

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 21 AUGUST 1879

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 21 August, 1879.

Telegraph Rates.—Notices of Motion Withdrawn.—
Lunacy Bill.

TELEGRAPH RATES.

Mr. WALSH asked the Postmaster-General—

Referring to the answer of the Postmaster-General, that no advance in Telegraphic Charges is contemplated at present—is any such advance contemplated for the future?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: In reply to the honourable gentleman, I beg to say that, at present, no advance in Telegraphic Charges is contemplated.

Mr. WALSH said he was sorry to have to appear again on the floor of the House, but that was a palpable evasion of the question which he did not anticipate, he

admitted, and which he trusted the House would not permit. He would put his question again, as he was sure the honourable gentleman could not have understood :—

Referring to the answer of the Postmaster-General, that no advance in Telegraph Charges is contemplated at present—is any such advance contemplated for the future?

The question was a plain one. The Postmaster-General's reply was :—

At present, no advance in Telegraphic Charges is contemplated.

That was equally plain. It was obviously an evasion, or else the Postmaster-General had quite misunderstood the question. It was the reply which was given yesterday.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Not quite.

THE PRESIDENT: Does the honourable gentleman intend to put himself in order by making a motion?

MR. WALSH: Yes; he would do so. Yesterday he put the following question:—

Mr. Walsh asked the Postmaster-General, pursuant to notice, Touching the present Telegraph rates—is he contemplating any advance in the present charges, or have the Government determined to make such?—If so, to what extent?—And to what part of the territory are such increases to be applied?

ANSWER: No advance in Telegraphic Charges is contemplated at present.

That led him to put the question which he had put to-day, the gist of which was—Was any such advance contemplated for the future?—and the answer to which was, again :—

At present, no advance in Telegraphic Charges is contemplated.

He maintained that it was a clear evasion. If honourable gentlemen chose to submit to that kind of thing, he could not help it. If it was what they had been in the habit of submitting to, it was not what would be submitted to in another Chamber. He had a right to ask the question, because his intention was to found a motion upon the information he might obtain. There was a rumour current, that, owing to the report of the head of the Telegraph Department, the Government did—and, now, he perceived they did—intend to do what he suggested;—when the present Session was over, to put differential charges on messages in one part of the colony over the other. It was because—

THE PRESIDENT: I am afraid I must interrupt the honourable gentleman, and read our Standing Order, the 35th, which is very explicit :—

No question shall be put to any member without previous notice; and no discussion shall then take place upon the subject when any question is put.

MR. WALSH: It was you who put it to me whether I intended to conclude with a motion.

THE PRESIDENT: I did not think the honourable gentleman intended to be irregular.

MR. WALSH: He put the matter as one of privilege. When an honourable member deigned to put a question, and a Minister replied evasively, it was a matter of privilege. That was the question he intended to raise, only it was suggested by the President that he should make a formal motion for the adjournment of the House. Now, it was a question of privilege. When a question like his was put to a Minister, the House had a right to a clear and distinct answer. In the Council, at any rate, above all places, the Government could afford to be not evasive. There was a rumour extant, founded upon the report of the Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs, that the Government intended to make a differential charge—that was, they were going to tax the people—

MR. BOX rose to a point of order. He asked the President whether the hon. Mr. Walsh could take up the time of the House discussing that question of his? The Standing Orders were distinct. He had heard nothing about the matter of privilege. He should like to know whether the honourable gentleman was in order in discussing the question which he had put, and which had been answered by the Postmaster-General, and which he now most distinctly referred to in his speech?

THE PRESIDENT: I think the speech of the honourable gentleman is in relation to the question and the reply, and is totally irregular. I had some hope that the honourable gentleman had an intention to put himself in order; but I must say, now, that no discussion can take place upon the answer that has been given to the question that has been already put.

MR. WALSH: Then, I am to understand that when we get an evasive answer, we are not to discuss it—we are not to object to it? That is about the practice.

THE PRESIDENT: The honourable gentleman is not in order at the present moment.

MR. WALSH: Then, it is no use putting questions.

NOTICES OF MOTION WITHDRAWN.

The notices of motion being called on,

MR. WALSH rose and said: Seeing that, according to the practice in the Upper Chamber, and the support the Government received, the representative of the Government was justified in giving evasive replies, he presumed accordingly that they could not—

THE PRESIDENT: I must interrupt the honourable member. The question before the House is a very different one. Shall I read it to the honourable gentleman?

Mr. WALSH: He was aware of it. He was referring to his motion:—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, a return showing—

1. The number of bales of wool carried by the Southern and Western Railway for each of the years 1874-5-6-7 and 1878.

2. The amount of freight, each year, received for same.

In order to give information of the way in which he should deal with it, he was referring to what had gone before, which he thought was not irregular on his part. If the Government were justified in giving evasive answers, so, he presumed, they would be justified by the Chamber in giving evasive returns. Therefore, he withdrew his motion:

Withdrawn accordingly.

Mr. WALSH, for the same reason, he said, withdrew the following motions, standing next in order on the notice paper in his name:—

2. That there be laid upon the table of this House, a return showing the amount for freights received or charged by the Railway Department upon the Southern and Western Railway from railway contractors, for materials used by them in their contracts, or for machinery employed by them.

3. That there be laid on the table of this House, a copy of the contracts, plans, and specification in connection with the agreement entered into with Messrs. Overend and Co., for the construction of the Dry Dock at South Brisbane.

Withdrawn accordingly.

LUNACY BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL presented “a Bill to Consolidate and Amend the Law relating to the Insane,” and moved its first reading.

Mr. WALSH: Hear, hear.

Question put and passed.

The Bill was thereupon read a first time, and ordered to be printed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, on moving that the second reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for this day week, remarked that as he saw there were two other Bills for second reading next Wednesday, therefore it would be undesirable to bring forward on the same day a measure of such importance as the one now under notice, which would perhaps require considerable time to be occupied in the necessary explanation of its various provisions. He might just add that the measure was founded upon legislation in England and in New South Wales; and, he believed the most recent experience in connection with the treatment of the insane had been brought to bear in the preparation of it. On Thursday next he would be prepared to give a full explanation of it.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 3:44 p.m.