

ASSOCIATION OF PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES OF AUSTRALASIA

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

**Conference: Parliamentary History and Heritage:
The Role of the Parliamentary Libraries**

Session 4: Live Political and Parliamentary History

FRIDAY, 16 JUNE 2006

Brisbane

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Friday, 16 June 2006 at 3.00 pm

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Mr Denver Beanland, former MP and Minister, Queensland Parliament (Ph D subject, Hon. T. McIlwraith, former Premier of Queensland) “From Member to Minister to History Ph. D student: What the Parliamentary Library can offer”.

Mr BEANLAND: Mary, thanks for the opportunity to be with you to talk about the research. It is certainly very different doing research for yourself as a PhD student compared to being a member of parliament. Mind you, I used to have research when I was down at City Hall, too, but other people used to do that as well. Of course, it is one thing to get on the communicator and ask staff to get something or other which you need for a speech—and I used to do that fairly regularly, if I remember correctly; perhaps a little too regularly at times. I certainly kept them busy, anyway, and they could not complain that this workload was not sufficient. Nevertheless, that is different from the work that you have to come and do yourself.

When I think we are looking at the Parliamentary Library system, it is important to understand, as I do, that it has specialist areas. It is not going to be like other libraries. In doing this thesis I have travelled the globe a little. I have had to go back to the real Ayr in Scotland—unlike the one in north Queensland—to the National Library of Scotland, the University of Glasgow, down to the British Library and to the public records office as well as to a number of other libraries in this country and archives. When you move around you start to get an appreciation of the different services that are available and the specialities in each area. It is fair to say that the Parliamentary Library has material that relates to the parliament itself, to what has happened within the parliament going back since the separation, in this case, of Queensland and the other states and colonies, or in New South Wales since the first parliament.

Of course, not all the records are of parliament. There is all the archival material that is over at the State Archives. You have to take that into consideration as you are going along. There is much to recommend the Parliamentary Library, because not always can you get access in these other places to hard copies of *Hansard*. *Hansard* often comes on microfilm. The University of Queensland has some hard copies but some is on microfilm. The Government Gazettes in some of these places come on microfilm or microfiche, to make things even worse. You can imagine when you are dealing with somebody like I am dealing with—McIlwraith who was in parliament for 22 years and Premier three times having more fights than you could name on the floor of the House and bitter arguments and debates that literally went for 24 hours a day, seven days a week before they stopped—there is a huge amount of material. If you use microfilm, you cannot flip backwards and forwards to find this material, because you have to be looking at the index.

Today, can I add very importantly, we must keep in mind that serious researchers—whether you are doing a postgraduate degree or you are professional researcher—do not have 10 years to do it in. In the old days people said, ‘You go out and research for a book.’ I remember people taking years and years to do research for PhDs and books. Today, the pressure is on. It is three years to do a PhD and they want it finished. They do not want it going on for four or five years. In researching books, I have talked to people and they say, ‘No, you have to produce it in a certain time period.’ So it is more important than ever to be able to quickly acquire the information that you want. So the issue of accessibility is very important, the availability of it is important, as is the ease of access.

You can go to some of these libraries—and I was saying this to one of the ladies who was talking to me before about what I was going to say—I will mention the John Oxley Library, there is the heritage collection that relates to interstate and to here, you have to fight your way through those people doing their family histories. Family history is a big issue. I am not against that. In fact, I was a chief promoter of it in my day and so I am partly responsible for the big influx of people doing it. But that is another story. The facts are, though, that it is very, very difficult if you are in a hurry. Sometimes you have to wait half a day to get a machine. That is fine if you are not a serious researcher and you are not on time limits. But when you are doing postgraduate work, you have all of these time limits. You have to either make an appointment or make a time and go in and get the machine. You cannot take too long—but you are not too sure how long it is going to take—and you have to look it up fairly rapidly.

These are all very relevant points that I make: the ease of access, the time, the availability of it and the quality of the product that you are getting. I think this is what you get from watching all of these megabytes, gigabytes, terabytes—I have been bitten all over, anyway. You have even had a wall up there, I have noticed before—whatever it was. The situation is that when you move to the new digital—which I presume will be the in word—eventually this material will have to go over. As I find, as a serious researcher, it is the quality of that material that will go on, that is so important as far as being able to readily and quickly read it. That is why I have glasses—from sitting down at microfilm machines and, I might add,

not the one here at this Parliament's library. The machine at the Fryer Library got so bad that I can say that I am probably responsible for that library getting new ones. I kicked up such a fuss, because they just used to tear through your eyes. Not only was I complaining but also were every other staff member bar the senior librarians, who I gave a bad time until they got new machines.

This is all about the outcome. I mention that because it is so easy for you as professional librarians who are looking after these libraries—the senior management—who do not think about these things so much and think of the importance of them. I can assure you that as a researcher they are terribly important. Again, it is one of the great attributes of this Queensland Parliamentary Library that you are able to come in, there is a machine, you can get access to it, you do not have to fight for it. There are other people who come here apart from me, I might add, but you do not have to fight your way through hordes and hordes of people who are not on the serious side as a professional researcher. You know if someone is there and they are serious about it, they are getting on with it just as quickly as you are and they want to produce some results.

They are just a couple of important matters to constantly keep in mind. The thing about the Parliamentary Library is that it has so many other areas that other libraries do not have material on apart from the ease of access to the *Votes and Proceedings* and to the *Hansard*. The other day—I know someone was probably cursing me—I asked to get a copy of the standing orders for 1878. You would say, 'What the hell does he want that for?' Of course, you cannot pick up these standing orders just anywhere; they are held here—again a speciality—and they are stored away. So I finally get the standing orders. People say, 'Why do you want to look at them?' It is very interesting. When you are doing colonial history as I am—doing McIlwraith—these speeches that I mentioned that go on forever and a day, the first thing that struck me, having been in the place for 14 and a half years is that there are time limits under standing orders both in the House, in committee and what have you. There were no time limits on these speeches during the colonial period. So it was important for me to get those standing orders and to check them to just see if there were time limits. Professors do not take it that there are no time limits unless you can quote from standing orders and say that you have checked standing orders and give a great big huge footnote. You might only get half a line in the sentence, or something. What I love about all of this work, of course, is that you can spend all day, produce half a line in half a sentence in a fraction of a paragraph, or perhaps even it is down on the footnote and you get a mark for it—a tick—to say 'well done'. The fact that it took half a week to produce it is irrelevant.

The reason I mention the standing orders and about these speeches—these filibusters—is that if you pick up history, and this goes for other colonies as well, you will find these speeches but no historian has ever picked up the point or said about the fact that, unlike today, there were no limits on speeches. What went on in those days cannot go on today. Governments move to use the guillotine and do all sorts of things which they did not have the ability to do under the standing orders then and there were no time limits. Of course, once things got into committee stage, members were able to speak as many times as they liked for as long as they liked. So committees of the whole House just went on and on and on and on—as it did here at one stage—and on, only stopping for the Sabbath and then starting again on the Monday and they went on again all week. Never mind about the poor old Hansard reporters. They just had to put up with it.

But speaking of that and time limits, I was a little tickled when I was doing my cataloguing the other day and writing another chapter to pull out something that I pulled out some time ago—I am sure that I gave it to Tim or Mary—about that fellow O'Donovan from the library (Denis O'Donovan—Queensland Parliamentary Librarian 1874-1902). He sent this note to Tom McIlwraith thanking him for the wonderful words of praise McIlwraith mentioned on O'Donovan in the debates on supply back in 1882. The Premier moved that there be granted—you are going to like this—to Her Majesty for service of the Crown for the year 1882-83 a sum not exceeding £7,400 for the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly. The Parliamentary Librarian had been put down for an increase of £100 a year. He had put that increase down after considerable inquiry and investigation for the labours of the librarian and the result was that he was satisfied that the officer was underpaid. The amount of extra labour which that gentleman was at present expending on the compilation of a new catalogue—the O'Donovan catalogue—of the library was really astonishing and the fund of useful knowledge of literature shown to be possessed by him in the preparation of that work was very great. The catalogue, when completed, would, he felt sure, be a credit to the colony. So libraries had problems with money then, too, obviously, as just as they do now about so many things.

So you have the situation where you do have this specialist material. I think it is important that whilst, as I say, it is not like the Archives, nevertheless there is so much here. What I find many people do not understand—and you as librarians do, I know—is that in the colonial period, unlike today, governments could not take everything into cabinet and plead cabinet secrecy, a matter for cabinet that cannot be disclosed or commercial-in-confidence. If you go through the *Votes and Proceedings* you can see the matters that were tabled in the parliament and ordered to be printed and, therefore, recorded in the *Votes and Proceedings*. If they were not ordered to be printed, they were still tabled and you can go to the Table Office, which is the other great adjunct to this facility, and which has an enormous volume of material that is readily accessible also in its original formats and all nicely catalogued and easy to access. In the *Votes and Proceedings* you can go through and pick out the letters. It is quite incredible that when Tom McIlwraith attempted to annex Eastern New Guinea, or Papua New Guinea, which is how we came by it officially in 1883, all letters and correspondence were tabled in the parliament. In 1880, there was a huge

debate about a mail service contract to Queensland because the ships used to go, instead of via Torres Strait, via those dreadful southern colonies and capitals—places like Melbourne and Sydney. All the males and the other migrants got off there. So no immigrants came to Queensland; they all jumped ship down in Sydney and Melbourne. That was a problem because in the 1870s and the 1880s—the colonial period—settlement was the big issue. So to overcome that problem it was proposed to run a direct service to here. There was a big subsidy involved. The British India Steam Navigation Company were not going to do it for nothing or for the cost of the income; the government had to pay a subsidy. The details of that subsidy are all tabled in the parliament. The letters were all printed and they are all in the *Votes and Proceedings*. These are very valuable materials. Whilst there are *Votes and Proceedings* in less than a handful of other libraries in this state, some of them are not very readily accessible. They are at the Fryer Library but not to most other places as easily as one would like to simply go and pull them out. When you have to start ordering this material up one thing at a time, you are never too sure where it is all going to start and end. It is a bit like going through the indexes of *Hansard*—the accessibility of being able to flip backwards and forwards, again, keeping in mind that you are in strict time limits. You do not have 10 years to write this stuff or investigate it; you have got a mere three years normally, or less, depending on what it is. So you have really to be move on it rapidly and quickly access it and quickly move through it and understand it. Again, quite often you are not only having to read the debate in relation to the person you are looking at, but the whole debate, to get an understanding and then quite often you do not understand it. You have got to go and look at the statutes, which are also available in the Parliamentary Library—the actual bills that went through, the acts of the parliament at the time. You have to read those to get a clearer understanding of what was what happening. Even then, occasionally you need to go and refer to the newspapers of the day to see what they are saying about it, because quite often there is a different take on the whole situation.

These are all important things. One day I was looking in this library for the *Sydney Mail*. You would say, 'The *Sydney Mail*? What the hell do you want to look at that for? That would not be here.' One of the ladies got on the machine for me and said, 'We've got the *Sydney Mail* for a couple of years. I wonder why we got that.' I said, 'I don't know, but what years?' '1879.' That was just the year I wanted. Why would the Queensland Parliamentary Library have the *Sydney Mail*? No good reason at all, except the library has the hard copy of the *Sydney Mail* for the very same reason as I wanted the *Sydney Mail*. McIlwraith was elected Premier in the elections late in 1879, he became Premier in early January 1879, and the *Sydney Mail* printed and published a portrait of McIlwraith and details of his whole cabinet and a background of his education and so forth. Tom had taken that newspaper article and forwarded it to his father in Ayr, because I read the letter. I wanted a copy of this actual newspaper. So when I looked at the hard copy I thought, 'Yes, I can just see Tom looking at this hard copy and reading it.' He ordered it. He knew they were printing it. The journalist would have contacted him and told him that it was happening. So he would have sent back material and so on and he would have ordered these copies for the library to get these copies in. The library had the copies for that year and the next year and then it started to cease getting copies because there was no longer a need them. So you can see that there is some story. It is the same situation with the *Dalby Herald*. We have copies of the *Dalby Herald* in the Parliamentary Library. You would think, 'Why the dickens would this Parliamentary Library have the *Dalby Herald*?' Of course, in the 1860s and the early 1870s it was the only newspaper from Dalby west to the border, or over the border—any border—whether it was South Australian-Northern Territory border or the New South Wales border. The squatters who represented—and I say 'squatters' because they were all squatters—those seats at that time would come down here and they would need the *Dalby Herald* to read. So you would get the actual hard copies of the *Dalby Herald*. But again, you can see the squatters sitting around looking at this hard copy material. You might be able to get it on some microfilm at the John Oxley Library, but I can tell you now that it is not the same as sitting down looking at the hard copy, looking through the different pages of it.

In conclusion, can I say that it is always wonderful to come to the library. I mentioned before how I travelled to all of these other libraries. With some of the libraries in the United Kingdom, you know that you are not very welcome. I can tell you that you are not very welcome at all. I will not go into the details, but it is unfortunate with the cost structures today. You can see that the pressure is on, even in Queensland. I know pressures are on this library, too, but this issue does not apply to this library. Unfortunately, because of pressures the staff of the UK libraries are not as fully trained as they should be. I am not blaming the staff; it is just the fact that people do not know exactly what they have in their archives or their library. Therefore, they are not able to assist you, especially with some of this archival material. It is quite often very difficult to track down. Your library here, Mary, has well-trained, professional and enthusiastic staff. I had to say that. It is always good to come where you have enthusiastic, friendly staff. I say that not only as a student, which I am, but also in my various forms of former life. It is always nice to come and be welcomed at a library and feel that you are welcome to go through and look at the material, take it, sit down and treasure it, as librarians do, because with the materials, they are once in a lifetime. It is the original material. You can go through those *Hansards* and see where someone in 1860, 1870 or 1880 has marked the sides of those *Hansards*. The pencil markings are there. In some cases you can even guess who did the markings.

Ms Tracy Arklay, Ph D student Griffith University. "Researching Queensland Parliamentary History 1957-1989: project for Queensland Parliament".

Ms ARKLAY: We are committed to getting the project completely finished. John Wanna was expected to come up here. He is very sorry he could not. I am filling the breach at the last minute. This slide shows you our chapters. The proposed title of this work is 'The ayes have it: The history of the Queensland parliament'. Queensland being a unicameral and a very majoritarian system I think that is quite a good title.

John Wanna started the history close to 10 years ago. He started during his sabbatical. About a month and a half in he realised that he probably needed a bit of research help. I was called to come in to work with him for one day a week for 10 weeks. Ten years later I am still here. We used to come quite frequently on a Wednesday for about the first 4½ years. To date, we have written over 110,000 words. We have about nine chapters completed. There are still a few chapters that I have notes for that have not been written up in chapter form yet. That is the next process. Then it will be a matter of sending them out to various readers. Some people have already seen them and commented on them. We are going to send them out to a reading group and get it underway.

This is not a political history; it is a parliamentary history. We have based it very much on the parliamentary record rather than looking at the executive or at the party room machinations. It is a history of what has happened in this place. But politics is inherent in that. It is political to that degree.

The references I have used, the resources I have used have been predominantly *Hansard*. The first thing I used to do was come in and read through the debates, get a feel for who was saying what, what the principal arguments were, the personalities at the time and then go on to look at newspapers and legislative acts. Political chronicles are always helpful to know what people at the time were viewing as important events.

I concur completely with what Denver said. I have used both the Queensland *Hansard* and now the Commonwealth *Hansard* from the 1940s and 1950s. They are wonderful pieces of history, but they are slowly but surely falling apart. They are slowly but surely disintegrating. No matter how carefully you turn the pages they are becoming brittle. The bindings are falling apart. If we do not do something soon future historians and future students are not going to have anything to work with. We all have to think about what we are going to do here. The archives in Canberra have digitalised an awful lot of their stuff to make it really accessible to anyone in the world who wants to look up things. It is still not complete, but it is a marvellous reference material. I think it is probably worth the time and the money.

I will go through the history quickly since that is the point of me being here. The first chapter basically details the parliament—the set up in Queensland and what makes it different. There have been arguments that Queensland has basically been government by cabinet. We look at issues like how often parliament meets. Some years it is 60 days a year and some years it is less. Parliament sometimes did not meet for almost an entire year. We explain how that came about. The chapter basically provides an outline of how parliament works. We review the tradition of speeches, the Governor's address and all those normal things. It also examines the role of various office bearers within the House. It looks at legislation, the kinds of legislation passed, the priorities of different governments and different parties and observes areas of contention. For example, later the role of parliamentary committees becomes quite a big issue for debate in the House. We view those sorts of things in the first chapter.

Then we get into the actual story of parliament and how it unfolds. In 1957 we had the Labor split and tensions in the House bubbled over. This chapter looks at how the split came about and the relative strengths of the parties and how things changed during that time. Until then Queensland had been dominated by the Labor Party. At the beginning of the coalition period anyone observing politics here did not think that the coalition would survive very long.

Chapter 3 deals with the early Nicklin years. Queensland, as I just said, had been a Labor state for most of its history. Really up until 1963 most pundits did not believe that the government would remain in power. We look then at how Nicklin and the conservatives consolidated their hold on Queensland, helped of course by the continuing hostility and divisions within the Labor Party as was reflected during the debates in the House.

Then between 1963 and 1968 the coalition government cemented its position in Queensland. But tensions were still brewing underneath, for example, with different changes around the electoral system, the introduction of preferential voting, the issue of three-cornered contests and so on. If you understand this part of the history, you can look forward and think that is how 1983 happened. It was building all the way along. To have that understanding of history is very important, I think.

Chapter 5 really looks at legislation, particularly during that period, and looks at which way the government was going. I do not think it is a surprise to anyone that there was less emphasis on health and education in those days and more emphasis on industrial relations, primary industries, justice and Attorney-General, finance and state development. In those days parliament was like a glorified boardroom where the government ministers acted like company directors to make strategic interventions to expand economic growth in Queensland. We deal with that sort of issue. During the 1950s and 1960s parliament was still not irrelevant. Both sides of the House respected it for the institution that it was. In a way, parliament acted as an institution of record. Issues were shaped by the debates that occurred in the place.

Chapter 6 deals with the opposition parties in parliament. As we all know, to be effective the opposition is crucial. The Labor Party had huge problems in the 1950s and 1960s with most of the Gair ministry defecting to the Queensland Labor Party. The ALP led opposition had very little ministerial experience. Most ALP members had defected to the QLP. It initially had 11 members, most of whom had been ministers before.

One of things that is very true in those days probably in the federal parliament as well as the Queensland parliament was how there was great respect and camaraderie between both sides of the House. They were mates as well as adversaries in the House. We give examples of that throughout this book. One example is Liberal leader Gordon Chalk and ALP leader Jack Duggan who both represented places near Toowoomba which is about 1½ hours drive from here—it would have been 2½ hours in those days. Gordon Chalk used to always give Jack Duggan a lift home in his ministerial car at the end of sitting days. There was a spirit of friendship that existed.

After Nicklin, who really did cement his premiership and was the Premier for a very long time, over 10 years, Pizzey, a former education minister, was the natural successor. He became Premier but he unfortunately died seven months later leaving the coalition with really no successor. So chapter 7 looks at that and looks at the beginning of Bjelke-Petersen's rise and how he won the leadership ballot. For the first few years his position was nowhere near assured. We were very careful with this. When we were starting to write this, which was 10 years ago, there were still many people in the House who had very strong views and memories of that time. We really had to use the official record and not put our own views on the events. We said what happened and will let the readers make their own decisions. It is an academic piece of work. We look at the Bjelke-Petersen years as he makes the transition from a very tenuous start where we had deputations from the Speaker because he supposedly misled parliament to really cementing himself as the voice of Queensland.

I have notes then up until chapter 10. Chapter 9 is the last full chapter. I have notes about chapter 10. John and I are looking forward very much to finishing next year.

Mr Colin Sheehan, Historical Coordinator, Native Title Connection Unit, Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water. "The resources of the Parliamentary Libraries in historical research for Government purposes".

Mr SHEEHAN: I will start my talk with where Denver talked about access, availability, depth of collections. That is, I think, the fundamental point to any research using the Parliamentary Library. As a former librarian, maybe a failed librarian, I think I could say very much that the collections of the Parliamentary libraries—and my experience has been of this one here—are as a resource within Australasian libraries very much underrated and undervalued. Particularly in Australia where the state and university libraries of some of the states were, let us say, late starters, they lack retrospective depth in their collections and therefore the role of the Parliamentary Library and the parliamentary collections form an important complement.

Reference was made to the Queensland newspapers. In the State Library, the Queensland newspaper collection starts from 1931. So the retrospective newspapers are held uniquely by the Parliamentary Library, and therefore that collection is so terribly important. Yes, they have been reduced to microfilm, and we have all gone blind. I think there is now a new explanation for why people go blind rather than the usual one—because they have been looking at microfilm!

The other thing from which the Parliamentary Library here benefits and thereby researchers benefit, is that at the beginning of their corporate life they were able to establish exchange arrangements with their sister legislatures throughout the British Empire. Consequently, one finds in the collection of the Parliamentary Library materials that are unique. Whilst to management, let us say, these materials may not have been used, to quote Sir Gerard Brennan, from 'time immemorial', they are for inquirers like me very, very relevant. Legislators at the time had had experience in a wide range of areas in the British Empire and consequently—certainly in the early 19th century—legislators in the colony of New South Wales had very detailed knowledge of what was going on in Canada, in the Cape Colony and in other parts of the British Empire and in Great Britain itself, and therefore that informed the decision making that occurred within the colonial legislatures.

For example, the whole question of responsible government was one which in my early life in the Wik case occupied considerable resources starting here and ending up with the archives of the parliament of New South Wales, trying to get into the mind of one William Charles Wentworth. That did not work. Even the High Court could not get into his mind. Nevertheless, it is that width of resource that matches the experience of the time. I am eternally grateful to the Parliamentary Library that it does in fact have the early legislation of the colony of New South Wales, the early legislation of the Cape Colony and some of the early materials of the first federation in Canada, that of upper and lower Canada.

A specific example of where I have used the resources of this library to answer inquiries very quickly was in 1998 when the federal government brought in the amendments to the Native Title Act and the Commonwealth invited the states to make submissions on those forms of legislation that the states deemed may have extinguished native title. I set off to find the provenance of a particular clause in the 1897 Queensland Land Act. That led me through a very interesting exercise here that occupied many days

in the Parliamentary Library, and I am very glad to say that I avoided numerous meetings at work by being here.

It led me through the colonial legislatures of Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia until I tracked down what probably was the earliest provenance in Australasia in legislation introduced by Richard Seddon into the New Zealand parliament. Ultimately, it led me back to the Homesteads Act introduced by Abraham Lincoln in 1862 into the US Congress. I was able to follow all of this through the sessional papers of the legislatures, the statutes of the legislatures and the parliamentary debates of those legislatures—all of which were here in Queensland and all of which were available immediately. And it was done very much within the time constraints that had been put on the states by the Commonwealth as to when this material was to be submitted.

I think that is a very good example of the collecting policy of the library from the 19th century being maintained so that users today can do it very quickly—and that certainly runs through much of what I have to do. The access and availability of material and the willingness of the staff to locate it and their willingness to do something that you would never get away with at the Oxley library—and that is to provide photocopies of material that can be given to federal court judges who are usually not particularly generous when you say, 'I can't get it'—have made my life as a researcher much easier.

The other thing is that the materials in the Parliamentary Library are useful indicators to sources outside where you can pursue your inquiries. Denver has spoken quite correctly about the correspondence published in the sessional papers. That is a wonderful guide to where to go from here and it usually brings you back once again. If I can take a particular example of his beloved Tom McIlwraith's singular achievement of the annexation of New Guinea. This particular action that was taken in 1883 had a huge impact on the Federation of the Australian colonies. The reaction of the imperial government by repudiating McIlwraith's action was certainly a huge impetus to Federation that occurred. The debates of the Federal Council of Australasia, which saw representatives from New Zealand and Fiji attend, are all here. The statutes of the federal council are here and the *Votes and Proceedings* are here. So, again, you do not have to go anywhere else.

But the New Guinea question brought into play the fact that Queensland is quite unique insofar as it shares international boundaries. One only has to go to the Queensland parliamentary debates to look at the first real interaction on an international level between an Australian colonial government and what was the function of the imperial government, which was foreign relations—and that related to what they call the kidnapping of South Sea Island labour for, firstly, the Torres Strait fisheries and then later the Queensland sugar industry. In the mid-1870s, that led to a formal protest from the French government to the British government about kidnapping of workers for the Torres Strait fisheries from the Loyalty Islands. Of course, that introduced a whole new concept because everything had to go from here to London to Paris and back again. That was resolved, and you can follow that debate very carefully through the sessional papers of New South Wales as well as through the parliamentary debates here.

The next significant example involves one of Denver's ministerial predecessors, an arch enemy of Thomas McIlwraith—one Sir Samuel Griffith—and his little contretemps with the imperial government about the escaped French convicts from New Caledonia. In 1871, after the fall of the Paris commune, the French republic sent prisoners out to New Caledonia. That really upset the Australasian colonies because, having got rid of convicts from all of Australia, they did not want them sitting on our doorstep 300 nautical miles west of Rockhampton. Some of them escaped, and a huge debate broke out because the French government demanded under the Anglo-French treaty for their extradition. So the British Colonial Office wrote and said, 'Please send them back to New Caledonia.' Samuel Griffith said, 'Not on your life. We refuse to do so for they have not committed a crime that is deemed to be a crime in Queensland.' And this became a cause celebre between Great Britain, France and Queensland—all of which is documented not only in the parliamentary debates but also in all of the correspondence published in the sessional papers. Ultimately, it led to an amended treaty between England and France. So all of this I can find here.

The other thing is that a lot more was published in both the sessional papers and the gazettes. For example, particularly in the sessional papers of the upper house, you had the publication of treaties that were related to the colonies, together with the relevant dispatches from the British Colonial Office. This gives you an indication of where this material is. In the experience I have had, when you go to the State Library to look at this stuff and you are busily trying to think what on earth some official in the Colonial Office is actually writing in the margin of these letters, you have someone lean over and say in a very nice voice, 'Dear, are you finding your family as well?' As a former librarian, I can say that my best experience of that was when one elderly lady came in and wanted to find grandma who arrived in Brisbane in 1858. After events in the state of origin the other night, I think you will appreciate the irony of this. I said to her, 'Well, actually you will have to look in the New South Wales records because it was prior to separation.' She said, 'Oh, no, dear. They arrived in Brisbane.' I said, 'Yes, but it was before the separation.' She said, 'Dear, I never knew that New South Wales was once part of Queensland!'

Just to conclude on the international aspect as to where you can go from sources here to outside and then back again, one can only refer to the question of New Guinea and the repudiation by the secretary of state for the colonies of Queensland's action. Insofar as Queensland shared a border with the Dutch possessions in what is now Indonesia-New Guinea, consequently this had implications beyond the immediacy of this colony. It occurred at a time when both the eastern colonies of Australia and New

Zealand were causing several headaches for the imperial government by their own imperial aspirations. If one looks at the extensive correspondence relating to New Guinea and the question of annexation, one can also look in the same sessional volumes of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria of an extended application to the imperial government for the annexation of the then New Hebrides, which of course would have caused huge problems for the imperial government vis-a-vis France and its interests.

In relation to the Dutch, the British certainly had no desire whatsoever to upset the Dutch because they had upset them enough by the prosecution during the time that Thomas McIlwraith was Premier of Queensland in what was the first Boer War—that is, the Netherlands was not impressed with the actions of the British government in the Cape Colony. All the statutes are here in the Parliamentary Library, so you can see the events of what happened during that war. Consequently, when Queensland annexed New Guinea, the Dutch necessarily were somewhat perturbed.

In an official journal of the Netherlands East Indies government entitled *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche India*, which is held at the Queensland Museum, there is a very brief article at the end of the volume for 1883 which simply says, 'New Guinea annexed by Queensland,' and it sets out that Queensland had no constitutional power to do this, that it was the responsibility of the British government and that the British government would have to discuss this with the Netherlands through the minister resident at The Hague. This relationship was a tenuous one. But where it becomes visible—and if you think of the present situation—is in 1895 when the British and Dutch governments agreed on a slight change of the border between what was then Dutch New Guinea and British New Guinea, which was also the boundary of Queensland, and that was the 141st meridian of longitude. That sets out very much that parts of our colonial history impinge beyond. I think as a researcher you could make no better start for your inquiries than here.

Ms MEMBREY: This is not so much a question but a statement. On listening to all three speakers speak about the wonders of the collection of the Queensland Parliamentary Library in particular, they also made passing mention to the quality of the staff here. It made me reflect on the fact that some years ago—far too many years ago—I wrote an article about the fact that parliamentary library staff were years ahead of their colleagues in every other type of library from university libraries to state libraries and so on because we take each request personally. We do not sit back and say, 'Just go over to the 364s, you will find it there.' We work with our clients to make sure they get what they want and ultimate satisfaction. So it was really nice to hear the three speakers today talk about how wonderful the collection is and how wonderful the staff is, because it just reinforces the fact that many of us who work in parliamentary libraries are proud of what we do and don't like to leave parliamentary libraries, because we cannot comprehend ever working in a public library. Why would you? So thank you very much. You have just reinforced my sense of professionalism and my sense of being.

Mr GILMOUR: I have two questions that are probably totally unrelated. Obviously, there are periods, especially in recent history—say in the Russ Hinze era; the white-shoe brigade—there was a lot of decision making that perhaps was not documented quite as officially as it may otherwise have been. I am just wondering how much of a resource is still lurking there and whether that perhaps has an effect on library collecting policy? What other sorts of documents, or less official sources, may come to bear on those sorts of events? Given the fragility of some of the earlier materials, how do researchers feel about having to review a digitised copy of an old newspaper rather than the real thing? How should that be done in a sensitive or authentic way to make sure that researchers get what they need?

Ms ARKLAY: For my PhD I have been in Canberra quite a lot. Down there you go through the archives and it is all there. They have digitised an awful lot of their records and I find that wonderful when I am up here and I can flick and it is there. It is not as nice as looking at the original document, but it is damn handy. You know that it is there and if you want to, you can always get them to send you up a photocopy or something like that. So there are ways around that. There are still real gaps, though. There is a lot that is not digitised, but there is quite a lot that is now. The other thing about Russ Hinze, with our history at least, we are looking at parliament and what happened here. So if anything is mentioned here, we will talk about it. But if it is not mentioned in this place, other people have written a lot about that sort of thing.

Ms SEEFRIED: One of the collecting policies, I would believe, of all of the state parliamentary libraries and also the Australian Parliamentary Library would be to collect the materials which provide the context for political and parliamentary issues, which would be selected articles and critiques of particular political events.

Ms ARKLAY: You have a very good collection up here—like all of the Fitzgerald stuff and all of that.

Ms SEEFRIED: Yes, and all the news and media clippings that go back that far—all of those sorts of things. So they are also extra contextual materials which you can use.

Mr BEANLAND: I will just say, Mary, that, for example, if you go back to the colonial period, you can go to the minute books of the executive council over at the Queensland State Archives and look through the ministerial or the cabinet decisions there that authorise all sorts of things to happen. If you read through history, it appears as though the Premier or the minister rushed off and made some decision himself. But all of these flowed from decisions from cabinet—or most of those things—even back in that period when McIlwraith to raise a loan. He had authority. I have mentioned the mail contracts and so forth coming

through the Torres Strait. So that was done through an executive council minute. You can actually have a look at the minute and see where it is authorised and signed by the governor et cetera. In more recent times—whether it was Russell Hinze or X, Y, or Z—it does not matter—decisions of cabinet, of course, are held for 30 years and they go over to the State Archives and in 30 years they are all placed before the public and you can have a look at them. You can get access to them. So the material is there. From departments, back in the years gone by it varied—it is a lot different now; departments are required to keep all sorts of things under the Archives Act—most department records; stuff was thrown out that should have been kept and that was done by the public servants. Quite frankly, ministers would not have had the time and would not have known. The public servants all know what not to put on the record or on the file. Ministers do, too, I might add, but that is a different issue.

Mr SHEEHAN: One of the other things that I think is important to bear in mind with digitisation, as was certainly found with microfilm, is that in the 19th century they used a dreaded thing called press letter books. That was almost rice thin paper from which copies were made. The Indian ink had some iron in it so the whole of the internal bits of the letter books fall out. Therefore, there is a technical problem in reproducing this vast amount of material. Usually those letter books are so fundamental as a document for research that you have no access whatever to the entire series because of the physical condition and to reproduce them digitally is really not an option either.

One of the other things in terms of reproducing archival records on microfilm is that it is not just the text of the letter that is so fundamental to it but also the marginal notations of where you can trace the policy developments as to what happened are really very critical. I do not know whether most of you are familiar with some of these things but they literally cover the whole surface of the page and then go over the page. They are usually written at a 45 degree angle to it in illegible handwriting. When you look at those things on microfilm you go more than blind. For so much of that early colonial period you need to look at it like that.

One of the great things I found in relation to the escaped convicts was to be able to have Carol drag up the volumes of the *Capricornian* and the *Queenslander* and put them beside one another to look at the reports as well as the *Hansard*. You may think that they are just the same because they have copied the same newspaper report. No they are not. One will have added a bit of electoral commentary—for example, they disapproved in Rockhampton of the way Griffith was dealing with this; this is another reason central Queensland wanted to become a separate colony. The ability to look at them together is an important research tool along with the official record. I think now you can have two screens operating together. Maybe that is a way of doing it. There are technical problems in reproducing old documents that technology will have to address, particularly for the colonial period.

Mr GILMOUR: You have an 1870s *Media Watch*.

Ms EMMERSON: I wanted to make one quick comment about what Denver said. It is really heartwarming as a professional researcher to have him, as a former member of parliament, realise that it might take a half a week to get a footnote. Could you possibly inform your contemporaries of that situation and explain that it is not all available on the net?

Mr BEANLAND: What's the net?

Conference adjourned at 4.27pm