

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

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In the course of this paper, I intend to deal only with the main events leading up to the establishment of the University of Queensland and to leave, possibly to a further paper, the question of its later history. At first sight, it may appear that this field is somewhat restricted and that little can be added, or indeed needs to be added, to the mere recital of such a chronicle as can be found prefaced to the official record of the Inaugural Ceremony which took place on 1st June, 1911.

Nevertheless, I feel that something can be learned from the closer study of a movement that spread over thirty-nine years. There is surely something of interest in the gradual development and fruition of a scheme which, originating in and restricted for long to a very small section of the community, eventually gained popular support and was received with widespread enthusiasm on its successful completion. One central point which I think can be established from such a study is in effect this; that before this project could have any hope of success, it was necessary for those few who were intensely interested in it and whose continued efforts alone did in fact secure its success, considerably to modify their ideas, or at any rate their approach, in terms of the community in which they hoped to establish their University. In some cases, I suspect, this involved a radical revision of their whole idea of what a University was and what it stood for. That such a revision was necessary seems to be borne out by the care that was taken to emphasize what amounted to a change of front once it was decided upon. It would probably be going too far to say that the progenitors of the University idea compromised with popular prejudice, rather perhaps did they realize that to that particular community and at that particular time, the idea of the University, as it was originally in their minds, appeared at least anachronistic and certainly impractical.

The procedure I have adopted in investigating this matter is to pay attention, particularly, to the treatment of the various questions relating to the establishment of a University as they were raised in the Legislative Assembly, giving Press comment only when it relates to those particular occasions. This I have done because, after all, it was in the Assembly that at least the final battle had of necessity to be fought. I have assumed that the same arguments for and against would be revealed by a more careful study of, for instance, the correspondence columns of newspapers over the whole period. I realize, however, that further work of this kind would be necessary more carefully to estimate, for instance, changing public reaction to the University idea.

I think it might be as well here to summarize the main stock arguments which the proponents of the University had to face time and again during the course of their long agitation.

In the first place, it was asserted from beginning to end, that the State just could not support financially such a luxury as a University. From this broad thesis were developed related ones, chiefly along the lines of the other necessities to which should first be devoted the huge sums that would be squandered on a University. At one time railways were preferred, but the hardy annual was the crying need of primary education, which, it was stated "ad nauseam," should be brought within the reach of every child before any move was made to provide facilities for higher education which at least one section of the House felt would be the exclusive preserve of the rich anyhow.

The argument of location and distance was developed remarkably in two divergent directions. In the first place, there was inevitably some attempt to label a University in Brisbane as a further injustice to the North. At the same time, however, it was also asserted that it would be no more expensive for Northerners to continue to send their sons to Sydney or Melbourne, rather than to Brisbane, where, in any case, the education provided would never approach that given in the "Deep" South.

The basic financial argument came to have less validity with the gradual increase in the State's prosperity and the realization of its considerable resources, but it was sufficiently convincing to postpone the estab-

lishment of the University on at least two occasions when conditions were otherwise very favourable.

Most of the other arguments raised could be fairly easily refuted on logical grounds, though naturally that did not prevent them being raised time and again, particularly as the long period of the agitation allowed of several generations of members in the House. A more difficult one, and the issue which I feel, caused greatest heartburn to those whom I call, deliberately, the "academics," was that what was needed in Queensland was something of a more practical nature, something which would contribute directly to the increased productivity of the State and, thereby to an immediate betterment of its inhabitants. People like John Murtagh Macrossan, who were vitally interested in education and who fought unceasingly for the extension of its benefits to all, thought inevitably, in view of their own background, in terms of the actual struggle of the worker with his environment and felt that his best hope lay in increased technical education, particularly in mining and agriculture. It was useless to assure them that the stimulation of intelligence by higher learning would actually better equip the common man for this struggle, or to talk vaguely of raising the intellectual level of the community as a whole.

They had to be persuaded that the mere improvement of skill at the technical level was only half the battle for increased production and easier living, that beyond this was the need for abstract research and for the training of scientists who could apply their grasp of principles to the development, for instance, of even better techniques for the skilled worker to apply. They had in fact to be shown the benefit that would rebound from University teaching in the more "down to earth" Faculties.

In short, they had to be convinced that there was practical utility in a University.

I think that the supporters of the University idea realized this and, accordingly, deliberately "back-pedalled" on the traditional cultural arguments and paid more and more attention to the practical or technical aspect.

And so it was, I feel, that the movement for the establishment of a University on the grounds of higher education and culture was gradually modified, at any rate for propaganda purposes, to the basic concept of a

factory for the professions, with the higher things of life as an incidental and fortunate accompaniment, but one which must obviously fulfil a secondary role. I think it would not be untrue to say that there are still clear evidences of this feeling today, both within the University and in the community it serves.

Let us now study in some detail the main events in the long period of development which culminated in the University Act of 1909.

Bernays quotes a significant passage from a letter Bulwer Lytton, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote to Sir George Bowen in 1859, when the latter was about to take up his duties as first Governor of the New State. "Education," he said, "the colonists will be sure to provide for."<sup>(1)</sup> This was more than a truism on Lytton's part. He was quite right in assuming that the colonists would not be as slow as the Mother Country in appreciating the advantages inherent in widespread education. What he probably saw only vaguely, if at all, was that when they did set about providing for it, the system they would erect would be related characteristically to their own particular problems and but little influenced by accepted practice elsewhere, in no aspect more so than in regard to tertiary education.

From the first, there were persons in the colony who had had a University training and who never doubted the ultimate necessity of an institution of advanced education in a community of any size, but the first official recognition of this need comes in 1870 with the passage by Lilley of the mis-named University Act. This merely authorized the holding of local examinations for the Degrees of such of British Universities as should approve of the scheme. The Act stated that it was desirable to foster "classical and scientific education," presumably in that order.

A perusal of Governors' despatches over the thirty-nine year period during which this Act was in operation discloses that not a few candidates did in fact take advantage of the 1870 regulations. It was a cumbersome business however, and many candidates apparently failed to survive the wearisome procedure, quite apart from the terrors of the examination itself. Even as late as 1910, however, the Governor was busy handling the enrolments of aspirants to the London

(1) Bernays. C.A., "Queensland Politics During Sixty Years;" 1859-1919, Brisbane Govt. Printer, n.d., 4.

Matriculation examinations, so that the connection was never really broken, even though the 1909 Act repealed the measure of 1870.<sup>(2)</sup>

An interesting provision was included in the Elections Act of 1870-71, passed in the year following the University Act of 1870, stating that when the University of Queensland was established, and when it had produced one hundred graduates, it would be entitled to return a member. There are two points to note here. Firstly, there is some indication that Lilley had been in earnest the previous year when he had stated that he had considered bringing in a Bill to establish a University, but had been deterred only by the example of the other colonies and the expense which it felt the young colony could ill afford.<sup>(3)</sup> Secondly, then is the conscious use of the name of the State in the title of the University, rather than the name of the city in which the University would necessarily be established, as had been done in each of three Universities already established in the Australian colonies. This indicated a realization of the opposition that was certain to be offered to the proposal for a University on the grounds that, being located in Brisbane, it would represent a further injustice to the people of the North and Centre. This title was always carefully used by the proponents of the University plan.

George Thorn was the only member seriously to oppose the 1870 measure. He was also the only other graduate in the House apart from Lilley at that time, but there seems good reason to doubt from a perusal of his speech,<sup>(4)</sup> whether he had so much as read the Bill through. By all accounts, this would not have deterred him from speaking. In general, it was a measure that could hardly arouse any opposition; in fact, it was doubtful whether it could achieve anything at all.

In 1874, a Royal Commission reported on the education of the youth of the colony and stated, *inter alia*, "Our secondary schools will never do the educational work of which they are capable until they become component parts of a system vitalized by the control-

(2) On 18/3/10, for instance, we find that a Mr. Gutzmacher wanted to change the fifth subject for his matriculation from "Modern European History" to "Heat, Light and Sound," perhaps not such a great translation in those days of blustering Kaisers "in shining armour."

Governor's Official Despatches 1910, Q'ld. 21 (to Sec. of State for the Colonies), 18/3/10.

(3) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. II, 1870; p. 172.

(4) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. II, 1870; p. 172.

ling influence of a University.<sup>(5)</sup> The Commission therefore recommended the immediate foundation of a University.

The major portion of the 1874 report was embodied in the Education Act of 1875, commonly referred to as the "Lilley Act." Griffith, as Attorney-General, introduced the Bill on 23rd June 1875, but stated in comment on it, that it was his opinion and that of the Government, that it was premature to establish a University at that time, though, he added, "no doubt there will some day be a University established here."<sup>(6)</sup>

The "Courier" of the following day, in its leading article, reported favourably on the Bill in general, but deplored the "omission . . . of any design on which to shape the central action of one future educational system in a University." It suggested that "like many good things it is a question of money—that is, of force. . . . Our young men and women do not ask for it and why then should the Attorney-General seek to satisfy a want which does not exist itself? Where is the pressure? It does not exist except in the thought of those who are governed rather by abstract ideas than by a practical estimate of the real requirements of the case. Roads before railways . . .,"<sup>(7)</sup> and more in this vein. Neglecting the sarcasm, I think the paper had the key to the "lack of pressure" in its phrase, "abstract ideas." So long as the University movement remained associated in the popular mind with this highly suspect concept, it could hope for no strong measure of support.

By 1877 apparently, Griffith had decided that it would no longer be premature to proceed in the direction of a University, and so introduced a Bill to this purpose. His measure failed to proceed beyond a first reading, again, I feel, by reason of its indefiniteness of appeal—argument for it by Douglas as Premier and by his Works Minister George Thorn, being confined on the part of the former to a vague statement that "there is a desire to establish a University here," and, of the latter, to comparative population figures for New South Wales at the time of the foundation of Sydney University and Queensland at the date of

(5) "Queensland Parliament Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings," 1875, Vol. II; p. 122.

(6) *Queensland Parliamentary Proceedings*, Vol. XXVIII, 1875; p. 530.

(7) *Brisbane Courier*, 24/6/1875.

speaking.<sup>(8)</sup> W. H. Groom, then a mere fifteen years in the House, slated the Bill on the grounds of other more urgent needs, and expounded for the first time, what were to become two of the standard arguments of the anti-University-ites, namely, lack of private endowment and the increasing tendency to Brisbanization. . . . "It comes to this," he said in conclusion, "that this University would have to be established with money extracted from the pockets of the poor."<sup>(9)</sup>

No further development took place, at any rate not in Parliament, for ten years. In 1879, the Douglas Government was replaced by the first McIlwraith Ministry which remained in office until defeated over the Land Grant railway scheme in 1883. The subject of the proposed University was hardly mentioned in the House during this period. Griffith headed his first Ministry in 1883, but the University question received no attention until 1887, when a feeler was put out in the Governor's speech in the following terms: "My Government have for some time had under consideration the desirability of taking preliminary steps . . . to establish a University."<sup>(10)</sup> This particular sentence was not apparently considered worth much notice by either side, neither party leader mentioning it in the debate on the Address in Reply, and the only action taken during that Parliament was the introduction by Griffith of a monster series of petitions, no less than sixty-six at one time, from such diverse quarters as the Brisbane Municipal Council, sixteen other municipalities, twenty-seven divisional boards, six religious denominations, the Queensland Bar, four Grammar Schools, the National Agricultural and Industrial Association and a number of University graduates. These petitions originated in a circular petition drawn up by the indefatigable Lilley and his band of zealots. One and all, they prayed Parliament to make immediate provision for the establishment of a University. The Opposition were quick to seize on this phrase, "make provision for," and to argue that to receive the petitions meant illegally committing the House to actual expenditure. At any rate, this offered sufficient excuse for several members to state positive objection to the whole University idea. Brooks said, evidencing

(8) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXIII, 1877; p. 21.

(9) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXIII, 1877; p. 23.

(10) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LII, 1887; p. 5.

the growing effectiveness of Lilley's organizing work, "I have had a feeling for some time past, that this University is being somewhat forced on the public . . . our duty lies in a more utilitarian way."<sup>(11)</sup> As the "Courier" put it, "the preliminary mutterings heard during the Address in Reply were expressed in a more forcible way."<sup>(12)</sup>

But a more significant passage is taken from the "Courier" of 29th July, which commenting on the Governor's Opening Speech said, "It appears the Government are favourably disposed to the system of University education carried out in the Western States of America." "This system," it stated, "was developed from the intense desire for practical knowledge among a practical and busy people [where] applied science had come to be regarded as the greatest lever by which all material progress was to be made. [Here] devotion to abstract studies was hardly to be expected . . . [they] were thrust aside by the self-sufficient and iconoclastic Americans. . . ." It went on to point out the limitations of the older English Universities as compared with the American Scheme in which the University took its place as "an institution devoted to the completion of practical training . . . in effect technical colleges dealing with the professions. If these are the lines upon which the Government proposes the Queensland University shall be modelled they will shock many preconceived notions." I suggest that that is just what did happen, that many of the erstwhile supporters of the movement must have recoiled in horror from this picture, and that those that fainted not at least assumed a classic pallor.

Still, as the "Courier" went on to point out, "conditions here are very much what they were when Ohio and Michigan and Illinois made the new departure."<sup>(13)</sup> Whether the shock to his supporters was too great or whether he gauged the probable opposition as too strong, Griffith proceeded no further at this stage and was defeated at the next election.

In 1888, while out of office, he presented a further petition signed by Lilley and others<sup>(14)</sup> and in the following year yet another forwarded by sixteen prom-

(11) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LII, 1887; p. 118.

(12) *Brisbane Courier*, 29/7/87.

(13) *Brisbane Courier*, 25/7/87.

(14) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LV, 1888; p. 646.



inent educationalists.<sup>(15)</sup> This year also saw, incidentally, the petition of Albert Smith, potter, who preferred a free library to a premature University,<sup>(16)</sup> a man who had apparently read Carlyle.

On 9th August, Griffith moved in the House for a Royal Commission on the desirability of establishing a University, in a speech which I think is outstanding for careful reasoning. From a close perusal of this speech, it becomes evident, I think, that he at least had become convinced that more was necessary than to reply on the old platitudes relating to "coping stones"<sup>(16A)</sup> and culture. Especially and for the first time, he met the Opposition on their own ground by describing with great care the immediate practical results of higher scientific education. His peroration is worth repetition—"All arguments of expediency, example and utility and even of our own pride point in the direction that we should not be behindhand in doing work which is recognized by all civilized nations as work that is essential to the highest progress of a nation."<sup>(17)</sup> All his care was in vain. Morehead as Premier set the tone of the debate by enquiring why Griffith had taken no action in this direction in 1883 when he had been left by his predecessors a nice full Treasury to play with. He insisted that there was already a glut of University men in the colony, all unemployed and unemployable. "What we need," he said, "is a good system of technical education." "I know that," interjected Griffith, "I pointed out the kind of University that would be established here."<sup>(18)</sup>

The Minister for Public Instruction fell back on the endowment argument and Archer registered his opposition on solely financial grounds. A notable convert, however, was Groom, whom apparently a further twelve years residence had convinced on this point. Being by now in truth the "father of the House," and, it seems, already starting to weary people a little by reiterating it, he added his parental support to the mover. "We ought now to affirm the principle which in my opinion ought to have been affirmed by the House

(15) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LVII, 1889: p. 825.

(16) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LVIII, 1889: p. 1038.

(16a) Practically every speaker in the House over the whole thirty-nine years managed to refer to the University as the coping stone of the educational structure. Bernays uses the term himself, I feel probably with his tongue in his cheek.

(17) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LVIII, 1889: p. 1062.

(18) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LVIII, 1889: p. 1068.

years ago—that a University should be established in Queensland.”<sup>(19)</sup>

He also stated that he had said this all years before, which of course left him plenty of scope for argument, though certainly twelve years before he had been a vigorous opponent and eighteen years before had helped to dethrone Lilley as the champion of Free Education. In addition to siring Legislative Assemblies, he was also the progenitor of E. Lyttleton Groom who himself was an active supporter of the University movement; perhaps indeed, here we may have the clue to this change in loyalties.

How unfortunate it is that we have no visual record of the early proceedings of our Parliament; even from the dry pages of Hansard one gains the impression that the imperturbable Griffith was well and truly stirred by the factious opposition to what was after all, a fairly limited proposal. There is a sincerity and force to his brief reply that, to me, is often lacking in his more polished utterances: he seems almost frantic with impotent rage at the calculated obtuseness of Morehead and the obvious party solidity of his followers. The “*Courier*” endorses these views arrived at by a mere perusal of the speeches. On the 10th August it reported Griffith’s introductory speech as “The best . . . during this session at any rate . . . argument very close and effective . . . careful marshalling of evidence” and his reply “as telling as his opening speech. He contended that a University was not necessarily a huge pile of buildings where men learned Greek and Mathematics, wore trencher caps and talked of “higher culchaw,” but that it was a body of men and women who met to be instructed in the sciences, a knowledge of which would make them more useful members of the community and enable them to intelligently assist in the development of the resources of the country.”<sup>(20)</sup>

When his motion was lost by 24-16, the “*Courier*” came out with “The treatment of the University question in the Legislative Assembly on Friday last will go down to posterity as a notable instance of argument on one side and vote upon the other,” then with a delightful mixture of metaphors proceeded, “The Leader of the House (Morehead) put his worst foot forward (if

(19) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LVIII, 1889; p. 1071.

(20) *Brisbane Courier*, 10/8/89.

any foot could be said to be worse than another) and in effect let the cat out of the bag when at the outset of his speech he objected that the Leader of the Opposition had not brought forward this Scheme when he himself was in office. The glaring irrelevance of this objection made it clear that a question which of all others should have been decided on non-political grounds was to be sacrificed to the exigencies of party." Then again, significantly, "Now, however, that Sir Samuel W. Griffith's motion has been in the meantime negatived, optimists may regard the events as really not retarding but forwarding the interests of the higher education in Queensland. Whatever proposal may be made in the future as to the establishment of a University, will not be on the lines of the schools of the Middle Ages, but in consonance with modern requirements." It went on to advocate the immediate establishment of a fund to meet the endowment argument and the enlistment of the "help of all those, including honourable members who voted against but spoke in favour of the immediate foundation of a University."

(21)

It seems fairly safe to say that from this time to the final establishment in 1909, there was never any danger of the University idea being lost sight of. The following year, for instance, a further petition reached the House from three Catholic priests again pressing for the immediate establishment of a University and for the guarantee of freedom of religion in connection with it. The Churches indeed were wholehearted supporters of the movement from the start, and about this period, the University motion came to be a standing item on the agenda of many religious conferences. Raynor points out that the Churches had a double interest in fostering a University; firstly, because many church officers were themselves University men and secondly, because there was a growing feeling among them that University training was a desirable prerequisite to training for the Ministry.<sup>(22)</sup>

The Griffith-McIlwraith coalition Government overturned Morehead on the Land Tax issue in August, 1890, and, the following year, with all the confusion of the Shearers' Strike, saw a Royal Commission appoint-

(21) *Brisbane Courier*, 13/8/89.

(22) Raynor, K. *Thesis*. Attitude and Influence of Churches in Queensland on Matters of Social and Political Importance. (1859-1914), p. 71.

ed, headed by Lilley, to consider once again the desirability of establishing a University.

I found an analysis of the personnel of the Commission to be of some interest.<sup>(23)</sup> The original Commission named twenty-three members to which three more were later added; all but three of these signed the final report. Of the twenty-three, thirteen were University graduate, and no less than five were clergymen, including the two Archbishops. The Government was represented by the Premier (Griffith), the Solicitor General (Byrnes), the Minister for Public Instruction (Hodgkinson) and Power, the Under Secretary to the Department of Public Instruction. There were included one Judge (Real), the Headmasters of the two Grammar Schools (Roe of B.G.S. and Cameron of Ipswich), three doctors and six lawyers.

There could not be the slightest doubt that the individual members were such as would personally favour the establishment of the University.

The final report of the Commission, which recommended immediate action to establish a University, makes interesting reading, as clearly recognizing the trend noted by the "Courier" four years before, and emphasized by Griffith in his 1889 speech. The Report as a whole was notable for the number of minority riders attached to it, but to this passage, there was no dissent. "Merely literary instruction, highly desirable in itself and therefore not to be neglected as contributing to the grace, enlightenment and enjoyment of life, is not such a primary necessity in a newly settled country as the knowledge and practical arts which sustain existence and upon which life is really based. The University will give the highest instruction in all those scientific principles which are necessarily applied in the industrial arts. . . . It will also . . . furnish the more ornate literary culture for those who desire it."<sup>(24)</sup>

In its recommendations, it included a plan for five faculties—of Arts, Laws, Sciences, Medicine and Applied Science and four associated institutions—School of Mines, Agricultural College, a Technical College and a Teachers Training College. By way of contrast, the 1874 Commission has recommended the establishment of a University for these three reasons:

(23) *Q. V. and P.*, 1891, iii, p. 809.

(24) *Q. V. and P.*, 1891, iii, p. 820.

- (1) Training of teachers and through the general cultural and educational influence on the colony.
- (2) Training of lawyers.
- (3) Training of doctors.<sup>(25)</sup>

This scheme, however, failed to materialize. The Report of the Commission was mentioned in the Governor's Opening Speech,<sup>(26)</sup> but never became the subject of Debate in the House. Two speakers only in the course of the debate on the Address in Reply alluded to it at any length. Black clearly indicated that he had not read it by stating that he did "hope that while the Government advocate higher education as connected with a University, they do not lose sight of the more practical technical education,"<sup>(27)</sup> particularly in relation to agriculture. Aland favoured the project but deplored the lack of available finance. A number of speakers supposed they would have a further opportunity of speaking on the Commission's report, but as far as I can discover, this was denied them.

The virtual ignoring of this report is interesting since Griffith obviously favoured the University scheme and apparently had been able to persuade his new found colleagues of the need at least for a Commission. Wyeth<sup>(28)</sup> suggests that his interest was in fact on the wane by this stage and that it was notable that towards the end of his Parliamentary life his attention to education slackened, only to revive in full force on his retirement to the High Court Bench. There may be some justice in this, but on the other hand, it cannot be denied that these years were difficult ones for Griffith, with their related succession of adverse seasons, depressions and strikes, and it may well be that his failure to take action was prompted by the double motive of personal overwork and conflicting claims on the dwindling income of a temporarily unprosperous State.

No further action was taken on the Parliamentary front for seven years, but in the meantime, private agitation rapidly grew in strength. In 1893, a public meeting was convened by J. L. Woolcock and Lyttleton Groom, the natural brother as we have noted of the Legislative Assembly. This particular concave was, it seems, not a notable success, at any rate numerically,

(25) *Q. V. and P.*, 1875, iii, p. 122.

(26) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XLIV, 1891; p. 3.

(27) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XLIV, 1891; p. 19.

(28) Wyeth, E. R., *Thesis*, History of Education in Queensland, III, p. 32.

but in turn it summoned a rather better attended gathering which decided on the motion of Sir Samuel Griffith, by now secure in an extremely well padded chair at the Supreme Court, seconded by Sir Charles Lilley, to proceed immediately with some scheme of University extension.

The body then set up continued in existence until the establishment of the University and there is no doubt that very considerable credit is due to the citizens who gave their time to it generously and without reward and thus kept the University movement alive. The Queensland University Extension was affiliated with the Sydney University, and courses of lectures were given for which that Institution awarded certificates to those candidates who succeeded in an examination at the conclusion of the course. In 1897, the Scheme was extended to include the Central Technical College and the College of Pharmacy. In the same year, a notable move was made in endeavouring to persuade both Sydney and Melbourne Universities to grant external status to Queensland students, that is, exemption from lectures and the privilege of locally conducted examinations. The immediate result was a refusal by both institutions, for different reasons, though in 1901 Melbourne finally agreed. Regular classes, however, were conducted for the Matriculation examinations to both Universities.

The main value of this body certainly lay in keeping the University question openly before Parliament and people, actual practical results in the spread of higher education were hardly encouraging. G. W. Power, for instance, stated at Gympie in 1907, that in fourteen years' operation the extension had only been able to secure the actual graduation of four students.

In May 1898, a deputation from the Extension waited upon the Minister for Public Instruction with a plan which envisaged three alternatives in order of preference. First, a University as set out in the Report of the 1891 Commission; Second, a University College; and Third, a Council of Education. In amplification of the second proposal, twelve objects of such a college were advanced, of which the first three were:

- (i) "Training advanced students up to degree standard;
- (ii) "The intellectual training of school teachers;

(iii) "Scientific training for mining, engineering, surveying, agriculture and higher technical education,"

and only the twelfth of which was "The general intellectual advancement of the colony by the presence in it of a centre of knowledge"—clear evidence of the importance that was by then placed on the severely practical side. The Council of the Extension was instructed at the same time "to endeavour to secure the immediate passing of some legislative provision for encouraging and guiding higher education in Queensland."<sup>(29)</sup>

Byrnes promised the deputation that he would introduce a Bill and mention of such a measure was included in the Governor's Speech at the opening of the session.<sup>(30)</sup> The Debate on the Address in Reply dragged out a weary three weeks and this, coupled with the tragic death of Byrnes, effectively prevented any real business being done during the session. The University question was however freely discussed in the general debate and the attitude of the newly arrived Labour members outlined by Glassey. He said that "the establishment of a University would merely benefit those who are in a position to give their children a higher education in some other part of the world and unless the Government . . . intends to place it within reach of the poorest child in the colony he would oppose it."<sup>(31)</sup> Several other speakers took the same line, but at least one Opposition Member (Maughan) thought a University should have been established years ago.

The "Courier" on 27th July rather prematurely hoped, while expressing "unfeigned satisfaction" at the Government's plan, that the long contention on this subject is about to bear "happy fruit."<sup>(32)</sup>

This debate saw the first strong appearance of the argument for completing the primary education system before starting on the tertiary frills. It was stressed for instance by Browne, Kerr and Castling. Byrnes' reply to this was that in effect, the time would never come when the primary system would be perfect and that in fact the two levels reacted on one another.

Incidentally Groom, who could with reason now

(29) Queensland University Extension. *Annual Report*, 5th, 1897-8.

(30) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXIX, 1898; p. 3.

(31) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXIX, 1898; p. 3.

(32) *Brisbane Courier*, 27/7/98.

regard himself as the grandfather of the House (36 years continuous membership), again spoke of the need for an institution on the "more modernized principles in America rather than those established in the other colonies."<sup>(33)</sup>

In the following year, 1899, a Bill was actually introduced by Dalrymple, the Minister for Public Instruction, who, in moving the second reading on 27th October,<sup>(34)</sup> explained that the 1893 crisis had caused postponement of action on the findings of the 1891 Commission. He took the same line as Byrnes had against the "primary education first" argument and while developing the "lack of private endowment" theme practically promised the University £100,000 from the death duties relating to the intestate Tyson estate. This must have embarrassed his colleagues, who on suspects were already avidly considering of the budget-balancing value of these particular funds. It was not long, in fact, before they were absorbed in just that way. Dalrymple also signalled out for mention the lack of any religious test in the Bill.

Dawson, the leader of the Labour Opposition, warmly supported the principle of the Bill, denied the validity of the primary versus tertiary conflict and criticised only three details, to wit, the smallness of the endowment, the exclusion of females from the Governing body, and the autocratic nature of the Senate. After a rather vague statement by Dickson, the Premier, which for the first time for over ten years tended to rely on the "general culture" argument, it was left to Lesina to produce perhaps the most remarkably expressed opposition in the whole course of the forty-years struggle. He would oppose this Bill for a "fad of a University as a further sop to Brisbane." Moreover, "nearly all Universities in the course of time become snobbish and cater only for the middle and upper classes," then, echoing an argument which had appeared for the first time in the previous year's debate, could they not "leave it to the Federal Government." In fact, he just did not like Universities which he felt spent their time "filling minds with dead and gone philosophies and languages which are never spoken but in the heat of passion, and then only for the purpose of deceiving the public." He would prefer that

(33) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXIX, 1898; p. 97.

(34) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXXIII, 1899; p. 691.



they "provide places to learn mineralogy or agriculture" but heaven preserve them from a Mining School in the University. He was appalled at the thought of Northerners sending their sons in "tall collars to Brisbane to listen to lectures from a learned professor who does not know a pick-handle from a windlass."<sup>(35)</sup>

The House then presumably adjourned as on a later occasion after a burst of Lesination "no wiser but much sadder," that is at any rate according to the "Courier."<sup>(36)</sup> This outburst was of course, typical of Debates on this subject, though a little more colourful than usual. There were very few new arguments ever introduced and, in fact, it must almost have been a relief to have them put on occasion rather more strikingly. During this debate, Philp came out for the first time as a supporter of the University; having changed his mind he tells us over the last ten years; cannily he pointed to the value of trained geologists.

In Committee, the Government yielded to Dawson on the first two of his objections, but the question of the location of actual power in the new institution was sufficiently complicated by amendments and reamendments as to justify Dalrymple in withdrawing the whole measure. There is apparently strong feeling on the need to liberalize the suggested constitution, and as the "Courier" put it, the University supporters were "reluctant to risk losing by delay what they had laboured so long for but were unwilling to accept removable and serious defects."<sup>(37)</sup>

According to the authors of the preface to the account of the Inaugural Ceremony, the 1899 measure was modelled on the Constitution of the University of Sydney while the Byrnes Bill of the previous had tended towards the Melbourne scheme. Groom, who had apparently now included both Universities and native-born Premiers in his family circle, was constrained to cry in committee that this (Dalrymple's measure) was not the Bill Byrnes would have proposed.

(35) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXXLII, 1899, p. 695.

Lesina as we shall see recanted and came out as a supporter of the 1909 Bill, but it would still be interesting for him to see to-day the spectacle of the newly-established School of Mining Engineering actually operating its own mine, under the direction of a Professor who is himself a practical mining engineer of many years standing.

(36) *Brisbane Courier*, 7/9/1900.

Said the *Courier* on this occasion, quoting Carlyle, "Better a thousand times that such a man should not speak but keep his empty vapour and his sordid chaos to himself."

(37) *Brisbane Courier*, 7/11/1899.

Dalrymple tried again in 1900, prompted by the University Extension, with an amended Bill. It never proceeded past a first reading, which was not unduly surprising since it was listed in the Governor's speech eleventh out of thirteen measures, yielding preference to proposals relating to dentists and fire brigades, doctors and marsupials.<sup>(38)</sup> In any case, the major portion of a short session was used up in an interminable discussion on the alleged weakness of Philp's Government for creating sinecure Royal Commissions for their supporters and a nice suggestion that Philp himself might be seduced from his capitalist allegiance to the ranks of the Labour Party.

In 1901, the Bill had disappeared from the Governor's speech, though Fire Brigades, dentists and insolvents hung grimly on. No notable further development took place before 1906, when there was a sudden resurgence of interest both in the House and among the public at large. In that year, a congress was convened of those interested in forwarding the University movement.

The Chief Justice, Sir Pope A. Cooper presided, a University Bill was drawn up and the Congress resolved itself into the Queensland University Movement. The proceedings of the Congress were forwarded to the Premier, Kidston. The University Movement remained in active operation till the final Act was passed three years later, circulars were distributed to influential persons and bodies, lectures were given and a fund opened to endow the University. By 1909, the sum so collected totalled £3,700.

The itinerant speakers did not have it all their own way, but by concentrating on the practical aspect of the question, they were able to gain a sympathetic hearing. The Rockhampton "Daily Record" of 6/3/1907 reporting an address by G. W. Power of the Movement, said, "There were one or two expressions of regret because it was not proposed to make culture the central pivot of the curriculum . . . but nothing could be wiser than the decision of the Committee to leave classics on one side and devote attention to the physical sciences."<sup>(39)</sup>

1906 also saw the success of a motion by Tolmie in the House, resolving "that in the opinion of this

(38) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXXLIV, 1900; p. 3.

(39) *Rockhampton Daily Record*, 6/3/1907.

House, it is desirable that the Government should introduce a Bill to provide for the establishment of a University in Queensland." Varying the cliché a little, Tolmie referred to the proposed University as the keystone of the educational arch, rather than a mere coping stone to its structure, inferring that it would lend stability and strength rather than merely crown it. In a speech very similar in many respects to Griffith's in 1889, he dealt with the general improvement in the tone of the community that would result from the establishment of such a centre of intellectual activity. He emphasized its economic importance to agriculture and mining particularly and its part in teacher training. Answering an argument that was a great favourite with the Labour members of the House, he pointed out that although it might be true that the best men would come to the top in the community anyhow, they would certainly attain this pre-eminence much more rapidly under the stimulus of a University. On the question of cost, he showed that a modest endowment would represent only  $1\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. of the existing Education Vote.<sup>(40)</sup>

The Home Secretary followed with a very indecisive re-iteration of the stock arguments coupled with an expression of strong personal sympathy—the inevitable interjection of "Yes-No" did not fail to materialize.

Philp assured his colleagues that everybody knew that times had been too bad since 1899 to establish the University, but it was useless to wait any longer either for the perfection of the primary school system in the absence of University trained teachers, or for the much talked of endowment by private individuals.

Leahy, who was nothing if not a man of the people, "Of course, the Universities as I understand them are not applied to practical purposes . . . but in a country like this . . . it must be established for practical purposes."<sup>(41)</sup> At all events, he added, that would be the only reason that that Assembly would vote money for such an object.

Another shrewd blow at the "self-made man" idea was dealt by Mitchell who stated that he had never found a gentleman who reached a high position without a University training who did not claim that a Uni-

(40) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XCVII, 1906; p. 862.

(41) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XCVII, 1906; p. 866.

versity training would have been a very considerable advantage to him.

The final vote was in the movers' favour by 22-19, Kidston, by the way, voting with the "Noes," though he had not spoken during the debate.

While Tolmie's motion was still under discussion, the Government passed an Act to secure certain lands in Victoria Park for the future use of the University. Bell, the Minister for Lands, explained that this was in effect the first step towards the institution of a University, and expressed the Government's view that the time would unquestionably come when it would be considered advisable to proceed further. Griffith, of course, had said just that over thirty years before, in 1875. Kidston, however, gave more definite grounds for hope, stating that there would be no University Bill that year, it being the Government's intention to attend to primary and secondary education first.<sup>(42)</sup> There was surprisingly little comment on this committing of the site of the University to Brisbane. Barton, the member for Carnarvon, was prepared to do his duty to his electors, by suggesting Stanthorpe as an alternative, but if he was really in earnest, which is doubtful, he would, I think, have found himself in a minority of one on that question.

1907 and 1908 were unstable years politically, as the three party problem that had arisen as a result of the advent of an organized Labour party gradually settled itself. After Philp and Kidston had in turn attempted to form a stable Government independent of each other and with Labour also in opposition, the inevitable fusion of anti-Labour elements took place, once Kidston's defection from the Labour Party was an accomplished fact, and Kidston faced the House with Philp in support in November 1908.

The Governor's Speech for the opening of the third session of this Parliament, 1909, devoted a separate paragraph to the intention to found a University to mark the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Queensland's establishment as a separate state.<sup>(43)</sup> The Session opened on the 29th June, but the Address in Reply debate which was devoted to a full dress attack on the recent coalition lasted till 28th July, the Government surviving a hostile amendment by the narrow

(42) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XCVII, 1906; p. 1162.

(43) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. CIII, 1909; p. 11.

margin of one vote. A dissolution was granted in August, but not before Barton, the Minister for Education, had made a valiant attempt to introduce the University Bill.

The new Parliament met on 2nd November. There was need for haste if the foundation stone of the University was to be set as Kidston had promised on the 10th December, that being the actual anniversary date. The University Bill appeared first on the list of measures mentioned in the opening speech being immediately followed by a measure to dispose of sewage. This unfortunate sequence proved an easy trap for Allan, moving the Address in Reply, whose anti-climatic utterances are worth repeating. "The University they hoped to establish," he declared, "may be only a seed—it may be only a germ—it may not make much difference immediately to Queensland, but it will lay the foundations of one of the greatest assets we can have as a State. I also refer to the Metropolitan Water and Sewage Bill."<sup>(44)</sup>

Barnes, the new Minister for Public Instruction, moved the second reading of the Bill on the 9th November in a long careful address. A little uncertain at first on the general intellectual improvement angle, he really settled down when he got into the details of the Bill itself, taking care to emphasize that the sexes were treated equally in all respects in connection with the management and membership of the proposed institution; Dawson's point of 1899 had been successfully made, it seems. This was a practical Bill, he assured the House, their University would not produce snobs. He wound up by explaining how the proposed £10,000 endowment for seven years was to be allocated. After listing one professor at £1,000, three at £800 and 10 lecturers at £300-£400, it is suitably chastening to find that the librarian, and presumably his library, is included in third place in the "Miscellaneous" list, with attendants, registrars, caretakers and general expenses, all at £2,600 per year.

At the end of his speech, Barnes sprang a surprise that nearly wrecked the whole proceedings. A committee appointed by the Government had recommended the taking over of Government House and grounds as

(44) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. CIV, 1908; p. 17.

the site of the new University and their recommendation was to be acted on.<sup>(45)</sup>

Lennon, speaking as Deputy Leader of the Opposition expressed strong support and was particularly pleased with the name University of Queensland, though he could not resist saying that the proposed University was partly designed for the "aggrandizement and ornament of Brisbane." He admitted, however, that it could not be located elsewhere, though he doubted how much the North and West would benefit from it. He was anxious to see it operate as a free institution and expressed his intention of opposing in committee, firstly, the proposed arrangement whereby after the first retirement of Senators, there would no longer be a Government nominated majority on the Senate, and secondly the suggestion that donors of £500 and upwards be given seats on the Council.

The remarks of J. W. Blair are interesting, firstly because it was understood that he was still smarting under what he considered to be ill-treatment by Kidston during the coalition wangling with the Philpites and secondly, in view of his later long service as Chancellor of the University.

He expressed strong views in favour of making entry free, not only of fees, but also of matriculation examinations, since these in turn required fees and other expenditure. He was particularly pleased at the practical approach. "Older Universities," he insisted, "devoted . . . too much time to the classics, dead languages and arts which after all do not tend to help us in the struggle of modern life."<sup>(46)</sup> Above all, however, he wanted the University immediately and intended to press for the inclusion of a six months compulsion clause to force the Government's hand on this point.

Kidston, in his speech, forged the remark quoted by Bernays, which, while a little confusing in its metallic metaphors, nevertheless carried the ring of truth: "No amount of higher education," said the Premier, "will make a leaden sword as good as a steel sword, but when you have the iron in the man a higher education will sharpen it and make all the difference in the world."<sup>(47)</sup>

(45) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. CIV, 1909; p. 95.

(46) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. CIV, 1909; p. 99.

(47) *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. CIV, 1909; p. 105.

A minor but interesting point is the complete volte-face of Lesina, for whose violent opposition of ten years before was substituted an almost subdued support—perhaps he had been reading the “*Courier*.”

The second reading was accepted without division.

In Committee, there was virtually no organized opposition to the Bill; the major objections of Lennon were met by compromise and while there were some divisions, no amendments at all were carried against the Government. The only stumbling block was supplied by the decision as to the site, which of course was not included in the Bill at all. It seemed not quite clear whether Kidston wanted the House to endorse his action without criticism, or to give an honest expression of opinion. The Government House proposal was not a new one. According to Wyeth,<sup>(48)</sup> it was first mooted by Lilley in 1889. At any rate, it did not please the Brisbane members, who considered the Domain as virtually an extension of the Botanic Gardens. The day was saved by a Government promise to construct a drive around the river bank, perhaps this will eventuate when the University finally vacates its first home.

The suggested site certainly did not suit the new Governor, Sir William MacGregor. On the whole, he was surprisingly reticent about the University in his despatches to the Colonial Secretary. I say surprisingly on two grounds; firstly, because I think he clearly was an enthusiastic supporter of it and secondly, because his despatches as a whole are in number and length immensely more voluminous than those of any of his predecessors. I can trace only three which bear on the subject and of these, the longest is in connection with the decision to use Government House for University purposes. In a secret despatch, dated 28/4/1910, he wrote: “The Government of the State has set apart the present Government House in Brisbane for the purpose of the University, a measure that is certainly unpopular, as there are many historical associations connected with this building as Government House. The site is a very charming one for a Government House, but not roomy enough for a University and the buildings are not suitable. A temporary abode for the Governor is being prepared elsewhere, pending the building of a new Government House,

(48) Wyeth, *op. cit.*, III; p. 21.

which is not likely to be complete under three years from now.”<sup>(49)</sup>

On at least two counts, he was undoubtedly right, but from the general tone of the despatch, one wonders if there is something a little significant in the words of the Students’ song—“They bade the Governor pack his kit and off to Fernberg hie him!”

Of the other two despatches mentioned, one requests advice as to the advisability of his accepting the Chancellorship, and the other includes this interesting passage: “As seems to be the case in the more modern universities, the entrance or matriculation examinations are to be comparatively easy.<sup>(49A)</sup> . . . It is feared that it may be difficult for those who are training for professional life to grasp the importance of a working acquaintance with the leading modern languages. The classics will not be largely patronized. It is intended to affiliate the technical schools and colleges to the University.”<sup>(50)</sup>

The preamble to the Act of 1909 begins as follows: “Whereas it is desirable to promote sound learning, to encourage original research and invention and to provide the means of obtaining a liberal and practical education in the several pursuits and professions of life in Queensland” and provision was made initially for three Faculties—Arts, Science and Engineering, for a diploma in Education and for both evening and external students.

So then was consummated the event which had been forshadowed by Lilley thirty-nine years before.

While it would be absurd to suggest that the only factor responsible for this ultimate success was the considerable emphasis that had come to be laid on one aspect of the University’s function, it seems reasonable to suggest that this emphasis was a very potent one in view of the kind of people whom it was necessary to persuade of the need for a University. It is a factor which I feel tends to be neglected with consequent distortion in any discussion based on what might be called the immediate factors leading to the establishment of the University, chiefly of course, the availability of finance.

(49) Governor’s Secret Despatches, 28th April 1910.

(49a) Thanks to Blair? Or is this merely a comment on the lack of complete insistence on classics in matriculation.

(50) Governor’s Secret Despatches 1910, p. 13. (To Secretary of State for Colonies), 22/10/10.



I suggest in short that our University was sold hard to the community as a kind of superior technical college, and I feel fairly certain myself that this was done deliberately by the few active proponents of the University scheme, not because they thought exclusively in these terms themselves when considering the function of the University, but because they realized that only in this way could a practical and essentially uneducated community be persuaded of the utility of an institution, which, in its eyes was, according to the point of view, either superfluous or dangerously reactionary.