

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 21 APRIL 1871

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 21 April, 1871.

Gympie Gold Field—Motion for Papers.

GYMPIE GOLD FIELD—MOTION FOR
PAPERS.

Upon Mr. KING giving notice of motion,
that there be laid on the Table of this House,
a Return shewing—

1. The amount of Revenue received from the
Gympie Gold Field, from 1st January, 1868, to

1st January, 1871, including all sums received for miners' rights, business licenses, rents of land leased either for mining or other purposes, escort fees, and duty received on gold exported from the Port of Maryborough during that period.

2. Shewing the amount expended during the same time for roads, bridges, and other improvements, on the Gympie Gold Field.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said he had objected to this being a formal motion, because, he thought, the honorable member, in moving for returns involving expenditure, ought to satisfy the House that some practical benefit would result from that expenditure. The returns the honorable member now asked for would cost about twenty pounds, and it had not been shewn that any particular advantage would be gained by furnishing them.

Mr. FORBES moved, as an amendment, the addition at the end of paragraph two, of the words—

"and the roads between Brisbane and Gympie, and between Maryborough and Gympie, and the sums paid for carrying the mails between those places annually."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it would be as well also to add a return of the police expenditure at Gympie, and the expenditure for commissioners. To make the return as perfect as possible, the whole of the expenditure upon the gold field should be furnished. He would therefore move, as a further amendment, the addition of the words—

"Amount paid for police and commissioners and other expenses connected with the gold field."

Mr. STEPHENS said that if a return were furnished to shew the special expenditure on the Gympie gold field, it would be only right to shew also the contributions, by the people of Gympie, to the customs revenue.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The only objection to that would be the difficulty of obtaining it; in fact, it would be impossible to obtain it, as most of the goods were sent to Gympie out of bond. With regard to the police expenditure, that could easily be furnished by calculating the population of Gympie at the average expense per head. There had been a considerable amount of extra police expenditure at Gympie, as the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, who had been Colonial Secretary, must be aware.

Mr. LILLEY: The expenditure for police at Gympie would be required for a similar population in any other part of the colony. The extra expenditure to which the honorable member referred had, he believed, been incurred by the Government of which the honorable gentleman was a member, in consequence of a panic which was felt at the time. He believed there would be no great difficulty in obtaining the customs returns, though they would not, perhaps, be absolutely correct.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If the return were given as he asked for it, and the figures placed in separate columns, honorable members could make what use they liked of it. The return now asked for included the duty on

gold exported from Maryborough. But there was a great deal of gold exported from Maryborough which did not come from Gympie. If the return were furnished at all, it should be a full and correct return, for he supposed there would be some motion founded upon it, probably that Gympie should have five or six members.

Mr. ATKIN said he was perfectly sure the honorable member for Wide Bay would be satisfied if Gympie were represented on the basis of population. He thought, if the police expenditure were calculated by the average cost per head, the customs revenue might be calculated in the same manner.

Mr. DE SATGE said this motion would be simply the initiation of a system of asking for returns relative to every town in the colony. If it were granted, he should certainly ask for a similar return for Clermont.

Mr. KING said he could not see why the mining community should be specially charged with an expenditure which was paid out of the general revenue. The honorable Colonial Secretary seemed to have an idea that, in asking for this return, he was striving to shew the claims of Gympie for additional representation. There was nothing in the resolution whatever to shew that; but he was very much afraid that additional representation was the bugbear of the honorable member and his party. All he could say was that he was satisfied the claims of the Wide Bay district were so well known to honorable members that he had not the slightest idea of strengthening them by a motion of this sort. His only object in bringing it forward was to inform honorable members of the actual income derived from the gold fields of this colony. With regard to the expense of these returns, he begged to inform the House that there were quarterly returns sent in to the department of Public Works, and to the Treasury, shewing the amount of revenue received for miners' rights, business licenses, and escort fees. There would, therefore, be no difficulty in furnishing the return he asked for, and he presumed it would be equally easy to obtain from the Customs department the amount of gold exported from Maryborough. As to the number of other gold fields which exported such a quantity of gold from Maryborough, in addition to the Gympie gold, it would be very satisfactory to the House to know where they were. He should be glad to receive some further information on the subject.

Mr. STEPHENS said the first portion of the resolution asked for a return of the revenue derived from the Gympie gold field, which there need not be any difficulty in obtaining. The second part called for a return of the expenditure on roads and bridges and other improvements connected with it. Now, he would suggest that the second part be omitted altogether. That would lessen the expense of the return, which was the principal objection made to it by the Secretary for Works. Further than that, he

believed it would be practically impossible to get at the expenditure asked for in the latter portion of the return. He was aware, from having seen the vouchers when he was Treasurer, that money granted in one vote was very often transposed to another, and to obtain the required information, it would be necessary to go over the whole expenditure for roads and bridges for a long time back. He had succeeded, in a great measure, in putting a stop to that system, but he could not be quite sure it was entirely done away with. The practice had prevailed for a long time, and he had taken great pains to put a stop to it. He believed, therefore, it would be found impracticable to get at that expenditure, and the simplest way would be to omit the second part of the resolution altogether.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There could be no possible objection to furnish as full a return as possible, and he could hardly understand the object of honorable members on the other side of the House in endeavoring to restrict the return, because all these questions could be discussed after it was furnished. As to the Government having any fear of additional representation, he thought their action, all through, shewed that they fully intended to have it. They had even brought down to the House, last session, a Bill which would have made provision for fifty-two representatives; and they had then and had always had the matter at heart, and intended to carry it out at the proper time and under proper circumstances. He thought that taunt was entirely uncalled for, and it was not supported by fact.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS would undertake to furnish the information. He had no doubt the honorable member and his friends were very averse to see the figures put upon the paper, but he would undertake to furnish them. He believed the honorable member for South Brisbane was Colonial Treasurer at the time when many of these changes were made in the votes—when the most unfair, the most abominable changes were made in votes which ought to have been expended in the Wide Bay district, but which were spent in other places. At last the honorable members of the Government had become shocked at their own doings, and had endeavored to amend their ways. The practice had not been done away with when he (the Secretary for Works) took office, but he had taken steps to end it at once. He would endeavour to obtain the information asked for; but he must inform the honorable member for Wide Bay that it would cost more than he imagined. He wished to correct a statement of that honorable member—that the Government were in possession of quarterly returns of all the revenue. Part of the revenue derived from the miners never reached the Government at all. He alluded to that portion of it which came from the mining court, which he thought the honorable member

should also shew as one of the burdens cast upon the people of Gympie. His honorable friend, the Premier, had pointed out that this return, if granted, would give a very imperfect statement of the amount of gold exported from Gympie. No doubt a good many of the other gold fields were no longer flourishing; but at one time there was a great deal of gold sent down from Kilkivan, Jimna, and other places, which then almost vied with Gympie. Yet the honorable member was quite willing to have the gold from these places included in the return from Gympie, and this was the sort of motion which the honorable member expected to pass unchallenged. The honorable member had taken a course which was not likely to benefit his constituents. If, however, a return was to be furnished, it ought to be a proper return, and he would not, therefore, consent to the withdrawal of any portion of it, if it were only to let the public know how their money had been expended by successive Governments. He should consider it his duty to press the amendment to a division.

The amendment of the Colonial Secretary was then put, and the division which was called for shewing that there was not a quorum of members present, the Speaker adjourned the House.