

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 2 MAY 1872

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 2 May, 1872.

Telegraphic Communication with Europe.—Postal Communication with Great Britain, *via* Java.

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION WITH EUROPE.

The Order of the Day for the consideration of the Legislative Assembly's Message respecting Telegraphic Communication with Europe, having been read,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Honorable gentlemen, I have to move—

That this House being impressed with the importance of establishing Telegraphic Communication with Europe, resolves—That the Government shall be empowered to enter into a contract, subject to the approval of Parliament, with a Telegraphic Construction Company, for the laying of a Telegraph Cable between Norman Mouth and Java, or such other place as may appear most desirable, either on a guarantee of interest on cost of construction, or on such terms as may be agreed on; and to enter into negotiations with such of the neighboring Colonies as may be disposed to join in carrying out the above object.

In asking you to assent to this resolution, I will, as shortly as possible, explain to you the reasons that influence the Government in its favor. I have heard it mentioned outside, and it is an idea prevalent in the minds of many persons, that if this resolution is affirmed by the Council, the country will be liable for a large sum of money. Now, I wish to disabuse the minds of honorable members of that idea; for all that this resolution will do, is, to allow the Government to enter into

negotiations, and to submit any arrangement they may have entered into, for the carrying out of this important and desirable work, to both Houses of Parliament, for approval; so that, unless any such arrangement shall have been entered into, and brought before Parliament, and approved of, no money can be expended. Honorable gentlemen are aware that, for many years, we have thought of telegraphic communication with England. We have, through many difficulties, extended our line to Norman Mouth, on the Gulf of Carpentaria; and we are now prepared, whenever the opportunity is offered to us, to connect by cable, and thus to bring Australia into direct communication with the whole civilised world. There can be no doubt of the desirability of this. Queensland was the first to make the attempt and to carry her line over the country to the Gulf of Carpentaria. I have myself been very much interested in this subject; and I remember, nearly four years ago, in 1868, when I came into office, pointing out that, unless we pushed our lines as far as Cardwell, along our own coast, in all probability the southern colonies would attempt to take a line across the continent. I have, on many occasions, given my opinion of the line that has been stretched across in the colony of South Australia. I do not think that that line could, under any circumstances, become a reliable line. Honorable gentlemen, here, are all well acquainted with the bush, and many of you are familiar with the interior of this country; and all who have travelled much inland are aware that the interior of Australia is subject to great droughts, and also to heavy floods. I have no hesitation in stating my opinion that the difficulties are so numerous that they will be hard to overcome on that line. Honorable gentlemen know how it was that the South Australian overland line was adopted. Captain Osborne was sent out from home to Australia, for the purpose of entering into communications with the different Colonial Governments, with the object of having a telegraph line laid down to connect us with Asia, Europe, and England, which line was to join the submarine cable at Port Darwin, and to come thence across to Burke Town. He arrived in South Australia, first, and was induced, by a promise on the part of the Government to make an overland line from Adelaide to Port Darwin, to fall in with their views; as thus the construction, by the company he represented, of some seven or eight hundred miles of a land line, over an uninhabited country, would be avoided, which line the company would have had to maintain, to keep up the connection with our line to the Gulf. He naturally thought that the South Australians must know more about the colony they lived in than his company could know; and they bound themselves down in very heavy terms to complete the work, and entered upon the construction of the line. This is, in effect, the history of the subject. Although I do

not pretend to know very much about telegraphy, yet, from what I have read, I have every reason to believe that scientific men agree generally that the contemplated submarine cable from the present terminus of our line at Normanton would be far better than a land line from Port Darwin to Burke Town, had the line originally projected—or, rejected—been carried out instead of the undertaking now in progress in the sister colony adjoining our western border. I think that though such a cable may cost a little more at first than the land line, it will in the long run be much the cheapest. At the same time, I do not know that it is very much to be regretted by us or the other colonies, that the South Australian Government are doing what they have undertaken. They do exhibit a great deal of pluck in their attempt, and although I have stated my opinion that they will not be able to maintain regular communication, I think that, at all events, they will be able to open communication with the mother-country. But, unless telegraphy is certain, it is almost useless; and, as an alternative line must sooner or later be required, we are only hastening a consummation devoutly to be wished. We have been in communication with Mr. Gisborne, the original projector of telegraphic connection between England and Australia; and his proposal is printed. In one of his letters he states the amount of cost to us; and I will give the House the particulars:—He states that it will cost from £700,000 to £800,000 for a cable from Java to Normanton. His offer, which could not for a moment be thought of, stipulates for a guarantee of six per cent. on that sum for ninety-nine years; which would bring the interest up to £48,000 a-year. Mr. Gisborne, in another letter, states that £16,000 per annum would be the outside sum for which this colony would render itself liable; for he supposes that New South Wales, and perhaps New Zealand, would join Queensland, and he calculates that four per cent., or, at least, £32,000 would be paid by them. I have made inquiries, before bringing this resolution forward in the House, and, as far as I can understand the subject, I have arrived at the conclusion that £400,000 is the sum that the cable will actually cost. Of course, honorable gentlemen are aware that where scientific men differ so much, it would be impossible for me to name an exact sum: I can only give an opinion. Cables made by Mr. Hooper, whose cables are becoming very much in vogue, and are considerably cheaper, and said to be better, than those hitherto used—which, I am informed, cost £300 per mile—may be used; and, if I am right as to their cost, the work can be carried out for £400,000. At five per cent. interest, guaranteed, the annual charge of the undertaking will be £20,000. If, on the other hand, Mr. Gisborne is correct in his calculation of £32,000 as the amount which will be returned from the messages of other colonies, then the guarantee of £20,000

will be nominal, as the colony will be liable for nothing. I have every reason to believe, from inquiries I have made, that the line will pay for itself; and I think, also—in fact, there can be little doubt about it—that New South Wales will gladly join us in this guarantee; that colony being as much interested in having efficient telegraphic communication with Europe as we are. As this is the first colony in the connection, we shall receive our messages at less cost than our neighbors, and New South Wales will have the cost of conveying her messages further through her territory. Now, honorable gentlemen, we have completed a line to Norman Mouth, which has cost us a considerable sum of money: and you will easily perceive that if we can obtain all the European telegrams through that line, we shall be able to make use of it much to our own advantage; in fact, the line will be put to the use it was originally intended for. The course along which it is intended to take the cable is somewhere about 1,800 miles; but the cable itself will be 2,000 miles long. At £200 per mile, the cable will cost £400,000. There is very little doubt that, before long, another cable will be stretched to New Zealand, forming telegraphic connection between that colony and England. If our line is complete, even supposing the South Australian line also to be in working order, naturally, and in all probability, the New Zealand messages would be sent *via* Queensland. In other words, the messages of New South Wales and New Zealand would be conveyed by our line, and they would, I believe, repay amply the cost that we are willing to subject ourselves to. I wish to explain to honorable members that, in supporting this resolution, they will not help the Government to go into debt recklessly; nor will the Government incur any obligations unless we can make arrangements of that satisfactory nature that they will be approved of by Parliament. Unless we make arrangements, honorable gentlemen do not pledge themselves to any expenditure at all. I believe, if the resolution is passed, that there need be very little doubt it will enable the Government to initiate arrangements which will ensure the carrying out of the undertaking successfully. I do not know if honorable gentlemen have looked over the map, on which the different telegraph lines are shewn; if so, they will have seen that we shall be connected with almost the whole world. I do not know that I need say more. After honorable gentlemen have spoken, if there is any necessity, I shall be very glad to make any explanation that I am able. I have brought with me a chart which shews the soundings of different places along the probable course of the cable; and it is now on the table. I shall be very happy to answer any questions that honorable gentlemen may put to me; and I beg formally to move the adoption of the resolution by the Council.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he had not quite made up his mind with reference to the resolution, which, he thought, must be taken in conjunction with the one that was to follow, respecting a steam postal service *viâ* Torres Straits; for he thought that the Government should not have introduced it until a later period of the session. The House must take into consideration that they were pledged to the promotion of internal communication; and if the Government recognised the necessity for any large expenditure on any great undertaking, such as the one before the House, or the one that would subsequently be proposed—he was now anticipating—the Council should desire the recognition of internal communication rather than anything else. True, that by this resolution the Government merely asked for power from Parliament to call for tenders, or to negotiate an undertaking of the nature proposed, subject to the approval of both Houses; but, considering how the Council had pledged themselves to internal communication, he was sorry that the subject of railways had not been introduced by the Government before either telegraphic or postal communication with England. It was a very great pity, too, that the Government did not take upon themselves the responsibility, with regard to telegraphic communication, that they had assumed with reference to postal communication, for which latter a contract had been entered into. By a paper laid on the table, it appeared that Mr. Fraser had made a contract with the Government for a steam service to Java, subject to the approval of Parliament. The same action might have been taken by the Government on the subject of the resolution. He (Mr. Fitz) regretted that the Government had not taken action twelve months since. The probability was, had they done so, that Queensland would now be in telegraphic communication with Europe. It was impossible to conceive the advantages that would have accrued to this colony from being the first to establish a connection with the mother-country. Reading the resolution attentively, he must say he thought it was almost a waste of time to discuss it at all, because the Government merely asked for permission “to enter into a contract, subject to the approval of Parliament,” and so on. The Government had entered into a contract for a postal service, with Mr. Fraser—

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: No.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Subject to the sanction of Parliament, which was now asked for. The arrangement had been entered into. The paper was before him, and he took it that a contract had been written out.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: It was merely correspondence.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: When the resolution was passed respecting the postal service *viâ* Torres Straits, the Government would be empowered to close the matter with Mr. Fraser;

and the Government were bound by it. But, when the resolution before the Council just now passed, the Government would not be bound by it. He considered it a pity that there was any difference between the two resolutions; and he regretted that the Government did not take the same action with regard to the telegraphic services as they had taken in the other case. If the Government should enter into any contract, it would be monstrous that the country should be bound to a five per cent. guarantee for ninety-nine years. He was aware that that was looked upon by the Government as an excessive term; but he certainly thought that twenty-one years would be quite a sufficient term over which to give a guarantee. Again, the cost, £600,000, appeared to him to be absolutely monstrous, judging according to the contrast afforded by Mr. Cracknell's idea, that a cable which would cost about £200,000 would answer all purposes. If the Government could get the work done for so much less, there would be a corresponding saving of taxation upon the colony. Five per cent. interest on £600,000 would be £30,000; which, with £25,000 for the postal service, would give a total of additional expenditure of £55,000 per annum. How far that would go towards giving internal communication to the colony! And the House could not possibly enter into any other subject that was of more importance to the colony, not even excepting telegraphic and postal communication with England. He should leave the matter as it stood, and should speak to the next resolution which pledged the Government fully; and would only say, that he was exceedingly sorry that the Government had not taken up telegraphic communication twelve months ago.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: He must say that he shared in the regret of the honorable gentleman who had just sat down, that the Government had not brought this matter forward twelve months ago. At the same time, he saw no reason for delaying its settlement, now, if it could be carried out in a satisfactory form. A great difficulty appeared to him in the discrepancy between the two estimates before the House: one, £800,000, was double the amount of the other, £400,000. That was a very great margin to leave open, for there was no guide or limit as regarded the amount of expenditure to be gone into. The resolution imposed no limitation whatever. If the lowest estimate should be found sufficient, he had not the slightest doubt that from the first the line would pay. He was in Sydney lately, and he had had a good deal of conversation with mercantile men on the subject of the telegraph; and he found that there was a strong feeling amongst them in favor of our line, in preference to the South Australian line. The general opinion was, that the Queensland line would be a much more efficient line than the other, and that it would be most used, provided that the tariff was made reasonable. He had been told by

a partner in a considerable importing firm that, if the tariff was reasonable, his firm would send a telegram every fortnight, and that his correspondent at home would send as many; and that, to his own knowledge, many other firms in Sydney would use the telegraph as much as his firm. There was therefore a reasonable prospect that the undertaking would be self-supporting. He should be very sorry to support anything which would be likely to interfere with the development of internal communication; but seeing no chance of that question coming on for consideration immediately, and looking especially to the cost of the telegraph being kept down to the lowest estimate, and to its being self-supporting, there was no reason for delaying the undertaking on that account. He should like to hear from the Postmaster-General what was the opinion of the Government on the point of cost, and whether they were likely to go to the extent of £600,000 or £800,000. If this should be the case, he should prefer that the subject was deferred for further consideration; but if they would limit the cost to £100,000, let them proceed without any further delay.

The Hon. L. HOPE: Would the Postmaster-General inform the House if the existing land line which the colony possessed would be sufficient for the traffic expected?

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said he agreed with the Honorable Captain Simpson about the discrepancy in the figures given to the House by the honorable gentleman representing the Government. A guarantee of six per cent. upon £800,000 for ninety-nine years was an astonishing demand. With the known great abundance of money in the market, everywhere, at the present time, it appeared an extraordinary guarantee for any undertaking by a Government. Lately there had been a good deal of talk about consolidating the Queensland debt, and reducing the interest payable by the colony from six to five or four and a-half per cent. He did not see the difference between debentures and any other form of security bearing interest. Any company in the old country would be satisfied with a profit of four and a-half or five per cent. on such a guarantee as this colony could offer. Besides, a guarantee extending over a term of twenty-one years ought to suffice. Another discrepancy he begged to point out. The Postmaster-General spoke, in the first instance, of the cable costing £300 per mile, and afterwards, in his calculations, he spoke of the total cost being £400,000, which, for the distance, was at the rate of £200 per mile. Perhaps the honorable gentleman would inform the House upon the point of difference noticed. On the other hand, he (Mr. Heussler) could not agree with the Honorable Mr. Fitz, who had said that the Government had done nothing on the subject of telegraphic communication; for it was patent that a great deal had been done, and they had arrived at the last act, the negotiations being brought on to

the stage. He hoped that negotiations would be opened with a new company. The ninety-nine years' guarantee asked for, was, under the circumstances, most monstrous and absurd. Far be it from him to oppose the resolution; but he felt bound to draw the attention of the Government to the few points he had indicated.

The Hon. G. HARRIS said he did not think that any great harm could ensue from the passing of the resolution, because any engagement which the Government might enter into must be subject to the approval of Parliament. For that reason he felt disposed to support it as it stood, in order to give the Government an opportunity to enter into negotiations and to get particulars of what the work could be carried out for. Before the resolution was passed, it would be well for the House to consider whether there should be two lines of electric telegraph between Australia and Europe. He understood that the South Australian overland line would be in working order this year; and, if Queensland established a separate connection with England, there would be considerable competition between the two colonies for the conveyance of messages; and it appeared to him that there would not be occupation for two distinct lines from two separate colonies, both trying to get as much business as possible by cutting down charges. However, for the reason first stated, he should cordially support the resolution.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Honorable Gentlemen—In replying to the questions which have been asked me, I must say, first, that I am quite surprised that some honorable gentlemen—the Honorable Mr. Heussler for one, and the Honorable Mr. Fitz, also—have taken up the idea that the Government contemplate an expenditure of £800,000 on the terms named in connection with that sum. In the first place, I merely quoted the letter which was written by Mr. Gisborne, in 1870, giving what he then proposed. At the time, I stated that in my opinion it was ridiculous to enter into that proposal. I wonder honorable members did not hear what I said. I brought it forward merely to shew, as I think, that there are very good reasons why the Government shall not enter into any contract, except as now asked for by the resolution; because it will be their duty to get this line made as cheaply as possible. I stated that Mr. Gisborne named £700,000 or £800,000; also that, as far as I could judge, £400,000 would be about the real cost. But I am unable to say what will be the exact cost, until arrangements for proceeding with the work have been entered into. In answer to the Honorable Mr. Heussler, I stated, also, that £300 per mile had been the amount that had been paid, hitherto, as far as I could ascertain, for cables. The Honorable Mr. Fitz thinks the Government very much to blame because they had not taken steps in the undertaking before this.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: I beg pardon, I said I regretted it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am very happy to tell the honorable gentleman that the Government have been for a very long time in correspondence on this subject; but until lately it was impracticable for them to go further. It was known that the state of affairs at home quite precluded people from entering into such matters as the Anglo-Australian telegraph extension. But now affairs are greatly changed; money is more cheaply obtainable than during recent European disturbances; and I have no doubt that our line will be carried out, and that the cost and the interest thereon will be less than if it was undertaken some time ago. I have also to state to honorable gentlemen who consider six per cent. too much, that I agree with them; and I gave them no reason to suppose that such was the amount the Government would pay Mr. Gisborne;—his letter stated six per cent., but the Government think that they will not have to exceed five per cent. I think that honorable gentlemen need have no fear as to the sum of money that may be expended on telegraphic communication interfering with internal communication, to which they pledged this House last year. I may refer to the report of the Superintendent of Telegraphs for last year, and to a large amount of correspondence which the Government have entered into and circulated, as far as they have been able to do so, to let the world know how our telegraph stands, and to give every information on a subject we have so much at heart; and I have no hesitation in saying that those efforts are now bearing fruit. With respect to the question put by the Honorable Captain Hope, whether the line is sufficient to carry all the business expected;—I may say that the line as it stands carries only one wire, which, I hope, will not be sufficient for the business. I trust that we shall have to extend two or three wires, to meet the business requirements of the line. As far as the poles are concerned, the line is perfectly sufficient. The more work we have, the more satisfied we shall be to place as many wires on them as may be required. I think I have answered all the questions that honorable gentlemen have asked me. As the Honorable Mr. Harris said, no harm can possibly accrue from passing the resolution as it now stands. The contract must come before the Parliament for approval.

The question was then put and affirmed *nem. diss.*; and a message was ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly informing that House of the concurrence of the Council in the resolution.

POSTAL COMMUNICATION WITH GREAT BRITAIN, *VIA* JAVA.

Upon the order of the day being read for the consideration of a resolution on this subject, sent up from the Legislative Assembly,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That this House being of opinion that the present postal arrangements of this colony with Great Britain are not satisfactory, resolves—That the Government shall be empowered to make arrangements for establishing steam communication by way of Java, at an annual cost to the colony not exceeding the sum of £25,000; and authorises the Government to negotiate with the Governments of the neighboring colonies, with the view of obtaining their concurrence and assistance in subsidising the line.

In asking your concurrence in this resolution, I will point out to honorable gentlemen, that this is dissimilar from the last which you have adopted—and I trust that it will meet with the approbation of my honorable friend, Mr. Fitz;—for the contract will not be subject to any further approval of Parliament. If this House passes this resolution, a contract can be entered into by the Government as soon as practicable.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Honorable gentlemen, especially those members who have been long in the House, are aware of the great interest the colony of Queensland has taken, almost ever since her foundation, in the Torres Straits route. There can be no doubt that it is the route best adapted for this colony. The honorable the President, Sir Maurice O'Connell, brought a resolution on this route before the Council as early as July, 1860. Many despatches, also upon the same subject were written by the Government to the home authorities in 1860–61–62–64; and in '65, there was a joint committee of both Houses to inquire into the subject. The report of that committee was favorable, and it followed that a trial line from Brisbane to Batavia was opened. If I remember rightly, the "Souchays" and the "Hero," steamers, made five different voyages. The cost of the trial line to Queensland, was £21,519; and to the Netherlands East Indian Government, £6,362; so that £27,881 was expended on those five trips. That proved, at all events, that such a line is practicable, which was before doubted; and it brought us into direct communication with the East. Since then several resolutions have been brought before the House, one by Mr. Douglas, when he was Postmaster-General. In fact, I think, every Ministry, and every Postmaster-General in this House, nearly every session, has had more or less to say on the subject. It is true, honorable gentlemen, that £25,000 is set down for the service; but it is to be remembered that from this sum is to be deducted the sum now paid for the Suez line, which amounts to something between £11,000 and £12,000, as far as I am able to judge: I cannot give the exact amount for this year, because our contribution is adjusted every year. Therefore, what this House pledges itself to is an expenditure of £13,000. Although, if the resolution is passed, the Government will be authorised to enter into a contract, I can

assure honorable members that unless the Government see that the service can be properly carried out, and that they can get their money's worth, they will certainly not enter into it at all. I hope that we shall have the concurrence of the neighboring colonies in our undertaking. A letter has been written already to New South Wales, to which no answer has been returned; this is attributable, I have no doubt, to the state of politics in that colony, at the time. I would point out to honorable gentlemen the great advantages which will accrue to Queensland in postal matters from having this service. It is true that as the time-table of the Suez route is at present framed, Brisbane has a longer time to answer the English mail than ever it had before; but it is also to be remembered that if Brisbane can answer, no other port north of Brisbane can send return correspondence by the existing arrangements for mail communication with the mother-country. And not only that, but the mail service between Brisbane and the northern ports is not at all satisfactory to the residents of the North. The steamers of the proposed service will touch at various ports, and the most northern port will have the longest time to answer correspondence, and Brisbane the shortest, between the inward and outward mails. I have followed out the time-table for one month; and I find that Brisbane will have from four to five days to answer letters; and that, therefore, the whole of Queensland, or rather, that portion of the colony which is at all near the seaboard will be able to answer British and foreign correspondence by the return mail. This service will also bring us into communication—and not only Queensland, but the whole of Australia—with Java, China, Japan, and all the British possessions in the East, and with other dependencies; and it will be of considerable assistance to us, also, in connection with the electric telegraph which we hope to establish. The place where we shall meet the China mails, by the proposed service, is, at present, Singapore; but I have reason to believe that steps will be taken to bring about the junction, not at Singapore, but at Java Head, whence the route will be direct to Galle. My honorable friend, Captain Simpson, will, no doubt, give the House some information on this part of the subject, as he has been to Java. I have not made such a voyage. There are, at present, three services a month from Java to Singapore, and if the steamers should go through the straits of Sunda, or, better, from Java Head, a day or a day and a-half more time would be given to us here, at the extreme end of our line, than if our mails have to meet the steamers at Singapore. Besides, the advantage of having additional time at this end to answer our letters, we should avoid detention—there need not be much, for the time-table could be so arranged as to avoid that—between Java and Singapore; at Penang, a certain amount of detention is involved;—and then our mails could

proceed from Java Head to Galle, whence the steamers depart with the mails for England direct. The mail time from Brisbane to Southampton, *vid* King George's Sound, at present, is fifty-eight days and one hour; it is from fifty to fifty-one days from Sydney, and the time-table, if you count by the hour, makes the voyage fifty-nine days by the Torres' Straits route—almost the same as by the Suez route. Certainly there is not above one day's difference between the two routes; and, as I have before explained to the House, in following the time-table—if honorable gentlemen will do that for themselves, they will see it—we shall have plenty of time here to answer our letters, and our fellow colonists all along the coast will have the advantage of regular mail communication also. Honorable gentlemen must bear in mind that if this sum of £25,000 is paid, we shall have other advantages also. For instance, should New South Wales not contribute to the subsidy for our mail service, we could act reciprocally otherwise, by giving our neighbors facilities for sending mails by it, and taking advantage of all their services, charging so much per letter. We should, in that way, be the gainers, as fewer letters go from here than would come from New South Wales. I think the House may say safely that the £25,000 is not for one service only. Practically, it is for two, if not for three services; that is to say, by reciprocity, with the neighboring colonies. As honorable gentlemen are aware, several intercolonial conferences have taken place. They have not certainly resulted in much, owing to the difficulty that each colony had to meet the views of the other colonies. I was at the last conference, and the terms made for Queensland in reference to postal arrangements were very good—almost too good to have been anticipated;—as by those terms, for £10,000, we should have had two services—*vid* California and *vid* Suez. But, before I went to the Conference I had come to the conclusion that the only practicable plan was for the different colonies each to adopt the route or routes which suited it best, and to reciprocate; and I think that the result has proved that I was right in my conjecture. The points that I wish to press most strongly upon this honorable House are—first, that should an efficient service not be procurable for the amount named, the Government will not lead the country into an expense for which it shall not obtain full value; secondly, that it is not an extra expenditure of £25,000 which the House is asked to assent to by adopting the resolution, as in reality you have to deduct from it £12,000 which is now paid for the service *vid* Suez. Again, I will urge, what is of greater consequence to Queensland than what I have said already, that we can now do the whole of our northern ports tardy justice, so far as their mail arrangements are concerned. I think this is to be looked at very favorably. This colony is in a different position from the other colonies. New South Wales has only one port, Sydney;

and Victoria has only one, Melbourne. The English mails come to a port in this colony which is situated far south; while all along the coast, northward, there are several large ports where numerous and influential communities are established, some of them numbering more people than the total inhabitants of Brisbane were when the English mail service was first established. Rockhampton has a numerous and active population; so has Townsville, and the population is increasing; Maryborough, too. In fact, all those places should be supplied with facilities for postal communication, which are not good at present. In entering into this contract, it will, of course, be for the Government to see that proper ships are provided for the service, and not the old Dutch tubs which have been alluded to elsewhere. I am quite satisfied that the service will be a very good one, and that it will be well worth what we shall pay for it; and, therefore, I have no hesitation in recommending it to the House.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said he could not give a silent vote on this question. He was very glad to see the resolution brought forward. It was five or six years since a gentleman came down specially from Java, to initiate this most important service, and he spent a considerable amount of money out of his private pocket, in introducing the subject. Mr. Van Delden, who was no doubt held in good remembrance by honorable members, and the community generally, was the gentleman to whom he (Mr. Heussler) referred. It remained for him only to draw attention to one point. Full information was required regarding the time in which the service could be performed each way. The House were apprised of the means of getting one or two days extra, for Brisbane to have the opportunity of answering the mails from England; and he hoped that the Government would be very strict to ensure that advantage. If a time-table was before them, honorable members would be able to judge for themselves.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I beg the honorable gentleman to observe that there is a time-table before the House: the honorable Captain Hope is looking at it.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER: He had not been aware of it. Perhaps Captain Hope would enlighten the House, a little, on the subject. His (Mr. Heussler's) doubts in regard to the time of the service were not quite removed. Referring to the trips of the "Souchays" and the "Hero," between Brisbane and Batavia, he said it had come to his knowledge that the fortnightly mail between Ceylon and Europe generally, and Ceylon and China, did not exactly tally with the time of the return steamers to Australia. With regard to the expense, he was not quite enlightened as to how far it included or did not include the present postal service to the northern ports. No doubt the northern ports had a right to be considered seriously in the settlement of this question; and, con-

sequently, if only £13,000 more than heretofore should have to be spent, that might safely be incurred. The service would be of great consequence to the colony, not strictly for a postal route alone, but for the development of trade between Queensland and the East Indies, with which this country would be brought into close communication. Observations had been made with regard to the "old Dutch tubs." He was not exactly a Dutchman, but he had the honor of being Dutch consul, and he had lived in Holland a considerable time before he came to this colony. The Dutch tubs were about the first that connected London with Holland, by steam, and one of them had lasted thirty years; and old as she was, she was considered the most comfortable passenger vessel on the line, and was preferred to other steamers belonging to the General Steam Navigation Company. The Dutch tubs were in no wise inferior to the vessels of other countries.

The Hon. G. HARRIS said he thought this resolution was very different, indeed, from the one that the House had just passed. In the first place, if it should be passed in its present form, it would empower the Government to conclude arrangements for the establishment of the service proposed. He did not think that was desirable, and his own opinion was that all such matters should be subject to the approval of Parliament. He desired, therefore, after saying a few more words, to move an amendment to the effect:—

That the Government shall be empowered, subject to the approval of Parliament, to make arrangements, by inviting tenders, for establishing steam communication by way of Java—

and so on. He thought that when an important project like this was started, the whole shipping interest of the world should have an opportunity of tendering for the line. The Government should not confine their arrangements to one section of the community, as he understood it was their intention to do—namely, to a company which was represented by a gentleman who recently visited the colony, Mr. Fraser, of Java. So far as he understood the statement of the honorable the Postmaster-General, he was led to believe that the cost to this colony of the present mail service *viâ Suez*, was about £12,000. If the sum named in the resolution for the proposed service was reduced by that amount, no doubt the cost would be reasonable. Still, if one individual, representing a company, felt himself in a position to make an offer to the Government to conduct a service for £25,000 per annum, it was probable that other companies, with far more vessels at their disposal than he had, and likely of a much superior class to his, would be in a position to offer to do the service at a less rate than the first offer made. At all events, it was right that tenders should be invited, and that the two Houses of Parliament should have an opportunity of judging of the offers for themselves. So far, he thought the present

service *via* Suez was very well conducted; and there was no immediate cause to press the Government proposal, without knowledge of what it would cost. By every English mail, the Brisbane letters arrived in proper time, which was as much as could be expected. Of course, it could not be expected that letters for Cardwell and the other northern ports of the colony could be delivered in time to be answered by return of post. But all purposes, for Ipswich, as well as Brisbane, and he had heard, in some instances, Rockhampton and the inland towns of Darling Downs, were served by the present arrangements. He did not think that any urgent necessity existed for pressing forward the resolution, without some further information upon the subject; and, with the object of delay, he moved, by way of amendment:—

That after the word "empowered" the following words be inserted:—"Subject to the approval of Parliament;" and, after the word "arrangements," insert "by inviting tenders."

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I think, when my honorable friend, Mr. Harris, has had a little explanation, he will see that tenders cannot be invited. He is aware that in many matters the Government always wish to invite tenders; but this is quite a different state of circumstances altogether. We are not by ourselves, here; we are concerned with the Netherlands Indian Government, who subscribe £10,000 to this service. Therefore, it will be quite impracticable for us to call for tenders: we should lose their support, and lose the service with it. But not only that; if my honorable friend, Mr. Harris, had looked over the Minutes of Proceedings of the House, he would have seen that a great deal of correspondence had formerly taken place on the subject of this resolution, that tenders had been called for, and that those received, instead of being £25,000, have been £45,000—I think I am correct in saying this—to £60,000; which is a very great difference, comparing the tenders with the present proposal. I think this explanation will be sufficient to shew the honorable gentleman that we must proceed with the resolution as it stands; and I am sure that my honorable friend, Mr. Fitz, will agree with that. I am very glad to hear that the Honorable Mr. Heussler gives such a very good opinion of the old Dutch tubs. I merely used the phrase, because it has been stated outside—not that I think anything of the sort—that the vessels were to be old Dutch tubs;—on the contrary, I think that careful attention to the time-table will obviate the cause for any apprehension on that score. If the honorable gentleman will look at the time-table, he will find that arrangements can be made for mails to leave Southampton for Brisbane, and Brisbane for Southampton, giving us the advantages we require of being

able to answer letters by return post. Those advantages can be secured for the Torres Straits service as well as the Suez service. In framing the time-table, the Postmaster-General will, of course, have to see to all this. As for the experimental trips, they were made every two months. The "Souchays," I must say, did not make the voyages so quickly as vessels can do. It is very easy to calculate the time the trip should occupy:—Seventeen days from Brisbane to Batavia; and two and a-half days from Batavia to Singapore, including stoppages;—that is, in all, nineteen days and a-half. I shall oppose the amendment.

The Hon. H. B. Fitz said he was not aware whether the Honorable Mr. Harris was going to withdraw his amendment or not. Of course, the question of tenders was settled by what had fallen from the Postmaster-General. But there was something higher, to his mind, to be considered. He did not like to see the colony pledged to an expenditure of £25,000 a-year until the question of railway extension had been settled, and he saw no immediate reason for this scheme for postal communication to be entered upon. The contract with the P. and O. Company would not terminate until 31st December, 1873. There was also something very suspicious in the terms of the memorandum of agreement: Mr. Fraser bound himself to nine knots an hour for his steamers, when a powerful company like the P. and O. Company, with its immense resources, bound itself, on this side of Suez, to only eight knots an hour. If the Dutch Government would give £10,000 towards the service now, they would do so twelve months hence. It was impossible to say what terms might be made with the P. and O. Company in twelve months. The resolution stated that the present postal arrangements were very unsatisfactory. He (Mr. Fitz) understood that they were very satisfactory.

An HONORABLE MEMBER: You cannot answer letters.

The Hon. H. B. Fitz: He thought that depended upon the postal arrangements between this and Sydney. He must say that if he sat alone, he should vote against the Government being empowered to take the action proposed, and to close any arrangement, without the approval of Parliament. If the Honorable Mr. Harris would alter his amendment, so that before any contract was concluded it should have the sanction of Parliament—as in the resolution upon the telegraph—it would best meet the wishes of honorable members. It was impossible to say that the Government might not make better terms than were proposed now. The line would, it was said, give postal facilities to the northern ports; but he did not suppose that their correspondence with Europe was very important at present. A few letters were sent to and fro, no doubt; but he supposed the principal correspondence of the northern ports was with Brisbane. He

should vote against the resolution as it stood, and he wished to see the amendment altered so that it should make the contract subject to the approval of Parliament.

The Hon. G. HARRIS said he was willing, with the sanction of the House, to take out of his amendment the words "by inviting tenders," leaving the condition simply that the contract should be "subject to the approval of Parliament."

Amendment, by leave, altered.

The Hon. W. HOBBS said he thought that even with the proposed alteration, the amendment would scarcely meet the case; as, so far as he had read the papers before the House, it was absolutely necessary that the contract should be entered into as speedily as possible, or Mr. Fraser could not keep his offer open. It appeared that that gentleman was receiving a subsidy from the Netherlands Indian Government in order to open communication between Java and this colony, and that he must make a contract as early as possible, or he would lose the subsidy. It would be quite out of place for the Council to decide that the completion of the contract should be subject to the sanction of Parliament, because such action might involve a delay of twelve months, and even then it might not be completed. He would, therefore, support the resolution as it stood, and he urged upon honorable members to avail themselves of the opportunity that was now offered of opening up the Torres' Straits route. With regard to the Honorable Mr. Fitz' apprehension that the House were acting in a hurry, he must say that he thought the Government of the colony had taken a very long time to consider the subject. The opening of the route had been talked about by all parties for the past six or seven years; there had been trial trips by the "Souchays" and the "Hero;" tenders had been called for; but no further advance was made than what he described, until this present opportunity. He thought it would be a waste of time to delay any longer. It had been said that the present means of communication answered very well. It answered, no doubt, for Melbourne and Sydney; but he thought it was very doubtful whether it answered for this colony. The A. S. N. Company took what time they liked in sending our mails by their steamers. Formerly, it was not once out of six or seven times that our English letters could be answered by return mail. The small sum that he thought was likely to be required for opening up the new route necessitated our closing with the offer as speedily as possible. The cost of the service by the Suez route, £11,000 or £12,000, would be saved; and that would leave only about £13,000 to be made up for an independent service that promised to be advantageous to all the other ports of the colony besides Brisbane. That cost, considering the rapid progress of the colony to the north, was a mere trifle. The advantages of the service

to the colony would be incalculable. It would put an end to the discontent which prevailed in the North, and, instead of being a dissatisfied and disunited community, Queensland would be a large united colony. There was, he thought, something grand in the idea of having such a large territory as this closely connected by a steam mail service. He would therefore support the resolution.

The Hon. J. GIBBON: He must certainly deprecate any further expenditure—hasty expenditure—upon steam postal communication with Europe, because he was quite well aware that the present services were very effective indeed. That by Suez was admirably conducted.

The Hon. W. HOBBS: To Sydney.

The Hon. J. GIBBON: And we were only two days from Sydney. He thought the House would be very unwise to give up a thoroughly good service for a shadow—a kind of mirage—that would never answer the requirements of the colony. It was perfectly absurd to think that a steamer, calling at every port between this and Cape York, could perform the mail service in a satisfactory manner. Honorable gentlemen should bear in mind that on the proposed mail service £25,000 a-year would be spent, and that there was no hope of developing a considerable passenger traffic, which would all go by San Francisco and Suez; and if the travelling public did not avail themselves of the service, the House must come to the conclusion that the money was, in a great measure, thrown away. Those considerations were advanced as conclusive, to say nothing of the difficulties and dangers of the sea. Only the other day, the crew of a vessel were murdered by the savage cannibals of the islands on the Queensland coast. He had thought upon the whole subject a great deal, and he believed it would be very unwise to proceed with the service proposed. He could see neither sense nor wisdom in altering the service. The present mail service was a very good one. When the proper time arrived, and the country was densely populated to the north, it might, perhaps, be desirable to run steamers to Batavia; but he had very much doubt whether any good mail service would be established by the northern route.

The Hon. L. HOPE said he could not agree with the Honorable Mr. Gibbon, that the money expended on the proposed mail service would be thrown away; for, to say the least, the service would put this colony in an independent position. Queensland would be able to dictate pretty good terms to her neighbors, instead of being dictated to. Nor did he (Mr. Hope) believe that the dangers of the sea, which the honorable gentleman had made so much of, were very great. The more the Torres' Straits route was traversed, the less the difficulties would appear. The "Hero" had found no difficulty whatever in navigating the route. In fact,

the captain of the "Hero," when asked about it, said it was no more difficult than driving through George street; that was to say, he could time his departures so that he would pass all the dangerous points in daylight, and have the clear places for his night runs. Perhaps it might be necessary, he (Captain Hope) was informed, to have one or two light ships or light boats to mark dangerous positions. The captain had also said, that a stranger to the navigation might have to anchor two or three times on his first trip; but, after that, an ordinarily cautious man could run through with confidence. As to the natives of the coast and islands, steamers were not likely to be subject to any accidents from them. He was very glad to hear the Postmaster-General assure the House, that letters would have the same despatch by this route as by the Suez route. He wished to ask the honorable gentleman a question. In one part of his speech he had mentioned the possible continuation of the line from Java to Ceylon. Would that be done by the same company?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: By Mr. Fraser.

The Hon. L. HOPE: For the same subsidy?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: For the same subsidy.

The Hon. L. HOPE: He should most certainly support the resolution for the establishment of the Torres' Straits postal route.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE would say a few words before giving his vote. The feature of the new route that most recommended itself to him was, that justice would be done to the whole colony by the mail service connecting all the ports. That was a feature which the House ought not to overlook. It pressed very strongly on his mind, so much so, that, if he found, or could anticipate, disadvantages to travellers by that route, he thought it would still recommend itself to him. Notwithstanding what had been said by the honorable Mr. Gibbon, it was perfectly true that the present mail service was not satisfactory to this colony. He (Mr. Browne) admitted the fact that the P. and O. Company performed their part of the contract extremely well; but it extended only to Sydney. At any rate, he thought Brisbane was not satisfied with the present service, between this and Sydney; and the northern part of this colony was practically ignored under existing arrangements. It must necessarily be so. Therefore, with those facts very strongly brought before them, honorable members ought to feel great pleasure in supporting the resolution, which proposed to give the benefit of an independent mail service to the whole colony, especially when the Government of Java joined in sharing the expense of that service. The Honorable Mr. Fitz considered that Mr. Fraser, in guaranteeing nine knots an hour by the steamers to be engaged in the service, was, in all probability, venturing to promise more than he could perform, inasmuch as the P. and O. Company guaranteed

only eight knots an hour by their steamers. The P. and O. Company, with great caution, would not contract, he (Mr. Browne) believed, for more than eight knots; but the fact was, as many honorable members who had travelled by the Suez line could state, that their steamers really did travel more than nine knots an hour. Therefore, those steamers were able to go at a greater speed than the contract specified; and the seas traversed by the P. and O. Company's steamers were rougher, and far more subject to storms, than the waters of the proposed northern route. The House might well believe that Mr. Fraser had not ventured to promise more than he could perform. As regarded the amendment, he could not see the necessity for it at all. It appeared to him (Mr. Browne) that the House were called upon, now, to do what the Honorable Mr. Harris proposed to do, by-and-bye, namely, to approve of the contract. The terms of the contract were before the House, to be approved of. They had been approved of by one House of Parliament; and the Council were now asked to approve of them. He (Mr. Browne) was glad that the honorable gentleman had withdrawn the proposition for tenders; because, however good the tender system was in general, in this particular case its adoption would upset the whole arrangements for the service. The House had before them a memorandum from the Netherlands Indian Government, to the effect that that Government would support the line proposed by Mr. Fraser; but the Queensland Government had nothing else from the Dutch authorities that would lead honorable members to imagine that any other line would be supported by them. Therefore, if calling for tenders could not be taken into consideration, no other offer might be entertained than the one before the House. He should like to know from the Postmaster-General whether the Government had received from the Government of Netherlands India any stronger offer of support than was contained in the memorandum included in the printed correspondence. It certainly did not go very far:—

"Approved and resolved: To inform Mr. Fraser, of Batavia, that the Indian Government take the greatest interest in the realisation of the plan proposed by him for a steam communication between Java and Australia. And that the Minister of Colonies proposes to open a head in the Budget for the year 1872, for the 'Costs of maintaining a regular steam communication with Australia.' In order to prove that the Imperial Government does not give up the idea of eventually being able to co-operate in obtaining a steam communication with Australia.

"Extract of this Resolution shall be given to Mr. Fraser for his information."

It would be more satisfactory, perhaps, to have something more definite from that Government; but he presumed that that was the form in which they delivered their contracts or promises; and therefore the House

must be satisfied with it. He should be very glad to support the resolution.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER rose to speak to the amendment. With regard to the observations of the Honorable Mr. Browne upon the subsidy of the Netherlands Government, he might be able, perhaps, to throw a little light on the subject. He had reason to believe that that Government were willing to recommend a subsidy of £10,000 for the service. As a matter of fact, any recommendation of the Governor-General of Netherlands India, was generally adhered to by the Royal Government at the Hague—it was hardly ever rejected; and, in due course, the £10,000 would have to go before the Netherlands Parliament to be considered and approved.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: After the discussion that had gone on, there remained very little for him to say. He did not know that he should have risen, but that, having travelled the line himself, he was pretty well acquainted with it. From his acquaintance with it, he might say that he had no doubt whatever that, if a proper class of steamers was used, the distance could be done in very good time. When he went up in the "Souchays," an old steam collier—she was not a very fast vessel—the distance was done in fifteen days' steaming. She was twenty days on the passage; but there were a good many delays that would not be necessary in a well established service. He had very little doubt that the distance from Brisbane to Batavia could be done in that time or less. As regarded the knot speed of the steamers to be engaged, he might remark that it was perfectly true that the P. and O. Company had contracted that their steamers should run only eight knots an hour; but that was only as a matter of economy. Those steamers could run nine or ten knots, and more; but there was a difference of expense between eight and ten knots speed of about fifty per cent. in favor of steaming at the rate of only the two knots less, which was a considerable saving; consequently the company, when sending in their tender, had likely based it on terms which they thought would be most readily accepted. The expense this colony was now subject to for mail communication with England was £11,000 or £12,000 a-year; if that were saved by withdrawing from the mail service, there would be left about £13,000 to be made up to cover the cost of the proposed new line. Practically, the extra outlay would provide the advantages of three services for this colony, supposing that the Californian route was kept open; because we could always send letters by the other routes, as the other colonies could send letters by Batavia, upon paying the postage. If the colonies subsidizing those other routes reciprocated thus with Queensland, things would work pleasantly. There was a great deal in the argument that the line to Batavia would bring all parts of the colony into close con-

nection. As far as Brisbane was concerned, it would be in very much the same position as now, as, for part of the year, there would be a day less, and for the other part a day more, than now, for answering letters by the mail. But the great convenience to all the other parts of the colony, and the advantages that would result from this connection by a regular mail service, were conclusive reasons in favor of the line. At present, the residents of the northern parts of the colony could not get a chance of answering English correspondence without considerable delay. Another argument in favor of the resolution was, that heretofore Queensland had been obliged to go in for whatever was settled by other people. It was quite time that Queensland settled her own affairs, as far as possible. He (Captain Simpson) could not see why this colony should not have a mail service as well as Victoria; which colony would have two, as the Government were about to subsidize a line *viâ* the Cape, as well as the one *viâ* Suez. Then, New South Wales would have the line *viâ* San Francisco; and she and New Zealand would probably join with this colony. He saw that Mr. Fraser proposed that his mail line should be Batavia to Sydney, touching at the Queensland ports; and, of course, he concluded that that proposition was made in contemplation of the New South Wales Government joining with the Queensland Government in granting the subsidy. It would be a considerably greater expense for the steamers to go down to Sydney than if they terminated the voyage at Brisbane; therefore, he concluded that if New South Wales gave no subsidy, and the voyage terminated here, an amount would be taken off the subsidy asked for;—otherwise, he could not see the fairness of the matter. He need say nothing about inviting tenders, as the Honorable Mr. Harris had withdrawn that part of his amendment. He confessed that he should be best pleased to see vessels under the British flag engaged in the service. It had been suggested that, instead of the mails going on to Singapore, the route should be so changed that they should meet the branch steamer at Java Head, which was about the same distance as Batavia from Brisbane. However, that, he supposed, must be a matter for future consideration with the Indian Government. He had looked over the distances; and, if that change was carried out, it would make a difference of something like four days less in the mail time between Brisbane and Point de Galle. At the present time the voyage from Batavia to Galle occupied twelve and a half days, including stoppages. By the route from Java Head, at the rate supposed, nine knots an hour, eight days would be the time occupied; and, allowing half-a-day's detention at Java Head, where it would be necessary to coal, there would be four clear days saved. There was a very good harbor inside Java Head, into which he had been; it was called

Mew Bay, and there were a couple of islands in it, where a very good coaling station could be formed. The run from Brisbane to Java Head would be about fifteen days or less; and thence to Ceylon eight days, instead of twelve and a-half, which was the time occupied going from Batavia, by way of Singapore, to Galle. If the change could be carried out, it would be a great boon. There was just one other question to which he should like to draw the Postmaster-General's attention; and it was that, in Mr. Fraser's proposition, the steamers were to be of one thousand tons burden. Although it might be possible to get vessels of that class to perform the service, he questioned it. The service could be satisfactorily performed by vessels of one thousand tons register, but not by vessels of one thousand tons burden. The latter were equal to only seven or eight hundred ton ships; and, taking into account the quantity of coal they would have to carry on so long a voyage, the passenger accommodation would be circumscribed. If the northern route become a favorite passenger route, as was likely, on account of the smooth water passage—from Rockhampton to Torres' Straits, and, indeed, the whole way, after the vessel got amongst the islands—such steamers would not answer at all. So far from the necessity for anchoring as often as was the case when he made the voyage in the "Sou-chays," Captain Logan had said that he never troubled himself to anchor at night after the first voyage; nor would any skilful navigator do so, after he had made one or two voyages and found out how to get clear of the obstructions by daylight—until he reached Cape York, where he would have to anchor. So that there need be no fear as to the voyage being made in the time named. As to submitting the contract to Parliament, that would involve further delay; and he could not see that the Government were likely to make better terms for the service. The Dutch Government, as he understood, were to pay £10,000; in addition to that, the Queensland Government were to pay £25,000. He thought it was by far the best offer that could be got, and he should not be for delaying the matter further. He should support the resolution.

The Hon. G. HARRIS said he was sorry that he had not had an opportunity to see the correspondence before; but as it had been placed in his hands, he would observe that there were many matters in it which he considered objectionable, and which he would explain to honorable members.

The PRESIDENT: The honorable member has spoken.

The Hon. G. HARRIS presumed he was entitled to speak on the amendment.

The PRESIDENT: The honorable gentleman has done so. He moved the amendment. If the House have no objection, he can speak.

The Hon. G. HARRIS: With the permission of the House, he would proceed. The memorandum of agreement with Mr. Fraser

stated that the steamers to be employed should be of the burden of one thousand tons. Any honorable gentleman who understood anything at all about shipping, would see that a steamship of a thousand tons burden was simply a vessel that would discharge a dead weight cargo of about eight hundred tons, not taking passenger accommodation into account. He (Mr. Harris) had not the slightest hesitation in saying that such vessels as were proposed in that memorandum of agreement would not be larger than the "Blackbird," which traded between Brisbane and the northern ports. He undertook to say that that vessel would discharge a thousand tons, without consideration of her passenger accommodation. The "City of Sydney" was such another vessel. The steamers proposed would be something like the "Souchays," the pioneer of the northern route. One of the strongest objections to that vessel, and to the "Hero," was the want of passenger accommodation. There was a great difference between registered tonnage and burden. He strongly urged upon the Postmaster-General that, in the event of the resolution passing, of which he had no doubt, the attempt to carry out the service with such a class of ships would prove very inconvenient. He had no objection to the route being opened, provided that it was done in a proper manner, and in business form; and he advised the honorable gentleman of the propriety, the importance, of altering the agreement so as to ensure vessels of a tonnage of one thousand tons register being employed in the service; otherwise, there would be no end of complaints, and the route, which might be a favorite passenger route, would be passed over altogether in favor of other routes. He saw no great necessity for employing any but vessels under the British flag, this being a British colony, especially when there was any number of them unemployed. If the Government in power, with a large majority at their back, thought otherwise, he must be content with recording his objection to the employment of any but British vessels. Another matter to which he would direct attention was, that the service might commence either in January, 1872, that was this year; or, in January, 1873. He presumed he was right in understanding the Postmaster-General to have said that the present mail contract would not terminate until the end of 1873. That being so, the House would at once see that if the new service was entered into in accordance with the terms agreed upon, the colony would be subject to the payment for a double service for one year. It was a matter for the consideration of the House, whether that would be advisable. He thought there was no necessity for two mail services. Surely one would be enough. Presuming that the resolution would be adopted, and he had no doubt that it would be, that was

another matter which the Government should look into, and take care that the colony should not be subject to two subsidies, and that the new contract should not be entered into until the old one had terminated. He had nothing further to say, but to press his amendment to provide for the approval of Parliament for the contract.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: In reply, I will but state that I think my honorable friend who moved the amendment will find that his argument about two services was scarcely necessary. We pay, now, rateably for our letters carried by the P. and O. Company's service. Therefore, if we send letters by our own service only, we shall not have to pay for them by the other. I do not know whether the honorable gentleman knows that when the Panama route was open, the diminution was sensible; and we had, for our small colony, to pay as much as £2,000 for letters sent by that route. There is another matter to be mentioned by me. The Postmaster-General of England has given notice of the discontinuance of the P. and O. Company's service at the end of 1873; and I think it is hardly likely that the service will be gone on with again. When I was in Melbourne, the authorities, there, were very much in favor of a service *via* the Cape, and another *via* San Francisco. If they are both taken up, it is not at all likely that Victoria will enter upon the Suez service again; because that colony pays one-half of the subsidy now as its contribution, its correspondence being so large, as compared with the rest of the colonies. With regard to the steamers being under English or Dutch colors, I cannot see that the contractors would have any objection to take English colors. So far as the ships are concerned, it is plain to common sense that if it is found that those of a thousand tons are not sufficient, as soon as the trade increases, the contractors will lay on larger vessels. If the vessels should not be fit for the service, the contractors would be subject to penalties; for the contract will impose all the conditions and restrictions usual in postal arrangements. The heads of agreement printed are merely a draft which will form the basis of the contract. The contract will bind the contractors in heavy penalties, not only with us, but with the Dutch Government. I think that the Honorable Mr. Harris will see that it is advisable, as honorable members have urged, for him to withdraw his amendment and to let the resolution pass. That course will save us a great deal of trouble. He will see that the sense of the House is very much in favor of the resolution. And, not only that, but from what has occurred in another place, and from the division that took place, it appears that this is a matter which is in favor with the whole country. The feeling is that we should open the new route as early as possible; otherwise, the Dutch Government might withdraw from the undertaking.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Was he to understand the Postmaster-General, that the country was not pledged to December, 1873, to expend £11,000 or £12,000 upon the existing service?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I can explain to the honorable gentleman that our subsidy is not the same whether we use the service or not. We are charged for the letters which we send. For instance, in 1872, we are charged with the number of letters which we sent in 1871; and, at the end of 1872, the accounts are made up, the number of letters sent by each colony are calculated, and the total subsidy is divided by the number of letters;—so that we pay rateably, in proportion to the letters we send. Actually, if we send no letters, we shall not pay at all; but if we pay, we pay in proportion to the number of letters that we send. We are still concerned in, or committed to, the contract up to 1873; but as we pay rateably upon our letters, should we send only a small number, in the same proportion we diminish our payment.

The question was put, and the House divided.

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" T. L. Murray-Prior.

The amendment was therefore negatived.

The original question was then put and affirmed. The usual message was ordered to be sent to the Legislative Assembly, informing that House of the concurrence of the Council in the resolution.