

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 11 MAY 1871

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 11 May, 1871.

Omission in Business Paper.—Message from the Legislative Assembly as to Bills transmitted to the Legislative Council.—Polynesian Immigration.—Volunteer Law Amendment Bill.—*Omission in Business Paper.*

OMISSION IN BUSINESS PAPER.

The Hon. G. ELLIOTT rose to a point of order, for the purpose of calling the attention of the House to what he considered to be a very serious omission in the business paper for to-day, respecting a portion of the proceedings of the House on the previous day. It would be in the recollection of honorable members that when the second reading of the Kerosene Bill was under discussion, yesterday, Mr. Harris moved, by way of amendment, that the word "now" be omitted from the motion, with a view to adding at the end of the motion "this day six months." When the question was put that the word "now" be omitted, the House divided. Seven members voted for the omission of the word and four against it. It appeared by the business paper that the question next put was—"That the Bill be read a second time this day six months," which was put and passed without division. It ought to have appeared on the business paper that after the division, as to the omission of the word "now" from the original motion, the question—"That the words proposed to be added, be so added," had been put. But such was not the case. This, he considered, was a most grievous mistake; and, if it went forth to the public that they conducted their business in such a loose manner, it could not fail to have a most serious effect upon this branch of the Legislature. He certainly thought that notice should be taken of this irregularity, and that some steps should be taken to have the error rectified.

The Hon. The CHAIRMAN said he wished to know from the honorable gentleman, Mr. Elliott, if he simply wished to call attention to the alleged irregularity, or if he wished to bring forward a motion on the subject.

The Hon. G. ELLIOTT said he had called attention to what he considered to be a very great irregularity. It was one which, he thought, it was the duty of the Chairman to take notice of.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he could not be sure whether the question—"That the words proposed to be added, be so added," was put from the Chair or not. He did not know whether it was from the weakness of the Chairman's voice, or from the unacoustic properties of the chamber, that, generally, he was unable to hear the honorable gentleman. He thought it would be well if the honorable gentleman would endeavor to speak a little louder when putting a question to the House or when delivering a ruling.

The matter then dropped.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AS TO BILLS TRANSMITTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The Hon. the CHAIRMAN informed the House that he had received the following Message from the Legislative Assembly:—

“MR. PRESIDENT,

“The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the Legislative Council’s Message of date the 4th instant, have resolved as follows, viz.:—That the Resolution transmitted from the Legislative Council, by Message, on the 10th instant, and dated the 4th instant, be returned to the Council with a Message that such Resolution may lead to a breach of the privileges of this House,—and the said Resolution, with the Message conveying the same, is now accordingly returned annexed hereto.

“A. MACALISTER,
“Speaker.

“Legislative Assembly Chamber,
“Brisbane, 10th May, 1871.”

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said, that as this Message had reference to a Resolution which he moved, he might be allowed to make a few remarks upon it. When he brought forward the Resolution referred to in the motion, and proposed that it should be communicated to the other House, he did so as a matter of courtesy to the other House. What use would there have been in passing such a Resolution, unless they had informed the other House of it? He very well knew that the other House had nothing to do with any Resolution which this House might come to respecting the time and manner in which they would conduct their proceedings; but at the same time, he thought it was only right to inform the other House that a Resolution had been passed to the effect that they would not receive Bills towards the end of the session, unless they were forwarded in time to afford honorable members sufficient opportunity to duly consider them, before agreeing to them. He did not expect that the Message would have been so discourteously received by the Legislative Assembly, as it had been. However, he would now move—

That the message just received from the Legislative Assembly be taken into consideration this day six months.

If the House should agree to such a proposition, he thought they would only be treating the Legislative Assembly in the same way as they treated this branch of the Legislature. He had been for ten years a member of the Legislative Council, and during the whole of that time he had always seen a great want of courtesy exhibited by the Assembly towards the Council. It seemed to be the opinion in some quarters, that because this was a nominee House, it was not entitled to the same amount of respect as was due to an elective House. He had even heard it said by honorable members of the other House, both in and out of the House, that a nominee Council was the only

blot in the Constitution Act; and that all that was wanted to make things right, was universal suffrage, and an elective Upper House. Now, for his part, he considered that a nominee House, where the number of members was not limited, was better than an elective Upper House, as regarded good legislation, because the members were not dependent for their position upon their adhesion to what might be the popular political questions of the day. As he had said before, he had only desired that the Message should be sent to the Legislative Assembly as a matter of courtesy, in order that honorable members of that House might know that the Legislative Council would not consent to have a crowd of Bills thrust down their throats at the close of the session.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he wished to remind the House that when the resolutions in question were under consideration, he expressed the opinion that it would be well not to forward them to the Legislative Assembly, as honorable members of that branch of the Legislature might be offended with them. Besides that, he considered there was no need for such a resolution, because the House had it in their own power to say whether they would or would not suspend the Standing Orders to admit of the passage of Bills through all their stages in one day. He regretted very much that such a message had been sent to the other House; and he was sure that if such a message had been sent from the Assembly to this House, his honorable friend, Mr. FITZ, would have been the first to resent it. The Assembly could not know that the resolution was communicated to them as a matter of courtesy, as the message said nothing to that effect. As to the motion before the House that the message be taken into consideration this day six months, he thought that it ought to be withdrawn, and that the message should be taken into consideration and dealt with at once. That, he thought, would be the most courteous mode of dealing with it, and the one that was likely to be most conciliatory. As he wholly disapproved of the motion now before the House, he should certainly vote against it.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE said he fully agreed with the opinions which had been expressed by his honorable friend, Mr. FITZ, in respect to the way in which the resolutions passed by this House had been received by the Legislative Assembly. It was possible that they had made a mistake in transmitting the resolutions; but if so it was a mistake that arose from the best of motives. It was a mistake that arose from a desire on the part of this House to acquaint the Legislative Assembly with the nature of a certain resolution that had been come to. The message was more in the way of a suggestion from this House to the Assembly to expedite their business, so that this House might have a reasonable opportunity of con-

sidering measures originated in the Legislative Assembly and subsequently transmitted to the Legislative Council. At the present time every honorable member felt more or less irritated, because of the way in which their message had been received; and he would, therefore, suggest to the honorable member, Mr. Fitz, that he should amend his motion so as to allow a few days to elapse before the message from the Assembly was taken into consideration.

Mr. FITZ said that, with the permission of the House, he would amend the motion to the effect that the message from the Legislative Assembly should be taken into consideration on Wednesday next.

The motion as amended was then put and agreed to.

POLYNESIAN IMMIGRATION.

The Hon. C. B. WHISH moved—

That an Address be presented to His Excellency the Acting-Governor, expressive of the feelings of surprise and indignation with which this House has perused the letter addressed by the Aborigines Protection Society to the Under-Secretary for the Colonies; and to request that, in reply thereto, His Excellency would call the attention of the Secretary of State for the Colonies to a letter addressed to His Excellency, by Lord Granville, dated 6th January, 1870, enclosing a letter from Mr. Murdock to Sir F. Rogers, on the subject of certain reports received through the Foreign Office, and especially relating to the Report of the Select Committee of the House of Assembly, appointed to inquire into the operation of the Polynesian Laborers Act; which letter conclusively shews that the Board of Emigration Commissioners, and through them, the Home Government, were perfectly satisfied with the action taken by the Queensland Government in dealing with the whole question of Polynesian Immigration.

The honorable gentleman said he considered that the subject to which his motion related was one of the most important that could engage the attention of the Legislature at the present time. From the correspondence which had been placed on the table of the House respecting Polynesian immigration, it would be seen that Lord Kimberley, in his letter to the Officer Administering the Government in this colony, under date 27th January, 1871, asked for full information as to the legislative action which had been taken by this colony in the matter. That being the case, they might review the whole of the Polynesian labor question. Now this Polynesian immigration had its origin in the high price of white labor, its scarcity, and the uncertainty of securing its continuance. Another consideration was that a great amount of the labor required on certain stations in the colony was of a very light description; but for which, nevertheless, women and children were not available. The Polynesians in the colony had been brought from the nearest group of islands in the

Pacific. Many of them had been introduced into New South Wales before any were introduced into this colony. The experiment was tried here of having Polynesian laborers, and it had proved to be eminently successful. The men who had been brought here were docile and easily taught to work; and they had shewn that they were well able to keep their own. Unless they had been brought here it would not have been possible to have advanced certain industries which had been developed to a successful degree. Their introduction also had had the effect of raising white men from the position of laborers to that of overseers on plantations. The white man was therefore in a better position than he was in formerly; and as far as his experience went, they always kept on very good terms with the Polynesians. On the other hand, the Polynesian, by coming here, had had extended to him the benefits of civilisation—whatever those might be. He was taught all sorts of work, and during his residence here his physique was greatly improved, as any one could judge for himself who saw them when they were landed, and saw them when they were about to return to their native islands. Another effect of their living with white men was this, that they left off their habits of cannibalism. The first step towards christianising those men had been taken by thus civilising them in the first instance. Those Polynesians were employed throughout the length and breadth of the colony in all the minor capacities of labor; and some of them were employed as domestic servants. Of course it was naturally to be supposed that the introduction of cheaper labor than could be obtained from Europe would meet with opposition, and it had done so. A great hue and cry had been raised against the introduction of those “slaves,” as they had been called. Meetings had been called on the subject—and they were very carefully packed meetings, too. No one who was desirous of saying a word in favor of Polynesian labor was allowed to open his mouth. The letter of the Aborigines Protection Society to Lord Kimberley, was a very fair specimen of the opposition this sort of immigration had met with. When the hue and cry was first raised against the importation of those men, the Government in this colony wrote to him (Mr. Whish) for information on the subject. That was in 1867. He then gave them as much information as he could give them now, as to the Polynesian immigrants. He suggested to them that perhaps it would be well for the Government themselves to import the men into the colony, as was done by the Government of Natal. The Government subsequently had a Bill brought in and passed, providing for the immigration and protection of those Polynesians. In that measure they shewed them more attention than they shewed to the white man; and now a Government agent had to go with the ships to the islands, and his expenses had to be borne by the

employers of the Polynesians. A few years ago a committee of the Legislature was appointed to inquire into this matter, and see that all was fair and square. This report was sent to the Home authorities, and it proved to be satisfactory. The reply was forwarded in a letter from Lord Granville, which enclosed a letter from Mr. Murdoch to Sir F. Rogers—extracts from which would shew that certain alleged outrages had occurred at the Fijis, but that they had no connection whatever with the Queensland Polynesian emigration system. There were sixteen witnesses examined before the committee, and the only witnesses as to kidnapping were Mr. W. Brookes, Mr. Davidson, and Mr. R. Short, but their evidence on the matter was neither precise nor important. The letter to which he had just referred went on to say that the writer fully agreed with the conclusion to which the committee had come, namely:—

"That the allegations that had been made to the effect that the immigrants were procured by force or fraud; that they were treated unjustly by their employers; that they would injure the colonists or be injured by them; that they would not be returned to their homes; or that their employment was disadvantageous to European laborers, were not proved by the evidence."

The writer added:—

"They could not, I think, come to any other conclusion."

Now, the Aborigines Protection Society should have been aware of all that. It was their business to be aware of it, and to make themselves acquainted with what steps the Legislature of this colony had taken in the matter. He did not think that they could be ignorant of the letter of Mr. Murdoch to Mr. Rogers. Well, although knowing of all this, the society forwarded to the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, the Right Honorable William Monsell, the letter which had been laid on the table of the House along with other correspondence, and which was dated the 3rd of January, 1871. He considered the letter was an insult to the House. Mr. Chesson, who forwarded the letter referred to in the motion, begged the whole question, by saying that he enclosed a letter on the Polynesian slave trade. This letter was signed by half-a-dozen gentlemen, who were, no doubt, very well intentioned; but, before signing the letter, they could not have weighed the evidence upon which it was based. The letter forwarded to the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies was, in fact, almost a copy of a letter which appeared in the "Express," which was at one time a journal, but was no longer a journal. The letter he alluded to, as having been published in the "Express," was signed by Mr. William Brookes. Well, in that letter, Mr. Brookes stated, that he went to the various Government offices to make inquiries on this subject, and that all his questions were most courteously answered; and that no one attempted

to conceal anything from him. So far, so well. Now, the letter was written with the view of proving that the islanders were, on their employment here, in the condition of slaves. Mr. Brookes said that the "Lyttona" brought twenty-four islanders as passengers. But Mr. Gray, the immigration agent, stated that the vessel was licensed to carry seventy-five. Now, he would like to know, what slaver would have brought only twenty-four of those islanders when he had a license to bring seventy-five—thereby throwing away between five hundred and six hundred pounds. The sixth paragraph of the letter was as follows:—

"None of the five forms are signed, except by John Smith, the *mate*, who signs as agent, and the witness to the natives' signatures is 'Henry Ploughsedge,' a common sailor, one of the crew. None of them were countersigned by Taylor Winship, as master of the vessel."

Even with the mate as agent, they only got twenty-four, instead of seventy-five, islanders as passengers; which shewed the captain of the vessel did not get much profit. But here again Mr. Gray shewed that Mr. Brookes had been guilty of wilful misrepresentation. Mr. Brookes was informed that the papers were not complete, and yet he wrote as if they were complete. It was stated that Mr. Brookes was a justice of the peace and a man of unimpeachable veracity; but he would like to know where his veracity was when he wrote this letter. Mr. Brookes, he thought, must have left it behind him on his shop counter. The tenth paragraph of the letter of the society went on to say:—

"That public opinion in the colony is not altogether in favor of this state of things is proved by the fact that when, a short time since, the above-named Mr. George Raff offered himself as a candidate for the representation of East Moreton, a county close to Brisbane, he was defeated on the question of black labor."

They did not say that they thought so and so; but they put this forward as a statement of fact. There was no hesitation in making the statement, and therefore he was justified in assuming that the gentlemen who had signed the letter had taken every pains to obtain all the information they could get on the subject. If so, they shewed a lamentable amount of ignorance about it. They did not seem to know how little Brisbane had to do with East Moreton elections. Besides, it was not true that Mr. Raff, on the occasion referred to, was defeated on the black labor question; for the fact was that he was defeated on the question of railway extension from Ipswich to Brisbane. If the society had so much information on the subject as they professed to have, he would like to know if they were also informed as to the disgraceful proceedings that took place at a public meeting convened previous to the election referred to, by Mr. Raff himself—with whom Mr. Brookes should not be named in the same day, taking them only as citizens.

Mr. Raff came forward at a critical moment to serve the colony, and when he had multitudinous private affairs to attend to. Well, he tried to address the meeting, but a band of rowdies, headed by Mr. Brookes, prevented him from being heard. The disgrace of the proceedings at that meeting attached to Brisbane still. The tenth paragraph of the letter concluded as follows:—

"The present Ministry, however, are favorable to the trade, and their advent to power has given it new vitality."

He thought it was quite unnecessary that he should make any remark upon this passage, inasmuch as the present Ministry was quite able to hold their own in the matter; and the honorable the Colonial Secretary had already denied the charge, as would be seen by his letter, which was attached to this printed correspondence. If making voluminous regulations still more onerous was calculated to give new vitality to the trade, he must say that the present Ministry had done so with a vengeance. He now came to the testimony of Mr. Alfred Davidson on the subject. Now, Mr. Davidson was one who should know something about those islanders, for he had a good many of them about his place, though he had never heard that that gentleman had ever paid any of their passages. He seemed, however, to know the price of them, for he said that they cost from £10 to £12 apiece. He also informed the Aborigines Protection Society that the word "sold" was used, but that it was generally called "passage money." He further stated that the "Spunkie" made about £800 in one trip. Now, that was only a flea-bite to what had been made by some who had carried out contracts with the Government. He would now call attention to the Immigration Act, 33 Victoria, No. 9, clause 25. The clause provided, that—

"Free passages may be granted to female domestic servants and such other emigrants of the laboring class as may from time to time be specially required. Provided that in the case of laborers and others an undertaking is entered into to repay to the Queensland Government in one year after arrival in the colony eight pounds and in two years after arrival in the colony eight pounds sterling being sixteen pounds in the whole."

It also provided that—

"The employer would be required to endorse on the undertaking to be entered into by such mechanic laborer or servant an undertaking to pay to the Government the sum named therein in the event of default of payment on the part of such mechanic, &c."

Now, nothing more was done in the case of the Polynesians. In fact, the two cases were quite analogous; and if the black man was a slave, so also was the white man;—and perhaps the latter was the greater slave of the two. The eleventh paragraph went on to say—

"Late advices report that the price of the human commodity has been so far raised that some employers will not buy."

Then the twelfth paragraph, quoting Mr. Davidson, said:—

"In Brisbane, I have been indirectly in communication with white sailors who have sailed in these traders, but who refuse, for their own sakes, to go again; they will not give public evidence, but admit the badness of the thing, and that I am quite right to oppose it: they say 'well, we were paid.'"

Any comment on that passage was not, he thought, required. The thirteenth paragraph said:—

"We are further informed that the French are fining ships, when they can, for bringing away men; and that although the 'Lyttona' escaped, she was chased by two armed boats and nearly captured."

He might state, on this point, that when importing the first lot of islanders, he and his partner first went to New Caledonia, and the Governor there informed them that he would not allow any of the men to leave the islands of Mare and Lifou, as they wanted them for themselves. He, therefore, presumed that it was from those two islands that it had been attempted to take some men away. Now, he and his partner would not have had any of the natives of those two islands, because they did not like them; and, besides, after what the Governor of New Caledonia had said, they could not have got them. The fourteenth paragraph of the letter was as follows:—

"A later letter (29th September) informs us that 'the deportation of the islanders has become worse—nine ships are going out, and high rates are being paid for the men. Unfortunately, the captains have made successful arrangements by which Queensland can be kept in ignorance of what is really being done in Polynesia.'"

Now, if that was the case, how could it be supposed that the Legislature here could take cognisance of that of which they were studiously kept in ignorance? They knew of what they did themselves, but they could not know of what was done in the Fijis. The fact of their having appointed Government agents to accompany the vessels to the islands proved that the Government had done all they could to prevent anything like a slave trade. A quotation from Mr. Monsell's own speech was inserted in the seventeenth paragraph of the letter. It was as follows:—

"At the same time he admitted that in two particulars, these regulations were insufficient, as there were no regulations as to the introduction into Queensland of a proper proportion of the two sexes, and the attendance of emigration agents on board the vessels before they were allowed to sail. These omissions were, however, to be supplied by the Queensland Legislature."

Well, one omission complained of had been supplied, and that was the appointment of an agent to accompany the vessel; but as to the other, which referred to the importation of women, there was some difficulty. What was the proportion of women who should be imported? The late Colonial Secretary, who was a great lady's man, said it should be

twenty-five per cent. Well, if so, what, he would ask, was to be done in the case of the remaining seventy-five per cent.? How were they to be benefitted? It was quite ridiculous to say that men could not remain here for two or three years without having their wives and families with them. How many women were allowed to go on board one of Her Majesty's ships, when put in commission for an absence from home for several years? Not one. And how many were allowed to accompany a regiment when going on colonial service? Very few indeed. This objection was a mere sentimental one. We now come to Mr. Brookes—a justice of the peace, and a man of unimpeachable veracity. Verily a prophet had no honor in his own country; and that, in some cases, might be on account of his being better known than trusted. The eighteenth paragraph said:—

"We have shewn, on the authority of Mr. William Brookes (a justice of the peace), that there was no proper agent on board the 'Lyttona'; that she brought no certificate from 'a consul, missionary, or other known person'; and that, notwithstanding, the emigrant agent allowed the so-called immigrants to land and to be drafted to Mr. Raff's plantation. We are also credibly informed that, at Brisbane, there is no interpreter qualified to examine these unfortunate people on landing;—that, in short, the weak are at the mercy of the strong."

Now, from seventeen to twenty of the Islanders left Mr. Raff's employment, and had their case heard before a magistrate in Brisbane; not before a bush justice of the peace, but before a real police magistrate, in Brisbane, and succeeded in getting their agreements cancelled, and snapped their fingers at their employer. Who, he would ask, was then the weak, and who the strong? The nineteenth and twentieth paragraphs of the letter were as follow:—

"We have also shewn that, in the case of the 'Spunkie,' another condition which you laid down as essential was not complied with, for, out of a cargo of one hundred and twenty-seven immigrants, only two were women."

"These facts, as well as others from the islands, satisfy us that the trade in Polynesians requires to be very firmly dealt with by Her Majesty's Government. It is true that Queensland enjoys representative institutions, and we have no desire to interfere with the control of her local affairs; but this is a matter which affects the reputation of the empire, and we cannot get rid of our responsibility by attempting to place it all on the back of a small Colonial House of Assembly. In conclusion, we cannot believe that either yourself, or the distinguished statesman who presides over the Colonial Office, will permit the slave trade to ravage the Pacific, or a British colony to be converted into a slaveholding state."

What induced them, then, to send this insulting letter? The six gentlemen who signed the letter, presumed to have more responsibility in this matter than the Legislature of this colony had. Honorable gentlemen had all heard of the three tailors of

Tooley street, who assumed to be the people of England. He thought the Under Secretary for the Colonies had stultified himself in sending out this letter, after the correspondence that he had previously forwarded to the colony on the subject, which was of quite a different nature. He now came to the third member of this Brisbane triumvirate, Mr. Robert Short, who, fortunately, was now in Melbourne. He stated that some things were done in Fiji that were too harrowing to be dwelt upon; but that he had the statements on report only from "our chiefs." Of course, everyone knew who "our chiefs" were. Such was the character of those informants, and such the worth that was to be attached to the evidence on which the self-constituted Aboriginal Society in England, consisting of five or six private individuals, had taken upon themselves to vilify the fair fame of this colony, and insult both Houses of the Legislature. They had done everything in their power to prove that this was a system of slaving, and they had signally failed in their attempts to do so. If the Queensland Government had taken no notice of anything that had been urged by all the malicious people who could be brought together to clamor against Polynesian immigration; if the Government had ignored everything, and allowed matters to take their chance; if mal-practices had taken place, and no notice had been taken of them, no harsher language could have been used than was used in this letter. Without asking any question about it, the whole of this immigration was put down as slavery on the *ipse dixit* of three obscure individuals. But the Government, he thought, if anything, had overstepped the legitimate bounds of legislation in the way they had dealt with respect to those unfortunate people. They watched them from the day they arrived in the colony till the day they left it, and they secured that they should have every comfort provided them. Yet the colony was to be periodically insulted in this way. Honorable members were well acquainted with the truth of what he had stated. He, therefore, felt every confidence in leaving in their hands the motion now before them, convinced that they would uphold the cause of integrity and truth, and vindicate the honor of the Legislature of the Colony of Queensland.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he could not allow this question to pass without saying a few words upon it. He did not intend to oppose the motion, but he must say, that so far as he was concerned, he did not see the use there was for it. The honorable gentleman opposite had informed the House that the Aborigines Protection Society in England, consisted of a number of private gentlemen; and, if that was the case, he did not think the House should take notice of their representations in this way. He quite agreed with all that had been said by the honorable gentleman who had brought forward the motion; and, he thought, it was quite unnecessary to

go further in the matter. On the receipt of the despatch transmitting the communication referred to, the honorable the Colonial Secretary wrote the following letter, which was sent home :—

“Colonial Secretary’s Office,
“Brisbane, 12th April, 1871.

“SIR,—I do myself the honor to enclose for the information of your Excellency a Report from the Immigration Agent, relative to certain statements made in a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, from the ‘Aborigines Protection Society of London,’ transmitted under cover of His Lordship’s Despatch of the 27th January last, upon the subject of the introduction of South Sea Islanders to Queensland.

“It is a matter of surprise that on the unsupported assertions of two correspondents in Brisbane, from whom the Society have derived their information, the Colony of Queensland should be stigmatised as ‘a slave-holding State, encouraging a slave trade that threatens to ravage the Pacific.’

“Very little enquiry, in a reliable quarter, would have satisfied the Society that ‘the state of terror and demoralization it describes as growing up in those islands,’ does not exist; and that nothing is known or has been ascertained that would justify the strong language which the Society have thought proper to use.

“I do not think it necessary to add anything to the Report of the Immigration Agent, or to do more than endorse the correctness of the statements contained therein. Nor do I think it necessary to make more than a passing allusion to the motives commonly believed to influence certain of the Missionaries in discouraging the emigration of islanders of whose labor they are well known to avail themselves on very advantageous terms; but I may observe that by the Missionaries refusing to sign the certificate, or in any way to identify themselves with the engagement of the islanders, the portion of the Act relating thereto has been rendered inoperative.

“A proposition to amend the Act so as to make it compulsory on employers to introduce a proper proportion of the two sexes, was, I believe, contemplated by Mr. Arthur Hodgson, during his tenure of office as Colonial Secretary, but I am not aware that the proposition was favorably entertained by any large section of the community; and certainly the present Government have never in any way bound themselves to supply, as stated, such an omission in the regulations, nor do they now recognise the necessity of it.

“I would also point out to your Excellency, that the Society, in their anxiety to prove that the introduction of Polynesian laborers as at present conducted is *little better than a slave trade*, have gone out of their way to assert what is not the case, and what they have no possibility of knowing, namely, that ‘the present Ministry are favorable to *the trade*, and that their advent to power has given it new vitality;’ thus utterly ignoring the action taken by the present Government in appointing paid agents to accompany ships employed in carrying Polynesian laborers between the Islands and Queensland, and in framing instructions specially intended for the protection of the emigrants, and for the purpose of checking abuses that might be supposed to

exist among the South Sea Islands in connection with the emigration.

“So much misapprehension exists in England with reference to the introduction of these islanders, that I would suggest to your Excellency the desirability of making such representations to the Secretary of State of the Colonies as would lead to the appointment by the Imperial Government of a Commission to examine into and report upon the whole subject.

“If such a course were adopted, I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion that the result would shew that there is no foundation for the assertion that ‘*The Polynesian Laborers Act*’ is so inefficiently administered as practically to afford no protection to Polynesian Immigrants, and that the Immigration is little better than a slave trade.

“I have, &c.,

“A. H. PALMER,

“Colonial Secretary.

“His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government of Queensland.”

Accompanying this letter there was a lengthy report from the Immigration Agent, Mr. Gray, giving full information on the subject. That, he thought, shewed that the Government had done everything in their power to prevent Polynesian immigration from degenerating into a species of slave traffic. Honorable gentlemen all knew how this question was brought before the Aboriginal Protection Society in England; and he thought the despatch, and the letter of the Colonial Secretary, which were sent home, would be quite sufficient to shew that this Polynesian immigration did not in the least partake of the nature of slave importation. He thought, therefore, that the motion might be withdrawn.

The Hon. LOUIS HOFF said he could hardly agree with the proposition of the Honorable the Postmaster-General, that the motion should be withdrawn, because it was possible that parliamentary action might be taken with respect to this matter at home. He therefore thought, that, considering the insult which had been put upon the Legislature of this colony by the letter which had been read, some parliamentary action should be taken here respecting it. He thought it was very hard that two or three individuals, who were held up as being of unimpeachable veracity, should be allowed to insult the Legislature of the colony in respect to Polynesian immigration. He would certainly support the motion.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE said he also hoped the motion would not be withdrawn, and that the House would pass it. He did not think they should rest satisfied with the despatch and letter of the Colonial Secretary which had been sent home on the subject; more especially as it was stated by those gentlemen to whom so much credit was given for veracity, that the present Government were favorable to the trade. He thought that a representation by the Legislature on the subject would be of great force at home, and have a most beneficial effect.

The motion was then agreed to.

VOLUNTEER LAW AMENDMENT BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill to amend the law relating to the Volunteer Force of Queensland. The object of the Bill, he said, was to secure a more efficient body of volunteers than they had at present, by requiring that those who joined the force, should continue to serve in it for a stated number of years. Some amendments were made upon the Bill as originally brought in, when it was before the Legislative Assembly, and in committee he would propose some further amendments upon it, which had been suggested by officers of the force. The honorable gentleman then described the various clauses of the Bill.

The Hon. C. B. WHISEN said it was not his intention to oppose the second reading of the Bill; but he merely wished to take that opportunity of stating, that he thought there would be a good deal of disappointment felt, when, in a few years, they found the position they were in as regarded this volunteer question. It was all very well to make a nucleus, but what would be the good of that if they never got further? It might be found in a few years that they had been premature in taking action in this matter. As to the Bill, he did not agree with it at all, nor did he agree with the principles of it. Indeed he did not think that it would be good for the volunteers themselves. What benefit did the country derive from the money expended on the volunteer force? There had been about £10,000 expended already in connection with the volunteer force, and what had they got for it? If there were ten times as many inhabitants in the colony as there were at the present time, and if there were throughout the country large centres of population, it might be well to establish in every one of them what would be the nucleus of a militia force. He did not think that the Bill would produce the results which it was expected would be derived from it.

The motion was then agreed to, and the Bill was read a second time.

OMISSION IN BUSINESS PAPER.

The Hon. G. ELLIOTT said he wished again to refer to the point of order which he raised at the commencement of their proceedings, to-day. The omission to which he had called attention was a very serious one, and he would like to know what was to be done in consequence, in order to remedy it. It was impossible to alter the business paper, and therefore he thought the only thing they could do would be to rescind that portion of it which related to the second reading of the Kerosene Bill, and commence with that measure *de novo*. He thought, at first, that it was merely a clerical mistake in the business paper; but he had since ascertained that the questions had been taken down as put from

the Chair. He looked upon the omission as a very serious matter.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL was about to give notice of a motion on the subject, when the House was counted out.