

Queensland



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Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 1876

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Monday, 25 September, 1876.

Railway Classification.—Electoral Irregularities.—Members' Expenses Bill.—Supply.

RAILWAY CLASSIFICATION.

MR. BUZACOTT said that he rose to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of bringing under the notice of the honorable Minister for Works the absurd differential charges at present made for the conveyance of goods by the Northern Railway. He had received a letter from one of his constituents, who said that the intricacy of the railway tariff was causing very great inconvenience, and who had called his (Mr. Buzacott's) attention to several articles on which the difference in the charges was more particularly noticeable: for instance, dried apples were included in the first class, other dried fruits in the second class, and others in the third class; whilst, with regard to other articles, the difference was equally absurd. He believed that such a system was operating very injuriously against the railway, because it involved great difficulty with the

carriers, whom the merchants and squatters were desirous of engaging to take wool and supplies from end to end in order to avoid the necessity of having an agent at Dingo, the present terminus. When a permanent terminus was established, it would, of course, be necessary to have such an agent; but at present, when the site of the terminus was being constantly removed as construction went on, no carrier could be found to take goods from end to end, owing to the difficulties of classification. He had made a great many inquiries into the matter, and he had found, so far as could be ascertained, that a simpler system of classification would not be followed by any loss of revenue to the railway, whereas it would prevent a great deal of the annoyance and inconvenience at present experienced by merchants and others at Rockhampton. He thought that a similar system should be pursued as that adopted by steamers and carriers, as by it there would be no loss of revenue to the railway; and on the other hand, the expenses of management would be lessened. He moved—

That this House do now adjourn.

The PREMIER said that the classification at present adopted by the Government in this colony was based on that of the London Clearing House, and was the same as that in England and in the Australian colonies; but no matter what it was, it could not be expected to please everyone. One thing he might say in reference to Rockhampton, namely, that the present tariff would be the means of bringing far more traffic on to the Northern line than had hitherto been the case; for instance, a great deal of copper now went down to Rockhampton that would otherwise have gone to Broad-sound. He had not had much time to devote to the subject, as honorable members were aware; but he would promise the House to give it his attention as soon as he could. He thought that on the whole, the tariff was not an unsatisfactory one, and that it was wise to abide by a classification which was universally adopted in England and most of the colonies. He believed the honorable member for Port Curtis was in favor of having one uniform rate for all goods.

Mr. PALMER said he should be glad if he could believe the statement of the honorable Premier that the present tariff would be the means of increasing the traffic on the Northern line, but he could not see how goods were to come from Clermont to Rockhampton instead of to Broad-sound, unless some alteration in the charges was made, as the distance between the two places was about the same, and there was more good grass on the Broad-sound road. The present traffic was not suited to carriers, because they could not enter into contracts to take goods from Dingo Creek, as they did not understand the tariff, and could not understand it. He held in his hand a letter from a leading merchant of

Rockhampton, and he would ask, how any carrier could contract to carry goods classified in the manner mentioned in that letter? The writer stated that apples were classified as first-class, currants second-class, and raisins, which were not really classified at all, were charged as third-class; sperm candles were charged first-class, whilst tallow candles were put down as second-class; cocoanut matting was put down first-class, and Chinese matting second-class; what was the difference, he should like to know, between two rolls of matting? Why, one would think that they had a protection Government, who wanted to put a protective charge on the Chinese. Then again, colonial wine was put down as first-class, and imported wine second-class, and so on; in fact, there were thirteen different classifications, giving the greatest amount of work, and frequently ending in any amount of dispute. That was the opinion of the writer of the letter he held in his hand, and he would mention the gentleman's name; it was Captain Hunter, who was, if anyone was, well qualified to give an opinion on such matters. He should like to hear the Government defend such a tariff. The Premier was wrong in saying that his (Mr. Palmer's) idea was to have one uniform tariff, as that was not the case—what he had said was, that if ships and carriers could carry goods at two different rates, namely, by weight and by measurement, he did not see why railways should not do the same. The honorable gentleman might say that he should have tried to alter the system when he was in office, but he was not Minister for Works. He certainly had mentioned the matter to his colleague, the Minister for Works, who, however, allowed himself to be guided by official routine.

Mr. WALSH: No.

Mr. PALMER said, that at all events it had never been done. He believed that if any Secretary for Works was willing to do justice to the country, and at the same time to the railway revenue, he would say to the Traffic Manager, "Make me out two classifications by which the revenue shall not suffer. I insist upon having it," and it would be done. The present system required about three times as many clerks to compute the different rates as should be necessary, and no one but a man trained to the work was able to check the railway charges accounts. He knew that on the Downs the storekeepers' whole time was taken up in checking those accounts, whilst in the interior it was impossible to check them; thus, so far from the railway being an accommodation, it was, as Captain Hunter said, a disgrace, and goods were coming down to Rockhampton by drays which should come by railway.

Mr. BELL said that they had been told by the Premier that the Government considered the present tariff was a very good one; but that was not the opinion of the Government themselves, but the opinion of Mr. Statham Lowe, the Traffic Manager. He believed that

no member of any Government had gone into a calculation of what was the best tariff, but all Governments had been guided entirely by Mr. Lowe. If there could be any one thing to make him try to get into office again, it would be to show Mr. Lowe that the present tariff was not a good one. When he was last in office with his honorable friend the member for Port Curtis, they tried to get the honorable member for Warrego, who was then Minister for Works, to alter the tariff; but every objection was made, and he believed that Mr. Lowe had been able to override the objections of every Minister for Works since he had been in his present position. The honorable member for Warrego had never been able to give any reason, nor was the present Minister for Works able to give any, why a single tariff consisting of two classifications, namely, weight and measurement, should not be equally remunerative to the railway as the present tariff. The Premier stated, and Mr. Lowe said, that it could not be done, as it was not done in England.

The PREMIER: Nor in the colonies.

Mr. BELL said that had he been Minister for Works, he should be ashamed if he had not tried to make some alteration, as everybody outside of the Government offices said the present classification was an absurdity on the face of it. As the honorable member for Port Curtis had said, why not tell Mr. Statham Lowe to revise the tariff, and make two classifications of it, namely, weight and measurement, and if Mr. Lowe could not do it, let somebody else be found who could; and if the Minister for Works could not do it, then, if he (Mr. Bell) was in the House, he should try and get another Minister for Works.

Mr. J. SCOTT said the same question had cropped up a good many times, and the only explanation which had ever been made was, that the present classification was the custom in England; but circumstances in this colony were very different to those in England, as here there were considerable difficulties connected with the transmission of goods. The honorable member for Port Curtis said he had tried to alter the present system, but had not succeeded; but it was during that honorable gentleman's administration that a more uniform rate had been charged, and the railway had paid better during the time that was the case than it had ever done since. There was no difficulty in the way of the Government doing that, and the honorable Minister for Works could satisfy himself of that, if he made inquiries.

Mr. PETTIGREW said that honorable members opposite had been talking about the tariff on the Northern line, but he had a few words to say in regard to the classification of goods on the Southern and Western Railway; at the same time he thoroughly endorsed everything that had been said by those honorable members. Butter was carried down

at fourpence a cask, which at the present time was worth £200 a ton, so that supposing a cask was broken, a loss was incurred of far more than a month's freight. Maize was brought down at 2s. 6d. a ton, and from Rosewood at 3s. 4d., which was less than one-half the distance, so that the charges must be fixed with the object of running the steamers off the river. Heavy traffic would not pay for much handling. He thought that the traffic on the railways should be made to pay without at the same time being a hardship on the people. No portion of a line should be worked at a loss simply to run off the steamers. There was no use in talking about who was to blame until the Ministry took the matter in hand and got some mercantile man to give them some advice. At the present time it was really hard labor to understand the classification of goods, and he was certain it would not pay; and he trusted, therefore, that during the recess, if the Minister for Works thought of the matter at all, he would endeavor to frame a better tariff.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, in reference to the subject now before the House, that he had, some months ago, waited upon the late Colonial Treasurer, who was then acting as Premier, and had brought under his notice the necessity of having some alteration made in the railway tariff, and that gentleman quite agreed with dividing all goods under the heading of weight and measurement. He did not see why the present Minister for Works could not take a step in that direction. All he could say was, that if anyone took the list of Mr. Lowe and compared the rates in it with those charged in England, he would see the utter absurdity of the tariff in force here; and he trusted after the expression of opinion that evening, the honorable Minister for Works would not allow himself to be led by the nose by Mr. Lowe any longer, but would have some alteration made.

The COLONIAL TREASURER would explain that the classification was not made by Mr. Statham Lowe, but was one made, whether wisely or unwisely it was not for him to say, by a body of men of considerable experience in railway matters at home, who constituted what was known as the Railway Clearing Board; they furnished a classification by which goods could be sent from the north to the south of England. There was no doubt that circumstances in England were somewhat dissimilar to those here, but he trusted that when any alteration was made in the classification here it would be one uniform with the classification in the neighboring colonies—that, he thought, would be far better than any arbitrary system of classification formed by the Ministry of the day, without regard to the tariff in the other colonies. He understood that the classification in this colony was similar to that in New South Wales and Victoria, and that where any departure had been made, it had been to suit the convenience of the public. He quite agreed with the

speakers who had preceded him that it was desirable that there should be a revision of the railway tariff, but, at the same time, he thought it should be made in uniformity with the tariffs in the other colonies. The simple plan mentioned by the honorable member for Port Curtis must recommend itself to everyone, but still it was a matter for consideration whether it could be carried. He believed that the experiment made by the honorable member for Port Curtis was not a very successful one—

Mr. PALMER: It was very successful.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that he had been misinformed; at any rate, he thought that any future classification should be uniform in all the colonies.

Mr. IVORY thought that, until the railways in this colony were connected with those of the neighboring colonies, which would not be for some years, all the Government had to do was with their own lines, and act accordingly.

Mr. MACDONALD said he had pointed out to the Traffic Manager in the North that the classification was very defective; but it had been pointed out to him, by that officer, that if it was reduced to two or three charges, the prices would have to be much higher than they now were in order to make the railway pay; and, when he further assured him (Mr. MacDonald) that the classification was the same as on the Southern and Western line, of course he could not object. He thought it was very desirable that some alteration should be made in the tariff.

Mr. WALSH said the only remarks he had to make in reference to the railway classification of goods were in regard to a legal opinion he had taken some years ago. Between Ipswich and Gatton the rate charged was 35s. a ton, while from Gatton to Ipswich it was 45s. 6d. a ton, and that sort of thing went all through the tariff, and was, he believed, contrary to law. In support of his opinion, he would read the 101st clause of the Railway Act, which gave power to the Commissioner for Railways to make such charges in respect of goods thereof—

“as may from time to time be determined upon by the Governor with the advice of the Executive Council Provided that all such tolls be at all times charged equally to all persons and after the same rate whether per ton per mile or otherwise in respect of all passengers and all goods or carriages of the same description and conveyed or propelled by a like engine or carriage passing only over the same portion of the line of railway under the same circumstances and no reduction or advance in any such tolls shall be made either directly or indirectly in favor of or against any particular company or person travelling upon or using the railway.”

He had occasion some years ago, when he found differential rates being charged, to take the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown, and they considered that such charges were contrary to the Act. At that time the

charges were acting most unfairly, as one individual had his goods carried very much cheaper than the community generally had theirs. He thought it was unfair at the time, and was satisfied that the Government were right in making only one charge for all. He would recommend the honorable Minister for Works to take the matter into serious consideration. He should not enter into the general question which had been raised, but would express a hope that the Government would always protect the revenue of the railway, and the people of the country generally, against the clamor of a few customers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS wished to refer to the statement that had just been made by the honorable member for the Warrego, that the Government ought to protect the railway interests. Whatever simplification might be made would, no doubt, be desirable, so long as it did not reduce the railway revenue.

Mr. BELL: That is not wanted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he thought that simplification might be attained, and at the same time increase the railway revenue. He very much doubted whether the colony received as much revenue from its railways as it should do, and therefore it was very necessary, as he had already remarked, that any change in classification should go in that direction. The officers of the department had pointed out the danger of simplification in the direction in which it had been named by honorable members, but if it could be done without any reduction of revenue, the sooner there was some simplification the better.

Mr. BUZACOTT said he was glad to have been so supported by honorable members in bringing forward the matter, but at the same time, the House had not received from the Minister for Works any promise that he would cause a revision of the present tariff to be made. He should, therefore, take an early opportunity of bringing the matter again before the House, but in such a substantial form as to have hopes of its being thoroughly discussed, and the sense of the House being ascertained in regard to it. He would, with the permission of the House, withdraw his motion.

Mr. MACROSSAN said that had not the honorable member for Rockhampton moved the adjournment, it was his intention to have done so, with the view of bringing under the notice of the honorable Colonial Secretary a most flagrant violation of the Electoral Act—

Mr. BELL rose to a point of order. He thought it was not wise for the honorable member to introduce new matter on the same motion for adjournment, as honorable members who had spoken on the last question could not, according to the rules of the House, speak upon the question which the honorable member was about to bring before them.

The SPEAKER said that, as a question of order was raised, he might say the honorable member for the Kennedy was quite in order, as the question brought forward by him was as relevant to the motion for adjournment as that which had just been disposed of, or as such questions generally were.

Mr. BELL said he did not wish to imply that the honorable member for the Kennedy was out of order, but he would point out that it would be more convenient if the honorable member would allow the present motion to be withdrawn, and move another motion, so that honorable members who had already spoken could speak again.

The SPEAKER said that was a matter that rested entirely with the honorable member for the Kennedy.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he was extremely obliged to the honorable member for Dalby for calling his attention to the fact that by the course he was about to adopt he might have prevented honorable members from speaking on the question he was about to bring forward. He should take another opportunity of moving the adjournment.

The motion was by leave withdrawn.

ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES.

Mr. MACROSSAN moved—

That this House do now adjourn,

and stated that he did so for the purpose of bringing under the notice of the honorable Colonial Secretary a gross violation of the Electoral Act by the Police Magistrate of Charters Towers, which he was pretty well certain would lead to the disfranchisement of many electors both in the electorate of the Kennedy and in that of Ravenswood. Those violations had been for year after year going on in the North, and the same people who had been guilty of those violations had been permitted to go unpunished. On two occasions his own name had been struck off from the roll; the first time it was done, as he believed, intentionally, in order that he might be prevented from becoming a member of that House, as no man could be elected a member unless his name was on some electoral roll. Now, the man who had the audacity to strike off his name had been actually promoted in the public service instead of being dismissed, as he should have been for many reasons. The violation of the Act to which he drew attention that day, was of the 16th section of the Elections Act of 1874, which provided that the person appointed to collect the names of voters should give true copies of the lists to the Clerk of Petty Sessions for the district, who should cause copies to be printed or fairly transcribed of such lists, and deliver a copy of the same to any person requiring it, and should also cause a copy to be affixed on the Court House for a period of fourteen days, ending on the 30th September in every year. It was now the 25th

September, and there remained only five days more of the time allowed by the Act, and yet no electoral list could be obtained in the Kennedy or Ravenswood districts. In large electorates like the two he had mentioned, it was impossible, if the lists of electors were not exhibited at the proper time, for men at a distance from the Court of Petty Sessions, whose names had been omitted from the roll, to have them inserted within the time specified, namely, the tenth of October. One portion of the district which the bench of Charters Towers had to deal with, was Cape River, which was a hundred miles distant; it was in the Ravenswood electorate, and every man there whose name was omitted from the list would be disfranchised for the ensuing year. That, he submitted, was a very serious subject for the consideration of the Government. The gentleman who had been working in the matter had prevented the Clerk of Petty Sessions from hanging up lists at the Court House so that everyone might examine them, but had ordered them to be sent to the printers, in whose hands they were at the present time. But the most remarkable thing in connection with the gentleman in question, was that last year, when he (Mr. Macrossan) was attending to his duties in Parliament, his name was omitted from the list, and that when he returned home in October, and made an application to the gentleman referred to to have it put on the roll, although that gentleman knew that his name was on the old roll, and that he was an elector of the Kennedy, he told him that his name could not be inserted without infringing the Act. He respected that gentleman's conscientious objections, and referred him to the Attorney-General, who replied that it was contrary to the Act to put his name on. That gentleman's conscience prevented him then from putting on the roll a name which had a right to be there, and it now prevented him from exhibiting the electoral lists as he was required to do by the Act. He considered that no person should be allowed to violate the Electoral Act with impunity. Unfortunately there was no punishment provided in the Act for such neglect of duty, but he considered it was the duty of the Government to see that the Act was properly carried out, and to call upon their officers to show why the strict letter of the law had not been carried out.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the matter had already occupied his attention, and the moment it came before him, his instructions were, that inquiry should be made immediately why the law had not been carried out. The answer received by wire was not at all satisfactory, but instructions were sent to the officer to use every effort to have the list exposed, so that persons might see whether or not their names were on it. The answer was, that the list had been sent to the printer; and no further reply had been sent. All he could say was, that he should

require a full explanation of the reason why the Act had not been complied with. The honorable member for the Kennedy stated that care had been taken to omit his name so that he should be disqualified from being a member of that House; but the honorable member was not singular in having his name omitted, for he believed that there was scarcely a member of that House, or even one of the most leading men in the country, whose names had not been some time or other omitted from the roll. He had had an instance brought under his notice not very long ago, where a gentleman who lived in a house which must have been passed by the collector over and over again, and must have been known to him to be inhabited, had his name left off the roll. The present question had been brought forward at an earlier period of the present session, and he had then stated that the Government would make every effort to prevent any omissions from the rolls. He would promise the honorable member that the officer at Charters Towers would be called upon to show why there had been any irregularity.

Mr. DE POIX TYREL said he rose to point out that the case of the honorable member for the Kennedy was not at all a singular one, as in the district of Carnarvon, both the name of another gentleman and his own had been omitted from the list.

Mr. LORD thought the argument of the honorable Colonial Secretary and the honorable member for Carnarvon went to show that there was all the greater necessity for Police Magistrates and Clerks of Petty Sessions being made to do their duty. The Act provided that the Clerks of Petty Sessions should cause copies of the lists to be fairly transcribed or printed; so that there really was no necessity to send them to the printer, if they could not be printed in time to allow of names being put on that were omitted.

Mr. IVOXY said that his name had been omitted from a list, although it had been on a previous one. There was something in the Act, he believed, which provided that the old list need not be made the basis of the new one, and, consequently, he thought it was high time that there should be some fresh legislation on the subject. It was exceedingly awkward that persons holding a property qualification, and living a considerable distance from where that qualification existed, should have to go every year and see if their names were on the roll.

The PREMIER thought that the collectors should take the old rolls as a basis, in order to get in the preliminary rolls as quickly as possible. He believed that his honorable colleague, the Colonial Secretary, had given instructions to have all preliminary rolls exhibited as speedily as possible, and that that was done to enable those persons whose names were omitted, to have them inserted on the roll before the 10th of October. He had

found his name had been left out of several rolls—in one case, out of the roll for the Bremer electorate, and when he inquired into the matter, he found the old roll was not taken as a basis. It was not the duty of the Government to interfere with returning officers, but instructions had been sent to them to have the rolls printed as quickly as possible, and, therefore, the honorable member should not feel aggrieved. The Government had done all they could, and in the case of Charters Towers, he believed the rolls would be printed in a few days.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that as he wished to save the House another motion for adjournment, he rose to call attention to a slight inaccuracy in last week's "Hansard." He was made to say there, that he was strongly opposed to the extension of the Northern Railway to Emerald Downs, whereas he was in favor of it. He did not wish to make any complaint, as he had been informed that the gentleman who reported his speech was suffering from an attack of neuralgia at the time; but he did not want it to go forth to his constituents that he was opposed to the extension to Emerald Downs.

Mr. WALSH said, in reference to the complaint of the honorable member for the Kennedy, that he thought after the promise which had been given by the honorable Colonial Secretary, that nothing more could be done; but they had since been told by the honorable Premier that it was no part of the duty of the Government to interfere with the returning officers. Now, if it was no part of the duty of the Government to interfere with those particular officers, then it was no part of their duty to interfere in electoral matters at all. The whole thing bore an improper aspect; first they were told one thing by one Minister, and another by another; he considered that the Government should leave those officers to the unfettered discharge of their duties.

Mr. J. SCOTT said that there was a difference of opinion between the Police Magistrates as to whether the old rolls could be used as the basis of the new ones; and that being the case, he thought the Government should decide upon some interpretation of the law on that point, and let it be made public as soon as possible.

Mr. EDMONSTONE said he regretted that the matter should have come before the House again. On the last occasion in which it was discussed, it was distinctly stated by the then honorable Colonial Secretary that the old rolls should be taken as a basis in framing the new rolls; that all names should be taken by the collector as before, and that, where persons were absent who had a property qualification, their names should be taken from the old roll and put on the new one. Last year, the returning officer of one of the Brisbane electorates had his name left out. He thought the Premier had made a mistake in saying that it was

not the duty of the Government to interfere, as he considered it was the business of the Government to see that every person who possessed the proper qualification should be represented on the rolls.

Mr. PALMER thought the present debate showed one thing very plainly—that the Government should reintroduce the old Electoral Act, and make every one register himself.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS thought the Government were entitled to see that their officers performed their duties as required by the law; but as regarded matters of detail, such as the compilation of the rolls, he did not think it was their duty to interfere.

Mr. BELL said, so far as he was concerned, he certainly did hope the Government would interfere; he understood it was going to be an instruction to Clerks of Petty Sessions to make use of the old rolls as far as possible as a basis of the new ones, at the same time infringing as little as possible upon the spirit and wording of the Act. If something of this kind was not done, he was satisfied one-half of the electors in the colony would be disfranchised. He knew this would be the case in his district and the surrounding one, and he was aware that the Police Magistrate held that it was not his duty to use the old roll; but as a promise was made by Mr. Macalister when he was head of the Government, and by the present Premier, honorable members had a right to expect that instructions would be sent to make the old rolls the basis of the new.

Mr. PETTIGREW said the sooner they went back to the old system the better. They were spending a large sum of money every year in collecting the electoral rolls, and the work was very badly done. Parties were going about the colony from place to place, and unless there was some better way of collecting than at present, he did not see how the lists would be correct. He believed the only cure was to go back to the old system of electors' rights, under which every man had to see that his own name was put on the lists, and which was no doubt by far the best system.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he thought the Government understood quite well that he had no intention of throwing any blame upon them in connection with this matter of which he had complained. He wished merely to draw the attention of the Colonial Secretary to the breach of the law by this officer who was under his charge; and to the connection of this particular breach of the law with the same officer's conduct last year, when, in carrying out the letter of the law, he violated its spirit. Now, in this particular case, he had violated both spirit and letter, and every argument that had been used by the Premier, and every honorable member on that side of the House—all admitting the number of names that had been left out—proved the necessity of some immediate and radical

change. In reply to the Premier, he begged to state that the particular rolls to which he had referred were not hung up at Charters Towers as they ought to be. He received a telegram late on Saturday evening, saying that the rolls were not exposed, and would not be ready for sale until the 26th September, whereas the law required that they should be ready for public use on the 16th September. On this account, he repeated that it was impossible for many people in the electorates of Ravenswood and Kennedy, whose names were omitted, or wrongly spelt, or otherwise rendered ineligible, to be put upon the rolls for this year. These men would be, in fact, disfranchised, and he hoped the Colonial Secretary would cause a very strict inquiry to be made into this flagrant violation of the law; and if the Government had no authority to interfere in the compilation of electoral rolls, as he knew they had not, it was their duty to see that these subordinate officers did their duty and did not violate the law. With reference to his previous statement that he believed his name had been omitted to prevent him becoming a member of the House, he would explain that this was under the old Act, and that there was no mistake about it. He, himself, wrote out an application and personally handed it in with eight others, and four of those were put on the list, and the others, including himself, were rejected; and there was, he thought, no mistake whatever as to the reason, for the officer, when he was charged with the omission, denied that it was done in his office. At that time the Kennedy comprised the four northern electorates—Bowen, Ravenswood, Cook, and Kennedy; and he took the trouble to look into the lists when he came to Brisbane, and found that the omission had been made in the Ravenswood office. Therefore, he did not for a moment believe the omission was a mere accident. Whether the violation of the law, to which he now called attention, was a mistake or not, he would not say; what he did say was, that the officer who had been guilty of this neglect of duty, of this violation of the law, should be punished.

Motion for adjournment withdrawn by leave.

MEMBERS' EXPENSES BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, that the Order of the Day for the second reading of this Bill be discharged from the paper,

Mr. WALSH said he should like to have a little explanation as to the withdrawal of this Bill. He had no wish to detain the House, but when an important measure like this was withdrawn, there should be some information as to the reason.

The PREMIER said there was likely to be some doubt about the Bill, and the honorable member for the Bremer had intimated that he should object to it. A message had come down from the Governor, recommending payment for members' expenses, and, in order to

make the Bill doubly sure, he (the Premier) now moved that it be discharged from the paper, that it might be re-introduced in committee, in accordance with the usual practice.

Mr. PALMER said he must congratulate the Government upon coming to their senses in one matter; if he had been correctly informed, there was another Bill that had been wrongly introduced.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

On the Order of the Day being read that the Speaker leave the Chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply,

Mr. IVORY said, before the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, he should like to be informed whether the promise made by the Premier the other day with reference to the Clerk of the Executive Council and Private Secretary of the Governor had been fulfilled. Had the honorable the Premier given this gentleman the option of choosing which position he would hold, and if so, which office had he selected to retain?

The PREMIER said he presumed the House would scarcely wish him to disclose to the House what had passed between him and Mr. Drury, but he might state that His Excellency the Governor was making arrangements by which Mr. Drury would only hold the office of Private Secretary for something like three weeks or a month more. Mr. Berkeley was expected by that time to have returned, and he (the Premier) believed Mr. Drury would then cease to be Private Secretary.

Mr. PALMER said there was no presumption about this matter, for there was a distinct understanding that the Premier was to put it to Mr. Drury which of the two offices he would elect to hold. It was on that distinct promise that the money was voted; the House had nothing to do with the Governor; it had to deal with the Premier and his promises. Would the Premier now inform the House which office Mr. Drury elected to hold?

The PREMIER said Mr. Drury had elected to remain Clerk to the Executive Council, and as it was not possible for His Excellency to secure a Private Secretary immediately, he believed the House would not object to Mr. Drury remaining Private Secretary a little longer, under the circumstances he had explained.

Question put and passed.