

Register. 15th May 1882

PROFESSOR TATE AND THE
NORTHERN TERRITORY.

[By Telegraph.]

Port Darwin, May 14.

A large public meeting was held at the Exchange Hotel, Palmerston, on Saturday night, to consider the *Register* report of Professor Tate's speech at the reception of the Parliamentary party on their return from the Northern Territory at the Semaphore on April 13. Mr. V. V. Brown was in the chair. Messrs. Meldrum, Levi, Solomon, Skelton, Adcock, Miller, Gott, and other influential citizens spoke. Professor Tate's action in offering to report on private properties for an interest in the claims was freely commented on by the various speakers, and his speech was attributed to disappointment at his offers being declined. The following resolution was carried unanimously—"That in the opinion of this meeting Professor Tate's speech at the Semaphore on April 13 was grossly unfair to the people of the Northern Territory and the resources of our colony, and was not so much prompted by the result of scientific research as it was by the spiteful feelings of a disappointed speculator."

Register 16th May 1882

PROFESSOR TATE AND THE
NORTHERN TERRITORY.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—The telegraphic news from Port Darwin published in to-day's issue calls for a reply from me. The resolution of the Palmerston meeting in respect to my speech on the occasion of the reception of the Ministerial party at the Semaphore embraces three counts, that:—

1. I was grossly unfair to the resources of the colony.

2. I was grossly unfair to the people of the Northern Territory.

3. My conduct is to be attributed to disappointment at my offers to report on private properties being declined.

The first two are matters of opinion, and as to the third charge I give it a most emphatic and categorical denial. In this last connection I may state that certain persons sought to make capital out of our visit, but as we did not aid them hence, perhaps, this retaliation.

I am, Sir, &c.,
May 16. RALPH TATE.

The Advertiser May 16th
1882

PROFESSOR TATE has raised the ire of the Northern Territorians. Probably the professor himself is not at all surprised at this. He could scarcely expect that the very free remarks he made about the white population of the Territory would be accepted in a spirit of gratitude. Supposing that what he said were true, and that it would be well for the Territory if a "clean sweep" were made of the present

settlers there, still, whether true or not, no man could make the statement without bringing down anathemas upon himself. It may be assumed that Professor Tate had considered the matter beforehand, and did not speak in a moment of excitement, for he had had all the somewhat considerable time occupied in the passage from Palmerston to Adelaide to cogitate. Any possible annoyance, such as hinted at in our telegram yesterday, had ample time to wear off; and at least he ought not to have been unwittingly betrayed into an utterance that he was not prepared to stand to. It was only natural that when reports of the professor's remarks reached Palmerston they should be warmly canvassed and earnestly condemned. Besides his strictures upon the people, Professor Tate questioned the suitability of the country for agricultural or pastoral pursuits, but

he could scarcely have spoken more favorably than he did of its mineral resources; and probably his speech at the Semaphore would have called forth no strong protest but for the condemnatory statements about the people. On receiving reports of the speech they gathered together in an indignation meeting at Palmerston, pronounced his assertions "grossly unfair to the people of the Territory," and proceeded to take their revenge in the shape of a charge of spite harbored by the professor, because, according to their version of the affair, certain overtures he had made to report on some mineral claims were not accepted. We cannot of course pronounce an opinion upon an *ex parte* statement of this kind, though it does not seem probable that a man of Professor Tate's status would be likely to place himself in a false position, or to vent his spleen in a speech remote both in time and place from the scene of his alleged disappointment. A distinct charge, however, was brought against the professor of conduct highly unbecoming his official position, and the matter cannot properly be allowed to remain where it is. The professor may have been treated unjustly by the Palmerstonians, but he will scarcely get much sympathy in the annoyance he must feel at being so unceremoniously dealt with by those he attacked. He accompanied the Minister and his party for the purpose of making scientific researches, and reporting the result of his investigations. It would have been in better taste, as no doubt it would have been more prudent, had he when called on to say something of his experiences, confined himself to his legitimate department. There were others whose proper province it was to make observations on political and social matters, and from them, if from any one, criticisms on the condition and character of the people might have properly come. Only in one respect might an exception have fairly been made, by the professor, *viz.*, in regard to the way in which the work of developing the resources of the country had been carried on. The remarks complained of certainly included this subject, but if they were only intended to be applied in this way they were altogether too general and sweeping.
