

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 1879

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 10 September, 1879.

Leave of Absence.—Loan Bill.—Divisional Boards Bill.—
Baukers' Books Evidence Bill.—Orphanages Bill.—
Conduct of Business.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

Mr. HART moved, that leave of absence be granted to the honourable Louis Hope, for fourteen days.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it was rather a serious thing that the House should be called upon at this period of the session to grant leave of absence to a member who had been only occasionally in attendance hitherto. They had difficulty in forming a quorum; they had not a member to spare. Though he was aware that in this instance there was no help for the motion, the honourable Mr. Hope having gone to Sydney, yet it was very unfortunate that the honourable gentleman's private affairs had called him away from Brisbane. He was not going to offer any formal objection to the motion.

Mr. WALSH: Why not?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: But he could not help giving expression to the opinion that no leave of absence ought to be asked for at the present period, and under present circumstances, unless in case of illness.

Mr. HART mentioned that he was not aware of the circumstances of the honourable Louis Hope's absence, except the fact that on last Thursday that honourable gentleman asked him to move for leave of absence on the first sitting day, as he (Mr. Hope) had got a telegram summoning him to Sydney.

Mr. MEIN said he felt inclined on this occasion, at all events, to support the position the Postmaster-General took up. He had consulted the records of the Council, and found that the honourable Mr. Hope had been in attendance seven times during the session. That honourable gentleman did not suffer from ill-health, and he seemed to come to the House at most irregular intervals. Since he (Mr. Mein) was a member of the Council, the times that honourable gentleman had visited the House had been few and far between. He repeated what he said yesterday, that some honourable members seemed to come to the Council just when it suited their own private affairs to be in town. The Council would not be doing their duty if they granted leave of absence to those honourable gentlemen so readily as they had been in the habit of doing. It was unpleasant to refer to matters like this, but when requests for leave of absence were not backed up by good reasons, the House ought not to grant them. When no reasonable excuse was offered, he took it that the House should refuse to grant leave of absence to a member, and then he would be placed in contempt, and would have to

answer for himself why the House should not deal with him. If attendance to their parliamentary duties was a tax upon honourable gentlemen, and if they did not feel the responsibility of their position, they should give up their seats. Many honourable members, himself amongst them, came to the House at great personal inconvenience and sacrifice, and it was unfair to those who came to form a quorum, when others interfered with the conduct of public business by their non-attendance. When the House granted leave of absence, time after time, without good and sufficient reason, they encouraged the irregularity of members.

Question put and passed.

LOAN BILL.

The House resolved into Committee of the Whole for the further consideration of the Loan Bill.

Clause 1 was under consideration at the adjournment; upon which an amendment was moved for the omission of the first three items under the head of railway extensions.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted be so omitted.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he should like to ask, before the Committee went to a division, if the honourable member who moved the amendment was determined to press it; or, if he was willing to withdraw it?

Mr. PETTIGREW said he answered that question last night, and he saw no reason now why he should withdraw the amendment. He brought it forward for the good of the country. The country was going headlong to destruction. If the three trunk railway extensions to which he objected should be constructed, he was certain they would not pay for years—not in the time that honourable members had to live. Honourable members who sat with the representative of the Government on the other side of the House agreed with him, that all the works proposed by the Government could not be authorised. In the state that the country was in at the present time, they ought to put the break on. At any rate, he should try to stop its downward progress to destruction. He should resist the making of experiments, which was all that could be said for those extensions to which he was opposed. He had a perfect right to move the amendment, and the House had a perfect right to consider it, and to affirm it, according to the President's ruling. For himself, he was not one of those whose hands were tied, as those of some honourable members seemed to be. He had no wish to put the present Government out of office—he did not want his place, by any means; but he wished

to stop their extravagance; and, so long as he had a seat in the Council, he would do what he could to stop any such extravagance. Heretofore, he had done it. One of those railways, as the House had been informed, would run more than fifty miles into the desert. How could the country stand that? Anything for the good of the country which was put before the House he should be very glad to support. Honourable members opposite, after their speeches, ought to thank him for bringing forward the motion and for pressing it to a division.

Mr. WALSH thought the Postmaster-General, after putting that pertinent question, and having a reply to it, should give the Committee the reason why he put it. In divers ways the honourable gentleman had tried to frustrate the amendment. He said, first, it was unconstitutional; that it would bring the Council into collision with the other House—that was a terrible threat;—then, in his peculiar style, he solemnly asked the mover of the amendment if he intended to press it. Did the Postmaster-General say that the honourable Mr. Pettigrew was not doing his duty to the country in proposing his motion? Was he able to show that the people of the country were not in accord with the amendment? Was he able to show that the interests of the country required the railway extensions to be made? Was he able to show, by any reasoning or by any figures, that those railways would pay? Until he was able to do that, he could not ask that the amendment be withdrawn. He was bound to give his reasons for opposing it. He (Mr. Walsh) never lost any opportunity of recording his vote against railways for the benefit of squatters. He should never cease to oppose such works, because he was perfectly convinced that railways for squatters alone would never pay. They would have to be paid for by nine-tenths of the people of the country who could not derive any advantage from them. Such were the reasons by which he was animated for taking the course which he now took in opposing the passage of the Loan Bill. Looking back on his parliamentary career, it had been consistent with the position that he now took up in the Council. If the Postmaster-General could not give reasons for wishing the amendment to be withdrawn, he could not expect the Committee to be affected by his vague threats.

Mr. MEN said the Postmaster-General might have vouchsafed some information to the House upon the points regarding which information had so often been asked during the debate. His so doing might affect some votes. It had been pointed out by nearly every speaker, that the Committee had received no information whatever as to the direction or the routes

of the proposed railway extensions, or the grounds the Government had for considering that the lines would be reproductive. All that had been said by the honourable gentleman, in answer to the requests made to him, was that the railways would pay the interest on the money to be borrowed for their construction. If the Committee could be satisfied on that point, he (Mr. Mein) felt sure that there would be an unanimous vote in favour of the Bill. How could the Postmaster-General expect the Committee to endorse his proposal, that three trunk lines should be extended 130 miles into the interior, without knowing anything further about them? All that the Committee knew was that they were to cost, as estimated, £3,000 per mile. They had no evidence that the return of traffic on the lines would anything like pay the interest on that cost. If the Postmaster-General could give any plausible explanation on the point, it would be of great advantage to him. As matters now stood, it would be his (Mr. Mein's) duty very consistently to vote against the propositions of the Government. Under ordinary circumstances he would not vote against them, but considering the enormous interests at stake his duty was clear. To say the least of it, the honourable gentleman treated the House with discourtesy in not giving the information which had been asked for. The Committee were entitled to the information. They had evidence before them that on the railways already constructed the country was losing one and a-half per cent. What evidence was there that, if the proposed extensions were constructed, the loss would not be increased two-fold? The country was in a very depressed condition, and was not equal to the expenditure now proposed by the Government; and, therefore the Government were not justified in pushing on the Bill. The Committee were asked to vote a sum of money for the proposed extensions that would involve the country in the payment of interest annually at the rate of £150,000 in addition to what was now paid on the public debt. As pointed out by the honourable Mr. Walsh, the extensions were for the benefit of one class, and the general population of the country could not reap the slightest advantage from them.

MR. WALSH: Hear, hear.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The honourable Mr. Mein just stated that, if he could give information which would satisfy him and those honourable members on the same side of the House, an unanimous vote would be recorded in favour of the Government scheme. Well, the mover of the amendment had informed the Committee that nothing he (the Postmaster-General) could say would ever satisfy him or make him alter his opinion. If the honourable

Mr. Pettigrew had not said those very words, he used words equivalent to them. Moreover, the honourable Mr. Mein, this afternoon, raised the objections that were raised yesterday, and answered, as far as it was possible to answer them. It was never proved yet that any railway constructed in Australia would pay, before it was constructed; and it was a silly thing to ask that he (the Postmaster-General) should prove anything of the kind. He had not the slightest hope that, after the four or five hours' discussion which took place yesterday, anything of the kind suggested by the honourable gentleman would satisfy him. During the time the honourable gentleman was absent last night, of course, he did not hear the repeated explanations which he (Postmaster-General) gave on the question raised by him yesterday, and now repeated. He had not the slightest idea that anything he could say would alter his mind on the subject before the House. The subject had been fully discussed, and the sooner the Committee could come to a division the better.

MR. WALSH had not the slightest doubt that the honourable gentleman, who had mustered his forces, thought that the sooner they went to a division the better; but perhaps that was not the opinion of the Committee, and it was not the opinion of the country. The honourable gentleman should have gone to a division last night, when the Committee were fully possessed with the evidence of the discussion and all prepared to vote. But he had his reasons for not going to a division. When he (Mr. Walsh) looked around the House now he could see how they applied. There was a reason why he objected to going to a division this afternoon, and it was that he required some information for the people of this country, to justify the Council in authorising the railway extensions. But there was little possibility of their getting information. So far as the general public was concerned, the honourable member had vouchsafed none. The debate that took place last night would bear comparison with any that ever took place in the other Chamber. An important constitutional question had been raised, and fought for, and sustained, and gained; yet the people of this country had no opportunity of getting any information about it. He could not attribute to the Government the fact that the newspapers of this colony had refused to report that debate, and to give the public information. He had an idea why, at any rate, one paper had not given it—for services rendered! It was very easy to put two and two together. Honourable members found the leading journalist of this colony now in the employment of the Government. They found him leaving his duties as a journalist, and absenting himself in the pay of the Gov-

ernment. They found that the shareholders of his journal were grumbling, owing to the absence of that individual who was in the pay of the Government. How did they know that that gentleman, who was so badly representing Queensland in the neighbouring colony—disporting himself there—did not consider it was his bounden duty, now that he was in the service of the Government, to protect the Government from information of their proceedings reaching the public from that Chamber? He (Mr. Walsh) confessed it was very suspicious, that the Government had the Press really under their control, so far, that they could command the absence of the principal managing proprietor of the leading journal. It did look very suspicious that, contemporaneous with his absence, the most meagre accounts appeared in that paper of the most important proceedings of the Council. The people of this colony would become aware of the unfairness of that journal. They had no opportunity, owing to the arrangements of the Press, and to the way in which the Council's own *Hansard* was issued, of obtaining information in good time of what was going on in the House. If the Council could give the public an opportunity of getting information, of knowing what they were doing, they would be only performing their duty. Already he saw by the evening paper that the public was taking notice of the extravagance of the Government in their proposed expenditure. Meagre as was the information published of the proceedings of the Council last night, there was some feeling working in the minds of the citizens of Brisbane. He did not hesitate to say that if the colony had a fair Press, an honest Press, a Press untrammelled by the Government—a journal whose manager was not in the pay of the Government at this moment—the proceedings of the Council would be as fairly reported and circulated as the proceedings of another place were. He (Mr. Walsh) gave reasons why the House should be slow in proceeding with the Bill until the public had an opportunity of knowing what they were doing. He should be pleased, at any rate, to see any obstruction thrown in the way to prevent enormous and unwarrantable expenditure being sanctioned by the House. He had nothing else to say beyond entering his protest against it. At the very time the Government were foisting upon the people a measure—forging upon the people in the inside districts the necessity for putting their hands in their pockets—for making their own roads, they were wringing from those very people millions of money for making railways for the squatters in the outside districts. Let that go before the country!

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was not true.

Mr. WALSH: It was true. While the Government were refusing absolutely to assist the farmers and the people who did not use the railways, who could not use the railways, they were pushing a Bill through Parliament to compel them to tax themselves for the making of their own roads. That in addition to what the people would have to contribute towards extravagant railways for the benefit of one class—a class that was not called upon in any fair way to contribute to the roads in the inside districts. It was the most unjust parliamentary action he had ever seen in his life. If the Government had any good counsellor amongst them, he would have urged them to proceed with one measure only in the session. He (Mr. Walsh) should be very glad to go to a division, and, for the third or fourth time in his life, to record his vote against making railways into the interior. If there was any agricultural settlement, if there was any produce, any coal-mine—such as the Government had been fishing for at Cooktown—in the interior, there would be some reason for going out into the blank distance where there was no population, as far as he could see, and no produce to give a return in traffic for the expenditure of two or three millions of money. The railways the Government proposed to make would cost not only £3,000 a-mile; they would cost £5,000 a-mile;—and he had something better than his own judgment for saying so. Whoever lived to see the end of the proposed expenditure need not live long. If he should have the power, he would recall the words he uttered this afternoon.

Mr. MEIN said he did not wish to prolong the discussion unnecessarily, but to give a word of warning to honourable members what would be the effect of their vote. The Postmaster-General had been repeatedly asked for information, and he had scrupulously refrained from giving it. If honourable members submitted to the present propositions, they must be prepared at a very early date to assist in the removal of the capital of this colony from its present situation to Rockhampton. He might say he firmly believed there was a deliberate design to refuse information as to the direction in which the main trunk railway extensions were to be constructed. The obvious intention was that the Central Railway should bring down to the port of Rockhampton the whole traffic, or substantially the whole traffic, of the interior of the colony.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: No.

Mr. MEIN: Yes;—to divert from the southern portion of the colony the traffic that, otherwise—if the Roma railway were extended in the natural direction that it ought to take, viewing the relative position of the colony with that of New South Wales

—would come by that route. Although the Government had abstained from a deliberate expression of opinion on that point, it was pretty generally stated by those in their confidence that their intention was not to extend the Roma railway westward at all, but to the south of a line connecting Roma with Charleville. Charleville was almost due west of Roma; the extension south of it from Roma would draw the traffic of a very small portion of the interior of the colony. Honourable gentlemen must be aware that the intention of the Government of New South Wales was to extend their railway, almost in the immediate future, through the New England district up to Bourke. Well, a large amount of the supplies for the south-western portion of this territory came already through the sister colony of New South Wales, by way of Bourke. When the railway was extended out to Bourke the bulk of the supplies would come from New South Wales, and our produce would in all probability be taken in that direction. He could not conceive that, even in the distant future, when a large increase of population was settled in the interior of the colony, a line south of Charleville would be likely to pay anything like the interest on the outlay. At the same time, the intention of the Government was pretty well known to be to extend the Central Railway from Retreat through eighty miles of desert to Barcaldine Downs, to draw the whole traffic of central Queensland; so that the result would be that the whole of the Blackall and Tambo traffic, that would otherwise come by way of Roma, would find its exit along the Central Railway at the port of Rockhampton. He believed that the Government were not sincere at all in their advocacy of the other two main trunk lines of railway. What prospect was there of the extension of the line westward from Charters Towers paying within the next half century, when it must necessarily compete with the line westward from Rockhampton? He did not believe the Government, in their hearts, had any sincere belief that the extensions from Charters Towers and from Roma could, under the most favourable circumstances, be profitable speculations. They simply looked forward to getting a return from the railway extended from Emerald Downs. The inevitable result would be, when that line was constructed in a westerly or south-westerly direction, which was, he believed, the intention of the Government, that the whole traffic of central Queensland must inevitably find its way by the Central Railway to the seaboard at Rockhampton. It was a cunningly devised scheme for benefiting the central districts at the expense of the rest of the colony. He had expressed his convictions on the question. He again warned honour-

able members. He was firmly convinced that the large majority of the members of the House in their hearts believed that this was not the time to borrow three millions of money for the construction of railways. Even if the colony were in a prosperous condition, he did not see any prospect that the three lines of railway, simultaneously constructed, would be likely to pay for years to come; but, in the present condition of affairs, and, seeing what would be the inevitable result of the construction of the Central Railway, so far as regarded the Northern and Southern lines, the undertaking would be disastrous. Honourable gentlemen should deal with the propositions before the Committee on their merits. They knew they had a constitutional right to amend the Bill. Their duty was plain, if they considered the welfare of the country. Let them act, not considering solely how their decision would affect the Ministry, but how it would affect the country. Let them act honestly and justly for the welfare of the country. Honestly believing himself that it would be disadvantageous to Queensland to borrow the money to make the three extensions, he cordially supported the amendment of the honourable Mr. Pettigrew, and left the responsibility of the result to those honourable gentlemen who against their convictions would vote with the Government.

The Committee divided on the amendment :—

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Messrs. Mein, Pettigrew, Swan, Edmondstone, Cowlshaw, and Walsh.

NOT-CONTENTS, 10.

The President, Messrs. Brown, Sandeman, Foote, Hart, and Gregory, Drs. O'Doherty, Mullen, and Hobbs, and the Postmaster-General.

Resolved in the negative.

Original question put—That Clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. WALSH supposed the Government were not serious in going on with all the lines. Some honourable members on the other side, their supporters, objected to some of them. The best plan would be to take the items *seriatim*; then the Committee would be able to test these honourable gentlemen according to their expressed opinions. The argument that no plans and specifications had been prepared for the three main trunk extensions did not apply to the Western Railway to Roma—£100,900. Would the Postmaster-General say what plans he could produce?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The plans and specifications were on the table of the other House, and would be sent up to the Council in due course.

Mr. WALSH: Well, postpone the item until the Committee had them.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was already stated by honourable gentlemen

that they would support the items as they stood in the Bill, without absolutely committing themselves to the approval of the plans and estimates. They reserved to themselves the right to discuss those when they should be produced.

Mr. WALSH demanded information about other items in the Bill.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He had explained the whole of them.

Mr. WALSH: It did not make much impression.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: *Vide Hansard.*

Mr. WALSH: The £100,000 for local bodies was not explained.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes; see *Hansard.*

Mr. WALSH: £10,000 for colonial defences. He should like to pause on that, as he did not think any honourable gentleman would vote for such a piece of absolute folly.

Mr. MEIN: There were some honourable gentlemen under a misapprehension. He should like to know what the representative of the Government thought on this point. Did he think the Council were committed, by passing the first clause, to the works enumerated in it? If not, what did the Government propose to do with money borrowed for the construction of some works, presuming that those works would not be authorised? Honourable gentlemen considered that after passing the Bill they would be bound in honour to vote further for the plans and specifications. The Government were going in for a substantial portion of the loan in March next. What would be done with the money raised in excess of what might be authorised by Parliament hereafter? It was an important question. Did the Postmaster-General consider that the passing of clause 1 committed the Legislature to the construction of the works foreshadowed in the clause? If not, how did the Government propose to deal with money borrowed under the Bill, which might not be used for the works indicated, through Parliament refusing approval of the plans of construction?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL could only repeat what he had already said, that when the plans, sections, and books of reference came before the Council, if he was not in a position to give honourable members a satisfactory explanation of them, and satisfactory information concerning the works, let the House reject them. Of course, voting for the items in the Loan Bill did give a qualified approval of the works proposed—no doubt about that. If he could not give reasonable satisfaction to the House, that the works could be completed according to the plans for something like the cost indicated, the House were free to act as they liked. With regard to borrowing the money, he assured the Committee that the

Government did not intend to borrow it before they required it. There would be several plans, sections, and books of reference laid on the table of the House before the close of the session. There was already provision made for a large expenditure on existing railways.

Mr. WALSH reminded the Postmaster-General that it had been expressly stated elsewhere, that the Government intended and were anxious to raise the whole loan—and to get the Bill passed and the debentures ready and on the London market by March next. Perhaps the honourable gentleman would state officially the amount the Government intended to borrow.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: As much as they required.

Mr. MEIN: That was very unsatisfactory.

Mr. WALSH: That was the way the honourable gentleman satisfied his followers. He never knew the honourable gentleman give a distinct answer to a direct question. The supporters of the Government, he was afraid, were beginning to find out that they had been let in. They could not be expected to be satisfied, but they would vote for the Government. He again asked for information about the Burrum Railway and Mr. Hurley's scheme. If the latter was not approved of by Parliament this session, would the Government carry out the railway?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He had answered the honourable gentleman already, in reference to the Burrum Railway, as well as he was able; and he referred to the distinct statement made by the Premier in another place in connection with the loan. The Government did not intend to increase the deposit of money in the banks of the colony.

Mr. MEIN characterised the answer as quibbling and evasive.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He believed the Government intended to render every assistance for the carrying out of Mr. Hurley's scheme, and for passing his Bill through Parliament this session; provided that Mr. Hurley complied with the conditions imposed by the Government. He could not say they would accept the Bill in its integrity, nor was he empowered to say if Parliament did not pass it this year—another opportunity might be given next year—that the Government would take any steps to carry out the railway themselves. Mr. Hurley would, no doubt, demand to be allowed reasonable time to carry his project into effect. He was engaged on it now. He had not come down from Maryborough; and until he did come, a positive answer could not be given. With regard to the money required by the Government, the honourable Mr. Mein knew very well that the Government spent at the rate of £1,000,000

to £1,200,000 per annum; he knew that the present Government could not very well reduce, but would not increase, their expenditure on loan account; he also knew that the funds in hand would be exhausted by April next; and he sufficiently understood that the Government must be ready to command fresh funds by that time.

Mr. MEIN: That was not an answer.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL could give no other.

In answer to Mr. WALSH,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said there could not be any of the branch railways made until next session. The plans were not ready; and it was not possible that the Burrum line and the other lines could be started at once. The Government would spend the loan in twelve months, instead of in three years, if they carried out all the works at once. It was perfectly impossible, however, to do so.

Mr. WALSH: Another question. Had the Government been treating with Mr. Hurley on the basis of the Railway Act of 1872?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL was unable to answer that question.

The clause was then agreed to.

Clause 3—Debentures may be sold beyond the limits of the colony.

Mr. GREGORY asked if the Government had any intention of selling any part of the loan within the limits of the colony? It was within his knowledge that there were several instances of trustees holding large sums of money who were anxious to purchase colonial debentures without having to go to the London market. Another question connected with the first, was, whether the debentures could not be registered as inscribed stock. Since the recent bank disasters, trustees had a great desire to become possessed of inscribed stock. Debentures were negotiable from hand to hand; and he knew of the inconvenience that would arise if the whole amount under the loan were inscribed;—but, he suggested a limited amount might be so treated by the Government, so as to afford the most secure investments for trustees. He had urged the subject on successive Treasurers, but difficulties were in the way of legislation on the subject; and it was almost too large and complicated a subject for a private member to take in hand. Yet a Bill might be easily framed for the registration of debentures, with the object he had in view; and that he was not unwilling to initiate if necessary. He now asked, whether a portion of the loan would be made available to meet the wants of persons who had investments to make for long dates, and who wished to avoid the risk of holding ordinary debentures? Had the Government decided anything on the subject?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: In answer to the honourable gentleman, he directed his attention to the terms of the clause under consideration:—Debentures might be sold "in places beyond the limits of the colony" as the Governor in Council should authorise. Of course, the Government had full power to sell them within the colony. He presumed that—

Mr. GREGORY: Inferentially.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He might say that if there was any probable demand for a portion of the loan within the colony, a portion of it would be offered at the current price. No doubt, the Government had full power to dispose of debentures in the colony under the Bill. With regard to inscribed stock, the experiment had been tried in other colonies, and it was found to interfere very much with the operations of commercial men and with the Treasury. In New Zealand it proved undesirable, though all preparations to give effect to it had been made. The Colonial Treasurer had the subject referred to by the honourable Mr. Gregory under consideration for some time past. As was remarked, it was a very important one.

Mr. GREGORY expressed his acknowledgments to the Postmaster-General for his explanation, as far as it went. He was aware of the objections to inscribed stock on the score that transfers of debentures were hampered; and that persons did not always wish it published to the world that money was passing through their hands. With the ordinary debentures, a merchant wanting an advance had only to deposit them with a bank, and there was no further difficulty about his getting money on them. He had no wish to interfere with that class of business; but to have a portion of the debentures issued for the present loan inscribed, to admit trustees who were desirous of becoming possessed of them to have them. It was within his own knowledge that a trust had been compelled to sell Queensland debentures and to purchase New South Wales inscribed stock. He objected that there should be an objection to Queensland securities in favour of the stock of any other colony. About £30,000 was at stake in that transaction. He knew of a second case, in which £60,000 was involved. If one individual knew of transactions to the extent of £90,000, other persons might be aware of even more extensive requirements in the way indicated. He had gone fully into the New Zealand scheme, and the elaborate correspondence of Sir Julius Vogel with the Imperial authorities and the Bank of England, and the difficulty was that the Government wanted to consolidate the whole public debt from several loans. The making of inscribed stock was an insignificant part of the measure projected; because that measure involved very much

larger issues than simple inscription. He urged on the Government that provision ought to be made for the registration of debentures within the colony; it could not necessarily extend beyond the colony without a very complicated system being perfected, which would cost from £4,000 to £6,000 a year.

MR. HEUSSLER: The registration of debentures was not a new subject at all, but one of old standing. When the President was Colonial Treasurer, that honourable gentleman introduced a measure in the Legislative Assembly for the registration of debentures. But difficulties were in the way of perfecting the work in which he was engaged. Five or six years ago, when he (Mr. Heussler) was in the old country, he had occasion often to speak on the subject with a gentleman who was particularly interested in the Queensland loans, and who devised a plan by which colonial stock should be registered in the Agent-General's Office. His friend's idea was to get rid of many difficulties that arose on the Stock Exchange, at home, with regard to stamp duty, and in other ways; and to provide an establishment for registering Queensland debentures which were employed in the way the honourable Mr. Gregory suggested. It would not be difficult to frame a measure under which debentures could be registered, and unregistered also without undue obstacles, at a very small cost. The idea was a good one. The provision for registration need not hamper in any way the free disposal and circulation of debentures ordinarily. In his opinion a great many private investors in the old country would be very glad to hold our debentures, if for the sake of their greater security the debentures could be registered without the formalities and drawbacks attaching to inscribed stock or any fetters to circulation. It would be a very desirable thing to make the necessary provision.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL could only repeat that the Colonial Treasurer had the whole subject under consideration, and that at the proper time the honourable gentleman would put his conclusions in a formal way before Parliament.

MR. GREGORY was satisfied. He did not wish the subject to be allowed to drop, and so he took advantage of the opportunity of disseminating and ventilating it.

Question put and clause agreed to.

Clause 4.—Securities signed by the Governor or Vice-President of the Executive Council to be deemed duly issued.

MR. GREGORY invited the attention of the Committee to the immense drudgery involved in the mechanical work of writing signatures to the securities. An hour a-day for every day in the week did not suffice to meet the public requirements upon the Governor to sign documents, including deeds of grant.

Great difficulty connected with this subject arose recently in New South Wales, just prior to the departure of Sir Hercules Robinson, because of the necessity for the sign-manual of Her Majesty's representative to about ten thousand documents awaiting issue. The Crown Law officers made research to discover some means of surmounting the difficulty, for a time without avail; but going back to the time of George III., when it was not possible for his Majesty to sign his name, a precedent was found for availing of mechanical appliances to meet the requirement. The drudgery that he (Mr. Gregory) complained of was not allowed to fall on the manager of a bank; and why should it devolve on a Governor? He trusted that the Government would take the subject into consideration. It was hardly the thing to move a substantial amendment on the clause; but he hoped that the Queen's representative would find himself relieved from the tax upon his time and from the mechanical drudgery of signing his name to the extent heretofore deemed necessary.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The subject was already under the attention of the Government. He might say that each of the signatures to be put on the debentures meant six days' work for the individual who had to sign. The Government were considering whether any arrangement could be made—without, of course, interfering with proper security that must attach to the issue of the debentures—by which those documents could be signed and countersigned without that objection which the honourable Mr. Gregory had raised.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the Bill was reported without amendment; and the report was adopted.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL.

A message from the Legislative Assembly was received, transmitting "A Bill to provide for Local Government outside the Boundaries of Municipalities," for the concurrence of the Council.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a first time and ordered to be printed.

BANKERS' BOOKS EVIDENCE BILL.

On the motion of MR. MEIN, the House resolved into Committee of the Whole to consider the amendments of the Legislative Assembly in this Bill, as transmitted by message.

MR. MEIN said, after passing through a very severe trial of criticism, especially in a quarter entirely unexpected, the Bill had been returned to the House in a comparatively unutilated form. Some of the amendments made in it were not of

much effect or desirable; but he should move that the House agree to all of them.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the Bill was returned to the Legislative Assembly with a message stating that all the amendments made in it by that House had been agreed to.

ORPHANAGES BILL.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL, on moving the second reading of "A Bill to make better provision for the Establishment and Management of Asylums for Orphans and Deserted and Neglected Children," said he felt quite certain that its provisions would meet with the hearty approval of honourable members on both sides of the House. It was a measure that had long been required. At present, the orphanages were carried on under several Acts relating to the subject, including the Reformatory Schools Act, which still remained in force; while two statutes of New South Wales relating to the apprenticing of male and female orphans, passed in 1834 and 1851 respectively, would be repealed by the Bill brought before the House. It would be seen that there were at the present time three orphanages in the colony—at Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville, and they would be deemed public orphanages under the Bill. Authority was given for the appointment of superintendents, matrons, teachers, and other officers for carrying on those institutions. The 5th clause provided that public orphanages might be placed under the charge of local committees; and by the 6th clause provision was made for licensing any orphanages that might be established by private benevolence. The license could be withdrawn, if necessary, on six months' notice, at any time. Further, by the last-mentioned clause, proper provision was made for the conduct of private asylums. The 7th clause would enact that—

Any child under the age of twelve years who shall be found in the colony without father and mother or who shall be deserted by its father and mother or whose father and mother shall be unable to support it and any child found in a state of destitution or without any means of support may be sent to an Orphanage upon such authority and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by the regulations.

Children once admitted into an orphanage were not to be discharged except under the provisions of the Bill, or upon the order of the Minister administering it, until they should have attained the full age of twelve years. No child would be permitted to remain in an orphanage, at the public expense, after the age of thirteen years, without the leave of the Minister, nor in any case after the age of sixteen years. Following clauses provided for compelling the relatives of children to contribute towards

their support. The authorities at present found great difficulties in compelling persons who had deserted their children, to contribute towards their support; and it was believed that those provisions would give the power necessary to attain the end in view. He (the Postmaster-General) might remark that in the case of the Diamantina Orphanage there was upwards of £1,300 owing by parents of inmates of that institution. If the Bill was in force, such persons would have to pay, if not what they already owed, at all events, any expense that might be incurred on account of their children hereafter. There was no doubt that many persons deserted their children, simply because they did not care for them; others probably felt that in a public orphanage their children would be better taken care of than in their own homes. However, the Bill would have the effect of compelling such persons to contribute towards the support of their children if they deserted them or acted the part of unnatural parents in any other way. There were at the end of last year 165 children in the Diamantina Orphanage school, 19 in the Infants' Home, and 235 in St. Vincent's Orphanage; so it would be seen that a very large number of children were to be provided for. At Rockhampton there were between 70 and 80 children; and at Townsville about half that number. It was necessary that full powers should be given to deal with those children, and with their parents, whenever the latter could be found. By the 12th and 13th clauses a weekly sum could be ordered by a justice to be paid by a parent on account of his child; and in case of refusal to pay, the parent could be apprehended on warrant and imprisoned for three months. By the 15th and the next succeeding clauses, it was provided that the superintendent of orphanages should take charge of estates of inmates. It might seem rather odd that orphans should have estates; but there were at the present time several children in the orphanages who had estates;—in one case, an orphan possessed the sum of £200. Heretofore, the authorities had not had any proper control of cases of that sort. The Bill enabled them to deal with estates and place the funds in the bank or otherwise to apply them for the benefit of the orphan, after making a deduction of 10s. per week for his maintenance while an inmate of an orphanage. By the 21st clause, ministers of religion of all denominations were to have access to the orphanages, to

give instruction to them on the days and at the times allotted by the minister or committee of management for the religious instruction of the inmates who are of such denominations respectively.

The 22nd, and 23rd, and 24th clauses provided for placing children out to board. In

England, and, he believed, in some of the colonies, the boarding-out system was worked very successfully. It gave children the advantages of home life, of which they were deprived when kept in large asylums. It involved, he believed, no more expense than the usual cost of sustenance within the institutions, and it had many advantages.

The Minister may permit any inmate of any orphanage under this Act to lodge at the dwelling of any trustworthy and respectable person so that the child be taught trained clothed and fed as if he were lodging in the orphanage itself.

In this colony it had been hitherto impracticable to carry out that system to any extent; but as the population of the colony increased, and as the cities and towns became larger, no doubt many opportunities would be offered for its extension, by placing children in the care of trustworthy and respectable persons. Children boarding out would still be regarded as inmates of the orphanages. The 25th clause provided that children might be hired or bound apprentices. The 26th and following clauses related to penalties in respect of inmates escaping or being harboured, and to the making of regulations by the Governor in Council. He had gone over the main provisions of the Bill, and as the authorship of it was claimed by the leader of the Opposition on the one hand, and by the Colonial Secretary on the other, there could be no doubt that it was a creditable production. Although a good measure, yet it might perhaps be regarded, because of its doubtful paternity, imperfect. On an occasion like this, when both sides of the House were anxious to father it, he was sure it would be found worthy of adoption by the House. He did not anticipate any opposition, or at least very little, to the passing of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS.

On the motion of Mr. GREGORY, the Toowoomba Chapel Lands Sale Bill was considered in Committee of the Whole and reported without amendment. The remaining Orders on the paper were postponed.

The House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.
