

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 25 AUGUST 1864

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 25 August, 1864.

Pleuro-pneumonia in Cattle.—Electoral Bill.

PLEURO-PNEUMONIA IN CATTLE.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved, pursuant to notice, that the report presented on the 17th instant, from the Pleuro-pneumonia Committee, be adopted. He said it would be observed that the evidence which had been taken was of a most extensive character, and he believed it was reliable. It showed that the disease existed in the northern parts of the Colony, and that at the commencement of the year it had made its appearance at Rockhampton, and in that neighborhood, and at Gracemere, it had shown itself in a very virulent form. It was proved, from the evidence of Mr. Jardine and others, that from Rockhampton it had extended to the Burdekin and other northern parts. The origin of the disease there was attributable to the driving of stock from the neighboring colonies. The evidence showed that the disease was infectious as well as contagious. It still existed in the neighboring colonies, and the methods there taken to prevent its spread had proved to some extent ineffectual. It was very difficult to prevent the introduction of diseased cattle. However, the inspectors at the frontiers had, as far as lay in their power, turned back the stock supposed to be contaminated. Clause three in the report said, "That in order to prevent as much as possible its further extension, from the same source to which its original existence may be traced, it is desirable the prohibition upon the introduction of horned cattle from the neighboring colonies should be strictly maintained." The inspectors of other colonies had turned back and put into quarantine a quantity of animals under a similar clause. He (the Colonial Treasurer) argued that this restrictive clause was desirable, as it was wrong to imperil the clean districts by free and unrestricted importations. The southern districts of the Colony were at present clean, but if free passage were allowed to all cattle over the borders without examination, they would not long be so. It might be said that there was a great trade in stock with the southern colonies, and that this clause of the report was intended to put a stop to that trade; but such was not the case. If such a clause were not enforced the Government would subsequently lay themselves open to the imputation of locking the stable door after the horse was stolen. The Darling Downs and Warrego districts were free from the disease, and in the infected districts it

would die out as the season became more favorable. He believed that if proper precautions were taken, the disease would in a short time disappear from the northern districts. Whether it was attributable to change of seasons, or whatever was the cause, he believed it would be seen, by a perusal of the evidence, that inoculation in the treatment of the disease had proved a great success. There was no danger of its introduction from the north to the south. On the contrary, it had been introduced by those who had taken up new country to the north, and introduced southern stock. Clause four was to the effect that "the destruction of horned cattle, other than those actually infected, with a view to stay the progress of the disease, has been found totally ineffectual, and should be discontinued; and inasmuch as such cattle only as bear unmistakable evidence of the disease, and as such are utterly worthless, should be destroyed, it will be unnecessary to provide compensation for destruction thereof, and your committee recommend that clause five, and so much of clause six as relates thereto, of the Diseases in Cattle Act, should be therefore repealed." The clause in the Act referred to—the repeal of which was recommended—was liable to abuse. People destroyed their bad cattle, and then asked compensation from the Government, on the plea that such cattle were diseased, when such was not the case. The clause was to the effect that all diseased cattle should be destroyed, and no compensation awarded to the owners. He would allude to Mr. Perry's evidence as regarded "inoculation," which was not a cure, but a preventive measure. That evidence was as follows:—

"Can you mention the names of any other stations on which the disease is known to exist in the northern districts? Yes, it is known to exist at Fort Cooper, Port Mackay, Strathmore, and at Messrs. Earl's Station, joining Mount Wyatt."

"By Mr. Douglas: You mentioned the disease having appeared on the Flinders River? Yes; Mr. Henry told me that a mob of cattle travelling out there were suspected of being affected with the disease; but nothing is known for certain."

"By Mr. Sandeman: From your own knowledge, do you consider inoculation a specific remedy for pleuro-pneumonia? Yes; Mr. Archer has adopted it very successfully."

"On what stations has it been adopted? On Mr. Archer's, Mr. Vicary's, the Mariborough, Collaroy, Mount McConnell, Conway, and Strathmore stations; and, I believe, most people are having recourse to it in the Kennedy District."

"Has the result been entirely successful on all stations where it has been adopted? No; it is only lately that people have found out that they were making a gross mistake in using impure virus. I believe that Vicary's station has suffered much from this cause."

"But with proper virus, you believe that success would be the result of the operation? Yes; if it were taken in time. Inoculation is not supposed to cure—it is only a preventive measure."

It would be seen by the fifth clause of the report that the Government invited squatters to form themselves into associations to prevent the spread of the disease. That clause recommended that the formation of associations in each district should be encouraged and supported by the Government, for the suppression of this disease, by preventive as well as by sanitary measures, and that assistance should be rendered to enable them to defray the salaries of inspectors, to act under their supervision, qualified to carry out the necessary measures. This clause was highly necessary, inasmuch as the disease in the Leichhardt was to a great extent attributable to travelling teams of bullocks. These teams often introduced the disease in untainted country, and it was desirable that a power should be given to inspectors to supervise such teams. If the stockholders followed out this clause, and would destroy their own cattle when disease made its appearance, much good would be done by its enactment. He (the Colonial Treasurer) was not at first a believer in inoculation, but he had since had cause to alter his opinion, and thought it should be encouraged as a preventive measure. He believed, if the squatters would destroy their infected cattle, and inoculate their herds, the disease would be put a stop to. He referred to the evidence of J. B. Coleman, Esq., which, on page 7, question 38, was to the following effect:—

“Do you think the disease could be easily subdued, if met with proper usage? Yes; if prompt measures were taken.”

“Have you been employed in New South Wales, in reference to pleuro-pneumonia? No.”

“Have you any objection to say what rates prevail in Victoria for the inoculation of cattle? No; I can speak from my own experience, as I publish my rates. I charge 1s. per head, up to 500; up to 2,000, 6d. a head; and for any over 2,000, 3d. per head. I don't think that any one but myself does it for so little as 3d. per head, for over 2,000 head.”

“What assistance do you require in inoculating? I have never known anyone to get extra help for this purpose. I generally ask if there is a proper crush-yard, as the one chief thing I require. If I get that—in consideration of my being able to inoculate with facility and comfort—I make a difference in the charge for inoculating.”

“What are the Government enactments, or regulations, in Victoria, in reference to this disease?—Have they adopted any curative or preventive measures? None whatever.”

“Have they appointed any inspectors? No; the Act by which the inspectors were appointed, expired a few months ago, and with it expired the appointment of all officers under the Act. The pleuro-pneumonia commissioners ceased to be commissioners, and no inspectors appointed under the Act retained their office, that I am aware of. The Act had become a dead letter, a year before it expired, for want of funds to carry it out.”

“Do you know how the Act was carried out?—was it by assessment? No; they never made any assessment.”

“Did they destroy cattle in the first instance, under compensation to the owners? They did, and found the system subject to abuse. Parties were known to get diseased cattle, put them into their herds, then give information of the disease, and claim compensation for the whole herd. The system was, consequently, put a stop to by the Government.

“And now there is no Governmental action at all for the prevention of the disease? No.” He thought the recommendations of the report were borne out by the evidence, and that the further introduction of horned cattle, except under the terms mentioned in the report, should be put a stop to. That was all which appeared to him necessary to say. He would, however, add that the Government had not been anxious to legislate on the subject. They looked upon the question of pleuro-pneumonia as one which should be left to those more immediately interested in it. That was the result of the commission which had been appointed in Victoria for a similar purpose. The Government of that colony commenced by taking very strong steps to stay the progress of the disease, but all their efforts resulted in the abandonment of all action in the matter. The Government of New South Wales had also arrived at the same conclusion, and did not act at all in the matter. He begged to move the adoption of the report.

ELECTORAL BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved,—“That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, for consideration of this Bill in detail.”

Mr. DOUGLAS asked if it were desirable to enter upon the question; the measure would meet with opposition on many points.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY expressed his surprise at the remark of the honorable member. He (the Colonial Secretary) was not aware that the House was disinclined to consider the question. He had proposed several alterations consequent upon suggestions which had been made to him.

Mr. MACKENZIE said he was not present when the Bill was presented to the House, but he was aware that petitions against it had been presented. As far as he could judge of the Bill, he thought it was a well-intentioned measure. But there was at present no great desire for any change, unless a comprehensive Bill could be introduced. There were several clauses in the Bill before the House, among others the education clause, which would meet with great opposition. He could not see, therefore, why the measure should be pressed upon the House.

Mr. BLAKENEY said he was surprised that the Government should urge the Electoral Bill upon the House, which was as obnoxious a measure as it could possibly be, and he trusted that every member on his (Opposition) side of the House would oppose it in all its stages. He had been pleased to hear the

honorable Colonial Secretary say that the session was drawing to a close, and he had hoped the Government would at least have allowed the measure to rest this session. He thought they might have made that concession. It was a similar Bill to that passed in Melbourne during the past year. He observed that the Government were very slow to bring in any Acts which had passed the Victorian Parliament unless they restricted them considerably. Why did they not adopt the Victorian Bill in all its principles? Why not embody manhood suffrage and triennial parliaments? He affirmed that the Bill which it was now proposed to consider would prove a very cumbrous measure. It had only recently become law in Victoria, and in that Colony they were about to hold a general election upon that very measure. He thought it would be only right to wait and see how it worked there before adopting it in this Colony. He maintained that it was the duty of every member in the House to do his utmost to stay the progress of the Bill. He, for one, should do so, and he flattered himself he should be well supported. There was but one course which a minority could pursue in such a case, and he told the Government that it would be resorted to to prevent this Bill from becoming the law of the land. The result would be that weeks and weeks might elapse before it was passed. The Bill would, no doubt, be backed by a majority of the House, and the only course left to the Opposition was to absent themselves when it was brought on. He had hoped that it would have been allowed to rest for this session, and that the business of the country would have been finished without any further delay. He did hope and trust that honorable members on his side of the House, by exerting every means in their power, would be able to prevent the passing of the Bill.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is a threat.

MR. BLAKENEY: Well, it was a threat, and no doubt the honorable member would come out against him in his usual bitter style. He would, however, repeat that in every single stage of the Bill it would be strongly opposed. Was Queensland come to this? Why the Bill, if passed, would disfranchise one-third of those persons whose names were now on the electoral rolls. Because a person was unable to read and write, was it any reason that he should be debarred from voting? He should like to know, too, how the Government proposed to work this measure at the different polling places. If one of the candidates had an agent whose object it was to impede the polling he might object to every elector who came forward, and every elector who could not produce a voting certificate would be disfranchised. Since everything was fair at elections, such practices would, no doubt, be adopted, and he should like to know how many voters might be turned back at one polling-booth, if every person brought up had to be subjected to such an ordeal as was

provided in the Bill. Then, again, an elector might, perhaps, have taken a glass or two more than usual, and might not sign his name in the same way as he had signed it before. Again, he should like to know why a man should be compelled to pay for his vote? The franchise ought to be the privilege of every one. Then an intending voter had to travel some distance to obtain his elector's right, and the result would be that he would not take the trouble to obtain it, and the elections would be left in the hands of a few. The educational test had before been discussed, and rejected, by the House, and as he thought, very justly. For he could not understand how a man's inability to read and write should prevent him from forming a judgment as to the respective merits of rival candidates. What necessity was there for crippling the rights of the inhabitants of this Colony? He affirmed that those rights had already been interfered with by a misinterpretation of the Orders in Council, which left the franchise as it existed years previously in New South Wales. But that was not sufficient for the Government; they wanted to tamper with them still further. Was that a just principle to adopt in this Colony? The honorable gentleman from whom the Colonial Secretary gained his diplomatic experience, in speaking upon this subject not long ago, had made use of these words—"You should increase, and not diminish the franchise." Those were the words of Mr. Gladstone, who proposed to increase the franchise to the working classes. There was another amusing feature in the Bill. A person seeking to obtain his vote had to go to the returning officer, pay his shilling, reply to certain questions put to him, and sign his name, if he were able to do so, before he obtained his certificate. It was natural to suppose that the matter would end there. But no, the returning officer had it in his power, without any reason whatever, if he thought fit, for it was left entirely to his discretion, when he returned the lists to the officer of the court, to note an objection to any name he chose, and the elector was then and there disfranchised, unless he chose to attend the revision court. That provision alone was an insuperable objection to the Bill. But the worst part of it was to come. Any person who should fail to substantiate his objection to a name on the list might be fined, with costs; but the returning officer, be his conduct as gross as it would be, got off scot free. It was easy to see how such a clause would be worked in the hands of persons who might have a bias either one way or the other. He contended that it was both dangerous and unconstitutional to vest such power in the hands of any persons whatever. On the second reading of the Bill he had endeavored to show what a cumbrous measure it was, and he saw it more than ever now. Then, again, the time-honored practice of nomina-

ting candidates, by show of hands, was to be done away with, for what reason he could not see. The nominations were to be conducted in a sort of hole and corner way. Some men, it appeared, did not like to meet their constituents publicly, face to face—they did not like anything to come between the wind and their nobility. But he trusted the time would never come, or that he at least should never see it, when that old custom would be abolished in this country. He could not see what object would be attained by this change, unless it were the exclusion of certain candidates. The Bill also required that every candidate who sought to be returned to the Legislative Assembly should deposit a sum of £50 with the returning officer. Now if it were required that every candidate should pay a certain sum towards the expenses of the polling booths, &c., the proposition would be reasonable enough. But it was only those who polled a certain number of votes who got their money back, and the luckless outsiders had to pay the penalty of their rashness. He feared very much that the Electoral Bill would require so much patching to make it passable, that it would very much resemble another Bill which he was happy to see had now passed the House and become the law of the land, the only portion of which, as it was introduced into the House, was the preamble.

At this stage of the debate, notice being taken that there was not a quorum, the House was counted, and there being only sixteen members present, the Speaker adjourned the House until ten o'clock to-morrow.
