

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

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**Legislative Council
14th September 1860**

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Extracted from the third party account as published in the
Moreton Bay Courier 15th September 1860

The President took the chair at ten minutes past ten o'clock a.m., and read prayers.

SETTLEMENT ON SOUTH-EASTERN SHORES OF GULF OF CARPENTARIA.

On the motion of Mr. GALLOWAY, the President left the chair, and the house resolved itself into a committee of the whole for the consideration of the report of the select committee appointed to enquire into the expediency of forming a settlement on the south-eastern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES having read the report, Mr. GALLOWAY moved its adoption.

The PRESIDENT said the house would expect him, as chairman of the select committee, referred to, to offer a few observations on the subject under consideration. When he first moved in this matter, on the occasion of his calling for the appointment of the committee, he stated at considerable length the objects he had in view; the main object being the establishment of a port on our northern coasts from which our produce could be shipped to the continent of Asia and the islands of the Eastern Archipelago, and a considerable trade carried on by exchanging our own and British merchandise for the productions of other countries. Singapore was at present the centre of this trade, and it was very probable that if a port were established at the Gulf of Carpentaria, and a commercial settlement formed, a considerable portion of the eastern trade would be diverted from Singapore to our own shores. The committee had not been able to obtain any evidence as to the capabilities of any portion of the shores of the Gulf for the formation of a shipping port. Dr. Lang had referred to the writings of Captain Flinders, who described Investigator Roads as affording good and safe anchorage for ships, but the roads were twenty-two miles from the main land, and only at that distance between the main land and the islands in the offing could good anchorage be found. It appeared, therefore, undesirable to the committee to fix on that locality as a site for a commercial settlement on the shores of the Gulf; and as they could procure no evidence as to any other suitable locality, they had refrained in their report from recommending that any place should be selected until a proper survey of the whole Gulf could be made, and the natural features of the locality reported on by some competent marine surveyor. Captain Stokes reported favourably of the mouth of the Albert River, which empties itself into the Gulf, as a suitable place for the formation of a settlement. Mr. Gregory, the Surveyor-General, however, speaking of this river, says that there is a depth of only 18 inches of water at its mouth at low tide, and of 12 feet at high water, while a very heavy and dangerous surf rolls upon the bar. In the face of this evidence the committee could not decide upon recommending the mouth of the Albert as a proper site for settlement. Captain Stokes gave a very different account of the Albert. He says there is an abundance of water at its entrance, and that it is navigable for thirty or forty miles from its mouth. It is very probable, therefore, that Mr. Gregory, may not have seen the principal outlet of the river; the committee, however, cannot take this for granted, and the information left the question one of considerable doubt. Therefore, before any further steps are taken, they deem it expedient that a proper survey be instituted, with a view to afford information that will lead to correct conclusions. From the master of a coasting vessel the committee obtained

information that at Pera Heads there exists good anchorage for ships near the shore; but a settlement there would entail upon us a hundred miles additional land carriage, and there were other objections to the favourable reception of a proposal to select a site there. A suitable port was worth searching for, however, and he (Captain O'Connell) had no doubt it could be found. The committee, therefore, recommended that the shores of the bay be searched with this view, from the northern to the southern extremity. The committee having in view the establishment of a settlement somewhere on the Gulf, desired Mr. Gregory to furnish them with an estimate of the probable cost of an overland expedition to the Gulf, as in the event of a settlement being formed, it would be desirable for commercial purposes to connect it as speedily as possible by an overland line of road with the settled districts of the colony. Mr. Gregory estimated the cost at £4800, which the committee considered too large a sum to expend without a definite object in view. They, therefore, recommended that no overland expedition be undertaken till a marine survey of the coast shall have taken place, and a suitable site for a settlement finally determined on. Having arrived at this point, the committee felt it would be useless to enter into the question of telegraphic communication; for, until a mercantile port were established at the head of the Gulf, no advantage would accrue to the country from the establishment of such communication. The advantages of an overland over a deep sea line were apparent to the committee. The deep sea lines were uncertain, and on the route by Torres Straits the line would be peculiarly liable to accident, for the bed of the sea was formed of coral rocks on which the wires would have to lie, and where they would be subject to abrasion as had been the case to a considerable extent in the Red Sea. Again the overland line would be the much shorter of the two—it would be less expensive, and it would be more useful, as it would give the settlers in the intermediate districts the opportunity of communicating with any of the towns through which the lines might pass. Besides, if the deep sea line were adopted it would only entail a double expense, as from the progressive and rapid settlement of the country to the northward it would soon be necessary to establish telegraphic lines on that account. Until, however, a suitable site for a settlement could be procured, it would be practically useless to make any distinctive recommendations with reference to the establishment of telegraphic lines.

Mr. GALLOWAY entirely concurred with the hon. President in the remarks he had made with reference to the propriety of immediately instituting a marine survey of the coasts of the Gulf, for, from the information collected by the committee it was a doubtful question whether or not a suitable site for a settlement could be procured at all. No one could doubt, however, the immense advantages that would accrue to the country from the formation of a commercial depot to the north, where the colony would be placed in immediate communication with China, India, and the islands of the Archipelago. War had commenced in China, and the powers engaged were anxiously considering to what quarter they could look for supplies. If this colony had a settlement at the Gulf in the neighbourhood of good anchorage for ships, a line of road would speedily be marked out from the present settled districts to that distant locality, our horses would be driven overland and shipped thence to supply the Indian market, and our sheep and cattle to supply the wants of our soldiers engaged in war with the Chinese. Besides we would be enabled to exchange merchandise for the wares in China, and for the spices of the islands of the eastern seas.

Mr. BIGGE said, with respect to the survey proposed to be instituted, on the coasts on the Gulf of Carpentaria, it was highly desirable in the event of no eligible site for a settlement being discovered, to instruct the marine surveyor to examine the shores in the neighbourhood of Cape York, where a convenient situation for a commercial town might be determined upon. Some years ago a select committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales was appointed to take evidence and report upon the desirability of forming a settlement at Cape York, and they found that there was a good harbour with good anchorage in the neighbourhood, at a place on the high way of commercial traffic, where steamers could conveniently coal, and receive whatever exports the colony might be able to supply them with. The formation of such a settlement would be the first step in the initiation of steam communication between the principal sea ports of these colonies and Singapore; and it was highly advisable, having the prosperity of the country in view,

and the rapid development of its resources that such communication should be established forthwith.

Captain O'CONNELL said that Captain Blackwood, of the "Fly," had already made an elaborate survey of the coast from the entrance of Torres Straits on the east to their western extremity, showing all the harbours on the northern coast of Australia. That survey could at any time be referred to, and it would not be necessary to go over again the ground already traversed by a close and accurate observer. One main object of the formation of a settlement on the gulf, however, was to avoid the numerous reefs and shoals in Torres Straits, which could not be so conveniently done, were a settlement to be formed at Cape York. For although Captain Denham, of the "Herald," had laid down a safe course for ships through the Straits, it was well known that the dangers of coral seas are of an insidious and treacherous character, and no one could reckon for any length of time on the safe navigation of such dangerous waters. Steamers consequently would be more readily placed on the line, if a settlement were formed at the head of the gulf, than if one were established at Cape York. Eventually, a railway would be formed in this direction, and then the advantages that would accrue to this colony would be incalculably great. Dr. Lang had stated that there was a point in the interior to which a telegraphic line could be carried from the head of the gulf, and which would be equi-distant from Brisbane, Sydney, and Adelaide. No doubt this fact would be taken advantage of at some future time; but at present the colony must content itself with an overland line direct to the gulf.

The question as to the adoption of the report was then put and passed, and the house having resumed, the Chairman reported progress, and the report of the committee was adopted and ordered to be embodied in an address to be presented to his Excellency the Governor.

SUPREME COURT CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of Mr. GALLOWAY, this bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Assembly with the usual message.

LIBEL BILL.

Mr. GALLOWAY moved that the President leave the chair, and that the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole for the consideration of the Assembly's amendment on this bill.

Mr. ROBERTS said as the Assembly did not think it advisable to allow the clause they had amended to stand, but altered it after it had been re-inserted by the Council, and as it was not advisable at the close of the session to continue the discussion further, he would move as an amendment on the original motion that the committal of this bill stand an order of the day for that day six months.

The question having been put, the amendment was carried.

MESSAGES FROM THE ASSEMBLY.

The PRESIDENT announced and read two messages from the Assembly, accompanying, 1st, the bill to provide for the Alienation of Crown Lands, without amendments, and 2nd, the bill to provide for the Leasing of Crown Lands, with an amendment on clause 3.

On the motion of Mr. GALLOWAY, the house went into committee to consider the amendment of the Assembly on clause 3 of the Leasing Bill, when the amendment of the Assembly was adopted, and the house having resumed, the Chairman reported progress, the report was adopted, and the bill transmitted to the Assembly with the usual message.

MESSAGES FROM ASSEMBLY.

A message having been received from the Assembly accompanying the Appropriation Bill for 1861,

The bill was read a first and second time, on the motion of Mr. GALLOWAY, considered in committee, read a third time, and transmitted to the Assembly with the usual message.

A message was also received from the Assembly signifying that they had agreed to the Council's amendments on the Supreme Court Bill.

STANDING ORDERS.

On the motion of Mr. GALLOWAY, the Standing Orders Nos. 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, and 58, suspended on the 11th September till further notice, were replaced on their old footing.

On the motion of Mr. GALLOWAY, the house adjourned at 20 minutes past 12 o'clock till 11 a.m. on Tuesday next, when it is the intention of his Excellency the Governor to prorogue Parliament.