

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 2 DECEMBER 1870

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 2 December, 1870.

Postponed Notices of Motion and Orders of the Day—
Railway Management.—The Case of Job Short—Gaoi
Management.

POSTPONED NOTICES OF MOTION AND
ORDERS OF THE DAY.

Mr. BELL moved, pursuant to notice,—

That an instruction be given to the Standing Orders Committee of the House, to the effect that such alteration be made in the standing orders as is necessary to give precedence to all postponed Notices of Motion and Orders of the Day on the Business Paper of this House.

He said his object in bringing forward this resolution, was to obtain the opinions of honorable members in reference to the inconvenience which resulted from the way in which the notices of motion were placed upon the business paper of the House. As far as his experience went, it had almost invariably been the case, that the member who first put a notice of motion on the paper, was the last to receive the attention of the House—in fact, according to the present arrangement, the last become first and the first become last. He could see no reason why the notices of motions should not be placed on the business paper of the following day, so that the member who first tabled his motion should have the first opportunity of bringing it before the House. He proposed, therefore, that the Standing Orders Committee should take the matter into consideration, and if they took the same view as he did, they would order that the different motions and orders of the day should retain the order in which they were placed on the paper, until the whole business on the paper was wiped off. It was not necessary for the House to discuss the matter at present, but he thought there could be no objection to refer it to the Standing Orders Committee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was afraid from what he had learned from the officers of the House, that the object of the honorable member would hardly be met by the resolution he had moved, and that instead of being of any advantage, it would only lead to confusion, and they would never know what business was coming on. If the honorable member would alter the wording of the

resolution, so as to accord with what he had said in addressing the House, and refer the question to the Standing Orders Committee to consider, there could be no objection to it. As the resolution stood, the Standing Orders Committee would be instructed to make the alteration. He must confess that he had often been in a fog as to what business was coming on, and he should be glad to have the subject taken into consideration by the committee.

Mr. BELL, in reply, said he would accept the suggestion of the honorable member, and with the consent of the House would alter his motion so as to read thus—

That an instruction be given to the Standing Orders Committee of the House, to take into consideration the Standing Orders, with a view to give precedence to all postponed Notices of Motion and Orders of the Day on the Business Paper of this House.

The question so amended was put and passed.

RAILWAY MANAGEMENT.

Mr. BELL moved, pursuant to notice,—

That a Select Committee be appointed, with power to send for persons and papers, and to sit during any adjournment of this House, for the purpose of taking evidence and reporting upon the present management of Railways in this colony, with a view to obtain an expression of the opinion of this House as to the policy which should be adopted by the Government in its Railway management,—such committee to consist of Mr. Walsh, Mr. Miles, Mr. Wienholt, Mr. McIlwraith, and the Mover.

Before going into the question, he wished to state that upon consideration he thought it would be better to have the committee chosen by ballot. It could hardly have been supposed that upon the introduction of railways into this colony, their construction and management would have been faultless. A good many strictures and much inquiry had been made on the subject of construction, and he thought the time had now arrived when some inquiry should be made into the management of the railways of this colony. He might not, perhaps, succeed in proving to the House the mismanagement which, in his opinion, existed; but should he fail to do so, the committee he asked for would still be of much service, if it succeeded in gaining the confidence of the country in whatever management the House chose to adopt for the future. He could safely say, that out of doors the greatest dissatisfaction existed with regard to the present management. There were three kinds of management—three distinct policies by which the railways of the colony might be managed. The first was the present system, which, in his opinion, was on the face of it nothing but injustice and inconsistency towards those who made use of the railway. The second was a policy which extracted the greatest amount of money possible from the railways, irrespective of any interest or advantage which they might confer upon the country. The third

was a policy which, by fostering many productions along the lines of railway by a low and impartial scale of charges, created an amount of traffic which did not at this time exist. He would here state that this question had been forced upon his attention by a very large portion of the constituency who had sent him to that House. They felt from their peculiar local position with regard to the railways, much dissatisfaction with the management which had hitherto characterised the railway department of this colony. He held in his hand a list—a comparative list of the charges made by the present tariff, and he thought it would shew an amount of inconsistency which would appear almost inconceivable. The distance between Ipswich and Allora was 131 miles, and between Ipswich and Dalby 130 miles, and the rates charged for the conveyance of goods, in almost every instance, was higher to Dalby than to Allora. For instance, to Allora first-class goods were charged £3 per ton, and to Dalby £3 15s.; for second-class goods, at owner's risk, the charge was £3 per ton, and to Dalby it was £4 17s. 6d.; second-class goods, at commissioner's risk, to Allora, £3 15s., and to Dalby £6 1s. 8d. per ton; third-class goods, at owner's risk, from Allora, £4 per ton, from Dalby £6; third-class goods, at Commissioner's risk, from Allora, £5 6s. 8d., and from Dalby, £8; for special class, Allora, £2 15s., and Dalby also £2 15s.; wool, per bale, clean, was charged 10s. 6d. from Allora, and from Dalby 11s.; wool, per bale, in grease, from Allora 14s., and from Dalby, 14s. 6d. Several inconsistencies also occurred in the classification of goods for various rates. For instance, boilers, however small, were charged as weighing four tons. A small steam boiler weighing only one ton, would cost £15 for carriage to Dalby. Oil manufactured at boiling-down establishments, if sent in casks to Ipswich, cost 4d. per gallon; but if sent in drums, which were much more easily stowed and less liable to leakage, it cost 8d. per gallon. Flour, salt, soap, soda, sugar, and fencing wire, were all charged 75s. per ton to Dalby, 130 miles from Ipswich, and only 60s. to Allora, which was 131 miles. Tobacco, for sheep-washing, cost £3 15s. per ton, and tobacco, for smoking, £6 1s. 8d.; millstones £3 15s., and grave-stones £4 17s. 6d.; horse-hair £3 15s., ditto, in bags, £6 1s. 8d.; biscuits, in bags or casks, £3 15s., ditto, in tins, £4 17s. 6d.; wines and spirits, in casks, £4 17s. 6d., in cases, £6; kerosene, carried at Commissioner's risk, £8, or 9d. per gallon; rice, £3 15s. per ton; sago, £6 1s. 8d. It seemed utterly incredible that such a tariff could be made out. Gunpowder, in kegs, and ammunition, were charged at double rate, at owner's risk, the minimum quantity being 5 cwt., so it appeared that 1 lb. of gunpowder or cartridges would be charged double rate as if it were 5 cwt., and cost 60s. Hides and

tallow could be forwarded at a special rate, but in minimum quantities of one ton of each, and purchasers of these products, in Dalby, must purchase one ton before they could avail themselves of this rate. The boiling down sent last year traffic in tallow and skins amounting to over £6,000, nearly one-twelfth of the total amount of traffic on the whole line, as would be shewn if the returns were moved for. Now, there was a great deal of difference in the cost of sending sheep by train, and the cost of sending tallow and sheepskins by the same mode of conveyance. It appeared that if the railway carried live sheep, weighing eighty pounds, from Dalby to Ipswich, they charged sixpence per head—eighty pounds of course meant the gross weight of the sheep before it was killed. Well, 300 of those sheep, at eighty pounds each, would weigh ten and three-quarters tons, which, at fourteen shillings per ton, would amount to £7 10s.; while the produce alone of the same number of sheep, or twenty pounds tallow each, at fifty shillings, and five pounds skin at sixty shillings, would amount to £8 14s. Besides this difference, the live sheep would require four trucks to convey them, while the produce of the same number could be sent in one truck. In consequence of these charges a very large number of sheep had been sent to Rockhampton to be boiled down, and the tallow sent direct to Sydney to be shipped for London, at about twenty-two shillings per ton; for, of course, every one would get the highest return he could for his fat stock. From information he had received, it was estimated that the number of sheep thus lost to the business was not less than from 150,000 to 200,000. The loss of traffic to the railway was estimated at 2,000 tons, and the loss to the revenue, at present rates, £5,000. Now, it was in order to impress upon the House the views which he entertained with regard to the last of the three policies he had mentioned, that he had quoted these figures, in the hope that they would adopt a tariff which, by fostering the productions which were raised along the lines of railway, by carrying them at moderate rates, would admit of the fullest rates for goods sent up the railway. That was a policy which had never been adopted in the management of railways in this country hitherto. There were many interests at present in abeyance, and it remained a question with those who proposed to establish them whether they would not be prevented by the present prohibitory rates for conveyance. There was a probability of meat preserving being carried on extensively along the lines of railway, but the present rates on preserved meats would be ruinous. In meat-preserving establishments a large number of hands were employed, and it was desirable to encourage such industries, especially at the upper end of railway lines. One of the results of boiling down and meat preserving was the very large

accumulation of animal matter. There were thousands of tons of manure now lying at the establishment at Dalby, which would give traffic to the railway, and be of great benefit to sugar growers and farmers, if carried at a low rate. It was not his intention, at this time, to go into any further details as to the management of railways in this colony, either in reference to the engineering branch or to the practical management of the lines. He hoped he had said sufficient to induce the House to grant this committee, and to shew that it would be productive of great advantage to the country. Whatever might be the result—whether the present system were continued or not, the inquiry would give satisfaction, and would make the people of this colony generally have more confidence in the management of their railways.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said he had not the least objection to the appointment of this committee. As far as he was concerned as Minister of the department he should be glad to assist in disseminating as much knowledge of the subject as was possible, with a view to bring about some more satisfactory system of working the railways. He did not know whether the honorable member intended to reflect upon him personally when he stated that the greatest dissatisfaction existed at the present management.

Mr. BELL disclaimed any personal reflection whatever; he had alluded to the system in operation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He thought the dissatisfaction which existed was confined to those who were the most interested in the matter. Where any dissatisfaction was felt by any other class, he believed it arose from motives very different from those to which the honorable member for Northern Downs attributed it. For his part, as a taxpayer of the colony, he was extremely dissatisfied at the low rates which were charged on the railway; he thought they were nothing more or less than a robbery upon the people of the colony. They were nothing like what they ought to be or what had been promised by those who advocated the construction of the line. He well remembered how those gentlemen protested in that chamber that it was not a reduction in the price of carriage that they sought to obtain by making the railway, but greater facilities of transit; but now they were continually carping at what he must persist in considering very low charges, and asking for reduced prices. The honorable member for Northern Downs, in bringing forward these complaints, was advocating the interests of his constituents at Dalby, but not the good of the colony. It was well-known that at some of the large stations on the Darling Downs a saving had been effected of from £1,500 to £2,000 a-year in the cost of cartage since the construction of the railway. He had admissions to that effect in his possession. Before the railway was made to Dalby the rate per ton for the cartage of goods from Ipswich to that place was eight

pounds, and they were frequently weeks, sometimes months, on the road; now they could be carried expeditiously for about half that price, and the same remark would apply to other places. It was the same with the passenger traffic. Within the last three or four years a person going to Dalby by the mail coach had to pay fifty shillings, and it took him two days to get there. Now he could be carried there in a few hours in the most luxuriant manner for sixteen shillings. No doubt the railway had been a great advantage to the honorable member's district; but, on behalf of those who did not derive any advantage from the reduced fares, he must warn honorable members that in approaching this subject, they must bear in mind that they had a higher object in view than merely to satisfy those who had the advantage of the railway within their reach. The honorable member had drawn a contrast between the charges between Ipswich and Allora and Ipswich and Dalby. He admitted the existence of differential charges; he was sorry they existed, and he had often attempted to obviate the necessity for them. But the reason for the difference of which the honorable member complained was, that the distance between Ipswich and Allora, by road, was not much more than half the distance between Ipswich and Dalby, and parties would not pay more for carriage by rail than they paid to send their goods by drays. Still, he was opposed to these differential charges, and he did not think from his short experience, as Minister of the department, that it was right for the Government to place themselves in opposition to the carriers. They ought to be allowed to get their fair share of the trade, and the public money should not be employed to create a competition with them. With regard to sheep and cattle—sheep were brought down from Dalby and Allora at sixpence per head, and he was advised that upon every train of sheep brought down the country lost at least £42 10s. The mistake was not in the discrepancy or excess of the charges; it was the special arrangements which had been made to please certain persons by allowing them to send their goods at low rates with the idea of cultivating a trade. Sheep were charged sixpence a head, which was a ridiculously low rate for a distance of 131 miles. There was very little difference in the cost of bringing down the produce in the shape of tallow and skins. He believed about 110 sheep would give one ton tallow. As to the argument used by the honorable member for Northern Downs, that a large number of sheep were sent to be boiled down and shipped from the Northern ports, he did not believe a word of it. That statement had, no doubt, been foisted upon the honorable member by some persons who were personally interested in getting the rates reduced. Any sheep farmer must know that it would pay a squatter much better to drive his sheep along the rich pastures of the western waters to Dalby, and

send them down at sixpence per head, than to allow them to waste away in traversing the barren country which they would have to pass to reach a northern port. No one but a madman would think of sending his sheep to Rockhampton when he could send them through the beautiful country which led to Dalby. And with regard to the statement in the papers that 150,000 had been diverted from Messrs. Blaxland's establishment, it was absurd. If that establishment could boil down that number, which he doubted, it would take them a whole season to do it. He did not hesitate to say that there were not 150,000 sheep fit for boiling down in the colony at that time. The honorable member had referred to the classification of goods. He was advised that this was completely a science, and he must confess he did not feel himself equal to making any alterations in it. What he hoped was that the committee would enter upon the inquiry in a fair spirit, and obtain the best evidence they could as to the management of the railway, to the benefit of the community generally. He hoped they would be able to arrive at a tariff which should be fixed by Act of Parliament, so that no Minister occupying the position he did should be able to interfere with it; for he did not hesitate to say that it was a dangerous power to place in the hands of a Minister. For his part, he could very easily make himself popular by reducing the rates, and making special arrangements, if he thought proper to do so; but it was extremely undesirable, in his opinion, that such a power should be placed in his hands. He should devote his attention to the establishment of a scale of charges which would be for the general good of the country, and he hoped they would be fixed by Act of Parliament, so that no one could trifle with them. He would recommend the honorable member to alter the number of members of the committee to seven, as there was always a difficulty in securing the attendance of a quorum when the number was so small. He should be happy to assist the honorable member, and to afford him any information in his power.

Mr. MILES observed, that as the Government did not object to the appointment of the proposed committee, it would be as well to postpone the discussion until the committee had taken evidence, when the question could be fully debated.

Mr. KING said he quite agreed with the mover of this resolution that it was extremely desirable to institute an inquiry into the management of the railways of the colony, and he thought "the committee should be instructed to prepare such a scale of charges as would relieve the general revenue from the charges made upon it by the facilities of carriage given by the railway to the inhabitants of the Darling Downs." He would move that as an amendment, or, rather, an addendum to the motion. He did not wonder that the honorable member for Northern Downs was dissatisfied, having had the advantage of

such low rates, in not getting his goods conveyed free of charge altogether.

Mr. BELL said his object was not specially to obtain a reduction of rates—the committee might possibly recommend a higher scale. What he wanted was a more equitable scale of charges. He hoped the honorable member would not impute motives to him.

Mr. KING had understood the honorable member to advocate a reduction, and he could only say that different inferences might be drawn from the same words. Reference had been made to the cost of conveying tallow and sheep sent down to the boiling-down establishment at Dalby. It appeared to him that the colony was now paying a bonus to support that establishment, and, as there were other establishments of the same kind, it was not right that the public money should be expended in protecting one person at the expense of another. He would reserve any further remarks on the subject until the new scale of charges came before the House.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he thought it would be very invidious indeed, to make such an addendum as that proposed by the honorable member for Wide Bay. It appeared to him that it might be worthy of the consideration of the House as to whether a simple system of charge for dead weight would not be most advantageous. The railway route, as between Allora and Warwick, was very circuitous, and that rendered it necessary for the charges to be different from what they would otherwise have been, because of the necessity to compete with the carriers, who could pursue a shorter route.

Mr. DE SARCE said he thought the House had now been furnished with the most positive evidence that could be afforded as to the worthlessness of the Warwick Railway. It had been admitted that the line had been carried in a circuitous route, in order to obtain traffic and drive carriers off the road; but it was now found that in order to accomplish such objects, it was necessary to reduce the rate of charges below what would meet expenses. He, therefore, thought it must be admitted that the Warwick Railway was a great mistake.

Mr. THORN said he did not think there had been any sufficient reason advanced in support of the amendment proposed by the honorable member for Wide Bay. He believed that, if the rates of charge along the western railway were reduced, both passenger and goods traffic would be greatly increased.

Mr. FIFE remarked that he had some conversation with the honorable the Secretary for Works upon railway subjects, and the conclusion he had come to was that the best thing that could be done would be to have a committee of inquiry with respect to the railways. He believed that a reduction of the scale of charges on the line from Rockhampton to Westwood would have the effect of greatly increasing the revenue derivable both from passenger and goods traffic. He

also believed that a reduction in the scale of charges on the Southern and Western line would also have a beneficial effect, both as regarded the revenue and the convenience of the public.

Mr. FERRETT said that the honorable member for Wide Bay had, in proposing his amendment, insinuated that the squatters in the western and southern districts got their goods conveyed by the railway at a very reduced rate. Now, he could inform the honorable member that it cost him as much to have goods conveyed to and from his station, by railway, as it cost him, formerly, to have his goods conveyed by drays.

Mr. CRIBB said he would support the original motion, and he considered that, for the reasons advanced by the last speaker, which he could fully bear out, and for other reasons, as affecting the revenue of the colony, and the general development of traffic between the interior and the sea-coast, the honorable member for Wide Bay would do well to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he thought that a great many questions had been imported into the debate, which would have been more advantageously dealt with when the House had the benefit of the report and evidence of the proposed committee of inquiry on the railways in the colony. He could scarcely make out what the honorable member for Wide Bay meant by the addendum he proposed to the original motion. He was perfectly aware that on the capital invested in the construction of the railway to the Darling Downs, the colony had to pay interest at the rate of six per cent.; and that that rate per cent., with other charges, amounted to a very large sum in proportion to the revenue of the colony. He could not, however, exactly see the value of the amendment proposed by the honorable member for Wide Bay; because he could not see that an increase of rates of charge would have the effect of increasing the revenue derivable from the railways. Indeed he was inclined to believe that any increase would have an opposite effect. The honorable member for Wide Bay, and other honorable members who supported him, seemed to take a very narrow view of the question of railway communication. They seemed to think that the Southern and Western Railway was beneficial only to the inhabitants of the Darling Downs and the adjacent districts. Now, the fact was, that the Southern and Western Railway was beneficial to other districts—even to the Wide Bay district, inasmuch as it had the effect of transferring the ordinary means of carrying power from one district to another, and thereby reducing the rates of carriage. Now, that was a view of the question which, as it seemed to him, had not occurred to the honorable member for Wide Bay, or those who supported him.

Mr. STEPHENS said he hoped the honorable member for Wide Bay would either withdraw his amendment, or modify it considerably,

because, in its present shape, he thought it would be found to be impracticable. If the scale of charges was raised, the effect would be to diminish the amount of traffic, both as to goods and passengers. If the honorable member had stated by his amendment that it was intended to relieve the revenue as far as possible, most honorable members on the Opposition side of the House, as well as himself, might have been disposed to give it their favorable consideration. He had always held that the railways should be managed as if they were the property of a private company, and consequently that the scale of charges should be fixed on the basis of business principles; and he hoped that if the proposed committee of inquiry should be appointed, the members of the committee would bear in mind the probable advantage of reducing the charges, for he must say he considered that a larger amount of revenue would be obtained from a reduction in the cost of carriage of goods, and a reduction of passenger rates, than was obtained at present. Now he was prepared to admit that if they reduced the charge for the carriage of wool, there would not be an additional bale sent down by railway; but if they were to increase the charges, there might be a great diminution of the traffic. It was no use to suppose, therefore, that by doubling the rates for the conveyance of goods the income to the revenue would, in consequence, be doubled; because, under such circumstances, the squatters would, and very naturally so, again begin to send their goods by dray. Honorable members who had previously held seats in the House, knew that he had always opposed the adoption of the route which had been followed out in the case of the Warwick Railway, on the ground of its being so circuitous. By the present route a line of railway had had to be constructed as between Ipswich and Warwick, extending over a distance of 150 miles, whereas the two places could have been connected by a line of only ninety miles in extent. Now, all he desired to see was that such a scale of charges and such a mode of management should be adopted as would secure an increase of traffic and of income, to as great an extent as possible.

The amendment was then put and negatived, on a division, as follows:—Ayes, 5; noes, 17.

Ayes, 5.
Mr. Moreton
" De Satgé
" Fyfe
" MacDevitt
" King.

Noes, 17.
Mr. Walsh
" Stephens
" Thompson
" Ramsay
" Scott
" McIlwraith
" Miles
" Johnston
" Cribb
" Ferrett
" Thorn
" Wienholt
" Forbes
" Royds
" Handy
" Haly
" Bell.

The original motion was then put and carried without division; but a ballot was demanded for the appointment of the committee, which resulted in the election of Messrs. De Satgé, McIlwraith, Walsh, Miles, Cribb, Scott, and the Mover.

THE CASE OF JOB SHORT—GAOL MANAGEMENT.

Mr. BELL moved—

That a select committee be appointed, with power to send for persons and papers, and to sit during any adjournment of this House, for the purpose of taking evidence and reporting upon the circumstances connected with the death of one Job Short, who died in Her Majesty's Gaol in Brisbane, on the 25th day of March last, and to include within the scope of such inquiry so much of the general management of the gaols of this colony as the committee think necessary,—such committee to consist of Mr. Palmer, Mr. Lilley, Mr. Royds, Mr. Groom, and the Mover.

This case was one, he said, in which, like the last, he had been moved to take action by a large portion of his constituents. The man Short and his family had long resided in the district which he (Mr. Bell) represented. A great interest was taken in his fate, and great anxiety was felt as to the immediate cause of his death, while in gaol. The man had been sentenced to imprisonment for cattle stealing. Before he went to gaol, he was a man of strong constitution and great mental activity. He remained but a few months in gaol when a sudden change was found to have taken place in him; and he eventually died, having either been insane or pretended to be insane some time before he died. The Government, or the Government officials, rather, contended that he pretended or shammed madness. Those who knew him well thought that he was a man unlikely to sham madness; that he must have been mad at the time of his death. The inquiry proposed was for the object of obtaining information. It was not for him (Mr. Bell) to say that the man was or was not mad, that he had been well or ill treated by the gaol officials; but, in order to satisfy his constituents, who had communicated the case to him, he moved for the committee. He had obtained from the present Attorney-General a copy of the depositions which had been taken at the inquiry held in the gaol shortly after Short's death; but those depositions, and that inquiry, failed to satisfy those who took an interest in the case. After the committee had investigated the whole circumstances of the case, it would be seen whether the unfortunate man had been well or ill treated, and whether the regulations enjoined by the gaol authorities were such as would inflict hardship on persons in the state which that man was in prior to his death. One of the principal and strongest statements made by the widow of deceased, which to a great degree evoked the sympathy of a large portion of his (Mr. Bell's) constituents, was that she had

offered to the Government of the day, to obtain, in the first place, the examination by, and, in the next place, the certificate of, a second medical man, touching her late husband's death; but her request was objected to and refused absolutely. It was a sad case altogether, because the deceased had gone through an amount of mental and bodily suffering which was not at all of an ordinary character. As to an inquiry into the "general management of the gaols of the colony," he had very little interest in it outside the immediate object of making the motion. He might state that he had been further communicated with by another portion of his constituents, whose representations were very strong in another case. It was not with the view of going to any great length with the inquiry into gaol management that he had enlarged the scope of the motion, but only so far as it involved the improvement of the present system of detaining debtors in gaol. A gentleman from his district was sent to gaol for contempt of court;—thus he was in the position of a person committed, and also of a debtor. In gaol, he was subjected to all the inconvenience, the indignities, and many of the penalties of the greatest criminals. He was obliged to go to his cell at five o'clock in the afternoon, subject to be searched at that time, and, also, in the morning, and in many other ways improperly treated. The House would agree with him (Mr. Bell) that it was not at all necessary or compatible with his position, to treat a debtor in the manner described. He might mention that the honorable members named on the committee were willing to take the trouble to make the inquiry, if the House had no objection to appointing them.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There would be no objection, on the part of the Government, to the appointment of the committee. He must say, however, that he thought it was giving undue prominence to the case of the late Mr. Job Short, to appoint a committee especially to inquire into that case, and to bring in the general management of the gaols as an appendage to it. He should like the motion much better if the honorable mover would invert the two subjects of it. The case of Job Short was a very simple one. It occurred before he (the Colonial Secretary) came into office. As he understood it, the man was a notorious character, and was utterly unmanageable in the gaol; and he was, therefore, sent to St. Helena for solitary confinement—the only place where he could be subjected to it. There he took to standing upon his head in his cell; and the medical officer said he was shamming. He (the Colonial Secretary) remembered seeing him when a patient in the hospital, on one occasion that he accompanied the late Premier to the island. The man was treated, and his head blistered, and he gave it up and was all right. But, subsequently, he took to standing on his head again—he would stand on his

head for hours, in his cell—and he died. The case had been explained over and over again to persons who had made inquiry at the Attorney-General's office, and of the Crown Law officers of the late Ministry and of the present Ministry. However, it was desirable to make everything satisfactory; and if anything had not come out that should have come out, the committee could make full inquiry. As regarded the inquiry into the gaols of the colony, and their management, he should be satisfied if the committee could make the management better than it was. Since he came into office, he had done the best he could, and he was quite satisfied the gaols would now bear favorable comparison with what they were a few years ago. He suggested that the committee should be appointed by ballot.

Mr. MILES endorsed the statements made by the honorable member for Northern Downs with reference to the feeling of the people in his district in reference to the case of Short. No doubt after the inquiry the matter would appear in a more favorable light than at present.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, in explanation, said he had inquired some time ago into the debtor's case mentioned. There was no debtor's prison, properly speaking; and the man was put into a cell from choice in preference to staying in the debtors' ward of the gaol. When leaving the gaol, he expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the treatment he had received. The prison officials had done everything they could for him.

Mr. BELL, in reply, said he thought it was scarcely worth while to alter the terms of the motion, as suggested by the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government. No complaint had been made by the debtor against the gaol officials; but it was the absence of a debtors' prison, and the treatment of debtors in consequence, that suggested the desirableness for the inquiry into the general management of the gaols.

Leave having been given for the amendment of the motion, and the ballot not being pressed, and the House consenting to his doing so, Mr. Bell named the following members to form the committee:—Messrs. Bell, Lilley, Miles, Palmer, and Royds.