

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 1880

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 2 September, 1880.

Motion for Adjournment.—*Hansard*.—Life Insurance Returns.—Insanity Bill—third reading.—Rabbit Bill—committee.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN took the chair at 4 o'clock.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said that he had a few remarks which he felt it was his duty to make, and to qualify them he would conclude with a motion. He begged to call the attention

of the Postmaster-General to the following advertisement in yesterday's paper:—

"RANDWICK RACES!
 RANDWICK RACES!
 RANDWICK RACES!
 SYDNEY.

"The Metropolitan Stakes Seance, 1880.—A Sweep of £500 is now open on this event; 81 prizes. To be run on Tuesday, September 7. Prizes—£200, £100, and £50; starters £75, and non-starters £75.

"The drawing for the above seance will positively take place at the Royal Hotel this (Wednesday) evening at 8 p.m. sharp.

"Subscribers are particularly requested to be in attendance."

It then went on to state where tickets could be obtained, and that early application was necessary, as only a few remained unsold. This advertisement was signed "Stephen J. Byrne, projector." He had two reasons for calling the attention of the Postmaster-General to this advertisement, and the first was because he believed that such an advertisement as this and the business connected with it was contrary to law, and that it was the duty of those in charge of the administration of the laws of the colony to check such proceedings. That advertisement was followed up by an announcement in to-day's *Courier*, which ran thus, and he hoped hon. gentlemen would weigh almost every word of it:—

"A large crowd of people assembled last night at the Royal Hotel to witness the drawing for Mr. Byrne's £500 sweep of the Metropolitan Stakes, which will be decided on Tuesday next. One drawing took place in the billiard-room, which was densely thronged with expectant ticket-holders. Mr. McLellan occupied the chair, while Messrs. A. E. Douglas, R. R. Dawbarn, and J. C. Beal, acted as scrutineers."

Now, he might state at once that he had taken the trouble to ascertain that the last-named person was no other than the Government Printer, a gentleman occupying a very important position, a highly-paid servant of the public, and one who had, if he (Mr. Walsh) was not mistaken, something like 100 men and boys under him. He wished to call the particular attention of the Postmaster-General and of all hon. gentlemen to these facts as being, first, what he believed was an infraction of the law by allowing such gambling to proceed, and, secondly, what he considered the mistake the Government made, if they were cognisant of it before, of permitting one of the principal officers of the Government to participate not only in an infraction of the law, but also to assist in the cultivation of such immorality as he (Mr. Walsh) thought was involved in the proceeding. It was strictly a gambling transaction; gambling was contrary to law, and repressible by law. But apart from that—whether it was legal or not—the immoral effect must be very great indeed when they found the head of a department such as the Government Printing Office, with so many youths under him, setting the pernicious example of being one of the principal gamblers in the colony. He need not say anything further on the subject. It must be patent to the minds of every hon. gentleman who had any regard at all for the moral welfare of the colony that it was the duty of the Government, acting for the public, to see that, at any rate, their best paid officers were exempt as far as morality went, and did not make themselves conspicuous by breaking the law and setting a bad example. He hoped that the few remarks he had made would have the effect of calling the attention of the Government to the facts he had brought under the notice of the House. He begged to move the adjournment of the House.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL regretted that he had not had the advantage of considering this question, the bringing of it forward by Mr. Walsh having been sudden and unexpected. With regard to the legality or illegality of the transaction, he presumed that

was more a matter for the police to deal with than for a responsible Minister of the Crown; and in regard to the presence at the meeting of a Government officer, he thought it would savour rather too much of interfering with the liberty of the subject for the head of the department to interfere. If the meeting was legal he thought it would be a hardship to interfere with the liberty of a subject who enjoyed the same rights as other members of the community; and if it was illegal, of course he laid himself open to the same pains and penalties as others who attended it. They each might have their individual opinion with regard to matters of that sort; and, for his own part, he thoroughly disapproved of them. But he found that they prevailed in New South Wales and Victoria; indeed, he saw the other day a report of one of the Ministers in Victoria raffling his house for something like £5,000, and he must admit that it seemed rather a remarkable method for a Minister of the Crown to resort to to sell his property. He presumed that the object of the Hon. Mr. Walsh had been obtained by calling attention to the matter, and he did not think the House would expect him (Mr. Buzacott) to say anything further upon it.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said he might state that he concurred in all the observations that had fallen from the Postmaster-General. He also sympathised with the Hon. Mr. Walsh in the views he had expressed with respect to the prevalence of a gambling spirit throughout the colony. At the same time, he thought that hon. gentleman's feelings had led him to speak too harshly altogether of a very valuable public officer, Mr. Beal; and that he (Mr. Walsh) could not have attached their full meaning to the expressions he used when he said that Mr. Beal was one of the biggest gamblers in the colony.

The HON. W. H. WALSH: I did not say so.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said the hon. gentleman did. He did not think that Mr. Beal's presence at the Art Union referred to could in any way be construed into making him a gambler. It was quite probable that Mr. Beal had not the slightest interest in the drawing over which he presided. It was well known that Mr. Beal was a great lover of sports; he had been all his life identified with all healthy out-door amusements, and there was no doubt his sympathy with such sports and his well-known integrity had pointed him out as a gentleman in whom the persons who had taken shares in this Art Union would have confidence in seeing that it was properly carried out. He was quite sure that Mr. Beal had never been mixed up in any gambling transactions. As the Postmaster-General had said, if the holding of these Art Unions was illegal the police should interfere; and if it was not illegal, Mr. Beal had as much right to be there as any other citizen; and as long as he was not mixed up with any discreditable gambling transactions, it was very hard to interfere with that officer's amusement. At the same time, he (Mr. Mein) agreed with the Hon. Mr. Walsh, that it was time some steps should be taken to put a stop to the gambling spirit which was becoming so prevalent in the colonies. It was, happily, not so prevalent in Brisbane as elsewhere, and they must all regret the intensity of the gambling mania which existed notably in Melbourne, and which had spread to Sydney, and was now apparently extending to some small portion of the community here. A few years ago steps were taken to put such drawings in Victoria down, but they had been apparently abortive, as he had seen notices of a similar kind to those read by the hon. gentleman concerning races likely to come off in Melbourne, and also in Sydney. After all, the drawings were con-

ducted on precisely the same principle as Art Unions. A certain number of prizes were given, and persons paid into a general fund and ran the chance of getting prizes. It was very hard that it should go abroad uncontradicted by those who knew Mr. Beal, and had great respect for him, that he was at all of a gambling disposition; and he was sure that Mr. Walsh had spoken under a misapprehension, and would be sorry himself to do any injury to Mr. Beal.

The HON. W. F. LAMBERT said he was glad to hear the defence which the Government Printer had received. For himself he would not know that gentlemen if he met him in the street; but he had never heard the slightest word thrown at him in his position as long as he (Mr. Lambert) had been in Queensland. He believed that Mr. Beal did his duty as a man, and to his own credit and the satisfaction of the country. They all, every man of them, no matter whether he was a member of that House or one of the general community, must have some little amusement, and he thought it would be very severe if they could not take that amusement as they wished. He would ask the Hon. Mr. Walsh whether the totalisator was a recognised or legal institution in the colony; and if Mr. Beal or anyone else were to volunteer to carry it through, should he be catechised or lectured for doing so? He really could not see what harm could attach to Mr. Beal for his action in connection with this drawing. He (Mr. Lambert) purchased a ticket himself, and he saw nothing unfair, unjust, or illegal, in what had taken place. He was glad, however, that the Hon. Mr. Walsh had brought the matter forward, because it should be decided what was really illegal and what was not. Mr. Beal was one of those who had to see that justice was done to those who had entrusted their money into the drawing; he had not done anything wrong in any way, and he (Mr. Lambert) believed that gentleman would stand justified before the public.

The HON. J. C. HEUSSLER said that he intended to say a few words on the question in the abstract. It struck him that gambling was one of the vices inherent in human nature. They found it everywhere they went. In Europe they found that gambling was carried out on green tables, but public opinion at last made an end of that everywhere. But he might tell hon. members there was a good deal of legitimate gambling, and he would explain what it consisted of. There was gambling in bonds and debentures, which they found in London and in every great mercantile city in the world. Then there was a form of gambling which could be compared with the one the Hon. Mr. Walsh had alluded to—namely, Art Unions, which was carried on to an enormous extent. Then there was racing, which they found everywhere, and which originally had a very good object, but by the introduction of gambling it had become a nuisance. Then they had great gambling at home in oil, in flour, in iron, and actually in herrings in Holland, and even in sardines and anchovies, and, although carried on as a mercantile transaction, it was nothing more than gambling as to who should pay at the end. Compared with that, the totalisators, art unions, and raffling, which were common in the community, and which was their principal vice in that respect, come nearly to zero. To satisfy the gambling spirit in the world some Governments had actually legalised it in the shape of lotteries, which were licensed by the State and brought a certain revenue. It would certainly be better for them if they were all much better people, if they were all good in the world; but at the same time he believed it would be very dull. It seemed to him that what was considered a spirit of business enterprise was as nearly as

possible allied to gambling. To come back to the question, he considered that this Art Union affair was a mild form of gambling, an amusement in the same way as a rubber of whist which was played for the sake of a few pence. It was a handsome thing to support the Arts, in the expectation of some time or another getting a prize or something even a little more than the contribution to such a speculation.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said he must candidly admit that nothing the Postmaster-General had said surprised him. He was not surprised to see the hon. gentleman getting up as the defender of what was manifestly a piece of vice—that of gambling, setting at defiance the laws, and encouraging the most pernicious class of people they had to deal with—namely, horsey gentlemen, who too frequently prevailed now. He questioned, however, the argument that hon. gentleman had used, and his right to make such a statement as he had made, that if the Government Printer was not breaking the law he had as much right to take part in those proceedings as other people. He denied that Government officials had a right to do anything that had an immoral tendency, or was calculated to encourage or disseminate vice. The argument of the Postmaster-General would be as good if he said that the Government Printer would have a right to join a dancing saloon company, and be the head man in it; or that out of office hours he could go and make a fool of himself in the public streets. He (Mr. Walsh) denied that public officers had equal rights with other citizens; they had duties to perform to the public that employed them, and which a good Government would exact from them. It was something discreditable to the country to allow its chief officers to go and take a prominent part in a huge ungodly gambling transaction. He was sorry that the Postmaster-General, who once had a character for sanctity, for humility, and certainly for anything but being a patron of gambling, could get up and say that officers like the one to whom he had alluded were breaking no law and no official decorum in taking part in such a meeting as that of last evening. He did not know whether they were justified in drawing inferences, but he would point out that one of the most peculiar *Hansards* that had appeared this session was issued that morning. Were they not justified in supposing that if the Government Printer had not attended that meeting last night *Hansard* would not have been brought out in the shape it was that morning? Was that one of the minor evils that apparently followed from this action of the Government Printer? He regretted that the temper of the House was such that they could for one moment wink at and get up and defend one of the principal officers of the State taking part in what he (Mr. Walsh) believed to be a totally illegal proceeding, and one that—whether illegal or not—was certainly grossly immoral. Hon. gentlemen could not have pondered over the notice he had read, and he would therefore again read it, so that he might justify his action. [The hon. gentleman here again read the paragraph from the *Courier*.] Hon. gentlemen would see that a large crowd of people assembled for—what? To see the law broken, and to assist in breaking it. He did not hesitate to say that, in his opinion, the law was broken, and the Government Printer helped to break it—in fact, the notice seemed to state that it was owing to such a gentleman as Mr. Beal being present that the thing was carried out in a plain straightforward manner. It might be very lucky that Mr. Beal was there on that account, for, from the reading of the paragraph, it would appear that the anticipation of the journalist was that otherwise it would not have been carried out in a straightforward manner. The way in which the question

had been met certainly astonished him. He should have thought that in that House, at least, an echo might have been found to the desire of any hon. gentleman who wished to inculcate or insist upon morality being exhibited by their principal Government officers. He was sorry that his remarks had been so misconstrued to say that he had said Mr. Beal was the greatest gambler in the colony. He hardly thought he could have used that expression, as he did not know Mr. Beal to be such a man; therefore, he (Mr. Walsh) could not say, nor did he think he said, Mr. Beal was such a man. What he said was that Mr. Beal was at the head of a large establishment where there were a number of men and young boys, and that the example must be a pernicious one; and he maintained that the Government should protect the junior employés of the establishment from the bad example set by the head of it. What would be thought if Mr. Beal should be seen riding at their principal races, either here, at Ipswich, or Toowoomba, all of which he would be justified in doing according to the argument of the Postmaster-General, because he would not be breaking the law? But he (Mr. Walsh) said that it would be setting an example of immorality to the public service which would have a very baneful tendency indeed, and which, he thought, the best thinking portion of the public would object to and deplore. He had not said a word about Mr. Beal not being a good public officer. He wanted to preserve him as a good officer, and to keep him from following the course which so many public officers had followed and come to ruin—by becoming sporting characters. If hon. gentlemen in both Houses had done their duty in that respect, many a poor fellow who had suffered from dereliction of duty would have been saved; and it was because he would preserve such good officers as he believed Mr. Beal to be from becoming not only the example, but setting a bad example, that he had performed the unpleasant duty of calling attention to the matter. He regretted, he did not hesitate to say, even more than the action taken by Mr. Beal, the flippant way in which this serious subject had been treated by its defender the Postmaster-General. He begged to withdraw the motion.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY thought the Hon. Mr. Walsh was making a mountain out of a molehill. The broad principle that gambling was prohibited by the law was, up to a certain point, undoubted. There were certain public functionaries appointed to see to this, and it would be a dereliction of duty on their part if they did not do so; but he did not think in the present case that point had been arrived at; and they would be taking up the unsatisfactory position of Satan rebuking sin if they went beyond a general expression of disapproval of the increase of gambling in the colony. For his own part, he did not think that Mr. Beal deserved censure, and he was sorry the Hon. Mr. Walsh had made so much of it. He could undertake to say that that hon. gentleman had played many a game of whist and lost his shilling, and also bet on horseracing. He (Mr. Gregory) had done so himself, and he considered that anything within those limits was admissible; and so long as it did not become a public scandal it was not within their province to take cognisance of it.

Motion for adjournment, by leave, withdrawn.

HANSARD.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that, in moving the adoption of the report of the Select Committee of members of the Council appointed to confer with the Speaker of the Assembly and members of the Printing Committee, he did not think it was necessary for him

to say much, the question really having been settled on the motion for the printing of the report moved by him a few days ago. The only thing that the House was likely to take exception to was the recommendation that *Hansard* should be issued as a joint publication, the debates of the Legislative Assembly coming first on the sheet. With regard to the remarks which the Hon. Mr. Walsh had made that afternoon respecting the form in which *Hansard* of that day appeared, he found that the complaint which the hon. member made was the result of an overweening desire to economise in the Government Printing Office. If it was the outcome of the absence of the Government Printer last night, the country would certainly not suffer if that officer was absent every night. He might explain that had *Hansard* not been printed in the form that it was that day the Council's *Hansard* would have required the same amount of machining as the six pages of the Assembly's debates. The only mistake that was made was in not dividing and cutting them as was usual after they had been printed; but to do that would not be a laborious undertaking for the reader. He had handed to him figures showing the number of copies of *Hansard* printed during the seven weeks of the current session. Of the *Hansard* of the Assembly, which for the first two or three weeks also included the reports of the Council, 205,010 copies had been printed; and of the Council reports, since they came out as an independent *Hansard*, 82,395 copies had been issued, making altogether 287,405 copies. The expense of printing and circulating had been exceedingly small, because between £200 and £300 had been received from the sale of the copies. When the type was once set up the mere printing was a small item, and the sale of *Hansard* very nearly covered the entire expense caused by printing the additional issue. During the last twelve months the type had been changed, and *Hansard* had been issued in a form in which it could be circulated easily, and the additional expense of printing it in that form had been very nearly if not quite defrayed by sales to the public. Notwithstanding all the complaints that had been made about the expense of *Hansard* and the injury it was doing, he thought that, on the whole, both Houses of Parliament had reason to congratulate themselves upon the success of the publication. Of course, like everything else, it was not perfect, and he had no doubt that some of the issues might just as well have been suppressed. Still he noticed that every session a decided improvement was going on in the style of the reports, and, by-and-bye, when Mr. Senior had a complete staff worked up, the result would be not only a reduction of the expense but far superior reports even to those that they now had. He begged to move the adoption of the report.

The Hon. G. SANDEMAN said he should like to ask whether the Postmaster-General was aware of the arrangements between the Government Printing Office and the different newspapers regarding the supply of *Hansard*, for he found many persons were much disappointed that day at not receiving the usual issue of *Hansard*—at not receiving the report of the debate in the Assembly last night. It was a matter of some importance to have explained.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said, with the permission of the House, he should be happy to answer the question as far as he was able. He observed, from a paragraph in the *Courier*, that the *Hansard* issue supplied by that journal had been withheld on the ground that a speech delivered in the Assembly was libellous, and laid the proprietors of the *Courier* open to an action for damages if they circulated the publication. So far as he understood the law, there was no doubt that a proprietor of a newspaper circulating even an authorised official *Hansard*

did not escape the liability imposed upon him by the law of libel. In England he could circulate *Hansard* or any other correct report without incurring any liability, it having been established therethat so long as a newspaper circulated reports which were fairly compiled, were intended to be for the public advantage, and were not printed with any malicious intent, the printer or publisher should be privileged; but in Australia the law was more stringent in this respect. He believed the proprietors of the *Courier* were perfectly correct in stating that they would be liable for any libellous speeches which were reported in *Hansard* and circulated by them. At the same time, he thought the liability was not really worth considering. No court would be likely to give the plaintiff substantial damages in a case of this sort, because it would be perfectly impossible to prove a malicious intent. There might be constructive malice, but no one could say with any show of reason that the publisher of *Hansard* was actuated with any such intent, so that he thought the danger was imaginary, and that no one having any regard for his pocket would venture to bring an action against the publisher of *Hansard*. It would be prudent to excise slanderous expressions, but it was difficult to deal with a matter of that sort when members of the House refused to allow condensation. As regarded the supply of *Hansard*, it was issued to all newspaper proprietors on the same terms.

Question put and passed.

LIFE INSURANCE RETURNS.

The HON. W. D. BOX, in moving—

That there be laid upon the table of this House, a Return showing the Returns received by the Colonial Secretary from the Life Insurance Companies doing business in Queensland, required by the 7th clause of the Life Insurance Act of 1879—

said it would be in the recollection of hon. members that last year a Life Insurance Act was passed, and that the seventh clause required that at the end of each year a certain statement of the position of each society should be delivered to the Colonial Secretary and be published in the *Government Gazette*. The *Gazette* was a paper which was not largely read, but the interest which attached to the position of each society doing life insurance business in the colony was universal; and though statements such as the Act required might not be valuable the first time they were supplied, they would become so in the course of years by enabling comparisons to be made. His object was to have a return of the statements received by the Colonial Secretary, so that it might become part of the parliamentary papers, and be accessible to every person, for if it was printed it could be purchased at the Government Printing Office. In a single paper the whole of the returns of Life Insurance Companies would be compiled and the attention of hon. members and the country would be drawn to the societies. When the clause was passed it would have been very much better had it provided that such a return should be added to the papers which were usually laid on the table on the meeting of Parliament. His desire was to have the return compiled annually, and he should endeavour to carry out that desire if he lived. He trusted that the House would consent to the motion.

Question put and passed.

INSANITY BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly with the usual message.

RABBIT BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the HON. F. J. IVORY, the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill.

Preamble postponed.

On clause 1—Live rabbits not to be introduced into the colony,

The HON. W. H. WALSH said he thought the clause ought not to pass, it being unnecessary even for the purpose of taking all the precautions necessary under the Bill. The second clause, that no person should have in his possession or keep on his premises any live rabbits unless they were securely confined in hutches or boxes, was quite stringent enough. It was going rather too far to say that from and after the passing of the Act no live rabbits should be introduced into the colony. Some of the most valuable animals were known to be rabbits; they were valuable as meat to the consumers, and as a source of profit to the breeders. Let them, if necessary, be put into quarantine; but to provide that the whole population of a colony containing millions of acres should be debarred from introducing one of the most domestic, and certainly the most innocent, of all animals was really too absurd. He could show that rabbits might become one of the most valuable products of the country. If the Hon. Mr. Ivory would excise the clause, nearly all his opposition to the Bill would cease. He could not consent to the passing of the clause; it was excited by fear, and fear was one of the worst feelings that legislators could be guided by.

The HON. F. J. IVORY said he presumed the Bill was meant to keep rabbits out of the colony as much as possible, and, as he had said yesterday, he did not think that a Bill having that purpose in view could be too stringent. Although the Hon. Mr. Walsh seemed to have a particular partiality for rabbits, and to consider them a valuable animal, he (Mr. Ivory) did not think members could be doing wrong by excluding them entirely from the colony. Possibly the only reason why those persons who had rabbits were allowed to retain them was because members did not like to legislate so as to order the owners to destroy their rabbits forthwith; in fact, it would be making the Bill have a retrospective effect to a certain extent. To his mind, however, to provide that from this out no live rabbits should be imported was a very good and proper part of the Bill.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said he did not think the value of the Bill would be affected by the excision of the clause, as the subsequent provisions were very stringent against the propagation or dispersion of rabbits. Clause 2 provided proper precautions against these animals getting away, and he did not think it should be made an offence for a person to introduce an animal which might afford amusement and enjoyment to him and did not become harmful until it escaped. He saw no necessity for insisting upon the clause, but he was indifferent. He did not keep rabbits, although in days gone by he was interested in them. Rabbits afforded a harmless amusement and not unprofitable occupation to young people, and he thought it hard that persons should be prohibited from introducing them for private purposes if proper precautions were taken against their escape.

The HON. W. F. LAMBERT said that yesterday the Hon. Mr. Taylor alluded to a case which occurred of a man who having "a down" upon a station holder, and wishing to do him an injury, used a scabby sheepskin as a saddle-cloth and threw it upon some portion of his run, in order to introduce scab among his sheep. He could not see why a similar thing might not happen if they allowed rabbits to be introduced

into the colony. He was confident that there were large areas of land in the colony where rabbits would thrive and become numerous, and a nuisance. He had seen parts of Victoria where they had proved a great annoyance and expense, and thought he could point out hundreds and thousands of acres in this colony where they would increase just in the same way as they had in that colony. When they undertook to do a thing there was nothing like doing it effectually, and therefore they should put a proper stop to the rabbit nuisance. They had the marsupial plague to deal with, and it had proved quite enough for those who had to make a livelihood from squatting or farming pursuits. It should be the duty of hon. members to endeavour to assist those classes in preventing a plague of any kind attacking them. They had bad seasons and the marsupial pest to contend with, and if the rabbit nuisance was allowed to come against them they would be simply ruined. The Bill, to his mind, was hardly strong enough. As they had learnt from the speech of the Hon. Mr. Sandeman, in South Australia the Government came forward and destroyed rabbits if a man would not destroy them on receiving notice. That was quite right, and it was a step this colony would have to take in a short time with respect to the Bathurst burr nuisance. Some people said that they did not need to eradicate the burr on their lands, but it was destroying a great portion of the Crown lands and rapidly becoming a nuisance to the colony at large. He hoped that some steps would be taken to carry out the original Bathurst Burr Bill, or an improvement of it. The Bill before the Committee should have his support. He would advocate the destruction of every rabbit in the colony. The Bill did not go that far, but it was time they protected themselves and the country against the pest.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that he found there was a feeling in the Committee rather in opposition to the clause as it stood, and, as an alteration would perhaps facilitate the passage of the Bill, he would move that at the end of the first line, after the word "shall," the words "except as hereinafter provided" should be inserted. If the Committee approved of that amendment, he intended afterwards moving that the words "unless it is confined in a hutch or box as provided under this Act" should be inserted after the word "shall," in the fifth line. It had been represented that it would be a great hardship not to allow a person to import, for domestic purposes, a fancy rabbit of a kind which if turned loose could certainly not exist. The amendments that he had mentioned would deprive the clause of all the objections which had been urged inside and outside the House. He begged to move his first amendment.

The HON. G. SANDEMAN thought that, in a matter involving such important results as might follow from this Bill not being passed, they should be doing wrong to adopt any alterations which would jeopardise the passing of it. He did not see why they should be actuated by any feeling of sentiment in a matter of this kind. It was a matter of real business in connection with the future of the country, and if the Postmaster-General passed his amendment he (Mr. Sandeman) should not oppose it; but he thought they were doing wrong in taking any steps which would be likely to jeopardise the passing of the Bill in another place. He knew there was a very strong feeling in the House in favour of the Bill, and he believed that this amendment was very likely to jeopardise the passing of the measure.

The HON. C. S. MEN said he hardly thought that result was likely to arise, but it seemed to

him that if they did not introduce an amendment they were likely to jeopardise the passing of the Bill in that House. He did not believe the feelings of hon. members in the other House were quite so strong on the Bill as the Hon. Mr. Sandeman had stated, and he was satisfied that they would be quite prepared to accept half-a-loaf rather than go without any bread at all—that they would be willing to accept such precautions as were necessary to prevent the dispersion of rabbits. He thought the phraseology of the Postmaster-General's amendment might be improved by inserting the words "unless securely confined within hutches" after "seas." The wording of the Postmaster-General's amendment seemed to render the clause rather ambiguous.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he did not think there need be any fear of losing the Bill in the other House by making amendments in it; because if the amendments made were not agreed to by the Assembly the Council need not insist upon them. He did not see that there was very much difference between the amendment he had proposed and that proposed by the Hon. Mr. Mein.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY suggested that it would meet the views of hon. members by adding at the end of the clause the words "excepting in confinement as hereinafter provided." The only effect he could see that would arise from clause 1 would be to create an absolute protection to local owners and producers of rabbits. If rabbits were of any value at all these people would have it all their own way, as they would have no foreign market to compete with, and that would be a great inducement to them to breed more. For his own part, he thought they might expunge clause 1 without the least injury to the Bill, because no person could keep rabbits except under the conditions mentioned in clause 2. He was so fully alive to the serious injury which might occur through the spread of rabbits in Queensland that he should feel inclined to support any part of the Bill which would tend to keep them under in every way—in fact, to deal with the matter thoroughly he would sooner see the Bill go through exactly as it stood than make any amendment which would imperil or prejudice its being carried out in its fullest integrity.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said the last speaker had dwelt upon the serious injury which might be done to the colony by the introduction of rabbits, and that provoked him (Mr. Walsh) to refer to the benefits which might accrue to the colony by those animals being introduced and scientifically cultivated. He wished to call the attention of the Committee to a few commercial statements in connection with rabbits, and then he would ask hon. gentlemen whether through sheer fear they were justified in absolutely prohibiting the people of this colony from cultivating such a valuable project. He found in Chambers' Encyclopædia the following observations—

"Rabbit skins have a regular commercial value in consequence of the hair being well adapted for felting purposes."

Were they to exclude from this colony an article that might become to them of equally as great commercial value as wool itself? He did not hesitate to say that there were in the elements of rabbit culture as much prospective profit to the colony as in the present cultivation of wool—

"Thence they are collected in large numbers by the chifferons of this and other countries; and the hair itself is not unfrequently imported from Holland and Germany, under the erroneous name of "coney-wool." Its chief use is in making the bodies of felt hats."

Were they to prevent the commencement of the manufacture of felt hats in this colony by a Bill like this? The article then went on to say—

“There has been a very large market in the United States for the imitation furs prepared from rabbit skins, to which country the British manufacturers have largely exported.”

Were they going to deny to this colony the opportunity of supplying British manufacturers with rabbit furs? They knew that in Tasmania at that moment there were one or two very extensive hat manufactories which made their goods almost entirely from rabbit fur, and the industry would not succeed in that colony had it not been for the cheapness of the material supplied by the rabbit in that country. Again, upon reference to another work—“The Cyclopædia of Useful Arts”—he found this quotation:—

“The skins of hares and rabbits are used in common with beaver and nutria (or coypou) skins for felting purposes; they are also dressed and dyed for conversion to various other uses. Rabbits' fur is made into cloth for ladies' use; the skins of the finer sorts of rabbit are much employed for linings, &c., the skins of the white Polish rabbits forming no mean substitute for ermine. The silver-grey rabbit formerly peculiar to Lincolnshire, but now bred in warrens in other parts of the country, is invariably exported to China and Russia, where it is in great demand and secures a high price.”

Would it not be better to nurture that peculiar rabbit so that they could become the exporters of this fur or skin to the countries that would take it from them, probably in unlimited quantities? Again, on referring to the same work, he found a table showing amongst other things the number of rabbit skins introduced into Great Britain in 1851 and 1860. In 1851 the number imported was 71,394, and in 1860, such was the growth of the trade, that there were 217,089 skins imported. He would ask hon. gentlemen were they going absolutely to shut out all possibility of establishing a trade of this kind? He said it would be perfect madness on their part to attempt anything of the sort. They had no more right to do so than to say that, if he had country peculiarly adapted for cultivation of rabbits, he should not cultivate them or turn the land he possessed to any use he thought fit. There were many hundreds of small settlers in the country that could make a valuable living out of the growth of rabbits if they were sufficiently instructed how to cultivate them. There were numbers of places in the colony where stock would not exist, where cattle would not flourish, and sheep could not live, and yet were admirably adapted for rabbits; and, instead of debarring men of small means from venturing into this industry, they would show a great deal more patriotism and a great deal less fear if they instructed them how to turn such land to valuable use, and thus enable them to become more valuable colonists. It was all very well for hon. members, or others who were actuated by similar motives, who possessed vast tracts of rich agricultural land, from sheer fear of having the trouble of keeping away a pest of this kind, to foster such a Bill as this; but he said there was ten times the quantity of land in this colony that was only adapted to the production of rabbits, and upon that land tens, and perhaps hundreds of thousands of persons might exist and gain a livelihood, and be a great advantage to the country. These were visions that probably he should not live to see, but, at any rate, he felt it his duty, with the knowledge he possessed, to protest against the absolute prohibition of the introduction of these animals. Seeing the temper of the legislation he was willing to assist in the passing of the Bill in something like a rational form, but not in such a state as it now stood; and he thought the

suggestion of the Postmaster-General should be at once acceded to.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY said the argument of the Hon. Mr. Walsh amounted to this—that they were sadly in want of hats and it would be a good thing to encourage the increase of rabbits so that they might be well supplied with hats; but they must think for a moment that because they had hats they might be deprived of their coats and nether garments. If this pest were allowed to be introduced they would probably be driven out of the country; they would have neither food nor clothing, and ultimately they might have to become like the aborigines in the north and wear a head-dress and nothing more. The argument of the hon. gentleman was to the effect that they should foster, as an industry, this pest which might bring into the colony a few thousands a-year, while at the same time they would lose hundreds of thousands, in all human probability. He thought whether clause 1 was maintained in the Bill or not was immaterial, except, as the hon. gentleman in charge of it had pointed out, that if they once began mutilating the Bill, unless the alterations were absolutely essential it was far better to let it alone. He must draw attention to the remarks which had fallen from the Hon. Mr. Walsh with regard to members who supported the Bill acting under fear. It almost looked as if they were actuated by some feeling that was mean and cowardly and weak, but he would ask what was it that actuated legislation upon almost any subject? It was fear. For instance, the Contagious Diseases Bill was passed probably through fear. The quarantine laws were passed for the same reason. The police were maintained to protect their houses and homes through fear; and he did not understand what the hon. gentleman aimed at when he said they were simply supporting the Bill out of fear. No doubt it was fear, but it was not fear which was cowardice, but simply the fear which actuated them to prevent themselves or their friends being ruined by the introduction or encouragement of a pest which might result in serious injury to a very large number of persons who were really the producers of the largest industry in the colony.

The Hon. G. SANDEMAN scarcely thought, however desirable it might be to encourage new industries in young communities, that they should support such a doctrine as that propounded by the Hon. Mr. Walsh, with respect to the cultivation of rabbits. They were, in a great measure, a pastoral community; they were dependent upon the results of their grazing land for their largest product, and they knew very well what the introduction of rabbits had done in the neighbouring colonies in the way of injuring that product. The Hon. Mr. Walsh had also said that it was all very well for occupiers of large tracts of rich land to argue against the introduction of rabbits, but while he (Mr. Sandeman) was one who had some interest in the colony he had no interest whatever in this question individually. He was speaking on behalf of those who were striving in the settled districts to make a living out of their land under very great disadvantages, and he knew very well that if they did not stamp out, with all the force they could command, what had become one of the greatest pests in the other colonies, they should be doing an enormous injury to those people who were striving hard to make both ends meet. He hoped the Bill would pass as it stood.

The Hon. W. F. LAMBERT said he had alluded on a previous occasion to the attempts that had been made by landholders in Victoria to stamp out the rabbit nuisance, but he forgot

on that occasion to state that one of the means they were forced to adopt for that purpose was to construct stone fences two feet under ground, two feet wide, and four feet high. Any hon. member who knew anything about fences, and he thought no one knew better than the Hon. Mr. Walsh, would at once understand the enormous cost this would entail. Of course the erection of stone fences could never be done upon leasehold land. It was now only upon freehold; and only wealthy men could stand such expense. He sincerely trusted they should never have such a pest in the colony. He saw no reason why rabbits should not increase in the colony, although they had not done so up to the present. He knew there were many parts of the country where they were almost certain to increase, and he therefore thought it was a very prudent thing not to run the risk of the introduction of such a pest.

The Hon. W. H. WALSH said he had omitted, when previously speaking, to draw attention to another quotation from Chambers' Encyclopædia, which was as follows:—

“The flesh of rabbits is in high esteem, and the fur being used for various purposes, rabbit warrens are found profitable in lands not suitable for agriculture.”

It was entirely because he thought that they ought to preserve for the people of this colony who had lands not suitable for agriculture the alternative of being able to turn their attention to the cultivation of rabbits that he took up the position he did. Again, this work said—

“Rabbits eat almost any kind of vegetable food, the coarser blades of cabbage, turnip leaves, celery tops, carrot tops, and other produce of the garden not suitable for human use are readily consumed by them, as well as chickweed, sow-thistle, dandelion, and many other weeds. With very little trouble and still less expense, a man can easily secure one or two rabbits a-week from the produce of his stock. When the rabbit enclosure contains a plot of grass or clover it affords them an important part of their food.”

He maintained that, with the knowledge they possessed on this subject, it was doing a downright injury to working men, who had an opportunity of cultivating rabbits as an article of food, that their introduction should be prohibited. The hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill must know that he would not be able to carry it as it now stood—at any rate, not to-night.

The Hon. F. J. IVORY scarcely believed that the Hon. Mr. Walsh was sincere in the advocacy he was carrying out for the introduction of rabbits—at any rate, he (Mr. Walsh) was thoroughly singular in his views. There was not another member in the House, nor he believed in any part of Australia, who held similar views to those of the hon. gentleman. If the Hon. Mr. Walsh were sincere he (Mr. Ivory) could only regret it, and if he were not sincere he thought that it would be far better, now that he had said all he possibly could say in the advocacy of rabbits, that he should withdraw his opposition and allow the clause to pass. Judging by his speech, that hon. gentleman was not only antagonistic to the clause, but was a positive advocate for the introduction and propagation of rabbits throughout the colony, a position which he (Mr. Ivory) had never heard taken up before. He actually argued that it would be a great advantage to the country that rabbits should be introduced and propagated—that a valuable industry would spring up from them. Sincerely he did not believe that the hon. gentleman held the views he had been advocating this evening, and, under the circumstances, he thought he might very well withdraw his opposition.

The Hon. W. H. WALSH thought that the remarks of the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill were not likely to neutralise opposition. He was not going to oppose the Bill, and if the sug-

gestions of the Postmaster-General were carried it would neutralise any opposition he had to it, because it would deprive it of some of its unnecessary and too strict provisions. If the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill had stated his willingness to accept the proposed amendments he would have shown a little more sincerity in his desire to pass the Bill, instead of accusing others of insincerity. He (Mr. Walsh) was sincere on the subject, and believed they had no right to prohibit the introduction of a most useful animal. It might be prudent to do so in a rational way, but that was quite another thing. He was willing to do so in a rational and prudent way, but not in doing it in a manner which he maintained was prompted by the fear of injury arising to the colony. It appeared to him that the amendment of the Postmaster-General would provide all that was required, because under the Bill no person could keep rabbits except as imprisoned animals, and any person keeping them loose would be subject to pains and penalties.

The Hon. F. J. IVORY could not see in what respect clause 1 would be an injury to the colony in any shape or form, as one would be led to believe from the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Walsh. That hon. gentleman had apparently got some great love for rabbits, but he (Mr. Ivory) had always been led to suppose that they were a perfect nuisance wherever they existed. At the present moment the Legislature of Great Britain was holding out facilities to farmers to destroy them wherever they possibly could without interruption from the proprietors.

The Hon. W. H. WALSH: They are cultivated in every country in Europe.

The Hon. F. J. IVORY said that it might be all very well for countries in Europe to cultivate them, but he did not think the hon. member would stand up and maintain that they should be cultivated here.

The Hon. W. H. WALSH: Do you want the House counted out?

The Hon. F. J. IVORY said of course, if there was not a sufficient number of persons present to go on with the Bill he must submit to the consequences; but to avoid anything of the kind, in place of allowing the hon. gentleman to have that satisfaction, he would move that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Question put and passed.

The House having resumed, the further consideration of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Wednesday next.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 6 o'clock.