

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Council**

**WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 1885**

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 16 September, 1885.

Emu Park Railway.—Western Railway Extension.—Mackay Railway Extension.—Beer Duty Bill.—Cairns to Herberton Railway.—Customs Duties Bill—second reading.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

## EMU PARK RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon T. Macdonald-Paterson) moved—

1. That the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Rockhampton to Emu Park, *via* Lake's Creek, alternative line, as received from the Legislative Assembly by message on the 9th instant, be referred to a Select Committee, in pursuance of the 111th Standing Order.

2. That such Committee consist of the following members, namely:—Mr. F. T. Gregory, Mr. E. B. Forrest, Mr. Holberton, Mr. Pettigrew, and the Mover.

Question put and passed.

## WESTERN RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed extension of the Western Railway from 299 miles 37 chains (from Dalby) to Charleville be now adopted.

Question put and passed.

The POSTMASTER - GENERAL then moved—

1. That this House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Western Railway from 299 miles 37 chains (from Dalby) to Charleville, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 26th August last.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

## MACKAY RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed extension of the Mackay Railway to Eton be now adopted.

Question put and passed.

The POSTMASTER - GENERAL then moved—

1. That this House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Mackay Railway to Eton, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 26th August last.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

## BEER DUTY BILL.

The PRESIDENT read a message from the Legislative Assembly, forwarding, for the concurrence of the Council, a Bill to impose a duty on beer manufactured in Queensland, and to provide for the registration of breweries.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

## CAIRNS TO HERBERTON RAILWAY.

The PRESIDENT read a message from the Legislative Assembly, forwarding, for the approval of the Council, the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Cairns to Herberton (first section), from 0 miles to 24 miles, and including the wharf line shown by the said plan, from 2 miles to  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles.

## CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL—SECOND READING.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Hon. gentlemen,—In moving the second reading of this

Bill—a Bill for granting to Her Majesty certain increased duties of Customs—I do not propose to say much in regard to the details of the measure, for these are more conveniently and more properly dealt with in committee; and I find that hon. gentlemen prefer entering upon those details in committee as a rule. I think my observations may be confined to clauses 4, 6, and 7. With respect to clause 4, it is quite correct that every person should be permitted to add to the contract price so much money as would be equal to the duty which, by reason of the Bill becoming law, would have to be paid on such goods, and also that purchasers should have the option of declaring the contract null and void. That is a usual provision in a Bill of this kind; but in clauses 6 and 7 there are a few matters on which I may say a few words. They have reference to what has been going on in the colony for some time—namely, the introduction of goods that are really substitutes for goods liable to a fixed rate of duty, but which are admitted under the *ad valorem* duty, and have to some extent practically evaded the duty collectable in the case of the articles when completely manufactured. Then these articles that come in—paying *ad valorem* duty—compete with the articles which pay the higher fixed duties. Clause 6 is very clear, and I think it will be sufficient if I read it instead of giving an explanation in my own language. It is as follows:—

“When goods are imported into Queensland which in the opinion of the Collector of Customs, certified by him to the Colonial Treasurer, are a substitute for known dutiable goods liable to a fixed rate of duty, or possess properties substantially the same as those of such dutiable goods, the Treasurer may by order under his hand direct that a duty be levied on such goods at the same rate as that payable on such dutiable goods.”

The clause goes on to say that every such order shall be published in the *Gazette* and one other newspaper published in Queensland, and that a copy shall be exhibited publicly in every Custom-house. It further provides that if any importer feels aggrieved in regard to the rate of duty so determined by the Treasurer, he shall have the right to appeal from the Treasurer's order in the same manner and subject to the same conditions as are prescribed by the Customs Act of 1873. Clause 7 contains an important provision in regard to the powers of the Customs authorities. It is very necessary that these powers should be extended and defined, especially with respect to the articles which I have before adverted to, which are doubtful in the eyes of the Customs authorities as to the heading under which they should be admitted and what duty they should pay. These powers are conferred by the clause and are well defined. Before reading the clause I will refer to the practice of New South Wales. There the Comptroller of Customs has the authority to impose upon such articles, the character of which he is unable to fix under the schedule of the New South Wales Customs Act, any rate up to the full extent of the fixed rate of duty declared. It is regarded by the Government as very much better to define the powers of the Customs authorities here in a different way, as shown by clause 7, which is to the following effect:—

“When any goods, which in a raw or unmanufactured state would be liable to a lower rate of duty on importation, are before importation subjected to any treatment which, in the opinion of the Collector of Customs, certified by him to the Colonial Treasurer and confirmed by the Treasurer, has been applied by way of partial conversion, or preparation for the conversion, of such goods into an article of merchandise which would be liable on importation to a higher rate of duty, but so that the goods cannot fairly be charged with such higher rate, then such goods shall be liable on importation into Queensland to duty at a rate equal to one-half of the duty which would be chargeable upon the article of merchandise into which they have been so partially converted or prepared to be converted.”

One of the numerous articles may be mentioned in illustration of what would be the practice under the clause. For some time past fruit has been imported from Tasmania and Victoria in a partially manufactured condition. On reaching Brisbane its manufacture is completed, and it enters the market as jams and preserved fruits. If the full duty were chargeable in respect to partially manufactured fruit, it would be a blow, to some extent, to a local industry which has been established in the city, and it is not deemed prudent to do more than collect what is believed to be a sufficiency of duty to place such articles on a par with the articles which enter the colony in a completely manufactured state. Doubtless hon. gentlemen have read the schedule attached to the Bill, and I think it will go without saying that the articles enumerated there will bear the duties affixed to them. It is no doubt a matter of regret that it has been found necessary to impose any additional taxation; but in view of the uncertainty of our revenue from many sources, especially from railways and Customs, also in view of the doubtful nature of the revenue should the serious drought continue for a few years, it has been found necessary to look ahead and put our finances in a sound condition. The burden on the colony, in the aggregate, if the Bill should become law, will be comparatively trifling; and I think the community as a whole approve of the duties and will not feel the slight additional burden it is necessary to put on the articles contained in the schedule. I beg to move the second reading of this Bill.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY said: Hon. gentlemen,—As it has been very justly remarked by the Postmaster-General, any question likely to arise upon the Bill will be more fairly and fully discussed in committee, and I have no intention of detaining the House at present. The only question I really think can be fairly considered now is the necessity for introducing additional taxation at all. I do not question the articles selected, but the general policy of increasing taxation at the present time, when the country was promised relief from taxation by the wonderful land law passed recently. It rather comes before us as a back-handed blow to find that instead of being relieved from burdens those burdens are to be increased. It is another proof of the mistake frequently made in attempting to legislate for the benefit of the country without due care in looking at the results likely to accrue from changing the existing policy of the country upon any main question. I look upon this measure as another instance of the great mistake—the grievous error—which the present Government made in altering our land legislation, and making it necessary that a measure of this sort should be brought forward.

The Hon. W. D. BOX said: Hon. gentlemen,—I did not intend to trespass on the time of the House, but I cannot allow the second reading to pass without making a few remarks. In a young growing colony like this, I do not think the people will appreciate a tax on machinery. Nothing relieves them from labour so much as the use of machinery, as hon. members very well know; and it is a matter for regret that a Ministry supported by the labouring classes of the community should be the first in the records of Queensland to bring forward a Bill interfering in any way with the introduction into the country of steam-engines, and machinery for mining, manufacturing, and sawing. It is well known that a small steam-engine will do the work of a dozen men. If the Ministry desired to raise more revenue they could have done so by revising our tariff, which is one of the most

extraordinary in existence. A short time ago there was a duty of 2d. per lb. on candles, while stearine was admitted on paying a duty of 5 per cent. *ad valorem*. The late Government saw that and changed the duty on stearine; and if the present Government took the trouble to look through the tariff they would find a great many rates that might be altered in a similar manner. Boots and shoes are charged only 5 per cent. *ad valorem*, but the importer of leather has to pay 20 per cent. and 17 per cent. for kip and sole leather respectively. Blucher boots are made of those two kinds of leather, and if the manufactured article could not be so cheaply imported the boots would be made in the colony, provided the duty on leather did not exceed a reasonable amount. Then the people who made boots here would consume dutiable goods; they would consume our tobacco, and live amongst us; and we should have cheap boots. I am speaking of a trade which I know something about. Look at the returns which have been furnished to this House, showing the enormous amount of boots, shoes, and saddlery, imported every year! At present the raw material is highly taxed, while the manufactured articles are allowed to come in with a small duty; and this Ministry, who say they are assisting the labouring classes, who have the votes of the labouring classes—there are no poor men in the colony, I think, except the upper class—this Ministry, who got into power on the popular ticket, are introducing a Bill to tax machinery, when a revision of the tariff would have served their purpose quite as well. Boots and shoes we all know something about. The boots and shoes we wear are not made here; but our hides go through our market to Sydney and come back again as boots and shoes. And a great deal of our saddlery and harness is made in Victoria. These are things that want looking into, and I wish I had sufficient eloquence to stir the Treasurer up to look into them and give relief to the labouring classes instead of putting a tax on machinery. I approve of the duty on spirits, because I think they can very well stand an increase; but I am very sorry indeed that a Ministry of Queensland should have proposed to tax machinery.

Question put and passed, and the committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for tomorrow.

The House adjourned at twenty-six minutes to 5 o'clock.