

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 21 DECEMBER 1870

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 21 December, 1870.

Suspension of the Standing Orders.—Governors' Salary Bill.—Brisbane Waterway Bill.—Settled Pastoral Leases Bill.—Marriage Law Amendment Bill.—Savings Bank Bill.—Country Publicans Licensing Bill.—Legislative Council Estimates.—Brisbane Bridge Bill.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The Hon. J. F. McDougall moved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will enable the Council to pass the Settled Pastoral Leases Bill through its various stages in one day.

He stated that the Bill was a very short one which he thought would recommend itself to the favorable consideration of the Council, and would not be objected to in any of its various stages. The motion explained its object, and he would say no more than that he believed it was very necessary to get the Bill through this session, which was so very shortly to terminate.

The Hon. H. B. Fitz said he should oppose the suspension of the Standing Orders for the same reason that he gave yesterday;—he thought it was a very unwise and mischievous proceeding, and ought not to be attempted. But it had been invariably the practice, here, for the past ten years, to suspend the Standing Orders for the purpose of passing through Bills at the close of the session. He could not see that the Bill under notice was of such very pressing necessity, that such a proceeding was called for. He had read the Bill, and it was not the simple measure that he was at first led to believe it to be. Dealing with the Crown lands was a matter of importance, and not to be done without due consideration. On the motion for the second reading, he should give his opinion of the Bill; but he should now divide the House on the question of the suspension of the Standing Orders to pass the Bill. There were so many measures, now, that dealt with the Crown lands, most of them for the amendment of something done before, that the House could not be too careful. The Bill could stand over till the next session, in order that honorable members would be allowed time to read it carefully.

The Hon. J. F. McDougall, as a point of order, held that it was not within the honorable member's province to go into the merits of the Bill.

The Hon. H. B. Fitz: He had not done so.

The Postmaster-General said he should support the motion, because he thought it was competent for the House to vote against

the Bill itself at any stage. As his honorable friend had said, the session was very likely to close before long; and unless they suspended the Standing Orders, which they could do, there being a very full House to-day, they would virtually throw over the Bill to next session. He reserved to himself the option of voting against the Bill.

The question was put and affirmed, on a division:—Contents, 11; Not-contents, 5.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL then moved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will enable the Council to pass Government Bills through their various stages in one day.

He had said so much on this matter before, that the House would pardon his saying any more at present.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he should oppose the motion, on principle. It was treating the Council with the utmost disrespect, that the Government should send up Bills at the end of the session for the House to pass without time for consideration. If they were to share the responsibility of passing Acts, they should have the time to read them, at least, so that they could know what they were about. The way that public measures were sent to them from the other House by the Government was as if they thought the Council a mere voting machine. Surely, if the Assembly took a fortnight, or three weeks, or a month to pass a Bill, the least they could do was to allow the Council some time to read it. Bills were brought up, laid on the table, and advanced through all their stages in one day, in the Council, many honorable members, he had no doubt, never having read them.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he must reply to his honorable friend's accusation against the Government. As he had explained before, the Bills were read a first time and printed yesterday, and they would come up for second reading, to-day, in due course. Surely his honorable friend had read all of those Bills. If the motion were carried, it was not his intention to press any Bill through all its stages to-day, if there were good grounds for objecting to that course, and he could possibly avoid it. But every honorable member would agree with him that there were several of the Bills down on the paper now for second reading which could very readily go through their respective stages this afternoon.

The question was put and affirmed.

GOVERNORS' SALARY BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in moving the second reading of the Governors' Salary Reduction Bill, said it spoke for itself. It contained only one clause, and provided that the salary of all future Governors of this colony should be reduced from £4,000, the present salary of the Queen's representative in Queensland, to £3,500 per annum. It was not thought by Ministers that the salary

of £4,000 was too much for a gentleman in the exalted position of Governor; but the Bill was to carry out part of a scheme for the general reduction of the expenditure of the country—it was one amongst others to economise. He believed that the sense of the House was in favor of the Bill.

The question was put, and the House divided:—

Contents, 6.		Not-Contents, 10.	
The Hon. L. Hops		The Hon. H. B. Fitz	
" W. Thornton		" G. Harris	
" E. I. C. Browne		" C. B. Wish	
" W. Yaldwyn		" J. F. McDougall	
" J. C. Heussler		" G. Elliott	
" T. L. Murray Prior.		" D. F. Roberts	
		" J. A. Bell	
		" W. D. White	
		" H. G. Simpson	
		" J. J. Galloway.	

Resolved in the negative.

BRISBANE WATERWAY BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in moving the second reading of the Brisbane Waterway Construction Bill, explained that it was a measure to enable the Corporation of Brisbane to construct a sewer in the creek which ran across Queen street, and thence to the river. A portion of land was to be given to the corporation, and some was to be sold to provide funds for the work, which land had been included in the provisions of the Parliamentary Buildings Act. The Bill proposed to restore that land to the municipality. Honorable members would agree that it was a necessary piece of legislation.

The motion was agreed to, and the Bill was passed through all its subsequent stages.

SETTLED PASTORAL LEASES BILL.

The Hon. J. F. McDougall moved the second reading of a Bill to authorise and regulate the subdivision of Pastoral Leases in the Settled Districts of the Colony. It might be expected, he said, that, as a pastoral tenant of the Crown, he should know somewhat more of the matter referred to in the Bill than other gentlemen who were not so intimately acquainted with that particular interest. In order to afford as much information as he could upon it, he should just go through the clauses:—Clause 1 enacted that the provisions of this measure should be read with the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868. Any lessee for pastoral purposes under the eighth clause of the Act of 1868, was to have the power under this Bill to divide his run. As the principle of cutting up and dividing large holdings had been so repeatedly affirmed, he thought he need say very little on the point of the desirability and necessity of extending the power to all occupants of large pastoral runs from the Crown, to cut up and divide their holdings into five or six portions, provided that each portion contained not less than a certain stipulated area. The Council would, he thought, consider it only reasonable and just that, if a man was so fortunate, or unfortunate, as to hold a large run that

he could not dispose of, he should be placed in the position to subdivide it. Clause 2 was the short title. Clause 3 provided that any run should be divided, unless it contained a less area than twenty square miles. It guarded, therefore, against the possibility of very small holdings, of four or five miles; the minimum area for subdivision being specifically laid down. The run was to be subdivided—

“into two or more runs and to have the rent payable on the original run subdivided and apportioned amongst the new runs to be created by such subdivision and the pre-emptive and grazing rights appertaining to the original run disposed of in accordance with and subject to the provisions of this Act.”

As he had heard it objected to that the latter provision might create some little difficulty, he wished to point out that it could not do so. Whenever a run was subdivided, whatever the grazing rights that were held by the original lessee, they were divided and parted with the portion or portions of the run sold. As to the apportionment of rent, clause 5 said—

“The rent reserved on the original lease to applicant shall be subdivided and apportioned amongst the new runs proportionately as near as may conveniently be to the area thereof respectively but so that the aggregate of the new rent shall not be less than the total of the original rent”——

therefore, the Government, at all events, would not be losers by the division;—

“and also so that the apportioned rent on any subdivision shall not in any case be less than two-thirds of the amount that would be arrived at by calculating from the absolute proportion such subdivision bears to the total area.”

The Government were secured in the payment of the original rent, whoever might buy the portions of the run. Clause 5 provided that—

“A fee of five pounds sterling money for each subdivisional run shall have been paid into the Treasury which fee shall however be returned to the applicant in case his application is refused.”

He thought that was only right, that the applicant should pay fee: consequently the Bill, if passed, would be a source of revenue to the country. The 6th clause reserved power to the Governor to refuse his consent to the subdivision of any run:—

“It shall be optional with the Governor to refuse his consent to any such application or to grant the same with or without modification as to any particular comprised therein but should such application be granted it shall be so subject to the following conditions—

“The applicant must furnish with his application a feature survey or map of his original run such as is required by section eleven of the said Act but also including a similar feature survey or map of the new runs into which he desires such original run to be subdivided.”

Consequently, the pastoral lessee was at the entire expense of the proceeding. He must lay his application before the Governor, under clause 3, and, if it was approved of, he proceeded at his own expense with the subdivision, as shewn. Another condition, under clause 6, was—

“Every such run must be of not less than ten square miles.”

That provided that the country should not be ridiculously cut up into small holdings. Clause 7 said—

“Pending any application it shall be lawful for the Governor to require the applicant at his own expense to make and furnish any such additional surveys and plans as may appear to be necessary.”

That, he took it, inferred that, should disputes hereafter arise, the pastoral lessee should be required to furnish any other plans that might be necessary to settle the question; and that the Government should thereby be at no expense. Clause 8, he entirely agreed with:—

“The pre-emptive right attached by the said Act to the original run shall not be subdivided, but shall be attached to such one of the new runs as the applicant may designate.”

Honorable gentlemen might not have thought on this matter. The clause was a very important one; it prevented the pre-emptive right from being given up in any way;—that remained intact, and was to be attached to one of the portions into which the run was subdivided. Clause 9 provided for the apportionment of grazing rights:—

“The grazing or pasturage rights under the said Act attached to the original run shall be subdivided and apportioned amongst the new runs in such manner as to the Governor may seem expedient.”

Of course, that was a very simple matter; and he thought he need not say anything about it. Clause 10 was—

“On any such application as aforesaid being approved of by the Governor the lessee shall surrender and yield up his existing lease and the Governor shall cause leases of the new runs to be made out in accordance with the provisions of this Act but the subdivision shall not in any case have any effect until the issue of such new leases.”

Well, that was a very proper saving clause, too; and he thought it required no comment from him: it recommended itself to the House. The concluding clause, 11, ran thus—

“Nothing herein contained shall defeat affect or interfere with the right of resumption by resolution of both Houses of Parliament as prescribed in the tenth section of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868 or of the same being exercised in each subdivision of the run after the issue of the new leases.”

Of course, though the run should be subdivided, the Government were not in any

way deprived of their right of resumption over the land, or any portion of a run;—that was a power under the existing Act which was continued in the Bill. He hoped that honorable gentlemen would agree with him that the Bill was a very important one. It had been before the other branch of the Parliament in a former session, and had arrived at its last stage, when, unfortunately, it lapsed in consequence of the prorogation of Parliament. The same thing might occur on this occasion, unless the House would allow the Bill to pass through its various stages to-day. It might seem presumptuous in him to press it on the attention of honorable members as an important question, when they might consider it an unimportant one. But it would not be at all an unimportant one if he had a large holding, and, to a certain extent, had it encumbered, and wished to sell a portion of it. There was no reason in the world why he should not do that, to clear off a portion of his liabilities; but he could not do it under the existing law. He hoped, therefore, that the Bill would, in this case, recommend itself to the favorable consideration of the House, and that honorable members would assist him in passing it through all its stages to-day.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he should not offer so much opposition to the Bill had it not been introduced at this late period of the session and rushed through in such a way. As to the principle of it—he supposed there were not two or three members in the House who had read the Bill—he had no hesitation in saying that it was one of the most selfish Bills that was ever introduced in either House of Parliament. He looked upon the Bill as intended for the benefit of the gentleman who had introduced it in the other House. Now, he should endeavor to put a very different aspect upon it from that indicated by the Honorable Mr. McDougall. The honorable gentleman had said it was a very important matter for the pastoral lessees that it should pass; but he (Mr. Fitz) thought it was a very much more important matter for the public, that it should not pass. He should shew the House why the Bill should not pass. He would take one run, by way of example—that of the gentleman who had introduced the Bill, and who held 540,000 acres of land before the subdivision under the existing law, and the resumption by the Government; and, now, he held 270,000 acres, upon which he paid £600 a-year rent. If the Bill should pass, that gentleman could divide that 270,000 acres into forty or fifty runs; and then the Government, as honorable members were aware, by the Crown Lands Alienation Act, could not resume any of the lands held under the ten years leases. Every honorable member knew that the ten years leases were not worth two years' purchase; but if the Bill passed, when the Government introduced resolutions in Parliament for the resumption of the land of those runs, they

would have to deal not with one Crown tenant but with forty or fifty, perhaps five hundred, Crown tenants. Of all those different individuals, some would most likely hold seats in the other House; if not holding seats themselves, they would exercise great influence in the elections; and, was it to be supposed that the resolutions could be carried through the Assembly with such an influence as that brought against them? The fact was, that even the members of the other House had not read the Bill. They had been merely assured that it was perfectly right. There had been no opposition to it. It was a very exceptional course that had been taken in connection with it, by the way it had been introduced. It was a very insidious Bill, and should not be allowed to pass through in the way proposed. He had no hesitation in saying that the public would be wronged if it passed. There would be no resumption of the land under the ten years leases; the Bill would effectually stop that, and well the honorable member knew it. The eleventh clause said the Bill was not to interfere with the resumption of runs, but he maintained that the Government would find their difficulty when they had to deal with forty or fifty run-holders, instead of one individual—they might have to deal with three or four hundred persons where now they had to deal with only one. Bills ought not to be introduced with the indecent haste which had characterized the progress of the measure under notice; and, believing that it had not been properly considered, he should divide the House upon it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the Honorable Mr. Fitz had used one of the worst arguments for his cause when he said that forty or fifty persons would be in occupation of the land where now there was one, if the Bill passed. It struck him that the Crown Lands Alienation Act was passed especially for the purpose of getting the lands occupied by the people; and if fifty could be induced to go where one was now, he thought the Bill deserving of the support of the Council.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON said he thought that what the Council had heard in this debate shewed clearly enough that the minority had a right to object to the Bill being passed hastily. He, for one, never saw the Bill, until he came into the Chamber at half-past three o'clock, and when he looked over it, and heard the arguments against it, he felt more than ever that it was not a measure that ought to be passed without being well considered by honorable members. There was a fair amount of argument on both sides, but he was inclined to agree that no advantage was to be gained by the Bill, but that it would be a drawback; yet, at the same time, it was one of those matters upon which he thought a conscientious vote could not be given by members like himself, who did not thoroughly understand it, without

more time for consideration. Therefore, if the question went to a division, he should not vote on it; and he felt bound to give his reasons to the Council, for the course he should take.

The Hon. C. B. WHISH said he should most certainly oppose the passing of the Bill through all its stages to-day. He had already stated what a poor compliment it was to the Council, to be asked to pass Bills in a few hours. If any responsibility attached to the Council, to the discussions they held and the votes they gave, honorable members had better wait until they knew something about the Bill before they passed it, however much it might be required. Another reason for his opposing the Bill was, that he did not like its being brought in just a day or two before Parliament would be prorogued. It was a Bill that might be very beneficial; but he should like to know a little more about it than he could be expected to have learned within the last few hours. At any rate, his chief opposition was to having a Bill hurried through the House which was of an important character, because dealing with the Crown lands.

The Hon. W. THORNTON said he just wanted to explain his reason for voting against the second reading of the Bill, after having voted for the suspension of the Standing Orders, to allow Bills to pass through all their stages in one day. When he came to look at the Bill, he found that it was not of so simple a nature as he had been led to imagine from the reports he had received; it was of a very complicated character. He confessed that he had not read it before he came to the House. But, after reading it, he thought that some further thought should be given to it. He had listened to the objections that had been raised against the Bill by the Honorable Mr. Fitz, and he really thought that, under the circumstances, he should vote against the motion for the second reading, not that he condemned the Bill, but simply to afford time for further and ample consideration.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE said he should support the second reading of the Bill, and for a few reasons that he would give. One reason was, that he believed it would assist many gentlemen in this colony who were largely engaged in squatting pursuits, and who might have very heavy liabilities, which, at present, might be weighing very heavily upon them, and from which, by a division of their runs under the operation of the Bill, they might be enabled to free themselves, to a great extent, if not altogether. That would be a satisfactory result to themselves and to the colony generally. He thought, also, that it had been very well pointed out by the Honorable Mr. Fitz, who had so strongly opposed the Bill—and the observation had been noticed by the Postmaster-General—that it would have the effect possibly of increasing the settlement of the colony by

the occupation of the lands, as, where one squatter now held the land, by a subdivision of his run, forty or fifty squatters would be in occupation of the same land. The principle which had been contended for so long, and which was still being contended for—to get population in all the districts of the colony, would be given practical effect to. That was a move in the right direction, and for those reasons he should give his vote for the second reading of the Bill. He could not see that the Bill was so complicated as the Collector of Customs, the Honorable Mr. Thornton, had said. It was a simple measure, and if any honorable member applied his mind to it, he could come to a decision upon it.

The Hon. J. J. GALLOWAY said he should support the second reading of the Bill. He really could not say that there was not fault to be found with it; but it seemed to him to be a mere matter of justice to certain persons who could not take advantage of the existing law. The division of the runs, as proposed, seemed to him to be for the good of the country instead of harmful. It was simply to allow a person who might have too much land to get rid of a part of it. He really could see no objection to the principle of the Bill, though he really did object to the House passing measures through all their stages in one day. He had objected repeatedly to the adoption of such a system session after session; and he hoped there would be an end of it. The Council should be no longer expected to pass Bills without any consideration of their provisions at all.

The Hon. J. F. McDougall said he should have no objection to take the third reading of the Bill on the following day, if that would meet the wishes of honorable members.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said his observations were, he supposed, rather impertinent after what had fallen from the last speakers, but it struck him that as the majority of honorable members had not seen the Bill till to-day, it might stand over till to-morrow. As far as the principle of the Bill went, he heartily agreed with it, because he thought its application was just the thing that was required under the circumstances. Only because honorable members complained that they had not had time to read the Bill, he urged that it should be allowed to stand over.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative, on a division:—

Contents, 12.		Not-Contents, 4.	
The Hon. J. F. McDougall		The Hon. L. Hope	
" J. J. Galloway		" W. Thornton	
" W. Hobbs		" C. B. Whish	
" G. Elliott		" H. B. Fitz	
" G. Harris			
" J. C. Heussler			
" W. Yaldwyn			
" W. D. White			
" J. A. Bell			
" D. F. Roberts			
" E. I. C. Browne			
" T. L. Murray Prior			

MARRIAGE LAW AMENDMENT BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill to amend the Law relating to Marriages. He said he need hardly enter into the matter, because honorable gentlemen would see his reasons. He thought that no one could have any objection to the Bill passing through all its stages during this sitting.

The question was put and affirmed, and the Bill was passed through all its stages without objection.

SAVINGS BANK BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in moving the second reading of a Bill to authorise the investment of moneys deposited in the Government Savings Bank in certain securities, and to amend the existing Savings Bank Acts, said that complaints had been made in the House that money had been appropriated from the Savings Bank improperly by respective Governments. The Bill provided that in future the moneys deposited should be invested in debentures or other Government securities, and vested in the hands of trustees. The trustees would be the President of the Legislative Council, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the Colonial Treasurer for the time being. No securities so invested could be sold without the authority of the Governor. The sixth clause of the Bill provided for the inspection and audit of the securities:—

“The Auditor-General shall half-yearly or immediately after the thirtieth day of June and the thirty-first day of December of each year duly inspect count and audit the Government Debentures and Treasury Bills held in trust as aforesaid for the Government Savings Bank and also ascertain that the residue of the said moneys including such of the same as shall necessarily remain in the hands of the Colonial Treasurer to the credit of an open account in the manner hereinbefore mentioned is invested in accordance with the provisions of this Act and make a special report of each such audit and such report shall within seven days after the making thereof if Parliament be sitting and if Parliament be not sitting then within seven days after the next sitting of Parliament be laid before both Houses of Parliament.”

Clause 8 provided for the repeal of the eighth section of the Savings Bank Act of 1864, and the first and second sections of the Savings Bank Act of 1864 Amendment Act; and clause 9 provided for the payment of interest on deposits. He thought there was nothing in the Bill but what honorable members had already seen in the time it had been in their hands.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he should support the second reading of the Bill. He thought it was a great pity that the rate of interest had not been altered, in the ninth clause. No doubt, it was the high rate of interest paid by the Savings Bank which worked prejudicially in regard to the busi-

ness of the other banks. He had been told that, at the present moment, there was a large number of deposits in the Savings Banks, lodged by different persons, at call, on which five per cent. interest was paid. If the interest was reduced, and deposits of only £250 received by the Bank at interest, that would be much better than the existing arrangement. The Savings Bank Act was specially for the working classes; and, as most of them could hardly have more than £80 or £100 of savings deposited at a time, they would get the benefit of it as much as now. He had heard, further, that a great deal of money was lodged in the Savings Bank which had been withdrawn from the banks in New South Wales. One family, alone, had not less than £6,000 deposited in the names of its different members, for which they received five per cent. interest from the Government. When the Colonial Treasurer brought in the Bill he put the interest at three and three-quarters per cent. up to £500, and if that had been passed it would have prevented such an abuse as paying such a high rate of interest as five per cent. on large amounts lodged at call. It would have left the money in the proprietary banks, which, having plenty, would have reduced the rate of discount, and the commerce of the country would have benefited.

The Hon. C. B. WHISH said he quite agreed with the Honorable Mr. Fitz in this matter; but he imagined that the House could make the necessary alterations in the Bill, if they agreed to do so. He thought five per cent. too high interest for the Government Savings Bank to pay on large deposits at call, and it ought to be reduced.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE observed that, if what the Honorable Mr. Fitz had stated was a fact, he should like to know where he had got his information concerning a family's deposits in the Savings Bank. He presumed it had been from the Savings Bank authorities.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Not at all.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: He presumed that it had been so obtained, in some form.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: I know the party.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: He could only say that if the Savings Bank authorities gave any information at all as to who were depositors, or what amount of money they had from any person or persons, they would be very much to blame; just as much as a private bank would be that disclosed the transactions of any of its customers.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: What he said, he had been led to believe from what had been told to him. A party in the House had told him that he had two sums of £500 in the Savings Bank: he was known to the Honorable Mr. Browne. And, the same party had informed him that there was a family who had £6,000 in the Savings Bank, lodged in several sums.

The Hon. J. J. GALLOWAY supported the Bill, which he thought was very much required; and he was glad to see it brought forward. He had long wanted to see an alteration in the way of dealing with the moneys deposited in the Savings Bank. He asked the honorable gentleman representing the Government, what had been done with regard to the Registration of Debentures Bill? He had seen that such a Bill was brought forward in another place; but he had heard nothing about it since. The honorable gentleman must be aware that if the colonial debentures were registered at home, it would give a very great increase to their value. As a certain amount of the debentures named in this Bill would be sent home to be sold, he should like the information from the Postmaster-General.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL was understood to say, that he had spoken to the Colonial Treasurer on the subject, and would do so again this afternoon, to obtain the information which the Honorable Mr. Galloway desired.

The question was put and passed. The Bill was then considered in Committee, and reported without amendment. On the motion for the third reading,

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said that a Bill similar to the one now before the House had recently come under his observation, which provided for the payment of a less amount of interest than five per cent. on deposits under £500. An alteration had been made by the other House, and the Bill had lost its value altogether. There was not too much money in Queensland; and, if the original Bill had been agreed to, and the interest paid on deposits in the Savings Bank reduced, and the amount of deposits received at interest lowered, the consequence would be, that several thousands of pounds now locked up would come back into the circulation of the colony. It would be better for the colony to have as much capital as possible available for its commerce, than that the money should be kept out of circulation in such an institution as the Government Savings Bank by the payment of an unduly high rate of interest. There was room for enterprise here, in manifold directions; and the money could be well employed in investments or undertakings which afforded a sufficient guarantee, and which would enable it to be circulated for the benefit of the whole colony. At any rate, that was his humble opinion. There should be no inducement to investing a large amount of capital in the Savings Bank. That bank paid higher interest, under the circumstances, than any other bank could give; and it was a mistake altogether. It took £300,000 from circulation in the business of the country. He thought it would be best to throw out the Bill, and perhaps in another session, three or four months hence, the Government would be in a position to give security to depositors, without the

attendant objections which existed under the present Act, and which were to be continued under the Bill: they might bring in a Bill to conduct the Savings Bank in a new style altogether.

The question was affirmed, and the Bill was passed.

COUNTRY PUBLICANS LICENSING BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved the second reading of the Country Publicans Licensing Bill. He explained that, hitherto, the publican's license fee was £30 all over the colony. As honorable members were aware, many persons on road-sides and in out-of-the-way places could not afford to pay so high a fee; and, there was, in consequence, quite a nest of sly grog-sellers in many of the country districts. The Bill provided that, whereas the maximum license fee was £30, the minimum should be £15, and that the granting of the country publicans' licenses should be discretionary with the justices of the respective districts. It would do a great deal of good, and put down sly grog selling; because many persons who could not afford the present fee would pay the reduced fee. The original amount proposed was £10, but it was altered to £15 in another place;—he thought £10 would have been best. However, he did not think that persons would risk being fined for grog-selling, when they could do so legally by payment of an annual fee of £15, and become licensed publicans under the Act.

The Hon. J. F. McDougall said it had, heretofore, been considered desirable to keep down the number of public houses. No doubt, for the purposes of revenue, it might now be desirable to make as many as possible; and the effect of the reduction of the license fee would be to increase the number of public houses in the country. As regarded sly grog-selling, he did not think that if the license fee were reduced to £10, that would put a stop to it. The Government would not be placed in a position, by the Bill, to prevent the illegal sale of spirits in inaccessible and out-of-the-way places, or even on public lines of road, where the traffic would not pay a man to get a license fee at £15. At the same time, he (Mr. McDougall) should offer no opposition to the Bill. He did not believe in it beyond the fact that it might tend to increase the revenue. He believed, with his honorable friend, that it was desirable to reduce or eradicate sly grog-selling.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said there were many out-of-the-way places in which was considerable traffic, yet not sufficient to give a man a return for the outlay of the present license fee, but enough to justify him in taking out a license at the reduced fee.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE said he certainly agreed with the Honorable Mr. McDougall, that the Bill would increase the number of public houses; but he disagreed with him when he said that it would

not decrease the number of sly grog-sellers. He thought it would be better to have an increased number of licensed public houses, known to and under the control of the police, than to have many of those houses still sly grog-shops, not accessible to the police. He did not think the Bill would increase public houses more than was required. It was not desirable, of course, unduly to increase them; but if the Bill increased them, it would also increase the revenue, and what was sold in them would have paid duty, which might not be the case in sly grog-selling. He did not clearly understand the Postmaster-General that the alteration from £10 to £15 was made in the other House.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he should support the Bill with a great deal of pleasure. Few honorable gentlemen had travelled the country as much as he had, and he thought the effect of the Bill would be beneficial. If the license fee had been reduced to £10 it would have been better in all respects, even for the revenue. He had stopped at accommodation or eating houses, where grog was sold, and it was not likely that they could afford to pay a heavy license fee. It was inconsistent that in a place like Brisbane, or any of the large towns, a fee of £30 a-year was paid by a publican carrying on his business in a spacious house, and that, two hundred miles away in the interior, a man occupying a place of no more than four rooms, should pay the same amount. He certainly thought the license fee ought to be decreased in favor of the country publican. It ought to be decreased still further than was proposed in the Bill, or, he feared, it might not tend to reduce sly grog-selling nor yet increase the revenue. He knew there were many persons who sold grog openly without a license, and who would, of course, now take out a license.

The Hon. C. B. WHISH said he did not anticipate that there would be a gallon more of grog sold on account of the reduced license than without it. Licenses would, of course, be taken out under the Bill, and every man who took out a license would be enlisted on the side of order and good government, which was not the case, now, with all who sold spirits.

The Hon. W. THORNTON said he should certainly support the Bill as one that had been required for a long time. He thought that, in committee, the license fee should be altered to £10.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: You cannot do it.

The Hon. W. THORNTON: Well, he should not offer any opposition. He was satisfied that under the Bill, persons would not be induced to commit an illegal act by selling without a license.

The question was put and affirmed, and the Bill was passed through all its subsequent stages without alteration.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ESTIMATES.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ asked the Postmaster-General, without notice—

If it is the intention of the Government to replace upon the Estimates for 1871, the amount which had been deducted from the Estimates of the expenses of the Legislative Council for that year?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Honorable gentlemen—I have consulted with my colleagues, and the amount will be placed on the Supplementary Estimates.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: If that was placed upon the records, it would be sufficient; and he moved that the question and answer be entered in the journals of the House. In connection with this subject, he might mention that four years since, when a similar innovation was made by the Government of the day, he made a speech in the course of which he quoted a passage from the *Times* which he thought very apt, and applicable to the present occasion. He trusted that, in future, no similar attempt would be made by the Government.

The Hon. J. J. GALLOWAY observed that there was a proper course to be pursued with regard to the Estimates of the Council; the other House could either ask for a conference or for a joint committee. It was, he thought, most uncourteous to interfere with the Estimates of the Council in the way that had been done. He hoped that, though it was not the first time, this was the last time it should occur.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL was understood to say that he felt very much regret at what had occurred, as much as any other honorable member of the House. He had done all he could in the matter, and he trusted that what he had done would be accepted by the Council.

The Hon. D. F. ROBERTS said he thought the House would be satisfied with what the Postmaster-General had done, as representing the Government in the Council. He understood the honorable member to say that he thought the House had not been treated properly. He differed from honorable members who said the Government had done what was objected to in connection with the Council's Estimates. It was not the Government, but the House of Assembly, that reduced the Estimates; it was the Assembly that had treated the Council with disrespect. He trusted that in future there would be no further question about voting what was asked for, for the expenses of the Council, by the President. It only remained to explain that no more was put down than was actually required. He believed they understood that the item which had been struck off would be restored? If the Assembly had asked for a conference, or some kind of explanation, he should have been satisfied.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said, that when he complained of the Government in connection with the matter, it was because, when an honorable member moved the reduction in the Assembly, the Government did not offer any opposition to it. Therefore, he thought the Government were to blame.

The Hon. D. F. ROBERTS: They did not press the Estimates.

Question put and passed.

BRISBANE BRIDGE BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in moving the second reading of the Brisbane Bridge Debentures Bill, said the preamble explained its object as well as he possibly could. In a few words, he might inform the Council that a certain contract had been entered into for the building of a bridge across the Brisbane river, at Brisbane, and certain moneys had been advanced by the Bank of Queensland to carry out the work. As honorable gentlemen were aware, the bridge was not finished; and the object of the Bill was to facilitate its completion, which, all must allow, would be a very useful thing; looking at the pillars in the river, he was reminded of the people in Canada that fable spoke of. The original debt, with interest accrued, amounted, now, to something like £120,000; and, by this Bill, the Bank agreed to take £75,000 in liquidation of that debt, and the interest, instead of being, as originally, eleven per cent., to be five per cent. As he understood it, that was much below the amount of money actually advanced by the bank. Messrs. Brassey and Co., the contractors for the iron work of the bridge, claimed now £25,000, and it was proposed that they should complete the bridge for £21,250 in addition to their claim. In fact, there would go to the Bank of Queensland £75,000 in debentures, and to Messrs. Brassey and Co. £46,250. There was some discrepancy between the latter amount and the sum of £51,250 said to be secured to the contractors; but that was a matter between the parties themselves, and referred to some exchange which he was hardly in a position to explain. But, however, the total sum now required was £121,250, for the completion of the bridge. As the Bill had been explained to him, by his honorable colleagues the Attorney-General and the Secretary for Lands, it was to get over the local difficulty of making issue notes to bearer. On reading over the third clause, it would be seen that nothing in it rendered the Government liable in reference to the contract or the work. The contract under the Bill, was really between the municipal council or the corporation, issuing the debentures, on the one part, and the Bank of Queensland, which had to do the work, on the other. He hoped the Bill would pass.

Question put and affirmed, and the Bill was passed through all its stages.