

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 1864

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 6 September, 1864.

Railway between Maryborough and Gayndah.—Rivers and Harbors.

RAILWAY BETWEEN MARYBOROUGH AND GAYNDAH.

Mr. MACKENZIE moved, pursuant to notice, —“That this House will, to-morrow, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider of an address to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed on a Supplementary Loan Estimate for the year 1864, a sum of not less than £400,000 for the formation of a railway between Maryborough and Gayndah.” He said he was somewhat surprised at seeing this notice on the paper, as, during his temporary absence, he had left it in charge of his honorable colleague, Mr. Edwards, in whose hands he thought it would have greater justice done to it than in his own. He had put it on the paper in consequence of a resolution which had been brought forward by the honorable member for Eastern Downs (Mr. McLean), and which had been agreed to by the House. The principle upon which he based his claims was, that while railways were sanctioned to the westward, southward, and northward, central Queensland should not be overlooked. He might expatiate at great length, as the honorable member for Eastern Downs had done, on the great quantity of agricultural land around Gayndah, which only required for its settlement and occupation an open road to the seaport. The time had not, however, arrived when a large sum should be voted by the House for such a work, although a certain expenditure might be undertaken in the meantime for the survey of the road. His was a rough calculation—£5,000 a mile for eighty

miles. He thought the subject should receive some consideration at the hands of the House; and he trusted that the Secretary for Lands and Works would so far agree with him that a survey should be made of the line, and means adopted to decide what amount of traffic was on the road.

Mr. BLAKENEY seconded the motion.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS congratulated the honorable member on the opinion which he had expressed, that the time had not yet arrived for the construction of a railway to Gayndah. He (Mr. Macalister) was not sorry that the motion had been placed on the paper, because it enabled him to state that the only reason for which the Government opposed the motion was that they had no returns as to the amount of traffic on that road which would justify them in acceding to it. By the last return, which in all probability was not a very reliable one, and was about twelve months old, there was not traffic enough to pay the expenses of a railway for a week. He trusted that the occupation and settlement of that part of the Colony would divert a large amount of traffic on the road from Maryborough to Gayndah, and he should endeavor to find out what it was. Even if it would only justify a tramway, the Government would be very happy to carry out the surveys, which were formerly promised to the honorable member who represented that district.

The question was then put and negatived.

RIVERS AND HARBORS.

Mr. BELL: Sir, I beg to move, "That the report presented on the 31st ultimo, from the Select Committee on the Rivers and Harbors of the Colony, be now adopted." In doing so, I may say that I cannot approach the subject without feeling that it is one of more than ordinary importance. The subject is one which must be of deep interest to every colony, and especially to a young country like Queensland at the present time, when the sister subject of internal communication is receiving such marked attention throughout the Colony, and at the hands of this House. Large sums of money have been voted by the Legislature for the construction of railways, and the improvement of roads. But it appears to me, that unless some increased facilities are given to the navigation of our rivers and harbors, and to our intercourse with the outer world, that expenditure will be useless, or rather it will not ensure those great and beneficial results which were anticipated at the time the money was voted. There are two views of the subject, sir, to which I will call the attention of honorable members in the consideration of this report. The first has reference to those works and improvements which require immediate attention, and the other to those which are not of such an urgent nature. It was with these two points in view that the committee entered upon the task which was committed to their

hands by this House. If any honorable member thinks the recommendation contained in the report involves too large an expenditure of money—and, I believe, that opinion has been expressed—I beg to refer him to the appendix to the evidence given by the Collector of Customs, which shows the very large increase in the arrivals and departures of vessels trading to this port during the past year as compared with the year 1860. That increase has amounted to 349 vessels, of 118,037 tons burden, and that does not include the coasting trade of the Colony. I think that is a sufficient answer to any honorable member who holds to the opinion that the expenditure recommended by the report is either unnecessary or premature. Although the question of lighthouses is not one which a select committee, appointed to consider the "rivers and harbors of the Colony," might have been expected to embrace; it will be recollected that when the subject was debated in this House, and the committee was appointed, that question was alluded to, and it was understood that it would be taken into consideration by the committee with the main subject of their enquiry. The committee had no desire, in dealing with that part of the subject, to interfere in any way with the action previously undertaken by honorable members in another place. I have said, sir, that there are two points of view from which to regard this question. But there is a third, and I will refer to them in their order. In the first place there are those great and necessary works which, in the opinion of the committee, are of great urgency, and ought not to be allowed to slumber. Then there are those works which, although of importance, do not require such immediate attention; and, in the third place, there are certain works which may be delayed for a still longer time, but which the increasing trade of the Colony will render necessary. The report alludes to four points, upon which the committee consider it desirable that lighthouses should be erected. The first in importance, where the erection of a lighthouse is most urgent, is Sandy Cape. The evidence which has been taken, has clearly shown the necessity of this work, on account of the dangerous position of the Breaksea Spit, which lies just off this part of the coast, where several losses have already occurred. The committee are of opinion that the construction of a lighthouse at this point should not be delayed for a single day longer than is absolutely necessary. Then the three next points, which are included in the same class, are Cape Capricorn, Bustard Head, and Cape Byron or Point Danger. The witnesses examined were of opinion that a lighthouse is much wanted at Cape Capricorn; and there can be no reasonable doubt as to the necessity of a light at Bustard Head. It would point out, not only the dangers of that point, but would also serve the purpose of a guiding light into Port Curtis. Then comes the

question of a lighthouse on the boundary line between this Colony and New South Wales, and that is a point upon which the committee did not consider themselves authorised to decide. There was a difference of opinion upon this subject in New South Wales, and there the question was referred to the consideration of a select committee of the Legislative Council, who seemed to think that Point Danger was the most favorable site. The committee appointed by this House have taken a good deal of evidence upon this point. But there were two classes of witnesses, each of which viewed the question from a different point of view. The masters of vessels and steamers, going from the south to the north, expressed themselves in favor of a lighthouse on Cape Byron as best suited to their trade; while the traders from the north to the south represented Point Danger as the most convenient site. The committee have therefore come to the conclusion that, in the first instance, it will be desirable that the Government of this Colony should confer with the Government of New South Wales, in order to arrive at a decision upon this point. If it be considered that only one lighthouse is necessary, I think, sir, it may fairly be left as a matter to be settled between the two Governments. Some of the evidence tends to show that a lighthouse is necessary at each place. The committee are, however, of opinion that, although the increasing trade of the Colony may, at some future date, render the erection of two lighthouses necessary, it is not at present expedient to do more than to recommend that one should be erected at the point which may be fixed upon as the most suitable of the two I have mentioned; and they think the Colony of New South Wales should be invited to assist in the work. Then, sir, the committee, in the third clause of the report, anticipating an increase in the trade and commerce of this Colony, which, to judge from the rate of progress made during the last few years, must shortly take place, have expressed their opinion that lighthouses will be necessary at Lady Elliott's Island and Double Island, but those are works which are not of a pressing nature. Clause seven refers to harbor and river lights which the committee regard as of very great importance; and to this part of the subject they have given their best attention. It is clear that some of the principal rivers in this Colony have "silted up" to a great extent, and that there exist obstructions in them, which, if not speedily removed, will materially injure the river trade. Much evidence has been taken upon this subject; and the committee have come to the conclusion, that it is not necessary to depend entirely upon dredges for clearing away those obstructions. They are of opinion that much may be done by means of embankments, the effect of which is to throw into one channel the whole force of the tides; combined with a system of harrowing, alluded

to by several of the witnesses as having been successfully adopted in New South Wales and elsewhere, to displace the loose deposit in the bed of the river. But these means will not do away altogether with the necessity for dredging; and the committee recommend that no time should be lost in obtaining a river dredge, of suitable construction for this purpose. It is clear that the rapid strides which the trade and commerce of this Colony are taking, demand some attention. There are many places where work of this nature is urgently required—in the Brisbane, the Bremer, and the Fitzroy. Then, sir, the committee urge upon the House the necessity of establishing telegraphic communication between the harbors and the towns of this Colony. There are many reasons in support of this recommendation. Honorable members are fully acquainted with the advantage of direct and prompt communication with the coast in cases of shipwreck or distress; in meteorological observations, and for general shipping purposes. On the coast of England communication of this character, by giving warning of the approach of storms and bad weather, had done much to prevent the loss of life and property; and the committee are of opinion that the time has arrived when similar precautions should be adopted in Queensland, without loss of time. The telegraph may be in progress while the lighthouses are in course of construction. In order to place the matter clearly before honorable members who may be of opinion that the recommendations of the committee are of too costly a character, I have obtained an approximate estimate of the expense of extending telegraph lines between the several points I have referred to, which I will read to the House:—

"Construction of Rockhampton and Cape Capricorn extension, *via* the Pilot Station:—Rockhampton to Broad Mount, overland line, say 34 miles, at £45 per mile, £1,350; Broad Mount to Sea Hill, submarine cable, say 11 miles, at £120 per mile, £1,320; Sea Hill to Cape Capricorn, overland line, say 30 miles, at £45 per mile, £1,350; total, say 71 miles, at a cost of £4,020. Maryborough and Sandy Cape extension:—Overland line, say 80 miles, at £45 per mile, £3,600; submarine cable, 6 miles, at £120 per mile, £720; total, say 86 miles, at a cost of £4,230."

When the advantages to the Colony and to the mercantile community to be derived from these lines is taken into consideration, the expense is really very small. The total cost is £8,340, which, at six per cent., is only £481 per annum. The next point, sir, to which I shall refer, is the southern entrance of Moreton Bay, a subject which the committee looked upon with great interest. A great deal of time has hitherto been lost in consequence of the avoidance, by steamers, of that entrance. The committee have no hesitation in expressing their decided opinion that the southern entrance in fair weather is a perfectly safe one,—they have taken great

pains to obtain reliable evidence upon this point. They are of opinion that, as soon as information can be afforded by telegraphic communication as to the state of the water on the bar, there will be no hesitation on the part of commanders of steamers in leaving the river by that entrance instead of the northern entrance. They will thereby save a day, or at any rate twelve hours, which in these days of advancement is a great object. It is the opinion of the committee that the southern portion of Moreton Bay has not received the attention it deserves. There is now a large population on its shores consisting of agricultural companies, and settlers of great wealth, and it is necessary that these requirements should be taken into consideration. The committee are of opinion that if the long channel between Stradbroke Island and the mainland is buoyed off it will tend considerably to increase the traffic which is springing up in that direction. In connection with this subject I may mention that there also exists, what is termed a grievance by the department to which the matter belongs; the numerous rafts of timber frequently sweep away the buoys in the navigable channels, and the committee recommend that some stringent rule should be enforced to prevent it, and some course adopted, such as giving a portion of the fine to the informer, which would probably have the desired effect. Now, sir, I come to that portion of the report which refers to the bar of the Brisbane river, and I may say that this is the only part of the report upon which the committee were not unanimous. They, however, were strongly impressed with the advantages already derived, and I hope yet to be obtained, from the work which has been undertaken there. The channel, as far as it has been cut, has proved a complete success, and I may say that since this report has been printed, a further cutting has been made in the outer bar, which gives a depth of not less than fourteen feet for vessels over both bars, and one foot more on the outer bar than on the river flats. This I consider is a great advantage, and one which I am sure the House and the country will be glad to hear of. It is also within the knowledge of the committee, that vessels have been successfully towed through the channel, and that the tide is not greater there than will admit of a safe passage. They have taken upon themselves to add a recommendation in favor of the officer who has had charge of the work, and whose zeal and ability have brought it to a successful issue. They have also, in the next clause, expressed their entire satisfaction of the Admiralty survey, and the evidence tendered by Captain Jeffereys; and they recommend that his present force be increased, and that a steamer be substituted for the very small sailing vessel he has now in use. That will involve an additional outlay, but I think the House will agree with me, that it will be more than compensated by the rapid and effective manner in which the work will be

performed. I have now, sir, touched upon the principal points in the report, and shall not further detain the House, except to address myself to the main question it involves. And, in spite of what may be advanced in reference to the expense to a young Colony like this, which the works recommended by the committee will involve, I believe it is highly necessary that they should be undertaken without delay. In the approximate estimate I have made, I have taken an average of the cost of four lighthouses—the lighthouse at Cape Moreton which cost £6,600; a very good one at the South Head, Sydney, which cost £5,000; one at Port Stephens at £8,800—but that was expensive, as the stone had to be conveyed from Sydney; and one at £7,000. Taking, then, £7,000 as the average, the cost of four lighthouses would be £28,000. The telegraph lines would cost, say £8,000; that would make £36,000, which, with two lightships at £2,000 each, would give a total in round numbers of £40,000, which is not nearly so much as was anticipated. The only matter which I find I have not alluded to, is the lighting of the rivers and harbors. I think the House will have no hesitation in adopting the recommendation of the committee in this respect. A lightship at the “Elbow” in Keppel Bay, and another at the “Fairway Buoy,” in Hervey’s Bay, appear to be necessary; and there are also other places mentioned in the report where buoys and lights are required. I have only to add, sir, that I trust the report is one which the House will consider themselves justified in adopting, and I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to those honorable members who were engaged with me in the enquiry, and who have taken so much trouble at a time when they were otherwise much engaged.

Mr. DOUGLAS seconded the motion, which was put and passed.