

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 12 JUNE 1872

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 12 June, 1872.

Privilege — Non-payment of Council Expenditure. —
Soundings of the River Brisbane.

PRIVILEGE—NON-PAYMENT OF COUNCIL EXPENDITURE.

The PRESIDENT said: Before the business of the House is proceeded with, I regret to have to report, that I am officially informed by the Clerk of the Parliaments that no provision appears to have been made for the payment of the salaries of the various officers and messengers attached to the service of the Legislative Council, nor for the contingent expenses of the House, for the month of May now past. Further, he informs me that on forwarding the usual monthly vouchers for the month of May to the Auditor-General, he has been unable to get these put into warrant. It will, of course, be for the House to consider what steps are to be taken to meet so serious an interference with the independent exercise of its powers under the Constitution Act.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: This is a very important question, and I think, whatever action this House is going to take upon it, there is no doubt whatever that we should be trespassing on very dangerous ground, and we might give rise to very serious difficulties, if we should send a message to the other branch of the Legislature upon it. Now, I rise merely for the purpose of moving that this important question be taken into consideration to-morrow, so that honorable members can give their attention to it, as such, meanwhile. My own idea is, that if this House is to be an independent branch of the Legislature, it is very clear that the matter of supply for this House should be provided for by a Bill.

Question—That the consideration of the foregoing communication stand an Order of the Day for to-morrow—put and passed.

SOUNDINGS OF THE RIVER BRISBANE.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ moved, pursuant to amended notice—

That an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be laid on the table of this House, a Return shewing the soundings for every two hundred feet on each side of the River Brisbane, for one hundred feet out from low-water mark, between Shafston and the Bridge at South Brisbane. Also, the depth, at low-water, along the centre of the river, between the aforesaid places.

He said he thought it more than likely that the vexed question of the Brisbane and Ipswich Railway would be dealt with before the present session was over. There appeared to be a difference of opinion with reference to the depth of water on the south side of the river, which most persons looked upon as the most desirable place for the railway terminus. If it should be found that the water there was

so shallow that it might cause serious expenditure for dredging the river, why, of course, it would be advisable to carry the goods terminus lower down the river where an adequate depth of water could be ensured. He had had conversations with parties who were pretty well informed upon the subject, and they had told him that there was no doubt whatever that the river was silting up very considerably on the north side, but not so much on the south side. He believed that at Harris' wharf, the river had silted up to such an extent that the Messrs. Harris had been obliged to carry the wharf out into the river a considerable additional extent; and they would, again, have to carry it out further still. There was another matter of which the public was not aware; that was a great obstruction in the river opposite the A. S. N. Co.'s wharf, or a little past it. From what he had learned, it appeared that an iron vessel, of about three hundred tons burden, had been purchased as a spec. by the present Secretary to the Marine Board, and brought to anchor opposite the house of the Rev. Mr. Moffatt. During a flood, she broke away from her moorings and sank. The owner had endeavored to raise her, but lifted the deck off. She remained at the bottom, there. After the flood, a considerable quantity of mud silted up, shallowing the water. As could be seen at low tide, there was a much less depth of water than before. If the vessel remained, it would cause a very serious obstruction to the navigation of the river. He (Mr. Fitz) had been informed by Captain O'Reilly, that it would cost a considerable amount of money to raise the vessel and dredge the river. His only object in asking for the return was, that the Government should be able to see which was the proper spot for the railway terminus. As the city Corporation had gone to a great deal of expense in building a bridge across the river to South Brisbane, there was no doubt that for the convenience of the public the most desirable place for the terminus would be on the south side of the river, near the bridge. But, on the other hand, if it should be found that a large amount of money would be required to dredge that portion of the river embraced in the motion, in order that vessels drawing a certain number of feet in depth should approach the terminus; or, if vessels coming through the Channel should not be able to go alongside the wharf at the terminus; the proper plan would be, he (Mr. Fitz) presumed, to have the goods terminus lower down the river, where there was deep water, and a passenger branch-line and station on the south side. He understood that the honorable gentleman representing the Government would oppose the motion on the score of expense. He had conversed with Captain O'Reilly and with Commander Heath, the Portmaster, and the latter said that he would take the soundings in a week with the ordinary staff that he employed. The work would not

cost above ten pounds. If the motion should be objected to, it would be necessary for him (Mr. Fitz) to add another resolution, to send this to the Assembly. But, in such a case, the Council would be a perfect nullity—if they could not get such a return as he asked for, because of the cost. All returns cost money, if only for the paper on which they were printed.

The Hon. L. HOPE suggested that the motion would be improved if the honorable member specified the particular point of the survey—say, “the town boundary at” Shaftson.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he had no objection, at all; and, with the leave of the House, adopted the amendment suggested as part of his motion.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he did not rise to oppose the motion, as the honorable Mr. Fitz had given his reasons for it, which he had desired to hear. There might be great utility in what the honorable gentleman proposed; but he (the Postmaster-General) could assure him that before the Government built the railway they would take very good care that the matter was well looked into, and they would not bring the terminus to the wrong place. He could hardly think that the small sum of money named by the honorable member would cover the expense of doing the work proposed. However, it was not very improbable that Captain Heath would be able to do it with his men; and he (the Postmaster-General) could see no objection to it.

Question put and passed.