

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Council**

**THURSDAY, 24 JUNE 1875**

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Thursday, 24 June, 1875.*

Despatch of Business.—Immigration Act Amendment Bill.—The Law of Alienation of Crown Lands.—Count-Out

## DESPATCH OF BUSINESS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That Friday in each week be an additional sitting day of this Council, unless otherwise ordered.

If, he said, honorable members would look at the notice paper they would see that business was increasing at an awful rate, for the disposal of which he was very anxious to secure another day in the week. He did not care what day was fixed upon; Tuesday would do as well as Friday, and, in fact, he should himself prefer Tuesday. That, however, he left to honorable members. He did not desire the motion to take effect next week.

The Hon. L. HOPE suggested that Tuesday would be the better day.

The PRESIDENT: It seemed more convenient for honorable members who had to go up the country to have Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday to themselves.

The Hon. J. F. McDUGALL said it was the wish of the country gentlemen to have Tuesday as the extra sitting day.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

By leave, the POSTMASTER-GENERAL altered his motion, substituting "Tuesday" for Friday, and, as amended, it was passed.

## IMMIGRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved the second reading of a Bill to amend the Immigration Act of 1872. He observed that the object of the Bill was to abolish the land-order system at present in operation. Honorable members must not think that because the Government proposed to abolish that system, they intended to adopt a passive or an inactive policy so far as immigration was concerned. On the contrary, he assured the Council that immigrants would pour into the colony just as freely without land orders as they had done in the past. At the time the land-order system was introduced, it was expected that immigrants would settle on the land; but experience had shown conclusively that not more than two or three per cent. of the immigrants had done so, while their land orders were parted with to speculators and land-jobbers at a discount of about seventy-five per cent. of their value. It was within his own knowledge that many land-order warrants had been sold for five pounds each. If the immigrant resided in the colony twelve months, he might get another five pounds for his twenty pounds land order. But, in the great majority of cases, the holder did not get it. As soon as the immigrant could make a declaration of residence for twelve months in the colony, he sold his land order to an

agent or a speculator at a discount; who, in turn, sold to the large land purchaser or proprietor at something like twenty per cent. less than the nominal value of the land order. There were now three ways of getting land orders:—Full-paying passengers, before shipping in England, got land-order warrants from the Agent-General for Emigration, and on landing in the colony, upon presenting their warrants, they received land orders. Assisted passengers likewise got warrants, and after residing in the colony twelve months, and paying the balance of passage money to the Government, they got land orders. The third class were those immigrants who were nominated by persons in the colony, and who entered into a bond before sailing, that, twelve months after their arrival in the colony, they would pay the balance of their passage-money which the Government had provided; which payment would entitle them to land orders. If they did not pay, the persons who nominated them were liable for the amount due to the Government. He (the Postmaster-General) might point out to the Council that the Colonial Treasurer found great difficulty in estimating his revenue, on account of the way that land orders were returned to the Treasury in payment for land purchases. In some years very few were received; in other years, a great many were paid in—sometimes £15,000 or £20,000 worth in one batch. With the view of remedying that evil, the Bill was brought in by the Government. It was merely a repealing Bill of certain clauses relating to land-order warrants and land orders in the Immigration Act now in force. The extent of the repeal was shown by the schedule which enumerated the provisions affected. He need say no more, unless honorable members desired that he should explain those provisions before the Bill got into committee.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY said he agreed with the object of the Bill, which had been much needed for some years; and he fully endorsed what fell from the Postmaster-General with regard to the working of the land-order system. That system was not working at all beneficially for the colony, more especially with regard to the revenue. More had been done by it to throw money into the hands of agents or middlemen than into the pockets of the immigrants or the coffers of the Treasury. Under those circumstances, the measure was a very desirable one. There was one thing that he should refer to: a rumor was current that by the Bill the value of land orders which still remained in circulation would, in some measure, be affected prejudicially.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Oh! no; they were preserved.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: Possibly it was a mistake as to the operation of the Bill. For many years past, the system of including land orders in the revenue of the country, and not debiting them to the cost of immi-

gration, had been a very great mistake. It was pointed out very forcibly by one Colonial Treasurer, not less than eight years ago, that the system of carrying land orders to the credit of revenue, and never debiting them to the Immigration Department, misled the public very much indeed; which was an additional reason for the repealing Bill. He should support the second reading.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON said he was somewhat in the dark about the Bill. He agreed with what had fallen from the Honorable Mr. Gregory, with regard to the working of the Act, so far as non-transferable land orders were concerned; because he believed it was only within two years that the present system of transferable land orders came into force. The old system was the best that was ever invented, he was quite sure. He should like to hear an explanation of the other system; for he was quite sure the non-transferable land-order system could never be a success.

The PRESIDENT: Honorable gentlemen—As the only member, I think, of the Ministry who inaugurated the land-order system now remaining in Parliament, I am bound to say a few words in its defence. I think that the great mistake that has been made with reference to the system of importing immigrants by land orders, has been that the executive department who had charge of it never managed it properly from the first, or, at least, from a very short time after its initiation. The object was to people the country by disposing of orders for land to pay the money for which the Colonial Treasury would become indebted for immigration, and which money would otherwise have to be paid either out of ordinary revenue or out of funds raised by loan. Now, when that system was made a portion of the original Immigration Act, which was passed in 1860—I was a member of the Ministry at the time—we had in our recollection the great inconvenience which had been felt in New South Wales from the indebtedness of that colony under the cost of importing immigrants. I was quite convinced that it was the policy of these colonies to import immigrants as rapidly as they could beneficially employ the people; but I saw that so to do might very much inconvenience the productive resources of the country, or, rather, embarrass the revenue—that, although we might be doing what was beneficial for the country, yet we might be overstepping the immediate means at our command—to provide the payment for immigration. It was thought that if we could make arrangements at home with shippers—as was, indeed, done by private parties—by Bishop Quinn, for instance—to bring immigrants to the colony without any strain upon the revenue, by taking payment for their passages in land orders, such a system would be a very advantageous one for Queensland. But, so many other interests intervened, that the system was not administered in its integrity. The first interference

was the cry, “The poor immigrant is robbed; he does not get the full value of his land order, when he sells it for five pounds.” This was not a consideration at all. The object of the system was to bring out fresh population to settle the country and to help to develop its resources, in which way the colony would receive a return for the land orders given for the passages of the immigrants. No doubt, some of the immigrants have been prodigal, and have parted with their land orders for less than their value; but many of them have found their land orders, when they reached our shores, a means of subsistence for a time, and a means of conveying them into the interior. The country was benefited, because, for the gift of each land order, we obtained an additional person to live here, and to help to improve our industrial resources or pursuits. “But,” the Treasurer says, “it interferes with my financial arrangements.” Does it not interfere with his financial arrangements to pay £15 in money for the immigrant’s passage? Has he no financial arrangements to make to pay away £15, with interest charged, as the cost of importing every immigrant? In the case of the land order, he merely receives it when it is presented at some land office in payment for a portion of our territory to be occupied, and after it has fulfilled its purpose. No interest accrues upon it; whereas, under the plan of paying cash raised by loan for immigration, the cost of the passage, with interest, remains a charge on the colony. Therefore, I do not think the whole question has been fully considered. There is, no doubt, a good deal of official inconvenience felt, a good deal of trouble, too, in the various offices in connection with land orders; and it is very hard for the Treasurer to get money as well as land orders in return for lands sold. But as the land order has fulfilled all that was expected of it, what more can be required? One cannot eat his cake and have it too. The colony has got its immigrants, and it is bound to fulfil the requirements of the bargain it made to get them—to give the land to the extent that the land orders represent. I have made these few remarks because I think that the whole question has not been considered. I have no intention to oppose the Bill, because it has passed elsewhere without any objection; and people seem to be tired now of the land-order system. But I am convinced, that if properly administered, it is the most efficient system to provide immigration for the country that has been devised.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN observed that his honorable friend the President had returned to theory, and, in that respect, he was correct in his view of the land-order system; but practically the difficulties that had arisen must be dealt with, and with them the Bill proposed to deal. No doubt, the immigrant coming to the colony expected that he would have some value for his land orders; but,

instead of anything like its reputed value, he got in the market five pounds for it; and he was a perfectly deluded creature. As the Postmaster-General had pointed out to the House, the land orders were sold at a frightful discount. The President said the Executive never managed the system properly. Well, there had been many Ministries in the colony succeeding one another, and none had improved in that respect; nor did he think there was room for hope of improvement. One essential point the President had failed to catch, which was, that the land orders were presented to the Treasury for payment of land purchased, and that they did actually represent ready money. In one recent case that honorable members knew, about £15,000 worth of land orders was presented in payment of land purchased by one individual on the Downs. The Treasurer, in his innocence, imagined that he was going to receive cash; but, in place of cash, he got a bundle of land orders. Only a few days ago, the Honorable Dr. Hobbs rather sneered at an objection he (Mr. Brown) took to advancing to a person £2,500 in land orders;—the honorable gentleman explained that the grant was “only in land orders.” Still it was clear enough that for the purchase of land, those land orders did represent and were equal to specie. In examining the details of the Bill, he thought it would be found that the schedule, showing the extent of the repeal of the Act of 1872, did not, in reference to the tenth section of that Act, apply to schedule E, named in it. That might be an omission which could be remedied easily. On the whole, he approved of the Bill, which was sadly wanted; and he should vote for the second reading.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He should see to it in committee.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said it was a pity the debate had taken the turn it now had, but on that account he should say a few words. The land-order system had been cried down by the Postmaster-General in such a summary way that he thought the honorable gentleman had fallen into a great mistake. He (Mr. Heussler) was quite sure that the land-order system, in the beginning, was about the best thing that could be established in a new colony. Under that very same system he had himself, as a private person, undertaken to supply Queensland with a number of his countrymen; and, for the introduction of 6,000 to 8,000 German immigrants he did not trouble the Government in any way more than to ask for just a couple of hundred pounds for his travelling expenses. He took the £18 land orders as an equivalent for the passage money of each immigrant. The success of the arrangement was acknowledged, and he had the satisfaction of seeing that the whole of the people he had been instrumental in introducing had done well, and that many of them had proved themselves very good colonists. It

was true that the land order, like a promissory note, bill of exchange, or any other scrip, might be a troublesome thing when it came back to the issuer. One's own bill remitted when cash was expected might be troublesome; but still a man in business must make up his mind to provide for his liabilities and meet his engagements; there was no excuse for his not knowing what they were. As long as land orders were transferable, as at first, there could be no more legitimate way of introducing immigrants. He used to take the land orders from the Government in the way he stated, and dispose of them to his squatting friends, who would in those days invest in £20,000, £30,000, or £40,000 worth at a time, for generally not less than £16 each; that was about ten per cent. less than their nominal value. He recollected that subsequently they rose in value, and were saleable at about five per cent. discount only. People who bought land were glad to take them, and pay them over to the Government at their full value. He might remark, that the demand for land grew, because people had so many land orders, and that double the quantity of land was sold that would have been disposed of by the Government otherwise. Competition was great. That time had now passed, and land orders were not of any more good, and the Treasury was embarrassed in various ways by them, and the country gained nothing by their issue. The land system ran now in different channels from the various ways existing of alienating land at very low prices, and there was now no such competition as there used to be. The credit of the country was established, and Queensland could go into the market and borrow as much money as she wanted, for legitimate purposes, at a rate of say four and a-half or five per cent. At five per cent. all costs would be covered. Consequently, there was no more necessity for the land-order system; it was of no use at present; and, so far as he was concerned, he should vote for the Bill.

Question put and passed.

#### THE LAW OF ALIENATION OF CROWN LANDS.

The House resolved itself into Committee of the Whole for the consideration of the series of resolutions on this subject. [See pp. 398 and 505.]

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY moved the adoption of the following:—

1. That the existing laws relating to the alienation of Crown Lands by conditional purchase are defective, and their working unsatisfactory.

He said that he had no wish to restrict discussion upon the resolutions; but, in deference to the wishes of certain honorable gentlemen, he intended, after the committee had had an opportunity of making amendments in the resolutions by considering them *seriatim*, to refer the whole to a Select Com-

mittee to frame a Bill in accordance with them. He should do so, because he was not informed that the Executive intended to do so.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL urged the postponement, or the absolute withdrawal, of the resolutions. He denied that the land laws were working unsatisfactorily. The honorable member was only wasting time. He had proved nothing to warrant the introduction, much more the adoption, of his resolutions. Let him bring in a vote of censure upon the Government at once, if he could sustain it upon any grounds.

A brief discussion followed, when the question was put and passed. No other of the resolutions was proposed, but the Chairman was moved out of the chair, and upon his reporting progress, the Honorable F. T. GREGORY stated that he should, on a future occasion, move that, instead of proceeding with the further consideration of the resolutions in Committee of the Whole, they should be referred to a Select Committee with instructions to draft a Bill upon them.

#### COUNT OUT.

On the Order of the Day being called for the third reading of the Deceased Wife's Sister Marriage Bill, the Honorable G. HARRIS drew attention "to the state of the House," and there not being a quorum present, the PRESIDENT adjourned the Council until the next sitting day—Tuesday, the 29th instant.