

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 1885

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 24 September, 1885.

Message from the Governor.—Elections Bill.—Beauaraba Branch Line.—Rockhampton and Emu Park Railway.—Isis Scrub Railway.—Cairns-Herberton Railway.—Justices Bill.—Customs Duties Bill—third reading.—Beer Duty Bill—committee.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor, intimating that the Royal assent had been given to the Public Charitable Institutions Bill.

ELECTIONS BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly, forwarding for the consideration of the Council, the above Bill.

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

BEAUARABA BRANCH LINE.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly, forwarding for the approval of the Council the plan, section, and book of reference of the Beauaraba branch line.

ROCKHAMPTON AND EMU PARK RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL brought up the report of the Select Committee on the Emu Park Railway, together with minutes of evidence, and moved that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

ISIS SCRUB RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL brought up the report of the Select Committee on the branch railway to Isis Scrub, together with the minutes of evidence, and moved that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

CAIRNS-HERBERTON RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Cairns to Herberton—first section—from 0 miles to 21 miles, and including the Wharf line shown by the said plan (being from 2 miles to 8½ miles, the plan, section, and book of reference of the line described as the alternative line, and passing by way of selection 138), as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 16th instant, be referred to a Select Committee, in pursuance of the 111th Standing Order.

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

The HON. A. J. THYNNE said: I think it is rather unusual to speak on a motion of this kind, but having had the honour to present a petition to the House on the 2nd of this month, referring to this railway, I think I am justified in calling the attention of members of the committee to the fact that such a petition has been presented, and express the hope that they will take it into their earnest consideration. This is one of the most important questions that has been referred to a select committee, but I am sure the gentlemen who compose the committee will do the matter full justice.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said: I think I shall be justified in saying a few words upon another subject. I see the Postmaster-General has adopted the plan of placing the same members upon railway committees in every instance. It is quite likely that he has thought over the matter and selected members whom he thinks would be generally available, but it strikes me that, having regard to the question before us, it would be desirable that in forming the committees a little thought should be taken as to the qualifications of members and their general knowledge of the localities. I do not propose to go so far as to suggest that the selection of members should be done by ballot, although there are some cases in which such a course would be desirable, but I would ask the Postmaster-General to take this matter into his careful consideration, for I think the country would thereby derive considerable benefit.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: I am quite in accord with the observations that have fallen from the last speaker, and am free to admit that in selecting members to sit on these railway committees I have to some extent been guided by the circumstance that the members so selected were available. There are one or two gentlemen at least whom I would have liked to have had on the committee I have just proposed; but, unfortunately, those gentlemen do not attend very regularly, and their services are not available. I am unaware of any member who is at present in the House who has a greater knowledge of the railway in question than any one of the members I have chosen.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: Nobody knows anything about this railway. The Government do not know anything about it themselves.

The HON. W. D. BOX: Why not propose Mr. Aplin?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I have indicated what I think, and if it be at all possible I will adopt the suggestion of the Hon. Mr. Gregory; but if I am unable to adopt his suggestion it will arise from the fact that members are not available. I promise the hon. gentleman that the matter will have full consideration.

Question put and passed.

JUSTICES BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL presented a Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to Justices of the Peace and their powers and authorities, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed, and the second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Wednesday week.

CUSTOMS DUTIES BILL—THIRD READING.

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

BEER DUTY BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the President left the chair, and the House went into Committee to consider this Bill.

Preamble postponed.

Clauses 1 and 2—"Short title" and "Interpretation"—passed as printed.

On clause 3—"Power of Minister"—

The HON. W. G. POWER said that as one who had for a long time been connected with breweries, and as a brewer, he wished to make a few remarks. The proposed system of collecting the new duty would, he considered, be a very annoying system to the people who had to suffer from it, and if the duty had been collected, through the Custom House, on the materials from which the beer was manufactured, it would have been a great deal better for the country and the people, because that would encourage the growth of barley. Some time ago a considerable amount of malt was made from colonial barley. Some of it was very good and some was very bad; but he had made malt from barley grown in this colony, and he also manufactured beer from it, which in every way proved satisfactory. The practice, however, seemed to have got into disuse, and all the materials required for the manufacture of beer were imported, with the exception of sugar; indeed, a great deal of that was imported. If the duty was collected through the Custom House a very great deal of labour would be saved. Ten years ago there were only one or two breweries in the colony, but at the present time there were a great number of very large ones, which gave employment to mechanics, builders, and the labouring class, to a very considerable extent. If imported beer was not taxed to the same extent as the colonial manufacture, numbers of the small breweries would be put out of existence. The large ones certainly could stand the tax, but the small ones could not. Further, he could assure hon. gentlemen that the consumers would most decidedly have to pay the proposed duty, because they would either get a smaller measure than they did at present or they would get a weaker article, which amounted to the same thing. It was out of the question that the brewers would bear the whole burden of the tax. He believed a similar duty was imposed in Victoria some years ago; but after a year or two it was taken off, and the malt from which it was made was chiefly made in the country, either from barley imported from New Zealand, or from what was grown in the country. The fact of collecting the stamp duty on the premises would very seriously interfere with the business of the brewers, because some of the public expected to get served at any hour at which they happened to require beer, and he had known customers served as early as 6 o'clock in the morning and as late as 9 o'clock at night. Hon. gentlemen would therefore see that unless the inspector was always on the premises the business of the brewers would be seriously interfered with. He trusted the Postmaster-General would see his way to amend the measure in that and in other respects.

The HON. E. B. FORREST said it appeared that the Hon. Mr. Power would like to carry two points. The first one was that the duty on beer should be collected through the Customs. He had no particular objection to that, but he certainly would protest against any attempt to saddle imported beer with any more duty than it carried at the present time. As a matter of fact, the imported article was already taxed to the extent of 37s. 6d. a hogshead, and he was convinced that it could not bear any more. As far as putting an excise duty on colonial-brewed beer was concerned he did not think that would lead to much discussion. He believed that the brewers could stand it very well, but it was absurd to suggest that the difficulty could be got over—if there was a difficulty—by putting additional taxation on imported beer. If any such attempt were made he should raise his voice against anything of the sort.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said hon. members would please notice that the clause under discussion had reference to the powers of the Minister; and if any discussion was desired to be instituted in relation to the question mooted by the Hon. Mr. Power it could come on later. He thought they should stick to the ordinary rules of conducting business and get along with the clauses, and as the matters referred to cropped up they could be discussed. It was a very inappropriate time to discuss the question raised by the Hon. Mr. Power.

The HON. W. FORREST said if the discussion was at all out of order they could move the adjournment of the House, and then enter upon it. It was quite possible that the opinion of a practical man like the Hon. Mr. Power might alter the views of a great many members, not with regard to the actual question of putting an excise duty of 3d. per gallon on beer, but with regard to the mode of collection. While he was on his feet, he might say in reply to what fell from the Hon. E. B. Forrest that either the duty upon imported beer was utterly inequitable, or else putting a duty of 3d. per gallon upon colonial beer and leaving the imported article untouched was inequitable. To his mind it would be much fairer to put the same duty on imported beer as on beer manufactured in the colony. He dissented from the statement that they ought to tax their own manufactured article and allow imported beer to come in without any additional taxation.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE said that in view of the increasing value of freehold property, and the amount of money made by land speculators, the Government should raise the additional revenue they required under the Stamp Act instead of taxing a productive industry.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 4, as follows:—

"The Governor in Council may appoint fit and proper persons to be inspectors of breweries, and may appoint one of such inspectors to be chief inspector of breweries;"—

The HON. W. FORREST said the system of inspection provided by the Bill was not the best way of collecting the revenue. It was clumsy, expensive, and inquisitorial. It would be very easy to find out how much beer a brewer sent away by a system of computation. It was quite sufficient for the brewer to pay the tax, without having his business interfered with by, perhaps, a meddling inspector.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said he quite agreed with the remarks of the last speaker. Of course it would be necessary for some branch of the Revenue Department to look after the collection of the tax; but the proposed mode of

collection was unnecessarily expensive. He did not think it was the wish of the Committee to interfere with the imposition of the duty, though he should prefer to see the proposed tax distributed between the imported and the home-manufactured articles. He hoped that when clauses 17, 18, 19, and 20 came on for discussion some more economical mode of collection would be proposed by the Postmaster-General.

The HON. W. G. POWER said the brewers could furnish, periodically, accounts of how much beer they sold, and the excise duty could be collected on the amount sold. The brewers would, of course, have to make sworn declarations as to the amount of beer sold during the period named. It was too bad to have an inspector continually on the premises. In a few years there would be ten times as many breweries in the colony as there were at present if they had any encouragement, but not if such a Bill became law. There could be no mistake about the declarations. The banks paid their duty in some such manner, and he did not see why the brewers should not be trusted also. In fact, it was not a matter of trusting them, because there would be enough people on the premises ready to inform if they did not do the correct thing; so that there would be no danger at all.

The HON. W. FORREST asked the Postmaster-General whether he was prepared to introduce a cheaper and less inquisitorial system of collection? He (Hon. W. Forrest) could formulate a system in a very short time which would attain the same object at half the cost, and at the same time give little or no annoyance to the brewer.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that it was unwise to depart from the question before the Committee. The clause under consideration only related to the instruments employed to carry out the system. Hon. gentlemen opposite seemed to think that was the proper time to discuss the mode of collection, but, being of a contrary opinion, he was content to say what he had to say on that subject when the proper time arrived.

The HON. E. B. FORREST said he thought it was the proper time now to raise the question. His idea was that there would be a necessity for inspection, and he did not hold with the idea of taking the general average of the production of a brewery. They might as well talk of a general average of the Custom House. What would be the result of that at the end of twelve months? However, let them by all means have the new system which the Hon. W. Forrest was prepared to formulate. Perhaps the Postmaster-General would say where it ought to come in?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he would leave that to the discretion of the Hon. W. Forrest himself.

The HON. W. FORREST said that, having shadowed forth the system, he would leave it to the Postmaster-General, whose duty it was to move amendments or assist in framing them. The hon. gentleman was paid liberally by the country and it was for him to put amendments which might be brought forward into shape. The revenue to be derived from brewers might be computed every three or six months by taking the average amount sold. If that were an increasing average it could be collected in proportion, and if a decreasing average it could also be collected in proportion; and such an amendment might provide for adjustment, if necessary. The average would be accompanied with sworn returns, and of course the system would provide for an inspection of books; so that anyone furnishing false returns would be liable to the penalties attached to perjury.

The HON. W. G. POWER said he did not see why brewers should not be trusted as well as bankers to furnish their returns. Every brewer with whom he had been connected kept his books in such a way that one could see what was sent out every day.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said that, in order to give the Hon. W. Forrest and the Hon. Mr. Power time to formulate an amendment embracing their ideas on collecting the duty, he would move that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again. They would have time to get their amendments ready by Wednesday next.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE said that, as a matter of policy, it would be more judicious not to press their right to make amendments in that Bill. They had already claimed the right to make amendments in all Bills, but unless there was a grave reason for doing so they should not make an amendment which might lead to a collision with the other branch of the Legislature.

The HON. W. GRAHAM said he could not agree with the remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Thynne. Why, because they had made an amendment in another Bill, should they for ever after hold their peace, and let any Bill pass without amendments for fear of a collision with another Chamber? The question was a very important one. Any sensible man could quite understand that the presence of an inspector might be extremely vexatious to the brewer. It should be borne in mind that the brewers would not only be saddled with the proposed duty, but would have to pay £5 for registration and £5 for every renewal of registration. He thought the whole tendency of the Bill was to press heavily on what was after all a colonial manufacture. If a duty of 3d. a gallon were put on colonial beer the same duty should be put on imported beer. He did not think the present duty on imported beer, as stated by the Hon. E. B. Forrest, was excessive.

The HON. E. B. FORREST: You are not in the business.

The HON. W. GRAHAM said he was a considerable consumer, and he thought he should have heard of it if the duty had been excessive. It could not be denied that a tax put on the article manufactured in the colony placed the imported article in a more advantageous position. He was in doubt whether now was the correct time to discuss the question; possibly it might be more correct to discuss it later on, when they came to consider the clauses dealing with the mode of collection.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said he should like to see some progress made; at the same time he should like to see amendments introduced which would improve the Bill. With regard to the remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Thynne, he might point out that it was not proposed that the Committee should exercise their rights in interfering with taxation—with the levying of certain duties—but merely with the administrative part of the measure—the mode in which the duties were to be collected. There was no clause requiring amendments till they came to clause 18, and under the circumstances he hoped the Hon. Mr. Taylor would withdraw his motion till then, when, unless hon. members were prepared with their amendments, there would be good grounds for postponing the further consideration of the Bill to give them time to prepare those amendments.

The HON. W. FORREST said he wished it to be understood that he had no intention of imperilling the passage of the Bill or interfering with the amount of revenue to be received, but

he objected that the Bill did not provide for sufficient revenue, because it did not put an equal amount of duty on imported beer. His object also was to get the same amount of revenue at a great deal less cost, which was surely a gain. It was not with a view of throwing the Bill out, but with a view of improving the Bill, that he made his observations. If they took a week to consider the Bill they might make some amendments that would improve the measure. Or they might pass the Bill on the understanding that it would be recommitted for the purpose of making amendments which might occur to them in the meantime. They could not tell at present what amendments might be required. The 59th Standing Order said :—

“On the motion for the adoption of the report, or on the order for the third reading being called or moved, the whole Bill, or any clause therein, may, on motion, be recommitted; but in either case a subsequent day shall be appointed for the third reading.”

Therefore they might now pass the Bill through committee, on the understanding that the Postmaster-General would move that it be recommitted, and then they could go into the whole question again.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he must decline to assent to the suggestion made by the hon. gentleman with respect to the recommitment of the Bill. He was somewhat surprised at the remark that hon. members did not know what amendments might be made in the clauses till they entered upon them, in view of the obvious fact that the Bill had been before hon. members for some time in order that they might recognise its form, shape, bearing, and effect, and come there prepared to make any suggestions they thought proper. The Bill was an extraordinarily succinct measure. Its working was simple; the economy of its provisions with regard to the collection of revenue were abnormally clear, and a very small percentage of the revenue derived would be absorbed in the expenses of collection.

The HON. W. FORREST: How much? Can you give us some idea?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes. In collecting the revenue expected to be derived by the Treasurer, the expense would be from £2,000 to £3,500.

The HON. W. FORREST: What percentage is that?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: A percentage on 4,000,000 gallons at 3d. a gallon. With respect to the suggestion of the Hon. Mr. Taylor, he hoped hon. members would not fall in with that hon. gentleman's views. The new duty was arranged to come into operation on the 1st October, and if the suggestion of the Hon. Mr. Taylor was adopted matters would be considerably upset.

The HON. J. TAYLOR: We do not care two straws about that.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said in that case he should not discuss the matter further. He really thought it was something unusual that a matter of that kind should be discussed in the way intended by the Hon. W. Forrest. The hon. gentleman was not responsible for the working of the measure—the Executive were responsible—and it was really a very unusual thing for an hon. gentleman in that or the other Chamber to come forward and suggest that a Bill should be postponed to enable him, an irresponsible person, to find out some scheme which he thought was better than that propounded by the Government. Of course the hon. gentleman could not think that he (the Postmaster-General) should postpone the Bill in order to enable him to do any such thing. The responsibility of the delay, if

there was any, would rest with those who took up that position, and he trusted that a measure embodying so much clearness, and requiring, to his mind and the minds of others, he was glad to say, so little attention, would not be unnecessarily delayed.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said that at the request of his friends he begged to withdraw his amendment until the Committee reached clauses 16, 17, and 18.

Question—That the amendment be withdrawn—put.

The HON. W. FORREST said he did not rise to oppose the motion, but he should like to reply to a remark which the Postmaster-General had just made. The hon. gentleman expressed his surprise at him (Hon. W. Forrest) endeavouring to formulate an amendment which would be an improvement on the clumsy Bill they had before them. He ventured to say that if he did formulate an amendment the Postmaster-General would not be able to say whether it harmonised or did not harmonise with the other parts of the Bill, although he was a member of the Government and ought to know all about it.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5, 6, and 7 passed as printed.

On clause 8, as follows :—

“Every brewer shall forthwith after giving such notice, and in the first week of the month of January in each succeeding year after the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-six, execute and deliver to the chief inspector or inspector, as the case may be, a bond to Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, with two sufficient sureties, to be approved by the chief inspector; in a sum equal to twice the estimated amount of duty that such brewer will be liable to pay under this Act during any one month, and conditioned—

1. That he shall pay, or cause to be paid, as directed by this Act, the duty payable on all beer made by or for him before the same is removed for consumption or sale, except as hereinafter provided;
2. And that he shall in all respects faithfully comply with the requirements of this Act and the regulations without fraud or evasion.

“The chief inspector shall fix the sum for which the bond shall be given in each case, and in so doing shall be guided by the quantity of beer that the brewery is capable, or likely to be capable, of producing in any one month.”

The HON. W. FORREST said the clause provided for the brewer entering into a bond in a sum twice the estimated amount of duty that he would be liable to pay. He would like to hear from the Postmaster-General how that amount was to be arrived at.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. gentleman's attention had evidently not been directed to the fact that books had to be kept by the brewers.

The HON. W. FORREST said if the amount the brewer would be liable to pay by way of duty could be discovered so easily, why should they adopt that clumsy system of inspection?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said there was a good deal of security in the fact that the brewer had to find two sureties in sums equal to twice the estimated amount of duty he would have to pay. If there was an inaccuracy discovered, the bond being double the amount of the estimated duty, the duty would be covered. He hoped the hon. gentleman would remember that under clause 38 regulations would be prepared by the Governor in Council for the working out of that matter.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: That will be the worst part of the Bill.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes; that would be the best part of it.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: I said the worst part of it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he thought it would be the best part of it. He was perfectly certain it was not intended to permit any brewer or his customers to be harassed in regard to the working of the Act; the contrary intention was understood, and well known by most hon. gentlemen, he hoped.

The HON. W. FORREST said if it was so easy to find out double the amount of estimated duty, why not find out half the amount of the bond?

The HON. E. B. FORREST said in the case of a bond they were dealing with an estimated amount, but in collecting an excise duty the Government would not be justified in dealing with an estimated amount. It might be a very simple matter to get an estimated amount for the bond, but the exact amount had to be found in the other case.

The HON. W. FORREST said the explanation made by the Hon. E. B. Forrest had shaken his faith in the system he was going to propose. That hon. gentleman said there was a necessity for that inquisitorial system of inspection, and he spoke with some authority, because he was a director of a brewery. He (Hon. W. Forrest) had no interest in a brewery, and never had. He therefore admitted that he was not so well acquainted with the tricks of the trade as his hon. namesake.

The HON. E. B. FORREST said he never said there was a necessity for an inquisitorial system of inspection, but simply for inspection. He thought so still.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 9 and 10 passed as printed.

On clause 11, as follows:—

“Beer shall not be removed from a brewery for consumption or sale except in hogsheads, half-hogsheads, or barrels, or in vessels of such smaller size as may be approved by the chief inspector.

“Any beer found in a brewery or removed therefrom in vessels of a size not approved by the chief inspector shall be forfeited, and may be seized by any inspector or officer of police.”

The HON. W. G. POWER said it would be better to have all the sizes of the casks defined instead of leaving it to the inspector. Let people use the casks they had at present in use. At present brewers sent out their beer in hogsheads, half-hogsheads, and drums of ten and five gallons. Why should they not be allowed to continue that system instead of putting them to the great expense of getting casks that would please the inspector? People should be allowed to sell their beer in casks to suit themselves; and to cut down large casks into small ones was as expensive as getting new ones made.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said if an inspector were to attempt any interference with the trade or operation of the business of brewing his appointment would not be worth twenty-four hours' notice. The Bill was not one for the restriction of trade, it was for the levying of duty; and he thought that the good sense of the Committee would see that sensible men would be at the head of affairs, and men who had no desire to hamper trade in any way. No inspector would dare to disallow the use of vessels which had been known for centuries to the Englishman, Irishman, and Scotchman. The clause would be interpreted in a common-sense way.

The HON. W. G. POWER said the same measures were not in use here as were used in England and Scotland. There they had 9 and 4½ gallon casks, whereas here only 10 and 5 gallon casks were used. It would be a very serious expense to the brewers if they were compelled to alter the size of their casks.

The HON. A. H. WILSON said the Hon. Mr. Power did not read the clause rightly. It was left to the chief inspector to allow the beer to be put in any sized casks, and he would be a very peculiar inspector who would go against the wishes of the brewer.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it would be very absurd if the inspector did not prohibit the use of gallon-casks. The duty would not be worth levying, and threepenny stamps would have to be provided.

The HON. W. G. POWER said he had no doubt that some of the small breweries sent out two gallons of beer. He had seen that done in Victoria, and he did not see why they should not have the opportunity of doing that up the country. People in the town would of course not be bothered with such small quantities.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 12 and 13 passed as printed.

On clause 14—“Entries to be verified by declaration”—

The HON. W. FORREST said he should like to draw the attention of the Committee to that clause, which provided for a most elaborate system of book-keeping. Hon. members would notice that the system of book-keeping which would be forced upon the brewers would be an additional expense and an additional incubus. A very material further tax would fall on the shoulders of the brewers by having to keep up an additional staff for the purpose of book-keeping.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 15—“Monthly returns”—passed as printed.

Clause 16—“Penalties for not keeping books or making entries”—

The HON. W. G. POWER said he thought the penalty was rather severe. It certainly seemed hard that for a small mistake or omission a man might be liable to a fine of £50 for every day the mistake or omission was continued. Clerks and others might not be up to the mark, and the brewers should not be held responsible.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the penalty was certainly a very serious matter to those who would not comply with the Act.

The HON. SIR A. H. PALMER: It does not follow that the penalty would be £50.

The HON. W. G. POWER: Not necessarily £50, but it might be.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 17—“Beer duty stamps”—

The HON. F. H. HART asked the Postmaster-General what was the amount of the beer duty stamp which would have to be affixed?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Threepence a gallon.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said he was not particularly interested in the matter of beer duty, and he was not going to move any motion at that stage, but when clause 4 was under consideration a motion had been made by the Hon. Mr. Taylor that the Chairman report progress, for the purpose of giving hon. members time to devise a better scheme than that of affixing stamps for collecting the duty. He should like to hear the opinions of hon. gentlemen, and if they were such as to convince him that it was desirable that the matter should stand over for a week he would support a motion to that effect.

The HON. W. G. POWER said he thought it would be as well that they should have a further week to consider the matter and see if they could discover some other mode of collecting the

duty than that of affixing stamps. He would, therefore, move that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he hoped the hon. gentleman was not in earnest. That was a matter that had been before them for a long time, and the Bill was intended to come into operation on the 1st October. Matters of State would be upset in no small degree if the motion was agreed to. He should not take the responsibility of making any attempt to dissuade hon. gentlemen from the course suggested by the mover of the motion, but he should leave it to the good sense of the Committee to say whether it was desirable in a matter of that kind—a simple matter which had been before the country for a considerable time—discussed from end to end of the colony;—whether it was desirable that they who were supposed to be abreast of the times, and have a proper appreciation of their legislative functions should delay the measure. Under the circumstances he should not say one single word more, but leave the question entirely with the Chamber.

The HON. E. B. FORREST said he hoped the hon. gentleman would withdraw his motion. Why waste time? The Bill had been before the House for a considerable time, and if hon. gentlemen had any amendments to propose they could well do so now. He saw no force in the objection of the Hon. Mr. Power to the clause, because whether the duty was paid in stamps or cash it made no difference to the brewer. It was not desirable that they should put off the consideration of the Bill from week to week.

The HON. A. H. WILSON said he hoped the hon. gentleman would withdraw his motion. So far as he could see he did not think a better way of collecting the duty could be suggested than by affixing stamps, and it would be a waste of time to postpone the consideration of the Bill at that stage.

The HON. W. G. POWER said he thought they could devise some less expensive mode of collecting the revenue; but as it seemed to be the wish of the Committee not to delay the measure he would withdraw his motion.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said they had now come to a proper part of the Bill to discuss the question of collection of the duty, and some little explanation would facilitate the business before them. There appeared to be an opinion amongst hon. gentlemen that there would be a difficulty in using stamps, but really he did not see the difficulty. The next few clauses might very well be considered with the one they were discussing. They found in clause 18 that the stamps were to be affixed to the casks, and had to be cancelled by the inspector at the time of the removal of the beer from the brewery. Now, at an earlier part of the discussion it was objected that that would require the inspector to be constantly on the premises from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., because people wished to get beer at different hours. It would be very inconvenient to limit the hours of delivery, because they knew a very large proportion of the beer would go out from the breweries to the hotels very early in the morning. He should offer no opposition to the clause if the Government were prepared to promise that the regulations would be so used as to get over the difficulty—to provide that as soon as ever the beer had been stamped and the stamps cancelled the beer should be permitted to be removed to a delivery store. The regulations might be so framed as to prevent any evasion, and as the Bill stood he did not see that there would be any objection to his proposal, provided the Government were willing to give a liberal interpretation to the provisions of the Bill. The line

of demarcation between the brewery proper and the delivery store need not be a very difficult one—it might almost be an arbitrary line marked out across the floor for the time being. The beer could then simply be shifted from one part of the building to another as soon as it was stamped and the stamps cancelled, and then delivery could go on until the supply was exhausted and it was necessary to call in the inspector to pass a fresh brew.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was glad the details of working the business had been referred to by the hon. gentleman. It was the intention of the Government, under clause 38, to give every facility for working the business. It was not necessary to go into details, because everyone who had any acquaintance with the subject knew that it was quite practicable to carry out the regulations without any friction whatever; and he thought they might trust to the regulations to be promulgated under the Bill being such as to give every facility for carrying on the business of brewing.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 18—"Casks to be stamped"—

The HON. W. G. POWER said that, after a brewer had fairly stamped his casks, someone who wished to do him an injury might steal the stamps, and the brewer be fined £10. It ought to be provided that the inspector should keep a book showing the date on which each cask was stamped.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that if he stamped a letter, and someone stole the stamp, he would be in the same position. The Bill was not intended to make provision for such cases. The brewer must look out for himself—if he had a dishonest servant he must take steps accordingly.

The HON. W. G. POWER said he was not talking of a dishonest servant, but some other fellow, who might wish to do a brewer an injury—perhaps a discharged servant. If a stamp were taken off, the brewer would be liable.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said there was a law in existence for the other fellow as well.

Clause put and passed.

The remaining clauses, the schedule, and the preamble were passed without further discussion.

The Bill was reported to the House without amendment, and the third reading made an Order of the Day for Wednesday next.

The House adjourned at nineteen minutes to 6 o'clock.