

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 11 OCTOBER 1866

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Thursday, 11 October, 1866.*Immigration.—Additional Customs Duties Act of 1866
Amendment Bill (Suspension of Standing Orders).

IMMIGRATION.

Mr. MACKENZIE said, before entering upon the business of the day, he would move the adjournment of the House, in order to make a few remarks with regard to an answer he had received from the honorable the Colonial Secretary on a matter of great importance. The remittance system of immigration had been in operation for a great many years, and the stoppage of it was a very serious matter; and, once stopped, it might be hard to put it in operation again. There was a great difference between putting a stop to indiscriminate immigration and stopping all immigration recklessly. The continuance of the remittance system resolved itself into this: a certain number of deposits, paid in the colony by the friends of intending emigrants, would be sent home to the Imperial Emigration Commissioners, who, three or four times a year, and oftener, sent out those persons that were nominated in the colony, and for whom passages were partially paid and provided. He could remember the time when £5,000 or £6,000 a year was sufficient to be sent home for that purpose; and he thought it was worthy the consideration of the Government, during the recess, that they

should take upon themselves to provide the Commissioners with funds to fill up ships with emigrants under the remittance system. The remittance system brought the best class of immigrants the colony received; and it would not take £10,000 a year to keep it actively in operation for all reasonable requirements. However, he would leave it to the Government to deal with the matter.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the Government were quite alive to the necessity for carrying out both the Immigration Act and the remittance system—that was, the land order system as well as the remittance system; but they had a difficulty presented to them of a financial character, which they were not in a position to get rid of. The sum of even £10,000 was a very large one for the Government to advance for the remittance system, when the great object which they ought to have in view was to make the immigration of the colony self-supporting. The remittance system was not self-supporting, because, in point of fact, the amount paid by persons in the colony was very small. Again, he thought the honorable member was wrong in stating that it would not be easy to restore that system. It was the easiest that the Government could restore; for the reason that it arose from deposits made by friends or relatives in the colony on behalf of those whom they were desirous to bring out. And whenever it was known that the Government would receive deposits, the system could be revived without any difficulty. The light in which he (the Colonial Secretary) looked upon the question of immigration, at present, was this: with a desire to promote a wholesome system of immigration, he did not think the Government and the country were in a position to do so. But, he thought, once they obtained a land fund, however small, that was the legitimate fund out of which immigration should be supported; and then a proposition might be made to enable the Government to carry out the remittance system equally with the land order system.

The motion for adjournment was then withdrawn.

ADDITIONAL CUSTOMS DUTIES ACT OF 1866 AMENDMENT BILL (SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS).

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved, pursuant to notice,—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will admit of the introduction, and passing through all its stages in one day, of a Bill to amend an Act to impose additional duties of customs.

The question was put and passed, and the Bill was read a first time.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in moving the second reading, said the Bill now before the House had been brought in to remove certain difficulties which had arisen in consequence of some amendments which had been intro-

duced in committee in the Bill lately passed. The Government had learned from the customs authorities, and from various importers in Brisbane, that it was almost impossible to carry out the provisions of the Additional Customs Duties Act of 1866 with satisfaction, either to the importer or the Government. It was found that the term “agricultural implements” was capable of such wide interpretation that it was impossible for the Collector of Customs to decide definitely what articles should be exempted, and upon what the duty should be imposed. It had been suggested that the articles he had mentioned should be classed among those imports which should be subjected to *ad valorem* duties. He would also mention that, from the expressions of opinion during the passing of the Bill he had referred to, he had gathered that, if not a majority, a large proportion of honorable members were in favor of the imposition of a certain amount of duty upon flour, so as to afford some slight protection to agriculturists; and, although the Government were not prepared at that time to include flour among dutiable articles, still, in view of the necessity which existed, and the anticipated deficit in the revenue, they considered it their duty to allow the matter to come before the House again, and were quite willing that flour should be subject to an *ad valorem* duty. The measure before the House, as honorable members would perceive, reduced the articles to be exempted to a very small compass indeed. They included only—animals living; fresh fruit and garden produce; fresh meat; gold and silver coin, gold dust and bullion; passengers’ baggage and cabin furniture and personal effects, which have been in use and are not imported for sale; plants, trees, and shrubs; specimens of natural history. The labors of the Acclimatization Society, it was thought, should be encouraged; and, therefore, plants and trees were amongst the exemptions. He did not think it necessary to give any further explanation of the Bill, and would leave it in the hands of the House.

Mr. PUGH said he thought, if the exemptions were confined to the articles mentioned in the first clause of the Bill, a considerable injury would be inflicted on persons in the colony; and there would be no encouragement to persons in England to import capital for the prosecution of interests which it was desirable to foster. He did not think machinery should be left out of the list of exemptions; he would exempt machinery required for agricultural as well as for other purposes. If machinery for the manufacture of sugar were imported duty free, he could see no reason why sugar itself should be taxed, as the importers of that article conferred equally a benefit upon the colony. He was averse to impose a duty upon articles which would affect the iron trade of the colony; he only referred to complete machinery, and to such goods as could

be manufactured here. A case had occurred only the other day, when some boiler plates arrived, upon which a duty of ten per cent. was paid; and the Collector of Customs had informed him, that if the boiler had been complete it would have paid no duty at all. If the honorable the Colonial Treasurer would introduce a provision to exempt all complete machinery, he should have no objection to make. It was all very well to talk against protection, but he believed in protection to a certain extent, as free trade, like anything else, might be ridden to death.

Dr. CHALLINOR observed that the terms animals living, plants, trees, and shrubs, would include almost the whole range of natural history. The item "specimens of natural history" appeared to him only a catch to let animals into the country free of duty. He thought it was a pity that importers of valuable stock should not take their share of the burden. Then, the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Pugh, would exempt complete machinery; but how was that to be defined? He had recommended the exemption of machinery for washing wool, but the importation of that article did not benefit the colony; it only benefited the persons who imported it, whereas, the manufacture of sugar was an advantage to the colony at large.

Mr. R. CRIBB said that in the very specious way in which the Bill had been brought forward, a great question had slipped through, and that was the taxation of flour. The Government had been informed that a tax upon flour would be allowed, and a further tax upon sugar, upon condition that the stamp duties were not pressed. But the stamp duties had been carried, and now it was attempted in an insidious way to carry the Bill before the House. When the Bill went into committee—although he thought the best way would be to let it stand over till next session—he should move that the word flour be inserted, as that was the condition upon which the stamp tax had been assented to.

The question was then put and passed, and the Bill read a second time.