

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1868

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 7 February, 1868.

Export of Fresh Meat Bill.—Proposed New Quarters for the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

EXPORT OF FRESH MEAT BILL.

Mr. WALSH, in announcing that he had taken charge of the Export of Meat Bill for the honorable gentleman who had originated it in another place, begged briefly to state that he thought some such measure would be a lasting benefit to the colony. But, at the same time, as the Bill was at present framed, he felt bound to say he could not give it his whole support. He asked honorable members, if they were of the same opinion as himself, to agree to the second reading; and, it would be for them, in committee, to put the Bill into such shape that it should effect the good which he presumed the promoters desired from the legislation. It appeared to him that, as it stood, the Bill was likely to benefit but one single person or company; and he could never, of course, give his consent to the passing of a measure of that kind, the advantages of which might be transient to the colony. Under its provisions a person would be able to avail himself of its benefits by exporting one hundred tons of uncooked fresh meat, after which he might, if he chose, cease to carry on operations. He would propose some such alterations in the first clause as would allow any person or persons who complied with the provisions of the Act to avail himself or themselves of its benefits. It should not be the first claimant who should benefit. He would not restrict it to one or to twenty persons. He would limit the operation of the measure to two years after its passing. Again, in the first proviso of the second clause, he would make a considerable alteration, as he was not quite sure that it would be fair to exempt salted meat from the Bill; and, again, he was not decided in his own mind if it would not be unjust as well as impolitic to exempt cooked meat:—

“ Provided always that such selection shall be made within three years after the passing of this Act and on such selection being made as aforesaid and on application by the person or com-

pany of persons making such selection and on proof being given as hereinafter provided that the said conditions have been duly complied with a free grant in fee simple of the said *ten thousand* acres of land shall thereupon issue to such person or company of persons as aforesaid."

There was no reason why the live stock of the colony should not be converted into a valuable export, as cooked meat as well as in an uncooked condition. He would, therefore, suggest an amendment to the effect that provided that the meat was the property of one establishment, and had been shipped within the period of two years, and consecutive six months from the previous shipment, it should be sufficient to entitle the shipper to the benefit of the measure. He threw out those suggestions for consideration. He knew there were honorable members who thought that before the Bill was passed, it should be put into a different shape altogether. The honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Macalister, had some idea of granting a bonus on all shipments of meat from the colony.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We have had enough of bonuses.

Mr. WALSH: He pressed upon the House the consideration, that this was a very important subject. It was manifest to every one that the exports of the colony were much smaller than they ought to be, and that the development of new exports should be encouraged. He trusted that honorable members would proceed to discuss the Bill with an earnest endeavor to improve the condition of the colony, by offering inducements to the capitalists and colonists, of whatever means, to embark in some such enterprises as were indicated in the Bill. He moved that the Bill be read a second time.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he should support the second reading of the Bill; but he quite agreed with the remarks of the honorable member for Maryborough in reference to the desirability of having its provisions amended in committee. The danger was, in passing a Bill of this kind, that it might be rushed through the House too hastily; and that a whole crop of claimants would spring up with claims for establishing new industries. He did not think the principle of bonuses was a good one. It was, however, desirable to encourage an export of the kind contemplated, and certain inducements might be held out to the company in question; but the manner proposed—to give the land directly a certain quantity of meat was exported—was going a little too far.

The Hon. A. MACALISTER said he was not aware when he entered the House this morning that the Bill was likely to come on for discussion, and, for that reason, he had not with him some information which had been communicated to him on the subject. He thought the House was perfectly satisfied that the Bill would never, in its present shape, give encouragement to the export of

meat. He took it that the great object to be obtained was to raise up and encourage a profitable trade in the export of meat from the colony; but, as the Bill stood at present, not only would the trade be restricted to one description of meat, but it could only be carried out, as was observed by the honorable member for Maryborough, by one individual; and, whether it turned out a profitable speculation or a losing one, the 10,000 acres of land would be gone. One ship would, in point of fact, carry home all the produce for which the House were asked to grant the land. He could not help thinking that the Bill partook a good deal of a "job." He did not at all connect the honorable member for Maryborough with it. The Bill, on the face of it, shewed that an attempt was made to get out of the colony 10,000 acres of land, for which the colony would derive no equivalent benefit. It must be altered from beginning to end; and when that was done, possibly the measure might be one to encourage the export of meat from the colony. In fact, it would be necessary to alter the very title of the Bill: it was "A Bill to Provide for the Encouragement and Export of Unsalted and Uncooked Meat, from the Colony of Queensland." Why should it not be a Bill to provide encouragement for the export of meat anywhere? Why should it be restricted to export to the United Kingdom? Why not export to India, China, and Japan? And why say only one hundred tons? Encouragement should be held out to all parties who chose to engage in the trade, and assistance should be given for the export of smaller quantities. Grants of land should be continued for two or three years, until it was clear that the trade was profitable, and that those engaged in it would be able to stand without assistance. It was very important that the export of every description of meat should be encouraged. Mr. Blaxland's meat would not be touched by the Bill; yet he (Mr. Macalister) believed it was a very satisfactory article. A patent had been taken out some time ago by a gentleman in Brisbane for the preservation of meat for export, and that gentleman had obtained the highest certificates from Paris, respecting the success of his endeavors to preserve the meat. And as to the quality of the meat, all productions of the kind should be embraced in the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY remarked that the Bill was something like the famous Highland gun that was known in history; it was a very good gun, but it wanted a new lock, stock, and barrel! so with the Bill; it was a very good one, but it wanted altering from beginning to end, title and all. He must say he thought the colony had had quite enough of bonuses. The cotton bonus they had had a great deal too much of. Since a grant of land had been made the other day to a gentleman who had occupied himself in the profitable occupation of sugar growing, everybody was applying for land, as a reward

for having initiated some new industry. If one person got land for one thing, he did not see why another should not get it for another thing. As far as patents went, he might state that before long he expected that there would be more patentees than butchers in Brisbane. Since he had been in office he had granted three, but he did not believe that they would result in anything tangible. They did no good, except the little of putting £20 into the Treasury. He was afraid the patentees would have great difficulty in getting back their money. He had no objection to the Bill going into committee, but he reserved to himself the right of cutting it and carving it quite as much as any meat that would be exported under it would ever be.

Mr. ARCHER was sorry to say that he differed entirely from most of what he had heard; and he did so because he knew the special object of the Bill. As to giving bonuses for the export of salt and cooked meat, that was not at all necessary, such a trade was already established. Salt and cooked fresh meat was exported from Ipswich; and as soon as the patent for the export of that meat fell in, any number of persons could, as the House were aware, export as much as they liked. Much of it had been sold, but the trade had not become extensive, not because the meat did not keep well, but because such poor animals had been slaughtered that the meat would not sell in England. The colony already possessed methods of exporting salted and cooked meat for the home market. The preparation of extract of meat and powdered meat in tins was already in successful working; and, he believed, paid the exporters. But a successful attempt had never yet been made to send home uncooked fresh meat. The great object of the Bill was to encourage those persons who were willing to go to an enormous expense in trying to do so. If they intended to supply England with food for the million, they must ship home carcases, and that could only be done by the freezing process; at least, no other method of preserving meat fresh had been discovered. The freezing process did not destroy the value of the meat, and would keep it fresh for many months. Many honorable gentlemen had seen, in Sydney, meat that had been frozen for twelve months; and they were aware that it was as good as on the first day it was killed. He had, himself, eaten fresh meat that had been killed five months, and preserved by freezing during that time; and it was as good as if cooked at the proper time after leaving the hands of the butcher. It was well known in Europe that freezing did no harm to meat; and the only difficulty was to keep up the necessary degree of cold to preserve the meat fresh indefinitely. The cost of sending one hundred tons of meat to England would be as much as the value of the ten thousand acres

of land mentioned in the Bill, at the price of one pound an acre. To send home a single vessel, to furnish and fit her for carrying home a cargo of meat, would more than equal that; and was it likely that persons would enter into such an extensive undertaking for the purpose of sending home only one hundred tons of meat? Was it likely they would purchase and set up extensive machinery, with the object of sending home only one cargo, and not using it again? The expense of the undertaking was so enormous, that it would not pay the promoters to take twenty thousand acres of land and send home only one cargo. He had been in Sydney, and, while there, had several conversations with the gentlemen engaging in the speculation; he had entered into calculations of the expense of carrying it out, and he had no hesitation in saying that the company would not be able to start until they had £150,000 or £200,000, and that they could not claim under the Bill until they had spent £50,000 or £60,000, at the least. An extensive establishment would have to be formed, freezing-rooms erected, tanks constructed and fitted on board ships, at an expense so enormous that even the wealthiest men in New South Wales were afraid to enter into it alone, and had sent to England to form a company. There was no other effective process of preserving meat like the freezing process, and it was that which the Bill was meant to promote. He should support the Bill, in the hope that it would eventuate in the export of fresh and uncooked meat from the colony on the principle which had been mentioned.

Mr. FRANCIS supported the Bill, believing, however, that it required to be re-modelled from beginning to end. There was plenty of land in the colony doing very little good, and the best use that could be made of it was to give it to men who would improve it, develop the colony's resources, and increase the colony's exports. The cotton bonus was an admirable principle and had done good; but it was nearly time to withdraw it. Bonuses could not be continued to make trade profitable, but to encourage the development of new resources and industries. The sources of wealth abounded in the colony in profusion, only awaiting the industry of man to develop them. Many persons were making experiments in the direction of the useful object set forth in the Bill; and it would never do to limit its provisions for the benefit of one person or company. The House must take care that the admirable proposal to encourage the export of fresh meat was not abused, as had been suggested by the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Macalister. He should be glad to see the Bill withdrawn, on the understanding that it should be brought forward next session; but, by no means should they do anything to shew that they were too niggard, too poor, or too blind, not to encourage such projects as were set forth in the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS supported the Bill, as it would encourage an industry which ought to be promoted. He well remembered that in 1848, the year in which the famine occurred in Ireland, an immense amount of stock was boiled down. Something like half a million of sheep were boiled down in Australia: he had himself boiled down ten thousand. How much better it would be to send home to England and Europe a part of the meat that thus went to waste. He was quite satisfied with the arguments brought forward by the honorable member for Rockhampton, and should, for one, support the Bill almost in its entirety. There were one or two matters connected with the Department of Lands which required some consideration. He thought the Bill an excellent one as it stood; and if its provisions were made too general, its object would be defeated.

Mr. CLARK said he took very much the same view as the honorable member who had just sat down. He took it that the Bill was framed for the purpose of encouraging the export of fresh meat for unsalted and uncooked meat. Its object was to promote a new industry, and was, he believed, intended to assist the carrying out of the new system of freezing meat in this colony, and for that purpose alone, and there could be no doubt that if this process were once successfully established, the article would command a ready sale at home. He would not pretend to say whether the Bill was a proper one in its details; there were several clauses in it of which he disapproved, especially with regard to the description of land; but he approved of the principle, and he thought it should be confined to fresh meat alone, as he felt convinced that if that export were once set afloat, it would only be rivalled in this colony by the export of wool; it would be one of the most important industries ever established in the colony, barring none.

Mr. PUGH said he, in part, agreed with the principles embodied in the Bill, as he thought that any person or company of persons who embarked their capital in such an expensive undertaking should be encouraged, especially as they would be likely to meet with considerable opposition from the carcass producers and contractors at home before they could get a firm footing in the English market. He must say, at the same time, that he regarded the Bill, when he first looked at it, with some suspicion, as being intended to be the means of giving ten thousand acres of land to a particular person. He hoped, however, it would be so altered in committee as not only to offer encouragement to the exporters of fresh meat, prepared by the freezing process, but to those who exported extracts of meat. He would not go so far as to say salted meats, because that was an industry which was already established and found to pay. He would not restrict the grant altogether to ten thousand acres on

the first shipment, but to distribute it over various shipments; because the expense being, as the honorable member for Rockhampton had pointed out, principally in the fitting out of the vessels used for the purpose, and as these vessels would be equally available for Sydney, Melbourne, or elsewhere, it might happen that this large grant of land would be given for a single shipment from this colony. Of course, he was ready to defer to the opinions expressed by several honorable members who were more acquainted with the subject, but still he must say he should like to see the Bill, while offering full encouragement to this speculation, so far altered that the advantages it offered, instead of being confined to a few, should be as general as possible.

Dr. CHALLINOR said it was certainly very desirable, if possible, to establish a valuable export of this kind, but he objected to the Bill in its present shape; and, but for the alterations which it had been suggested should be made in committee, he should have opposed the motion for its second reading, and divided the House upon it. It must not be forgotten that the advantages offered by the Bill would be quite as much to the benefit of the other colonies, who might not contribute one sixpence. He had heard that the squatters in the other colonies would not unite for the purpose of carrying out that experiment, because those who did not contribute would, if it succeeded, benefit equally with those who did. It was not right that the youngest and weakest of the Australian colonies—he did not refer to the natural resources of Queensland—should be called upon to bear alone the expense of carrying out such an experiment. It would be much better if each of the Governments of the colonies would agree to bear a proportionate part of the expense of trying the experiment. He would not oppose the second reading of the Bill, though he should feel himself quite at liberty to oppose the third reading, and even to divide on it.

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

PROPOSED NEW QUARTERS FOR THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved—

That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a committee of the whole for the purpose of considering an address to the Acting Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed on the Supplementary Estimates of 1868 the sum of £1,000, to provide for the erection of quarters, at the new Houses of Parliament, for the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, in accordance with recommendations contained in a report from a select committee of this House, dated 10th October, 1866.

He said the Government had thought it necessary to bring this matter before the House, so that there should be an expression of opinion upon it, and also that the House

should be cognizant of what the Government proposed to do in the matter. The Clerk of the Assembly had written a letter to the Government, reminding them that when the new Houses of Parliament were finished, if he were to have a residence at all, it should be in the neighborhood of those buildings, in accordance with the resolution upon which his present residence was given to him. [*The honorable gentleman read the report of the committee.*] The Clerk of the Assembly had offered, if the Government put up a new house for him, to guarantee a certain rent—£120, he believed—for the building at present occupied by him; so that, in point of fact, the interest of the money required for the new building would be defrayed by the rent of the old one. The expenditure would not, properly speaking, be a charge upon the general revenue, as it would be transferred to the vote for Parliamentary Buildings as soon as the Government were able to raise a further sum by disposing of more of the land, from the proceeds of which it was intended that the new Houses of Parliament should be erected. He might add, that the Clerk of the Legislative Council had also sent in a claim to be supplied with quarters in the new Houses of Parliament. He would not read that gentleman's lengthy letter, which referred to the fact that the writer was first appointed Clerk of the Assembly, and afterwards to the Legislative Council—which he (the Colonial Treasurer) believed was the case, although he never acted as Clerk of the Assembly—and that he was senior officer, and therefore equally entitled to quarters in the House, besides being keeper of the Parliamentary records. He believed, however, that the records were kept in the Supreme Court, and that the object in view was to have a person living on the premises to look after the Parliamentary Buildings generally. It was for the House to consider whether the Clerk of the Council had a claim for quarters as well as the Clerk of the Assembly. But if those claims were admitted, there would be no end of them. The librarian would come forward and say he was entitled to free quarters, and many others. With these remarks, he would leave it to the House to say whether the building should be put up and whether the other claims should be entertained.

Mr. FITZGERALD said he felt surprised at the honorable the Colonial Treasurer bringing in such a motion, when he knew so well that they would not be able to meet their expenditure, even if no fresh additions were made to it, and when he was aware that his own estimated deficiency in the revenue must be somewhere about £150,000. He (Mr. Fitzgerald) had withheld all motions for expenditure for his own district, although the northern districts had given £60,000 of their revenue for the benefit of other parts of the colony. The Clerk of the Assembly had quarters which would do very well for

the present, though when they had more funds he would be very happy to vote a sum for the erection of fresh quarters. He should most certainly oppose the motion at present, as he thought it a most unnecessary expenditure to incur, and because he knew that the claim, if allowed, would be followed by a number of applications of a similar nature.

Mr. STEPHENS said he thought it would be better for the Government not to stir in the matter at present. The Clerk of the Assembly had quarters provided for him, which he could use until the Government were in a position, by the sale of a portion of the lands granted to them to dispose of for the erection of the new Houses of Parliament, to build him a new house. If the money were voted at present it would have to come out of the general revenue. He should, therefore, oppose the motion at the present time. He thought that when so many items of expenditure had to be postponed it would not be right to press this motion. With regard to the other claims, he did not admit one of them. He did not understand anything about another officer being keeper of the records; he supposed he locked them up in a safe and that was all he had to do with them. But the Clerk of the Assembly lived in the place and had to attend the sittings of the House, which constantly sat very late, and it was very convenient for that officer to be on the spot in order that the Government Printer might refer to him at any time. He had also charge of all the Assembly papers and records, and he had to arrange them and have them ready for the printer very early in the morning, and it was found exceedingly necessary for him to be on the spot. There was no other officer who had the slightest claim upon the House. He should utterly ignore any such claims. This claim had been admitted by the select committee, and the house now occupied by the Clerk of the Assembly was given to him for that reason. He thought, however, that until the Government were in possession of funds for the purpose, the matter had better stand over, especially as the money, if the sum were voted now, would have to be taken out of loan.

Mr. FRANCIS said he should support the motion, as he understood that the Clerk of the Assembly would guarantee that the Government derived a rent of £120 to £150 from the quarters he at present occupied. That would more than provide the interest for the money borrowed to erect a new house.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he leant towards the opinion expressed by the honorable member for South Brisbane, that it was not desirable to incur this expenditure at present. The amount mentioned would not be sufficient for the purpose. For that sum only a paltry building could be erected, which would not be in character with the New Parliament

Houses, and the effect would be very unsatisfactory. He thought, therefore, it would be better to let the matter stand over for the present, until some better provision would be made, even at the risk of a little inconvenience. The honorable Colonial Treasurer had not brought the matter forward very strongly, and he thought it would have been much better if he had resisted the application at the outset. It was admitted that the grant for Parliamentary Buildings would be exceeded, and this expenditure would, therefore, be in excess of the sum.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he hardly thought it fair to take the Government to task for bringing this matter before the House, because there was a report from a select committee which sat last session, which distinctly advised that the Clerk of the Assembly should have a residence in the immediate vicinity of the House. It was merely a question as to whether the finances of the colony were in such a deplorable state as not to permit of £900 being expended for the erection of a building for this purpose. He thought, when the whole of the land available under the Parliamentary Buildings Act was disposed of, there would be a balance more than sufficient to cover the outlay. It was for the House to decide whether the money should be expended or not. The land was not yet sold, and, of course, the longer it was kept out of the market, the better, in the present state of the colony.

Mr. FITZSIMMONS said he did not expect to have seen this motion on the paper, but he supposed the Colonial Treasurer had brought it forward on the recommendation of the select committee which sat last year on the subject. It was a compliment paid to the officer in question for his valuable services, and the benefit of his living on the spot was a point which had been closely considered, and that ought to have some weight with the House. As the guaranteed rent would more than cover the interest on the money required to be expended, and as it was acknowledged that the work had to be done, he thought it would be as well to have it done at once, and he should be inclined to vote in favor of the motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he might as well state, for the information of the House, that this sum of £1,000 would only construct what the Colonial Architect called a "temporary building." That gentleman had informed him that he could put up as good a building as that at present occupied by the Clerk of the Assembly for £1,000, or rather for £900; but when the block of buildings, as originally designed for the Parliamentary Buildings were completed, this house would have to be taken down. He supposed by the time these buildings were completed in accordance with the original design, many of their heads would have ceased to ache; but still he could not see the desirability of putting up a temporary building at such a

cost, and he would, therefore, suggest, as an improvement on the proposed arrangement, that when they vacated the present buildings it would be very easy to let them, and from the rent derived from this source they could find the Clerk of the Assembly a house in the immediate vicinity of the Parliamentary Buildings; and even if a suitable house could not be found for that amount of rent, he had no doubt the House would not object to a trifling sum being granted in addition.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he had merely brought his motion forward because the gentleman to whom it referred was an officer of the House, and wished to have the sense of the House taken upon the matter. He would, however, withdraw the motion on the understanding that the course suggested by the Colonial Secretary be adopted.

The motion was then withdrawn.