

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 25 AUGUST 1865

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Friday, 25 August, 1865.**Restrictions on Sheep.*

RESTRICTIONS ON SHEEP.

Mr. FORBES moved—"That this House having had under its consideration the petition presented on the 9th August, from certain lessees of Crown lands, and other persons resident in the Warrego district, is of opinion that the Government would be justified in modifying the restrictions on sheep crossing the south-western border of this colony from New South Wales." He said he had been induced to bring forward this motion on account of representations made to him by several members of the constituency he had the honor to represent, and by several honorable members of that House. He had received communications from a number of gentlemen in the Warrego district, informing him of the great loss they had sustained in consequence of their not being allowed to bring sheep across the border from New South Wales. It had also been represented to him that in the district on the New South Wales side of the border, adjoining the south-western portion of the colony, the scab disease was scarcely known. That being the case, and considering the restrictions that existed in New South Wales against the removal of sheep from one portion of the colony to another, he thought that sheep might be admitted from the portion of New South Wales to which he referred without any danger of the disease known as scab being introduced. He did not think the restrictions, which the Governor had power to remove, could be of very much value, seeing there was little or no immediate control over the inspectors on the borders. Scarcely anything was known of them, and in answer to a question on the subject put by the honorable member for North Brisbane some time ago, it was stated that their places of residence were not known. He had heard many complaints with regard to the negligence of the inspectors, some of which shewed that they allowed diseased cattle to be brought across the border. As to the scab disease, it was very difficult to be detected in its earlier stages; so much so that, as he understood, persons who had been engaged in pastoral pursuits for over twenty years admitted they would not be able to detect it in its incipient stages.

He did not wish the abolition of the restrictions altogether, but only their modification, so far as to admit of the introduction of sheep, especially into the Warrego district, that were known not to be affected with scab. The effect of the restrictions in that district was to keep it unoccupied, because of the difficulty of getting it stocked. As the district was a new one, the sooner it was stocked the better, not only for the district itself, but for the colony; for the sooner every new district was fully occupied and stocked, the colony the sooner derived the benefit of its grazing capabilities. He believed it was mainly owing to the monopoly of pastoral interest possessed by a number of gentlemen in a certain quarter, that those restrictions were brought into existence, and that it was for the maintenance of that monopoly they were continued.

Mr. WALSH seconded the motion.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he thought the honorable member for the Warrego had not shewn that the removal of the restrictions on the introduction of sheep from New South Wales would be attended with any apparent advantage to the colony. The honorable member, it also seemed to him, could not be aware that this question had received the full consideration of the Government, and that a commission had been appointed to co-operate with the Government in respect to the matter. As to modifying the existing restrictions, he thought that could only be done by substituting the New South Wales law, by which sheep were not allowed to be taken from one district into another, unless they were carefully inspected and certified to free from scab. The whole question, however, had been fully considered both by the Government and by the commission, and the result of the deliberation on the part of the commission was, that it would be unwise at present to modify the restrictions in any way. The wisdom of this decision was sustained by the fact that a short time ago the commission had ascertained that in some stations in New South Wales which had been pronounced to be free of scab the disease had again appeared, and the districts had, in consequence, been again proclaimed as a diseased district. Under such circumstances, he thought it would be unwise to modify the existing law. The honorable member had spoken of his district as particularly requiring a modification of the existing law, in order to the advancement of its settlement and occupation; but there was no district in the colony that had been so leniently dealt with in that respect, for in some instances the restrictions had been modified to allow of the introduction of sheep from New South Wales into the Warrego district. Now, that was more than had been done in the case of any other district in the colony. Again, it was the opinion of the Government that the Warrego district was the most dangerous district in the colony, and that if

scab should be brought into the colony it would be through that district, as the best line of road from New South Wales and South Australia lay through that district. The honorable member had referred to the difficulty of detecting scab, and the likelihood of the inspectors on that account being able to prohibit diseased sheep from being brought across the border; but he might inform the honorable member that it was not absolutely necessary the inspectors should be able to detect the disease. It was not for them to determine whether a sheep was scabby or not, inasmuch as it was their duty to prevent, as far as possible, any sheep being brought across the border. If diseased animals, whether sheep or cattle, had been allowed to be brought across the border, that only furnished an additional reason why the restrictions should be more strictly enforced.

Mr. MACKENZIE said he thought the motion was somewhat out of order, as it asked the House and the Government to over-ride the acts of the commission to whom this matter had been entrusted. The commission, of which he had the honor to be a member, intended at one time to relax the restrictions, but were restrained from doing so in consequence of receiving information to the effect that in some districts in New South Wales, that had been pronounced clean, the scab had again broken out. He thought that the restrictions having operated so successfully so far in preventing the introduction of scab into the colony, they ought not to be removed until all cause of danger by the bringing of sheep from the neighboring colony had disappeared.

Mr. TAYLOR said he thought the honorable member for the Warrego seemed desirous, by bringing forward such a motion, to have the whole of Queensland affected with scab; and denied that the Darling Downs squatters exerted any influence to prevent sheep being introduced into other districts of the colony, in order that they might continue to possess a monopoly of the pastoral interest. All that they desired, and all that every person in the colony, whether a sheepowner or not, should desire, was to see that every precaution should be taken to prevent the introduction of scab into the colony. The honorable member for the Warrego had said there was a difficulty in stocking country, but he could inform the honorable member that that was not owing to the want of sheep in the colony, for he held in his hand a letter from a gentleman in the neighborhood of the Peak Downs, in which the writer said—"What with the low price of wool, and there being no sale for sheep up here, very few of us will be able to pull through."

Mr. FORBES: They have no money to buy anything with.

Mr. TAYLOR: If the honorable member would invest there, he might get sheep to stock the stations in the Warrego district with. He was very much astonished to hear

the honorable member accuse a number of respectable persons of being paupers; and he thought it was very improper of him to do so. He trusted the commission, in spite of all the articles that appeared in the press, and in spite of all that might be urged by interested parties, would be firm in maintaining the restrictions, and not allow a single sheep to be brought into the colony from the neighboring colony till the sheep there were pronounced to be free of scab. There was scarcely one individual in the colony who could detect scab, and, therefore, as a matter of strict protection against the disease, he should oppose the motion.

Mr. WALSH supported the motion, and said he considered that the only restriction necessary was one to prevent the introduction of diseased sheep into the colony. The maintenance of the restrictions as they existed was, he held, wholly incompatible with the law that compelled persons taking up country to place a certain quantity of stock upon it within a specified time. Now, while they had this law in force, they also had in force a series of restrictions by which the persons were prevented from obtaining stock. The two regulations, he therefore contended, were wholly inconsistent. Another great wrong was done to the colony by the maintenance of those restrictions; inasmuch as they prevented capitalists coming from the other colonies, and taking up runs in this colony. He knew of one gentleman, from Victoria, who purchased runs in this colony, and was to have sent 40,000 sheep across to stock them; but when he found he could not do so, owing to those restrictions, he abandoned his project, and the colony had, in consequence, sustained a considerable loss.

Mr. McLean, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Haly, opposed the motion, on the ground that they considered the continuance of the existing restrictions to be absolutely necessary, to prevent the introduction of the scab disease into the colony, and a consequent heavy pecuniary loss to sheepowners, by subscriptions to provide compensation, as on a former occasion, for the flocks it might be found necessary to destroy in order to eradicate the disease.

Mr. SANDEMAN, as a member of the commission, could not but express his surprise that the honorable member for the Warrego should have brought forward this motion. He could not imagine how an honorable member, representing a pastoral constituency especially, could have proposed such a resolution. It only brought home more forcibly to his mind the conviction that pastoral constituencies should return to that House representatives who were practical men, thoroughly conversant, from actual residence, knowledge, and experience, with their interests and requirements. He did not mean to make any offensive reflections on the honorable member in any respect; but he would

say this, that he could not believe that the honorable member was a practical sheep farmer. He thought that all arguments should have justice for their basis, and the taunt the honorable member had thrown out respecting the Darling Downs squatters, was one that he could not hold to. That taunt was, that these restrictions had been kept up to maintain a monopoly. He would read a list of the names of the gentlemen forming the commission, from which it would appear that out of ten members only three were Darling Downs men. It was as follows:—Mr. Bell, Mr. Bigge, Mr. Mackenzie, Mr. Haly, Mr. White, Mr. M'Connell, Mr. Goggs, Mr. Deuchar, Mr. Beit, and himself. Of these three, one had never attended a meeting of the commission, and another had only attended once. He thought that the honorable member should be more careful before he threw out such taunts as he had done. He thought that by removing the restrictions we should be doing a great injury to the country, and he, for one, until we knew that the disease had been eradicated from New South Wales, would never consent to the removal of the restrictions. He was even more astonished at the views expressed by the honorable member for Maryborough. That honorable member had spent many years in sheep farming, and it was singular that he should have used such arguments. He did not know whether the honorable member had any knowledge of the disease of scab, but if he had suffered as much from it in his flocks in past times as he (Mr. Sandeman) had, he would not have expressed such views. He did not think it would be necessary to say more upon the subject, but he did hope that all would come to the conclusion that it was most undesirable to remove the restrictions for some time to come.

Mr. FORBES, in reply, said he was pleased with the discussion that had taken place, and he thought the country would be satisfied. He had to thank the honorable the Colonial Treasurer for the gentlemanly manner in which he had received the motion, and he could have wished that other honorable members had followed his example; and he also thanked the honorable member for the Burnett, Mr. Haly, for his honest and straightforward way of meeting it, and saying that he disagreed with it. There was no beating about the bush with them, no imputing motives; and he gave them credit for honest intentions. Not so, however, with the honorable member for Western Downs, Mr. Taylor, whose conduct was precisely the reverse. It was not for him to impute motives; but the House would not be surprised at anything coming from that honorable member, who was so much in the practice of making coarse attacks upon other honorable members. The conduct of honorable members for the Darling Downs was marked by a desire for a monopoly of the sale of sheep in this colony, and it was in keep-

ing with everything in which they were concerned. He (Mr. Forbes) had himself been taunted for not buying sheep from them. With reference to the remarks that had been made by the honorable member for Leichhardt, he said that he was as practical a man as that honorable member, who could teach him nothing about sheep management, and whose practicability in the House had not been an advantage to the country. However, having gained his object by the expression of the opinion of the House, and this being the only opportunity he had of discussing the petition from his constituents, which he had presented some time since, he begged leave to withdraw his motion.

The SPEAKER: I may say, before I put the question to the House, that I must take notice of the constant references made to the long speeches of honorable members in this House. Honorable members must recollect that it is the undoubted privilege of every honorable member to express himself as he thinks best for the interests of his constituents. Some men are not so concise as others in doing so, but they do the best they can, in their own way; and they have no right to be found fault with. I do trust that this will cease. Those honorable members whom I hear making these charges against other honorable members are themselves the longest speakers in the House.

The motion was then, by leave, withdrawn.

GRATUITY TO THE REV. DR. LANG.

On the order of the day being read for the House to resolve into committee of supply,

Mr. DOUGLAS said, before going into committee of supply, he had to ask the attention of the House, and the re-consideration of the Government, to something that occurred last night. He was not in his place, and he understood that there was but a thin House, when something was done in which he took a great interest, as did other honorable members. Some time ago, it would be remembered, he had moved a resolution for granting £1,000 to Dr. Lang, in recognition of his services to this colony. He found from the reports in the papers, and from statements which had been made to him, that the committee of supply had negatived the grant as placed on the Supplementary Estimates; and, if he depended on the reports in the public press, he thought the grant had hardly been supported as it ought to have been by the Government. He considered that the House had committed themselves, unfortunately, to a very disgraceful—

The SPEAKER: I think I must put the honorable member right. The honorable member will recollect that this House is now sitting as a House, and technically the House does not know what took place in committee; and I do not think he can bring anything forward that took place in committee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: When the resolutions were reported.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he looked upon the vote as a matter of notoriety. He would not make any reference to the committee, and he did not intend to make any motion on it; but he thought he had a right to take advantage of the motion for going into committee of supply, upon which it was competent for him to call attention to what he considered a grievance.

The SPEAKER: There is no question that the honorable member can do that, but he cannot refer to what took place in committee—the committee that is past.

Mr. DOUGLAS: At any rate, the gratuity was not to be granted to Dr. Lang. There were several items placed in the same category with Dr. Lang's gratuity:—£500 for the School of Arts, Rockhampton; £500 for the Lying-in Hospital; and £500 for the Servants' Home. All those were to be placed on the Estimates of last year, on account of votes of the House. He wished to draw the attention of the House to the fact that all those votes had been paid—paid in every case; but not in Dr. Lang's. What was just in one case was just in the other, and the money should have been paid to Dr. Lang as it had been paid under the other votes. That was altogether apart from the feeling of the House. He now only wished to express his intention of placing what serious difficulties he could in the way of carrying out the remainder of the Estimates, especially in matters of unauthorised expenditure. If the matter were not taken up in the serious way it deserved, the House had committed themselves. However, he was aware that he was somewhat out of order. He had taken advantage of the opportunity of justifying himself, if he should be factious in opposing votes of money which had been expended but not authorised.

Mr. WALSH said he thought that the honorable member had not fully considered the subject. He was a member of well known ability, and one who was so fully conversant with the proceedings of the House could not take exception to the proceedings in the case under notice. He (Mr. Walsh) hoped the honorable member would not adopt the course he had announced. He presumed, if it had not been optional with the House to object or pass the vote, it would not have been brought before them. It had been rejected by a large majority. He hoped they were not to be considered as mere children, who were to assent to everything submitted to them.

Mr. DOUGLAS: You were not in the House when the resolution was passed.

Mr. WALSH: True, he was not a member of the House when the matter was first mooted. Still honorable members when called upon to consider it now were not expected to vote contrary to what they conceived to be their duty.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he felt that, in deference to the Speaker's ruling, at all

events, the honorable member would postpone the further discussion of this matter until he could discuss it on the report of the resolutions to the House, when they came back from the committee of supply, or at some future date. As the honorable member was not in his place when the vote was taken, he would explain the way in which he had placed the matter before the committee, and the grounds on which the committee had acted. The item had been put on the Estimates in consequence of a distinct resolution passed by the House. In some cases, where it was for the advantage of the public service, or for the benefit of any person, or any class of persons in the colony, or where the individuals or parties interested would experience loss by the Government not taking the responsibility of granting the money before the Estimates were passed in committee of supply, the Government had paid the money over—in cases where they felt that, under those circumstances, they might safely do so. But the gratuity for Dr. Lang was such a peculiar vote that it had been difficult for him (the Colonial Secretary) to say he required it “for the service of Her Majesty for the year 1864.” The Government could not take any responsibility in the matter; they could not take upon themselves to pay it over as in the other cases, and say it was for the service of the country; they could not do so, until it had been brought before the committee of supply—placed on the Estimates, in accordance with the resolution—and voted by the committee. The honorable member would recollect that the Government, though not bound to do so, did actually vote for the sum last night in consequence of the House having passed a resolution to place it on the Estimates. It was rejected; and he (the Colonial Secretary) was sure that the honorable member would not by any factious proceedings, stay the business of the House, either by legitimate or illegitimate means, and set a bad example, simply because his own views had not been carried out. Let him remember that the Government were not to blame; though not bound to do so, they had supported the vote.

Mr. JONES said he was very glad to hear the explanation of the honorable the Colonial Secretary. When the feeling of the House was in favor of any course, that course should be followed. He spoke disinterestedly in the matter, and he was not a representative when the original resolution was passed. He did say, however, that if he had been in the House, he should have voted against it. He felt that the House had acted properly in the matter, and that no honorable member should attempt to force other honorable members of the House to do what they disagreed with.

The matter then dropped, and the House went into committee of supply.