

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 6 MAY 1875

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 6 May, 1875.

Resumption of Lands.—Maryborough and Bundaberg
Railway.—Parliamentary Buildings Vesting Bill.—
Adjournment.

RESUMPTION OF LANDS.

The following papers were laid on the table by the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, and ordered to be printed:—

“1. Schedule of lands proposed to be resumed from runs within the settled districts of Moreton, Darling Downs, Wide Bay and Burnett, and Kennedy, in pursuance of the powers conferred on the Legislature by the 10th section of the Act 31 Vic. No. 46.

“2. Return showing the runs in the settled districts of the colony, the names of the lessees, the areas of the leased halves, the areas proposed to be resumed therefrom, and the areas applied for under pre-emption on the said leased halves.

“3. Report from the Commissioners on the demand for land in the districts of Moreton, Darling Downs, Wide Bay and Burnett, and Kennedy.”

A message was received from the Legislative Assembly, forwarding certain resolutions which had been adopted by that House respecting the resumption of certain lands in the settled districts, and requesting the concurrence of the Council.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that the message be taken into consideration on Wednesday next, or, if the House should adjourn over next week for the Agricultural Show and the Races, at Ipswich, on the next sitting day. He wished honorable members to have time for the consideration of the resolutions, and to be placed in possession of the papers which were ordered to be printed in connection therewith.

Question put and passed.

MARYBOROUGH AND BUNDABERG RAILWAY.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN asked the Postmaster-General—Is it the intention of the Government to apply to Parliament, during this session, for the power and the means to construct a railway between Maryborough and Gympie, and also a railway between Bundaberg and Mount Perry?

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL answered—The Government intend to apply to Parliament for authority to construct a cheap line of railway between Maryborough and Gympie, but not between Bundaberg and Mount Perry, as a preliminary examination of the country shows that the latter line would be too expensive. If the construction of the line from Maryborough to Gympie is authorised, and the experiment prove successful, it will probably lead to the opening up of the Mount Perry and Bundaberg country, by a similar line, at a future time.

THE Hon. A. H. BROWN moved the adjournment of the House, in order, he said, to refer to the unsatisfactory answer he had received from the honorable gentleman representing the Government. It would be a great disappointment, perhaps not to himself exactly—as he had not been deceived by the promises of Ministers—so much as to the residents in his district, both at Bundaberg and Mount Perry, to find that a railway would not be constructed. The different towns had been visited by two prominent Ministers; Bundaberg had been visited by the Colonial Secretary and the Secretary for Public Works; and each gentleman had promised, directly or indirectly, that a line of railway to Mount Perry should be constructed. On one occasion, a very influential meeting was called, and a deputation from that meeting waited upon the Minister for Works, in Brisbane, to urge upon his consideration the advantages of that railway. At that meeting several honorable members of the Council were present—the Hon. George Harris, the Hon. Mr. Gibbon, and other members of Parliament. That was on the 21st January, last year. He should read the reply of the Minister for Works to the representations of the deputation. There was not, on that occasion, any reservation of any description whatever; but the honorable gentleman emphatically stated that—

“The Government will, next session, ask Parliament to vote the money for the construction of the line.”

This distinct assurance had been copied into different newspapers, in different parts of the country, especially the papers in the places more particularly referred to—Bundaberg and Mount Perry. They all expected the fulfilment of the promise of the Ministry; that the line would be commenced, they looked upon as a matter of course. The wealth which the people believed existed at Mount Perry it was essentially important to the

country should be opened up; and the line was wanted to convey the minerals to the port which they considered peculiarly adapted for the trade that had sprung up. Those gentlemen who had waited upon the Minister for Works, and received his promise, would feel great disappointment at the answer which the representative of the Government in the Council had given to his question this day. He (Mr. Brown) regretted very much to have to point out so distinct a contradiction to the promise that was made by the honorable gentleman's colleague. The Minister for Works said further:—

“We shall have a trial survey as soon as possible, and when approved, and the survey and working plans for the first section of the line are prepared, that will give us time to prepare the working plans and survey of the whole line. We shall have the estimates prepared for the whole line, and at the meeting of Parliament the House will be asked to vote a sufficient sum of money for the purpose. I may state I have received letters from the Boolbonda and Wolca Copper Mining Companies on the same subject, and my answer to them will be of the same nature as my remarks to you.”

Then the deputation retired, with thanks to the honorable gentleman for the promise which he had made. They appeared to have been perfectly satisfied that there was a strict intention on the part of the Government to carry out the promise made at that time on their behalf by the Minister for Works. Now, he (Mr. Brown) was told that there was no intention of the kind; and the only apology for that infraction of a promise was, that a preliminary survey had been made, and that, from the tone of the report of that survey, the line would be too expensive. Perhaps that was correct; but he had looked into the report of the engineer in charge of railway surveys, and he must say that he did not think the line would be an expensive one, compared with the cost of the line between Ipswich and Brisbane. He knew that a railway between Bundaberg and the place where he lived could be made very easily. But he should read a portion of the report of the Engineer in charge of Railway Surveys, to show what that officer said about the cost of the line which the Postmaster-General was instructed to say would be too expensive:—

“In considering the question of cost, the line from Bundaberg to Mount Perry may conveniently be divided into three sections. The first, extending for about twenty miles from Bundaberg, will be by far the least expensive, as, with the exception of the bridge across Splitter's Creek, the works, as I have already mentioned, will be extremely light. Including the cost of terminal station works and buildings, the section might, I think, be estimated approximately at about £5,000 per mile.

“The second section, say, as far as the left-hand branch of Gin Gin Creek, comprises what may be termed fairly average country, if we except the two ranges near Brusley and Pinnock's creeks, which would necessitate heavier works,

and thereby somewhat increase the average cost per mile. Taking these into consideration, it would not be safe to reckon upon a sum of less than £8,500 per mile. The probable length would be about 25 miles.

"The greater portion of the third section, to Mount Perry, a distance from 18 to 20 miles, embraces most unfavorable country for railway construction, and must, however economically the line is carried out, involve a large expenditure: not less than from £10,000 to £12,000 per mile can be set down for this.

"Assuming the above rates per mile, the total probable cost would stand thus:—

1st Section, 20 miles, say at £5,000...	£100,000
2nd " 25 " " at 8,500...	212,500
3rd " 20 " " at 11,000...	220,000
Total ...	£532,500

"Or, say, an average cost of about £8,200 per mile for engineering construction only."

That he (Mr. Brown) considered was not a large sum—

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: A very large sum.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN: For so important a line; nor did he consider it a sufficient justification for what he might call a breach of promise on the part of the Minister for Works to two important towns and a wealthy mineral district. He should not refer very minutely to the promise made by the Colonial Secretary. When that honorable gentleman paid a visit to Bundaberg, he was very much applauded. The laudation of him that was put forth in consequence of his promise was, he (Mr. Brown) might say, very gross, in fact. But the people would now feel grievously disappointed, both at Bundaberg and Mount Perry, and at other places also. He regretted that so many had been misled, deluded, into the hope that money would be placed on the Estimates for the work. As a resident of the district he must express his disapprobation of the course that the Ministry had adopted; but he could safely say that he had not been misled by their promise, or what it implied. He hoped that when they made promises again, they would be observed more strictly than in the present case.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he regretted that the honorable gentleman should be disappointed with the answer given respecting the line between Bundaberg and Mount Perry. But the honorable gentleman must have a little consideration, as the expense of the line would be very great, and it was not one that the country would be warranted in going in for yet. The colony had had sufficient of expensive railways; and honorable members knew an estimate, upon a trial survey, of £7,000 or £8,000 a mile, meant about £10,000 or £12,000, actual construction, and that was far in excess of the cost of any railway yet made in Queensland. The Government intended to make railways as cheaply as possible, and they intended to com-

mence a cheap line between Maryborough and Gympie, provided the other House voted the money. He thought that railways might be constructed on a different gauge from that in use here, at a far less cost than had heretofore been the case; and he was certain that the Parliament would never authorise the construction of branch lines, or feeders—he did not speak of main lines—at £10,000 a mile. The line between Maryborough and Gympie was to be a cheap one, costing about £3,000 a mile; and if that should give satisfaction, it would not be long before the Government would come down for authority to construct a line between Bundaberg and Mount Perry. He might state that the survey between Bundaberg and Mount Perry was not yet completed; so that under no circumstances could the Government yet ask Parliament for authority to make that line. With regard to the promises said to have been made by Ministers, he knew of no decided promise made by another Minister of the Crown respecting the construction of the line spoken of by the Honorable Mr. Brown; but he could assure the honorable member that the Government contemplated making that line if it could be done at an exceedingly cheap rate—at a rate that the country could afford to pay interest for. He hoped that the honorable member would withdraw his motion.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN: Prior to withdrawing the motion, he hoped that honorable gentlemen would allow him to say a few words. The Postmaster-General's reply was not at all satisfactory. The honorable gentleman had not defended the policy of his colleagues.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: What is that?

The Hon. A. H. BROWN: The Postmaster-General appeared to be very deaf. He had not defended the policy of Ministers. His (Mr. Brown's) chief objection was to the promise being made and not kept. He was not referring to the cost of the work, nor was he advocating the railway.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He did not know of any promise.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN: He was objecting to the proceedings of Ministers, that they should make promises to the district, and not keep them. With the permission of the House, he should withdraw the motion for adjournment.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

PARLIAMENTARY BUILDINGS VESTING BILL.

The PRESIDENT, in presenting a Bill "to vest the Parliamentary Buildings in the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly," observed that, at this stage he should merely state to the House that the measure was brought in in accordance with the recommendation made by a joint committee of the

two Houses that sat last session, and that reported, amongst other things, as follows :—

“On arriving at the consideration of the next question submitted to them, your committee deemed it advisable to call in the assistance of the Surveyor-General of the colony, Mr. A. C. Gregory, and from a perusal of that gentleman’s evidence, attached with plan to this report, your committee believe that your honorable House will agree with them, that the tenure under which the land supposed to be dedicated to the purposes of the Parliament is now held is not satisfactory; in fact, that it is only permissive, and entirely without any legal force. And your committee are of opinion that a short Bill should be introduced, and, if agreed to, passed into law, to set apart beyond any future question the land now occupied as devoted to the uses of the Parliament of this colony.”

Mr. Gregory was kind enough to draft a Bill which was laid before the committee, but not acted upon further at the time, inasmuch as the report of the committee was brought up at the close of the session. Now, he (the President) presented the Bill and asked the House to read it the first time, with a view to its being printed, to enable honorable members to consider it on some future day.

Bill read the first time, and ordered to be printed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved the adjournment of the House to the next sitting day, Wednesday, 12th instant.

The HON. A. B. BUCHANAN moved, by way of amendment, that the House adjourn until Wednesday, the 19th instant. There were sufficient reasons for such an adjournment. In the first place, the Agricultural Show at Ipswich was to take place next week, and so many honorable members would be present at the exhibition that there was not likely to be a quorum of the Council if called upon to meet on Wednesday. Though members should not attend, yet the officers of the House must attend in the chamber, and they would not be able to go to the show. Another reason was, that the important papers connected with the resumptions must be printed, and honorable members required time to read them, and to consider about the resolutions before the House.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that personally he had no objection to the amendment; but all the same he was anxious that the business of the country should be proceeded with. For the reasons stated by the Honorable Mr. Buchanan, he should not divide on the adjournment.

Question put and passed, and the House adjourned until Wednesday, the 19th instant.