

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 1876

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 22 November, 1876.

Adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT.

MR. WALSH said he thought it was his duty to call attention to a most extraordinary return which had been furnished by the Government to a motion of the honorable member for East Moreton—

“That there be laid on the table of this House a return showing—

“1. The names and number of selectors at present holding, under conditional purchase or pre-emptive selection, or both, within 20 miles of any of the proposed railways from Maryborough to Gympie, from Bundaberg to Mount Perry, or from Townsville to Charters Towers, an area equal to or greater than the maximum limit proposed in future to be allowed to selectors, viz., 5,120 acres; giving the nature, number, and classifications of selections in each case.

“2. The names and numbers of selectors at present holding, under conditional selection or pre-emptive right, or both, within 20 miles of any of the above-named proposed railways, an area equal to or greater than the maximum area proposed to be allowed, in portions, to be offered at auction, in any of the proposed railway reserves, under ‘*The Railway Reserves Bill*’ now before the House, viz., 2,560 acres, but under 5,120 acres; giving the nature, number, and classification of selections in each case.”

The paper he held in his hand was supposed to give a return of all those selections, but he did not hesitate to say that a more cooked return for party political purposes he had never seen prepared to an order of that House. He should not go into any of the particulars, for any honorable member who chose to look at the paper could see the facts, and judge for himself; but it was a most

garbled and cooked return, just made for the purpose of holding up a few persons as large monopolists of Crown lands, whilst all those selectors who were not supposed to be in antagonism to the present Government or the people of Brisbane at the present moment, were carefully omitted. There was not one-fiftieth part of the information that was asked for, and that there should be in the return if it was a fair one; and he did not hesitate to say that a more vile, cooked return was never laid on the table; it was an insult to that Chamber, and it was an infringement of the rights of the public when they had, in reply to the comprehensive return asked for, such a document as that he referred to. If that was the way the House was treated whilst in session, he should like to know how it would be treated when it was out of session. He begged to move—

That this House do now adjourn.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was not in the House until the honorable member was bringing his remarks to a close, but in reference to the return complained of, he might say that it would have been very difficult to comply with the exact terms of the order. He had pointed that out to the honorable member for East Moreton, who moved for the return, and requested that honorable member to call upon the Under Secretary for Lands and explain what he wanted. He understood that the honorable member had done so, and that after seeing Mr. Tully, it was arranged what was required, and he believed that the return contained all the information desired.

Mr. PALMER said that surely it was not a question of what any particular honorable member required, but what the House had ordered, and he must say that he had never heard such a lame excuse in his life as that made by the honorable Minister for Lands. He knew nothing of the return except what had been stated by the honorable member for Warrego; but he would repeat that the question was not what was wanted by the honorable member for East Moreton, but what the order of that House was, and whether that had been complied with.

Mr. FRYAR said the return had been furnished on his motion, and it contained pretty nearly what he wanted. He had at any rate got all the larger selections if he had not got the small ones, and it was a question whether the larger selections would not be sufficient for his purpose until the smaller details could be filled in. He certainly had not asked the Under Secretary for Lands to do all that was contained in the motion. He had looked over the return, and he did not think it was cooked, as stated by the honorable member for the Warrego. If that honorable member had been put down for selections that he did not hold, that was a matter with which the honorable member was concerned, and of which he (Mr. Fryar) knew nothing, but he believed that the return was what was intended by that

House, and contained the information that was asked for.

Mr. J. SCOTT said that if it was true, as he had very little doubt it was, that the return did not contain one-half of the selections, all he could say was that it was not a return that should have been laid on the table at all. If it was a cooked return, it was a disgrace to the Government, and he was very sorry that such a paper should have been laid on the table of that House.

Mr. WALSH said he did not want to know what the honorable member for East Moreton's idea of the return was, but he contended that it was not the return that was ordered by the House. He could mention the names of dozens of large selectors which were left out; but he could understand why it was a cooked return, and that was because the honorable member for East Moreton had land of his own, and had been allowed to go to the Lands Office and point out what he wanted and what he did not want to appear in it. He would point out one instance where he (Mr. Walsh) was put down as the owner of 2,500 acres within twenty miles of the proposed railway from Bundaberg to Mount Perry; why, he held nothing of the kind. Then his name appeared in another part as the owner of the same quantity; in fact it would seem as if he was a large landed proprietor—as under the head of “selectors who hold in the aggregate 5,120 acres and upwards,” was the name of “W. H. Walsh.” Just by way of illustration, to show how the thing had been cooked, apparently at the instigation of the honorable member for East Moreton, that 145 acres was supposed to be within twenty miles of the line from Maryborough and Gympie; or, taking the chair of the Sergeant-at-Arms as Maryborough and the Speaker's chair as Gympie, the 145 acres mentioned in the return would represent a spot in the Legislative Council chamber, whilst he did not hesitate to say that there were hundreds of persons whose names were kept out of the return, such as the Browns, the Leslies, and others whose names should be fully exhibited in it. He had no hesitation in saying that where there were ten names there should be two or three hundred. The reason why the return was brought up in such a disgraceful manner was, because the Minister for Lands had delegated the honorable member for East Moreton to go to the Under Secretary for Lands and tell him what he wanted, and no more. He thought he had done his duty in bringing the matter before the House.

Mr. McLEAN said he would take advantage of the motion for adjournment to call the attention of the Government to a statement which appeared in a leading article in that day's *Courier*. It had been often said in that House, that the honorable the Minister for Lands contributed articles to that paper, and it certainly appeared from the leader to which he referred, that it must have emanated from that gentleman. He would call atten-

tion to one paragraph, which he thought detrimental to the interests of the people, and to the settlement of them on the lands. It was as follows :—

“ Judging from the speeches of members of the present Government, and from the original provisions of the Bill as brought up by them, we are led to believe that in the southern districts of the colony a uniform price of ten shillings per acre will be adopted.”

Now, if he understood the Bill which had passed that House, it had been decided that the price should be five shillings an acre, and that it should be left to the option of the Government to increase it as they thought advisable, but that was very different to a uniform price of ten shillings an acre. It was well known that a great portion of the land in the southern portion of the colony which had been open for selection for years past, had not been taken up because the price was too high, and, therefore, he should like to know whether it was the intention of the Government to fix the uniform price at ten shillings an acre, as stated in the paragraph he had read.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that, although he had already addressed the House on the motion of adjournment, he might be permitted to make a few remarks in reply to the honorable member for the Logan. He did not admit that the honorable member had any right to attribute to him articles in the *Courier* newspaper. He had not for a long time contributed anything to that newspaper, and he was not responsible for anything that appeared in it. He certainly valued that medium of communication of opinion on public matters, but he was in no way responsible for what appeared in the *Courier*, nor did he think he should be held responsible as being in any way connected with it. He was not responsible, nor did he contribute to that paper in any form.

Mr. PALMER : Since when ?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was speaking of the present time. He hoped the honorable member for the Logan would not hold him responsible for what appeared in what certainly was a very intelligent journal; but even supposing he was responsible, he denied the right of any honorable member to call any statements made in that paper in question on the supposition that he had in any way contributed to the Press in some form and at some time. In regard to the particular matter referred to, he entirely differed from the interpretation put upon the intention of the Government by the honorable member or by the newspaper. It was the intention of the Government to put such a value on the land as would pay the purchaser. His object would be to secure a purchaser for the land under the conditions of the Bill, and he believed that in that respect he should be supported by his honorable colleagues.

The question was put and negatived.