

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 19 MAY 1875

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Wednesday, 19 May, 1875.**Plans—Continental Railway.—Misreporting.—Returns.—
Conduct of Business.*

PLANS—CONTINENTAL RAILWAY.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS laid upon the table of the House certain plans, showing, on the map of Queensland, the position of the proposed Continental Railway reserves.

The SPEAKER: I am not aware that this paper is laid upon the table in response to any order of the House, or in accordance with the requirements of any statute, or by command; and until the honorable gentleman shows either one or the other, I do not see how it can be laid on the table or become a record of the House. If I might advise the honorable member, I would say, to withdraw the paper, whatever it is, and bring it up to-morrow by command, and then the House may receive it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said he might explain that he thought it was optional when an honorable member placed papers on the table. When he was speaking the other evening on the Bill to which these plans had reference, they had not been prepared, and he now laid them on the table for

the information of honorable members. If necessary, he would withdraw them.

Mr. PALMER said they were not records, and he could not see any objection. He had done the same thing before.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could see no reason for withdrawing the papers. They were simply for the information of honorable members, in order to enable them to discuss the matter; and he thought an honorable member could produce any paper for that purpose.

The SPEAKER: There is no question before the House. The honorable member has not stated that he places the paper on the table by order of the House, or by command, or according to any statute, and therefore I cannot see how it can be received.

Mr. PALMER said he had laid papers on the table for the information of honorable members, without meaning them to be records of the House, but merely to illustrate the proposed plans of the Government.

The SPEAKER: When an honorable member rises in his place and calls attention to certain papers, I am bound to take notice of the proceeding, and if I think there is any informality, then, in the name of the House, it is my duty to call attention to the fact. I say there is nothing, so far as I can see, to justify the House in formally receiving the document. I have no doubt it may be a very valuable document for the information of honorable members, but it has not been introduced in that formal manner in which I think a Minister of the Crown ought to introduce it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS said he would withdraw the papers, as they had not been formally introduced. He did not intend that they should be records, but as they were in the House, honorable members would be able to avail themselves of them.

MISREPORTING.

Mr. PALMER said, as a matter of personal explanation, he wished to call the attention of the House to a misrepresentation of what he said last night on the subject of railways. He could assure the House that, if it only concerned himself, he should take no notice whatever of it; but what he did say was made to convey censure on a gentleman who was a very valuable public servant, and he thought it was necessary, in his behalf, to state what he really did say. He was reported to have said:—

“He thought the last thing the present Government should do was to accuse the late Administration with over-estimating the costs of the railway works which they had commenced; and said that they could not be held responsible for the errors of a subordinate whom the present Government had thought fit to dismiss soon after entering office.”

He did not say anything of the kind, or anything that could by any means be tortured

into anything of that sort. What he did say was, that it was absurd to hold the late Government responsible for the cost of the Brisbane and Ipswich Railway, when the Government who succeeded them had dismissed the officer in whom the previous Government had every confidence, and had put another man in his place, who had got the work done at an advance, he believed, of sixty per cent. on the previous estimate. He should not have taken notice of the matter but that it conveyed censure on Mr. Stanley—the last thing in the world that he should ever think of.

RETURNS.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked the honorable the Colonial Secretary, without notice, if he could state whether any returns had been made with reference to the expenses of the Education Commission? He found one return was nineteen days, and another thirteen days behind, and he would like some explanation on the point. If the accounts were so complicated as to require an unusual amount of time to prepare them, of course that would be sufficient explanation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the accounts were not very complicated, and he would perhaps be able to lay the return on the table to-morrow.

Mr. IVORY asked the honorable the Colonial Secretary, without notice, whether the returns ordered on his motion, on the 28th April last—

The SPEAKER: I must interrupt the honorable member. The question is put without notice, and is, therefore, informal. Of course it is quite within the province of the honorable the Premier to answer if he pleases; but the forms of the House require that notice should be given.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had not the slightest objection to answer the question. The returns would be laid upon the table the moment they came into his hands.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the postponement of the first order of the day—for the second reading of the Selectors Relief Bill—until after the consideration of the second order—for the resumption of the adjourned debate on the motion of the Secretary for Public Works, that the Continental Railway Bill be read the second time.

After discussion, the motion was affirmed on a division:—Ayes, 22; noes, 14.

Upon the second order of the day being called, accordingly,

Mr. IVORY rose and proposed—

That the debate be further adjourned.

Discussion followed, and the motion was negatived on a division:—Ayes, 12; Noes, 20.

Mr. GRAHAM then moved—

That this House do now adjourn.

Question put and negatived.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY then said: At this late hour of the night, and accepting, as I do, the suggestion made by honorable members on the other side, and particularly by the honorable member for Maryborough, who has stated that we are not likely to get through much business now, I propose not to go on further. I trust that the Opposition will understand that we are perfectly prepared, on this side of the House, to concede any reasonable proposition that is made; but I must say that to my mind this night has been very much wasted. I think, when honorable members on the other side get cool, they will admit this. There was an understanding that the Payment of Members Bill was the first order of the day we should get through, and then go on with the Continental Railway Bill. Now, I put it to honorable members on both sides, was not the consideration of Payment of Members Bill kept up to a time perfectly uncalled for?

The SPEAKER: The honorable member is out of order.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I submit, sir, to your ruling. I do not intend to say another word. I think at this late hour of the night it is desirable that we should adjourn. I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

The SPEAKER: I think the honorable member is out of order. The honorable member has spoken to the adjournment of the debate.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think the honorable gentleman has forgotten, himself.

The SPEAKER: I beg the honorable gentleman's pardon. I do not forget myself, in this position. If I forget myself, I am not fit to occupy this position. I will not allow such language to be addressed to the chair while I have the honor of filling it. I say that the honorable gentleman has spoken on this subject. I will not allow the chair to be insulted by such remarks being addressed to it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did not intend to insult the chair, or you, sir. But I will not allow even the honorable the Speaker to misrepresent my motives. I merely wish to correct the intimation which you made to this House. I will insist, with the assistance of this House, on doing so, upon any occasion. There was a motion before the House for the adjournment of the House. That motion was negatived. I moved the adjournment of the debate. I do not think there was anything wrong in doing so. I do not think there is any objection taken to my language—only because you think that I intended to offer personal disrespect to you, which I say I did not.

After a pause,

The SPEAKER said: It is put to me, that the honorable member was in order. I certainly thought the honorable member was not in order. When he addressed the chair in language which I consider is disrespectful to this House, in saying that the Speaker has forgotten himself, he was certainly not in

order. Not for one moment will I put up with this, if I am to be, at periods, subjected to detraction of that kind. I do not forget myself. I endeavor to do my duty honestly, and I do not forget myself in my position of Speaker of this House. I call upon honorable members to assist me in that duty; but not for a moment will I occupy this position, or any position in this country, to be told constantly by persons that I either forget my duty or am not capable of performing it. I proffer to place my resignation in the hands of this Assembly, at any moment it may please the Assembly to accept it; but I will not occupy this position, or any position, if I am to be subjected nightly, day after day, to the reflections of the Premier of the colony.

Mr. C. J. GRAHAM was understood to remark that one word of the Premier was certainly disrespectful, and ought to be recalled. At the same time, he thought it was only a *lapsus linguæ*. The Speaker had doubtless forgotten the fact that a motion for the adjournment of the House had been moved and negatived since the previous motion for the adjournment of the debate had been disposed of. He (Mr. Graham) was quite sure that the Speaker ought to receive from every member of the House, without respect to party, every assistance, and all possible respect, for his very efficient and impartial conduct in the Chair. He did not believe any disrespect was intentionally offered to the Speaker; for the House would resent it.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. C. J. GRAHAM: At the time, it did not strike him, that the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government meant anything of the sort; and the word he used was but a *lapsus linguæ*. The Speaker would accept the assurance from him, for himself and other honorable members, that they had the most perfect confidence in the Speaker.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have already, sir, stated that I meant no disrespect to you. I thought you would have acknowledged it—that I intended no personal offence to yourself. You have not acknowledged that; but you have, on the contrary, persisted in stating that I have nightly attacked you. I deny that; I deny it.

The SPEAKER: The honorable member has denied the statement that I have made. I shall resume the chair in an hour.

The sitting of the House was accordingly suspended, at half-past nine o'clock.

Mr. SPEAKER having resumed the chair,

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said, I think, sir, there has been some misunderstanding in the House with respect to the motion for the adjournment of the debate, made by my honorable friend, the Colonial Secretary. It appears, if my memory be correct, that he moved the adjournment of the debate, and that you, sir, in a moment of misapprehension, corrected him, saying that he had already

spoken to the main question; and I believe, in point of fact, he had only spoken to the adjournment, which got so mixed up in the debate, that it was quite natural a mistake might be made. It appears to have been a mere misapprehension, and the honorable the Colonial Secretary, in correcting you, sir, let fall a *lapsus lingue*, in saying you had forgotten yourself; intending to say, I suppose, that, at the time, you had forgotten he had only spoken to the adjournment. Some other misapprehensions followed, and you, sir, thought in consequence that some disrespect to yourself was intended; but it struck me, and I believe also the honorable member for Clermont, who has spoken on the subject, that it was not in its tone at all disrespectful. I believe what followed was what might naturally be expected; for a misapprehension once commenced was likely to run on; but I take it that the contradiction by the honorable the Colonial Secretary was rather complimentary than otherwise, being, as I understood it, only a disclaimer of any intention to use language disrespectful on any previous occasion this session. The circumstances being so, there can be no difficulty in putting the motion now for the adjournment of the debate, which was the motion moved by my honorable friend.

THE SPEAKER: When I stated that I should resume the chair in an hour, I did so in consequence of the Premier of the colony having given to the Speaker of this House a flat denial of a statement he had made. I felt it was not consonant with the dignity of this chair that such a statement should go forth uncontradicted. As far as was in my power, I adjourned the House for the purpose of enabling the Premier of the colony to substantiate his statement, or to give me, as the custodian of the honor of this House, an opportunity of defending its position and its dignity; and notwithstanding the explanation made by my honorable friend the Attorney General, I feel that the character of this House is at this moment at issue in consequence of the contradiction made by the honorable member of a statement made from this chair—a contradiction made to the statement made by myself. I have no hesitation in saying that, if I have made a statement which is worthy of the contradiction which was made by the Premier of this colony, I am not fit to be chairman of this Assembly; and more than that, I feel it my duty to state I can accept no other definition from any member of this House; I must either represent its honor, or I must retire.

MR. THOMPSON said he quite thought, and was under the impression at the time, that the honorable the Colonial Secretary merely used words indicating not that he intended to deny the correctness of any assertion made by the honorable the Speaker, but that he intended simply to say that he was not correct in his conception of his (the Colonial Secretary's) intention, namely, of an intention

to behave somewhat discourteously. He understood the honorable gentleman simply to disclaim that, and he also understood that still to be the meaning of the words he used.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Hear, hear.

MR. THOMPSON: In the heat of debate, and under the circumstances, which were slightly exciting, words were not chosen with such care and preciseness as they perhaps might have been. He did not understand the honorable the Premier to intend to impute to the honorable the Speaker that he had mis-stated anything, but simply that he had misconceived what was his intention.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Hear, hear.

MR. THOMPSON: He took the honorable gentleman's "Hear, hear," to be an assent.

MR. W. SCOTT would like to know from the honorable the Premier what he said, and intended to express at the time. He hoped the honorable the Speaker would retract the statement he made just now.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY said: I think it right, in justice to myself, as well as to you, sir, to state that the honorable member for the Bremer has exactly interpreted my feelings and intentions. I was exceedingly sorry, sir, that you should have imagined that I intended any personal offence to you, or any offence to you as Speaker of this House, because I think that you have known me long enough to know that I would never intend to do anything of the kind.

The question: That the debate be now adjourned was then put and passed; and it was adjourned until Wednesday next.