

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 17 OCTOBER 1884

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 17 October, 1884.

Formal Motion.—Pharmacy Bill—committee.—Jury Bill—committee.—Brands Act of 1872 Amendment Bill—second reading.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to :—

By Mr. BAILEY—

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

1. Divisional boards to whom grants of land have been made, or lands have been vested in trust, or lands reserved for board purposes.

2. Approximate present value of such lands.

PHARMACY BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of Mr. BAILEY, the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into Committee to consider this Bill in detail.

Preamble postponed.

Clauses 1 to 4, inclusive, passed as printed.

On clause 5, as follows :—

"Every member of the board must, until a register has been made, and that fact has been certified to the Governor under the provisions of this Act, be a registered chemist and druggist, who holds a certificate of competency as a pharmaceutical chemist or as a chemist and druggist, from the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, or any college or board of pharmacy recognised by the board under the regulations, or legally qualified medical practitioner; and so soon as such register has been made, and the fact so certified, must be a pharmaceutical chemist, who holds any such certificate or has passed the examination prescribed by the regulations, or legally qualified medical practitioner."

Mr. BAILEY said he had an amendment to propose in the clause. As at present proposed to be constituted, the board would be almost impracticable in Queensland. The clause provided that every member of the board must be a registered chemist and druggist who held a certificate of competency as a pharmaceutical chemist or as a chemist and druggist from the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, or any college or board of pharmacy recognised by the board. Seeing that there was no board in existence, that was a contradiction in terms. He wished to point out to the Committee what was the province of the board. It was not exactly a board of examiners, but rather a board to appoint examiners. They would be men skilled in chemistry, and having the power of appointing examiners to examine those who wished to enter the society. There was no necessity that the members of the board should individually be competent examiners; all that was requisite was that they should be men who were able, if not to examine themselves, to choose competent and proper examiners. He would give the Committee some idea of the examinations held under the Pharmacy Bill in Victoria :—

"PHARMACY.—To recognise the preparations of the Pharmacopœia which are not of a definite chemical nature, such as extracts, tinctures, the simple and compound powders, etc.; to describe the composition of such as are compound, and give the proportions of the active ingredients.

"MATERIA MEDICA.—To recognise specimens of roots, barks, leaves, fruits, resins, gums, animal substances, etc., used in medicine; give the botanical and zoological names of the plants, etc., yielding them, and the natural families to which they belong; name the countries and sources from which they are obtained, and the official preparations into which they enter, and judge the quality and freedom from adulteration or otherwise of the specimens.

"BOTANY.—To recognise the more important medicinal plants: to possess a general knowledge of the elementary structure of plants, and the structure and distinctive characters of roots, stems, leaves, and their parts; to name and describe the various parts of the flower.

"CHEMISTRY.—To recognise the acids, oxides, salts, and other definite chemical bodies of the Pharmacopœia; to describe the processes by which they are produced, the composition of such as are compounds, and explain the decompositions that occur in their production and admixture by written equations or diagrams."

That was the kind of examination necessary.

He held that men who had been engaged in the business for many years, in buying and selling drugs, were more competent to examine or assist at examinations than men who had a mere book knowledge only, because they were able to judge of the various qualities of drugs, and also of adulteration. It required more than book knowledge to judge of the qualities of the different drugs used in medicine. It was of the greatest importance, therefore, that the examiners should not be young men just from college who might have only book learning, but men who had been many years in the trade. There were a good many such men in Queensland, but not one of them would be allowed to sit on the board of examiners as the clause now stood. He therefore proposed to omit the following words :—

"From the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, or any college or board of pharmacy recognised by the board under the regulations."

After a pause,

Mr. BAILEY said that the Premier had suggested to him to omit some more words beginning at the 23rd line. He would therefore move that the following words be omitted :—

"Who holds a certificate of competency as a pharmaceutical chemist, or as a chemist and druggist, from the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, or any college or board of pharmacy recognised by the board under the regulations."

He had before explained that there was no board, and therefore no certificate of competency could be recognised by a board which did not exist. That was the first objection. The other was that they would place the examination in the hands of a very few young men who might from time to time arrive in the colony, and be placed over the heads of men who had been for many years practising the science of chemistry in the making up of drugs. He hoped the Committee would consider that the board would not be the actual examiners, but were supposed to be competent men to choose examiners.

The PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith) said that no doubt the objection raised by the hon. gentleman—that no certificate from the Pharmaceutical Society or any board of pharmacy could be recognised by the board until the board was in existence—was unanswerable. The clause required that the board, before it was established, should do something, which, of course, was impossible. At the same time there was no doubt that some of the reasons advanced for the alteration which had been made in the Bill since it was before that Committee previously were worthy of consideration. When it left that House before, it required that a member of the board should be either a registered chemist or a medical practitioner, the Government having to appoint the first board. Considering that that board would only last till the end of next year, he did not think it made very much difference whether it was one consisting of members with the special qualifications described in the Bill. At the same time he knew there was a very strong feeling that some qualification should be inserted, and the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill ought to consider well before pressing his amendment, whether it was desirable to go to the full extent he proposed. There were boards of pharmacy in Australia, but none in Queensland, and there were very few persons eligible under the definition in the clause to a seat on the board. He thought it might safely be left to the Government to choose the first board.

Mr. BAILEY said that what he was asking for was that the chemists should have a voice in the matter of raising their own status, and protecting the public. They wanted the liberty to conduct their own affairs; and that Bill had been brought in at their instigation for the public good. He hoped, therefore, that both that Committee and hon. members in another place would admit that those men who had shown good faith in the matter knew best how to conduct their own business. There was no doubt, as had been stated by the Premier, that it would be exceedingly difficult to get a board under that clause. The chemists had no wish that there should be any sham examinations; all they wanted was that the examinations should be conducted by competent persons. It was remarkable that, in the Pharmaceutical Societies of Great Britain and Victoria, hardly one of the first members of the board had passed an examination. He knew for a fact that in the English Pharmaceutical Society some of the first members were so well known for their skill and knowledge that they remained members for many years, although they had never passed an examination such as that laid down in the Bill. He had very little faith in new men who might have passed an examination being competent to examine in the various matters of which he had spoken with respect to drugs and chemistry. It required not only book knowledge, but practical knowledge, which could only be obtained by years of experience in the trade. He hoped the Committee would let the chemists of Queensland do as their fellows had done in England and Victoria. Such conditions as those in the Bill had never been proposed in other places at the formation of the board. He knew that a great deal of ill-will had been incurred by the chemists in Queensland for their efforts to improve their status, and confer a benefit on the colony. He hoped, however, that would not be continued, but that those men would be allowed to conduct their business in the way which, from their knowledge, they claimed to be the best possible way.

Mr. ARCHER said he desired to ask the hon. member whether he intended to propose any substitute for the words he had struck out, or have no qualification at all? It was very easy to strike out the words, but surely there ought to be a substitute for the qualification that was to be omitted.

Mr. BAILEY said the qualifications were exactly those which were adopted in England.

Mr. ARCHER: But I want to know what they are?

Mr. BAILEY said they were, a registered chemist and druggist and a legally qualified medical practitioner. Those qualifications were quite sufficient. Some of the examiners, of course, might not be members of the board. For instance, in Latin, they would probably get a teacher from the Grammar School to conduct the examination; in botany, very likely Mr. Bailey would be the examiner; and in chemistry, either Mr. Staiger or Mr. Marr, neither of whom would be members of the board. A confusion seemed to exist in the minds of hon. members as to the board of examiners. They were not to be actually the examiners, but were to lay down the lines upon which the examination was to be conducted, and appoint the examiners.

Mr. ARCHER: What qualification has Mr. Marr?

Mr. BAILEY said he did not think he would be qualified for a seat on the board; he would only be an examiner appointed by the board.

Mr. SCOTT said it seemed to him that the members of the profession were much more likely to know what they wanted than outsiders. The chemists and druggists who now practised in the colony had their names on the register, and he supposed they had passed some examination or had a qualification of some kind. They comprised the whole profession in Brisbane—and, he supposed, in Queensland—at the present time, and they knew better what was wanted in their own profession than any outsider. Perhaps the hon. member in charge of the Bill would say how those chemists and druggists came to be placed on the register?

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH asked how it was that the chemists and druggists themselves, under whose auspices the Bill had been got up, had put such a restriction on the composition of the first board?

Mr. BAILEY said that was an amendment introduced in the other Chamber.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said he did not think it was a matter of any importance that the board should consist of members of the societies which had been mentioned.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. BAILEY moved a further amendment on the clause by omitting all the words from "who holds" to the end of the clause. The term "pharmaceutical chemist" was already defined in the 3rd clause.

The PREMIER said that that amendment would preclude the appointment of medical practitioners to a seat on the board, and would be inconsistent with the course they had adopted in the previous part of the clause.

Mr. BAILEY said he was quite willing to leave in the words "or legally qualified medical practitioner," because he believed the medical practitioners would become very useful members of the board. He would therefore propose to omit only the words "who holds any such certificate or has passed the examination prescribed by the regulations."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. SCOTT said he should like to know from the hon. member in charge of the Bill whether the chemists and druggists now on the register had passed any examination?

Mr. BAILEY said he could only speak from his own personal knowledge. He knew some who had passed a preliminary examination at the Apothecaries' Hall in London; others who had passed before a board in Dublin, of which he forgot the name; and some others had earned their trade here, and had been many years engaged in it. It was exactly the same as it was in other countries when the Pharmacy Act was brought in. A number of chemists and druggists formed themselves into a Pharmaceutical Society, and had an Act passed similar to the Bill under discussion.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said that the provision relating to the matter in the Medical Act was as followed:—

"No chemist and druggist shall obtain a certificate from the Medical Board of this colony, except upon the production of testimonials satisfactory to such board, and stating that he has been engaged for a period not less than three years in learning pharmacy and chemical affinities, and that he is qualified to compound and dispense medicines. Provided that this Act shall not be construed so as to prevent any person from selling un-compounded drugs or patent medicines."

Question—That the clause, as amended, stand part of the Bill—put and passed.

Clause 6 passed as printed.

On clause 7, as follows:—

"In the case of future boards, the members shall be elected by the pharmaceutical chemists of the colony. Every election shall be held in such manner as may be prescribed by the regulations.

"Every ordinary election shall be held in the month of December on such day as may be appointed by the board."

Mr. PALMER said he would like to hear from the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill whether chemists all over the colony would have a voice in the election of the pharmacy board.

Mr. BAILEY: Yes; decidedly.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked if it was intended that the election must be limited to men who were either registered chemists and druggists, or legally qualified medical practitioners?

The PREMIER: That is provided for in the 5th clause.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that clause provided that, until a register had been made, every member of the board must possess certain qualifications. What he asked was whether, in the case of future boards, the choice of members should be restricted to that class of persons?

Mr. BAILEY said the elections would be conducted in the same way as all previous elections in the Pharmaceutical Society. A circular containing the names of persons nominated or eligible for election would be sent to every pharmaceutical chemist in the colony, and each chemist could strike out the names of those he did not vote for, and then return the list to the proper officer.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that was not an answer to his question. Clause 5 provided that, until a register had been made, every member of the board must be a registered chemist and druggist, or legally qualified medical practitioner. Clause 8 said the members of the society might elect anybody.

The PREMIER: No.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that was how he read it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the 5th clause, as amended, provided that—

"Every member of the board must, until a register has been made and that fact has been certified to the Governor under the provisions of this Act, be a registered chemist and druggist who holds a certificate of competency as a pharmaceutical chemist, or a legally qualified medical practitioner."

That was part of the clause. The latter part stated that—

"So soon as such register has been made and the fact so certified, a member of the board must be a pharmaceutical chemist or legally qualified medical practitioner."

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 8 to 15, inclusive, passed as printed.

On the motion of Mr. BAILEY, clause 16—"Notice of death to be given to registrar"—was amended by the substitution of "district" registrar for "deputy" registrar.

Clauses 17 to 19, inclusive, passed as printed.

On clause 20—"Qualification of pharmaceutical chemists"—

Mr. SCOTT asked whether the words in the 1st subsection, "is a registered pharmaceutical chemist," referred to persons registered under the Bill, or to those who were registered previously?

Mr. BAILEY replied that they referred to those who were already registered.

Mr. PALMER said there might be cases where a man had been carrying on the business for a number of years without having been registered as a pharmaceutical chemist. Would it be possible for such a man to continue to carry on

his business, after the passing of the Bill, without becoming registered as a pharmaceutical chemist? Perhaps the man might be aged, or it might be impossible for him to conform to the regulations within the time, or submit himself to the examination. What would such a man do in that case?

Mr. BAILEY said he could hardly understand anyone who had been carrying on the business of chemist and druggist for several years not being able to pass the examination. It was necessary for a chemist and druggist to be registered under the Bill.

Mr. PALMER said that such a man as he contemplated must either be registered within twelve months, or sell his business. He believed there was a case of the kind to which he was referring in Brisbane.

The PREMIER said that if there was such a case the person was acting in contravention of the existing law, which provided that any person who represented himself to be a chemist and druggist, and practised as such without being registered, was liable to a penalty. He did not think there were at present any unregistered chemists in the colony. There were one or two some time ago in the northern part of the colony, but he believed they had ceased to exist.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 21 to 27 passed as printed.

On clause 28—"Limitation of application of Act"—

Mr. BAILEY said he had heard of one case of rather peculiar hardship which would occur if the clause was not amended. It was the case of a man who had had his business conducted for many years by duly qualified assistants, though he himself was not a registered chemist, nor could he pass the examination. As the clause stood, that man's business would be ruined, and he thought it should be amended by including any person who represented himself to be a homœopathic chemist only.

The PREMIER said he did not see why those gentlemen should not be protected. The question was very much discussed when the Bill was before the Committee before. He moved the addition of the following words to subsection 3:—

Or any person who, having at the time of the passing of this Act carried on business as a homœopathic chemist, represents himself after the passing of this Act to be a homœopathic chemist only.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said it struck him that the clause went either too far or else not far enough. Why should they protect homœopathic chemists who happened to be in practice when the Bill passed? He understood that the Bill would protect homœopathic chemists at the present time. If he had not put that interpretation upon clause 26 he would not have allowed it to pass. What would happen to a man who practised homœopathy without being a pharmaceutical chemist under the Bill? That was what he wanted to understand. When the question was discussed before, he understood that the principle enunciated was that it was to interfere with homœopathic chemists in no respect. They were asked to respect the interests of one man who had been practising homœopathy, and interdict other men setting up as homœopathic chemists. It did not require one to be a believer in homœopathy to see the injustice that would be done to those men. The principle of the Bill before was that a monopoly should be allowed to certain men to practise as chemists, and grant them the privilege of using the name "pharmaceutical chemists." But if a man announced that he was a homœopathic chemist under the Bill, he understood that he could practise: therefore, what was the use of

the clause giving the individual who had practised heretofore as a homœopathic chemist the right to practise for the future? That threw a doubt over the whole thing. If it was not that he was satisfied that homœopathic chemists were protected, he should not allow the Bill to pass. The Premier must well remember the discussion they had on the Bill. He understood that clause 26 thoroughly protected homœopathic chemists; that was, that nothing would happen to a man who practised as a chemist, unless he gave the public to understand by a signboard that he was registered—if he put up any of the names, "Pharmaceutical chemist, pharmacist, pharmacist, chemist and druggist, dispensing chemist, or dispensing druggist." If he put up the sign "Homœopathic druggist," he could practise as long as he liked.

The PREMIER said the matter was very fully discussed last time the Bill was before the House, and certainly the intention was almost unanimously that homœopathic chemists were not to be interfered with. It was doubtful whether clause 26 would touch them or not. That clause read:—

"Assume or use the title of 'pharmaceutical chemist, pharmacist, pharmacist, chemist and druggist, dispensing chemist or dispensing druggist,' or other words of similar import, or to use or exhibit any title, term, or sign, which may be construed to mean that he is qualified to perform the duties of a pharmaceutical chemist, pharmacist, pharmacist, chemist and druggist, dispensing chemist, or dispensing druggist."

The question arose whether a man calling himself a homœopathic chemist would violate those provisions, and to avoid the difficulty they added words to clause 28 providing that clause 26 should not apply to any person representing himself to be a homœopathic chemist only. That was how the Bill was introduced into the Upper House this year. He should prefer to see it in that form, although he had formulated the amendment just proposed. It should apply to all cases. There was no prohibition, as the hon. gentleman had pointed out, against anybody practising as a chemist, but he must not represent himself to be qualified. There was nothing to prevent an amateur practising in medicine or chemistry.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: That amendment will be instead of the one you proposed.

The PREMIER said he would ask permission to withdraw his previous amendment, and introduce it in the shape in which it was when the Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. BAILEY moved that the following words be added to subsection 3:—

Or any person representing himself to be a homœopathic chemist only.

Mr. SCOTT said that, before the amendment was passed, he would like to ask how it would affect homœopathic chemists in the far bush who might sell other drugs. The word "only" would come in the way of that, and prevent him from being an ordinary retailer of medicines, such as "Holloway's pills," which were sold by nearly every storekeeper. A great many drugs were sold on stations, and he did not see why a homœopathic chemist should be debarred from selling them more than any other man.

The PREMIER: There is nothing to prevent his doing so.

Mr. SCOTT asked why was the clause to read "homœopathic chemists 'only'?" If those "homœopathic chemists only" sold other drugs, they would be subject to a fine, to which nobody else would be subject.

Mr. BAILEY said that, so long as they did not assume the titles mentioned in clause 26, nothing in the Bill could prevent them.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 29, as follows:—

"A pharmaceutical chemist, who is not a legally qualified medical practitioner, shall not be entitled to charge or recover any remuneration for services rendered as a medical practitioner."

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said that was a curious clause to have in a Bill of that sort. It had nothing whatever to do with it. They might as well say that a baker should not charge for the bread he sold. What had the clause to do with the preamble, which said:—

"Whereas it is desirable to make better provision for preventing unqualified persons from representing themselves to be competent to practise as dispensing chemists and druggists."

It dealt with a different matter altogether, and seemed to be some kind of a private arrangement between the doctors and the druggists. It might be a very useful clause, but it had nothing to do with the Bill; and he could not understand how it got into it. He should like to hear some reason for it.

Mr. BAILEY said the hon. gentleman was not very far wrong. The clause had got into the Bill as a form of holding out the hand of conciliation to the doctors, and as a means of trying to prevent some little jealousies that existed last year and the year before, when the Bill was brought in. He could not see what the clause had to do with the Bill, although he was in charge of it.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said there was no provision in existence at present preventing unqualified persons from charging for medical services.

Mr. BAILEY: A person may charge, but he cannot recover for such services.

Mr. SCOTT said the clause was perfectly useless in its present shape, because a chemist and druggist did not charge for his services; he simply added the amount on to the price he charged for the drugs. The clause was no protection whatever.

Mr. GROOM said there were a good many chemists in country districts who did perform the medical services to which reference had been made, and performed them very faithfully; and he did not see why they should not be paid for them. He knew of a number of families who preferred the advice of their chemists and druggists, and why should not those men be paid for the services they rendered? He thought the clause might be very well struck out altogether.

The PREMIER said, as a matter of fact, the clause was a kind of concession to the medical men who, up to the present time, had had the regulation of the chemists and druggists of the colony. They thought they were conceding a great deal, and they had been able to give a great deal of opposition to the Bill. The present was the third time it had been before the House, and it was not law yet. Those gentlemen complained that in many places chemists competed with them unfairly.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: Well, they can compete with the chemists by making up their own medicines.

The PREMIER said he believed they did that now by way of retaliation. Chemists were not at present entitled to make any charge for medical services, and could not sue for anything of the kind; so that the clause was practically only confirming what was the present law, and giving the public warning that they were not entitled to charge. He should advise that the clause be allowed to stand if it was desired that the Bill should go through.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said it was admitted to be a bad clause and of no use whatever; and yet the hon. gentleman said that if they wished the Bill to go through they should let it stand. He should like to know why? Were there any very strong representatives of the medical profession who would object to the clause being omitted? Was it likely that the Bill would be thrown out if the clause were omitted? He did not think so.

Mr. LISSNER said he would like to know where the line would be drawn between what were and what were not medical services. If he dropped into a chemist's shop and had a tooth drawn, the chemist could not charge for it according to the clause as it stood. Sometimes chemists were far better dentists than duly qualified medical men; and he thought they ought to be entitled to remuneration for any services they performed.

Mr. BAILEY said, as it was evident that the feeling of the Committee was against the clause, he thought it would be better to negative it.

Clause put and negatived.

The remaining clauses and schedules, and the preamble of the Bill were agreed to.

On the motion of Mr. BAILEY, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill to the House with amendments.

The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

JURY BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the Order of the Day being read, the House went into Committee of the Whole for the further consideration of this Bill.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked whether the Government were going on with the Bill in the absence of the hon. member for Bowen?

The PREMIER: No.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that under those circumstances he would move that the Chairman report no progress, and ask leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported no progress, and asked leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

The report was adopted, and the next sitting of the Committee made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

BRANDS ACT OF 1872 AMENDMENT BILL—SECOND READING.

The HON. B. B. MORETON said: Mr. Speaker,--In moving the second reading of the Bill now before the House, I will not take up the time of the House very long beyond affording a few reasons which induce me to move the second reading. The Treasury return for 1884 shows a surplus to the credit of the fund under this Act of £15,124.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Is it?

The HON. B. B. MORETON: I am sure that it was never the intention that a sum of that magnitude should lie as trust funds in the Treasury of this colony without being of any benefit to those from whom it has been gathered. The expenditure for the last three years was: 1881-82, £3,295; 1882-83, £3,449; and 1883-84, £3,754. That made the yearly average of, say, about £3,499, while the receipts for the same years have been: For the first period, £5,811; 1882-83, £5,853; 1883-84, £6,394; making the yearly average revenue £6,019. Therefore, we have had a yearly surplus of about £2,520 paid in, over and above the expenditure.

This year I believe the Colonial Treasurer has put down a sum of £4,300 for 1884-85, but out of that there is £900 for printing gazettes, etc., which has not appeared in last year's appropriation, and I understand that £500 of that is for new type, etc.; therefore it is very evident that we are asking the stockholders of the colony to pay an annual sum greater than is necessary for expenditure under the Brands Act of 1872. Whereas the assessment for every portion of 100 now is 2s. 6d., the Bill proposes that it shall be reduced to 1s. 6d., making thereby a reduction of 1s., or two-fifths of the present assessment. There is also a reduction on the transfer of a brand, from 10s. to 5s. On the same number of stock that was assessed this year, the assessment of 1s. 6d. would amount to £3,243 5s. 6d.; and added to that the sum of £600—which is a fair average—for the transfer fees, regulation fees and fines, making the total sum of £3,843 for the coming year. The sum received this year, for 1883-84, amounted to £6,349, but of that the registration fees amounted to £660, and transfer fees to £106, and fines, etc., to £221, or a total of £987 for extras during the year. It will be seen, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that even putting it at 1s. 6d. and making no increase in the stock for the coming year, we should have within a very few pounds of what the Treasurer really wants for the expenditure next year; and, considering we have £15,124 surplus, I think some of that might be taken to help any deficiency. But at the same time I think greater economy could be exercised in the department by making the policemen who have charge in different towns, inspectors under the Brands Act, and paying them £50 to £150, which some of them now get; and thus save, on what the inspectors have been getting up to the present time, from £200 to £250. I think the reduction in that way would economise the expenditure; and not only that, but would make the working of this Act very much more efficient than it is at present. With these few remarks I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker,—The figures that have been stated have been correctly given by the hon. gentleman who moved the second reading. The actual assessment received last year at 2s. 6d. a hundred was £5,406; and by this proposed reduction there will be, as far as I can ascertain, quite sufficient to cover the expenditure of the year. Judging from the history of the last two years, I think there is no danger of our losing the necessary revenue to carry out the working of the Act.

Mr. BLACK said: The object of this Bill is a very good one, for it is only right that where the revenue has proved to be in excess of the requirements of the Act a reduction should be made in the charges. But the basis on which the reduction is made should be thoroughly understood. I understood both the mover of the motion and the Premier to say that the reduced revenue would be sufficient to administer the Act; but I beg to take exception to that opinion. I maintain that the enormous reduction in the stock of the colony will make such a deficiency in the revenue under this head that there will not be anything like the money produced by the assessment of stock this year as in previous years. At the same time, we are quite justified in passing the Bill, even if there should be a considerable decrease in the assessment—which I am perfectly certain there will be—for it can be made up out of the very large surplus now in the Treasury.

Mr. PALMER said: I was quite surprised when I heard the hon. member in charge of the Bill read out the amounts collected under the

Brands Act; for I had no idea that there was such an immense sum in the Treasury to the credit of that fund. I believe that sum might have been greatly increased, if there were anything in the Act of 1872 by which owners of stock could be compelled to pay in their assessments. I think there are many owners of more than the minimum amount of stock—fifty head—who do not pay, but simply ignore the Act. There are some stations with large numbers of stock, whose owners never forward a farthing of the assessment. The regulations in reference to the duties of inspectors are not strict enough, and the consequence is that they wander up and down the country just as they like—in some cases doing nothing at all; in fact the office of inspector of brands is looked upon almost as a sinecure in some districts. There is one amendment which I think I shall propose when the Bill is in committee. It is provided that the fee for the first registration of a brand shall be 10s.; but there are a great many who have a few head of cattle, but who will not pay 10s. for the registration of a brand, and I think that if we reduce the fee to 5s. a great many more people will avail themselves of the Act. With the spirit of the Bill I do not believe any stock-owner will disagree.

Mr. GRIMES said: I do not agree with the last speaker in the opinion that many small owners of stock escape the payment of the assessment. I remember a case two years ago where an officer of the department actually used the agricultural returns in a certain district to gain a conviction against people under the Brands Act. That was going a step too far. There is no reason to complain of want of vigilance on the part of the officers of this department; they are rather too vigilant.

Question put and passed; and committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Friday next.

The House adjourned at five minutes to 5 o'clock.