

**Record of the  
Proceedings of the Queensland Parliament**

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**Legislative Council**  
**19<sup>th</sup> July 1860**  
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Extracted from the third party account as published in the  
Moreton Bay Courier 21<sup>st</sup> July 1860

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THE President took the chair at half-past 4 o'clock, and opened the proceedings with prayer.

**PRIMARY EDUCATION BILL.**

Captain O'CONNELL moved that this bill be read a third time.

Mr. BALFOUR said that he could not allow the motion to pass without expressing his sense of the valuable assistance rendered by their President in the perfecting and passing of this most important measure. He hoped it would be received and adopted in the other house in the same enlightened spirit that had characterised its progress through this. (Hear, hear).

The bill was then read a third time and passed, and Captain O'Connell and Mr. Galloway were appointed a deputation to convey the same to the Assembly, with a message requesting the concurrence of that body.

**POSTAL COMMUNICATION VIA TORRES STRAITS.**

Captain O'CONNELL said it had been suggested to him that it would be more convenient to consider his resolutions in committee, and he would, therefore, now move that the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the same.

The motion having been seconded, was carried.

Captain O'CONNELL now moved the adoption of the resolutions as follows:—“(1.) That in consequence of a late arrangement, under which the English mail steamers no longer proceed beyond Melbourne, it has become necessary to make better provision for the conveyance of mails between this colony and England. (2.) That in the opinion of this house the route via Torres Straits and Singapore is likely to prove more expeditious and economical, and to offer greater general advantages to Queensland than any other, and for the same reasons is likely to recommend itself to New South Wales and New Zealand. (3.) That this house is further of opinion that communications ought now to be entered into between the Government of Queensland and the Governments of the other colonies named, with a view to considering the adoption of the above route and the proportion of subsidy, in the event of its adoption, payable by each colony.” He explained that the necessity for some such arrangement as was now proposed had originated in the alteration of the mail contract between the P. and O. Company and the British government—the particulars of which were given in a correspondence published the other day. It appeared that, under the old contract, the company, in conveying the mails between Australia and Europe were compelled to provide a double line of steamers, whereby they had suffered loss to the extent of inducing them to incur the penalty of £25,000 rather than continue the service. Hence the new arrangement entered into by the home and Victorian governments, under which the latter had acceded to a subsidy of £60,000. This arrangement, however, would prove extremely disadvantageous to Queensland inasmuch as the steamers were to arrive at Melbourne on the 12th, and sail on the 26th of the same month, which would scarcely give them fourteen days to write and despatch their letters for the homeward mail. In August next he found

that the 12th would fall on a Sunday, so that the time, which under any circumstances was too short, would be still further limited. This was the inconvenience moreover of transshipping the mail twice instead of once, as under the old arrangement. By the route now proposed, via Torres Straits, the distance would be much shorter, while the steamers would have a comparatively smooth sea and fine weather during the whole of their passage. Moreton Bay would thus be the first port of arrival and the last of departure. The rapidity and regularity of the trips which were sure to result from the northern route, were advantageous, and would be felt almost as much by New South Wales as by this colony, and therefore he imagined there could be no difficulty in effecting a joint arrangement. As to the practicability of the line via Torres Straits he believed there could now be very little doubt on the mind of any one who had studied the question. Many years ago when the subject came before the Legislative Council of New South Wales for the purpose of investigation he remembered that the late Admiral King, whose opinion carried great weight, gave most distinct and decided testimony in favor of the route now proposed. It was clearly shown by the enquiry that steamers could navigate the passage during all seasons of the year, and that the distance would not be more than 3180 miles, which would permit of the trip between Sydney and Singapore being accomplished in 16 days. They would thus be advantaged by greatly increased expedition in the conveyance of the mails, whilst there was every probability that a rich passenger as well as commercial traffic would arise. There was reason to believe that invalids from India would be attracted to this colony and that a large and rapidly increasing traffic would result in consequence. With regard to the cost necessary to carry out the line they had at present but very little data upon which to form a correct opinion. It was supposed, however, that the entire expense would not be more than half the subsidy sanctioned by Victoria for the present mail contract, or in other words, that their share of the subsidy would not exceed £7000 or £8000. For this small outlay they would receive all the advantages of rapid and regular transit in addition to being the first port of arrival and the last of departure. He was informed upon good authority that Singapore at present received European news in 27 days; if so, allowing 16 days for the transit between that port and these colonies they might reasonably expect to receive European intelligence in 43 days. The adoption of this line would not necessarily interfere with the one now in existence via Melbourne. He need not remind hon. members that according to the present aspect of affairs in Europe a general war was by no means improbable. In the event of such a calamity happening the advantage of two lines would be very generally felt, as in the case of interruption one at all events might still be made use of. He concluded by expressing a hope that New South Wales and New Zealand would be found ready and willing to carry out the project.

Mr. BALFOUR supported the motion on the ground that the route proposed was the shortest and the most likely to prove beneficial to the colony. He was in favor of connecting it with Timor, which would enable them to accomplish the distance in 16 days, and as the Dutch steamers were constantly running from that port, there would be no difficulty in conveying the mails to Europe by the earliest possible means. In the event of a war they would also be advantaged, and the mails in that case would be placed under the protection of the Dutch flag, supposing that power to remain neutral. With regard to procuring boats he thought the government of the several colonies might either subsidise the A.S.N. Company, or charter steamers for themselves.

Sir CHARLES NICHOLSON said he was glad to find that the only correct idea with regard to the carrying out of steam postal communication between the Australian colonies and the mother country was now about to be realised. As his hon. and gallant friend had stated, the subject of steam communication via Torres Straits had engaged the attention of the New South Wales legislature nearly sixteen years ago. He happened to be a member of the Legislative Council at that time, and could therefore state that the result of the investigation alluded to was entirely in favour of the route mentioned. Not only did Admiral King give his evidence in favour of this direction, but it was a singular fact that every naval authority examined upon the subject expressed a similar opinion. Latterly he observed that a movement, conducted with the greatest possible assiduity, had been got up in Sydney in favour of the Panama line, but he believed that line was altogether impracticable. It was not only much longer than the one now under

consideration, but it involved a stage between the coaling places of 8000 miles. He was informed, and he had no reason to doubt the information—that it was impossible to procure a steamer for ordinary purposes capable of carrying coals to supply her for a longer distance than 4000 miles. The only instance of the kind was to be found in the voyage of the present mail steamers from Galle to King George's Sound, a distance of 4000 miles, but that was found to entail very serious inconvenience and expense, besides being almost impracticable. By the Torres Straits route the passage would be much shorter, the sea much calmer, and the trips as a matter of course much more regular, and now that steam communication (which he knew from good authority) had been established on a fortnightly scale between Copang (Timor) and Java, there could be no difficulty in ensuring regular and rapid postal intercourse with Europe upon the most easy and favourable terms. With regard to the particular passage to be made use of in carrying out this service he still thought, notwithstanding the discoveries of Captain Denham, that the inner one by the barrier reef was the best for steamers. There were many dangers no doubt to be apprehended, but these he believed could be obviated by the erection of lights and the placing of buoys in proper positions. On the other hand, the sea in all seasons was perfectly free from tempestuous weather, and the route, whichever passage might be adopted, would be the shortest, and would bring us into close intercourse with the richest and most interesting portions of the old world. He was inclined to think, however, that the hon. and gallant member was wrong in his estimate as to the expense. He (Sir Charles) had conversed with the principal agent of the A.S.N. Company on the subject, and was informed after mature calculation that the mail service of these colonies via Torres Straits could not be carried out efficiently for less than £90,000. But against this cost they must bear in mind that a very large amount would be returned to the colony in the shape of postal revenue, the route proposed being the most favorable for the conveyance of letters. As for New Zealand, he did not think that colony would be at all disposed to co-operate, as its interests were more connected with the line via Cape Leuwin. The French colony of New Caledonia, however, had a direct interest in the Torres Straits' line, and he had no doubt that the French Government would be willing to contribute towards its support. He quite concurred in the opinion that the steamers required for this service need not be of very large burden, and as coal could be obtained very cheaply along the line, the expense of working them would be correspondingly small. Under the existing arrangement the greater portion of the coal for the mail steamers had to be conveyed from place to place at an enormous expense, and he was aware for a positive fact that, at King George's Sound, it was supplied at the rate of £3 per ton. By the route proposed, however, the case would be very different, as they had abundance of coal deposits along their coast, and numerous facilities for the establishment of coal depots. He concluded by expressing his opinion that it would be safer at present to aim at nothing further than a line of steam communication to Copang, thus leaving the remainder of the service to be performed by the Dutch Government.

Mr. HARRIS expressed his entire concurrence in the resolutions. He thought that a small screw steamer might perform the service, provided a coal depot were established at Cape York and Copang. At the same time he believed the arrangement would involve a much larger cost than the hon. mover had estimated.

After a few words from Captain O'CONNELL in reply, the motion was put and passed.

The house then resumed, and the resolutions were ordered to be transmitted by address to his Excellency the Governor for approval.

The house adjourned at twenty minutes to six, until half-past four o'clock on Tuesday next.