much to Douglas's disappointment, Queensland did not send delegates to the second 'Constitutional Convention' held in 1897 and 1898.¹⁸⁹⁸

Douglas campaigned tirelessly for a 'yes' vote on Thursday Island. At a federation meeting held there in July 1899, he proudly claimed that, "Everybody here is in favour of it."¹⁸⁹⁹ A week before the Queensland referendum, Douglas again addressed Thursday Islanders on this subject. Here he passionately expressed his support for federation, and called on all Thursday Islanders to vote 'yes' with him.

What say you? Are you for union or against it? Are we to be one people from Cape Leeuwin to Cape York? Is this great island continent of Australia to be one country?¹⁹⁰⁰

¹⁸⁹⁷ See, Kay Saunders. "The Freest Spirit of Australasian Democracy: The 1899 Constitutional Bill Referendum Campaign in New South Wales and Queensland." In, Patricia Clarke, ed. *Steps to Federation: Lectures marking the Centenary of Federation*. Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2001, pp. 122-23. Douglas, while an ardent advocate of federation, could only influence the vote in north Queensland. He too was concerned over the indifference of the public, suggesting to Griffith that, "The public have still to be educated up to an understanding of the question in all its bearings." (John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 27 August 1896. Griffith Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, MSQ 189, pp. 503-8)

¹⁸⁹⁸ "A New View of Federation." *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 October 1896, p. 5; Kay Saunders. "'By Chance and Divine Intervention': D B Waterson's Contribution to Federation Studies." *Journal of Australian Studies*, no 69, 2001, p. 31

¹⁸⁹⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 9 July 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/b/2/c/13

¹⁹⁰⁰ Douglas (1900A), p. 11; "Lecture by the Hon. John Douglas." *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 August 1899, p. 2. Douglas's address was published in book form; (Douglas (1900A) and he sent a copy to Queen Victoria. (Privy Purse Office, Buckingham Palace, to John Douglas, 15 May 1900. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5(b))

Douglas recognised what a significant achievement federation would be:

By far the greatest achievement which has yet been accomplished in our Australian history, and will be for us and our children a glorious consummation in the closing years of the Victorian era.¹⁹⁰¹

In concluding his speech, Douglas demonstrated the depth of his passion and conviction for the federation cause and pleaded with his audience to vote likewise:

I, for my part, am going to vote “yes” with all my might; and I am thankful that I have lived long enough to see the day when it will become my privilege to do so. If I had a thousand votes for referendum day they should all be cast in the same way. And what are you going to do? I will venture to say that you, too, will vote “yes.”¹⁹⁰²

Nevertheless, Douglas found the crowd’s response disheartening, and he confided to his son that:

They did not enthuse much over federation. I tried to work them up about it, but really and truly I don’t think they care a snuff about it ... I see that there is a good deal talked about it in the papers. Still it does not look as if it was a live question. It does not glow as it ought to. I cannot understand why people seem to be so indifferent about it.¹⁹⁰³

¹⁹⁰¹ Douglas (1900A), p. 13

¹⁹⁰² Ibid., p. 15

¹⁹⁰³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 30 August 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(c)/17

The campaign for federation confirmed a pragmatic trait in Queenslanders, for they were largely unmoved by its idealism and instead cast their votes on economic and regional grounds.¹⁹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, Douglas need not have been concerned. 2

September 1899 - referendum day - was marked on Thursday Island “by a certain amount of enthusiasm”¹⁹⁰⁵ which translated into overwhelming support for federation, with 91 votes in favour and only one against.¹⁹⁰⁶

The colony of Queensland as a whole also returned a ‘yes’ vote, but it was the lowest of any of the colonies, with only 55 per cent in favour. Brisbane voted overwhelmingly against federation, but strong support for it in the central and northern districts ensured that Queensland joined.¹⁹⁰⁷ Queensland, acknowledging the power of the “crimson thread of kinship,” and despite Brisbane’s opposition, had agreed to federate with the other colonies and form a united Australia.¹⁹⁰⁸

Douglas was elated. For 40 years, he had called for a united

¹⁹⁰⁴ “The Federation Story.” Internet file, www.cofq.qld.gov.au/qld_story_overview.html

¹⁹⁰⁵ “Thursday Island.” *Brisbane Courier*, 4 September 1899, p. 9

¹⁹⁰⁶ “Federation.” *North Queensland Register*, 18 September 1899, p. 16; *Parish Gazette* (Quetta Memorial Cathedral Thursday Island) vol 26 no 4, 2 April 1928, p. 4

¹⁹⁰⁷ Saunders (2001), p. 109. The south of the colony registered 14,285 ‘yes’ votes and 22,398 ‘no’ votes; the central district registered 12,132 ‘yes’ votes and 6,682 ‘no’ votes, while the north had 12,376 ‘yes’ votes to only 3,332 ‘no’ votes. The Cook district, which included Thursday Island, returned 503 ‘yes’ votes, 54 ‘no’ votes and four informal votes. (“Returns for Federation Referendum.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1899, second session, vol 1, p. 753)

¹⁹⁰⁸ Waterson (1998), p. 37. The ‘no’ vote for Brisbane was over 62 per cent, the highest ‘no’ vote of any capital city. (Saunders (2001), p. 113)

Australia, and had now lived long enough to see it become reality. He, along with the rest of the Thursday Island community, joyfully celebrated the proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901. Douglas contributed £5 towards the festivities and, for the first time, proudly proposed a toast to the “Commonwealth of Australia.”¹⁹⁰⁹ He then sailed to the various Torres Strait Islands to hand out personally to the children their Commonwealth medals.¹⁹¹⁰

At Murray Island he:

presented the children with their Commonwealth medals and explained to them what they signified. The children were then assembled around the school flag staff and the Union Jack spread out, when he addressed them, telling them that it was their flag, and the symbol of the union of all the countries and states included in the British Empire. The Jack was then hoisted, saluted, and three cheers given for it. The children then sang God save the King.¹⁹¹¹

Douglas cut a commanding figure in Torres Strait. In his public life, his word was law and his authority rarely questioned. This was not the case in his private life, a life characterised by a stormy marriage, financial struggle and lengthy absences from his beloved children.

¹⁹⁰⁹ “The Australian Commonwealth.” *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 22 December 1900; “Commonwealth and New Year Celebrations.” *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 5 January 1901, p. 2

¹⁹¹⁰ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 7 March 1901. McCourt Papers. The Queensland government only supplied medals for European children, but Douglas objected, insisting that they be given to all children, “irrespective of class, colour or creed” and therefore procured additional medals for this purpose. (“The Australian Commonwealth.” *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 22 December 1900)

The next and final chapter explores Douglas's personal life, the difficulties arising from his marriage, the education of his children, and, as he grew older and frailer, his failing health.

¹⁹¹¹ Williamson, p. 96

Chapter 19: Douglas Family, 1889-1904

This chapter examines the relationship between John Douglas and his family following his return to Thursday Island in 1888, including his children's education, strained relations with his wife Sarah, financial difficulties, his final visit to England in 1902, and his death and funeral in 1904. In many ways, the last two decades of Douglas's life were difficult ones. Unable to retire owing to straightened financial circumstances, he was forced to work up until his death, while his family life disintegrated around him.

The personal relationship between John and Sarah Douglas and its impact on their children is addressed in detail, for it illuminates Victorian family life in a manner rarely documented. Unravelling what occurred and trying to understand and assess its impact provides an insight into a complex and bitter marital struggle. Family dynamics played out in unpredictable ways; alcoholism, isolation, frustration, bitterness and the interplay between two very complex, stubborn, intelligent and opinionated individuals. That this was a dysfunctional and unhappy marriage, soon became evident once the family returned to Thursday Island, and remained so until Douglas's death some 16 years later. Not surprisingly, John and Sarah increasingly invested their hopes and aspirations in their children, especially their children's education.

Marriage difficulties

Douglas returned to Thursday Island in November 1888 after completing the annual report on British New Guinea in Brisbane.¹⁹¹² Very little had changed in his absence, and he effortlessly slipped back into his old role as government resident. His family joined him soon afterwards. Douglas had missed his children terribly while he was in New Guinea and they were in Tenterfield. However, problems quickly developed between him and his wife Sarah.

Since their return to the island, the couple had slept in separate bedrooms.¹⁹¹³ On the evening of 2 February 1889, Douglas called for police protection after Sarah physically attacked him following a bout of drinking. On 5 February, during dinner, she, according to the court of petty sessions transcript, “threw a ladle full of hot soup at her husband across the table and soon afterwards repeated this act.”¹⁹¹⁴

Again, Douglas sought police protection and requested that Sarah be required to find sureties to be of good behaviour. Douglas sorrowfully informed the court that:

It is impossible for me to live in the same house with my wife again. I intend to institute proceedings in the Supreme Court to get a judicial separation.

¹⁹¹² John Douglas. “Annual Report of the Government Resident at Thursday Island.” *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 3, 1890, p. 207

¹⁹¹³ John Douglas vs. Sarah Douglas. Clerk of Petty Sessions, Thursday Island. *Deposition and Minute Book*, 13/3/1888-7/11/1889. *Queensland State Archives*, CPS 13D/P2, 5 February 1889

¹⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 February 1889

It is unknown how deep-seated or long lasting their marriage problems were before this event, as no documentary evidence for the years 1877 to 1888 has survived. Nonetheless, by the beginning of 1889, when John Douglas was 61 and his wife 44, the marriage had broken down completely. Sarah's excessive consumption of alcohol, which resulted in her becoming aggressive and physically violent, must have played a part. That she drank so heavily and so soon after her return to the island indicated that it was not something she had only recently begun to do. However, it is simply not possible to ascertain whether being married to John Douglas drove Sarah to drink or if there were other factors.

If the marriage was the cause of the tension between them, there were many possible reasons. A major problem was their different religions. Both Sarah and John were deeply religious, and lived their lives accordingly. However, now that the boys were older, which faith they would be brought up in caused considerable tension, exacerbated by John's active participation in masonry. Sarah was a proud Irish nationalist, while John was an equally proud defender of Queen and empire. As Sarah reminded her eldest son:

‘Ireland,’ father says, ‘is the one dark spot in England’s trilogy’ and all because we did not ‘turn our coat’ when England and Scotland did, although one or two of the old Popes handed us over to England. Bag and baggage, but we are still to the fore.¹⁹¹⁵

¹⁹¹⁵ Sarah Douglas to John Douglas, 8 September 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

Then, there was the isolation, marooned on remote Thursday Island far from relatives and friends. Whatever the reason, the deteriorating state of their marriage was cause for regret. Douglas informed the court that he bore Sarah no “malice or ill will,” while his wife insisted that instead of physically assaulting him, she had “merely caught hold of him to have the waltz.” As well, she had insisted on sleeping in his bed. Nevertheless, John Douglas indicated that he would institute divorce proceedings in the Supreme Court.¹⁹¹⁶

As it turned out, he did not file for divorce, and the couple remained married until his death in 1904.¹⁹¹⁷ Nevertheless, it was a deeply unhappy relationship, punctuated, due to Sarah’s excessive drinking, by extensive separations and occasional violence. That the marriage had failed utterly was an open secret on the small island, especially in the final years when Sarah lived in a separate house with her sons (Henry and Hugh.) As the young William Palmer, on a visit to the island in 1893, explained to his father, Sir Arthur Palmer, the president of the Queensland legislative council:

I intend to go and see the Hon John Douglas this
afternoon which I should have done yesterday but found

¹⁹¹⁶ John Douglas vs. Sarah Douglas. Clerk of Petty Sessions, Thursday Island. *Deposition and Minute Book, 13/3/1888-7/11/1889*. Queensland State Archives, CPS 13D/P2, 7 February 1889. (Material supplied by Anna Shnukal)

¹⁹¹⁷ As Kay Saunders has pointed out, divorce was an extremely expensive undertaking in colonial Queensland, and it is possible that this was why Douglas never pursued it. Another, more plausible reason for them staying together was for the sake of their children. (Kay Saunders. “Domestic Violence in Colonial Queensland.” *Historical Studies*, vol 21 no 82, 1984, p. 74)

Mrs John had been drinking rather badly so put it off.¹⁹¹⁸

At all times Douglas was deeply concerned about his wife's wellbeing. In 1890, he had her arrested as she:

had threatened to commit suicide on my refusal to supply her with stimulants. She was in a low melancholy state of mind, and I feared that she might carry her threat, repeatedly made, into execution.¹⁹¹⁹

When Sarah drank too much, which was frequently, she was, in her husband's words, "subject to occasional aberrations of mind, and during these periods she is in my opinion not responsible for her actions."¹⁹²⁰

It was hardly surprising that in his later years John Douglas had a strong aversion to drunkenness, frequently exhorting Torres Strait Islanders to abstain from the 'demon drink' and taking strong action against them when they transgressed. Alcohol was a major problem in the colony, including Thursday Island,¹⁹²¹ and one frequently commented upon by visitors, including Harold Finch-Hatton, who had

¹⁹¹⁸ William Palmer to Arthur Palmer, 21 January 1893. McIlwraith / Palmer Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 64-19/68

¹⁹¹⁹ Clerk of Petty Sessions, Thursday Island. *Deposition and Minute Book*. Queensland State Archives, CPS 13D/P3, 4 February 1890

¹⁹²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹²¹ A parson, Thomas Eykyn, on visiting Thursday Island in the 1890s where he stayed with the Douglas's in the Residency, made this observation: "One evening, coming in to dress for dinner, my hostess asked me to take a glass of sherry, for she feared I must be tired after being in the parish all day. I replied, that I had called at fifteen houses, at thirteen of which champagne had been opened, at the fourteenth whiskey, and at the fifteenth raspberry vinegar; and I thought I could wait until dinner. I do not, of course, state that I drank all these beverages." (Peripatetic Parson [Thomas Eykyn]. *Parts of the Pacific*. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Limited, 1896, p. 98)

noticed “the prevalence of drinking throughout the bush, and in all the big towns of Queensland especially.”¹⁹²² He also remarked on how drinking was, if anything, even more prevalent among the upper classes than among working men.¹⁹²³

Both Sarah and John nursed their disappointments over each other. He was mortified by her violent nature resulting from drink, whereas she was upset by both his inability to provide for the family financially and his curt attitude towards her. As Sarah wistfully confided to her eldest son:

I had the gayest and the happiest girlhood woman ever had. My life was like a summer’s day but I left it and then the clouds loomed ahead. I did not know what worry was until your brother and you were born and then when your father got led away with others and spent the money that I helped to save to educate you and your brothers and he was so very curt to me. It changed my whole nature I don’t feel the same person even now.¹⁹²⁴

¹⁹²² Fitzgerald, p. 305

¹⁹²³ Finch-Hatton devoted a whole chapter of his book to the prevalence of drink and the problems it caused in Queensland. See, Harold Finch-Hatton. *Advance Australia: An Account of Eight Year’s Work, Wandering, and Amusement, in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria*. 2nd ed. London: Allen, 1886, pp. 219-31. As to the extent of John Douglas’s drinking, it appeared to be in moderation. He confided to the Darling Downs Caledonian Society in 1874, that while he may have been able to “put away five or even six tumblers [of Campbelltown whisky] at a Presbytery dinner” when at university, in Brisbane he would never drink more than two. (“Mr. Douglas and the Dominion of Australia.” *Brisbane Courier*, 24 October 1874, p. 5)

¹⁹²⁴ Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 31 August 1897. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/13

Despite the failure of the marriage and their evident unhappiness, John and Sarah never divorced. Instead, they found solace in work and alcohol respectively, while focussing their energies, hopes and ambitions on their children.

The children's education

With the boys back on Thursday Island, their education became of paramount concern. As the marriage deteriorated, each parent devoted more time and energy to ensuring that the children would receive the best possible education. In many ways both parents, but Sarah in particular, channelled their aspirations into their children.

The small state school on the island was considered inadequate, so the family employed Edgar Herbert Sinclair as a tutor for the children.¹⁹²⁵ It was decided to send the boys to Brisbane where they could receive a better education. There appears to have been some disagreement as to which faith the boys would be educated in, Catholic or Anglican.¹⁹²⁶ Sarah and Robert, the youngest son, had already gone to live in Brisbane some time in 1889.¹⁹²⁷ However, Sarah returned to Thursday Island at the end of the year to take the

¹⁹²⁵ John Douglas vs. Sarah Douglas. Clerk of Petty Sessions, Thursday Island. *Deposition and Minute Book*, 13/3/1888-7/11/1889. Queensland State Archives, CPS 13D/P2, 7 February 1889. John Douglas had also requested that the boys be taught French and German by Mother Paul of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart Convent on her arrival to the island in 1886. (Letter from Catholic Presbytery, Alice Springs, 22 June 1973. Box 0566, Northern Territory, Thursday island, various. *Sacred Heart Archives*, Kensington, New South Wales. Photocopy kindly supplied by Dr Anna Shnukal)

¹⁹²⁶ Cecilia Douglas, p. 30

¹⁹²⁷ John Douglas to his children, 5 November 1889. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library,

remaining children to Brisbane in time for the following school year, where they were enrolled at the Catholic Christian Brothers St Joseph's College at Gregory Terrace.¹⁹²⁸

While living in New Guinea, Douglas had already spent several years apart from his children. Now he was apart from them again, a devastating state of affairs for one who had had children late in life. Although he immersed himself in his official duties, the extant correspondence between him and his children poignantly depicts his deep concern for their welfare.

However, Sarah then returned to Thursday Island with the two youngest children while Edward and Henry enrolled in the Ipswich Grammar School in February 1890.¹⁹²⁹ Shortly afterwards Sarah and Hugh and Robert joined them.¹⁹³⁰ Once again, John Douglas was alone on Thursday Island. A melancholy Douglas informed his children: "The break up of our home here has been a great loss to me, but I hope it will be for your good."¹⁹³¹

The Douglas children and their mother only spent a couple of months in Ipswich before they all returned to Thursday Island. Some time

State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/3/10

¹⁹²⁸ Cecilia Douglas, p. 31

¹⁹²⁹ John Douglas to Edward and Henry Douglas, 14 July 1890. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/3/11; Cecilia Douglas, p. 31: John Douglas to Alfred Cort Haddon, 22 May 1890. *Haddon Papers*. Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) M2728, Box 1, 3

¹⁹³⁰ John Douglas to his children, 18 July 1890. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/3/12

¹⁹³¹ *Ibid.*

before 1890, it was agreed to educate the boys in Great Britain. Sarah was determined that the children would attend a Catholic school, and enlisted powerful allies to convince her husband of the wisdom of this decision.

The Roman Catholic archbishop of Brisbane, Robert Dunne, discussed the matter of the children's education with John Douglas when he visited Thursday Island on his way to Europe.¹⁹³² Sister Bridget Conlon of the All Hallows Convent in Brisbane, who had introduced John and Sarah to one another in 1877, wrote to the archbishop when he was in Rome, urging him to seek the support of John Douglas's second cousin, Father Edward Douglas (1819-1898), a noted Catholic Redemptorist.¹⁹³³ He in turn suggested that the archbishop enlist the help of John Douglas's first cousin once removed, the Reverend Lord Archibald Edward Douglas (1850-1933), and the son of the eighth Marquess of Queensberry, who had converted to Catholicism and was now a priest at St Columba's Catholic Church in Annan, Scotland.¹⁹³⁴

Lord Douglas then wrote to John Douglas on Thursday Island recommending the *St. Benedict's Abbey School* at Fort Augustus, Invernesshire in Scotland, which was founded in 1878 as a

¹⁹³² Archbishop Dunne to Lord Archibald Douglas, 11 February 1891. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5(a)/4

¹⁹³³ Sister Bridget Conlon to Edward Douglas, 4 December 1891. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*; Archbishop Dunne to Lord Archibald Douglas, 3 November 1890. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5(a)/2

“Benedictine School for gentlemen’s sons.”¹⁹³⁵ The combined influence of these notable Catholics was sufficient to convince John Douglas to send the two oldest boys, Edward and Henry, to Scotland in time for the commencement of the 1891 school year. Back on the island, Sarah and John’s relationship continued to be beset with problems, and in April 1891 she was again charged with drunkenness and assault on Thursday Island.¹⁹³⁶

Sarah and the two oldest boys sailed to Scotland while Hugh and Robert remained at Thursday Island.¹⁹³⁷ Sarah then returned to Australia¹⁹³⁸ and early the following year Hugh and Robert were also sent to the school.¹⁹³⁹

Edward, as the eldest, took responsibility for his siblings and worried deeply about the state of his parents’ marriage, as this extract from a

¹⁹³⁵ Lord Archibald Douglas to John Douglas, 24 November 1890. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89–3/B/5(a)/3

¹⁹³⁶ Clerk of Petty Sessions, Thursday Island. *Deposition and Minute Book*. Queensland State Archives, CPS 13D/P4, 24 April 1891. Sarah pleaded guilty and was discharged.

¹⁹³⁷ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 28 July 1891. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89–3/B/1/1; Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 6 September 1891. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89–3/B/1/2. They spent two weeks in London before taking the train to Scotland, commencing school on 16 September. During Sarah’s absence from Thursday Island, the schoolmistress acted as Douglas’s housekeeper. (Ward, pp. 63-64)

¹⁹³⁸ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 22 September 1891. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89–3/B/1/4; St. Benedict’s Abbey to John Douglas, 24 February 1892. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; Extracts from *St Benedict’s College Chronicle* in the Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh, Scotland. The Children’s college numbers and dates of attendance were; Edward no. 207 (16/9/91-December 1894), Henry no. 208 (16/9/91-July 1894), Hugh no. 211 (18/3/92-July 1894) and Robert no. 212 (18/3/92-December 1894)

¹⁹³⁹ St. Benedict’s Abbey to John Douglas, 24 February 1892. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 11 May 1892. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas

letter to his father - written in 1892, when he was 14 years old -

attests:

Is mother like she used to be or is she better? I hope that she will not drink much again ... Perhaps mother and you will get on better now that we are not there, as so many causes of quarrel between you will be removed. Did mother get any permanent better health by coming home; I am afraid she did not because if she did get a little stronger for a while I think she soon lost it all, because you told me that after she had come back she had been carrying on.¹⁹⁴⁰

Above all else, Sarah wanted her children to be educated in the Catholic faith. St. Benedict's ensured this, and all her children became Catholic and remained so throughout their lives, despite John Douglas being a devout Anglican. He accepted his children being brought up Catholic, although what his thoughts on receiving this plea from his eldest son can only be imagined:

Father you won't be cross with me if I tell you that I wish very earnestly that you would become a Catholic. Do not think for a moment that anyone has asked me to say this to you ... It would be better to gain Heaven than to get anything else for perhaps they might not leave you at Thursday Island if you become Catholic.¹⁹⁴¹

Although John and Sarah were separated from two of their children, she was relieved that they were receiving a Catholic education while

Papers

¹⁹⁴⁰ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 11 May 1892. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

he could take comfort that they were getting a superior education in his beloved Scotland, and were in close proximity and contact with his relatives.

Bank smash

The 1880s were a boom decade in the Australian colonies, and the Queensland economy was transformed through a massive injection of outside capital that led to a speculative boom in 1886-87.¹⁹⁴²

Douglas was well placed to profit from the boom, because he owned the house in Sandgate and had used his substantial salary as administrator in British New Guinea to purchase property in Tenterfield.¹⁹⁴³ He also owned several blocks of land on Thursday Island.¹⁹⁴⁴ The speculative land boom reached its peak in Melbourne and led to increased reliance on British investment both for government expenditure on public works and for private domestic dwellings. As Stuart Macintyre accurately observed, this investment was:

marked by excessive optimism, cronyism and dubious
business practice, for the same promoters were active in

¹⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴² Fitzgerald, pp. 319-20

¹⁹⁴³ John Douglas. 1887 Diary. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/A/2. Douglas purchased the Tenterfield property, a house and half lots on either side, on 4 March 1887.

¹⁹⁴⁴ "Sale of Crown Land at Auction." Queensland State Archives, LAN AB/46, Microfilm Z1547. On 29 June 1885 Douglas purchased three blocks of land on Thursday Island, at least one of which had a dwelling subsequently erected. (Clerk of Petty Sessions, Thursday Island. *Deposition and Minute Book*. Queensland State Archives, CPS 13D/P3, 5 February 1890)

the cabinet and the boardrooms.¹⁹⁴⁵

By 1890, the cost of servicing the foreign debt in Victoria reached 40 per cent of export earnings.¹⁹⁴⁶ That same year, following financial defaults by several South American governments, the London money market refused new loans to Australia. Some land companies failed, and there was a run on deposits, leading to the infamous 'Bank Smash' of May 1893.¹⁹⁴⁷ Queensland, with its reliance on foreign capital, was devastated, and experienced a severe depression in the early to mid 1890s. This was exacerbated by a severe drought, record floods in Brisbane, and unprecedented labour discord, including the 'Great Strike,' which saw shearers pitted unsuccessfully against both pastoralists and the colony's government.¹⁹⁴⁸

Initially, as others experienced financially ruin, Douglas was able to weather the storm. Writing to his sons in Scotland, he graphically outlined the crises facing the colony:

Everything in the financial world has thus been thrown into confusion ... you will hear the year 1893 spoken of as an era of a huge financial collapse. ... First the floods and then the banking disaster. Still we shall survive. I am afraid, however, that there will be great distress. Many will be thrown out of employment by the pinching and scarring which must follow.¹⁹⁴⁹

¹⁹⁴⁵ Stuart Macintyre, p. 129

¹⁹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴⁸ See Fitzgerald, pp. 317-24 & Ross Johnston (1988), chapter 9

¹⁹⁴⁹ John Douglas to his children, 11 June 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers. For a further account, see John Douglas to his children, 14 July 1893. Andrew and Lorraine

However, all too soon Douglas also found himself a victim of the “pinching and scarring which must follow.” The details of how he came into financial difficulty are sketchy, but it appears that he made a bad financial investment, “joining in that wretched Mount Teswell business at Cooktown,”¹⁹⁵⁰ and both he and Sarah endured heavy financial losses. Sarah, in a letter to Edward several years afterwards, was still bitter; “your father got led away with others and spent the money that I helped to save.”¹⁹⁵¹ What made it even worse was that Douglas had sunk his money into this venture despite, following the discovery of gold at Mount Morgan, having had the opportunity to purchase “a share for next to nothing.” Had he done so, he would have become an extremely wealthy man. However Douglas was sanguine about what could have been, informing his son in connection with this matter that; “I am thankful to be what I am, despite all our shortcomings.”¹⁹⁵²

John and Sarah never recovered from losing almost everything during this period. Never again were they wealthy or even financially comfortable. From this point onwards, balancing the family budget was a never-ending struggle. Nevertheless, John Douglas did his

Douglas Papers. A local example of this distress was the closure for a couple of months of the only two bank branches on Thursday Island following the suspension of operations for both the Queensland National Bank and the Bank of North Queensland on 15 May 1893. (Kenneth Buckley & Kris Klugman. *The History of Burns Philp: The Australian Company in the South Pacific*. Sydney, Burns, Philp & Co. Ltd., 1981, p. 45; Ward, p. 168)

¹⁹⁵⁰ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 9 October 1897. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/16

¹⁹⁵¹ Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 31 August 1897. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/13

best to cope with the twin disappointments of his marriage and financial penury for which his son Edward later praised him:

I only hope that I shall have discharged my duty as well
as you have done and I can feel that peace of mind
which I think in spite of everything is your blessing.¹⁹⁵³

The children's education was the first to suffer. In early 1893, Sarah travelled to Sydney to receive medical treatment for an undisclosed ailment, and it was decided that the two youngest children would relocate from Scotland to Sydney and live with her there.¹⁹⁵⁴

However, this did not eventuate, and Sarah returned to Thursday Island around the middle of that year.¹⁹⁵⁵ The cost of educating the boys in Scotland in 1893 was £240 per annum, a significant portion of Douglas's annual salary of £700.¹⁹⁵⁶

Savings were required. When their domestic servant retired, the family resolved to do without one by, among other things, sending out the washing. John swept out the house daily, did the tidying up and attended to the lamps, while Sarah cooked. Eschewing a servant vividly illustrated how hard up the Douglas family was.

Historian Janet Roebuck reminds us that although Douglas's

¹⁹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁹⁵³ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, [April 1903]. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/1/18

¹⁹⁵⁴ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 23 January 1893. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/1/6; Edward Douglas to Sarah Douglas, 26 February 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹⁹⁵⁵ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 11 June 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹⁹⁵⁶ Father Oswald Hunter Blair to John Douglas, 22 August 1893. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/b/5/a

generation saw hard work as a virtue, only work outside the home was considered respectable. Domestic labour was something to be shunned, fit only for servants. Not only was a servant necessary to do the chores, without one it was impossible to be properly middle or upper class.¹⁹⁵⁷ No wonder Douglas explained to his children that, “we cannot see any company.”¹⁹⁵⁸ It was therefore no surprise that within two months they had abandoned this experiment.¹⁹⁵⁹

The final blow to the family finances came with the introduction of the *Civil Service Special Retrenchment Act*, which reduced Douglas’s salary by £100, leaving him with £600 per annum.¹⁹⁶⁰ As Sarah explained to her children, “Your father finds it hard now, his hand has been always open [and now] there is no money to pay for you.”¹⁹⁶¹

Sarah was bitter that the children’s wealthy Scottish aunt by marriage, Charlotte Douglas, did not financially help them.¹⁹⁶²

Charlotte had offered to pay for their school and university education on the condition that the children promise not to enter the priesthood or become monks. However, all four children refused to accept

¹⁹⁵⁷ Roebuck, pp. 23-24

¹⁹⁵⁸ John Douglas to his children, 7 September 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers.

¹⁹⁵⁹ Sarah Douglas to her children, 1 December 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 December 1893. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers.

¹⁹⁶⁰ Our *First Half Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based Upon Official Information*, p. 44. As this publication observed, despite the Act being deeply unpopular, “civil servants were indeed fortunate, when so large a number of their friends in private life were left destitute, in being able to draw their diminished salaries month by month.” Parliamentarians had their salaries reduced by 50 per cent. (Bernays, p. 125)

¹⁹⁶¹ Sarah Douglas to her children, 1 December 1893. McCourt Papers

¹⁹⁶² Ibid.

these conditions.¹⁹⁶³

Nevertheless, the school was keen to help. Robert, now 11 years old, expressed a desire to become a novitiate, and the school offered to keep him on “for almost nothing.”¹⁹⁶⁴ It was decided to leave both Robert and Edward at the school, the former while he decided whether to pursue a monastic calling and the latter to watch over him and because he was in his final year and had demonstrated “ability.”¹⁹⁶⁵

Henry and Hugh left Scotland in August 1894 and arrived at Thursday Island two months later.¹⁹⁶⁶ Henry found work on the island with the firm of Burns Philp, while Hugh was tutored at home.¹⁹⁶⁷ The family continued to suffer financially. As John apologetically informed Edward around this time, “I wish I could send some pocket money, but really I cannot. I have as much as I can do to pay your bills.”¹⁹⁶⁸

¹⁹⁶³ Cecilia Douglas, p. 32. Following Charlotte’s death in 1921, she left the boys £5,000, the amount she estimated would have been spent on their education if they had taken up her offer.

¹⁹⁶⁴ Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 20 April 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 8 September 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers. Robert did not become a novitiate, and therefore did not receive a reduction in fees. The fee for the two boys, at £126 per annum, was now only half the cost of educating all four boys in Scotland. (Father Oswald Hunter Blair to John Douglas, 20 May 1894. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5a/7)

¹⁹⁶⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 19 May 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 1 September 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers.

¹⁹⁶⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 7 October 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹⁹⁶⁸ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 19 May 1894. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

It was intended that Edward would go to university in London on completion of school.¹⁹⁶⁹ However finances precluded this, and with Robert being charged full fees after deciding not to pursue a career in the priesthood, Douglas was forced to recall both children home on completion of Edward's final year in December 1894.¹⁹⁷⁰ Robert and Hugh went on to the Jesuit St. Ignatius' College at Riverview in Sydney,¹⁹⁷¹ while Edward moved to Brisbane in 1897 to pursue a legal career as an associate to Sir Samuel Griffith, then the chief justice of Queensland, a career that would culminate in his appointment as a Queensland Supreme Court judge in 1929.¹⁹⁷²

Living in Brisbane apart from his mother had a significant impact on Edward, for, unlike his younger siblings, and, because being the eldest conferred additional responsibilities on him, he always remained closer to John than to Sarah, and became his father's confidant in later years.¹⁹⁷³ Despite the financial difficulties the family

¹⁹⁶⁹ Father Oswald Hunter Blair to John Douglas, 20 May 1894. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5a/7

¹⁹⁷⁰ John Douglas to Edward and Robert Douglas, 22 January 1895. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers. The boys' departure from the school caused 'general regret,' and the headmaster personally took them to London, where they went to the zoo and the circus before boarding a British India Liner for the voyage home. (Oswald Hunter Blair. "The Douglasses of a noble Scottish Catholic House: Tribute to the Four Queenslanders. January 12 1939. Douglas Cutting Book p. 121. In, Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/E)

¹⁹⁷¹ Hugh attended Riverview from 1896-98 and Robert from 1897-1901. (Personal correspondence with the archivist, St Ignatius' College, Riverview, 2000)

¹⁹⁷² Clement Macintyre. *Political Australia: A Handbook of Facts*. Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 309. In 1923, Robert Douglas also became a Queensland Supreme Court judge.

¹⁹⁷³ John Douglas to Edward and Henry Douglas, 10 May 1895. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89 -3/B/A/4

endured, all the children received a superior education, with Edward and Henry in turn financially assisting their father with the education of their two younger brothers.

Family, 1897-1902

Edward left Thursday Island in April 1897 for Brisbane to work as an associate to Sir Samuel Griffith, the Queensland chief justice.¹⁹⁷⁴

The family were upset at his leaving them but knew that Edward could not be expected to become a lawyer while living on the remote Island.¹⁹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, he corresponded regularly and extensively with his parents. The second eldest son, Henry, remained on Thursday Island, working first for Burns Philp and then for the Bowden Pearling Company. He became a member of the Torres Strait Shire Council and its chairman in 1904 before following his father into the Queensland parliament in 1907. During this time, the two younger sons, Hugh and Robert, were completing their schooling at St. Ignatius' College, Riverview, in Sydney.

Sarah was plagued by illness¹⁹⁷⁶ and money was in short supply,

¹⁹⁷⁴ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 17 April 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/1; *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 10 April 1897, p. 2

¹⁹⁷⁵ Indeed Edward never again lived on the island.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Hugh Douglas to John Douglas, 8 May 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/3; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 2 July 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/1; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 13 September 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/14; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 27 December 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/19

Douglas in 1897 regretfully informing Edward that he could not expect any monetary assistance from him, for “I know full well what claims will be made upon me by her, [Sarah] and the other boys, and I consider you have a fair start now.”¹⁹⁷⁷

Although money may have been in short supply, Edward was assured by his father that “whatever assistance and support I can give you will be without stint.”¹⁹⁷⁸ There were also entreaties from both parents for Edward to choose his friends carefully, John urging him to avoid the company of “bad loose or inferior women,”¹⁹⁷⁹ while Sarah grimly warned him to:

Be on your guard and have nothing to do with women who are corrupt and lead an impure life. It is the most debasing of all crimes to the human body and drags people down to perdition body and soul, both in this world and the next.¹⁹⁸⁰

Relations between John and Sarah continued to be strained, as this 1897 account from Douglas to his son Edward suggests:

Last Saturday we had a terrible time of it. Very violent. But worse than I have seen for many a long day ... It is very trying.¹⁹⁸¹

¹⁹⁷⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 17 April 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/9

¹⁹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸⁰ Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 18 June 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(2)/7

¹⁹⁸¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 11 May 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(a)/13

The four children attempted to steer a middle course in their mother's and father's domestic disputes, but were increasingly affected by their parents' unhappiness. Edward, now residing in Sydney, supported his father in any disputes, but Henry, still living at home, was closer to Sarah and under her influence, much to her husband's frustration, as this exchange to Edward demonstrates:

I wish that Henry would take more than he does to learning, and I would gladly help and direct him, but the fact is that your mother is so jealous of any influence I may exercise over him that it is useless for me to attempt it.¹⁹⁸²

Religion was at the core of this dispute. Sarah accused her husband of undermining Henry's Catholic faith whenever he tried to interest him in science. Douglas denied this, and insisted that the "grand laws of nature" in no way conflict with "Catholic knowledge."¹⁹⁸³ Sarah's religious experience and belief appears to have been altogether more literal and fundamental than that of her husband. John's spirituality, while profoundly intense, was tempered by Anglican sensibilities and informed by the numerous scientific discoveries and inventions of the era. Sarah's faith was of a greater emotional intensity, a product of her unquestioning Catholic devotion. To John, religion and progress supported and enabled each other,

¹⁹⁸² John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 9 October 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(a)/16

¹⁹⁸³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 23 October 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(a)/17. Although Douglas despaired at Sarah's "jealous suspicious nature," he urged Edward not to get involved: "The best thing

while to Sarah, science and reason were inimical to religion and could lead to her children's faith being undermined. John's and Sarah's religious beliefs were so intense, so passionately held and so incompatible that they could never be reconciled and hence were the cause of ongoing tension, dispute and unhappiness between them.

At the end of 1897, when Henry left Thursday Island on a holiday to visit his brothers in Brisbane and Sydney, Douglas confided to Edward that he was dreading being left alone with Sarah.¹⁹⁸⁴

However, he managed to travel to Brisbane on government business, and Henry soon returned, along with his two younger brothers, up from Sydney for the school holidays.¹⁹⁸⁵ On his return, John was plagued by illness and unable to walk, diagnosed with inflamed leg and knee carbuncles.

Meanwhile Sarah was again drinking heavily, and harassed a Mrs Bowes who had been called in to nurse Douglas. He was admitted to hospital, and on returning home his new carer, Mrs Smyth, was also harassed by Sarah, forcing him to relocate to the water police barracks.¹⁹⁸⁶

On 22 February 1898, Sarah and John Douglas separated when she

you can do is to hold your tongue.”

¹⁹⁸⁴ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 7 November 1897. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(a)/18

¹⁹⁸⁵ *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 4 December 1897, p. 2; Hugh and Robert returned to Sydney on 8 February 1898. (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 8 February 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/3)

¹⁹⁸⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 18 February 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/11

departed for Sydney. He agreed to pay her alimony of £200 per annum in monthly instalments.¹⁹⁸⁷ Following her departure and still unable to walk properly, he was carried up to the residency where he rejoined Henry. Douglas was ambivalent regarding their separation, and informed Edward:

Poor woman. She is awfully over grieved but I do feel sorry for her though deeply grieved and pained by her most monstrous ingratitude and her vindictive temper.¹⁹⁸⁸

Six weeks later, Douglas's health had improved. He was now mobile and ready to share with Edward his thoughts about Sarah and their separation:

It is an inexpressible relief to me to be able to live at peace with everyone as I do now. She treated me really shamefully when I was quite powerless, and it was from sheer necessity that I left the house. But as you know there are times when she is not accountable for her actions.

If she chooses to remain in obscurity in Sydney I cannot help it. I feel very sorry for her, and will do what I can to enable her to live in comfort as long as I live, but I don't think that I can ever bring myself again to submit to the

¹⁹⁸⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 22 February 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/4. Sarah travelled alone to Sydney, for Henry was unable to get leave and John could not afford the fare. She left no forwarding address, and two months passed before she informed John of her whereabouts, a boarding house in 73 Hunter Street. (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 13 June 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/8)

¹⁹⁸⁸ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 22 February 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/4

ignominy of living in the same house with her. It would not conduce to the happiness or the well-being of either of us to attempt to do so.¹⁹⁸⁹

This was a devastating period for both Sarah and John. The marriage had irretrievably broken down, and Sarah and John separated. Douglas did his duty, caring for her financially, while relieved to be free of the emotional and mental torment. Sarah escaped remote Thursday Island and was free to pursue her own life outside of the marriage. Both recognised how destructive their marriage had been, both for themselves and their children yet were deeply saddened by its ending, for they had been together for over 20 years.

Paying Sarah alimony put an intolerable strain on Douglas's finances. From his annual salary of £700, he had to find £200 for her and an equal amount for the boys' schooling at St. Ignatius' College, leaving only £300 for everything else, insufficient for his "liabilities." Douglas needed to dispense with the services of his Japanese servant in order to reduce his expenditure, but was afraid:

that Henry would kick a good deal at that. He is pretty exacting and insists upon having every thing in good form, and plenty of it. Meat at breakfast, dinner and tea which I do not think at all necessary.¹⁹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁸⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 29 March 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/7

¹⁹⁹⁰ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 24 June 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/9; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 30 June 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-

Douglas was forced to ask Edward to pay his Brisbane bills of around £30, a similar sum that his bad leg had cost him in doctors, nurses and chemist fees, and which were “haunting him.”¹⁹⁹¹

1898 was also a year when several of his oldest and closest friends passed away. Now 70, in indifferent health and beset by financial and marriage woes, a “rather depressed” Douglas candidly confided to Edward; “One hardly cares to stay. I should not, were it not for you all.”¹⁹⁹² Finding the tropical climate more difficult to endure, he attempted to secure a government post in Brisbane to be nearer to his sons, but was unsuccessful.¹⁹⁹³ A disappointed Douglas would remain on Thursday Island:

I must be content to do what I can for the few remaining years which may possibly be allotted to me in my present position. I do not see how it can be otherwise.

3/B/2/(b)/10

¹⁹⁹¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 24 June 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/9. As John apologetically informed Edward, “Whether I shall be able to repay is quite uncertain.” He was now so financially impoverished that he was unable to send Hugh and Robert their monthly pocket money, five shillings each. (Robert Douglas to Edward Douglas, 7 July 1898. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers)

¹⁹⁹² John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 27 July 1898. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 12 August 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/12

¹⁹⁹³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 23 August 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/13. Douglas appeared to have applied for two positions in 1898. It is unclear what the position Douglas was in contention for, although the local paper speculated it was either the administrator of New Guinea or else the presidency of the Queensland legislative council. (“Much Anticipated Changes.” *Torres Straits Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 25 December 1897, p. 2.) The second position was the chairmanship of the public service board. (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 4 September 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/14)

Considering all things I have much for which I ought to be
thankful.¹⁹⁹⁴

Hugh and Robert were becoming closer to their mother for she saw them more frequently in Sydney. Sarah found Hugh to be “affectionate and clinging, clinging and loving me before all ... [who] will go against anyone who goes against me.” Sarah, too, appeared resigned to her circumstances:

I have given up all antagonism and wish for peace at any price. I have had enough of fighting and you must fight for yourselves.¹⁹⁹⁵

Six months after leaving Thursday Island, Sarah, tired of living in lodgings in Sydney, finding separation financially and emotionally difficult, and missing the security her family, home and husband could provide, returned. Douglas, knowing he could not prevent her coming,¹⁹⁹⁶ was pensive but accepting:

I shall of course endeavour to contribute as much as possible to her comfort and happiness. Whether she will contribute to mine is by no means certain but if she wishes to come back of course it is my plain duty to do what I can for her.¹⁹⁹⁷

Hugh was thrilled, informing Edward:

¹⁹⁹⁴ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 4 September 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/14

¹⁹⁹⁵ Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 July 1898. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

¹⁹⁹⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 2 November 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/19

¹⁹⁹⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 22 September 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/15

It has been a very miserable time for her, down here, in boarding houses. Home is home ... Poor mother, you don't know how she suffers.¹⁹⁹⁸

Sarah returned to the Thursday Island residency in November 1898 but was still not well, for she rarely ventured out the house and had to lie down most of the day. Her return to the household appeared to be going reasonably harmoniously, as John notified Edward:

Everything fairly quiescent, a pleasing contrast to the conditions of affairs this time last year when we had some most distressing scenes.¹⁹⁹⁹

However, the domestic harmony ended following Douglas's return from a trip to Sydney,²⁰⁰⁰ as he sorrowfully informed Edward:

The outlook as regards your mother is not very hopeful. It might be expected that she would at least try not to be aggravating. Not only, however, is she not quiescent, but she is as selfish and as uncompromisingly hostile as she well can be; insults me grossly in the presence of Henry and Hugh without the slightest provocation, and is altogether impossible. After the happy and peaceful time I spent with you all it does seem such a desperate shame that everything should now be so disturbed by her malevolent disposition.²⁰⁰¹

¹⁹⁹⁸ Hugh Douglas to Edward Douglas, 2 November 1898. McCourt Papers

¹⁹⁹⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 4 December 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/20

²⁰⁰⁰ In the December 1898 school holidays, John and Edward travelled to Sydney and spent three weeks with Robert and Hugh, before Hugh, who had now completed his schooling, returned with his father to Thursday Island while Robert stayed with his brother in Brisbane before returning to St. Ignatius' College for the start of the new school year.

²⁰⁰¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 20 January 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley

While despondent and dejected, Douglas resolved to be resolute.

She never goes out of the house, and her set purpose,
so far as I am concerned, seems to be to make things as
uncomfortable as possible. It is enough to make one
lose all heart and hope, but I am determined not to do
that and I have had such a schooling in injustices which I
have to bear that I think I shall be able to hold on.²⁰⁰²

In February 1899 Sarah abruptly left the island and travelled to Brisbane, taking Hugh with her.²⁰⁰³ Together Edward and his father attempted to find employment for Hugh as a clerk or on the railways, as Douglas could not afford to give him an allowance.²⁰⁰⁴ In indifferent health,²⁰⁰⁵ Douglas was forced to continue working to support a family that was scattered and dispersed and, with a failed marriage to contend with, found little to look forward to:

I still have a good deal of go in me, but I have to take
things quietly. I cannot last much longer. I love you all,
your poor mother included and I pray to God that her

Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/1

²⁰⁰² Ibid.

²⁰⁰³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 March 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/2. Douglas was concerned on how this would affect Edward, and urged him not to “allow anything to become between you and your plain duty to yourself.”

²⁰⁰⁴ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 27 April 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/4; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 3 February 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/12. As John apologetically explained to Edward, the “truth is I really and truly do not have the money.”

²⁰⁰⁵ Douglas appeared to be suffering from rheumatism or arthritis; he was becoming hard of hearing, had frequent colds, and, as he admitted to Edward in October 1899, “I feel getting old.” (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 17 October 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/21)

heart may be softened to me, and to you, and to all
mankind.²⁰⁰⁶

It was at times like this that he found solace in his religion.²⁰⁰⁷ Sarah and Hugh remained in Brisbane. Edward no longer visited his mother; Hugh, upset at not receiving an allowance, did not correspond with his father for several months, while John complained to Edward that Henry had become “extremely reserved, as silent as the grave about mother or Hugh and I never hear anything about them from him.”²⁰⁰⁸ Edward eventually resumed contact with his mother, much to John’s satisfaction:

I am very pleased that you have seen her, and once more established friendly relations, though I can quite understand that you must be careful, and keep yourself free from any subsequent embarrassments.²⁰⁰⁹

Douglas still yearned for the family to be together again, but knew that it was no longer possible. “I wish that we could all be living together, but that is impossible, and we must make the best of things as they are.”²⁰¹⁰ He continued to pay Sarah her allowance on a monthly basis, but received no acknowledgement from Hugh, despite requesting one. Therefore, in August 1899 he delayed remitting the

²⁰⁰⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 5 March 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/2

²⁰⁰⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 2 November 1898. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(b)/19

²⁰⁰⁸ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 24 May 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/8

²⁰⁰⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 9 July 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/13

²⁰¹⁰ *Ibid.*

money. This action had the desired result, because Sarah telegraphed Henry asking why it had not been sent. John then arranged for the money to be remitted, but was unapologetic:

Henry took on greatly about it, and bounded out of the house. As from Hugh, I expect from him a simple acknowledgement, and await explanations from him.²⁰¹¹

Once again, Hugh stopped corresponding with his father. This greatly upset John, who informed Edward that if Hugh “chooses to dispense with me I cannot help it but I shall deeply regret it.”²⁰¹²

Douglas continued to pay for Robert’s education at St. Ignatius’ College, despite the financial burden this entailed. In considering where Robert should go in the Christmas school holidays, Douglas was wary of him staying with Edward in Brisbane:

I am not very pleased at the idea of his being influenced, and his mind poisoned against me by your mother. It’s bad enough to have Hugh turned against me as he evidently has been by her atrocious calumnies.²⁰¹³

Henry reacted to his family’s travails by immersing himself into his work, going back there most evenings after dinner until 10 or 11 o’clock.²⁰¹⁴ In early 1899, Edward left Brisbane and moved to

²⁰¹¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 3 August 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/14

²⁰¹² John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 19 August 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/15; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 26 August 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/16

²⁰¹³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 30 August 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/17

²⁰¹⁴ Ibid. As Douglas also informed Edward, “Henry is up to his eyes in work. At it late and

Rockhampton to work as Justice Virgil Power's associate.²⁰¹⁵

Sarah and Hugh returned to Thursday Island early the following year, where Hugh was reconciled with his father and gained employment with Burns Philp.²⁰¹⁶ In 1900, Edward travelled to Japan with Justice and Mrs Power,²⁰¹⁷ while Robert returned to Thursday Island at the end of the year for the school holidays.²⁰¹⁸ Hugh and his father now enjoyed cordial relations and John took him on visits to the islands.²⁰¹⁹ However, relations continued to be strained between John and Sarah, as this extract from a letter to Edward in February 1901 demonstrates:

We have had a very bad time of it and I have felt very much cut up about it, had to leave the house one night and sleep in the court house ... This has shaken me a good deal for the whole proceeding and the language was exceptionally outrageous and almost beyond bearing.²⁰²⁰

Nevertheless, Sarah was contrite following her bouts of drinking,

early." (John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 2 September 1899. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(c)/18)

²⁰¹⁵ Virgil Power to Edward Douglas, 11 September 1899. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas to Samuel Griffith, 28 November 1899. Griffith Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, MSQ 189, pp. 807-10

²⁰¹⁶ Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 17 February 1900. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

²⁰¹⁷ Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 19 August 1900. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

²⁰¹⁸ Robert Douglas to Edward Douglas, 9 February 1901. McCourt Papers

²⁰¹⁹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 7 March 1901. McCourt Papers

²⁰²⁰ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 23 February 1901. McCourt Papers

while continuing to suffer indifferent health.²⁰²¹ Robert completed his final year at St. Ignatius in December 1901, and returned to Thursday Island to contemplate his future. Over his father's initial reservations due to the cost, it was agreed to send him to Sydney University to study law, with his father, mother and brothers jointly funding his studies.²⁰²²

Visit to England

Another reason Douglas objected to Robert going to university in 1902 was that he himself was planning to visit England that year and wanted Robert to accompany him.²⁰²³ Given approval to take six months' leave on full pay, Douglas wished to see the 'old country' and his few surviving friends and relatives one last time.²⁰²⁴ As he informed Edward;

£200 ought to do the whole thing and then I should die at
peace with myself and you all.²⁰²⁵

Douglas made detailed preparations for his visit and his lengthy

²⁰²¹ Ibid.

²⁰²² Robert Douglas to Edward Douglas, 9 December 1901. McCourt Papers; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 21 December 1901. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(d)/2; Robert Douglas to Edward Douglas, 14 January 1902. McCourt Papers; Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 21 January 1902. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers. John Douglas agreed to contribute £100 annually, Sarah £35 and Henry and Edward the balance.

²⁰²³ Robert Douglas to Edward Douglas, 14 January 1902. McCourt Papers

²⁰²⁴ "Thursday Island. Interview with the British Resident." *The British Australasian*, 12 June 1902, p. 1005; "The Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G. Returned to Queensland." *Brisbane Courier*, 13 September 1902, p. 5

²⁰²⁵ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 21 December 1901. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(d)/2

absence from Thursday Island. Rather than having a relieving government resident, it was decided that existing officers on the island would share the duties between them.²⁰²⁶

Meanwhile, the ongoing problems between John and Sarah were reaching crisis point. As John sorrowfully informed Edward:

The old story, only rather worse. Unprovoked attacks. Pulled out of bed. Lighted lamps thrown at me. Driven out of the house. Fortunately a fine night. There must be an end to it. I am not called upon to continue to live in such an atmosphere of violence and maledictions.²⁰²⁷

Following this episode, the couple again separated, this time permanently. It was arranged that Sarah would receive £200 a year and passage to Sydney, and the agreement specified the reasons for the separation, namely Sarah's "intemperance and violence."²⁰²⁸

The family was devastated:

We have all been at sixes and sevens since the row. Very heartbreaking.²⁰²⁹

Edward watched on in dismay from Rockhampton at his family's disintegration, while John packed up his possessions and prepared for his voyage to England. On vacating the residency, John, Hugh and Henry relocated to the Metropolitan Hotel, John remaining there until he sailed for England on 2 April 1902, while Hugh and Henry

²⁰²⁶ John Douglas to the Home Office under-secretary, 23 January 1902. Queensland State Archives, HOM/A39

²⁰²⁷ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 10 February 1902. McCourt Papers

²⁰²⁸ Ibid.

²⁰²⁹ Ibid.; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 24 March 1902. McCourt Papers

stayed until 1 May before renting a house on the island. Meanwhile, Robert and Sarah had sailed to Sydney, he to commence studying law at Sydney University.²⁰³⁰ The family were deeply concerned about Sarah's welfare in Sydney, for she had stopped corresponding with her husband, something that caused him much grief.²⁰³¹ However, Henry persuaded Sarah to return to the island "instead of wandering around in boarding houses" and to reside with her children once they moved into a house. As he confided to Edward:

Although mother is a little trying at times I feel that we owe a great deal – in fact everything – to her, more than we can ever repay and I would not feel that I had done my duty unless I assisted her to end her few remaining days in peace and contentment. She has no one else in the world but us.²⁰³²

The island's inhabitants presented Douglas, on his departure for England, with a framed address and a purse of sovereigns containing over £90, 10 guineas of which he promptly donated to the island's Queen Victoria Memorial fund for improvements to the school of arts building.²⁰³³ 18 years had passed since he had last visited the land of his birth. The tone of his letters conveys the feeling of a man nearing the end of his life, and wanting to visit England one final time.

²⁰³⁰ Robert Douglas to Edward Douglas, 23 February 1902. McCourt Papers

²⁰³¹ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 12 March 1902. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

²⁰³² Henry Douglas to Edward Douglas, 24 March 1902. McCourt Papers

²⁰³³ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 30 March 1902. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; *Carpentarian*, 1 April 1902, p. 1; *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 12 April 1902, p. 2

The six-week voyage was uneventful. However, Douglas, who now suffered cramps in his legs if he walked too far or too quickly, was forced to use omnibuses and cabs in London, and had to consult a doctor after being left a “bit shaken” by one especially constant and rapid rail journey.²⁰³⁴ He had secured an invitation to the coronation of Edward VII, but did not attend as it was postponed due to the latter contracting appendicitis.²⁰³⁵ Douglas also spent time with his family in Scotland before returning to Australia in August.²⁰³⁶ In Melbourne, he lunched with Alfred Deakin, then the acting prime minister, before sailing to Brisbane where he spent time with his youngest son, Robert, who was there on holiday, before returning home to Thursday Island.²⁰³⁷

The final years

While Douglas was in Great Britain, the Queensland government, responding to the effects of a severe drought, had passed the *Special Retrenchment Act* that reduced public service salaries according to a sliding scale, and abolished some posts altogether.²⁰³⁸

²⁰³⁴ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 30 May 1902. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2(d)/3; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 16 July 1902. McCourt Papers

²⁰³⁵ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 3 July 1902. McCourt Papers; “The Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G. Returned to Queensland.” *Brisbane Courier*, 13 September 1902, p. 5

²⁰³⁶ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 30 June 1902. McCourt Papers

²⁰³⁷ *The Age*, 4 September 1902, p. 4; Alfred Deakin to John Douglas, 5 September 1902. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5/3

²⁰³⁸ Bernays, p. 164; *Our First Half-Century: A Review of Queensland Progress Based upon Official Information*, p. 179; Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 26 July 1902. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; “Retrenchment.” *Brisbane Courier*, 3 December 1903, p. 4. Edward’s salary was reduced by 10 per cent.

It was reported that Douglas's post would be one of those to go.²⁰³⁹ However, although these reports proved incorrect, he did suffer a loss of £200 per annum the following year.²⁰⁴⁰ The local Thursday Island newspaper saw this action as "undeservedly rough" on Douglas,²⁰⁴¹ while he himself regretted that this would result in the status attached to the position being lowered.²⁰⁴² On his return to Thursday Island, Douglas moved back into the residency, while Sarah, Henry and Hugh remained in their rented house. Douglas gradually returned to his old routine of hearing court cases and visiting the islands.²⁰⁴³

In December 1903, while in Brisbane, Douglas informed his superiors that he wished to continue in office "as long as I had a kick left in me."²⁰⁴⁴ However, it was plain to all that his days were limited: "he has not a long expectation of life or work," was how Edward expressed it.²⁰⁴⁵ On his return to Thursday Island in early 1903,

²⁰³⁹ "The Reorganisation." *Evening Observer*, 9 December 1903, p. 4

²⁰⁴⁰ Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 17 September 1902. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 12 September 1902. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/2/(d)/4. Douglas's base salary was reduced from £700 to £500 per annum. (*Queensland Votes and Proceedings, 1904, p. 527*)

²⁰⁴¹ "Notes and News." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 15 August 1903

²⁰⁴² John Douglas to the Home Secretary, 9 August 1903. Hom/A/10254 of 1903, Queensland State Archives

²⁰⁴³ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 4 April 1903. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/1/9

²⁰⁴⁴ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 10 December 1903. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers. It had again been rumoured that he would be retrenched. ("Hon John Douglas C.M.G." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 December 1903; "Hon. John Douglas Dead." *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1904)

²⁰⁴⁵ Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 29 April 1903. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

Douglas disembarked at Rockhampton to visit Edward. It was the last time they saw each other.²⁰⁴⁶

1904 saw Douglas's health continuing to deteriorate. He was now hard of hearing and the rheumatism in his arm was getting worse.²⁰⁴⁷

Walking was also becoming increasingly difficult.²⁰⁴⁸ Nonetheless,

he continued to visit the islands and this led to a further

deterioration in his health. As John Bruce, the teacher on Murray

Island later remarked:

he had to travel in small crafts which was anything but comfortable for the old gentleman who was beginning to get very frail.²⁰⁴⁹

In June 1904, Edward announced his engagement to Nettie Power and left Rockhampton to seek employment in Brisbane.²⁰⁵⁰

Douglas's health continued to deteriorate following his return from a trip to the islands, and he was now suffering from acute stomach and indigestion problems.²⁰⁵¹ His condition deteriorated and in early July

²⁰⁴⁶ Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 12 January 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

²⁰⁴⁷ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 22 January 1904. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/1/13; Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 21 May 1904. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/1/16

²⁰⁴⁸ John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 25 May 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

²⁰⁴⁹ John Bruce to Alfred Haddon, 3 November 1904. Haddon Papers, Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP) M2739, 1052, p. 3

²⁰⁵⁰ Edward Douglas to John Douglas, 25 June 1904. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/1/17; Sarah Douglas to Edward Douglas, 27 June 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 27 June 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers

²⁰⁵¹ Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 2 July 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; John Douglas to Edward Douglas, 4 July 1904. Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State

1904, he moved to Henry, Hugh and Sarah's house.

Death

On 23 July 1904 at 11 o'clock in the morning, John Douglas passed away "surrounded by those he most loved."²⁰⁵² He was 76. Edward, who was playing golf at the Brisbane Golf Club at the time, only found out later that afternoon after asking in the street why the flags on the government buildings in Brisbane were flying at half-mast.²⁰⁵³

The government organised a state funeral that took place the following afternoon, 24 July, at 4 o'clock on Thursday Island.²⁰⁵⁴

Following an impressive ceremony, the coffin was carried to the cemetery on a gun carriage and Douglas's body was interred in a plot, previously selected by him, on the highest part of the cemetery hillside overlooking the settlement.²⁰⁵⁵ His sons later erected a tall

Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/(d)/4; Edward Douglas to Annette Power, 25 July 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers. Annette Eileen Power, born 9 October 1885, was the daughter of judge Virgil Power, who Edward worked for as an associate.

²⁰⁵² Douglas died in Henry's house and present at the time of his death were Henry, Hugh and Sarah. By all accounts, there was a reconciliation of sorts between John and Sarah, as Edward informed his fiancée : "all the trials of estrangement which he so much lamented were closed in one perpetual reconciliation." The cause of death was listed on his death certificate as "Ileo-colitis, dyspepsia exhaustion." (*John Douglas Death Certificate*; Edward Douglas to Annette Power, 25 July 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers; *Pearler*, 27 July 1904. In, "Douglas Cutting Book," Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/E)

²⁰⁵³ *Ibid.* Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 29 July 1904. McCourt Papers. Edward's letter to his fiancée describing these events and the love and affection he held for his father is at Appendix 6. The flags on all government buildings in Brisbane flew at half-mast by order of the home secretary. ("Death of the Hon. John Douglas." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 July 1904, p. 3)

²⁰⁵⁴ "Queensland." *Cairns Morning Post*, 26 July 1904, p. 7

²⁰⁵⁵ "The Late Government Resident." *Torres Strait Daily Pilot*, 30 July 1904. In, "Douglas

granite column to mark the site of the grave.²⁰⁵⁶

Bishop Gilbert White officiated and delivered a moving eulogy, one that celebrated Douglas's achievements:

He was full of honour. His name will not easily die in Thursday Island. The respect in which he was held was absolutely universal.

And his religious devotion:

Like most strong characters, he had a firm and unwavering religious faith ... He knelt at the altar last, just a fortnight ago-to-day, and he told me that he had made it the final act of communion with, and resignation into, the hands of God.²⁰⁵⁷

Of the many tributes, one from Sir Samuel Griffith to Edward was especially noteworthy:

I do not know of any one in Australia who has left behind him a nobler record of public service.²⁰⁵⁸

Cutting Book," Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/E

²⁰⁵⁶ The two-sided inscription, which is still standing, reads as follows:

Sacred to the memory of John Douglas
Born 6th March 1828, died 23rd July 1904
Write me as one who loves his fellow men
Erected by his sons Edward, Henry, Hugh and Robert

Premier of Queensland 1877-79

Special Commissioner, British New Guinea 1886-8

Government Resident Thursday Island 1885-86, 1888-1904

²⁰⁵⁷ "The Late Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G." *Carpentarian*, vol 4 no 16, 1 October 1904, p.

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²⁰⁵⁸ Samuel Griffith to Edward Douglas, 25 July 1904. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5(k)

Despite dying 'in harness,' Douglas left behind only a few personal possessions and £120, enough to pay his outstanding accounts and funeral expenses.²⁰⁵⁹ His legacy would be his achievements in helping shape Queensland's political development and his beneficial impact on Torres Strait Islanders,²⁰⁶⁰ as well as the success of his four sons.

Douglas would have been proud of his son's achievements.²⁰⁶¹ Both Edward²⁰⁶² and Robert²⁰⁶³ became Queensland Supreme Court

²⁰⁵⁹ Edward Douglas to Henry Douglas, 8 August 1904. Andrew and Lorraine Douglas Papers. Douglas's will was not proved, saving probate expenses of £20 to £30. On Douglas working up until his death and the pride he took in the achievements of his children, Samuel Griffith informed Edward that, "I am sure, indeed I know, that it was his wish to die in harness, and his wish has been granted. Of his care for longer life, it was chiefly in expectation of the pleasure that he would have followed at the success of his sons." (Samuel Griffith to Edward Douglas, 25 July 1904. Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5(k))

²⁰⁶⁰ Bishop White, officiating at Douglas's funeral, reminded all those present: "how large his heart was, not merely towards his own people, but towards all the various peoples and nationalities on this and surrounding islands." ("The Late Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G." *The Carpenterian*, vol 4 no 16, 1 October 1904, p. 128)

²⁰⁶¹ As was Sarah, who lived long enough to see her children prosper, and who outlived Hugh. Robert ruefully remarked to Edward on their mother's reaction when he informed her that he would be moving to Townsville to marry his future wife, Alice Mary Ball: "The whole of mother's life has been so completely centered on the interests of her sons that it is an awful wrench to her to think that another woman can enter into and share the life of each of us." (Robert Douglas to Edward Douglas, 10 July 1911. McCourt Papers)

²⁰⁶² "Death of Judge Douglas at 69." *Brisbane Courier*, 28 August 1947, p. 3; "An Upright Judge." *Brisbane Courier*, 28 August 1947, p. 2; B. H. McPherson. "Douglas, Edward Archibald (1877-1947) and Robert Johnstone Douglas (1883-1972)." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 14. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1996, pp. 22-23. Edward Archibald Douglas was born in Brisbane on 2 November 1877. Associates to Sir Samuel Griffith and Justice Virgil Power, he was called to the Queensland Bar on 3 December 1901. He married Annette Eileen Power, Justice Power's daughter, on 9 January 1907 and they had eleven children, John Power (1907-31), Edward Sholto (1909-97), Evelyn Clare Mary (1911-c85), Robert Alexander (1913-23), Francis Hugh (1914-84), David Alastair (1917-21), Kenneth Maxwell (1921-72), Helen Cecilia (1924-65), Gavin James (1926-), Claire Catherine (1929-32) and Andrew Brice (1931-.) Appointed a Supreme Court judge on 22 March 1929,

judges, while Henry became a solicitor and followed his father into politics, becoming a member of the Queensland cabinet for a brief period in 1915.²⁰⁶⁴ Hugh was killed in France in 1918 shortly before the end of World War 1.²⁰⁶⁵ Sarah survived her husband by 27 years, relocating to Brisbane where she died in 1931, one week short of her 87th birthday.²⁰⁶⁶

Douglas was also commemorated through the construction of a permanent memorial, the Douglas Chapel, in the cathedral on

Edward died in office on 27 August 1947.

²⁰⁶³ "Former Supreme Court Judge Dies." *Brisbane Courier*, 26 December 1972, p. 2; McPherson, pp. 22-23. Robert Johnstone Douglas was born in Sandgate, Brisbane on 13 April 1883. Following his studies at Sydney University where he graduated with a BA degree in 1905, he was admitted to the Queensland Bar in September 1906. He commenced legal practice in Townsville in June 1907 and from 24 January 1923-13 April 1953 was a judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland. Robert married Alice Ball in Townsville on 15 January 1912 and they had five children, Robert Andrew (1915-98), James Archibald (1917-84), Beatrice Rose Mary (1919-2004), Hugh Maxwell (1920-85) and Alice Mary (1922-83.) He died in Townsville on 24 December 1972.

²⁰⁶⁴ Waterson (1972), p. 49. Henry Alexander Cecil Douglas was born in Brisbane on 8 April 1879. He married Flora Isabel Macdonald in 1910. Following her sudden death, he married Catherine Cecilia Beirne in Brisbane in 1914. They had four children, Mary Beirne (1915-?), Sybil Catherine (1918-2003), Henry Beirne (1921-41) and Alexander Michael (1926-.) Henry was the member for the electorate of Cook from 1907 to 1915 and a minister without office in the Queensland government from 6 April to 1 June 1915.

²⁰⁶⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 18 April 1918, p. 7. Hugh Maxwell Douglas was born in Toowong, Brisbane, on 21 May 1887, marrying Hannah Thornton on 21 December 1904. He had three children, Henry Alexander (1908-about 1999), Margaret (1909-39) and Edward Octavius (1913-about 1992.) Douglas enlisted in the army in 1915 and trained at Duntroon, becoming a lieutenant in the Australian Infantry. He was wounded at the battle of Messines, in June 1917, and repatriated to Australia. Returning to France in December of that year as a member of the 47th Battalion, he saw further active service and died of wounds at the 20th general hospital in France on 8 April 1918. He is buried in the Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

²⁰⁶⁶ "Mrs. Sarah Douglas." *Courier Mail*, 20 March 1931, p. 15; "Requiescat in Pace: Mrs. Sarah Douglas." *The Catholic Leader*, 26 March 1931, p. 19

Thursday Island.²⁰⁶⁷ The memorial tablet was unveiled in late 1907²⁰⁶⁸ while the Douglas Memorial Chapel itself was dedicated on 29 June 1913.²⁰⁶⁹ Torres Strait Islanders funded a stained glass

²⁰⁶⁷ "Memorial to the Late Hon. John Douglas C.M.G." Diocese of Carpentaria, Thursday Island, 1 October 1904. In, Douglas Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/B/5(e)/1; "Memorial to the Late Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G." *Carpentarian*, vol 5 no 17, 1 January 1905, p. 133. As well, a memoriam booklet was printed following Douglas's death. A copy is held in the Griffith Papers, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, MSQ 191, pp. 137-43

²⁰⁶⁸ "Douglas Memorial Tablet." *Carpentarian*, vol 7 no 25, 1 January 1907, p. 197. The inscription, which can still be seen in the cathedral, reads:

To the glory of God and in memory of
 Hon. John Douglas, C.M.G.
 Premier of Queensland 1877-1879
 Government Resident Thursday island 1885-1904
 who entered into rest July 23rd 1904
 Loved and honoured by all.

²⁰⁶⁹ "Photograph." Queensland State Archives 21 July 1975. From, Collins Collection, opening of the John Douglas Memorial Chapel, 29 June 1913. *Margaret Lawrie Collection*, MLC 1791-101. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

window depicting Douglas “in the figure of St. John in his old age at Patmos.”²⁰⁷⁰

John Douglas achieved much in his long and varied life. He outlived most of his contemporaries, and lived long enough to see the coming of federation. Active and involved in public life until the end, his children and grand children have continued his legacy, with many significantly contributing to the public life of twentieth-century Queensland.

²⁰⁷⁰ “Douglas Memorial Chapel: Dedication at Thursday Island.” In, “Douglas Cutting Book,” Douglas Papers. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, OM 89-3/E; *Parish Gazette* (Quetta Memorial Cathedral Thursday Island) vol 26 no 4, 2 April 1928, p. 4. 80 Torres Strait Islanders from various Torres Strait islands attended the ceremony.

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²⁰⁷² There is no index. Douglas is mentioned on pp. 35, 38, 216, 222, 227, 229, 238, 247, 262

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Appendix 1: John Douglas: A chronology of his Life

- 1828 Born in London, England, 6 March, seventh son of Henry Alexander and Elizabeth (Nee Dalzell) Douglas
- 1837 Orphaned after the death of his parents. Sent to Scotland where he was brought up by two of his aunts, who lived on Kinmount estate, owned by his uncles, the sixth and seventh Marquesses of Queensberry
- 1839-43 Attended Edinburgh Academy, Scotland
- 1843-46 Attended Rugby school, England
- 1846-49 Attended Durham university, England. Graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Licentiate in Theology
- 1851 Arrived in Sydney, New South Wales, on 11 August, after departing from Plymouth, England, on 23 April
- 1852-53 Appointed sub-commissioner of crown lands for the NSW gold district (Southern), 25 March-31 October 1852 and magistrate at Tuena goldfield, 24 November 1852-21 June 1853
- 1854 In March purchased *Talgai* property on the Darling Downs, with Thomas Hood and Edward Douglas
- 1859 Member of the New South Wales legislative assembly for the seat of Darling Downs, 30 August-November
- 1860 In July purchased *Tooloombah* property in the Rockhampton district, Queensland
- 1861 Married Mary Anne Howe (Nee Simpson), in Sydney, 21 January. Member of the New South Wales legislative assembly for the seat of Camden, 10 January-17 July
- 1863-66 Elected Member for Port Curtis, Queensland, 12 May 1863 in the first parliament. Parliament dissolved on 22 May 1863. Re-elected on 26 June 1863 in the second parliament. Position held until his resignation in early 1866
- 1866 Appointed to the Macalister ministry as a minister of the Queensland legislative council without portfolio, 1 February. Appointed postmaster general, 1 March. Resigned from the Ministry 20 July and from the legislative council on 25 July.

- Appointed Queensland treasurer on 19 December
- 1867 Elected member for Eastern Downs, Queensland, 4 January. Appointed Queensland secretary for public works, 21 May. Re-elected member for Eastern Downs on 5 July. Resigned as Queensland secretary for public works, 15 August
- 1868 Parliament prorogued on 27 August, with a general election called. Douglas decided not to stand for re-election for his Eastern Downs seat. Elected member for East Moreton, Queensland, 28 September, resigning on 8 December to take up a seat in the legislative council when appointed postmaster general, and leader of government business in the chamber, on 11 December
- 1869 Resigned as postmaster general and from the legislative council on 13 November after being appointed Queensland agent-general for immigration and agent for the colony of Queensland on 1 October, based in London. Departed for England on 30 September, arriving 9 December
- 1870 Resident in London. Resigned as agent-general on 28 December
- 1871 Concluded agent-general position on 24 April. Returned to Brisbane on 14 August. Stood unsuccessfully for the seat of East Moreton
- 1872 Successfully petitioned the Queensland parliament for a select committee into his role as agent-general. Handed down on 30 July, its report cleared him
- 1873 Stood unsuccessfully for the seat of Brisbane
- 1874 Stood unsuccessfully for the seat of Darling Downs. Successfully contested the seat of Maryborough, being elected to the legislative assembly on 27 April
- 1876 Appointed secretary for public lands in the Thorn Ministry, 5 June. His wife, Mary Douglas, killed in an accident in Brisbane, 23 November
- 1877 Douglas appointed premier of Queensland, 8 March, as well as the position of vice-president of the executive council of Queensland, while continuing to retain the post of secretary for public lands. Resigned the seat of Maryborough on 17 April and was re-elected unopposed on 27 April. Made Companion, Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (C.M.G), on 30 May. Married Sarah Hickey, 30

- July. First son, Edward Archibald Douglas, born 2 November. Resigned the portfolio of public lands and took the post of colonial secretary, 7 November.
Visited Thursday Island in November
- 1878 Re-elected member for Maryborough, 15 November
- 1879 Resigned the premiership, 21 January. Second son, Henry Alexander Cecil Douglas, born 8 April
- 1880 Resigned as leader of the opposition, 25 March. Resigned as member for Maryborough, 24 November
- 1881 Third son, Hugh Maxwell Douglas born 21 May
- 1882 Fourth son, Robert Johnstone Douglas, born 13 April
- 1883 Unsuccessfully stood for the seat of North Brisbane in August and Drayton and Toowoomba in October
- 1884 Departed for England on 22 February
- 1885 Returned to Brisbane from England on 12 February. Appointed government resident and police magistrate, Thursday Island, 13 April. Departed for Thursday Island, 23 April, arriving 1 May. Appointed Special Commissioner for British New Guinea, 26 December, formally taking up the post on 27 February
- 1886
- 1887 Purchased a property in Tenterfield, NSW in February where his family resided while he was in New Guinea
- 1888 Returned to Thursday Island and resumed his post as Government Resident, Thursday Island
- 1902 Departed for England 2 April. Returned to Australia in September
- 1904 Died 23 July at Thursday Island. The funeral was held on 24 July
- 1913 Douglas Memorial Chapel, Quetta Memorial Cathedral, was dedicated on 29 June

Appendix 2: Positions and Appointments held by John Douglas

| Appointment Date | Position/Appointment | End |
|------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 25/03/1852 | Sub-commissioner of crown lands of the gold district (Southern), NSW ²⁰⁷³ | 31/10/1852 ²⁰⁷⁴ |
| 27/05/1852 | Clerk of Petty Sessions, Araluen, NSW ²⁰⁷⁵ | 31/10/1852 ²⁰⁷⁶ |
| 1/11/1852 | Gold-fields sub-commissioner, Tuena Creek, NSW ²⁰⁷⁷ | 21/06/1853 ²⁰⁷⁸ |
| 24/11/1852 | Magistrate, NSW ²⁰⁷⁹ | 1860 ²⁰⁸⁰ |
| March 1855 | Deputy returning officer, Clarence and Darling Downs electoral district ²⁰⁸¹ | 1855 |
| 1855 | Treasurer and secretary of the Warwick Association Patriotic Fund ²⁰⁸² | |
| 30/08/1859 | Member for Darling Downs, NSW ²⁰⁸³ | 16/11/1859 ²⁰⁸⁴ |
| 14/07/1859 | Member, Select Committee on the Dismissal of Mr. C. F. Gorton, New South Wales Parliament ²⁰⁸⁵ | 16/11/1859 ²⁰⁸⁶ |

²⁰⁷³ *NSW Government Gazette*, vol 1 no 33, 26 March 1852, p. 519

²⁰⁷⁴ Mason, p. 22

²⁰⁷⁵ *NSW Government Gazette*, vol 1 no 54, 28 May 1852, p. 847

²⁰⁷⁶ Mason, p. 22

²⁰⁷⁷ NSW Legislative Council. *Votes & Proceedings*, 1853, vol 1, p. 560

²⁰⁷⁸ Mason, p. 23

²⁰⁷⁹ *NSW Government Gazette*, vol 2 no 114, 26 November 1852, p. 1725

²⁰⁸⁰ This position would have ceased with the appointment of the first Justices of the Peace in Queensland (of whom Douglas was one) on 13 July 1860.

²⁰⁸¹ NSW State Archives. *Colonial Secretary Correspondence*, 55/3033

²⁰⁸² *Moreton Bay Courier*, 28 April 1855, p. 4 and 2 June 1855, p. 3

²⁰⁸³ Richards, p. 300; *Moreton Bay Courier* 27 August 1859

²⁰⁸⁴ French (1990), p. 162; *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly* no. 33, 29 November 1859. *NSW Votes and Proceedings*, 1859-1860, vol 1, p. 239

²⁰⁸⁵ Dietrich Borchardt. *Checklist of Royal Commissions, Select Committees of Parliament and Boards of Inquiry. Part IV. New South Wales, 1855-1960*. Bundoora, Vic: La Trobe University Library, 1875, p. 22

²⁰⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

| | | |
|------------|--|----------------------------|
| 23/09/1859 | Member, Select Committee on the Case of James Hibberd, New South Wales Parliament ²⁰⁸⁷ | 16/11/1859 ²⁰⁸⁸ |
| 29/09/1859 | Member, Select Committee on the Case of Charles Wentworth Bucknell, New South Wales Parliament ²⁰⁸⁹ | 28/9/1859 ²⁰⁹⁰ |
| 7/10/1859 | Member, Select Committee on the Petition of Mr. William Sutherland, New South Wales Parliament ²⁰⁹¹ | 16/11/1859 ²⁰⁹² |
| 13/07/1860 | Justice of the Peace, Queensland ²⁰⁹³ | July 1904 ²⁰⁹⁴ |
| 10/01/1861 | Member for Camden, NSW ²⁰⁹⁵ | 17/07/1861 ²⁰⁹⁶ |
| 11/01/1861 | Committee member, Governor General's Opening Speech, NSW Parliament ²⁰⁹⁷ | 11/01/1861 ²⁰⁹⁸ |
| 15/01/1861 | Committee member, Departure of the Governor General, NSW Parliament ²⁰⁹⁹ | 17/01/1861 ²¹⁰⁰ |
| 29/01/1861 | Member, Select Committee on Seamen, New South Wales Parliament ²¹⁰¹ | 10/5/1861 ²¹⁰² |
| 1863 | Vice-President, Central and Northern Queensland | |

²⁰⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 24

²⁰⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁹⁰ Ibid. Only one meeting was held.

²⁰⁹¹ Ibid., p. 26

²⁰⁹² Ibid.

²⁰⁹³ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1860, p. 31; *Queensland Government Gazette*, no 40, 13 July 1860, p. 230

²⁰⁹⁴ Appointment held up until Douglas's death.

²⁰⁹⁵ Richards, p. 321. The writ was returned on 28 December 1860. (*NSW Government Gazette*, no 244, 28 December 1860, p. 2527)

²⁰⁹⁶ Mason, p. 42; *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly* no. 1, 3 September 1861, p. 2. *NSW Votes and Proceedings*, 1861-62, vol 1; *The New South Wales Parliamentary Record ...* 17th ed. Sydney, Government Printer, 1950, p. 120)

²⁰⁹⁷ New South Wales Legislative Assembly. "Standing and Select Committees Appointed During the Session of 1861." *NSW Votes and Proceedings*, 1861, vol 1, p. 1

²⁰⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

²¹⁰¹ Borchardt (1975), p. 35

²¹⁰² Ibid.

²¹⁰³ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1864, p. 77 and 1865

| | | |
|---------------|---|----------------------------|
| | Association ²¹⁰³ | |
| 28/1/1863 | Member for the Board of National Education ²¹⁰⁴ | April 1864 ²¹⁰⁵ |
| May 1863 | President, Milton Mutual Improvement Association ²¹⁰⁶ | |
| 12/05/1863 | Elected member for Port Curtis ²¹⁰⁷ | 22/05/1863 ²¹⁰⁸ |
| 26/06/1863 | Elected member for Port Curtis ²¹⁰⁹ | Feb. 1866 ²¹¹⁰ |
| August 1863 | Committee Member, Brisbane Diocesan Church Society ²¹¹¹ | |
| 9/09/1863 | Member, Select Committee to inquire into the petition of Dr. Jonathan Labatt, Queensland Parliament ²¹¹² | 1/09/1864 ²¹¹³ |
| 1864 | Vice-President, Caledonian Association of Queensland ²¹¹⁴ | |
| 1864 | President, Eastern Downs Horticultural and Agricultural Association (Warwick) ²¹¹⁵ | |
| 30 April 1864 | Foundation Deputy Master, Lodge St. Andrew no. 435, Scottish Constitution, Masonic Lodge, Brisbane ²¹¹⁶ | |
| October 1864 | Warden, All Saints' Church, Brisbane ²¹¹⁷ | |

²¹⁰⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 4 no 8, 28 January 1863, p. 69

²¹⁰⁵ *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 23 April 1864

²¹⁰⁶ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 May 1864

²¹⁰⁷ *Statistical Register of Queensland for 1863*, p. 17

²¹⁰⁸ Parliament dissolved before Douglas could take up his seat

²¹⁰⁹ *Statistical Register of Queensland for 1864*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1865, p. 19. The writ was returned on 19 June 1863. (*Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 4 no 48, 20 June 1863, p. 363)

²¹¹⁰ John Douglas. "To the Electors of Port Curtis." *Brisbane Courier*, 6 February 1866

²¹¹¹ *Brisbane Courier*, 25 August 1863

²¹¹² Dietrich Borchardt. *Checklist of Royal Commissions, Select Committees of Parliament and Boards of Inquiry. Part V. Queensland, 1859-1960*. Bundoora, Vic: La Trobe University Library, 1978, p. 11

²¹¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹¹⁴ "The Caledonian Society." *Brisbane Courier*, 25 May 1864, p. 2; *Brisbane Courier*, 26 September 1863, p. 2; Pugh's *Almanac*, 1869, p. 99. Douglas was a vice president for many years, including 1871 and 1872. (*Brisbane Courier*, 26 April 1872, p. 2)

²¹¹⁵ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1869, p. 99

²¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1865, p. 88; Dave Lauder. "John Douglas - the Erudite Administrator." *The Clan Douglas Association of Australia Newsletter*, no 12, February 1990. Douglas was Chairman of this lodge in 1866, 1867 & 1875.

²¹¹⁷ *Kissick*, p. 26

| | | |
|---------------|---|----------------------------|
| 10/05/1864 | Member, Select Committee on Pleuro-Pneumonia, Queensland Parliament ²¹¹⁸ | 17/08/1864 ²¹¹⁹ |
| 25/05/1864 | Member, Select Committee on the Rivers and Harbours of the Colony, Queensland Parliament ²¹²⁰ | 31/08/1864 ²¹²¹ |
| December 1864 | Trustee, All Saints' Church, Brisbane ²¹²² | July 1904 ²¹²³ |
| 1865 | Committee member, Brisbane Lying-in Hospital ²¹²⁴ | 1866 ²¹²⁵ |
| 1865 | Committee member, Brisbane Hospital and Benevolent Asylum ²¹²⁶ | |
| 1865 | Scotch Constitution. Lodge St Andrew's no. 435, Brisbane ²¹²⁷ | |
| 1865 | President, Rockhampton School of Arts ²¹²⁸ | 1865 ²¹²⁹ |
| 11/05/1865 | Member, Select Committee on the Existing and Proposed Lines of Steam Communication, Queensland Parliament ²¹³⁰ | 17/8/1865 ²¹³¹ |
| 15/08/1865 | Member, Select Committee on the Alleged Disenfranchisement of Electors for Eastern Downs, Queensland Parliament ²¹³² | 6/9/1865 ²¹³³ |
| 23/08/1865 | Chair, Select Committee on the Alleged Misconduct of | 31/8/1865 ²¹³⁵ |

²¹¹⁸ Borchardt (1978), p. 12

²¹¹⁹ Ibid.

²¹²⁰ Ibid.

²¹²¹ Ibid.

²¹²² Kissick, p. 27

²¹²³ Ibid., p. 30

²¹²⁴ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1865, p. 101 and 1866; O'Shea.

²¹²⁵ O'Shea

²¹²⁶ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1866, p. 95; *Brisbane Courier*, 15 February 1866, supplement p. 2

²¹²⁷ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1866, p. 88 and 1867. By 1868, Douglas was on the executive of the Provincial Grand Lodge and the Royal Arch Chapter, Brisbane. (*Pugh's Almanac*, 1869, p. 96.) Douglas retained these positions until 1877.

²¹²⁸ "Inauguration of the School of Arts." *Rockhampton Bulletin and Central Queensland Advertiser*, 25 February 1865

²¹²⁹ Ibid.

²¹³⁰ Mason, p. 69.

²¹³¹ Borchardt (1978), p. 13

²¹³² Ibid., p. 16

²¹³³ Ibid.

| | | |
|------------|---|----------------------------|
| | Chief Officer of the "Commodore Perry," Queensland Parliament ²¹³⁴ | |
| 1866 | Deputy Foundation Provincial Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge under the Scottish Constitution ²¹³⁶ | 1870 ²¹³⁷ |
| 24/01/1866 | Member, Intercolonial Exhibition Commission ²¹³⁸ | |
| 1/2/1866 | Minister of the Queensland Legislative Council without portfolio ²¹³⁹ | 28/02/1866 |
| 1/2/1866 | Member, Diamantina Orphan School Committee ²¹⁴⁰ | 1869 ²¹⁴¹ |
| 22/02/1866 | Member of the Legislative Council, Queensland. ²¹⁴² | 25/07/1866 ²¹⁴³ |
| 1/03/1866 | Postmaster-General, Queensland ²¹⁴⁴ | 20/07/1866 ²¹⁴⁵ |
| 11/04/1866 | Member of the Standing Orders Committee, | 20/9/1866 ²¹⁴⁷ |

²¹³⁴ Ibid.

²¹³⁵ Ibid.

²¹³⁶ Lauder (1990)

²¹³⁷ Ibid.

²¹³⁸ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 15, 3 February 1866, p. 160

²¹³⁹ "Weekly Epitome." *Brisbane Courier*, 3 February 1866, p. 5; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 13, 1 February 1866, p. 156

²¹⁴⁰ "Report of the Committee of the Diamantina Orphan School Upon the Working of the Institution During the Year 1866." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 11, 1867, p. 993

²¹⁴¹ Douglas resigned this position when he went to England in October 1869 as Agent-General for Queensland.

²¹⁴² *Statistical Register of Queensland for 1866*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1867, p. 27; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 23, 22 February 1866, p. 222

²¹⁴³ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 75, 25 July 1866, p. 673; *Statistical Register of Queensland for 1866*, p. 27. It was incorrectly recorded in the "Register of Attendance of Members of the Legislative Council During the Session of 1866," in *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, vol 9. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1866, p. 169, that Douglas had resigned on 20 September, the day the Council reconvened. There was some confusion as the *Brisbane Courier* was still referring to him as John Douglas, M.L.C. on 22 August 1866. (*Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1866, p. 2)

²¹⁴⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 23, 22 February 1866, p. 222; *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1876*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 3

²¹⁴⁵ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1876*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 3; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 68, 20 July 1866, p. 625

²¹⁴⁶ "Select Committee Appointed During the Session of 1866." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals* vol 9, 1866, p. 167

| | | |
|------------|--|----------------------------|
| | Queensland Legislative Council ²¹⁴⁶ | |
| 11/04/1866 | Member of the Joint Library Committee, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁴⁸ | 20/09/1866 ²¹⁴⁹ |
| 11/04/1866 | Member of the Joint Parliamentary Buildings Committee, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁵⁰ | 20/09/1866 ²¹⁵¹ |
| 26/04/1866 | Chairman, Joint Select Committee on the Defence of the Colony, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁵² | 12/07/1866 ²¹⁵³ |
| 25/07/1866 | Vice-President, Brisbane Philharmonic Society ²¹⁵⁴ | |
| 19/12/1866 | Colonial Treasurer, Queensland ²¹⁵⁵ | 21/05/1867 ²¹⁵⁶ |
| 4/01/1867 | Member for Eastern Downs, Queensland ²¹⁵⁷ | 21/05/1867 ²¹⁵⁸ |
| 17/01/1867 | Member of the Scab Commission, Queensland ²¹⁵⁹ | |
| 21/05/1867 | Secretary for Public Works, Queensland ²¹⁶⁰ | 15/08/1867 ²¹⁶¹ |
| 24/06/1867 | Chairman of the Board of Water Works, Brisbane ²¹⁶² | 15/08/1867 ²¹⁶³ |
| 5/07/1867 | Member for Eastern Downs, Queensland ²¹⁶⁴ | 27/8/1868 ²¹⁶⁵ |

²¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 168

²¹⁵¹ Ibid.

²¹⁵² Ibid.; "Report From the Joint Select Committee on the Defence of the Colony." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals* vol 9, 1866, paper no 34

²¹⁵³ "Select Committee Appointed During the Session of 1866." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals* vol 9, 1866, p. 168

²¹⁵⁴ *Brisbane Courier*, 26 July 1866, p. 2

²¹⁵⁵ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 7 no 163, 19 December 1866, p. 1265

²¹⁵⁶ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1876*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 3

²¹⁵⁷ *Queenslander*, 5 January 1867, p. 4

²¹⁵⁸ "Ministerial Changes (Privilege.)" *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 4, 1867, p. 189

²¹⁵⁹ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 8 no 6, 19 January 1867, p. 44

²¹⁶⁰ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 8 no 39, 21 May 1867

²¹⁶¹ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1876*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 3

²¹⁶² *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 8 no 51, 29 June 1867

²¹⁶³ *Statistical Register of Queensland for the Year 1867*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1868, p. 66

²¹⁶⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 8 no 53, 6 July 1867, p. 598

²¹⁶⁵ *Brisbane Courier*, 27 August 1868, p. 3

| | | |
|------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 18/09/1867 | Member Standing Orders Committee, Queensland Legislative Assembly ²¹⁶⁶ | 1868 ²¹⁶⁷ |
| 15/10/1867 | Chairman, Select Committee on the Selections in Agricultural Reserves Under the Notification of the 17 th August Last, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁶⁸ | 19/12/1867 ²¹⁶⁹ |
| 15/10/1867 | Chairman, Select Committee on the Distribution of Loan Expenditure, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁷⁰ | No meetings held ²¹⁷¹ |
| 16/10/1867 | Member, Select Committee on the Southern and Western Railway, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁷² | 19/2/1868 ²¹⁷³ |
| 21/11/1867 | Member, Select Committee on the Insolvency Bill, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁷⁴ | 21/02/1868 ²¹⁷⁵ |
| 11/12/1867 | Member, Address to His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh Committee, Queensland Legislative Assembly ²¹⁷⁶ | 28/01/1868 ²¹⁷⁷ |
| 28/09/1868 | Member for East Moreton, Queensland ²¹⁷⁸ | 8/12/1868 ²¹⁷⁹ |
| 11/12/1868 | Member of the Legislative Council, Queensland ²¹⁸⁰ | 13/11/1869 ²¹⁸¹ |

²¹⁶⁶ "Standing and Select Committees Appointed During the Second Session of 1867." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings, Second Session of 1867, vol 1*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1868, p. 597

²¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 599

²¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

²¹⁷¹ Borchardt (1978), p. 22

²¹⁷² "Standing and Select Committees Appointed During the Second Session of 1867." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings, Second Session of 1867, vol 1*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1868, p. 598

²¹⁷³ Borchardt (1978), p. 23

²¹⁷⁴ "Standing and Select Committees Appointed During the Second Session of 1867." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings, Second Session of 1867, vol 1*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1868, p. 598

²¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 599

²¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁷⁸ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1869*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1870, p. 6

²¹⁷⁹ *Brisbane Courier*, 9 December 1868, p. 2

²¹⁸⁰ *Statistical Register of Queensland for the year 1868*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 27

²¹⁸¹ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1869*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1870, p. 5; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 10 no, 104, 13 November 1869, p. 1501

| | | |
|------------|--|----------------------------|
| 11/12/1868 | Member of the Executive Council, Queensland | 13/11/1869 ²¹⁸² |
| 11/12/1868 | Postmaster-General, Queensland ²¹⁸³ | 13/11/1869 ²¹⁸⁴ |
| 30/12/1868 | Member of the Standing Orders Committee, Queensland Legislative Council ²¹⁸⁵ | 22/04/1869 ²¹⁸⁶ |
| 30/12/1868 | Member of the Joint Library Committee, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁸⁷ | 22/04/1869 ²¹⁸⁸ |
| 30/12/1868 | Member of the Joint Refreshment Rooms Committee, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁸⁹ | 22/04/1869 ²¹⁹⁰ |
| 30/12/1868 | Member of the Joint Parliament Buildings Committee, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁹¹ | 22/04/1869 ²¹⁹² |
| 1869 | First principal of Brisbane Queensland Royal Arch Chapter no. 127 Scottish Constitution, Masonic Lodge ²¹⁹³ | |
| 6/05/1869 | Member of the Joint Library Committee, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁹⁴ | 13/11/1869 ²¹⁹⁵ |

²¹⁸² *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 10 no, 104, 13 November 1869, p. 1501

²¹⁸³ Statistical Register of *Queensland for the year 1868*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 27

²¹⁸⁴ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1876*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 3; *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 10 no, 104, 13 November 1869, p. 1501

²¹⁸⁵ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Wednesday, 30 December 1868." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 13. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 18

²¹⁸⁶ Positions became vacant on the prorogation of the first session of the fourth parliament.

²¹⁸⁷ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Wednesday, 30 December 1868." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 13. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 18

²¹⁸⁸ Positions became vacant on prorogation of the first session of the fourth parliament.

²¹⁸⁹ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Wednesday, 30 December 1868." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 13. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 18

²¹⁹⁰ Positions became vacant on prorogation of the first session of the fourth parliament.

²¹⁹¹ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Wednesday, 30 December 1868." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 13. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 18

²¹⁹² Positions became vacant on prorogation of the first session of the fourth parliament.

²¹⁹³ Lauder (1990.) Douglas also later served as Joint Superintendent of Scottish Royal Arch Freemasonry in Queensland.

²¹⁹⁴ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Thursday, 26 May 1869." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 14. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 18

²¹⁹⁵ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1869*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1870, p. 5

| | | |
|------------|---|----------------------------|
| 6/05/1869 | Member of the Joint Refreshment Rooms Committee, Queensland Parliament ²¹⁹⁶ | 13/11/1869 ²¹⁹⁷ |
| 6/05/1869 | Member of the joint parliament buildings committee, Queensland parliament ²¹⁹⁸ | 13/11/1869 ²¹⁹⁹ |
| 13/05/1869 | Member, Joint Select Committee on Woogaroo Lunatic Asylum, Queensland Parliament ²²⁰⁰ | 11/8/1869 ²²⁰¹ |
| 1/10/1869 | Agent for the colony of Queensland, London ²²⁰² | 24/4/1871 ²²⁰³ |
| 13/11/1869 | Queensland commissioner, London exhibition of 1871 ²²⁰⁴ | |
| 1872 | President, North Brisbane School of Arts ²²⁰⁵ | April 1885 ²²⁰⁶ |
| 11/8/1874 | Member, Royal Commission Enquiring on the Workings of the Educational Institutions of the Colony, Queensland Parliament ²²⁰⁷ | 27/4/1875 ²²⁰⁸ |
| 27/04/1875 | Member for Maryborough, Queensland ²²⁰⁹ | 24/11/1880 ²²¹⁰ |

²¹⁹⁶ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Thursday, 6 May 1869." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 14. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 10

²¹⁹⁷ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1869*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1870, p. 5

²¹⁹⁸ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Thursday, 6 May 1869." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 14. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 10

²¹⁹⁹ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1869*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1870, p. 5

²²⁰⁰ "Minutes of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council Wednesday, 5 May 1869." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 14. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 6

²²⁰¹ "Select Committees Appointed During Session 2 of 1869." *Queensland Journals of the Legislative Council*, vol 14. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1869, p. 167

²²⁰² *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 10 no 95, 25 September 1869, p. 1300

²²⁰³ "Resignation of Mr. Archibald Archer as Agent-General for Emigration." *Queensland Legislative Council Journals*, 1872, pp. 107-9

²²⁰⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 10 no 104, 13 November 1869, p. 1500

²²⁰⁵ James Cleary. *The North Brisbane School of Arts, 1849-1899*. BA Hons thesis. University of Queensland, 1967, p. 135

²²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Douglas's presidency terminated when he left Brisbane to live in Torres Strait as the government resident for Thursday Island.

²²⁰⁷ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 15 no 110, p. 1634, 11 August 1874

²²⁰⁸ Borchardt (1978), p. 41

²²⁰⁹ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1876*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 3

²²¹⁰ Waterson (1972), p. 49

| | | |
|------------|--|----------------------------|
| 28/05/1875 | Trustee of the Brisbane Grammar School ²²¹¹ | 1877 ²²¹² |
| 17/06/1875 | Chairman, Select Committee on Forest Conservancy, Queensland Parliament ²²¹³ | 31/08/1875 ²²¹⁴ |
| 30/07/1875 | Trustee for land in Brisbane reserved for a female refuge ²²¹⁵ | |
| 5/06/1876 | Secretary for Public Lands of Queensland ²²¹⁶ | 8/03/1877 ²²¹⁷ |
| 19/09/1876 | Member, Select Committee inquiring into the Matters in Dispute Between the Public Works Office and Mr. Joseph Francis Kelsery, Queensland Parliament ²²¹⁸ | 8/11/1876 ²²¹⁹ |
| 28/09/1876 | Member, Select Committee inquiring into the claim of the Hon. William Hobbs, Queensland Parliament ²²²⁰ | 26/10/1876 ²²²¹ |
| 1877 | Preceptor of the Hinxman Encampment of Knight Templars ²²²² | |
| 8/03/1877 | Vice-President of the executive council of Queensland ²²²³ | 21/01/1879 ²²²⁴ |
| 8/03/1877 | Premier, Queensland ²²²⁵ | 21/01/1879 ²²²⁶ |
| 8/03/1877 | Secretary for public lands, Queensland | 7/11/1879 ²²²⁷ |

²²¹¹ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 16 no 65, 29 May 1875

²²¹² Keith Willey. *The First Hundred Years: The Story of the Brisbane Grammar School, 1868-1968*. Brisbane, Macmillan, 1968, p.335. According to Willey Douglas became a trustee in 1874.

²²¹³ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1875, p. 425

²²¹⁴ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1875, p. 425

²²¹⁵ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 17 no 87, 31 July 1875

²²¹⁶ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 18 no 58, 5 June 1876, p. 1180

²²¹⁷ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1897*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1898, p. 6

²²¹⁸ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1876, vol 1, p. 594

²²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²²² Lauder (1990.) Douglas was also the foundation Senior Warden of Queensland no. 9 Sovereign Chapter Rose Croix.

²²²³ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 18 no 58, 5 June 1876, p. 1180

²²²⁴ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 24 no 14, 21 January 1879, p. 173

²²²⁵ *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1897*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1898, p. 6

²²²⁶ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, vol 29, 1879, p. 68

²²²⁷ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 21 no 50, 15 September 1877

| | | |
|------------|---|----------------------------|
| 15/05/1877 | Member, Committee for drafting the Address in Reply to Opening Speech, Queensland parliament ²²²⁸ | 15/05/1877 ²²²⁹ |
| 30/05/1877 | Companion, Order of Saint Michael and Saint George (C.M.G) ²²³⁰ | |
| 14/09/1877 | Trustee of the Albert Park and Recreation Ground Reserve, Brisbane ²²³¹ | |
| 7/11/1877 | Colonial secretary, Queensland ²²³² | 21/01/1879 ²²³³ |
| 1878 | Vice President, Queensland Rifle Association ²²³⁴ | |
| 7/02/1878 | Chairman, Royal Commission on the Best Route for Extending of Southern and Western Railway to Navigable Water, Queensland Parliament. ²²³⁵ | 10/4/1878 ²²³⁶ |
| 24/04/1878 | Member, Committee for drafting the Address in Reply to Opening Speech, Queensland Legislative Assembly ²²³⁷ | 24/04/1878 ²²³⁸ |
| 24/04/1878 | Member, Printing Committee, Queensland parliament ²²³⁹ | 5/09/1878 ²²⁴⁰ |
| 16/08/1878 | Chairman, Select Committee on the Maryborough Gas and Coke Company Bill, Queensland Parliament ²²⁴¹ | 27/08/1878 ²²⁴² |

²²²⁸ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1877, p. 585

²²²⁹ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1877, p. 586

²²³⁰ "Statutes of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George." *Journals of the Legislative Council, 1877*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1877, p. 356

²²³¹ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 21 no 50, 15 September 1877; "The Order of St. Michael and St. George." *The Times*, 31 may 1877, p. 6

²²³² *Queensland Blue Book for the Year 1899*. Brisbane, Government Printer, 1900, p. 6

²²³³ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 24 no 14, 21 January 1879, p. 173

²²³⁴ "Qld Rifle Association." *Brisbane Courier*, 21 August 1878, p. 5. In October, Douglas was re-elected for a further twelve months. (*Brisbane Courier*, 9 October 1878, p. 2)

²²³⁵ Borchartd (1978), p. 60

²²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²²³⁷ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1878, p. 342

²²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²²⁴² *Ibid.*

| | | |
|------------|---|----------------------------|
| 19/09/1878 | Permission to use the title Honourable ²²⁴³ | |
| 6/01/1879 | Provincial Grand Master, Scottish Constitution, Provincial Grand Lodge, Masons ²²⁴⁴ | 1895 ²²⁴⁵ |
| 7/04/1879 | Member, Select Committee on Conditional Homesteads, Queensland Parliament ²²⁴⁶ | 24/9/1879 ²²⁴⁷ |
| 14/05/1879 | Member, Standing Orders Committee, Queensland Legislative Assembly ²²⁴⁸ | 9/09/1879 |
| 20/05/1879 | Member, Joint Library Committee, Queensland Parliament ²²⁴⁹ | 17/07/1879 ²²⁵⁰ |
| 12/06/1879 | Chairman, Select Committee on the Workings of the Railway Workshops and on the Best Mode of Maintaining an Adequate Supply of Locomotives and Railway Trolling Stock, Queensland Parliament ²²⁵¹ | 23/09/1879 ²²⁵² |
| 7/08/1879 | Member, Select Committee, Conditional Homesteads Selections, East Prairie, West Prairie and St. Ruth, Queensland Parliament ²²⁵³ | 24/09/1879 ²²⁵⁴ |
| 7/08/1879 | Member, Select Committee enquiring into the Claim of Nehemiah Bartley, Queensland Parliament ²²⁵⁵ | 9/09/1879 |
| 1880 | President, Johnsonian Club, Brisbane ²²⁵⁶ | |
| 7/07/1880 | Member, Standing Orders Committee, Queensland | 20/10/1880 ²²⁵⁸ |

²²⁴³ *Queensland Government Gazette* vol 23 no 40, 21 September 1878

²²⁴⁴ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1879, p. 159; 1880, p. 180; 1881, p. 153; 1882, p. 143; 1883, p. 150; 1884, p. 157; 1886, p. 199; 1888, p. 185; 1892, p. 200; 1894, p. 201; Lauder (1990)

²²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1896, p. 217; Lauder (1990)

²²⁴⁶ Borchardt (1978), p. 65

²²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁴⁸ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1879, p. 459

²²⁴⁹ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1879, p. 461

²²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²²⁵¹ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1879, p. 460

²²⁵² Borchardt (1978), p. 66

²²⁵³ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1879, p. 460

²²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁵⁶ *Johnsonian Club Inc. Handbook*, p. 15

²²⁵⁷ *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 1, 1880, p. 407

²²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

| | | |
|------------|--|----------------------------|
| | Legislative Assembly ²²⁵⁷ | |
| 13/07/1880 | Member Joint Library Committee, Queensland Parliament ²²⁵⁹ | 11/11/1880 ²²⁶⁰ |
| 15/07/1880 | Member, Select Committee on Contract for, and Carriage of Steel Rails, Mr. Hemmant's Petition, Queensland Parliament ²²⁶¹ | 4/11/1880 ²²⁶² |
| 1883 | Foundation member, Geographical Society of Australasia ²²⁶³ | |
| 1883 | The cycad plant <i>Macrozamia douglasii</i> named in his honour, Douglas being a "collector of the type" ²²⁶⁴ | |
| 3/4/1884 | Queensland Commissioner, International Health Exhibition, London ²²⁶⁵ | |
| 13/04/1885 | Government Resident and Police Magistrate, Thursday Island ²²⁶⁶ | July 1904 |
| 10/06/1885 | Deputy Commissioner for the Western portion of New Guinea ²²⁶⁷ | |
| 2/10/1895 | Government Agent for the protectorate of New Guinea ²²⁶⁸ | 25/12/1885 ²²⁶⁹ |
| 10/10/1885 | Justice of the Peace under the Marriage Act of 1864 ²²⁷⁰ | July 1904 ²²⁷¹ |
| 26/12/1885 | Special Commissioner for the Protected Territory in | 4/9/1888 |

²²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²²⁶² *Ibid.*

²²⁶³ *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, New South Wales Branch*, vol 5, 1891-92, p. 159

²²⁶⁴ Ken Hill and Roy Osborne. *Cycads of Australia*. Sydney, Kangaroo Press, 2001, p. 80

²²⁶⁵ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 34 no 57, 5 April 1884, p. 1027

²²⁶⁶ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 36 no 6, 14 April 1885, p. 1250

²²⁶⁷ John Douglas to Stanthorpe, 28 August 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, pp. 133-34. (Australian no 119)

²²⁶⁸ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 37 no 59, 2 October 1885, p. 1163

²²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁷⁰ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 38, no 65, 10 October 1885, p. 1303

²²⁷¹ Position held until Douglas's death.

²²⁷² *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea (In Continuation of [C.-4584] August 1885.)*

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|--------------|--|-----------|
| | New Guinea ²²⁷² | |
| 1886 | Honorary Member, Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Victorian Branch ²²⁷³ | July 1904 |
| 1886 | Patron, Torres Strait Sporting Club ²²⁷⁴ | |
| 1886 | President, Thursday Island State School ²²⁷⁵ | |
| 1886 | Patron, the School of Arts, Thursday Island ²²⁷⁶ | |
| 5/02/1886 | Deputy Commissioner, Western Pacific ²²⁷⁷ | 4/9/1888 |
| 11/09/1889 | Mining Warden and Commissioner, Thursday Island ²²⁷⁸ | |
| 30/10/1889 | Visiting Justice to the Thursday Island Goal ²²⁷⁹ | |
| 1890 | President, Anglican Church committee ²²⁸⁰ | |
| June 1890 | Foundation president, Torres Strait Boating Club ²²⁸¹ | |
| 26 July 1890 | Chairman, Quetta Memorial Church committee ²²⁸² | |
| 25/10/1893 | High Bailiff, Thursday Island ²²⁸³ | |

London, Houses of Parliament, 1890, p.7; "New Guinea." *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1886, p. 997.

²²⁷³ *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, Victorian Branch*, vol 8, August 1890, p. 13. Douglas was also an honorary member of the Queensland branch until his death.

²²⁷⁴ *Pugh's Almanac*, 1887, p. 118; 1888, p. 131; 1899, p. 135

²²⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 1888, p. 131

²²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118; 1888, p. 131; 1892, p. 171; 1894, p. 162; 1899, p. 135; 1901. In April 1889, Douglas was recorded as its president. (*Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 13 April 1889)

²²⁷⁷ James Thurston to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 9 February 1886. In, *Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean*, p. 225 (Australian no 112a); James Thurston to John Douglas, 5 February 1886. National Archives of Australia, G9, item 1/86; Fred Stanley to John Douglas, 9 January 1886. *New Guinea. Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, vol 2, 1886, p. 991.

²²⁷⁸ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 38 no 6, 14 September 1889, p. 90

²²⁷⁹ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 38 no 53, 2 November 1889, p. 748. Re-appointed 8 January 1891 (*Queensland Government Gazette*, vol 42 no 11, 10 January 1891, p. 130)

²²⁸⁰ John Foley. *The Quetta: Queensland's Worst Disaster*. Brisbane, Nairana Publications, 1990, p. 116

²²⁸¹ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 21 June 1890

²²⁸² Foley (1990), p. 116

²²⁸³ *Queensland Government Gazette*, vol LX no 67, 28 October 1893, p. 634

| | | |
|------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1895 | Foundation Master of Lodge Torres Straits no. 820 of the Scottish Constitution of the Masonic Lodge ²²⁸⁴ | |
| 1896 | Honorary correspondent, Royal Humane Society of Australasia ²²⁸⁵ | |
| March 1897 | President, Torres Straits Hospital Committee of Management ²²⁸⁶ | April 1902 ²²⁸⁷ |
| May 1897 | Trustee, Thursday Island Lawn Tennis Club ²²⁸⁸ | |
| July 1897 | Patron, Wybenia Bicycle Club ²²⁸⁹ | |
| 1898 | President, Torres Straits Diamond Jubilee Benevolent | |

²²⁸⁴ Lauder (1990)

²²⁸⁵ The exact dates are unknown, but included 1896-1900

²²⁸⁶ "Torres Straits Hospital." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 6 March 1897, p. 2; *Queensland Government Gazette* vol 48 no 133, 3 May 1902, p. 1332. The date when Douglas first became president is unknown, but it is earlier than this date. He was not president in 1898 but regained the position in June 1899. (*Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 24 June 1899)

²²⁸⁷ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 19 April 1902, p. 2

²²⁸⁸ "Thursday Island Lawn Tennis Club." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 22 May 1897, p. 2

²²⁸⁹ "Bicycle Meeting." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 17 July 1897, p. 2

²²⁹⁰ "Benevolent Society." *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 13 August 1898, p. 2. Douglas held this position until at least 1903

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| | Society ²²⁹⁰ | |
| 1899 | Vice President, Torres Straits Rifle Club ²²⁹¹ | |
| 1899 | Vice President, Thursday Island lawn Tennis Club ²²⁹² | |
| 1899 | President of the Thursday Island School committee ²²⁹³ | |

²²⁹¹ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 8 April 1899, p. 2

²²⁹² *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 27 May 1899, p. 2

²²⁹³ *Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 23 December 1899, p. 2. Douglas was re-elected president for another three years in January 1902. (*Torres Strait Pilot and New Guinea Gazette*, 1 February 1902)

Appendix 3: Illuminated Address by the All Saints Church Congregation, Brisbane, to John Douglas on 27 September 1869²²⁹⁴

To the Honorable John Douglas, M.L.C.

Dear Sir, - We, the incumbent, warden, and members of the congregation of All Saint's Church are anxious to take this opportunity of assuring you of our grateful appreciation of your efforts to promote the interests of this congregation throughout the period of the last seven years.

We trust that you will receive this address as an expression of regret that we are now to be deprived of your active co-operation and sympathy, and as a slight acknowledgment that we are not insensible to your constant efforts in our behalf.

In the new church recently built we have a substantial, and not unworthy, memorial of your love for, and fidelity to, the branch of the Church of England planted in this colony, and of your special attachment to the congregation of All Saints.

In thus sincerely tendering you our thanks, we are pleased to have the opportunity of expressing our grateful sense of the equal interest taken by Mrs. Douglas in the welfare of All Saints' Church, and of her ready and active sympathy in every work of Christian charity.

Feeling assured that whenever and wherever our common prayer is offered up, you will not be unmindful of those who worship at All Saints' Church, earnestly we pray that every blessing may attend both you and yours, and that you may have health and strength faithfully to fulfil the important duties with which you have been entrusted.

Heartily and in all sincerity wishing you God speed, we are, dear Mr. Douglas, very sincerely and faithfully yours. T. Jones, Incumbent; James R. Dixon, Warden; and a number of members of the congregation. Brisbane, September 27, 1869.

²²⁹⁴ Lecture by the Hon. J. Douglas. *Brisbane Courier*, 28 September 1869, p. 3

Appendix 4: Notice on Bishop Quinn Fined for not Registering the Marriage of Sarah and John Douglas.²²⁹⁵

H. Jordan (Registrar- General) v. James O'Quinn – neglecting to register a marriage.

Mr. Pring, Q.C., appeared for the plaintiff, and Mr. Thynne for the defendant.

The information set forth that

James Quinn, otherwise James O'Quinn, of Brisbane, commonly reputed as a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, or denomination, resident in Brisbane, and being registered as James Quinn under the provisions of the marriage Act as a minister of religion duly authorised for celebrating marriages within the colony, having on or about the 30th day of July, 1877, at Dara, within the Registration District of Brisbane, celebrated a marriage between two persons – to wit, John Douglas and Sarah, otherwise Sara, Hickey, did fail within one month thereafter to transmit to the said Henry Jordan, as Registrar of the District of Brisbane, a declaration of such marriage in the form of the Act.

Mr. Thynne admitted the charge, and said that it had been caused from lapse of memory, and that a declaration had been sent, but reached the Registrar-General a day too late for him to receive it according to the Act, which only allowed one month for the sending in of such declaration.

Mr. Pring objected to Mr. Thynne making any explanation of the matter, and thought it would be better for him to plead guilty and say nothing, otherwise he should have the whole case heard. He was quite willing to accept Mr. Thynne's explanation that it was an omission.

The Bench inflicted a fine of £10, the minimum penalty allowed by the Act, and costs of Court.²²⁹⁶

²²⁹⁵ The Telegraph, 20 December 1877, P.2

²²⁹⁶ The costs were five shillings and four pence.

Appendix 5: The Steel Rail Committee²²⁹⁷

Sir, Disapproving as I do of any secret legislative committee except when very weighty public considerations and the cause of morality demand secrecy, I now transmit to you the following brief report of the Hemmant petition Committee on the 23rd July.

I do this in the belief that the public take a very deep interest in the proceedings of that committee and in order to test the question of parliamentary privilege connected herewith.

I am solely responsible for the contents of this communication and if its publication is a breach of privilege I accept the consequences, and shall endeavour to maintain my position thus asserted in the cause of truth and of honest administration, which is now in grievous peril.

I am sir,

Your obedient servant

John Douglas

²²⁹⁷ *Brisbane Courier*, 2 August 1880, p. 3

Appendix 6: Letter Following Douglas's Death²²⁹⁸

17 Telegraph Chambers, Queen Street, Brisbane

25th July 1904

My dearest (Annette Power)

I must write to you tonight and yet I do not know where to begin. It is almost too difficult to bring myself to express my feelings. A thousand times would I prefer to be able to talk but I must accept the heavy task of trying to put something upon paper. You will judge from the tone and expression of my last letter how utterly unexpected was the news which so shortly came upon me whilst returning on Saturday evening from the golf links. My brother telegraphed at 11 am the hour of my dear father's death but the telegram did not reach Brisbane until the afternoon and the first intimation that I had of the event was the flags at half-mast on the government buildings and even then I never suspected it until I asked and was told in the street. I had only just time to send one telegram. Fortunately I was consoled by the fact that my brother writes that nothing could be more peaceful and happy than his death and that he suffered no pain whatever. He simply faded away and God took him to his arms as he slept after his long and faithful career of duty nobly followed.

I can hardly speak of him without feeling how impossible it is for me to express my feelings towards him. I revered him and loved him as I feel I never could regard any other being. He was my ideal from my earliest years. His influence has been the guiding spirit of my short life. How much I regret that fate so ordained it that since I grew to manhood my lot has been cast in a sphere so far removed from him. Alas I have seen but little of him, I who was so close to him, who always felt the deepest sympathy the most intimate alliance with that great and noble spirit. I have seen virtues exemplified in him that I never hope or expect to see equaled by any man. You may think that I exaggerate but you would not wonder if you had known as I have known that Christ like enduring patience and pity that filled his whole soul and that unflinching determination which fought and overcame difficulties which would have taxed the most valiant heart. Year after year, year after year, still at his post through storm and calm he fought a great fight until he saw us all firmly launched on the road of life and I rejoice to think that he has passed in the fullness of time covered with years of honour in full mental vigour, possessing to the last his physical powers and as he wished in harness. Truly how can I sorrow for him when I think of the manner and time of his death. He felt and knew that he could say "I have lived my life and that which I have done may he within himself make pure." He was ready to go. The poor body was worn out with the weight of years and with

²²⁹⁸ Edward Douglas to his fiancée, Annette Power, 25 July 1904. Andrew and Lorraine

the long incessant work of life. We have often talked and written upon the subject and he had such a divine trust in the overwhelming goodness of God that death had no terrors for him. He was true to the most noble ideals and had a profound belief too in the essential goodness of our poor weak human natures. How often I have thought that I would fulfill a great destiny if I could but follow some of the examples which he has set me in his life. I can at least strive for his that his presence shall be always with me encouraging and in inspiring me in the struggle of life and that I can endeavour to keep unsullied that name which he has handed down in so much honour and love.

Every one who came in contact with him were drawn towards him by that frank and almost boyish playfulness and that delightful charm of manner, always serene and dignified carrying himself as a natural leader of men. I say nothing of his public virtues, they were known to all. But only those who experienced his tenderness as a father combined with a strict regard for duty can ever estimate his capacity and his love. We were his joy and pride. Above everything did he rejoice that in the later months of his life that you and I should have been so happily engaged. It pleased him more than anything else for he felt that it was a pledge of our future happiness. I regret indeed only that you should never have known something more of him for he would have loved you with a father's heart and you could have given some of that devotion which he was ordained to receive from any daughter of his own. I did at first feel keen regret also that I had not gone to Thursday Island when I hesitated and finally decided not to do so. How much I would have given to have been able to say goodbye and yet even now I cannot understand how it was I did not by instinct feel that the end was coming. The attack which finally lead to death was first developed during a cruise in a small schooner called the Ventura amongst the islands for a week. He was determined to be up and doing and insisted on going out and personally interviewing and looking after the people of the islands. On returning he complained of acute indigestion which would not give way but he expected to recover soon. He seems to have had several spells and rallies and after a bad turn on Sunday he removed to the home of my brother and mother and there he at first progressed most favourably but it was [not] to be. I am so pleased too that he passed away surrounded by those he most loved and that all the trials of estrangement which he so much lamented were closed in one perpetual reconciliation. Everything leads to make me thank God for his goodness.

And now my eyes have grown dim. I cannot say any more. Keep him in your prayers and may he unite us all, both those that have gone before, and those that remain, in his everlasting love.

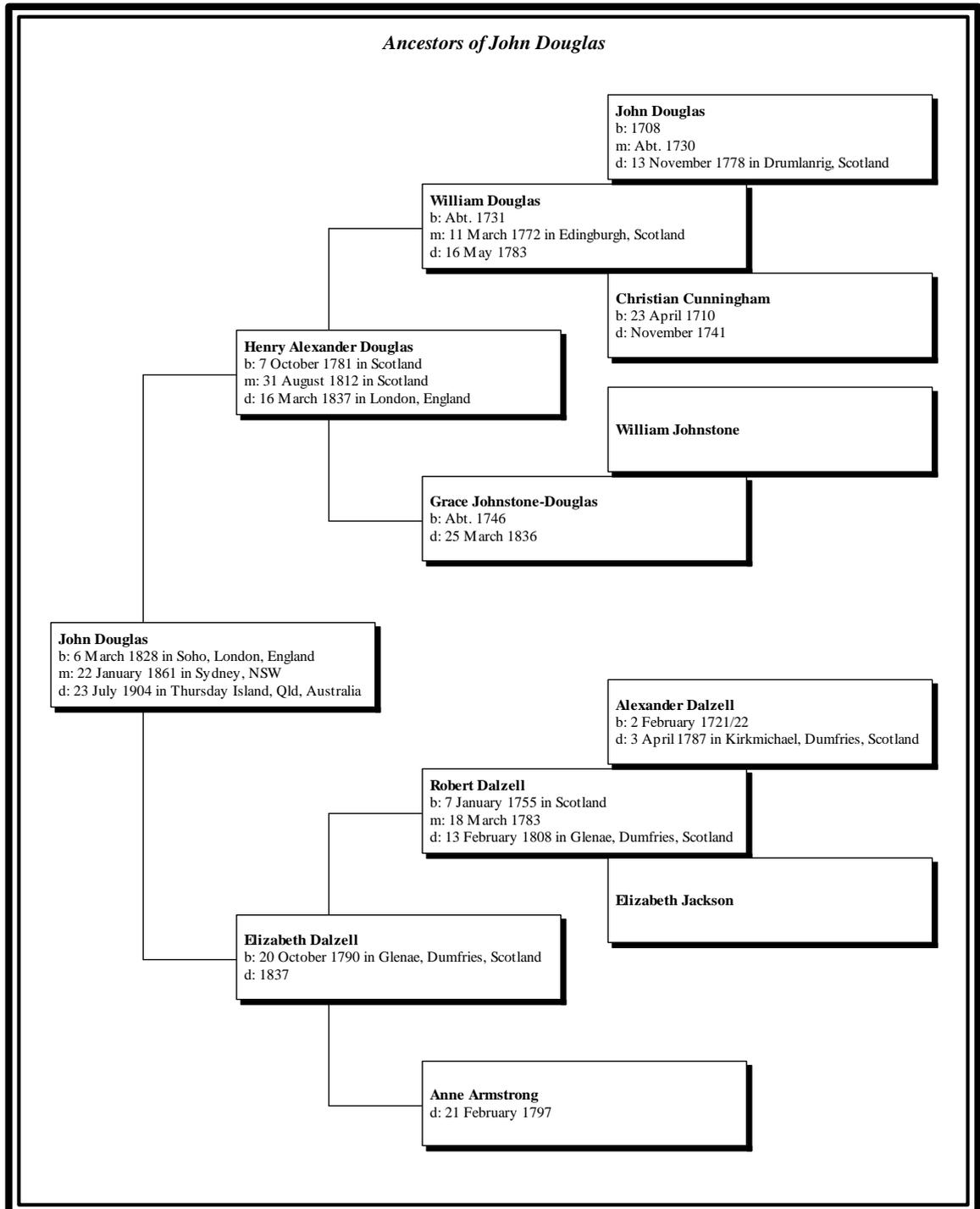
I have been the recipient today of so many kind expressions of sympathy. Sir Samuel Griffith wrote me a most touching and noble

letter which I shall always value and which I must show you shortly. Everyone has been most kind. I went out and stayed with the aunts yesterday. It was so peaceful and quiet. With most tender love to you my dear.

Your most affectionate, Edward

Appendix 7: Douglas Genealogy

Ancestors



Descendants

| | | |
|---------|---|--------------|
| 1 | John Douglas | 1828 - 1904 |
| .. | +Mary Anne Simpson | 1827 - 1876 |
| | *2nd Wife of John Douglas: | |
| .. | +Sarah Hickey | 1844 - 1931 |
| 2 | Edward Archibald Douglas | 1877 - 1947 |
| ..... | +Annette Eileen Power | 1885 - 1966 |
| ..... | 3 John Power Douglas | 1907 - 1931 |
| ..... | 3 Edward Sholto Douglas | 1909 - 1997 |
| ..... | +Mary Constance Curr | |
| ..... | 3 Evelyn Clare Mary Douglas | 1911 -ca1985 |
| ..... | 3 Robert Alexander Douglas | 1913 - 1923 |
| ..... | 3 Francis Hugh Douglas | 1914 - 1984 |
| ..... | 3 David Alistair Douglas | 1917 - 1921 |
| ..... | 3 Kenneth Maxwell Douglas | 1921 - 1972 |
| ..... | 3 Helen Cecilia Douglas | 1924 - 1965 |
| ..... | 3 Gavin James Douglas | 1926 - |
| ..... | +Clare McHugh | |
| ..... | 3 Clare Catherine Douglas | 1929 - 1932 |
| ..... | 3 Andrew Brice Douglas | 1931 - |
| ..... | +Lorraine Lawson | |
| 2 | Henry Alexander Cecil Douglas | 1879 - 1952 |
| ..... | +Flora Isabel Macdonald | - 1910 |
| ..... | *2nd Wife of Henry Alexander Cecil Douglas: | |
| ..... | +Catherine Cecilia Beirne | 1893 - 1977 |

| | | | |
|-------|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| ..... | 3 | Mary Beirne Douglas | 1915 - ? |
| ..... |  | +John Peter Fihelly | |
| ..... | 3 | Sybil Catherine Douglas | 1918 - 2003 |
| ..... |  | +Alan B Bryan | |
| ..... | 3 | Henry Beirne Douglas | 1921 - 1941 |
| ..... | 3 | Alexander Michael Douglas | 1926 - |
| ..... |  | +Morna Therese O'Rourke | |
| ..... | 2 | Hugh Maxwell Douglas | 1881 - 1918 |
| ..... |  | +Hannnah Elizabeth Thornton | - 1950 |
| ..... | 3 | Henry Alexander Douglas | 1908 – ca1999 |
| ..... | 3 | Margaret Douglas | 1909 – 1939 |
| ..... |  | +Ethel Audrey Malaher | |
| ..... | 3 | Edward Octavius Douglas | 1913 – ca1992 |
| ..... | 2 | Robert Johnstone Douglas | 1883 - 1972 |
| ..... |  | +Alice Mary Ball | 1882 - 1954 |
| ..... | 3 | Robert Andrew Douglas | 1915 - 1998 |
| ..... |  | +Barbara Shaw | |
| ..... | 3 | James Archibald Douglas | 1917 - 1984 |
| ..... |  | +Marjorie Mary Ramsay | |
| ..... | 3 | Beatrice Rose Mary Douglas | 1919 - 2004 |
| ..... |  | +Cornelius James Howard | |
| ..... | 3 | Hugh Maxwell Douglas | 1920 - 1985 |
| ..... |  | +Jean Duncan Love | |
| ..... | 3 | Alice Mary Douglas | 1922 - 1983 |
| ..... |  | +Thomas William Capell | |