

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

MONDAY, 19 AUGUST 1872

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Monday, 19 August, 1872.

Railway Extensions. — Loans Consolidation Bill.

RAILWAY EXTENSIONS.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the consideration of the resolutions of the Legislative Assembly, sent up on Friday last, as follows :—

“ 1. That the plans, sections, and book of reference of the line from Westwood towards the

Dawson River, Great Northern Railway, for fifteen miles (to 45-mile peg from Rockhampton), submitted for the inspection of honorable members, and now on the table of this House, be now approved, and forwarded to the honorable the Legislative Council for concurrence.

" 2. That the plans, sections, and book of reference of the line from Ipswich towards Brisbane, about fifteen miles, submitted for the inspection of honorable members, and now on the table of this House, be now approved, and forwarded to the Honorable the Legislative Council for their concurrence."

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That this House do now concur in these resolutions.

He was asked some time ago, he said, whether the Government intended to take any action with regard to the extension of the railways. The resolutions would shew that it was the intention of the Government to take immediate action. Plans had been prepared of a certain number of miles, and they were now before the House for inspection;—of fifteen miles and a quarter of the Ipswich and Brisbane line, commencing at Ipswich, and ending at Oxley, as honorable members would see. It was not at present known by the Government—in fact, the plans had not been completed—where the terminus would be; but it would be at such a place as the Government would find desirable. However, before anything could be done in the matter, the plans would have to be brought before the House for their approval and adoption. The route at present followed was that which had been surveyed by Mr. Fitzgibbon. It might be, in some places, as shewn in the plans, deviated from to a certain extent; but the deviations would not be great. There were two which he might specify as likely to be made:—One was near the Six-mile Bridge, where the floods were likely to injure Mr. Fitzgibbon's line; and the other was near Gatton, where the railway, as surveyed by Mr. Fitzgibbon, went too near the river, and might thereby be endangered. With regard to the Northern Railway, the plans shewed a length of fifteen miles. He (the Postmaster-General) had no doubt that honorable gentlemen had inspected the plans, which had been before the House for some time; and that they would give the Government credit, at all events, for having taken steps as quickly as they possibly could to carry out the railway works, which, unless the Government had been able to bring forward the plans—they had been prepared in a hurry—to submit them to the House for approval, this session, the Government would not be able to carry out during the ensuing recess.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: He certainly thought it was not fair to force the resolutions upon the House to-day. A good deal of information might be gathered with reference to the subject of the resolutions—he was not alluding to the northern line, but more particularly to the line between Brisbane and Ipswich. Because, if Government contemplated taking

this line the way that had been suggested, across the river at Oxley, there could be no two opinions about it, that the country would be put to an immense unnecessary expense. It would be found from the evidence which had been taken before the Royal Commission with reference to the resumption of land in the town of Ipswich, that the cost of the resumption would be as nothing at all in comparison with the expense of building a second bridge over the Bremer; in fact, the cost of the land would not be one-fourth of the expense of the bridge. The plans and specifications now before the House shewed that an extra bridge would have to be built over the Bremer. If his memory served him, Mr. Fitzgibbon's estimate of the Bremer Bridge was £24,000; but that it would not be built for that sum now was very doubtful, as iron had risen very much in price. Honorable gentlemen knew very well the cost of the Brisbane Bridge; and, that if another bridge was built over the Brisbane River, it could not be at a less expense than £80,000 or £100,000. One engineer had told him that it might be £80,000. At the present price of iron, it was doubtful. The Government did not state that they intended to carry the railway over the bridge. He had tabled a motion for calling a practical man before the House, to give them some information—the engineer of the Brisbane Corporation Bridge—who had had the contract for the work handed over to him from Peto, Brassey, and Betts; and by him it was said, that, by putting an extra girder to the bridge, which could be done very efficiently and economically, now, that alteration would enable the passenger trains, with the engines, to cross the bridge into North Brisbane. That could be done at a cost to the country of £4,000 or £5,000, at the outside. The engineer was preparing an estimate of what the cost would be. As the Government had already taken advantage of Mr. Fitzgibbon's survey for fifteen out of the twenty miles, it was perfectly clear that the survey made by Mr. Thorneloe Smith was unnecessary, and that the ordering of the latter was a political dodge to put off the Ipswich line. He trusted that the Postmaster-General would not force the resolutions upon the House, to-day, or until they got some evidence. There were, he thought, two or three other persons who could afford very much information upon the subject before the House. Mr. Thorneloe Smith, who made the survey to the Downs, was one; and Mr. Stanley, the present chief engineer, was another. Therefore, the House should pause before they adopted those resolutions. They must bear in mind that the resolutions were brought up only on Friday—it was not likely that honorable members would read them on Sunday—and that they had had but one day to consider them. The evidence would open their eyes, and the eyes of the public, too, when it was shewn that the Government meant to spend

for bridges as much as the railway would cost. Some time since, he moved that soundings of the river should be taken from the bridge down to Shaftson. He had seen some of them at the Port Office, though they were not yet completed and published; and he had been informed by Lieutenant Bedwell, that the depth of water was such, at the south side, that the largest line of battle ship could float there, within twenty-five feet of the bank. If such was the case, should the country be put to the expense of £100,000 or more, for bridges to carry the railway across the river, when the goods trucks could be left on the south side, where vessels could come up to the wharf and take in their cargo direct from the railway itself? While the goods could thus best go to the wharf and be shipped, at the south side; if necessary, the passenger carriages could be shunted through the town to a station on the north side, in what he would shew was the easiest mode to adopt. He was sorry to express suspicions, but it struck him forcibly that if the House waited for the completion of the line from Ipswich to Brisbane, upon the plan of the Government, they would see the copper ore travelling by rail from Peak Downs to Rockhampton before it would be possible for anyone to travel on the Brisbane line, which would not be completed in three years. The Government, having adopted fifteen miles of Mr. Fitzgibbon's survey, should adopt the other seven miles, having the goods station on the south side of the river, where the wharves could be made into deep water, and making some arrangement by which the passenger trains could cross the Brisbane bridge, at as little expense as was possible; and, in that case, he saw nothing to prevent the line being ready within twelve months. But, depend upon it, if the Government intended to bring the line somewhere into North Brisbane, near the Grammar School, no railway train would be seen from Ipswich this side of three years. He trusted that the Postmaster-General would postpone the resolutions until to-morrow. One day could not make much difference to him. If this request was refused, he should not press the matter.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: He thought the business of the Ipswich and Brisbane Railway was unfortunate in every phase. It was something like two years since the first commission reported upon it, and now when the line was to be proceeded with, the honorable Mr. Fitz, who had been one of the most urgent supporters of it, objected to the resolutions, because the line decided upon was only fifteen miles instead of twenty-four. As far as he understood the matter, the present temporary terminus was in such a position that the line must pass there, whether it was brought into Brisbane on the north or the south side. Any honorable gentleman looking at the plans and sections, and comparing them with Mr. Fitzgibbon's survey, would see that his line was exactly followed, with the excep-

tion of two trifling deviations. If it was the intention of the Government to cross the river at Oxley, the present site of the terminus, or to come straight from that point to Brisbane along the south side of the river, he could not see that that would make the slightest difference as regarded the work now proposed; because the plans and sections and book of reference of the remainder of the line, from Oxley, must be laid before Parliament for approval before the Government could carry it out.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: There was the extra bridge.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: The honorable gentleman wished to examine Mr. Stanley, the Government engineer. He knew as well as any honorable member of the Council, that the present plan was adopted on Mr. Stanley's recommendation.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: He did not know that.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: Well, he knew it. Therefore, as the House had it under the hand of the very gentleman whom the honorable member wished to see examined, he did not know what was to be gained by bringing Mr. Stanley to the bar of the House. Suppose the honorable gentleman's estimate to be correct, and the southern line to be much less expensive than the northern line, by all means continue it, and bring the railway across the Brisbane Bridge. But, if the northern line was the cheapest, let it be made. He was perfectly willing to see whichever was the most economical line adopted; but why that portion of the line which must be made, whichever route was followed from Oxley, should be delayed, he could not understand. It could only resolve itself into the bad luck that had attended the unfortunate line. He should support the resolutions.

The Hon. J. F. McDUGALL said it appeared to him that the House had not now to consider the desirability of the railway coming into North or South Brisbane, but they had simply to deal with the proposed extension of the railway for a distance of fifteen or sixteen miles from Ipswich, as shewn by the plans before them. It was evident that, from the point at which the extension stopped, the line could be continued to Brisbane on either side of the river, as might be found most practicable. The only question, to his mind, was whether the proposed line should cross the Bremer. The erection of a second bridge across the Bremer would involve a large expenditure. Further, the present terminus at Ipswich was an enormously expensive structure, and it seemed to him that that would be rendered utterly valueless or useless. Therein seemed to him to be the only question worth considering now.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Hear, hear.

The Hon. J. F. McDUGALL: But whether the House could get any valuable information upon that point, by postponing the considera-

tion of the resolutions until to-morrow, he was not prepared to say; yet if he thought that they could get any further information, he should certainly be glad to see the postponement. It was important to get as much information as possible upon the question of the railway, before the work was commenced and outlay gone into; it would be too late if the resolutions were approved of. If the Postmaster-General had no great objection, he thought it might be well to postpone the resolutions until to-morrow. With those remarks he would leave the question to the sense of the House.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it would be best to pass the resolutions, now. He did not see any advantage that would be gained by deferring them until to-morrow. The bridge over the Bremer would not be so expensive as honorable gentlemen seemed to think. He had been informed that £15,000 would be the expense of that bridge; and honorable gentlemen must be aware that to bring the railway through the town of Ipswich would cost a larger sum of money. No doubt many persons who had property in the town would be glad to see the railway taken through it; but it would hardly be for the advantage of the country. The plans before the House were recommended by Mr. Stanley. There would be no expenditure from North Ipswich to the bridge for land, as the land in the course of the line was all Government property. With regard to what had been said by the Honorable Mr. McDougall about the station buildings at Ipswich, when they should not be necessary for the railway they would be made use of to the best advantage: he (the Postmaster-General) could not go further.

An HONORABLE MEMBER: They were all movable.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The Honorable Mr. Fitz, somehow, endeavored to throw a great damper upon the work. It was only a short time ago that the honorable gentleman was very much in favor of the railway. He (the Postmaster-General) did not know for what reason the honorable gentleman seemed to be opposed to it now, except that he was opposed to everything—he was always in opposition.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: He did not know that any remark of his should lead to the comment just made by the Postmaster-General. He was opposed to £50,000 being thrown away upon one unnecessary bridge, £20,000 upon another, and £15,000 wasted in the station and turn-table at Ipswich.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: With regard to the Brisbane Bridge, perhaps there was some person interested in the Corporation who would like to induce the Government to buy that bridge. It had cost a great sum of money; but he did not see how, in any way, it would be of great utility. At present the railway would extend only about fifteen and three-quarter miles; and, as the Honorable

Captain Simpson had observed, whatever direction it might take to Brisbane from the present terminus, it must go so far as shewn in the plans;—from the terminus it might be continued on either side of the river, as would hereafter be shewn to be best. Although the Honorable Mr. Fitz thought it was a settled thing that the railway should come from that point along the north bank of the Brisbane, yet he could assure the honorable gentleman that it was not settled; and that when it was it would be upon the plain ground that the route chosen was the best. The plans must be submitted to Parliament for the remainder of the railway, as they were now submitted for the present proposed work, and then the House would be in a position to deal with the question of the southern or northern route to Brisbane. The House should pass the resolutions, to avoid delay—the session being so near its close.

The Hon. L. HOPE said he had nothing to urge against the line of railway, but it seemed to him that the House were asked to decide something that they knew nothing about. Honorable gentlemen might all have their little opinions; but, for mere form's sake, they ought to have some professional opinion before them at first-hand. It seemed that the Council might be a mere recording office for whatever was placed before them.

The Hon. F. H. HART: As he understood the Honorable Mr. Fitz, no exception was taken to the line so far as it came down to Oxley; but it was maintained by him that the railway ought to come from the present terminus in Ipswich without going round and crossing the Bremer, at the Basin; as the second bridge would cause an enormous expense, and delay the work for three years.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he had no objection whatever to the line, as he believed that Mr. Fitzgibbon's line was the best. The House should, he thought, hesitate before throwing away the terminal station at Ipswich, which would be utterly useless with the new line. From all that he could learn, the second bridge could not be built over the Bremer for less than £20,000; whereas, by bringing the line from the Ipswich terminus, the country would only be put to the expense of a little land, along the bank of the river. Once pass the resolutions, and to-morrow the Government could call for tenders for the railway works.

Question put and passed.

LOANS CONSOLIDATION BILL.

By virtue of the suspension of the Standing Orders, the Report of the Committee of the Whole upon the Loans Consolidation Bill was adopted, and the Bill was read a third time and passed, and then ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly with the usual message and accompanying schedule of amendments made in the Bill by the Council.