

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 1879

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 22 January, 1879.

Leave of Absence.—Order and Practice.—Suspension of
Standing Orders.—Appropriation Bill.—New Mem-
ber.—New Ministry.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN moved, without notice, that leave of absence for the remainder of the session be granted to the honourable James Cowlshaw. Owing to ill-health, the honourable gentleman had been visiting the southern colonies. He had anticipated being here at the opening of Parliament, but circumstances of an unfavourable nature had prevented his return. As the session, he (Mr. Mein) understood, was likely to be of very short duration, it was desirable the honourable member should have leave of absence.

Question put and passed.

ORDER AND PRACTICE.

The PRESIDENT said: I wish to call the attention of the House to a record in the minutes of the proceedings on the 16th and 17th instant, in order that the same may not form a precedent. On Thursday, the 16th instant, a Sessional Order was made

"That, unless otherwise ordered, this House will meet for the despatch of business on Wednesday and Thursday in each week," and yet, at the conclusion of business that day, the House was adjourned to Friday, and on Friday again to Tuesday. This departure from the arrangement of the Sessional Order was brought about by the announcement of the resignation of the Ministry made that day, and, no member objecting, the question was put and passed as a case of urgent and pressing necessity (in accordance with Standing Order 140). Nevertheless, it is as well for honourable members to recollect that no such question could be put without notice, did any one member object to it.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN said, there being an absolute majority of the whole Council present, it was desirable, for the purpose of passing the Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day, to suspend so much of the Standing Orders as related to Bills. He then made a motion to that effect.

The question, being unopposed, was put and passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

On the order of the day being called,

The Hon. C. S. MEIN moved the second reading of the Appropriation Bill of 1878-9, No. 3.

Question put and passed.

The Bill was then ordered to be committed.

The Hon. D. F. ROBERTS said, before taking the chair, he begged to return his thanks to honourable members for the honour they had done him by again electing him Chairman of Committees of the whole House during this present Parliament. His restored health would, he trusted, enable him to perform his duties to the satisfaction of the Council and with credit to himself.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The House resolved into Committee of the whole.

The Bill was reported to the House, and the report adopted. It was then advanced through its remaining stages, and passed; and returned to the Legislative Assembly with the usual message.

NEW MEMBER.

The PRESIDENT stated that he had received a letter from the Governor's private secretary, informing him that His Excellency, with the advice of the Executive Council, had been pleased to summon Charles Hardie Buzacott, Esquire, to the Legislative Council.

The Usher announced the presence of a new member, to be sworn.

The Hon. C. H. BUZACOTT was then introduced by the honourable A. H. Brown and the honourable W. D. Box, and, having produced his writ of summons, took the oath, and subscribed the roll as a member of the House.

NEW MINISTRY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (the Hon. C. H. Buzacott) said: Honourable gentlemen—In taking my seat, here, to-day, as the representative of the Government, it becomes me to state that I have accepted the position with very great reluctance. It is, I feel, a very high honour; it entails upon me great responsibility; and I feel that I am under a very great disadvantage, in succeeding so able a gentleman as has conducted the business of this House on behalf of the Government that he represented for the last two years and a-half. I feel my own deficiency; and it will take me probably some time before I shall be able to despatch with facility the business entrusted to me. At the same time, I hope to receive consideration and indulgence, and I am sure I shall be treated with fairness by this honourable House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: On my part, I beg to assure honourable gentlemen that in every way I will study the convenience of the House, and will spare no pains to fulfil the responsible duties I have undertaken, in a manner satisfactory to the House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN: Perhaps a word or two from me will not be out of place on this occasion. I take the opportunity, at the outset, of congratulating the honourable gentleman who has just spoken on his accession to this House and to the honourable and responsible position he now occupies. I can assure him that, from me, and I feel confident, also, from every other honourable member of this House, he will receive the utmost courtesy and consideration.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN: It was my good fortune to receive such while in the position which he occupies; and I feel that honourable gentlemen have not altered during the brief space that has elapsed since I vacated the position he has just assumed. There was one omission, perhaps, of no very great importance, observable in the honourable gentleman's remarks. He informed the House that he had assumed the position of representative of the Government in the Council. There has been no official intimation yet made to this House that a Government have been formed at all. It is customary, on these occasions, as far as my enquiries have led me to ascertain, for a Minister, when he assumes that position for the first time in this House, to

make the announcement of the formation of the Government, and who his colleagues are; and to announce the policy that the Government intend to adopt. There may be reasons why it is inexpedient for the honourable gentleman to detail to the House the policy that the new Government will advocate. There are, however, very many important questions agitating the public mind, at the present time; and I am sure honourable members, including myself, would be very glad to hear what course of action the new administration intend to pursue with regard to them. The question of public works is one of vital importance. We should be glad to learn whether the Government intend to prosecute public works with vigour; or whether circumstances have arisen which induce them not to push them forward with the energy with which the public has for some time past been familiar. There is, also, the important question involved in the financial position of the colony. I should be glad to learn what policy the Government intend to pursue with regard to the tariff—whether there is to be a revision of the tariff at all;—whether, if there is to be a revision, it is to follow what, I understand, are the protective proclivities of the Prime Minister, or the free-trade principles of the Colonial Secretary. Also, whether there will be any interference with the land question;—and other questions of equal importance. If the Postmaster-General is in a position to give the House any information on those points, I am sure the House will be glad to receive it from him. I, perhaps, would not have spoken on those points had I not observed that on former occasions it has been the invariable practice of the representative of the Government in this Chamber, when making the announcement which the honourable gentleman has just made, to intimate also to the House what policy the Government of which he is a member intend to pursue.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I hope this honourable House will not suppose that I have been guilty of any intentional disrespect—

THE HON. C. S. MEIN: Nobody accused you of it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Though I have failed to disclose what the policy of the Government will be; yet I am sure my honourable friend, who is so anxious for information on the subject, will attribute my silence to my innocence rather than to any desire to withhold from the Council any information which they ought to have.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: At the proper time, I shall be most happy to give all the information that my honourable friend can ask for. So far, however—I am bound to say—from its having been the

invariable rule for the representative of the Government to disclose the policy of the Government on occasions like the present; I found, to-day, on turning up *Hansard*, that in 1870, when the Honourable St. George Gore assumed the position I have now the honour to hold, he made no explanation or disclosure of the policy of the Government whatever; but merely stated what I have stated, to-day, that he had accepted the office. I do not know that I shall be out of order; but I should like to move—

That this House do adjourn until Wednesday fortnight.

THE HON. W. D. BOX said, before the question of adjournment was put, he should like to offer a few words about the action of the honourable gentleman who had just taken his seat. He had not much experience of the ways and method of Parliament, except what he had gained in the House; but he saw the *Gazette*, this morning, and he was aware of the fact—as, doubtless, were all honourable members—that the honourable gentleman was the representative of the new Government in the Legislative Council, having accepted the office of Postmaster-General. He quite agreed with the honourable Mr. Mein that the House would be very glad to hear what the Government intended to do—to know what they had decided as to their policy in regard to public works—but he certainly did not expect to get that information from the representative of the Government, to-day, the honourable gentleman having been associated with his colleagues so short a time—only a few hours. He agreed about the anxiety all honourable members felt as to what the future policy of the Government, would be in regard to all other questions of present interest; but he did not expect the Postmaster-General would lay before the House any sort of policy of the Government. When the honourable gentleman should meet the Council again, after the adjournment, which he (Mr. Box) supposed would take place, if he did not then inform the Council of the policy of the Government there would be very much disappointment.

THE HON. A. H. BROWN was understood to say he was not surprised that curiosity was felt as to the policy of the new Government, considering the legacy left to them, which was of a very difficult character to deal with—the debt of large dimensions; and, as he fancied, the Treasury nearly empty.

THE HON. C. S. MEIN: £148,000 in the Treasury!

THE HON. A. H. BROWN: He offered that as an apology for the honourable gentleman's curiosity about the policy of the Government. With the honourable Mr. Box he did not anticipate that the House

would have a disclosure of policy from the Postmaster-General. This session he looked upon as a merely initiatory session; and he supposed that Parliament would be summoned to meet again in three or four months, when honourable members should expect to be informed of the financial position of the country.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It has been suggested to me that it would be desirable that I should so far comply with my honourable friend's wish as to state who are the new Ministry. I will, therefore, say that the Premier and Colonial Treasurer is the honourable Thomas Mellwraith; Vice-President of the Executive Council and Colonial Secretary and Secretary for Public Instruction, the honourable A. H. Palmer; Secretary for Public Works and Mines, the honourable J. M. Macrossan; Secretary for Public Lands, the honourable P. Perkins; Minister of Justice, the honourable J. M. Thompson; and Postmaster-General, myself.

THE HON. C. S. MEIN: Just one word by way of explanation. I think Mr. Box was a member of the Council on the 25th of March, 1874, when the honourable George Thorn took his seat in this House in precisely the same way as my honourable friend, the Postmaster-General, did to-day, for the first time, as a member of a new administration. Mr. Thorn, then, informed the House of the fact, and stated that he would declare the policy of the Government on a future occasion. The honourable gentleman who had preceded him in the office of Postmaster-General took exception to the line of action that the new Postmaster-General had laid down for himself, and insisted that he should have made some Ministerial Statement to the House. Mr. Murray-Prior was the gentleman who did so—and he was followed on that occasion by the honourable E. I. C. Browne, who is thoroughly acquainted with the practice of the House, and who insisted that it was the duty of the Postmaster-General, on

assuming his position in the Council, to lay before the House a statement of the policy of the Government. And, in accordance with what appears to be—judging from the records of the House—the uniform practice, the honourable George Thorn did on that occasion make a statement and announce to the House the policy of the Ministry of whom he had become a member. It was in view of that precedent, which was recognised by myself when I assumed the position that Mr. Buzacott assumed to-day, that I thought it desirable to elicit from the honourable gentleman, if possible, an expression of opinion as to what the policy of the Government will be. If the honourable gentleman is either not in a position to announce that the Government have a policy—as I have no doubt they have—or he declines to make a statement to the House, we are, of course, not in a position to compel him to make one. But, if he followed precedent, he would inform the House of the policy of his Government.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: But one word more, in explanation. The honourable gentleman has not told the House the whole of the circumstances connected with Mr. Thorn. I find that Mr. Thorn was appointed to this House during the recess, and that between the date of his appointment and the time when the session began, ample opportunity was afforded to him and his colleagues to mature their policy. It is scarcely twenty-four hours since I had the honour of taking the oath before His Excellency, and I think that my honourable friend is rather premature in expecting me to disclose a full-blown policy to-day. I shall certainly decline to do it, with all respect to this House.

THE HON. C. S. MEIN: I did not ask for that.

Question put and passed; and the House adjourned until Wednesday, the 5th proximo.

PROROGATION OF PARLIAMENT.

Saturday, 1st February, 1879.

On this day, a *Gouvernement Gazette Extraordinary* was published with the following Proclamation:—

[L.S.] PROCLAMATION by His Excellency Sir ARTHUR EDWARD KENNEDY, Knight
Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George,
A. E. KENNEDY, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, Governor and
Governor. Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of Queensland and its Depen-
dencies.

WHEREAS the Parliament of Queensland now stands Adjourned to Wednesday, the fifth day of February, 1879, and it is expedient to Prorogue the same: Now, therefore, I, Sir ARTHUR EDWARD KENNEDY, in pursuance of the power and authority in me vested as Governor of the said Colony, do hereby Prorogue the said Parliament to Wednesday, the nineteenth day of March, 1879.

Given under my Hand and Seal, at Government House, Toowoomba, this first day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy-nine, and in the forty-second year of Her Majesty's reign.

By Command,

A. H. PALMER.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN
