

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 1867

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 6 November, 1867.

Grant of Innes Island to the Acclimatisation Society.—
Grant to the Honorable Louis Hope.

GRANT OF INNES ISLAND TO THE
ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY.

The Hon. E. I. BROWNE moved, pursuant to notice—

1. That in the grant to be issued of Innes Island to the Acclimatisation Society, a right shall be reserved to the public for landing at all necessary times, and of remaining on the said island for a period not exceeding twenty-four hours.

2. That in the deed of grant shall be inserted a condition that the grantees shall not at any time mortgage, incumber, or dispose of the land.

3. That in the said grant shall be contained a condition, that if at any time the said society shall be dissolved, or otherwise cease to carry on its operations, the grant shall be forfeited forthwith, and the Crown shall re-enter on its former estate.

That the above resolutions be sent to the Legislative Assembly for their concurrence.

He said he should have made one or two amendments in the resolutions as they stood, if he had been, when he placed them on the paper, in possession of the information he had since received. He knew nothing of the locality himself, but he had ascertained certain facts from other honorable members, who were present and would be able to speak on the subject. The island in question was, perhaps, intrinsically of little value, but there were a number of persons in the habit of crossing the bay, especially at the south or boat entrance, who, from stress of weather and other causes, were obliged to land there, and that privilege would be taken from them if the grant to the society were confirmed without any restrictions. He conceived that the power which would be given to the Acclimatisation Society by an unconditional grant of the island, would be extremely injurious to the public at large, and it was to remedy that state of things that he had brought forward the first resolution, which he hoped honorable members would concur in. Then, again, supposing the society should cease to carry on its operations, which the present grant was intended to facilitate, he could see no reason why the grant should not revert to the Crown again, either to be sold or devoted to any other purpose, and for that reason he had inserted the two following resolutions. The third resolution more particularly affected that part of the question, but the second resolution was also necessary, because if the society had the power to mortgage, the power of resumption would also go with it, otherwise no one would take a security upon it.

The Hon. F. E. BIGGE said he believed the grant would be a very good thing for the society, but a very bad thing for the country; for, as far as his knowledge of the island went, he believed it would make an excellent sugar plantation, and there were other islands in the bay which would be quite as suitable to the purposes of the society. He certainly thought the honorable member, Mr. Browne, was quite right in his suggestion that a landing place should be reserved on the island, and that parties landing should be allowed to remain there for twenty-four hours. He should have suggested forty-eight hours at least, because Innes Island was the only place in the neighborhood where boats could land at certain times, all the other ground having been alienated and being now private property. People who were storm bound would have no place to go to if they were not allowed to land on this island, and therefore he thought

it was only fair to give them access to it. He thought the time mentioned in the resolution should be extended, and he would move, as an amendment, that the words forty-eight hours be inserted instead of twenty-four. Boats, and especially rafts, might be detained for a much longer period; in fact, he had known cases where the latter had been detained for a month or six weeks. He could not see why the Acclimatisation Society should not fence off a portion of the island for that purpose. The portion he more particularly referred to was the western end, which was nothing but a piece of sand and swamp, which would do for the men to land upon, and where they would not interfere with the animals belonging to the society. He should, however, much prefer that some other island should be given to the society.

The Hon. A. NORRIS said he agreed with the two last resolutions, but he thought some little modification should be made in the first. He had no doubt that the statement of the honorable gentleman, Mr. Browne, was perfectly correct, and he thought that in cases where boats were in danger the men should be allowed to land on any island, whether it were private property or not. He would, however, suggest that it should be left to the society to decide at what times and places the public should be allowed access to the island.

The Hon. D. F. ROBERTS said the honorable gentleman, Mr. Norton, appeared to have mistaken the object of the resolution, which was to restrict the power of the Acclimatisation Society, and not to extend it, which would be the case if the honorable member's suggestion were acted upon.

The PRESIDENT observed that, as he was President of the Acclimatisation Society, and as the grant in question had been proposed by him, he thought it incumbent upon him to say a few words. He would state, in the first place, that he was not aware how or under what circumstances this particular island was chosen for the purposes of the society. It would be used for turning out upon it game of different descriptions not now in the country, and it seemed to him that if an indiscriminate right of resort were granted to the public it would be quite useless to devote the island to such a purpose. If, therefore, the resolutions were carried in the form they were presented to the House, and with the amendment proposed by the honorable member, Mr. Bigge, it would be tantamount to withdrawing the grant which the House had made by previous resolutions. If any persons, who from stress of weather landed upon the island, were allowed to remain forty-eight hours upon it, they might in that time shoot all the game upon it, and the society would be unable to prevent them. It would have been better, he thought, and more straightforward, at once to have proposed that the previous resolutions be annulled, and the grant be taken away from the

society. It might be the case that a more suitable island could be selected, and, as a member of the society, he might say that he had no particular predilection for Innes Island, nor did he believe that the society at present was in a position to make any use of it; but he thought, if the grant were to hold good, and the island be given over to the Acclimatisation Society, the proposition of the honorable member, Mr. Norton, was fair enough. If the necessities of the public required that there should be a landing there, the society had a right to protect their property by making the landing place where they liked. If the question went to a division, he should certainly support the amendment of that honorable member.

The Hon. W. WOOD said the more he saw of this grant the more he felt that these sort of things were given away too hastily, and that they would have to repent of them afterwards. He believed there was scarcely an island in Morston Bay that had not been given away to some one or other. There was one which had been given to a late member of the other House, who was not now in the country; and he believed another had been given to a member of the Council, who was also absent from the colony. He knew, also, that some friends of the late Premier had others, and he thought it was high time to look after this property. No doubt the honorable President was correct, and that if every person had a right to land upon the island it would be useless to the society, and they would not send any animals or birds to it. He thought it would be much better if his honorable friend, Mr. Browne, would move a resolution to withdraw the grant altogether. These grants were made altogether too hurriedly; he could not see why the islands should be given away at all. Some of them were very suitable for sugar plantations. If the question went to the vote he should support the resolution.

The Hon. W. THORNTON said he approved of the suggestion thrown out by the honorable member, Mr. Wood. He thought the grant in question had been too hastily conceded by the House. He was in the House at the time it was made, and he regretted that he did not then oppose the motion, but it did not then appear to him so objectionable. He had, perhaps, as much knowledge of that portion of the bay as any honorable member in the House, and he quite concurred in the opinion that to make such a use of the island would be to hinder trading to the south end of the bay, as boats passing backwards and forwards generally stopped there; in fact, it was the only place where they could stop when waiting for a wind. Rafts, especially, were frequently detained there for weeks. He did not think the suggestion of the honorable member, Mr. Norton, could be carried out, that the society should fix either the times or places at which boats should be allowed to land, because that must depend

very much on the tide. He did not think Innes Island was at all fitted for the purposes of the Acclimatisation Society; there was no water upon it, nor were there any rocks or suitable places for deer, or other animals of that species, and the soil was a species of red clay and not at all well grassed. If the resolutions were carried, the island would be of very little use to the society. He did not think it was right to give away the public property in this way, for those who come hereafter to the colony might find use for these islands which did not appear now. For these reasons, he should be glad if it were within the compass of parliamentary usage to annul the previous resolutions, and do away with the grant altogether.

The PRESIDENT said he thought it would hardly be in order to take into consideration any resolution which annulled previous resolutions. A motion of such an important character ought not to be introduced without due notice. If the honorable member, Mr. Wood, chose to withdraw the resolutions before the House, he could of course give notice of any others which might have a different object.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE, in reply, said that in placing the resolutions on the paper he had not contemplated any such result as had been predicted by the honorable President, and with all due deference to that honorable gentleman's opinion, he did not think they would have the effect which he appeared to anticipate. The honorable gentleman had said that if persons were allowed to land on Innes Island they would be able to shoot all the animals belonging to the society. But he, Mr. Browne, had not sought to obtain any such privilege for the public, nor did the resolutions, in his opinion, warrant such an assumption. If any damage were done to the property of the society, the persons committing the offence could be prosecuted. That might possibly involve some difficulty, but the society, when they applied for a grant of the island, should have taken all those matters into consideration. What he contended was, that the society were not to have the grant on such terms as would be extremely injurious to the public at large. He scarcely thought the honorable member, Mr. Norton, could have reflected upon his own suggestion, that it should be left to the society to determine the times and places of landing on the island. They might fix the places, but how could they fix the time, when the boats put in there from stress of weather and were entirely dependent upon the wind and tide? For instance, the society might decide that the public should land on the island on Mondays only, and a violent storm might get up on a Tuesday. He did not see the same objection to the choice of the landing places by the society, and in connection with this part of the question he might say that he had had some conversation with a leading member of the Acclimatisation

Society, and requested him to point out on the map any places which he considered proper to reserve as landing places, and had suggested at the same time that one landing place would not be sufficient. That gentleman had not done so, and he had therefore brought forward the resolutions in their present form. He could see no objection to mark out several landing places to suit the various changes of wind and tide. He should be quite willing to accept the amendment of the honorable member, Mr. Bigge, and extend the time for parties landing to remain on the island to forty-eight hours.

The question as amended was then put and passed.

GRANT TO THE HONORABLE LOUIS HOPE.

The Hon. W. WOOD moved the second reading of a Bill to enable a grant of land to be made to the Honorable Louis Hope. He believed honorable members would agree with him that the grant in question would be a graceful recognition of the services of one of the most valuable colonists in Queensland. The services that gentleman had rendered to the colony had extended over a number of years, but it was only during the present year that he had reaped any reward. The honorable gentleman had been, he did not say the only, but one of the pioneers of sugar cultivation, and he conceived that, if the Legislature offered rewards as they were in the habit of doing to the finders of gold and minerals, the man who proved that any new product, such as sugar, cotton, or tobacco, could be successfully raised in the colony, was fairly entitled to recognition. He felt sure the resolution would be agreed to, and would therefore at once move its adoption.

The question was put and passed.