

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 27 JUNE 1893

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 27 June, 1893.

Loss of H.M.S. "Victoria."—Queensland National Bank Agreement Bill: Third reading.—Public Depositors' Relief Bill: Committee.—Loss of H.M.S. "Victoria."—Queensland National Bank Agreement Bill.—Adjournment.

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

LOSS OF H.M.S. "VICTORIA."

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith): I rise, by the leave of the House, to address myself to a subject which is most painful to me, as I am sure it must be to the whole colony—that is, the loss the British nation has sustained in the sinking of the war steamer "Victoria." We were all struck with grief when the sad news was cabled to us; and it comes home to us all the more perhaps because we had learned to regard with feelings of affection many of the men on board that vessel at the time of the disaster. On occasions of this kind it is proper for us to address the head of the British nation, Her Majesty the Queen, and express our feelings and our loyalty; and I therefore ask the House to join in this address. I have taken the rather unusual course of refraining from going into committee, because I think this plan is the better one, as the address will appeal directly to all members of the House. Admiral Tryon, who was commander of the fleet, and on board the "Victoria" when she went down, was very well known to the Australian people from his long residence here, during which time he earned the esteem, and I may say the affection, of every one with whom he came into contact. I do not remember anyone who had wider views, and who more thoroughly identified himself with the wishes and aspirations of the Australian people than Admiral Tryon; and these considerations bring the matter more forcibly before us. We thoroughly appreciate the loss that accrues to the British nation by the deaths of so many brave men. The disastrous way in which that great loss occurred makes it appeal to us all the more strongly. On an occasion of this sort, I should not like to direct the attention of the House to matters which may have occurred to us in the shape of criticism; but I may express a hope that when the details of the disaster become known it will result in greater precautions being taken for the safety of Her Majesty's subjects on board these ships. We have

had it painfully brought before us by disasters of a similar nature, such as the loss of the "Quetta," that sufficient provision is not made for the protection of, at all events, certain portions of the crews. Our deepest sympathies are evoked when we remember that, according to the news received here, not one of the engineers on board the "Victoria" escaped. We do not attribute blame to anyone, but simply desire, in sending a message of condolence to Her Majesty, to express our appreciation of the loss sustained by the nation in the deaths of these brave men, and of Admiral Tryon, whom we in Australia, and those at home too, had come to look upon as the head of the British navy. The address I have to propose will be in this form—

"MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,—

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,—

"We, Your Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland in Parliament assembled, desire to approach Your Majesty with an assurance of the profound grief which has been caused in this colony by the intelligence of the sinking of Your Majesty's ship 'Victoria,' and of our keen sympathy on account of the loss of so many brave subjects of Your Majesty, which in our case is intensified by the recollection that among the services of the heroic admiral, whose loss is one of the saddest features of this disaster, is reckoned his long and honourable command of the defence of our coasts, during the period of which he secured the highest esteem and admiration of all who came within the sphere of his action or influence.

"We earnestly hope that Your Majesty's reign may not again be saddened by any similar calamity, and we pray that Your Majesty may long be spared to rule over us and all other Your Majesty's loyal subjects throughout the Empire." I have been in communication with His Excellency the Governor on this subject, and I suggested to him this course. His Excellency responded feelingly, as a loyal man would, and I have to express his deep sympathy with the action that is being taken at the present time. I understand that I have the leave of the House to propose the motion, and I now beg to move that the address be adopted.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion be put?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. POWERS: In seconding the motion, I would say that I believe the House would have thought the Premier wanting in his duty had he not presented some address of this sort for our adoption. The House will, I am sure, willingly discharge its mournful duty by passing this motion. This is not a time for speaking; all that ought to be said on the matter has been said by the Premier in moving the adoption of the address. All we can do is to pass the motion, as it is only by such a resolution that we can convey to Her Majesty the sympathy of the House and the colony in the loss which has been suffered by this disaster. I am sure we all earnestly and sincerely hope that Her Majesty's reign will not again be saddened by a similar calamity.

Mr. DAWSON: In the absence of the leader of the Labour party, I desire to say that we support this motion. With the leader of the Opposition, I think the Premier has said all that is necessary; but I may add that the Labour

party would have liked the address to have gone a little further, and extended our sympathy to those who are left fatherless and destitute by the sad fate of the men who were lost in the sinking of the "Victoria." The whole of this party sympathise deeply with all who are sufferers by the disaster, and I think a motion of this sort will show that human sympathy is not merely local, but can be extended to all people when it is necessary.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON: I am sure that the sympathy so feelingly expressed by the Premier will find an echo in the breast of every man inside the House, and also in the whole community. Every Briton, whether resident in the mother country or the remotest dependencies of the Empire, feels a personal interest in the British navy. We rejoice in its triumphs and feel distressed at its disasters, and I am sure that such a disaster as we have heard of lately comes upon us as a very great grief. We feel sorrow and regret, not only for the loss the navy has sustained, but for all those who are sufferers by the calamity. The address presented for our consideration is one that we can all accept, but I think that a cable of condolence might also be sent by the Government, if they have not already sent one. Possibly they may have done so, but not having heard anything on that point from the Premier I am not aware whether they have done it or not. The admiral was well known in Australia for his manly presence and force of character, and all those who have met him will remember that he took a deep interest in the protection of our coasts. I share the feeling expressed by an hon. member on the other side—that our sympathy and condolence should be extended to the relatives of the large number of brave men who so suddenly met their death by this calamity. I support the motion with all sincerity.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER: I now move—

That the address be signed by Mr. Speaker, and presented to His Excellency the Governor for transmission to Her Majesty.

I fully appreciate what the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dawson, has said, and had meant to convey our sympathy to those families who have been bereaved by this disaster. I think the address contains that; but if there is anything further wanted it will be done in the cablegram which His Excellency has intimated he will transmit to Her Majesty this afternoon, and which will be read by the Queen some time to-night.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK AGREEMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. H. M. Nelson), this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence, by message in the usual form.

PUBLIC DEPOSITORS' RELIEF BILL.

COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—"Interpretation"—put and passed.

On clause 2—"Act to apply to deposits of a public nature"—

Mr. DAWSON asked whether the Colonial Treasurer intended to include friendly societies and the union prisoners' assistance fund?

The COLONIAL TREASURER thought no one would object to including friendly societies, but with respect to the union prisoners' assistance fund, he understood there was some £1,500 to the credit of the fund in the bank at Longreach, and he did not see how it could be included; it could hardly be considered as of a public nature.

Mr. FISHER said the fund was as much of a public nature as other funds included in the clause. The money had been subscribed to assist the men to return to work, and to stand in the position in society in which they now stood in the opinion of a large body of colonists. Out of consideration to those persons, provision should be made for the release of that fund. He endorsed what had been said with respect to the inclusion of friendly societies, and thought the Premier had agreed to that at the last sitting.

Mr. McDONALD was sorry the Colonial Treasurer had not seen his way to include the union prisoners' assistance fund in the list. Whether the men had been sent to gaol rightly or wrongly was not for him to say at present; but a fund subscribed to give them a bit of a start when they came out should have been included in the Bill. There was something like £1,500 of that money locked up, and there appeared to be no possible chance of getting it at present. He was prepared to move the inclusion of the fund.

Mr. DANIELS thought that fund should certainly be included in the catalogue of charitable funds to be released. The money had been collected as an act of charity, and it should be released to enable these men to make another start in life.

Mr. SMYTH said that it was evident that £1,500 had been subscribed to subsidise crime, as it would not have been required if those men had been law-abiding. He had heard a Minister of the Crown state at a public meeting that the men did not want to get out, as they received £2 a week while they were in gaol. Two of them who had been released had been handed handsome cheques when they had come out, and really criminals were being treated as martyrs. If they had asked for mercy, they could have been freed. If as much energy had been shown in raising money for other and more worthy purposes, there would not be so much destitution at the present time.

Mr. CALLAN understood the money was deposited in the Queensland National Bank at Longreach as a trust fund. If that were so, in the reconstruction scheme of the bank it was stated that moneys to the credit of trust funds would be made available if possible, so that there was no need to provide for it in the Bill.

Mr. FISHER said that his colleague, Mr. Smyth, had introduced some acrimony into the debate, which was quite unnecessary. They were most anxious that the men at present in gaol should be given a start in life when they were released, and it was for those who had subscribed that money to judge whether other objects were more worthy or not. The fund should be made available at once. The question of how the men got into gaol, or why they remained there, had nothing to do with the question. If they lived long enough they would get out, and prove themselves men.

Mr. DANIELS: The hon. member for Gympie was wrong when he stated that the prisoners were in receipt of £2 a week while in prison. Two of them were married men, and their mates were paying their wives £2 a week, as they would not see their families starving.

Mr. FOGARTY was as law-abiding as most persons, but he intended to vote for the inclusion of the union prisoners' assistance fund in the Bill. He was totally opposed to strikes, and held that the shearers' strike was most disastrous, and the greater burden fell upon those in another place. If there was a grievance, it should be removed by constitutional means. It was not clear that the bank would make the money available, and he trusted the Colonial Treasurer would reconsider his decision.

The COLONIAL TREASURER pointed out that if hon. members wished to take action they could do so by moving an amendment, but none had been moved. He moved the insertion of the following words after "liquidators": "13. Registered friendly societies." The intention of the Bill was not to pay over to any of the bodies mentioned in the clause their credit balances in any of the stopped banks, but merely to assist any of them until they were able to obtain their funds, and thus prevent a cessation of their business.

Mr. POWERS considered the explanation satisfactory. He could not see that any bank which could pay at all would object to making the funds of hospitals and charitable institutions and flood relief committees available. The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney had already paid over part of the flood relief fund. With regard to the remark of the Colonial Treasurer that no amendment had been moved dealing with the union prisoners' assistance fund, the hon. members who were in favour of that had merely been waiting until the Treasurer moved the inclusion of friendly societies.

Mr. SMYTH thought cemetery funds should be included. The committee in Gympie had funds locked up in a bank; that at Charters Towers had about £1,000 locked up; and probably the same state of affairs obtained in other places.

Mr. ALLAN hoped the Colonial Treasurer would inform them what would be thought a body which the "Treasurer might consider to be of a public nature." Agricultural and pastoral bodies were certainly public bodies, because their money was spent for the good of the colony.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD: They are subsidised by the State.

Mr. ALLAN: Grammar schools were also subsidised, but he understood they were to be included in the Bill. The pastoralists' associations had to perform public duties in various ways—in assisting the marsupial and rabbit boards, and in encouraging the exportation of meat. One of them in Brisbane had £900 shut up in the Queensland National Bank; another in the Central district had £1,500 shut up, and they had had to borrow money to carry on.

The COLONIAL TREASURER knew from long experience that the trustees of grammar schools generally worked on overdrafts, therefore there was no necessity to include them. Having inserted friendly societies, he should stop. The definition was sufficiently large, and he should move that the words "any other deposits that the Treasurer may consider to be of a public nature" be struck out.

Mr. FOXTON contended that agricultural, pastoral, and mining societies were more of a public nature than friendly societies, which were run for the benefit of their members only. There was a society in his electorate which embraced all three branches, and which would be unable to hold its show next year if its funds—about £90—continued locked up. The argument that these societies should not be included because they were subsidised by the State was absurd,

because the fact of any body being so subsidised gave it a semi-official character. Local authorities were subsidised, and they were included. These societies were not established for the benefit of individuals, but for that of the districts in which they operated. He emphatically denied that all these societies were run on overdrafts; at all events, the one he had referred to was not. He moved that after the words "friendly societies," the words "agricultural and pastoral societies, and societies of a kindred nature," be added.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the effect of introducing such amendments into the Bill would be to make it inoperative. He had already gone sufficiently far by naming thirteen institutions, including friendly societies. He had carefully revised the list, and was of opinion that he had enumerated every institution which could be legitimately included in a measure of that nature. He found that there were no other institutions which could in any sense be called public or semi-public bodies, and had credit balances of any large amount, or were at all likely to be embarrassed by the stoppage of the banks. With regard to the society which was said to have a credit balance of £90, the bank with which it dealt would, no doubt, extend that amount of credit to the society, so that there was no occasion for it to go to the Treasury for assistance.

Mr. FOXTON thought that because only a very small amount was involved in the case referred to that was a good reason why the Treasurers should not raise any serious objection to the matter. Such a society would very much prefer to be assured of relief from the Treasury to having to depend on obtaining an overdraft from the bank where their money was lodged at a rate of interest in excess of that which would be paid them on their credit balance. £90 might be a very small thing as far as the Bill was concerned, but it was one of serious import to that particular society. Agricultural societies were on exactly the same footing as schools of arts, and he thought it must have been an omission that they were not bracketed together in the Bill. He was surprised that he had not received more support from representatives of agricultural districts, and hoped they would express their opinions on the subject.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said the bodies whose cause was advocated by the hon. member who had just sat down might well say, "Save me from my friends," for the Treasurer now proposed to strike out the latter portion of the clause, which was a saving provision, and would have given members the opportunity of gently persuading the Treasurer in his own room to extend the benefits of the Bill to other societies. But the result of the action of the hon. member for Carnarvon was that that grindstone would be taken away, whereas, if it were left, members would have a splendid opportunity to advocate claims which they would not have the hardihood to advocate in the House.

Mr. FOXTON said the speech of the hon. member would have been all very well if the Treasurer had not stated before the amendment was proposed that he intended to omit the latter part of the clause.

Mr. GROOM said the society he was connected with had an overdraft; but he believed that there was an agricultural and pastoral society in his district which would be interested in the amendment, as it had a considerable sum to credit. He agreed that if the latter part of the clause were left in it would be much better for agricultural and other societies. There was a good deal to be said in favour of retaining the words. For instance, much might be said in favour of including cemeteries; but if the con-

cluding words of the clause were retained, the Treasurer would have a discretionary power in dealing with them. He sympathised with the object of the amendment, and would support it.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON thought they would be over legislating in extending the provisions of the Bill in such a way that the Treasurer would have to find money for all those bodies which might have credit balances in stopped banks. He believed that the reconstructed banks would be inclined to give their customers ordinary facilities if only for the sake of preserving the connection; and such a society as that referred to by the hon. member for Carnarvon would no doubt be able to obtain the necessary assistance.

Mr. DUNSFORD said it struck him that nearly all the bodies and institutions mentioned in the clause, instead of having funds to their credit in the suspended banks, had overdrafts. The Bill would not, therefore, apply to them. That was certainly the case in the district he represented. He would throw it out as a suggestion that the Government step in and release those overdrafts. Hon. members might laugh, but it could be done without costing the Government one penny, while it would be of advantage alike to the Government and the local authorities. At present local bodies were paying $7\frac{1}{2}$ or 8 per cent. for their overdrafts. If the Government took them over they would also take over the securities. The Government would charge, say, 5 per cent., which was more than they were to get from the bank, and it would be simply removing the debit balance of those institutions to the Government account. In the case of the bank liquidating, those bodies would have a bad time of it, for the Government could not help them, as the Government's own funds would be gone; and the Government would have a greater amount of assets in the event of the bank smashing.

Mr. ALLAN said it was incorrect to say that the majority of the local bodies had overdrafts. One local authority in his own district had £3,600 to its credit locked up in a suspended bank, and yet it owed £1,000 for works, which it could not pay in consequence. There were many others in a similar position.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 25.

Messrs. Powers, Chataway, Armstrong, Hardacre, Dawson, Daniels, King, Turley, Rawlings, Browne, Groom, Plunkett, Dunsford, Morgan, Thomas, Bell, Allan, Duffy, Foxtton, Fogarty, Lovejoy, Reid, Fisher, Kerr, and McDonald.

NOES, 21.

Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Nelson, Barlow, Byrnes, Tozer, Philp, Lord, Dickson, Thorn, Petrie, Watson, Kingsbury, Morehead, McMaster, Dalrymple, Agnew, Smyth, Macfarlane, Cribb, and Phillips.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. McDONALD moved the addition of the words, "The union prisoners' assistance fund." The money had been subscribed for these men, and there should be some means provided by which they could get it when they came out. The hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, had introduced matter foreign to the subject. They had heard a good deal of letting bygones be bygones, and now the Government, who had professed to be anxious to do the best they could for these men, had an opportunity, by allowing the release of that fund, of showing that bygones were bygones.

Mr. DUNSFORD said there might be a difference of opinion as to whether the union prisoners had committed any crime or not.

Members on his side thought they had not; but even if they had they would have paid the penalty when they had served their sentences, and no reasonable man would propose that they should be punished twice by inflicting penalties upon them after they had served their sentences of imprisonment. He would not reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Gympie, who spoke heatedly, and who, he did not believe, desired to see these men punished twice. The fund was in the same position as the flood relief fund, and as the Government proposed to release that fund they might also accept the amendment. They knew that many men who served terms of imprisonment had afterwards turned out good citizens, and the fund had been subscribed by people in sympathy with the union prisoners, and would enable them to start as honest citizens and make their way in the country. The amount was comparatively small, and, as the men were entitled to it, he hoped the Committee would enable them to get it when they came out.

Mr. FOGARTY was not prepared to say that crime had not been committed by these men. They had been judged by their fellow countrymen, and if the law was faulty it should be amended by constitutional means. He looked upon the matter from a purely charitable point of view, and would vote for the release of the fund. When these men came out they would be destitute, and they should consider seriously before adding to the number of unemployed. He had no sympathy with disorder, but thought these men might become better members of society if they got a little assistance when they got outside.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. Tozer) trusted that they were not going to discuss the merits or demerits of the unionist prisoners. No doubt many people who had money locked up in the banks would like to get it advanced by the Government. He had money in the same bank that this fund was in, and considered he was more entitled to ask the taxpayers to assist him in his emergency than those prisoners, but no one had any right to make such a request. The only ground upon which anybody could ask for assistance was that of necessity, and he knew that many of the unionist prisoners had money in the Savings Bank, whilst some of them had other property as well. The discipline and the trades they had learned at St. Helena would make them much more useful members of society than when they entered the prison.

Mr. REID desired to contradict certain statements that had appeared in the Press with reference to the anxiety of the Colonial Secretary and the president of the Pastoralists' Union to relieve the distress of the wives and children of two of the men at St. Helena. It had been stated in the correspondence that the Government had considered the claims of the two married prisoners. The Colonial Secretary had invited them to sign a paper craving mercy, in his own words, and then he had cruelly thrown them back into prison. There was only one of them a married man, and his family were not in a destitute condition, as they had been in receipt of a certain sum every week. His wife had been able to pay off certain debts, and when the husband got out there was a handsome sum awaiting him to assist him on his selection. Application had been made to the bank before it went down, and it had refused to give the money up. Many of the men had no money, notwithstanding what had been said by the Colonial Secretary, and it would be a charity if the Government would advance the money.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON pointed out that the object of the Bill was to enable the Treasurer to "make advances in respect of deposits of a public nature in banks that have suspended payment." The Bill had been covered by a recommendation from His Excellency in pursuance of clause 18 in the Constitution Act, making provision for the objects set forth in the Bill. The money in question had been contributed by sympathisers with those unfortunate men, and was in no sense an account of a public nature. He raised the point of order as to whether the amendment was not *ultra vires*, being outside His Excellency's recommendation, and therefore could not be entertained.

Mr. GROOM: What is the flood relief fund?

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: That was for a national calamity.

The CHAIRMAN: The question raised by the hon. member for Bulimba is a very simple one for me to answer. I rule that the union prisoners' fund is not a public fund. It is not a public fund belonging to a registered friendly society in this colony. It is a fund belonging to a class, and is not in any way identified with the general public, and therefore it would be entirely out of order to introduce it into this Bill.

Mr. FISHER said that there was nothing for it but to appeal to the Speaker against the Chairman's ruling. The fund under discussion was for the relief and assistance of certain parties, and was practically governed by a body constituted similarly to the flood relief committee. The question had taken a prominent place at the general election, and at least half of those who had voted held the views entertained by those supporting the amendment. If the ruling stood, the feeling that had existed would be intensified. He trusted the Committee would support him. He moved that the Chairman's ruling be disagreed to.

Mr. HARDACRE pointed out that there were many funds included in the clause which were not of such a public character as the union prisoners' fund. The funds of liquidators, for instance, belonged to private companies which had become insolvent; and the police superannuation and Civil Service investment funds, although trust accounts, were of a class character.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They are audited by the Auditor-General, which makes all the difference.

Mr. KINGSBURY pointed out that the fund in question was originally called the "union prisoners' defence fund," and was raised more for purposes of a warfare than charity. At the last meeting of the House the leader of the Labour party referred to it as a defence fund; but now, from diplomatic motives, it was called an assistance fund. Had it been originally raised for the purpose of assisting the wives and children of these men while their husbands were in gaol, it might have been considered a charity of a public nature.

Mr. McDONALD explained that, although the money was originally raised as a defence fund, at the annual meeting it was decided to hand the balance over to a fund to be called "the prisoners' assistance fund." The hon. member for Burke made a mistake the other night in alluding to it as the "defence fund," which fund had been done away with two years ago.

Mr. KING regretted that the discussion had taken the turn it had—

The PREMIER rose to a point of order. The question was that the decision of the Chairman be referred to the Speaker.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that my ruling be disagreed to, and the same be referred to the Speaker.

The COLONIAL TREASURER asked how the ruling of the Chairman could be referred to the Speaker in that way? Such a thing was altogether unheard of. He presumed the Committee would have to give a decision on the point first.

The CHAIRMAN: I put the question as the hon. member placed it in my hands.

Mr. FISHER said he originally moved that the ruling be disagreed to, but subsequently the Chairman advised him to add the latter part. With the permission of the Committee he would amend the motion.

Mr. MORGAN said there were many members who would hesitate to pass anything like a censure on the Chairman, who would yet like to have an opportunity of discussing the subject of the amendment. He was of opinion that the amendment was quite within the "order of leave," and that the fund referred to came just as much within the meaning of the title of the Bill as several of the funds enumerated in clause 2. He very much regretted that the Treasurer had not seen his way to accept the amendment, and so save a very unpleasant discussion. It was only a small amount, and was to be distributed in the relief of a few men who were now, whether rightly or wrongly, imprisoned. He was afraid that they could not get back to a peaceful solution of the question; and much as he would hesitate to do so, he would have to vote against the ruling of the Chairman if the matter went to a division.

The PREMIER did not think there was any reason for saying that they could not get back to a proper and peaceful solution of the question. As far as the question itself was concerned, he would far rather have seen it brought to a direct vote of the Committee and decided on its merits. He doubted very much whether the ruling of the Chairman was correct. The title of the Bill was necessarily made to cover very wide ground, and there were some matters mentioned in clause 2 concerning which it might fairly be argued that they were not of a public nature. It would save time if the hon. member would withdraw his objection, and allow the matter to be decided on its merits.

Mr. GROOM considered that it was open to doubt whether that particular fund did not come within the category of public funds. The money had been subscribed by a large section of the public, and was to his mind as much a public fund as the funds of a liquidator, who was defined to be "any official liquidator, provisional official liquidator, or liquidator, as the case may be, of any company"; so that the Treasurer would be empowered to use public funds for the relief of any company, whether private or public. He hoped the hon. member for Bulimba would withdraw his objection.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON had no desire to cause any delay by insisting on his objection, but at the same time he was distinctly of opinion that the fund in question, which was raised in admiration of a few men, was not a public fund. Half a dozen men who raised money for a testimonial to any other man and put it in a bank, might with equal justice claim that it was a public fund. He had not expressed any opinion about the fund, but had merely discharged his duty in calling attention to the matter. He quite concurred in the ruling of the Chairman, which he believed would be sustained by Mr. Speaker, or any com-

petent parliamentary authority; but as he did not wish to detain the Committee he would withdraw his objection.

Mr. FISHER withdrew his motion.

The CHAIRMAN: The motion and objection having been withdrawn, of course my ruling comes to an end.

Mr. BELL did not agree with those who considered that those men, in support of whom that fund had been raised, had been committed to prison as the result of an unfair trial. He believed that they had received every justice at the hands of the officers administering the law; but he did not agree with the junior member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, that the fund which had been subscribed was a subsidy to crime. He (Mr. Bell) preferred to regard it as a fund raised by a number of colonists with the object of benefiting some of their fellows who were in prison, and who, when they came out, would sadly need support, in order that they might be put in the way of earning an honest living. It was with that feeling that he intended to vote for the amendment. He regretted that the Treasurer did not assent to the request when it was made. On that question they ought to adopt a broad policy of conciliation; and he thought it would be a graceful and a wise act, and one entirely in harmony with the spirit of the Bill, to include that particular fund in the clause under consideration.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. T. J. Byrnes) said there was no need to enter into the question of how the fund was raised, or for what purpose. They ought to look upon it simply as a debt owing by the bank to those who put it there. The question was whether it was a debt of such a nature that it should receive assistance from the Government. He thought that it was not, but that it was of a similar character to a fund to raise a testimonial in aid of some person or persons who stood high in the favour of a portion of the community. Would such a debt be entitled to be treated as a public debt? Such a motion would be scouted out of the Committee, and the proposed amendment ought to be treated in exactly the same way. No doubt a good many people had contributed to the fund out of charitable motives, but that had nothing to do with the question. The question was, whether the Treasurer ought to step in and liquidate a private debt due by a bank to the persons who put it there; and the only possible answer was, "No."

Mr. POWERS said the fund stood on exactly the same footing as the funds of friendly societies, which had already been inserted. He had seen money voted by the House for the prison brigade of the Salvation Army, with the very same object in view; and wonderful things were said in its favour. He was glad, however, to hear the Premier say he wished the question to be decided on its merits, and not on a mere side issue.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he had never denied that the fund had been subscribed for a good object; but that had nothing whatever to do with the question. Friendly societies were in a quite different position. They had been going on for a long time, their funds were always wanted to be drawn upon, and they were likely to get into a position of embarrassment through the stoppage of the banks holding their money. But the union prisoners were still in gaol, the money was not required at once, and, therefore, there was no need to include it in the Bill. He rather thought that a good deal of the discussion had been brought about for electioneering purposes.

Mr. DAWSON said that had certainly not been the case with the Labour party. All the insinuations had come from the other side, one hon. member of which having gone so far as to say that the fund had been raised as an incentive to crime. They did not want the money at once; all they wanted was that the fund should be placed on exactly the same footing as the others mentioned in the clause. If hon. members on the other side were sincere, and willing to let bygones be bygones, they would allow the amendment to be carried.

The PREMIER said though he was satisfied that the amendment should be put, he had not expressed an opinion in favour of it, and he would regret to see such an amendment carried. What was the use of talking about conciliation and letting bygones be bygones? The Government had been carrying out the law, and carrying it out as honest men in full sympathy with all human suffering, and they did not require to be talked to as men who should conciliate with other men. The Bill was not a conciliation Bill, but was intended to provide for certain specified objects. Why did not those interested make arrangements with the bank if they had such a fine subject? What better reasons could be offered for including that fund than could be offered for including the money of any individual who might happen to be in the same predicament? To increase the scope of the Bill to the extent proposed would render it impossible for the Government to meet all the cases that might be urged. They were there to do the best for the colony as a whole; and, as the amendment applied to a certain section of the community, it was not a matter which the Government should encourage in the slightest.

Mr. FOXTON pointed out that the amendment, if carried, would open up a very wide field indeed. He knew of a case exactly in point in which a committee had collected funds and purchased a testimonial for a gentleman who went to England some time back, but through the funds being locked up in one of the banks it could not be paid for. There was just as good a reason for asking that it should be released as for accepting the amendment proposed. They might just as well also ask the assistance of the Government for the release of trust funds locked up in the closed banks, and held by solicitors and others on behalf of clients as executors or trustees.

Mr. BROWNE said as to the statement that the money had been subscribed for the purpose of subsidising crime, a good deal of it collected in the district he came from had been subscribed by men who were strong supporters of law and order, and who had distinctly refused to have anything to do with the strike, or contribute anything to it while it was going on. After the men got into trouble, people all over Queensland, and outside the colony as well, had subscribed for the benefit of their wives and families, and for themselves when they got out of gaol. The fund was as distinctly a public one as the flood relief fund. It was not asked that the £1,500 should be taken out of the bank and handed over at once to the men when they came out, as under the Bill the Treasurer could exercise his discretion as to how much of it he would advance when application was made for it.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 19.

Messrs. Fisher, Kerr, McDonald, Hardacre, King, Reid, Dunsford, Morgan, Bell, Groom, Browne, Rawlings, Turley, Powers, Callan, Dawson, Fogarty, Daniels, and Lovejoy.

NOES, 28.

Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Barlow, Tozer, Nelson, Philp, Byrnes, Dickson, Peirie, Morehead, Lord, Agnew, Armstrong, Smith, Corfield, Macfarlane, Watson, Cribb, Cameron, Phillips, Smyth, Plunkett, Battersby, Thomas, Foxton, McMaster, Thorn, Kingsbury, and Dalrymple.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. CHATAWAY moved the insertion of the words:—"15. The North Eton Central Sugar Company, Limited, and the Racecourse Central Sugar Company, Limited." Those two bodies had borrowed money from the Government under the Local Authorities Works Loans Act; on the 1st January next they would have to pay for interest and redemption some £4,500, but about £2,500 of their money was locked up in a suspended bank, and they might not be able to make their payments. The money for erecting those mills had really been provided by the Government.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that the Government held a mortgage over the two mills, so that the hon. member was asking them to advance money to pay interest on their own mortgages.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD contended that the amendment could not be put, as it had not been included in the Governor's recommendation.

Mr. POWERS said that as long as the companies carried on they could not apply for assistance; but if they wound up they could apply, as they would then come in under "liquidators."

Amendment withdrawn.

Mr. DAWSON moved the insertion of "15. Trustees of public cemeteries." On Charters Towers the trustees had been put to considerable expense in opening a new cemetery, and he wished to enable them to obtain an advance in order to carry on necessary work.

The COLONIAL TREASURER had no objection to the amendment. The amount involved was almost infinitesimal, and it would be a very unpleasant thing if any individual were denied burial because the cemetery trustees had no money.

Amendment agreed to.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the remainder of the clause was omitted; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 3 and 4 put and passed.

On clause 5—"Authority to make advances"—

Mr. MORGAN asked whether the phrase "any such bank," which referred to a stopped bank, was rigid enough, and what amount of money the Treasurer might have to liberate under the Bill?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Bill was entirely permissive; but the full amount involved, including fixed deposits and everything else, was about £200,000. It was not expected that advances would have to be made to that extent; and in every case where a depositor applied for an advance he would have to give some assurance that the bank with which he had previously been dealing, and which had reopened, had refused to give the accommodation required. It was only in cases of urgency that the Bill would operate at all.

Mr. MORGAN would like to know whether, in case there was an account of a public nature in a deposit bank, and the directors refused an advance to the depositor, the Treasurer would help him until the money was liberated?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Bill conferred no rights on anybody. If the matter was one in which the public interest was concerned, it would receive favourable consideration so long as the bank came within the definition of a "stopped bank."

Clause put and passed.

On clause 6—"Transfer of accounts and securities to Treasurer"—

Mr. POWERS asked why it was provided that any debt due to the Treasurer, as the holder of the certificates therefor, should "not" be deemed a Crown debt? The Civil Service investment fund, police superannuation fund, and returning-officers' funds were in the banks to the credit of public officers, and should be considered Crown debts.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL pointed out that all the Bill enacted was that any debt due to the Treasurer as the holder of the certificates should not thereby be deemed a Crown debt. If such debts were already Crown debts they would remain so, but it was proposed to create a new relationship between the Treasurer and the banks, by which the Treasurer would become the holder of certain certificates issued by the bank. But the Treasurer would not, as the holder of those certificates, be in a position to enforce priority of payment. If he were they would be legislating retrospectively in a manner which would be very unfair to the other creditors. For instance, the flood relief committee had no right to enforce payment in priority of other creditors, and if the Treasurer took over the account and it became a Crown debt, that would be unreasonable and unfair to the other creditors. It was, therefore, proposed to leave the debts as they were; if they were Crown debts they would remain so; if they were not, they would not become Crown debts by reason of their being taken over by the Treasurer.

Mr. POWERS said if the Government were going to take over those debts they ought to be Crown debts, because they could not make anyone else liable—no one would accept the liability. He did not wish to press the point.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 7 put and passed.

On clause 8—"Accounts to be kept at Treasury of advances and securities transferred"—

The COLONIAL TREASURER said if a local authority or other depositor got an advance from the Treasury and deposited receipts or securities, and afterwards the bank took over the account in full, the Treasurer would hand back the securities.

Mr. MACFARLANE said if the banks were willing to advance money at 6 per cent. when they were only allowing 4½ to depositors, would the Government be willing to find the money, and save the depositor 1½ per cent?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Treasury was not going to be turned into a banking institution. If depositors could get reasonable accommodation from the banks, he did not see why they should come to the Treasury. If it was simply a matter of saving 1 per cent. or 1½ per cent. interest he did not think that would be a justifiable excuse for the Treasury taking over the account. If it was in the public interest to make an advance it would be done, but not otherwise.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 9 put and passed.

The House resumed; and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments.

The amendments were read a first and second time, and agreed to; and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

LOSS OF H.M.S. "VICTORIA."

The SPEAKER: I have to report that, pursuant to the order of the House during the present sitting, I signed the address to Her Majesty the Queen, and presented the same to His Excellency the Governor for transmission to Her Majesty. His Excellency was pleased to undertake to transmit the address forthwith by cable.

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK AGREEMENT BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, returning this Bill without amendment.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I move that this House do now adjourn.

Mr. POWERS: What business is there for to-morrow? We used to have too much on the business-paper, but now we have reached the other extreme.

The PREMIER: The business for to-morrow is very meagre. It will consist principally of the motion of which I have given notice, relating to the introduction of a Bill to aid in securing Queensland traffic for our railways.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at half-past 7 o'clock.