

The Langs in Queensland 1858-65: An Unwritten Chapter

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The history of nineteenth century Queensland journals and journalists has been a longstanding preoccupation of this Society. Details of newspaper proprietors and printers have been assiduously compiled by such leading Society members as Alfred Davies¹ and Clem Lack,² while, in more recent years, Rod Kirkpatrick and James Manion have contributed addresses on the same subject.³ In a carefully researched paper, Kirkpatrick paid tribute to the work of former Society President, Alan Arthur Morrison, explaining how he had set out to amplify Morrison's suggestive analysis of Queensland provincial journalism. In spite of the wealth of detail which both Kirkpatrick and Marion have provided, Morrison's noteworthy attempt to compile a comprehensive social history of colonial Queensland, using the press as a vantage point, has still to be fully developed. In keeping with Morrison's preoccupations,⁴ this address will focus on the formative 1860's, with special reference to the Lang family.

Preoccupied with details of newspaper production and personnel, most researchers have neglected to study the role by influential contributors in nineteenth century journalism. Operating on a free-lance rather than routine basis, articulate writers used the colonial press to agitate a range of important issues. One of the most prolific contributors during the mid nineteenth century was John Dunmore Lang, author of *Cooksland* (1847) and architect of controversial immigration ventures to Moreton Bay (1848-49). Lang's colonial reputation owed much to his prodigious newspaper correspondence, most of which was informative rather than merely personal or defamatory. For the isolated population of Moreton Bay, he assumed the status of an unofficial correspondent and provided the northern community with much needed leadership. In the early 1850's, Lang's comments on almost any topic touching their interests invariably

appeared in the *Courier's* correspondence columns. In view of this assiduity, it is surprising to discover that most of the local acclaim for championing Separation in the press went not to J. D. Lang but to William Wilkes, the *Courier's* erratic editor. Despite the fact that his own newspaper ventures were short-lived, Lang's generous literary contributions should not be overlooked. Not only was he a strong challenger for the title — the champion of Separation — he could also claim to have fathered provincial papers in early New South Wales. Pioneer pressmen, William Kerr (Port Phillip 1839) and James Swan (Moreton Bay 1846) were both Lang immigrants and loyal supporters.

During the early 1850's, J. D. Lang maintained a high public profile throughout eastern Australia. For northern colonists, in particular, Lang *was* the news. His correspondence to British, Sydney and local papers was supplemented by regular visits to Moreton Bay for the purpose of promoting regional interests, constitutional reform and, ultimately, Separation at the 30th parallel. James Swan, the *Courier* proprietor, and the Cribb brothers were regular members of the reception committee on these occasions,⁵ while other immigrants from the *Fortitude*, *Chaseley* and *Lima* ships took an active part at these local gatherings.⁶ After a strenuous round of lectures, sermons and public meetings, Lang travelled to Ipswich and onto Warwick to repeat the performance.

J. D. Lang's exertions on behalf of Moreton Bay have been recently reviewed by Don Baker in his acclaimed biography, *Days of Wrath*.⁷ While Queensland historians have been reluctant to condemn J. D. Lang's problematic association with the *Fortitude*, *Chaseley* and *Lima* immigrant ships, Baker places most of the blame for the breach of land order contracts on his subject rather than with colonial officials who opposed the project. The bitter quarrel about which party should be held responsible for the *Fortitude-Chaseley* land order fiasco was left unresolved for over a decade. Baker does not allude to it further, although it was later to re-emerge as an important consideration for Lang's Queensland career. After a critical examination of these early immigration schemes, Baker extends his analysis to include the hotly-contested election of 1854, when Lang snatched victory from local squatting candidate, Arthur Hodgson.⁸ At this point in the narrative, Lang's exceptional mobility escapes his painstaking biographer who, thereafter, abandons any further discussion of the Queensland connection. The reader of *Days of Wrath* might be led to suppose that J. D. Lang took no further interest in northern affairs. Such was not the case. Indeed the approach of Separation (1859) sparked a new phase of intense involvement by Lang in Queensland concerns. This renewed participation was facilitated by the arrival of his son, George Lang, in

Brisbane, where the latter was engaged simultaneously as a journalist on several local newspapers. The task of this address will be to sketch in this unwritten chapter in J. D. Lang's Queensland endeavour, focussing upon the press and on the interlocking careers of father and son.

OPTIMISM AND CONSENSUS: THE FIRST QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT

The first 18 months after Separation constituted an important new phase of J. D. Lang's association with Queensland. Devoting his energies almost exclusively to the north, Lang made several prolonged visits to Brisbane during 1860 and corresponded with leading members of the new legislature. A series of audiences with Governor Bowen in the same year helped to offset the poor relations which had existed between the Reverend Doctor and the Executive of the established southern colonies. Lang's unprecedented access to the administrative elite in early Queensland did not inhibit his public and newspaper pronouncements. A series of letters entitled "Separation and How to Follow It Up" appeared in the *Courier* during the first three months of 1860.⁹ In keeping with a tradition of regional newspaper rivalry, Lang used the *Courier* to rebut the Brisbane correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald* for deprecating his efforts in promoting Separation.¹⁰ Reviving the earlier visions of *Cooksland*, he undertook an optimistic assessment of Queensland's agricultural potential, based upon the subtropical staples of cotton and sugar. Although local cultivation of these crops had made only very modest advances prior to 1860, Lang remained convinced that, when grown by British immigrant labour, Queensland sugar and cotton could rival the output of the slave-labour and indenture economies operating in northern America and in parts of the British Empire.¹¹ The *Courier* letters, a hybrid of visionary schemes and intense regionalism, included a predictable eulogy of Brisbane and its river. Lang's satisfaction with the choice of Brisbane as capital, in preference to competing by other south-east Queensland settlements, was not merely a concession to administrative inertia. Rather, it arose from his conviction that the Richmond and Clarence districts would be shortly annexed to Queensland and that a further colony, extending north from Port Curtis, would eventually be constituted.¹²

Reinforcing J. D. Lang's presence in public and in the press was the task assigned to George, his only surviving son. Relations between father and son had been close since 1854, when a Ballarat bank scandal resulted in George's arrest and imprisonment for alleged fraud.¹³ J. D. Lang's outspoken defence of his son on this occasion, though intemperate, had helped to secure his eventual release. Following the Victorian trauma, George undertook an overland expedition with his uncle Gideon Scott Lang, to property at Wide

Bay. Arriving at Maryborough in the midst of the Hornet Bank reprisals, he was appalled by the state of race relations in the district and denounced the arbitrary violence practised on blacks as cowardly and un-British.¹⁴ In many respects, George Lang epitomised the colonial pressman of his day — educated, restless, progressive and down on his luck. He began his local career by contributing articles to the *North Australian* and supplemented his income by writing a weekly Brisbane letter for the *Sydney Empire*.¹⁵ The speed with which George established himself in journalism owed something to his father's connections. J. D. Lang had known John Kent, the *North Australian* editor for a decade; he also enjoyed close ties with the *Empire* and it was on his recommendation that the new owners, Hansen and Bennett, offered George employment.¹⁶

The regular correspondence which developed between father and son from this period provides valuable insights into early Queensland society. George Lang's objectives in Brisbane were two-fold, firstly to establish a political or legal career in a new environment and secondly, to advocate and defend his father's established causes. J. D. Lang insisted that George make a bid for office and stand as a candidate for the first Queensland Assembly. With tentative backing from Charles Lilley and the newly-formed Liberal Association, George Lang contested North Brisbane as an advocate of agriculture and an opponent of state aid but was unsuccessful. In a strong field which included George Raff, Henry Jordan and Robert Cribb among others, George Lang recorded 125 votes and was placed a narrow fifth. His father's advice proved premature for George had had little time to establish himself in Brisbane political life. The *Courier*, now under the management of Thomas Blackett Stephens, balked at his candidature on the grounds that he was untested and did not yet hold a stake in the colony.¹⁷

The appearance of a new journal, the *Guardian*, in April 1860, intensified youthful rivalries within metropolitan journalism. Relations between Stephens' *Courier* and the Langs were strained during the North Brisbane election when the *Courier* accused George of writing for the *Guardian*. The *Courier's* suspicions were well-founded. Not only had George pushed out a *Courier* man for the *Empire* position but he was using his influence with the *North Australian* and his contacts with the *Courier* to poach staff for the *Guardian* and undermine the influence of the leading journal. J. D. Lang was kept informed of these personality differences and appeared to sanction his son's initiatives. George's letters of mid 1860, written partly for paternal approval, revealed sharp competition between newcomers like himself and John Searl and the established *Courier* 'clique' of Wilkes, Pugh and Dowse.¹⁸ In addition, these local differences helped nourish a deep-seated rivalry bet-

ween J. D. Lang and William Wilkes. Wilkes, a *Courier* editor of pre-Separation days, had moved to Sydney and edged George out of the editorial post with the *Empire*; at the same time, Wilkes was consolidating his standing with the *Courier* by contributing regular jottings under the title "News and Notes by a Sydney Man". J. D. Lang associated Wilkes with an inebriate ticket-of-leave class which had done little to improve the status of colonial journalism. In order



Rev. J. D. Lang, 1858.

to monitor the *Empire's* Queensland policy, he had his son's Brisbane letters sent via his own address so that he could detect subsequent deletions by Wilkes and his editorial staff.

George Lang's electoral disappointment plunged him deeper into press business; he switched allegiance from the ailing *North Australian* to the *Ipswich Herald* and began polishing his shorthand for the historic parliamentary session. George was still convinced that his pen would improve his standing in Queensland society, and remained supremely confident about the *Guardian's* commercial prospects. With the announcement of plans for issue of a two-weekly *Guardian* he assured his parents that he would have "more to do" and "fewer opportunities of getting into mischief".¹⁹ A mitigating factor in the *Guardian-Courier* rivalry during the following months was the consensus over the abolition of state aid to denominational schools. Nonconformist intellectuals who had operated through the School of Arts prior to Separation, were now actively contributing to the press in support of a national system of education. By aligning himself with the *Guardian*, G. D. Lang became associated with the Congregationalist sect rather than with Baptists on the *Courier*. W. C. Belbridge, the *Guardian* printer, and Doctor William Hobbs, one of its regular literary contributors, belonged to this sect. Hobbs was also a prominent Lang immigrant and confidant of the Governor. Other writers who contributed to the early *Guardian* on an occasional basis included Henry Jordan and the Reverend George Wight, both educated professionals who served terms as Agents-General for Queensland in Great Britain.

Throughout 1860, the Langs, devout Presbyterians, joined with Nonconformists in lobbying the new Executive of Bowen and Herbert. Governor Bowen, during an interview of 1860 with J. D. Lang, praised *Cook's Land* at some length and reassured his guest about anomalies in the new Queensland constitution.²⁰ Preoccupied with his own plans, the Reverend Doctor appears not to have discerned an infringement of popular liberties in the recently gazetted Order-in-Council. He returned once more to Brisbane in July for a protracted stay of six weeks. On this occasion, father and son were again well received by the Governor. On 17 July, Bowen wrote to J. D. Lang to thank him for his efforts on behalf of Queensland Separation. In a letter to his wife, Wilhelmina, J. D. Lang described his subsequent interview with Bowen as a monologue and recorded his candid impression of his host as "one of the most persistent talkers I have ever met with — you cannot get a word in with him."²¹

During the same visit, J. D. Lang attended the state aid debate in the Legislative Assembly and recorded his favourable opinions in a letter to the *Empire*.²² He was impressed with Herbert's ability to make headway in an inexperienced parliament and concurred with

George's assessment of the young Colonial Secretary as "the ablest man in the House . . . superior as a leader to either Cowper or Jones"²³ in New South Wales. This optimistic opinion represented a dramatic shift from the republican and anti-imperial rhetoric he espoused in the early 1850's. In an unexpected political development, the Langs looked to the Executive as a potential ally against the squatters who dominated the first Queensland parliament. Their uncritical view of its proceedings deflected attention from the reactionary Orders-in-Council of December 1859 and helped to perpetuate the abiding myth of the first parliament as consensual and progressive. In so doing, they had been swayed by Governor Bowen's verbosity and misled by the political apathy which prevailed immediately after Separation.

J. D. Lang's Brisbane visit of July 1860 and his favourable comparison of Queensland with New South Wales were part of a concerted strategy to maximize his influence in the new colony. In cooperation with George, he pressed for the establishment of select committees into a range of questions including land legislation, immigration policy and the southern boundary. Perhaps the clearest sign of his confidence in the new parliament was the decision to petition the legislature for a Select Committee to inquire into the charges laid against him over the *Fortitude-Chaseley* venture.²⁴ Ten years earlier, the New South Wales Council had refused him this request and passed a motion of censure on his immigration conduct. J. D. Lang had always contended that a committee of inquiry would exonerate him of these charges; moreover, the campaign to secure his son's release in Victoria had strengthened his belief in this course of action. Charles Lilley, the first member for Fortitude Valley, was entrusted with the petition and a parliamentary committee appointed to examine its claims.

The Brisbane press greeted Lang's petition favourably. The *Guardian* observed that "it was needless to enumerate the services of Doctor Lang to this community", while the *Courier* concurred that the majority of the public had long ago formed their opinions in this matter.²⁵ J. D. Lang appeared before the Select Committee and published a series of commentaries on his petition in both Brisbane newspapers. On the eve of returning south, the Doctor nevertheless reminded his local supporters that "if I have not very many enemies here they make up for their smallness of numbers by being unusually bitter."²⁶ Among the more active of these opponents were Darling Downs' pastoralist, Arthur Hodgson, Legislative Councillor, George Fullerton, and Catholic lawyer-politician, Charles Blakeney. That Lang's close identification with the fortunes of the new colony posed a direct challenge to the authority of the squatters can be seen in the parliamentary manoeuvring associated with

his Select Committee. In 1860, Hodgson had come to Brisbane specifically to organize resistance to the popular leadership of liberal democrats like J. D. Lang and A. J. P. Lutwyche. Squatter parliamentarians were not yet sufficiently organised or confident to confront Lang openly. They were careful not to oppose popular motions in the House, but preferred to override or mutilate legislation in committee. In the case of the Lang inquiry, four of the six appointed members — James Taylor, John Watts, John Ferrett and St George Gore — were Darling Downs squatters and had been associates of Arthur Hodgson and Henry Stuart Russell in the 1850's.

The composition and proceedings of the Select Committee into Lang's immigration efforts elicited candid comments in the Brisbane press. *Guardian* editor, John Searl, stated frankly that "Doctor Lang's petition stands not the slightest chance of a fair investigation."²⁷ In the same issue, George Lang queried the legitimacy of "stacking" a committee with parliamentarians who had already voted against the adoption of his father's petition; he also engaged in a brief polemic with *Chaseley* immigrant, William Stanley Hall, who, with nine fellow passengers, revived the land order controversy and accused the petitioner of seeking compensation at their expense. Commenting himself on the circumstances surrounding his petition, J. D. Lang assured the *Fortitude-Chaseley* passengers of his intention to reimburse them in land, should the petition receive favourable consideration. The local press was in general agreement that land grants would constitute the most appropriate form of reimbursement to both parties.

However, this timely opportunity to settle longstanding grievances between J. D. Lang, the colonial authorities and the *Fortitude-Chaseley* passengers was lost when the favourable evidence of the leading witnesses — William Hobbs, the Cribbs and William Pettigrew — was discarded in favour of more obscure objections. Instead of honouring Lang's past services in money or in land, the squatter-dominated Committee confined its recognition to a brief note of thanks.²⁸ It was clear that neither the public nor J. D. Lang considered the matter closed. The *Guardian* reminded its readers that "the Doctor's claim against us is a debt of honour, a debt which cannot be repudiated without entailing upon us indelible disgrace."²⁹

For J. D. Lang, this personal disappointment was partly offset by the enthusiastic recommendations of an Immigration Committee sitting in the same parliamentary session. After three months deliberation, it advocated the adoption of a land order system by the Queensland government, and despite powerful pressures to the contrary, declared against the adoption of officially sponsored coloured labour schemes.³⁰ With some reason, J. D. Lang looked on the incorporation of land order provisions in the Crown Lands

Alienation Act of 1860 as something of a personal triumph. Despite the long history of opposition to his efforts in New South Wales and the resentment of Queensland squatters, his proposals were now an integral part of the Queensland immigration apparatus and would remain so for fifteen years. Under the relevant clauses of the new land legislation, all adults who paid their passage to the colony were entitled to land orders to the value of 18 pounds, with a further land order of 12 pounds forthcoming after two years residency.

In the press and in private correspondence, Lang declared his unqualified support for these measures. Shortly after the passage of the Land Bill, J. D. Lang wrote a series of letters to the *Sydney Empire* in which he undertook to defend the Queensland legislation against its southern critics, on the basis of the land order clauses and the retention of a high upset price. The attractions of a bonus system, he informed New South Welshmen, were such that "immigration (would) flow past our noble harbour to Queensland."³¹ On 3 October J. D. Lang wrote to Queensland Treasurer, Robert Ramsay McKenzie of "the very favourable prospects which have been opened up . . . in your recent Land Act and Immigration Report."³² In the same letter, he announced his imminent departure with George to Britain for the purpose of promoting immigration to Queensland.

When the Langs embarked for Britain in December 1860, they carried with them, on behalf of Clarence and Richmond River residents, two petitions which the New South Wales Governor had previously refused to transmit to the Colonial Office. During the previous decade, J. D. Lang's immigration ventures to Moreton Bay and the Clarence had led him to postulate the establishment of a colony, separated from New South Wales at the 30th parallel of latitude and extending only as far as Port Curtis.³³ His view of the 30th parallel as a natural southern boundary was strengthened by the creation of a single political constituency for the Clarence River and Darling Downs districts prior to 1859. Determined opposition to Lang's proposal had come from New South Wales Governor, Sir William Denison, who disparaged Northern Rivers separation petitions on the grounds that they were signed by labourers rather than by men of property.³⁴

By the middle of 1860, with Queensland Separation achieved, commercial interests at Grafton and Tenterfield were promoting trade and communication links with Brisbane in preference to Sydney. Local newspaper agitation by the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* brought about a series of public meetings in mid 1860, at which the prospect of annexation to Queensland was seriously canvassed. Reports of these meetings were reproduced in the *Courier* and the *Guardian* along with articles of support by the Langs.³⁵ By the close

of 1860, the *Examiner* and the pro-Queensland lobby were being challenged by a newly-established journal, the *Clarence and Richmond Independent*, which advocated complete independence for the Northern Rivers and the erection of a separate colony between the 28th and 30th parallels of latitude. In the ensuing compromise between these factions, two petitions were simultaneously drafted by Clarence residents, with annexation to Queensland emerging as the second option.³⁶ J. D. Lang, who was known to support the American system of creating smaller states, did not openly oppose complete independence for the petitioners; he was nevertheless confident that annexation to Queensland would emerge as the preferred option once substantial immigration and economic growth had transformed the existing northern colony.

PROPAGANDA AND POLEMICS: THE 1861 TOUR

After the Langs reached Britain in February 1861, they embarked on a lecturing tour as part of a concerted campaign to sell Queensland abroad. James Swan, the *Moreton Bay Courier* proprietor of pre-Separation days, had also returned to Britain and co-operated with the Langs during their immigration drive. When Swan visited his native Glasgow, this self-made man, once an illiterate orphan, was extolled by the Langs as a model of colonial enterprise.³⁷ Along with Swan and the Langs, Henry Jordan, the first Agent-General for Queensland, was expected in England during April 1861. Already in late 1860, George Wight, a *Guardian* associate of George Lang and acquaintance of Jordan, had made the return journey to Scotland with the intention of encouraging immigration and publishing his own work on Queensland.

The industrial centres of northern England and Scotland became focal points for the Langs' exertions. George Lang established an office in Glasgow, where he publicized his father's lectures in numerous pamphlets distributed to the local population. Advertisements were placed in the Scottish and Irish Nonconformist press and regular correspondence established with the *British Standard*, the *Glasgow Herald* and the *North British Mail*. As on previous tours of Britain, this publicity was aimed at recruiting Protestants, although the vehement sectarian feeling and language which coloured J. D. Lang's previous visits was less visible. During the 1861 tour, the Langs were struck by the limited prospects which then existed for emigration to the distant Australian colonies. The improved wages and better material standards enjoyed by the labouring classes had removed some of the inducements which existed previously during the "Cookland" tour of the late 1840's. Writing to the *British Standard*, J. D. Lang founded his optimistic predictions for Queensland upon the land order system which he had championed in the Australian colonies.³⁸

Shortly after these comments were published, Rev. George Wight wrote to the same paper and pointed out what he considered were minor inaccuracies in his colleague's exposition of the Queensland immigration regulations. Wight was careful to acknowledge J. D. Lang's industry and perseverance but anxious to avoid confusion between Henry Jordan's official mission and the private effort of the Langs.³⁹ Lang senior contributed a series of rejoinders to Wight in the *British Standard*;⁴⁰ however, the polemics which ensued proved inoffensive and appeared primarily as a useful expedient for promoting Queensland abroad. During the press debate, J. D. Lang revealed unexpected tact and diplomacy; throughout the overseas tour, he took care to stifle lingering resentment of the Queensland government over the inept handling of his petition.

The simultaneous publication of promotional works by J. D. Lang and George Wight, in mid 1861, complemented their British newspaper campaign. Lang's lengthy sequel to *Cooksland*, entitled *Queensland, Australia. A Highly Eligible Field for Emigration and the Future Cotton Field of Great Britain*, appeared in London only weeks before Wight's similar sounding, *Queensland, the Field for British Labour and Enterprise and the Source of England's Cotton Supply*.⁴¹ Although rivalry between the two men persisted, their written works demonstrated a consensus about the moral superiority of agriculture and the need for a system of small freeholds in Queensland; they appeared united in a common effort to recruit British labour for agricultural purposes and to stimulate interest in Queensland's cotton-growing potential. To this end, each reproduced glowing reports by British merchants concerning the quality of local cotton samples, favourably reviewed the 1860 Land Act, especially the provision for a cotton bonus, and staunchly supported the prompt annexation to Queensland of the fertile Clarence and Richmond River districts.

In supplying their British readers with optimistic assessments of their colonial prospects and providing a wealth of factual information about Queensland, these emigration works drew heavily on local newspaper sources. The Brisbane press, which furnished extracts for the Lang and Wight publications, closely monitored the movements and writings of its overseas representatives. Reviewing George Wight's book in December, the *Guardian* complained that "the hardships of life are kept too far in the background . . . its advantages gilded with an unnatural brightness."⁴² Local reviewers agreed that Lang's *Queensland* was more readable and informative than Wight's but levelled criticisms at both works. Reporting on Lang's Glasgow lectures and Henry Jordan's newspaper articles, the *Courier* suggested that its advocates were outdoing each other in depicting Queensland through a rose-coloured lens.

In spite of J. D. Lang's insistence that the first immigrants to Queensland be well provided for, many of the problems accompanying his *Fortitude-Chaseley* experiment were again in evidence. In the case of the *Wansfell*, a ship despatched to Brisbane in July 1861, passengers found themselves stranded in a South Brisbane warehouse on their arrival and were unable to take prompt advantage of their land orders.⁴³ The Agricultural Reserves to which they were directed were located well away from the township and largely unsurveyed. Brisbane newspapers greeted the propaganda emanating from the emigration lobby in Britain with a mixture of caution and criticism. The *Courier*, less inclined to censure J. D. Lang than the *Herald* had been during the *Fortitude-Chaseley* affair, nevertheless adopted several expedients to offset uncritical propaganda about Queensland. In a monthly summary for British readers, it fostered a more realistic assessment of the experience of new immigrants by including extracts on the practical difficulties of their situation. In addition, the editor, Theophilus Pugh, compiled and published the *Queensland Almanac*, a sober description of the colony and relatively cheap at one shilling a copy.

Amid their enthusiastic rhetoric about cotton, J. D. Lang and George Wight had also broached the political issue of Coolie immigration to Queensland in their emigration works. With the outbreak of the American Civil War (April 1861), economic arguments about cotton became associated with moral considerations about slavery and race. J. D. Lang, an interested observer of American society, supported the abolitionist cause. Writing to the *British Standard*, he drew a parallel between the American plantations of the southern states and the large cotton companies proposed for Queensland.⁴⁴ According to his religious viewpoint, Queensland and its emissaries were caught up in an act of divine intervention which would ultimately deal a death-blow to slavery and establish Queensland as a major new cotton field dominated by small-scale white enterprise. George Wight, on the other hand, appeared more favourable to the economic arguments advanced by large capitalists concerning cotton cultivation. In his *Queensland*, Wight refused to veto cheap labour schemes undertaken by private individuals and advanced the principle that:

Government does not undertake to introduce Coolies or Chinese into the colony; but neither does it put any obstacle in the way of those employers who desire to make a trial of that kind of labour.⁴⁵

Differences between Lang and Wight over Coolie immigration reflected a growing newspaper debate in Queensland over the colony's economic and political future. While the *Guardian* supported Wight and published many letters in favour of Coolie involve-

ment, the *Courier*, adopting Lang's tactics and occasionally xenophobic style, consistently marshalled strong opposition to their introduction, both in its editorials and published correspondence. Established Lang immigrants like the Cribb brothers and Henry Challinor, who had resisted the earlier attempts of Phillip Friell, Gordon Sandeman and other pastoralists to recruit coloured labour, voiced renewed opposition to the influential Coolie lobby.⁴⁶ When a *Guardian* writer cited Mauritius as a successful plantation economy and multi-racial model for Queensland to emulate, Robert Cribb protested that advocates of the Mauritius system had told the public nothing about the horrors of slavery — “nothing of the wail of agony that made itself heard even in the Mother Country — nothing of the state of society that it has produced in that island . . .” where “a few aristocratic lords” controlled a servile population.⁴⁷ Although slavery had been abolished in Mauritius by 1833, the extensive use of Indian indentured labour perpetuated a rigid colonial order which persisted well into the 20th century.⁴⁸ If the philanthropic intentions of local planters were readily exposed, the *Guardian* continued to publish correspondence on their behalf. The buoyant state of the Mauritius economy, the ready access of Queensland to the Indian labour supply and imperial prejudice against white workers in the tropics were arguments regularly invoked by Coolie advocates. The prospect of coloured labour and a plantation system in tropical Queensland led one *Courier* critic to advocate the speedy formation of a new colony in North Queensland, leaving the southern portion of the territory to the Langs, the Jordans and British immigrants.⁴⁹ A similar proposal had been mooted by J. D. Lang during his 1860 Brisbane visit. Such a compromise would depend in turn upon the prompt incorporation of the ambivalent Clarence and Richmond River inhabitants into Queensland.

While the political ties between the Langs and the *Courier* were strengthened during the Coolie debate, their alliance with the Queensland Executive was showing signs of strain. Herbert's decision, during the second parliament, to gazette Coolie regulations without consulting the Assembly irritated the press and Town Liberal members. Herbert's written assurance to Jordan and to the Langs that no immediate attempt would be made to introduce Coolies on an extensive scale failed to appease his critics. His action was interpreted by the Langs as subversive of their immigration efforts and may have been a decisive factor in terminating their tour. J. D. Lang remained adamant that the importation of Coolies would compromise Queensland morally and politically; in his widely-read *Queensland*, he firmly dissociated himself from Governor Bowen's public remarks about a flourishing cotton industry dominated by large capital.⁵¹ In so far as Bowen and Herbert envisaged a labour

aristocracy of British immigrants for the colony, supplemented by a multi-racial group of indentured or contract workers, they appeared to endorse the efforts of the Langs abroad. Yet the practical realities of British emigration encouraged the Langs and Henry Jordan not only to woo the small capitalist, as they had intended, but also to recruit substantial numbers of unskilled immigrants from the industrial centres of Glasgow and Liverpool.

DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEPARTURE 1863-65

With the despatch of the *Wansfell* in early July of 1861, the Langs terminated their six-month tour of Great Britain and returned to Sydney via Brisbane. A strenuous 18 month period of involvement in Queensland affairs was to be followed abruptly by a hiatus of comparable length, as the Langs turned their attention to southern matters. J. D. Lang's lengthy absence from his Sydney congregations would have been impossible without the industry and competence of his wife, Wilhelmina. The ambition and turbulence of his public career placed enormous strains on the Langs' marital situation without threatening its stability. Wilhelmina overcame a substantial age difference and engaged in far more than a submissive nurturing role in the marriage. Family crises appear to have brought out her staunch qualities as a devout Scottish matriarch. She maintained her husband's affairs in his absence and supported George throughout the aftermath of his prison trauma. George's Brisbane correspondence confirms that the self-effacing wife and mother was a well-informed party to the family's political and business decisions.⁵² At the close of 1861, George's nomadic instincts were again in evidence. Instead of remaining with his father in Sydney or returning to his *Guardian* post, he embarked on an independent venture as sole proprietor and editor of the *Burrangong Courier*, a mining paper in central New South Wales. For twelve months, George kept the venture afloat in the face of local competition. However, by the close of 1862, the prospects of the paper declined, as the diggers moved on, and he decided to sell out.⁵³ His fascination with the precarious life of the goldfields was a source of abiding concern to both his parents.

In early 1863, George returned to Brisbane and was employed as a *Courier* parliamentary reporter, before again switching to the *Queensland Guardian*. Both the *Courier* and *Guardian* now operated as dailies and were in need of experienced literary staff. Despite commercial competition, Brisbane journals were becoming less outspoken than they had been during the political campaigns of 1861. Nevertheless, the press continued to monitor the steady wave of immigration to southern Queensland. The substantial benefits which accompanied the promotional efforts of the Langs and of George Wight

in Britain were now flowing to the Agent-General, Henry Jordan. During 1863, the arrival of twenty-two immigrants ships (or two per month) helped to double the colony's population within the space of four years. However, unscrupulous use of the bounty system by the Black Ball Shipping Line sparked local criticism of Jordan and cast doubt on the future of the land order system. Many land-orders were being collected by shipowners or sold to pastoralists with little benefit to the colony or the immigrants themselves.⁵⁵ In early 1864, Jordan returned to Queensland to testify before an Immigration inquiry instigated by Colonial Secretary Herbert. In evidence, Jordan acknowledged problems with the Black Ball Line but argued strongly for the retention of the land order system; without it, he told the Committee, Queensland would get exclusively pauper immigrants



George Lang, 1858.

and would be deprived of the class of small capitalists and self-employed men required to stimulate agriculture. During the immigration wave of the early sixties, some 36 per cent of Queensland immigrants, or one in three, were able to pay their full fare and qualify for government land orders.⁵⁶

Throughout the immigration debate of 1863-64, both J. D. Lang, in public, and George Wight, in the *Guardian*, expressed continued support for Jordan and the existing apparatus. At a Brisbane gathering in the Ann Street Presbyterian Church, Lang praised Jordan and the land order system which he had helped to pioneer. Inspired by the steady tempo of immigration and population growth of the colony, Lang had come to Brisbane to petition the Queensland parliament once more for favourable consideration of his services to the colony. To his wife Wilhelmina, the petitioner now aged 65, confided "his intense desire to be out of debt . . . to get (his) mortgage and buildings cleared off."⁵⁷ Lang's petition coincided with a Brisbane testimonial to William Wilkes for his Separation services as *Moreton Bay Courier* editor. In mid July 1864, Wilkes visited the northern capital to attend a gathering in his honour and was duly presented with a silver cup filled with gold florins by Robert Ramsay McKenzie and Theophilus Pugh.⁵⁸ Press rivalry between Wilkes and J. D. Lang for the coveted title — the Champion of Separation — was the result of their previous collaboration on the *Moreton Bay Courier*. Lang who was in Brisbane attending to his own petition, interpreted the gift to Wilkes as a snub to himself and stated openly that "he had done ten times more for Queensland than (Wilkes) had ever done."⁵⁹ At the same time, J. D. Lang accused another *Courier* editor, Theophilus Pugh, now an MLA, of organising opposition to his petition. Encouraged by a cordial acceptance from Governor Bowen, he drew up a lengthy document reviewing his efforts from his first visit to Moreton Bay in 1845, up to and including the publication and promotion of *Queensland Australia* in 1861.⁶⁰ On 27 July, Herbert, the Colonial Secretary presented the petition to the House as a private member "in consideration of the great service Doctor Lang had rendered to the cause of separation in former days."⁶¹

Press reception to the petition was more ambivalent than it had been to a similar document four years earlier. Yet in the face of bitter attacks by the *Queensland Times* on the author, the *Queensland Daily Guardian* expressed optimism about the outcome. The *Guardian* editor, acknowledging the blemishes and faults in the Doctor's disposition, affirmed that "they are principally faults of temper. . . . he has been a true friend of Queensland and done her more service than many men in the colony."⁶² Three weeks elapsed before the Assembly debated Herbert's motion, during which time George Lang accompanied his father on a steamer tour of Maryborough,

Gladstone and Rockhampton. They returned to Brisbane in early August; J. D. Lang, after waiting in the capital until 12 August, returned to Sydney, confident that “the petition was in good hands.”⁶³ A few days later, a motion in Lang’s favour was debated and well received by a majority of Assembly members.

The timing and drafting of the petition were astute but its fate remained problematic. Fears were voiced in parliament that, in the event of a land grant, Lang’s pioneer immigrants would also be entitled to claim government compensation to the extent of 7,000 acres (2,835 ha).⁶⁴ Town members, led by Pugh and Brookes, supported the idea on condition that portions of the land be distributed by the petitioner to the *Fortitude-Chaseley* people. However a motion by Pugh to this effect was vetoed and a final settlement of the *Fortitude-Chaseley* land order debacle was thwarted by squatter parliamentarians, many of whom had not forgotten the role played by Lang’s immigrants in anti-squatting politics during the 1850’s. There remained the option of a financial settlement in the form of a substantial gratuity; estimates ranged from 5,000 pounds, the figure recommended by John Douglas, to as much as 10,000 pounds proposed by William Henry Groom.⁶⁵ Neither figure was inflated for the petitioner had incurred personal expenses of over 3,000 pounds during the 1847 British tour alone and been forced to break up and sell his library and possessions. John Douglas’ motion for 5,000 pounds appeared an acceptable figure, but the Assembly were reluctant to finalise the compensation claim. When the matter was concluded six weeks later, the gratuity had shrunk to 1,000 pounds. In a series of angry commentaries in the *Courier* and *Empire*, J. D. Lang lashed out at leading Queensland parliamentarians over their “shabby and contemptible” treatment of his petition and ridiculed the offer as “something like a bone thrown to a dog.”⁶⁶ Undoubtedly the Langs had made enemies in the Brisbane press, the clergy and among metropolitan parliamentarians, but hard-core opposition to the petition came predominantly from Darling Downs pastoralists, most of them self-made men and Scottish Protestants who had been longstanding critics of Lang’s politics.

Acrimonious public debate over the 1864 petition marked a break point for the Langs in Queensland. George, disappointed on his father’s behalf, left Brisbane and tempted by the northward expansion of coastal settlement, spent six months at Gladstone with the intention of starting a local newspaper.⁶⁷ Dissatisfied with what was still a backward location, he abandoned the Gladstone project and travelled south to begin a career in Victorian provincial journalism. George’s departure from the colony in mid 1865 marked the close of the Langs’ political endeavour in early Queensland. Neither father nor son forgave what they deemed a humiliating rebuff at the hands

of the legislature. In their absence, individual clergymen and parliamentarians would continue to acknowledge their efforts. The *Courier* was inclined to belittle J. D. Lang's achievement in his absence but the *Queensland Daily Guardian*, edited by Rev. George Wight, remained well-disposed. When the vote of 1,000 pounds to Lang was cancelled in the following session, Wight, who had first-hand knowledge of Lang's exertions on Queensland's behalf, insisted that:

However indecorous his (Lang's) conduct towards us may have been, the vote passed in the session of 1864 should not have been nullified. The Assembly has no right to break its word.⁶⁸

As on previous occasions, Lang's difference with the Queensland parliament was clouded by personalities and politics. On a number of points, the claims of the petitioner were open to question and he was prone to overstate his influence on northern affairs. The cotton dream did not eventuate, the boundaries of the colony remained unchanged and the imbalance of the rural economy was unresolved. Nevertheless a close study of J. D. Lang's journalistic and literary endeavour confirms his extraordinary dedication to a range of important issues in the formative decades of this state's history. While his son, George Lang, may have given useful service as a democrat in the Lower Chamber, J. D. Lang's proper place in early Queensland politics was that of an Upper House spokesman, providing spirited opposition to the pastoral interest. In conclusion, a review of J. D. Lang's association with Queensland during 1858-65 suggests that the "Reverend Agitator", as he was dubbed, became less pugnacious and perceptive towards the close of his long colonial career. After years of opposition to W. C. Wentworth in New South Wales, he failed to perceive or comment upon basic flaws in the Queensland constitution and electoral system, and his writings on behalf of the colony lacked the pungent satire which made him a political force during his republican phase. Yet as an ideologue of closer settlement and a vigilant press commentator, J. D. Lang exerted a salutary and pervasive influence over northern political affairs.

NOTES

1. A. G. Davies, "Queensland Pioneer Journals and Journalists," v. 3 no. 4, *JHSQ*, Feb 1945, pp. 265-83.
2. Clem Lack, "A Century of Queensland Journalism," *JHSQ*, v. 4, no. 4, Dec 1951, pp. 471-93.
3. Rod Kirkpatrick, "Development of a Great Newspaper Chain. The Provincial Story," *JRHSQ*, v. 12 no. 1, 1984, pp. 83-102; James Manion, "History of Newspapers in North Queensland," *JRHSQ*, v. 11 no. 4, 1983, pp. 139-151.
4. See, for example, A. A. Morrison, "Politics in early Queensland," *JHSQ*, v. 4 no. 3, Dec 1950, pp. 293-312, and "Town 'Liberal'

- and Squatter,” *JHSQ*, v. 4 no. 5, Dec 1952, pp. 599-618.
5. Lang to Wilhelmina, 21 July 1854 and 15 Jan 1856, in Lang Papers, v. 4, [MSS, M.L.]
 6. *MBC* 17 Nov 1849, p. 2 and 29 Nov 1851, p. 2.
 7. D. W. A. Baker, *Days of Wrath. A. Life of John Dunmore Lang* [Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1985] chs. 7 and 8.
 8. Baker, *Days of Wrath*, ch. 24.
 9. *MBC* 27 Dec 1859 p. 3; 21 Jan 1860 pp. 2-3; 21 Feb 1860 p. 2; 29 March 1860 pp. 2-3.
 10. *MBC* 21 Jan 1860 p. 2.
 11. *MBC* 21 Feb 1860 p. 2.
 12. *MBC* 21 Jan 1860 p. 2.
 13. *Abstract and Analysis of the Evidence taken by A Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria in the case of George Dunmore Lang, late Manager and Frederick Lee Drake, late Accountant of the Branch Bank of New South Wales at Ballarat* [Melbourne, Fairfax, 1857]
 14. George Lang to G. S. Lang in Autograph Letters to Sir Henry Parkes, pp. 176-179 [MSS, ML]
 15. George Lang to his Father, 6 March 1860 [LP v. 25]
 16. J. D. Lang to George, 6 Jan and 17 Feb 1860 [LP v. 4]
 17. *MBC* 28 April 1860 p. 2.
 18. George Lang to his Father, 6 March 1860 [LP v. 25]
 19. George Lang to Wilhelmina, 10 July 1860 [LP v. 25]
 20. J. D. Lang to Wilhelmina, 24 March 1860 [LP v. 4]
 21. J. D. Lang to Wilhelmina, 18 July 1860 [LP v. 4]
 22. J. D. Lang to the *Empire*, 8 July 1860, Quoted in *Queensland, Australia: A Highly Eligible Field for Emigration and the Future Cotton-field of Great Britain* [London, Stanford, 1861] pp. 287-290.
 23. George Lang to his Father, 28 June 1860 [LP v. 25]; Charles Cowper was New South Wales Colonial Secretary (1857-59) and Richard Jones, Colonial Treasurer (1857-58).
 24. *QV&P* 1860, pp. 979-81.
 25. *Queensland Guardian* 7 July 1860 p. 2; *Courier* 26 July 1860 p. 2.
 26. “My Petition”, *QG* 2 Aug 1860 p. 3.
 27. *QG* 7 July 1860 p. 2.
 28. *QV&P* 1860 p. 993.
 29. *QG* 21 July 1860 p. 4.
 30. Report of Select Committee into Immigration, *QV&P* 1860 pp. 636-37.
 31. *Empire*, 3 Jan 1861, Quoted in *QG* 14 Jan 1861 p. 4.
 32. J. D. Lang to R. R. McKenzie, 3 October 1860 [LP v. 2]
 33. J. D. Lang, *Cookland in North Eastern Australia. The Future Cotton Field of Great Britain* (London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1847) pp. 58-59.
 34. Denison to the Secretary of State, 27 Feb 1857, in *Papers Relating to the Separation of the Northern Districts and Moreton Bay* [Sydney, Government Printer, 1858]
 35. “The Boundary Question”, *QG* 12 May 1860 p. 3 and 19 May

- 1860 p. 2.
36. *QB* 11 Aug 1860 p. 4 and 6 Oct 1860 p. 2.
37. *Courier* 29 May 1861 p. 4.
38. J. D. Lang to the *British Standard* 22 Feb 1861. Quoted in *Courier* 29 May 1861 p. 3.
39. Quoted in *QG* 30 March 1861 p. 3.
40. Quoted in *Courier* and *Guardian* of 29 May 1861.
41. George Wight, *Queensland, the Field for British Labour and Enterprise and the Source of England's Cotton Supply* [London, Cornhill, 1861]
42. *QG* 25 Dec 1861 p. 3.
43. *Courier* 18 Dec 1861 p. 3.
44. J. D. Lang to the *British Standard*, "The American Crisis". Quoted in *Courier*, 28 Aug 1861 p. 4.
45. Wight, *Queensland, the Field for British Labour and Enterprise*, p. 111.
46. For details of these early schemes, see Kay Saunders, *The Origins and Basis of Unfree Labour in Queensland 1824-1916*. [St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1982] pp. 14-15.
47. "To the Inhabitants of Queensland," *QG* 27 April 1861 p. 3.
48. M. D. North Coombs, "True Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867" in Kay Saunders (ed.), *Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920* [London, Croom Helm, 1984] p. 112.
49. *Courier* 30 March 1861 p. 3.
50. Lang, *Queensland, Australia*, pp. 230-231.
51. Bowen to Newcastle, 6 Jan 1860, Quoted in Stanley Lane-Poole, (ed.), *Thirty Years of Colonial Government* [London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1889] pp. 116-18.
52. George Lang to Wilhelmina, 19 July and 25 July 1860 [LP v. 25]
53. George Lang to his Father, 21 Sept 1862 [LP v. 25]
54. George Lang to Wilhelmina, 27 April 1863 and to his Father 19 May 1863 [LP v. 25]
55. Michael K. Stammers, *The Passage Makers* [Brighton, Sussex, Terido Books, 1978], p. 36ff; M. A. Kleinschmidt, *Migration and Settlement Schemes in Queensland* [B.A. Hons. Thesis, University of Queensland, 1953] ch. 2.
56. George Wight, "Queensland A Sketch" in *Pugh's Almanac and Queensland Directory* [Brisbane, 1885] p. 87.
57. J. D. Lang to Wilhelmina, 23 July 1864 [LP v. 4]
58. "Testimonial to William Wilkes" *BC* 19 July 1864 p. 2.
59. J. D. Lang to Wilhelmina, 27 July 1864 [LP v. 4]
60. *QV&P* 1864 pp. 1277-82.
61. *QPD* 1864 p. 215.
62. *Queensland Daily Guardian* 30 July 1864 p. 2.
63. J. D. Lang to Wilhelmina, 12 Aug 1864 [LP v. 4]
64. *QPD* 1864 pp. 326-29.
65. *QPD* 1864, pp. 292 ff.
66. *Brisbane Courier* Supplement 15 Sept 1864.
67. George Lang to Wilhelmina, 2 Jan 1865 [LP v. 25]
68. *QDG* 31 Aug 1865 p. 2.