

REVEREND DR. JOHN DUNMORE LANG

(Papers read on January 22, 1959)

The Society is usually in recess during January, but as a special gesture in the Centenary Year, a meeting was held in January devoted to Dr. Lang, who had such a tremendous influence on the history of Queensland.

The following papers were read dealing with Dr. Lang as a man, as emigration supporter and as an advocate for Separation from New South Wales. Sir Raphael Cilento summed up the papers, and spoke on the end of Convictism in New South Wales.

DR. LANG—THE MAN

[Read by Mr. C. G. AUSTIN]

John Dunmore Lang was born at Greenock, Scotland, on August 25, 1799, but in a few years his parents went to Largs in Ayrshire, and he attended a parish school there for five years. It is a coincidence that his early schooling was obtained at Largs; the town of Sir Thomas Brisbane, after whom this capital city is named.

On leaving the parish school the young man attended the University of Glasgow, and having chosen the Church for his calling decided to pursue his ministry in one of the Colonies.

His brother George was already in New South Wales and his description of the moral condition of the colony roused the missionary zeal of the young minister, who decided to live in New South Wales. From all accounts there would have been ample opportunity to improve the moral condition of the colony.

After obtaining his degree and being ordained by the Presbytery of Irvine one September 20, 1822, the man who was to have such an impact on the history of Queensland left Scotland and arrived in Sydney on May 23, 1823, aged twenty-three years.

In 1824 Scots Church, Church Hill, Sydney, was built, and Dr. Lang was awarded the ministry, which he retained until his death. It was not long before he realised that there were not sufficient facilities for the education of young men for the Presbyterian Church, and in 1829 he determined to establish a college for this and other educational purposes. In 1830 he returned to England to obtain financial assistance and the Colonial Office granted him £3,500 on condition

that a similar amount was previously spent by the promoters. The new building was completed in 1835, and was at once occupied, classes having been opened two years before. He was instrumental in bringing a number of ministers to the colony, and the first Presbytery of New South Wales was formed in 1832.

In 1833 Lang again went to England and during the voyage wrote the first section of "An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales," which was published in England in 1834. He returned to Sydney and in 1835 published a weekly newspaper, the "Colonist." In those years the law of libel seems to have been harder to infringe than at the present time, but nevertheless the outspoken opinions of Dr. Lang soon involved him in libel actions, in which he conducted his own defence.

The year 1838 saw the establishment by Dr. Lang of the German Mission Station (at what is now Nundah) in the Moreton Bay District. In the year 1834 he had made three successive attempts to establish a mission to the aborigines by means of Scottish missionaries, but without success. Having ascertained that a body of missionaries could be obtained in Germany, the result was the establishment of the German Mission. Perhaps Rode Road might have been Macmillan Road.

Dr. Lang could not escape trouble or controversy and as a result of a conflict with the Presbyterian Church in Australia, he was deposed from the Ministry and was not re-admitted until 1863.

In the meantime he entered politics and in 1843 was a representative for Port Phillip in the new Legislative Council. He then turned his attention to Moreton Bay again and was the prime mover in encouraging emigration to this district. Troubles continued to beset him as in 1850, when a representative of the City of Sydney in the council he was found guilty of criminal libel when he published details of the careers of some of his opponents. The sentence was four months' imprisonment and a fine of £100. His popularity is shown by the fact that supporters collected 2,000 public subscriptions of a shilling each to meet the fine.

After another visit to England he returned to Australia, and not without the usual complications, was elected to the Legislative Council as a member for Stanley, Moreton Bay, and at once agitated for separation from New South Wales.

In 1872 Lang celebrated his fiftieth year as a minister, and was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales. He died in Sydney on August 8, 1878, at the age of almost seventy-nine years.

Such is a very brief sketch of a man who had tremendous influence not only on Moreton Bay but also on Australia. Dr. Lang was a crusader with the unfortunate knack of losing friends and alienating people. He vehemently denounced many persons and dubious causes; he was quick to sense an underlying motive, sometimes mistakenly, but to his credit it can be said that he did not stoop as low as some of his opponents.

If anyone encountered the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," he did. Even his children did not escape some of the hostility directed at their father.

When the sum of £10,000 was found to be missing from the Bank of New South Wales, Ballarat, Victoria, two young men in charge were immediately arrested. Another man named Burchell, who had been in charge of the bank at various times was not questioned, and he disappeared. One of the two young men arrested was the son of Dr. Lang, and after a prosecution which savoured of vindictiveness, both were found guilty and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The outraged father gave vent to his feelings, and was prosecuted for libel by the Manager of the Bank of New South Wales at Sydney, was convicted, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Petitions to the Governor, Sir William Denison, for a remission of the sentence, were of no avail.

The feelings of the father can be imagined when later it was found that the real culprit was Burchell, and the two young men were released.

Dr. Lang evidently failed rapidly in the latter years of his life, which is little wonder, considering the blows suffered by him for so many years. William Coote¹ states that "his great age . . . enfeebled his own perceptions of self-respect and called for an indulgence—not always extended to him . . ." Lang's stature in Australia can be gauged by the comparison Coote makes when he said ²"Few who saw him only in the late years of his life, would have imagined him the competitor of the towering and vehement Wentworth. . . ."

1. Hist. of Qld., p. 105.

2. *idem.*

As an example of the invective and scorn which Dr. Lang could convey in ordinary words, his final letter to Earl Grey in 1849 is a typical example. In this letter he stated that he had been three years in Britain seeking the welfare of the Colony. He had received from the President of America more courtesy than he had "as a representative of the people of New South Wales, from the paltriest underlings of your Lordship's Department. Like the mutes in the Sultan's palace at Constantinople these familiars of your Lordship regularly strangle every honest man and every honest measure connected with the colonies, in the dark recesses of their political inquisition.

"My Lord, there are certain injuries and insults—especially those offered to communities—which, for the good of society, ought neither to be tolerated nor forgiven.

"As far as regards the Australian Colonies, your Lordship has for three years past been virtually knocking at the gate of futurity for the President of the United States of Australia."

DR. LANG — EMIGRATION SUPPORTER

[Read by Mr. A. A. JORDAN]

Dr. John Dunmore Lang's Immigration Land Settlement Scheme is too vast a subject to cover in detail in the time at my disposal. I will endeavour to convey in a condensed form Lang's Immigration Policy.

Dr. Dunmore Lang, an energetic statesman and a prominent Presbyterian Minister, first visited Moreton Bay in 1845. The labour question was a difficult one following the opening for settlement of the District of Moreton Bay. It was the subject of "Free Labour" as opposed to the employment of ex-convicts that led to his visit. Most of the squatters, despairing of finding labour, desired a modified form of convictism. The Convict System had actually ceased in 1839 but the squatters were still looking for cheap labour. The British Government was desirous of transporting ex-convicts. It was considered that a partially reformed criminal settler was better than no settler at all. Dr. Lang and others advocated the introduction of Free Labour. His aim was to obtain a better class of immigrant—skilled tradesmen, and agricultural labourers of the type most required for the cultivation of cotton. With the support of cotton manufacturers in Manchester and Glasgow, it was his ambition to create a colony of cotton growers at Moreton Bay. He was a fearless and outspoken man and Lang soon found himself in opposition, not only to the leading squatters of Moreton Bay, but to powerful enemies in Sydney and London.

From January 1, 1841, to June 30, 1842, there had been imported into New South Wales (which at that time included both Victoria and Queensland) 25,330 adult immigrants at the public expense. Their expenses out had been paid from the land revenue of the colony. Of these immigrants 16,892 were from Ireland, and almost all Roman Catholics—while only 8,438 were from England and Scotland. Dr. Lang desired a better balance of immigration to include immigrants of Scottish extraction. Various systems of immigration had been tried, and were subject to much abuse—the immigrants being the chief sufferers.

The proceeds of land sales were applied sometimes directly and sometimes in anticipation by way of mortgage on the security of the land fund, for the payment

of passages. This was supplemented by the Imperial authorities defraying the cost of charter, and providing the necessary equipment of vessels. In addition, intending purchasers of land acquired by a deposit of their money with the home authorities, had a right to nominate immigrants for free passages in the Government vessels, at the rate of one adult for every £20 so deposited. It was a condition that all arrangements should be left with a body styled the Land and Immigration Commissioners, sitting in London. This system of immigration existed when Dr. Lang arrived in England in 1846 to endeavour to establish his principle, that instead of coming out semi-paupers in Government immigrant ships, the immigrant who paid his own passage should, on arrival, be entitled to a bonus in land, to defray the cost of his passage.

This visit to England in 1846 was Dr. Lang's sixth voyage from Australia to the United Kingdom.

In all, he made seven voyages, no mean performance when one considers conditions existing in the sailing ship era.

The Immigration Commissioners had been authorised to send out immigrants to New South Wales to the extent of £100,000 (one hundred thousand pounds) in passage money from the Colonial Land Fund. Dr. Lang sought permission from the Commissioners to select one hundred families from the neighbourhood of Glasgow, as a portion of the immigrants, for the purpose of their proceeding to Moreton Bay to be employed in cotton cultivation. This reasonable request was refused by the Immigration Commissioners.

The Doctor, not to be frustrated, enquired from Benjamin Hawes, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and desired to know, if in the event of being able to send out a number of suitable families to Moreton Bay, the Local Government would have it in its power to allow an equivalent in land for the expense incurred in their passage.

Dr. Lang has it on record that Mr. Hawes assured him that the Local Government would make to his immigrants an allowance in land at the minimum price, equal to the cost of their passage. On this understanding, the sums which the immigrants paid were held as payment for land, the passage being considered free. Hawes later denied that he had given Dr. Lang any such assurance. The case for Lang rests entirely on his assertion that Hawes gave him a verbal promise.

Dr. Lang failed to obtain the co-operation of Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and of officials at Downing Street. His criticism of the Imperial authorities and Sir Charles Fitzroy, Governor of New South Wales, did not assist his cause. Earl Grey considered Lang's plans were inconsistent with the Law and General Principles essential to the Success of a New Settlement. Had Lang been more diplomatic, and less impulsive, he might have gained the assistance of the British and Colonial Governments. He lectured throughout the United Kingdom endeavouring to obtain support for his immigration policy. To finance the scheme Lang attempted to form "The Cooksland Colonisation Company." Intending immigrants were to purchase and pay for a greater or lesser extent of land at twenty-five shillings (25/-) per acre, and such immigrants to be entitled to a free passage—land orders to be issued at the rate of £16 for every £20 received. Land orders were issued by Dr. Lang to Mr. W. Pettigrew, Resident Surveyor, Moreton Bay Settlement, for allotment of land to passengers to the extent of purchase money.

His scheme aroused considerable interest in the United Kingdom. Dr. Lang, in spite of opposition from the Imperial authorities and the Colonial Government decided to persevere with his policy, and with the assistance of Mr. I. Arnold, a London shipbroker, chartered the ship "Fortitude." The "Fortitude," 519 tons, captain, John Christmas, sailed from the Port of London on Thursday, September 14, 1848, with 270 immigrants. The vessel arrived at Moreton Bay on January 21, 1849.

The Government ship "Artemisia" arrived in Brisbane in 1848 with immigrants for the colony, before the arrival of the "Fortitude." In some degree this fact defeated the objective of Dr. Lang, and it has been said it was deliberately planned by the Imperial authorities.

Dr. Lang failed to notify Mr. Richardson — his agent in Brisbane — of the expected arrival of the "Fortitude." It is true unofficial information had been received from the "Artemisia" that the "Fortitude" had left London for Moreton Bay. When the "Fortitude" arrived, no arrangements had been made for the reception of the immigrants on board. The agent declined to accept any responsibility. Two cases of typhus having occurred on the passage out, Captain Wickham,

acting on the advice of Dr. Ballow, ordered the immigrants into quarantine, where they remained for two weeks. A statement of Dr. Lang's claims arrived with the immigrants, and this was sent by Captain Wickham—Resident Magistrate—to the authorities in Sydney for consideration. Captain Wickham allowed the immigrants to form a temporary village on the slopes of York's Hollow, in the vicinity of what is now Gregory Terrace.

The Government was apathetic and in a delayed reply to Captain Wickham's communication, refused to recognise the land claims of the immigrants. Captain Wickham was instructed that the "Fortitude" immigrants should not be allowed to occupy Crown land and were not to be supplied with Government rations. This attitude reflected the feud existing between Dr. Lang, Earl Grey and Sir Charles Fitzroy. The authorities in Sydney and the Home Government acted as if they wished to prevent free settlement at Moreton Bay, or as if they did not care what became of the settlement after the prisoners and prison officials had gone.

The "Fortitude" immigrants had paid £2,000 (two thousand pounds) passage money with the understanding that they would receive land grants on arrival. Earl Grey accused Lang of deliberately deceiving the immigrants. Dr. Lang's personal loss was £1,300. To accuse him of deliberate dishonesty is unfair.

His immigration venture proved a costly one for himself, and he was obliged to foot the bill from his personal estate. His conduct in dispatching the "Fortitude" without receiving an absolute guarantee from the Home Government with regard to land grants for the immigrants, was open to serious criticism. On 7th August, 1850, his political enemies in the New South Wales Parliament, after a long debate, passed a resolution of censure on his conduct in bringing the "Fortitude" immigrants to Moreton Bay Settlement without first obtaining a guarantee from the authorities concerning the issue of land grants.

The "Fortitude" immigrants were soon absorbed in useful employment, and no fewer than four who came out under Lang's Land Scheme became representatives in Parliament—one in the Legislative Council and three in the Legislative Assembly. The Land Commissioners considered arrangements for the arrival of the

“Fortitude” had been hurried and irregular. They insisted that with any future shipment of immigrants, the Commissioners should be given ample time to consider the applications of intending immigrants, and should be given the opportunity to examine and approve vessels in which they were to sail. The “Fortitude” was followed by the “Chaseley,” 515 tons, Captain Aldrich, sailed December 1848 with 214 immigrants, and the “Lima,” 347 tons, Captain Yule, sailed June 1849 with 84 passengers. These passengers brought out £900 (nine hundred pounds) land orders, and these were mostly honoured by the Government. With the arrival of the “Lima,” Dr. Lang’s immigration scheme to Moreton Bay came to an end.

There were three vessels dispatched to Port Phillip under Lang’s “Port Phillip Colonisation Company”—the “Larpent,” March 26, 1849, with two hundred (200) immigrants; the “Travencore,” July 12, 1849, with 200 immigrants; and the “Clifton,” November 16, 1849, with 262 immigrants. The actual number of immigrants introduced into Australia by Dr. Dunmore Lang was 1,364.

There was much that was sound and useful in his scheme for the settlement of Moreton Bay. His idea of land grants was subsequently adopted by the Queensland and New Zealand Governments.

Dr. John Dunmore Lang was a pioneer of “closer settlement,” and Queensland should remember him with gratitude.

DR. LANG — SEPARATIONIST

[Read by Mr. ARTHUR LAURIE]

Dr. Lang, who visited America in 1821, would have gained full knowledge of the American Colonisation system, which was similar to the Australian one — where enforced convict labour was used and exploited. He would also have full knowledge of the American fight for Independence which was declared in 1776, and in making a comparison between the two countries, he early came to the conclusion that the Australian system of development should be altered.

Dr. Lang joined in and supported the cause of separation from the parent centre—Sydney—and at the same time advocated self government in Australia. His greatest interest appeared to be in the development of Moreton Bay, after Brisbane had been proclaimed a free settlement. He visited Brisbane and the surrounding district, taking stock of all its potentialities and later wrote a book called “Cookslaud,” which was really a forerunner of what happened in 1859, but under the name of “Queensland.”

The fight for Separation in the northern districts of New South Wales was carried out by two different bodies—the first, and the most influential, was the Squatters’ Party. They wanted it mostly with the idea of getting transportation renewed. The other party were the Town Dwellers, who opposed the convict system. They were mostly the free working class and they clashed with squatters, but both continued their respective campaigns and eventually gained their main objective—Separation. There was also strong opposition to separation by Sydney business interests, wherein it was claimed that the city would suffer.

The fight of both interests was heightened when a vacancy occurred in the New South Wales Legislative Council in 1854. It was the “Stanley” Electorate and Brisbane was its centre. Dr. Lang nominated in the interest of “Separation without Convicts,” and Arthur Hodgson, a Darling Downs squatter, was nominated by the “Separation with Convicts” party. The election was hotly contested and Hodgson was declared elected on the casting vote of the presiding officer. The election on appeal, was declared void and another election followed—this time Dr. Lang was successful.

Dr. Lang early tested the feeling of the Council by moving that separation should be granted to the northern districts, and it was defeated by a large majority.

However, the fight continued on and was eventually granted and took place on December 10, 1859. Dr. Lang on many occasions expressed himself very forcibly against the policy of the Home Government, which was ignoring the views of the colonists. On one occasion he wrote to Early Grey, the Minister, and his words were these:—

“The President of the United States of Australia was getting ready, and would shortly be out, and would astonish the world with the manliness of his part and the dignity of his demeanour.”

This statement was used by his enemies to discredit him, and he was branded a disloyalist, which he repudiated by saying his opposition was not to the Crown, but to the policy carried out by Downing Street.

The following is part of his reply to his detractors:—

“I hold that a common language, a common literature, a common law, and a common religion, constitute an infinitely stronger and more binding tie than those which keep them now under the dominion of Downing Street; and whenever the day comes that we shall have a flag of our own floating over the splendid series of colonies founded in Australia, I feel confident that Great Britain will rejoice with them and will say: ‘Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou, Australia, hast excelled them all.’ ”