

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 1887

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 20 October, 1887.

Message from the Legislative Assembly—British New Guinea (Queensland) Bill.—Motion for Adjournment—The "Observer" Parliamentary Report.—Lady Bowen Lying-in Hospital Land Sale Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

BRITISH NEW GUINEA (QUEENSLAND) BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly, forwarding, for the concurrence of the Council, a Bill to make provision for the indemnification by the colony of Queensland of Her Majesty's Imperial Government against the expenses of the government of British New Guinea.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. W. Horatio Wilson), the Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Wednesday next.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

THE "OBSERVER" PARLIAMENTARY REPORT.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said: Hon. gentlemen,—I wish to refer to the way in which the business we did yesterday has been dealt with by the evening *Courier* newspaper.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The *Observer*.

The HON. W. H. WALSH: I draw no distinction between the *Brisbane Courier* and the *Evening Observer*, because the same Roman hand that moulds the pages of the one is strongly indicated on the pages of the other. I did myself the honour yesterday to refer to a question affecting the interests of the people of Brisbane generally; and I had no other object in view. It was not from any love of a particular section of the community, but simply because I felt it a duty I owed to my fellow-colonists to call the attention of the Postmaster-General—which means the Government—to the great benefit that would be derived by the Government hastening to secure the possession of a piece of land which,

of all pieces, should be a recreation ground for the Brisbane people. The necessity was imminent—there was no time to be lost; and that was why I drew the attention of the Government to the matter in the peculiar way I did yesterday. But for having done this, not only myself—I care very little about that—but the character of this Council has been impugned by this scurrilous publication, and that is why I feel it my duty to call the attention of this Chamber to the matter. The article is headed, "The New Farm Clique in the Council." Is there anything whatever to justify such a scurrilous appellation? The proprietors refuse to assist in circulating *Hansard*, which would give something like correct information regarding the transactions in this and the other Chamber, preferring to circulate only and alone their own lying accounts of occurrences that are said to take place here. This paper is circulated, while *Hansard* is denied circulation in the way it was heretofore circulated; therefore it is absolutely necessary to notice scurrilous, untrue remarks, so that at any rate some portion of the public will get some information of what goes on in this Chamber. Is there any representative at all of the New Farm clique in this Chamber? I am sure that other hon. members were taken as much by surprise as I was in regard to the duty I felt called upon to perform. Yet we cannot try to do good to the people of Brisbane, to protect their interests—life-long interests—without this paper that is supposed to be a branch of the leading paper of the colony stepping forward in this scurrilous way and trying to damage our fame and our name, and our doings here, by heading a paragraph, "The New Farm Clique in the Council." I shall not read the whole of it, because it is such bad English that it would disgrace the columns of *Hansard* were it to appear in them; but I shall read just enough to indicate the matter to which I shall call attention—

"It is comforting for the people of Brisbane to know what devoted friends they have in Mr. Walsh and his colleagues in the Upper House."

The whole thing is scurrilous and untrue. I am sure hon. members will bear me out in saying that I have no colleague at all in the matter, and that I did not speak to one of them on the subject. I never do consult hon. members respecting any business I have to bring forward in this House. I may do so after having brought it forward, but I make it a point never to discuss with hon. members a subject I am going to bring forward in this House. The paragraph goes on to say—

"How these disinterested gentry are ever puzzling their wits in order to discover some scheme which will make life more worth living, and with what glowing eloquence they defend the 'lungs'—"

and so on. Then comes a rhodomontade about long-haired Republicans and public parks.

The HON. E. B. FORREST: Read it all.

The HON. W. H. WALSH: I will do so.

"And with what glowing eloquence they defend the 'lungs' through which the community must take its occasional spell of extra air. Long-haired Republicans and unwashed Democrats may claim, if they like, that an Upper House is useless, but we are sure that none will think so who read the account of its ideas on the sale of the New Farm Estate. Public parks are good; that there is no denying, and in upholding them the Legislative Council has placed a debt of gratitude upon—well, we fancy, upon the aristocratic and exclusive society of New Farm."

I will stop here for a moment to ask what inducements there are for hon. members of this Council to undertake anything for the good of the country if their efforts are to be impugned by a paper that disseminates so largely amongst the very people for whom we try to do some good?

Is there not inducement for us rather to hold our tongues, to be silent, to do nothing in this Chamber, to let things remain as they are, or to let them go wrong? For the moment we attempt to do anything useful we are met by some such scurrilous remarks as I have just read. Then the paragraph goes on to say :—

“For estate after estate has been sold in other suburbs, and no voice has been raised on behalf of people's parks. Suburb after suburb has been covered with the clustering dwellings of the poor, and none have spoken in protest. The toiling thousands of the city might herd like cattle, and, indeed, are beginning to herd that way, yet no voice has ever been raised in our Upper House on their behalf, and no unanimous applauding of breathing-spaces has been evoked from our nominee rulers.”

If hon. gentlemen understand that I do not, but it seems to be to the effect that the representatives of the people have never demanded anything for them in the shape of public reserves.

“Mr. Walsh objects to small and wretched dwellings desecrating the sacred New Farm precincts, but he did not object to any noticeable extent when he took a hand in cutting up the Milton Estate, and pocketed his share of the profits which the present humpy-dwellers are making good. Yet Milton needs a lung as much as New Farm, and none the less because the latter is the home of nominee legislators, while the former is the home of the working man. If money is to be laid out in parks, let it be spent where the poor live, who have no grand gardens and no room for tennis courts in their back yards.”

I say the thing is so scurrilous and infamous, and it is so detrimental to the best interests even of the working men for whose benefit it is supposed to be written that these lies should be disseminated without being contradicted, that I have thought it my duty this afternoon to call the attention of this honourable House to the matter. As a proof of the utter falsehood of the article, let me make one explanation about myself—a thing I do not like to do, but which I feel to be necessary in the present instance. It is in reference to the following :—

“Mr. Walsh objects to small and wretched dwellings desecrating the sacred New Farm precincts, but he did not object to any noticeable extent when he took a hand in cutting up the Milton Estate, and pocketed his share of the profits which the present humpy-dwellers are making good.”

My connection with the Milton Estate was this : I was a tenant when I left the colony, and when I returned I found not only the house sold over my head but my furniture also. I had nothing to do with it except as a tenant. I had no more to do with any syndicate buying or selling that property than that table before me ; and more than that, for years and years before the property was sold I pointed out to the Government of the day the absolute necessity for purchasing the place on behalf of the people. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The Hon. W. GRAHAM said : Hon. gentleman,—I have not seen the *Observer*-to-day, so I am rather at a disadvantage in speaking on the subject, but I suppose the Hon. Mr. Walsh has picked the plums out of the article. He characterises it as a satirical article. All I can say is that the satire is of a very poor sort. It is about as poor an attempt at satire as I ever read. I think it is quite right that when papers rush in and publish statements which have no foundation in truth, such as that article contains—and I know personally that the Hon. Mr. Walsh had no connection with the Milton Estate—it is quite right to publicly contradict them. It is rather hard that pressmen should simply bandy these things about without taking the slightest trouble to make themselves aware of facts. It is getting a little too much in this place. I believe in the freedom of the Press a good deal ; I believe it is quite right that they

should express their opinions, whether in accord with the opinions of other people or not ; but I decidedly object to their misstating facts, and I consider that in every case in which they do so it is not right that we should treat them with the contempt that they perhaps merit, but it is right for every man to get up in his place and contradict them, so that the contradiction may go forth to the country, though not perhaps in as public a form as one would wish. The contradiction then will appear in *Hansard*, if not in the Press. I have not the slightest doubt that there will be a very sneaking sort of little notice in the *Observer*-to-morrow saying they regret they made a mistake. But it would be better if, instead of saying they regret making a mistake, as connecting the Hon. Mr. Walsh with the Milton Estate, they would take a little more trouble to find out facts. Such articles are certainly below our contempt, but still I think it is our duty to take notice of them and contradict them.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW said : Hon. gentlemen,—There is one part of this article which is contrary to fact ; it is this :—

“The toiling thousands of the city might herd like cattle, and, indeed, are beginning to herd that way, yet no voice has ever been raised in our Upper House on their behalf, and no unanimous applauding of breathing-spaces has been evoked from our nominee rulers.”

As a positive fact, when the Undue Subdivision of Land Bill was before this House, hon. members, at my instigation, I believe, had the minimum size of allotments increased to 32 perches ; but the other House would not agree to that amendment. The minimum size was increased in the interests of the health of the people. We could not compel them to make parks ; but by increasing the minimum size of allotments we did the next best thing in our power. As to the New Farm Estate, it is many a year since I saw it, but I consider that it is utterly unfit for residence purposes, the greater part of it, at any rate. I consider that flooded land is unsuitable for people to live on. I am not going to say that the Government should buy the land back, but I say that people should not buy in such a place at all. I do not know the particular piece of land that is offered for sale, but, so far as my knowledge goes, the whole of the land is flooded, except on the immediate river-bank. I am not aware that any of it is high land.

The Hon. E. B. FORREST said : Hon. gentlemen,—It is very extraordinary that we have these opinions stated here so freely. My hon. friend has taken on himself to state that this is all swampy land. Then he qualified his statement by saying that only the land on the river bank is swampy. That convinces me that he knows nothing about the land, and I doubt very much whether he has ever seen it. I am one of the “New Farm clique,” I am happy to say, and I am not ashamed to own it. I had no idea that the Hon. Mr. Walsh was going to bring this matter forward yesterday, but I am very much obliged to him for speaking as he has done. As one of the owners of the estate I may say that I consider it is the best advertisement given to the sale that is to come off next Saturday. As to the estate being secured for the public benefit, I may say that the Government have had the opportunity more than once of purchasing this land. Last year it was offered to them, and again this year, but they have not seen their way to buy it. The owners are prepared to sell, as the Hon. Mr. Macpherson said yesterday, at a reasonable advance on first cost. I am here to-day to confirm what the Hon. Mr. Macpherson said, and to state that the owners are patriotic

enough to offer the land to the country at a reasonable advance on first cost. But when I hear my hon. friend Mr. Pettigrew say that this is all swampy land, I must take the opportunity to contradict him. I say distinctly that it is not swampy land, and, moreover, if there is any site near Brisbane where people can live decently, it is on the old racecourse at New Farm. I confirm all that the Hon. Mr. Walsh has said about it. So far as the paragraph in the *Observer* is concerned, that does not affect me as one of the "clique." I have not read it, but I intend to read it, and no doubt it will amuse me. I did not rise for the purpose of asking the Postmaster-General whether the Government are going to buy the land, but simply to contradict the Hon. Mr. Pettigrew, who professes to know a lot about it, but who really knows nothing about it; in fact, he has never seen it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Hon. gentlemen,—I am unable to add anything to the statement I made yesterday. I represented the matter to my colleagues, and it is still under consideration. That is all I can say.

The HON. W. H. WALSH, in reply, said: Hon. gentlemen,—I was in hopes that some real champion of the people of Brisbane in this Chamber—those who go into the highways and byways—would have taken this opportunity to demand that the Government should protect the people's interest; but when I look around I see, alas! that it is vain that I expect these things. But I do trust yet that the Government will see their way to secure that important and unique piece of land for the use of the people. The more I think over it—I spent an hour in looking over the land to-day—the more I am convinced that it will be a dereliction of duty if some party in power, either the Government or the municipality of Brisbane, does not take steps to prevent the loss of what I may call the pearl of the metropolis. I know of no place comparable to it, either for beauty or suitability; in fact, there is no other place so much patronised as this by the working classes, even now, during their holiday time. I admit that it is late in the day, and that the Government are beset with great difficulty on the subject, but this is one of the most valuable gems of vacant land about Brisbane, and if the representatives of the people in this or the other Chamber, or the representatives of the Press, allow this land to be cut up and sold in those shreds of which I had ocular demonstration this morning, from seeing the pegs in the ground—if they are so supine as to permit this land to be lost to the public—they will confer lasting dishonour upon themselves and inflict a great loss on the city of Brisbane. With the permission of the House I beg to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

LADY BOWEN LYING-IN HOSPITAL LAND SALE BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HON. P. MACPHERSON said: Hon. gentlemen,—I have to move the second reading of this Bill, which is to enable the trustees of the Lady Bowen Lying-in Hospital to sell the whole or part of the land vested in them, with the buildings erected thereon, and to devote the proceeds to the purchasing of a new site and buildings for a like purpose in a more convenient locality. The evidence which was taken by the select committee of the other House shows that the site, the size, and the structural arrangements

of the present hospital are unsuitable, and that it is necessary to erect new buildings in a healthier situation. The evidence also shows that the price likely to be obtained from the sale of the premises will not only pay for the new site, which has been practically contracted to be purchased, but will also go very far indeed towards the erection of the new buildings. The evidence is very clear and copious in reference to the Bill. I will not refer to the whole of it, but simply to so much of the medical testimony as is included in Appendix A of the report, and to the evidence of the Hon. J. S. Turner, who has always taken a very deep and warm interest in the institution. Dr. Hill says:—

"When Brisbane was probably a fourth of its present size there was doubtless room enough; and in a house where it would be perfectly safe to have eight or ten lying-in women there is the greatest possible danger in having double that number—and you often have as many as that in the building now. I know that when I am in attendance I am full of anxiety on account of the continued overcrowding. Such a city as Brisbane should have much more accommodation than you can get in the present site; and as it appears that a much more roomy site can be obtained elsewhere, and sufficient money obtained by selling the present site to put up a suitable building, there seems no reason whatever why the present place should be continued as the Lying-in Hospital."

Then Dr. Hardie says:—

"I may state that the hospital generally is seriously deficient in accommodation, there having been frequently from fifteen to eighteen patients in the house at one time, whereas in my opinion there is room for only twelve. Not only is the building too small to meet its present requirements, but on account of its comparatively low situation, and of its proximity to the main thoroughfares of the city, I consider the site unsuitable for a hospital for lying-in women."

Dr. Tilston enumerates the various evils connected with the present building, as follows:—

- "1. The building will not accommodate the number of patients wishing to be admitted;
- "2. The situation is not by any means healthy, as the aspect is wrong for both breeze and sun;
- "3. The situation is noisy;
- "4. The present institution cannot be cleaned thoroughly without closing;
- "5. The overcrowded state makes it very likely that infectious disease will break out, and that at an early date;
- "6. It is quite impossible to separate married women from single women, which separation of course is most desirable;
- "7. There is no room for private wards;
- "8. There is no room for the treatment of diseases peculiar to women—an urgent want in my opinion;
- "9. There is little accommodation for a proper staff;
- "10. The cubic area is too small;
- "11. The value of the land is such that a sale of it would very considerably help to pay for a much larger and better building on a less valuable though more suitable site."

Next, there is a statement by Dr. W. Kebbell that the building, as regards structure, size, and position, is as defective as possible. Dr. Love says:—

"I consider that the present maternity hospital is now quite unsuitable, both from its position and construction, for the purposes for which it was originally built and for which it has been used during the past twenty-three years. The small size of the building, the noisiness and public character of the site, are serious drawbacks, but the long occupancy of its wards has rendered it positively dangerous to those women who seek its assistance and shelter."

Then Dr. Marks says:—

"In reply to yours, I have to state that having acted on your staff for some years I found the building most unsuitable and inconvenient. The close proximity of the place of worship is most objectionable. In my opinion it is very necessary to make the intended alteration both of building and site."

Then, as regards the financial aspect of the question, Mr. Turner, in his evidence, was asked by the chairman :—

“There is another question, Mr. Turner. Do you think that what the trustees will be able to get for the present site will be sufficient for all these purposes on the new site? Well, scarcely, unless they limit their expenditure to a little more than £4,000, say, in round figures. They will have to pay £2,000 clear for the new site. That will have to come out of the old place, the sale of it; and that will leave them £4,000 to £4,500 for the new premises. They could always get a little assistance from the public for a new building like that. They would be justified in spending £5,000. But to make it a little easier for them, power is given them in the Bill to mortgage for £2,000.”

I do not think, hon. gentlemen, that I need refer further to the evidence in support of the desirableness of this enabling Bill. Clause 2 of the Bill gives the trustees power to sell. Clause 3 directs that notice of the sale by auction is to be published. Clause 4 provides as to the disposition of the money :—

“Immediately after the receipt of the moneys realised by the sale of the said land, the trustees shall pay the reasonable expenses of such sale, and the costs, charges, and expenses of and attending the applying for and obtaining and passing of this Act, and shall deposit the remainder of the purchase moneys in the Union Bank of Australia, Limited, in Brisbane aforesaid, in the names of the said trustees, and shall not withdraw the same, or apply any part thereof, except for the purchase or for the completion of a purchase of another allotment or allotments of land in a more convenient locality, and for defraying the cost of erecting buildings thereon, and for furnishing the same in a manner suitable for the purposes of a lying-in hospital.”

Clause 5 states :—

“The trustees shall hold the lands and property so to be purchased and acquired as aforesaid, upon the trusts declared in the said recited deed of grant, to all intents and purposes as though the said land had been thereby granted to the trustees.”

And clause 6 gives the trustees power to borrow to an amount not at any one time exceeding £2,000. I have much pleasure in moving the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. W. F. TAYLOR said: Hon. gentlemen,—I have very much pleasure in supporting the motion of the Hon. Mr. Macpherson. I do so because there is no doubt in my own mind, and I do not think there can be any in that of any person who has gone into the subject at all, that the present hospital is far too small for the requirements of the city. It is always very much overcrowded, and the risks from overcrowding institutions of this kind are very great indeed; so great, in fact, that if a certain infectious disease should break out it would necessitate the immediate closure of the hospital, and thereby a great deal of injury would be done to certain persons. The institution, no doubt, is one of those that has done a great deal of good in its day. The building when first erected for the purpose was a very suitable one for the requirements of the city, and answered every purpose. But now, with the increased population, it is certainly too small, and, as I said, the risk of overcrowding is very great. Furthermore, there are a great many objections to the present site, such as the population which has crowded around it, and also the increasing traffic on the streets, and the great noise, which is very annoying to patients. The site which the committee have arranged for is a much more suitable one. The area is very much larger, and the aspect is one which will always command thorough ventilation, and will prevent anything like being crowded out by buildings being erected close to it. The land is sufficiently extensive to admit of the erection of the buildings necessary for this city for some years to come, and in addition to that, I hope the committee will see their way to extend the usefulness of the institution in other

directions. I have no connection whatever with the hospital, nor have I ever had, in any way. What I have said I simply say from my knowledge of these institutions and from a knowledge of the urgent necessity which has arisen for increased accommodation in this particular instance.

Question put and passed; and, on the motion of the Hon. P. MACPHERSON, the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for next Wednesday.

ADJOURNMENT.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Hon. gentlemen,—I move that this House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed, and the House adjourned at a quarter to 5 o'clock until Wednesday next.