

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 2 JULY 1873

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Mr. STEPHENS said that perhaps whilst the vote was being discussed, the honorable Premier would take the opportunity of informing the committee whether any further information had been received by him from New South Wales respecting the negotiations for a mail service *via* California.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, that as he had not intended to go any further with a motion lower down on the business paper, in reference to that subject, he had no objection to comply with the request of the honorable member, and to inform the committee of what he knew on the matter. He might say, that owing to the action of the New South Wales Government in declining to allow the Californian mail steamers to call off Cape Moreton for either the receipt or delivery of the Queensland mails, all negotiations regarding that service had been put an end to. He would read to the committee the last letter he had received from the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, Mr. Parkes, on the subject; it was as follows:—

“Colonial Secretary’s Office,
“Sydney, June 20, 1873.

“SIR,—With reference to your telegrams requiring the ships of the Trans-Pacific Mail Service to call off Cape Moreton to receive and deliver the Queensland mails, I am now desired by His Excellency Sir Hercules Robinson to inform you that this Government, after the most mature consideration of the subject, has decided not to consent to any arrangement which would interfere with the shortness of the passage between Sydney and San Francisco. 2. In any agreement between this colony and Queensland for the promotion of the two lines by way of San Francisco and by way of Torres Straits, the heaviest share of contribution would obviously fall upon New South Wales. This Government was prepared to enter fully into the development of the Torres Straits route, without expecting any very large support from Queensland in establishing communication across the Pacific, and I informed you to this effect in my letter of the 7th instant. But as you desire to have all the details definitely explained before you finally give your adherence to the San Francisco service, it appears to me that I ought also to be definitely informed of the advantages which New South Wales would derive from the service *via* Torres Straits. If the ships of that line are to call at all the more important of the northern settlements of Queensland, it must be admitted that in proportion to the delays so caused the value of the service will be impaired to this colony. I shall therefore be glad to be informed what number of days are calculated for the mail delivery between Sydney and London, both ways, *via* Southampton and *via* Brindisi respectively. At the present time, when questions of this kind are put to me, I am not in a position to give any accurate answer. 3. With regard to the Pacific service, it is very probable that this Government will close the provisional contract (which gives the colony the choice of two services) for the higher subsidy of £68,000, which is for a mail delivery between Sydney and Liverpool in forty days—namely, twenty-five days between Australia and California, six days across the continent of

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 2 July, 1873.

Mail Services *via* California and Torres Straits.—Order of Business.

MAIL SERVICES VIA CALIFORNIA AND TORRES STRAITS.

Upon the consideration in Committee of Supply of a supplementary vote of £5,000, for “Steam Mail Service” for the year 1873,—

America, and nine days across the Atlantic. In this case the Queensland mails would be delivered to and from Brisbane in forty-two or forty-three days, which would be much quicker than they can be delivered by any other route. 4. This Government is desirous, with the approval of Parliament, of joining Queensland in establishing the Torres Straits service, and it will be glad to receive your co-operation in the Pacific service. But it has already deliberately declined the assistance of New Zealand on the condition that the steamers of the main line should call at a New Zealand port, and it cannot consent to their calling off Cape Moreton, or to any departure from the direct route, on any consideration whatever.

"I have the honor to be,

"Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"HENRY PARKES.

"The Honorable The Colonial Secretary
of Queensland, Brisbane."

As far as the Queensland Government were concerned, this communication had put an end to all negotiations on the subject; because, unless the Californian Mail Service received and delivered the mails for this colony at the Pilot Station in Moreton Bay—as the Premier of New South Wales was informed before he wrote that letter—the Government could have nothing to do with it, and the whole matter would come to an end. Now, as Victoria had provided herself with a service *viâ* Suez, and New South Wales, a service *viâ* California, the Ministry had come to the conclusion that Queensland should also look to herself in the Torres Straits service. He had, therefore, sent a telegram to the Agent-General in London, to know what terms the present contractors would require to make it a ten-knot service, with Brisbane as the terminus, and the reply was anything but satisfactory. The Agent-General pointed out that, under the eighth clause of the agreement, they could make Brisbane the terminus of the line if it were determined upon; but with regard to the ten-knot service, the contractors asked the present subsidy, and also a guarantee that their dividend should never be less than ten per cent. That was, of course, a thing which could not be consented to. It would be opening the way to all sorts of carelessness and bad management on the part of the company, who would not care how the service was conducted if such a guarantee were given. He had, therefore, refused the offer, and he thought the nine-knot service would be sufficient for some time. Again, a ten-knot service would gain only two days in time, and the advantage of this would certainly not be equal to the additional cost which would have to be incurred; and he had telegraphed to the Agent-General to close the arrangement, making it quite certain that Brisbane should be the terminus. The Government intended to go on with the nine-knot service to begin

with, and if that were not sufficient, he had no doubt that, with the boats the company proposed building, they would, for a very moderate increase, be prepared to make it a ten-knot service. That was the present position of affairs. The time-table, as prepared, allowed sixty-two days fourteen hours from Southampton, and fifty-four days fourteen hours *viâ* Brindisi. The Postmaster-General reported that a ten-knot service would be of comparatively little advantage over the nine-knot service, because the latter would give ample time for reply. The steamer would, according to his calculation, be thirteen days in port, so that there would be ample time for replying from all parts of the colony.

Mr. HEMMANT thought the Government had done exceedingly well for the colony on this occasion by refusing to have anything to do with New South Wales in this matter. He was perfectly satisfied, when the subject was first debated, that New South Wales had not the slightest intention of agreeing to our proposals, and the result had shown such to be the case. He could not understand how, with a nine-knot service, they should have such a long time-table. Going by Singapore was only about 250 miles out of the way, and as the distance was only 5,017 miles from Galle, he thought there must be some error in the time-table. He saw by the proposal of Mr. Fraser, which was discussed last session, that the time *viâ* Brindisi was fifty-two days and a-half.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the same as under the present arrangement.

Mr. HEMMANT: He understood the honorable the Colonial Secretary to say fifty-four days. The former proposal to which he had referred was, he believed, to have been only an eight and a-half knot service; and he certainly thought they ought to get their mails here in less than fifty-four days.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, since the last debate on this subject, he referred the time-table back to the Post Office authorities, and they had made it exactly the same again. The honorable member for East Moreton should recollect that this table was made up supposing the steamer went on to Sydney; and that accounted for the two days difference to which he had referred.

The item was then agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was very anxious to formally introduce the Appropriation Bill that evening, and with that view he would, without previous notice, move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will admit of Resolutions of Supply and Ways and Means being received and otherwise dealt with on the same day on which they are reported from Committee of the Whole; and of Bills being passed through all their stages in one day.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, as one member of that House, he should most deci-

dedly object to such a motion being put without the usual notice.

Mr. HEMMANT said he should join his honorable colleague in the objection raised by him, and he must say that he thought it was a most extraordinary course for the honorable Colonial Treasurer to pursue at a time when the Education Bill, introduced by the honorable Premier, still remained unsettled. A great deal had been said about that Bill being shelved, and after the motion of the honorable member he began to think there was some desire to shelve it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The honorable member for East Moreton need not give himself the slightest trouble about the Education Bill, as, before the House was prorogued, that measure should go, at all events, to a second reading, or he would know the reason why. The Government had no intention whatever of stealing a march upon honorable members, but the motion of his honorable colleague was only for the purpose of expediting business, and putting things in form for the passing of the Appropriation Bill. There was no intention whatever of shelving the Education Bill.

Mr. GRAHAM would like to ask the honorable Premier also, whether a reasonable time would be granted for the disposal of private business. Private members had now only one day in the week, and there was some business on the paper second in importance, no doubt, to the Education Bill, but still of very great importance. If there was any sort of assurance from the honorable gentleman that a reasonable time would be allowed to private members, he thought no objection would be made to the motion of the honorable Treasurer.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had no desire to prorogue the House without allowing honorable members an opportunity of passing their private business; but he could not promise to keep the House open till all the private business was disposed of, as there might be fresh motions put on the paper every day. There were some important matters on the paper, such as the resolutions for the payment of members, that ought to be dealt with. There would be very little Government business during the next week, and in order that all honorable members might have an opportunity of recording their votes on the Education Bill, he should push that forward, although not a Government measure, on Tuesday next.

Mr. MILES asked if the motion could be put without the consent of the whole House?

The SPEAKER said, that by the 286th Standing Order, the consent of at least fourteen members was required.

Mr. LILLEY thought, after the assurance given by the honorable Premier that the motion was merely to expedite business, there could be no objection to it.

The question was put, and the House divided with the following result:—

Ayes, 18.	Noes, 10.
Mr. Palmer	Mr. King
" Bramston	" Miles
" Ramsay	" Hemmant
" Thompson	" Stephens
" Walsh	" Macalister
" Wienholt	" Thorn
" Eyfe	" W. Scott
" Ferrett	" Edmondstone
" J. Scott	" Griffith
" Lilley	Dr. O'Doherty.
" Morehead	
" Royds	
" Buchanan	
" Cribb	
" Clark	
" Graham	
" Bell	
" Handy.	