

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 19 JUNE 1873

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 19 June, 1873.

Completion of Parliament House.—Acting Judges Bill.—
Deviation of Southern and Western Railway.—Extension
of the Northern Railway.—Postal Communication.—International
Telegraphic Communication.

COMPLETION OF PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

The PRESIDENT said: Honorable gentlemen —In moving the resolutions standing in my name on this day's paper, I may say that my object is to get a joint committee of the two Houses of Parliament to take into consideration the advisability of now completing this building, which has for so long a time been in an incomplete state. There is no reason, I think, now existing why the plan originally proposed should not be carried to final completion. Honorable members, as well as myself, will have observed that the surroundings of the building are exceeding unsightly, both in the front and at the back. There is ground which requires to be enclosed and to be put into order, so as to present a somewhat more pleasant appearance than it now does. It is a matter that ought to be taken into consideration; therefore, I ask you to agree to the appointment of a committee to whom the whole subject may be submitted. It is also a fact, that, large as this building is, ample as its dimensions appear to be, for the proper accommodation of the Parliament of this country for many years to come, there are still wanting some things which might be added at no great expense. An inquiry as to the possibility of providing such additions is, it seems to me, desirable. We have not,

at the present moment, a place in the library, at all events, or in any part of the building, where we can hang a picture. We have one or two portraits—got in this colony, and very shabby ones, I may say—and they are hung in the library; and there is a print of Her Majesty the Queen, for which we can find no place: it rests now upon one of the book-cases. Whilst the inquiry is going on, probably we may be able to get the Colonial Architect, who has charge of the plans of the Parliament House, to propose some way by which, either on one side or the other of the building, a suitable gallery can be added, in which portraits may be hung. However, that will be a matter for the consideration of the committee and for the consideration of the Houses, when the committee's report is brought up. I also propose that there shall be another subject submitted to the examination of the committee, when appointed; and that is, the nature of the tenure upon which the land the Parliament House is built upon, and which is now occupied by us, is held. As far as I am aware, at the present moment there is no legal tenure—there is nothing but the consent of the Government and Parliament, which is perhaps sufficient for the time, to our holding these allotments—and difficulties might possibly arise. If intrusions were made upon the building or the land, we might not have a right to turn the intruders off, or to eject them. The only record in reference to this land is contained in the Report of the Royal Commission, of which I was chairman, on the proposed New Houses of Parliament, in 1864, addressed to Sir George Bowen:—

"1. Your Commissioners met for the first time on the 18th day of November last, under the authority of the letters of appointment received by the members composing the Commission; and having elected a Chairman and appointed a Secretary, adjourned until the 7th day of December, when the Royal Commission, bearing your Excellency's signature, having in the meantime (on the 2nd day of December) been received, the same was formally read, and the minutes of the previous meeting confirmed.

"2. It then appeared to your Commissioners that the first duty devolving on them was to determine on a site for the erection of the proposed new Houses of Parliament; inasmuch as an acquaintance with the precise locality fixed upon seemed likely to influence the designs of architects competing for the premiums, which your Commissioners desired to offer in order to procure plans from which to make a selection.

"3. Your Commissioners, after a personal inspection on the ground, unanimously agreed to recommend that portion of the Queen's Park which lies west of George street as the site to be chosen; and, in arriving at this decision, your Commissioners were guided by the following considerations:—

"4. That the site, in question would place the Houses of Parliament in a conspicuous and commanding position, in reference to the general plan of the city of Brisbane; that it would isolate

them from the noise and bustle of its great commercial thoroughfares; that it would secure them and the public records they would contain from much danger from fire, which would always attach to more crowded localities; and, finally, that it was an airy, healthy situation, in convenient proximity to the public offices most requiring access to Parliament when sitting.

"5. Your Excellency's Government were pleased to approve of the selection when the decision of the Commission was submitted to them; and, under instructions from the Minister for Lands, the Surveyor-General caused to be prepared lithographs showing the levels of the site, as well as its relative position to other portions of this city."

Now, as far as I am aware, that is the only official record of the mode in which the present site for the Parliament House was approved of. As I said before, I think there is sufficient doubt about the legal bearings of the subject to warrant an inquiry into it, also, by the joint-committee, if the Houses shall agree with me and constitute the committee. I therefore beg leave to move—

1. That the Legislative Assembly be invited to join this House in the constitution of a Select Committee to examine the plans now existing for the completion of Parliament House, and to report the result of such examination, and any recommendation they may arrive at. Also, to examine into and report on the tenure under which the land supposed to be dedicated to the uses of Parliament is now held.

2. That the members to serve on such Joint Committee be ten, five to form a quorum.

3. That the following members of this House be appointed to serve on said committee, viz.:—The Honorable T. L. Murray-Prior, the Honorable H. B. Fitz, the Honorable D. F. Roberts, the Honorable H. G. Simpson, and the Mover.

4. That these Resolutions be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, by Message, in the usual way.

I have named a large committee in order that we may have as many members of the two Houses as possible.

The question was put and passed, *nem. diss.*

ACTING JUDGES BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that "a Bill to provide for the appointment of Acting Judges of the Supreme Court, and for other purposes," be read the second time. He said he might explain that there was not the same pressing necessity as formerly, when he tabled a motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders, for the passing the Bill through all its stages in one day; Mr. Justice Lutwyche's leave of absence having expired, and, in fact, the sittings of the Court having lapsed. But the Bill would be required in the event of a similar occurrence happening to that with which every honorable member of the House was acquainted. The Government never had a doubt as to the power of appoint-

ing an acting judge; but after the occurrence to which he had alluded, they thought it best to bring the Bill in to remove any doubts, and to enable them to act in an emergency of a similar nature. By the first clause, the Governor in Council might appoint a qualified person in place of a judge absent on leave. It explained itself, as did all the other clauses; in fact, the whole Bill consisted of merely six clauses.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON said, he had, of course, no intention of opposing the second reading of the Bill, but he wished to point out a matter for the attention of the Postmaster-General, in regard to the fourth clause, which, unless he was entirely mistaken, would engage particular consideration in committee. The clause enacted that no person holding the position of a judge—

“shall while holding such commission be capable of taking or performing the duties of any other office or place of profit or emolument within the colony of Queensland,”

with exceptions specified. He thought it equally necessary that a proviso should be added, that no person should hold the office of judge if he was a member of either House of Parliament.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: He thought that was absolutely necessary to be inserted, and he should propose it when the Bill was in committee.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE said: As one knowing the necessity for the Bill, he, of course, had no intention of opposing it; but he wanted to know what arrangements had been made for the salary to be paid to the acting judge. He should like to bring under the notice of the Government—and, perhaps, it was as well to say that he now did so without having had the slightest communication with the gentleman to whom it referred—and to know, whether any arrangements had been made for the increase of the salary of the Chief Justice, who had been doing the duties of two judges for the last four or five months. His duties had been extremely arduous. It so happened that there was more business to be done than usual, and the whole of it was thrown upon him. He (Mr. Browne) should be glad to have some information, if the Postmaster-General could give him any, upon the point raised.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: In reply to the Honorable Mr. Browne, he thought he might state that the Government had had the matter under consideration. The salaries of all the judges of the colony were insufficient for their high position. He could not now say that a Bill would be brought in, but he thought it was very probable that such would be the case.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE, in explanation, said that was not what he wished to bring before the Government. He perfectly agreed

that the salaries of the judges should be increased; they were inadequate to the work to be done, and also to the position of the judges of the Supreme Court. What he wished to know, was, What arrangement had been made for the increase of the salary of Sir James Cockle for doing the work of two judges? He was glad to know from what he had read of the proceedings in another place, that some improvement was to be made in the position of the Chief Justice.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was not aware that anything had been done.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: Or thought of.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL: He was not aware.

The PRESIDENT said he was very glad that the Honorable Mr. Browne had thought proper to bring under the notice of the Council the matter which the honorable member had raised. He confessed that he was very surprised to find that no member of the legal profession had done so in the other branch of the Legislature. Like the Honorable Mr. Browne, he had had no communication whatever with the Chief Justice, to whom this matter referred. He was quite aware that his feeling was not to make any application on the subject; and he was quite sure that Sir James was the last man in the community to ask for what he might yet conceive to be an injustice to withhold from him. The House would recollect that four or five years ago, a Bill was introduced into Parliament—in the first instance, he thought, but was not quite sure, by the Ministry of which Sir Robert Mackenzie was the head—for the appointment of a third judge, and it embodied a proposal for the increase of the salary of the Chief Justice to £2,000 per annum. It might naturally be supposed that when a man saw a measure of that sort laid before Parliament by the Ministry of the day, he would anticipate that it would be carried out, and that his salary would be raised; but all those years had since passed by, and the promise then held out was never fulfilled. The Chief Justice had been sitting alongside the Puisne Judge who was receiving a salary of £500 a-year more than his own. He (the President) understood that an acting judge under the Bill was to receive at the rate of £2,500 a-year; so that the Chief Justice was receiving a lower salary than either a temporary judge, whenever one should be appointed, or the Puisne Judge. He confessed that he was surprised that the Ministry did not take this matter into consideration. As it had been brought up, he trusted that his honorable friend, the Postmaster-General, would lay it before his colleagues, and that before the close of the session, something would be done. He also agreed with the Honorable Captain Simpson that some alteration would have to be made in the Bill in committee.

Question put and passed.

DEVIATION OF SOUTHERN AND WESTERN RAILWAY.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the consideration of the following resolution sent up from the Legislative Assembly, yesterday :—

"That the plans, sections, and book of reference of the projected deviation of the Southern and Western Railway, from a point 3 miles 57 chains from Ipswich to the commencement of the Brisbane Extension at the present terminal station in Ipswich, as laid upon the table of this House, be approved, and that the same be forwarded to the Legislative Council for their concurrence;"—

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That this House do now concur in the resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

He said he had to draw the attention of honorable members to the deviation which was proposed to be made. If honorable members examined the plan, as, no doubt, they had already, they would find that the present railway crossed the River Bremer at the Ipswich Bridge, and took a very long round over some very indifferent country for about three miles and a-half. It struck him as extraordinary, why the deviation now proposed should not have been made originally. He was, for one, aware that there was a very considerable detour; but not being an engineer, he naturally thought that the straight line was considered impracticable in an engineering point of view. However, now that it had been decided that the railway should continue on to the capital, it had become necessary to make that railway as straight as possible, and to get as good a route as could be found. The line proposed to be made, which included the deviation, was two miles and seven chains in length, which was a saving of about a mile and a-half upon the long round already mentioned. It might seem strange that the line already made should be abandoned; but the map would show that, apart from the saving of distance, it had really become a necessity to make the railway go straight through Ipswich, to suit the extension of the line to Brisbane, and as it would otherwise be very difficult to get into or out of the station at Ipswich. By the proposed deviation, the passenger traffic could be brought straight on to Brisbane, and not interfered with, while the station and workshops at Ipswich could also be utilised. The expense would not be very large; and, in fact, it would be entirely recouped by the advantages to be gained by the alteration of the original plan. Upon calculation it was found that the expenditure upon the deviation would not exceed £17,000, although at first it might appear more. The new line, from where it joined the present line to where the bridge would cross the Bremer, was about a mile long, and it was through unalienated land; therefore nothing would be spent for the resumption of land. The bridge which would

cross the Bremer at Sadler's Crossing, could be made at a cheap rate; the approaches were good, and the main span of the bridge, which would be about 100 feet, would be composed of iron girders which were already in stock at Ipswich, and which had formed what was known as Watt's Bridge on the Main Range, and would now be utilised for the new bridge. The railway, from the bridge, went on to the Grammar School. There was very little land needed from the junction with the river, and that which had to be passed through was of no value; and it had been found that a very good road could be secured, with good gradients, through the hill at the Grammar School, about three-quarters of a mile. Then, the line ran straight to the point which was now authorised by Parliament, and which was a few chains west of the terminus. At this last-mentioned point, a siding would bring the goods trains into the station and workshops, and the passenger traffic would not be at all interfered with. It was proposed to erect a platform for passengers, at this spot. The cost of the bridge across the Bremer would be about £5,000, and that included the girders, which were estimated at a value of £800. The total cost of the deviation was put down at £21,000; but if honorable members took it in connection with the main line from Ipswich to Brisbane, they would find that £4,000 of that amount would be saved. In agreeing to the deviation, honorable members would bear in mind that the saving in distance effected was equal to 3,000 train miles in the year; and that, according to the traffic returns of last year, represented a saving of £853, which was equivalent to 5 per cent. interest upon £17,000, the cost of the deviation. There would be a saving in distance and a consequent saving in wear and tear.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said he should not have got up to speak on this question at all, but seeing no other honorable member rise, and as it was one of some importance, he did not care to let it pass without something being said upon it. Some little further explanation should be given than that of the Postmaster-General. It appeared that the whole saving would be one and a-half mile by the deviation. Travelling at the rate of twenty miles an hour, that was about four minutes saved. For that, it would be far too much of a good thing to spend £17,000! If there were other reasons for the deviation, the House might think differently of it. Looking at the plans, he saw that the railway from Ipswich went through unoccupied land; but the deviation would go through a large part of the town—where allotments would have to be bought, perhaps at a high price, from highly influential people! Whether that was the case or not, he would not in any way assert; but he, for one, could see no reason for the deviation. He saw the Chief Engineer within the precincts of the House; probably he could give them some information on the subject.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: if the saving was only four minutes and a-half time in an hour's journey, he agreed that it would be absurd to spend £17,000. He could see that the Honorable Mr. Heussler was not much of an engineer. If he looked at the plans he would see at once that the railway had to go straight, and that the curves to bring it round the other way made it almost impracticable and highly inconvenient. The expenditure was necessary, that the whole line might be improved and the station be made available. He thought he might safely say that no influential persons had received high prices for their land. The price of the whole land to be resumed was £6,620, and the whole expense was not nearly as much as would have to be incurred if the present plan was not carried out at first. Honorable members would see what he meant by the curved lines on the plan passing the station. Honorable members would admit that it was far the best to make a good job at first than to go on incurring unnecessary expense and be obliged to make alterations hereafter. It was not very long since that considerable expense was gone to on the line, and if the present weather continued further expense would soon be necessary.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: As several honorable members, with himself, knew very little about the locality of the deviation, it would be very satisfactory to the House to call the Chief Engineer to give them some information about it. They had very little local knowledge, and they must to a very great extent be guided by the knowledge of others. He therefore moved, without previous notice, and by leave of the House:—

That Mr. Stanley, Chief Engineer, be examined at the bar of the House.

Question put and passed.

HENRY C. STANLEY, Esquire, C.E., was called to the Bar, and examined:—

1. *By the President*: Mr. Stanley, you are the Chief Engineer under the Government for the management or construction of the railway? I am Chief Engineer of the Southern and Western Railway.

2. *By the Hon. H. G. Simpson*: You are called, Mr. Stanley, in consequence of several honorable members of the Council not being acquainted with the locality of the deviation; and the information that you can give us will make up for that absence of local knowledge. I wish to ask you, first of all, whether it is on your recommendation, or is it in consequence of your professional opinion, that this deviation is recommended? It is.

3. Now, I will ask you to state as nearly as you can to the House, the *pros.* and *cons.* in regard to the deviation: why you have selected it? The line authorised by Parliament, last session, followed the course of Mr. Fitzgibbon's original survey. It left the present line at a point in the North Ipswich yard, passed through North Ipswich by the Immigration Depôt, and crossed the Bremer at the neck of the basin. I had recommended the Government to adopt this line in

preference to the other routes then proposed, as I considered it the most direct, as well as best from an engineering point of view. This line was, however, objected to by the people of Ipswich, for the reason that it would leave South Ipswich, the principal business part of the town, on a branch, and cause inconvenience and delay to the traffic in shunting backwards and forwards across the bridge to the station. I received instructions from the Government to consider whether an alteration in the line might be made so as to bring the main line through South Ipswich and convenience the traffic there. With that object in view, I recommended this deviation. There had been a survey carried out previous to my doing so, by Mr. Smith. This survey is shown on the plan before the House by a dotted line, leaving the present line between the end of the Bremer Bridge and the Stations and passing through South Ipswich by the line shown on the plan. Though this line would give the advantage sought for, of placing South Ipswich on the main line, yet it had this disadvantage: it would cause great inconvenience in the traffic arrangements. The station would be left on a short siding, off the main line, and the whole of the shunting when trains met, or when other shunting was going on, would be thrown upon the single line upon the Bremer Bridge. In fact, the opinions given, with regard to this line, by Mr. Stephens, who reported upon it, and by the Traffic Manager, condemned it. Mr. Stephens says in his report:—"In making these remarks I do not look to the immediate present—I look to the future; and, although, for the next three or four years we might possibly put up with the great inconvenience in shunting, &c., which the adoption of the new line would entail, yet it will be found that if the traffic becomes at all considerable this nuisance would become intolerable; in fact, the traffic movements would become almost unmanageable. Even now the siding accommodation at the Ipswich goods and passenger station is very cramped and inconvenient, and it is difficult to conjecture what it would be with an increased traffic and an additional line running into it. It would, I apprehend, be also very awkward in the case of two trains passing each other at this station." And the Traffic Manager, in his report upon the same subject, says:—"But if the present station and its position is retained"—referring to Mr. Smith's proposed line;—"then—whether the line for Brisbane leaves the present site either by running through the Ipswich station, or at a point north of the station, at the south end of the bridge over the Bremer—there would be a daily detention to the trains, and a daily expenditure in working them; and the inconvenience, detention, and cost thus experienced at Toowoomba would, in a modified form, be repeated at Ipswich. In the event, too, of trains meeting at Ipswich, the inconvenience and detention would be of a still more serious character, and only one train, as at Toowoomba, could enter the station at a time." On these grounds, I advised the Government not to contemplate adopting that particular line; but, in order, as I said, to meet the requirements of the local traffic, that the line should come through South Ipswich, I recommended that this deviation should be formed. It has the advantage of securing better gradients than the present line; it reduces the distance over which the whole traffic of the railway will pass by

nearly a mile and a-half; and, of course, it will save time in working the traffic, besides wear and tear. The cost of it, compared with the line I was just now speaking of—Mr. Smith's—and including the portion of the line authorised by Parliament to the point of junction marked B on the plan, would be £17,000 more than Mr. Smith's line; but, on the other hand, the saving effected in the distance over which the traffic would pass would amount to 3,177 train-miles in the year, calculated upon an average of four trains each way per diem—which, I may state, is not by any means a high average; and the saving in the working expenses, calculated at the rate of the working expenses, last year, would amount to £853. This sum represents interest at the rate of five per cent. on over £17,000. In addition to that, is the saving of time and wear and tear to permanent way and rolling stock.

4. Mr. Stanley, it was suggested to me outside the House, the other day, by a resident of Ipswich, that there would be a diminution of the receipts on the line from there being a shorter mileage to run. In your opinion, the saving in working expenses and wear and tear would more than counterbalance the loss? Most decidedly.

5. You referred to Toowoomba, I think. It was found necessary to make an alteration at Toowoomba, I think, to avoid the state of things which you would avoid at Ipswich? Yes; we are now carrying out alterations at that station.

6. And circumstances rendered it necessary? Yes; the very great inconvenience in working the trains there rendered it necessary.

7. Do the same class of circumstances require it at Ipswich? If the line by North Ipswich was carried out, it would place Ipswich to some extent in the same circumstances as Toowoomba has been placed in.

8. *By the Hon. J. C. Heussler:* The present state of Ipswich does not exactly—or, rather the new line does not pass the present station at all? We cannot bring the line through the present station, as it lies nearly at right angles to the proposed new line.

9. There must be some new station formed on the line? The intention, as I stated in my report, is to connect the line at the station with the main line by a short siding. This would make the station offices and goods shed still available for traffic purposes; but, so as to avoid the inconvenience of passenger trains shunting backwards into the station, I propose to put up a passenger platform alongside the main line. It is only a short distance from the station, so that there would be very little inconvenience to passengers.

10. And the present bridge over the Bremer becomes quite superfluous? Not at all. It will still give access to the workshops on the other side. It is also used as a road bridge.

The Witness retired.

The original question was then put and affirmed.

EXTENSION OF THE NORTHERN RAILWAY.

The Order of the Day was read for the consideration of the message from the Legislative Assembly, forwarded yesterday, with the following resolution:—

"That the plans, sections, and book of reference connected with the Extension of the Queens-

land Northern Railway, from a point at 38½ miles to another point 58½ miles, be approved, and that the same be forwarded to the Legislative Council for concurrence."

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That this House do now concur in the resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

He said the first section of the railway had been approved of by Parliament, from Westwood to Goganjo, 38½ miles from Rockhampton. The present extension was from that place, Goganjo to the Dawson River, 20 miles; being 58½ miles from Rockhampton. The route had been carefully surveyed, and the levels taken by Mr. Hannan, a very competent man; and he was given to understand from Mr. Ballard's report that the cuttings and earthworks, and the bridges, of the first six miles were very light, and the clearing chiefly scrub. With regard to the route selected on the Goganjo Ranges, Mr. Ballard was highly pleased, inasmuch as a gap had been found 30 feet lower than Plews' line, with much easier earthworks and better gradients, as well as a saving of two miles in distance. The surveys had been carried on with difficulty, owing to the denseness of the scrub. He (the Postmaster-General) had a tracing which he should be very happy to show to honorable members, and which explained the several routes surveyed. The first route was surveyed by Mr. Plews; Mr. Jardine surveyed another route; and the last was Mr. Hannan's survey, which was an improvement upon the other surveys. Of course, in a country like that, every exploration by an efficient engineer would tend naturally to make the line less expensive than was at first proposed. He (the Postmaster-General) need hardly remark that the Government had every reason to believe in the proficiency of the engineers and gentlemen concerned in the line. They believed that the railway would be efficiently and economically carried out.

Question put and passed.

POSTAL COMMUNICATION.

A Message was received from the Legislative Assembly, yesterday, forwarding the following resolutions, agreed to at the late Intercolonial Conference, and adopted by that House:—

"1. That the rates of Postage to the United Kingdom, by any of the services agreed to by the colonies—already established or to be established—shall be the same as at present by the Southampton route; the Brindisi charge also remaining as at present.

"2. That there be, on and after 1st January, 1874, a uniform intercolonial letter rate of 2d per half ounce, both overland and by sea; and that a uniform intercolonial parcel and book-packet rate be also adopted, according to a scale agreed upon.

	s.	d.
Not exceeding 1 oz....	0	1
1 oz., but not exceeding 2 ozs.	0	2
2 ozs. "	$\frac{1}{4}$ lb.	0 4
$\frac{1}{4}$ lb. "	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb.	0 8
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. "	$\frac{3}{4}$ lb.	1 0
$\frac{3}{4}$ lb. "	1 lb.	1 4

and so on, increasing 4d. for each $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. or fraction of a $\frac{1}{4}$ lb.

"3. That after 31st March, 1873, captains of vessels be permitted to have a box or bag for the reception of letters up to the time of sailing, provided such letters are sufficiently stamped, and also bear the late-fee stamp; such letters to be delivered without extra charge by the postal authorities of the colony to which they are addressed."

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the consideration of the message,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That this House do now concur in the resolutions of the Legislative Assembly.

He said he had to explain that everything contained herein could have been arranged under sections 7, 8, and 14 of the Postal Act in force in this colony; but the several matters having been brought up in the late Intercolonial Conference, held at Sydney, this year, it had been thought desirable to submit them to the approval of Parliament. The arrangement contained in the first resolution was come to because there were several propositions for different postal routes on the determination of the Galle Service, and, as it was thought best that none of the colonies should alter the rates in respect of any service which might be adopted by any of them. With regard to the second resolution, honorable members would remember that some time ago the postal rate between the colonies was six-pence, and that it was lately reduced to three pence, the present rate. It was now proposed to assimilate it to the inland rate of two-pence. The book packet and parcel postage rates were to be as detailed. Honorable gentlemen would see that those rates were nearly similar to the existing rates, with the exception that the rate for packets between two and four ounces was four-pence; and from four ounces upwards, it was four-pence for every quarter of a pound, or fractional part thereof. The change was made so that the largest packets, which were very inconvenient for the post, should pay at a higher rate than small packets, which were the most numerous and which were easily transmitted. With reference to the third resolution, honorable gentlemen might be aware that hitherto the practice of posting letters on board ship had existed, and that, in fact, many letters were posted in Queensland not bearing a Queensland stamp at all. A person posting a letter without a stamp, was liable to a fine of £50, and this was evaded by putting a stamp on. When the letter arrived in Sydney, the stamp was not obliterated, but the postal charge was made by the authorities there. Now, the Post Office would take the responsibility of all such letters as should be posted on board

ship, and deliver them in the same way as if posted in time for the regular late-fee mail.

The PRESIDENT said, before the question passed, he should like to ask the Postmaster-General, with reference to the first resolution, if all the colonies had agreed that the rates of postage to the United Kingdom should be as at present? Supposing that Victoria had a service to Galle, and Queensland a service *via* Torres Straits, would our letters be carried by each route at the same rate of postage as at present?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in answer to the honorable the President, said it might be remembered that in former times this colony paid £1 per pound for correspondence transmitted by Panama. He took it that although the colonies would not be bound to take mails, yet, if they should take them, they could only charge the same postage rates as at present.

The PRESIDENT: As the honorable gentleman was aware, we were sometimes charged 16s. 8d. upon a newspaper coming by California. He had seen that himself.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes. That was at the postage rate of £1 per pound. He had, as far as he could, stopped them coming, except from America.

The PRESIDENT: Then if Queensland agreed to the rate, she bound herself. It was not known whether the other colonies would carry Queensland letters by the Galle line; but Queensland would have to carry their letters by the Torres Straits line.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: At the Conference, the representatives of the different colonies brought the subject forward. Of course it was with the idea that several independent mail services would be carried out. He could only give his own opinion, which was, that the colonies would carry letters at those rates; but he did not think that one colony was actually bound to carry the letters of another, although they were all bound to charge only those rates if they did carry one another's mails. Notwithstanding that a colony might have to pay for its service, even £1 per pound, it could only charge other colonies whose letters it carried the rates mentioned—the Southampton rates; and it could not put on an extra 4d. an ounce.

The PRESIDENT: He recollected a charge once made of something like £16, for some blue books.

Question put and passed.

INTERNATIONAL TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION.

The Legislative Assembly having adopted the following resolutions, agreed to at the late Intercolonial Conference, forwarded them to the Council, yesterday, by message:—

"1. That in view of the serious inconvenience that would result from the stoppage of telegraphic communication with Europe, it is desirable to construct a telegraphic cable between Singapore and the terminus of the Queensland lines at Normar Mouth.

"2. That a memorial be transmitted to the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, informing him that the several Australasian Governments are very desirous of co-operating with the Imperial Government in the acquisition or construction of through lines of telegraphic communication between Great Britain, India, and Australasia.

"3. That on and after November first next, the charge for telegraphic messages within each of the Australasian colonies be one shilling for ten words (exclusive of address and signature) and one penny for every additional word, but that these charges are not to include messages on the lines from Port Augusta to Port Darwin, from Bowen to Norman Mouth, nor the cable charge between Tasmania and Victoria.

"4. That messages for New Zealand and Western Australia be received at all Australian stations, the proper charge being made for their transmission to the port or place from which they are to be posted, and *vice versa* with regard to telegrams posted in New Zealand and Western Australia to the telegraph operator at any port in Australia; and that arrangements should be made for the collection of telegraph charges on all such messages."

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, on moving that the resolutions be concurred in by the Council, observed, that as the conditions of agreement for the construction of the lines desiderated would come on for consideration on Wednesday next, and as the House had only now to deal with an abstract question which had been brought up at the Conference, he need say little in explanation of his present motion, as compared with former resolutions which were passed by the Council last year. At that time it was intended that the submarine telegraph cable should go from Norman Mouth to a point in Java, but now it was intended that the cable from Queensland, instead of being connected with Java, should be taken *via* Macassar to Singapore; that there should be an independent through communication with Singapore, entirely distinct from the line between Port Darwin and Singapore. In fact, telegraphic communication must be assured by a duplicate cable. The second resolution spoke for itself. The Imperial Government were as much interested as the Government of Queensland, and as the other colonies, in direct telegraphic communication between England and Australia, and it was to be expected that the Imperial Government would afford some assistance in the carrying out of so important an undertaking. The reduced rates mentioned in the third paragraph, would, it was to be hoped, pay. The charges were very small; but as population in the colonies increased, he had no doubt that the low charge would lead to an increased use of the telegraph. The exceptions in the latter part of the third resolution were necessary. It was agreed that the cost, per message of twenty words, from New Zealand to New South Wales, was not to exceed fifteen shillings, the charge for each word above twenty being nine-pence; and the cost of twenty

words from Normanton to Singapore, was not to exceed forty shillings for the first two years, and thirty-five shillings afterwards, the charge for each word above twenty being two shillings. The fourth resolution was merely local, and the arrangement under it would afford very great convenience to persons in the colonies, who would be able to send telegrams, as they were unable to do now in many cases because there was no one to collect the charges.

Question put and passed.