

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 6 DECEMBER 1894

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THURSDAY, 6 DECEMBER, 1894.

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

RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

This Bill, received from the Assembly, was read a first time.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. A. J. Thynne): In moving that the second reading of the Bill stand an Order of the Day for to-morrow, I wish to inform hon. members that I propose, if possible, to pass it through all its stages then. I mention the matter now so that hon. gentlemen may, between this and the meeting of the House to-morrow, consider the measure in all its bearings.

Question put and passed.

HANSARD JOINT COMMITTEE.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

1. That the joint committee on reporting, printing, and circulating *Hansard* have leave to sit during the recess, and to report to both Houses of Parliament next session.

2. That a message be sent to the Legislative Assembly inviting their concurrence in the foregoing resolution.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT: I think it is due to the reporting staff that a few words should be offered by some member of the House with respect to some remarks made here a few days ago about *Hansard*. I do not wish to refer to those remarks further than to say that in my opinion the reporting on *Hansard* since I have been in the House has been admirable. There has been judicious condensation, which is very much more difficult than full reporting; and I cannot help contrasting the improvement which has taken place in the method and accuracy of the *Hansard* reporting since I was formerly honoured with a seat in this House with the style of the reporting previously. It may be remembered by some hon. members—I regret to say that only eight of those who were here when I was a member formerly are here now—that in the session of 1874 I moved for a committee to inquire into the practicability of bringing out the publication of *Hansard* on the mornings after the debates had taken place. I was not particularly desirous of having that done myself, but being known as an expert practical journalist I was asked by some members of the Assembly to move for the committee. In moving for the committee I laid down certain definite lines on which the reporting should be conducted, providing for condensation in Committee of the Whole, for full reports in some cases, and for abridged reports in others. That scheme I submitted to the committee. They did not approve of it in its entirety, but favoured full reporting. I told them that, with full reporting, a daily *Hansard* would be practically a failure, because it would be so large, and the reporting so diffuse, that no average person could find time to read it. Subsequently their recommendations were presented to the House. For a short time there was an effort made to condense, but members of the House all began to complain so grievously that their speeches were

cut down, that at last the proceedings came to be reported almost verbatim. That was a very serious mistake, as was discovered some years afterwards, and the reports were then cut down considerably. It was also found that the publication of *Hansard* on the morning after a debate was not satisfactory, because condensation is very difficult work to perform accurately, and the reporting staff being so hurried could not produce faithful reports when the sittings were protracted. It therefore did not give satisfaction, and last year, I think, the Government informed Parliament that they intended to propose some alterations in the publication of *Hansard* this year with a view to economy and also to giving condensed reports. The improvement which has since been effected in the reports is worth a great deal more than the money saved in printing. The publication of *Hansard* every alternate day in pamphlet form allows time to the reporting staff to revise their manuscript, and the reporting is so accurate on the whole that I seldom take the trouble to read anything I have said in the House. Parliament is to be congratulated upon the report as issued now, which has a literary credit that is not, I think, surpassed in Australia. I do not altogether approve of the committee to whom it was proposed the publication of *Hansard* should be confided, and I was very pleased to see that, after discussion in another place, their duties were confined to inquiring and reporting upon *Hansard*. I do not think it would work to have *Hansard* controlled by a committee. In the hands of the Speaker and President it is very much safer, and very much freer from political influence and interference. My deliberate opinion, after forty years' experience in journalism, is that any change in the mode of conducting *Hansard* must fail to be an improvement. Had I not heard disparaging remarks made in connection with *Hansard* I should not have risen to speak now, but in justice to the staff, whose labours are sometimes extremely severe, I think they are entitled to some recognition, and I therefore thought that this motion ought not to be allowed to go as formal.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I also have heard some disparaging remarks in connection with the method in which the *Hansard* reporting is done, but I have not taken those remarks seriously at any time. My own experience in connection with the reporting in *Hansard* is such that for some considerable time past I have practically given up looking at the proofs of my speeches for the purpose of correcting them, and I think that, if we compare the work which we get done in this colony with parliamentary reporting elsewhere, we must admit that it is as well done as anyone could expect. The work done by the reporters is very well done, and the condensation that takes place is of a most judicious character. So far as my experience goes, the condensation and the work of *Hansard* is carried on without the slightest interference from any member of this or the other House; and, as far as I myself am concerned, I do not think that in the whole course of my experience in the House I have once seen a transcript of a report before it appeared in print in *Hansard*.

The HON. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON: I do not know whether there is anything behind the observations made by the Hon. Mr. Buzacott and the Postmaster-General. I have not for many years heard a disparaging remark about the staff or the reporting in *Hansard*. I remember hearing something years ago, but I have not noticed anything to complain of. Speaking of my own experience I may say that I have taken the liberty, if I may so term it, to put on proofs of my speeches the words "most

admirable reporting," and I think that during the whole of this session I have only altered about half a dozen words in my speeches. I am a shorthand writer myself, though not an adept now, because I have not been in practice for a number of years, but I understand exactly how errors creep into a report. I always wish to be reported literally, and they report me literally. Where a comma should be it is inserted, and where a dash is required they put in a dash. The reporting, as I have noticed it for a great many years, is scientific perfection. The condensation I approve of, and I think that the intelligence of the gentleman at the head of the reporting staff who brings about that condensation is of no ordinary quality. I have the greatest pleasure in adding my testimony to that of the Postmaster-General and the Hon. Mr. Buzacott as to the accuracy of the reports. An hon. gentleman has just handed me some information which shows that some remarks were made about *Hansard* the other evening of which I was not cognisant, as I happened just at that time to be absent from the Chamber. I thought there must be something behind the observations made by the Postmaster-General and the Hon. Mr. Buzacott, and I shall only add that I could not say too much about the most excellent reporting and splendid condensation that takes place under the judgment of a man who, I hope, will live long to occupy the position he now fills.

Question put and passed.

CROWN LANDS BILL.

THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly.

PASTORAL LEASES EXTENSION BILL.

RECOMMITTAL.

The Order of the Day for the third reading of this Bill having been discharged from the paper, the Bill was re-committed, and clause 6 verbally amended.

The House resumed; and the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with a further amendment.

THIRD READING.

The Bill was then read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly.

CIVIL SERVICE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

RECOMMITTAL.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, this Bill upon recommitment was consequentially amended in the 3rd clause.

THIRD READING.

The Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly.

GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK STOCK BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On clause 6—"Price of stock debited to depositor and transferred to Treasurer"—which it was proposed to amend so as to fix the minimum price of stock at par,

The HON. W. D. BOX said that the more he thought over the amendment he had proposed the more confident he was that it ought to be accepted. The object of the Bill was to transfer moneys in the savings bank payable on demand to stock-bearing interest at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and with a fifty years' currency. The Bill enabled the Treasurer under certain regulations to issue stock to the extent of £1,000,000. It was not the idea to use the Bill for the purposes of a loan for

public works, and all the objects of the measure would be secured by the insertion of the proviso he had proposed. He trusted the Committee would adopt the amendment.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL pointed out that in all their legislation in connection with the issue of Treasury bills and debentures there was no such restriction upon the Treasurer as the amendment would impose, and no Treasurer would consent to such a restriction. The idea of limiting the issue of stock at par would not stand the test of experience or consideration for a moment. If a man had an article for sale he could not expect to dispose of it for more than its market value. The restriction would injuriously affect the operation of the Bill, because if at any time the Treasurer wished to initiate a policy of issuing the stock at $2\frac{1}{2}$ instead of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. he must be prepared at first to dispose of it at a little below par, counting upon the advantage likely to accrue to the colony through the reduced rate of interest after the stock was some time in the market and its value established. The amendment was inadvisable and impracticable, and he hoped it would not be pressed.

The HON. W. D. BOX said the hon. gentleman must know that the position of that stock was entirely different from other stock. In one case the Government had a policy of works or the redemption of a loan to provide for, and Parliament gave the Treasurer power to issue debentures and obtain for them the best price he could. The Bill dealt with an entirely different matter. The Government had the moneys of certain depositors at call, and they wished to turn it into stock bearing $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest, and if it was sold below par the loss would fall upon the consolidated revenue. If he did not get support for the amendment he would not take up time with it.

The HON. J. COWLISHAW said that clause 5 stated that the stock to be issued to depositors should not exceed the amount standing to the credit of the depositors in the savings bank. That showed that the intention was that the stock should be issued at par, because if at any time it was issued at a discount more stock would be issued than the amount standing to the credit of the depositors at the time.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT said the matter had been fully dealt with the other day. He agreed with all that the Postmaster-General had said. It was a matter in connection with which no hard-and-fast rule could be made, and it was absolutely necessary to allow the Treasurer full discretion. The only advantage to be obtained by fixing the minimum price at par would be that probably only ordinary savings bank depositors would apply for the stock; and if the Treasurer was able to reduce the price and issue the stock at a discount, there might be a temptation to over-issue stock beyond the intention and spirit of the Act. The money obtained by the issue of that stock could only be applied to the redemption of Treasury bills, debentures, and other like securities; and although that seemed a check upon impropriety, it might be evaded in this way: A Treasurer might have a deficit of, say, £300,000 at the end of the year. He could first issue Treasury bills to that amount to temporarily wipe out the deficit, and he could then, by accepting applications for savings bank stock to that amount, expunge the Treasury bills, and so, without parliamentary authority, convert a floating debt or deficit into a funded stock debt of fifty years' terms. He did not suppose any Treasurer here would do anything like that, but strange things had been done in Australia, and they did not know who might yet be Treasurer in Queensland. He did not question the statutory right of the Committee to make the amendment proposed, but as it indirectly

affected the Premier, he did not see how the other House could accept it, unless they were prepared to accept it in the form of a suggestion, and avoid the technical encroachment upon their privileges. He hoped the amendment would be withdrawn.

The HON. G. W. GRAY took a different view from that taken by the Hon. Mr. Box, and thought they were indebted to the present Treasurer for putting upon the market under that Bill a Queensland stock in which trustees and executors would be able without risk to invest trust moneys in their hands. The accumulations in the savings bank were due to the want of a safe investment for trust moneys that would give an assured income. In Great Britain trustees were compelled to invest in stock of that sort, and the average percentage they received was $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The mover of the amendment suggested that the Treasurer might use the money for public works, but the 8th clause effectually blocked that by limiting its investment to the redemption of Treasury bills and other securities, which were now bearing 5 and 6 per cent. interest. If for that purpose the Treasurer sold that stock at something below par, he would be quite justified in doing so; but the construction of the Bill showed that there was no present intention of doing so. He was sure that a great many people would invest in that stock in preference to mortgages upon real property, which in many instances at the present time brought in nothing.

The HON. W. D. BOX, finding that the Committee were against him, asked leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 9, inclusive, put and passed.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT proposed a new clause providing for the investment of trust moneys in the stock created by the Bill. He was disposed to consider the clause he proposed better than that suggested by the Postmaster-General, inasmuch as his clause would enable trustees to invest trust moneys in that stock in the same way as they were empowered to invest in Imperial Government stock under the present law. At present they could not invest in colonial stock unless upon directions from the Supreme Court, and there was some doubt as to whether the court could give such directions. The clause prepared by the Postmaster-General dealt only with trust moneys in the control of the Supreme Court. He did not like legislation involving unnecessary appeals to the Court. It meant expense and delay; and delay in the case in point might prevent an advantageous investment of the trust money in stock. He found he had the support of the New South Wales Act in that particular, and he was almost sure, too, that he had seen similar clauses in the Victorian and New Zealand Acts. In reference to the inclusion of local government authorities in this clause, he might explain that there were a few local authorities who had fixed deposits, and although previously they had been able to draw against them by paying 1 per cent. more than they were receiving, that practice had now been altered, and if local authorities now placed money in the banks they had to place it there for fixed periods and could not utilise it. If they were permitted to invest money in savings bank stock they could easily realise at any time. He might point out that the more persons who were induced to invest money in stock, the more marketable it would become, and the higher price it would realise. He begged to move the clause of which he had given notice.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was very strongly opposed to any system which would enable local authorities to extract money

from the ratepayers for the purpose of putting it out at interest. He was aware of the provision in the New South Wales Act giving power to trustees to invest in this stock, but he was unwilling to accept the New South Wales statutes as a guide in such matters. The power of investment by trustees in this colony was guided by the Equity Act of 1867. Clause 91 provided that the judges of the Supreme Court might make orders for the investment of cash under their control in such funds or securities as they saw fit, and the following clause gave power to trustees generally to invest in such stock or securities as the court allowed money under its control to be invested in. That, perhaps, was a better system than the making of a hard-and-fast rule for the investment of trust funds in any particular class of stock. If in the future anything occurred to call the attention of the judges to the fact that that class of security was not a desirable one, then they could by rule of court alter the system, and the general body of trustees would have to follow suit. The amendment which he had to propose simply declared that savings bank stock should be a security in which cash under the control of the court might be invested. He trusted the hon. gentleman would not press his amendment.

THE HON. G. W. GRAY thought after the explanation of the Postmaster-General they were still more indebted to the Treasurer for bringing in the Bill. He knew of several cases in which trustees had invested trust funds on mortgage of freeholds, and the properties had now fallen into their hands, with the result that the widows interested in the estates were left without any income. In cases of that sort could the executors bring the funds under the control of the court?

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it would not be necessary to do so. If the rule of court said that court funds might be invested in any particular security, then trustees generally could invest in that security.

THE HON. C. H. BUZACOTT said in giving local authorities power to invest in that stock it did not follow that it would induce them to extract money from the ratepayers for the purpose of investment. There might be various works which they wished to undertake, and it might be advisable to allow them to put by so much a year until they were in a position to carry out those works. In that manner the money would accumulate and bear interest from day to day. The Postmaster-General had practically set the judges above the legislature, and if the securities they were talking of were any other than Government securities he could thoroughly agree with him; but should it be said that the judges, who held their appointments at the will of the legislature, were to overrule the intention of the legislature? The legislature said that that stock was to be open to everyone, and the judges seeing that there was a tendency to it declining to say ninety-six or ninety-seven might give directions to invest only in Imperial stock. He still thought his clause was better than that to be proposed by the Postmaster-General, but he would not press it.

Clause, by leave, withdrawn.

On clause 10—"No notice of trust receivable"—

THE HON. G. W. GRAY asked if the investment was not to be registered with the names of the trustees on the certificate, and in the register of the Treasury?

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the names of the trustees would be inserted, but the Treasurer was not going to take the responsibility of any breach of trust which a trustee might commit. It would be impossible for the Government to take over a trustee's responsi-

bility. There was nothing new in the clause, a similar provision being inserted in all Bills of that nature.

THE HON. G. W. GRAY asked if trustees would be registered as trustees?

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL said they could describe themselves in any way they liked.

THE HON. G. W. GRAY thought the clause scarcely explicit enough. A clause was to be inserted giving trustees power to invest in the stock, and consequently they would apply for it as trustees or executors. They would expect to be registered and have the stock made out in their names.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. gentleman must be familiar with the difficulty that had arisen in connection with banking accounts. A bank could not be expected to take any responsibility as to the manner in which funds were going to be operated upon. A trustee might desire to have a particular description put upon him, but the Treasurer would not be bound to treat the funds as trust property. Looking at the question in the interests of trustees only, he would ask hon. gentlemen to consider what the effect would be of omitting the clause. No trust fund could be transferred unless the Crown Law Officers gave a certificate that the trustees were lawfully authorised to do what they proposed to do. It would be very much better for trustees as a body that the Treasurer should not be bound in the slightest degree by any trusts.

THE HON. G. W. GRAY said if the Postmaster-General assured them that there was no difficulty in connection with the clause he was prepared to accept it.

THE HON. A. C. GREGORY said, although trustees might give in their names as trustees when taking up stock they would be personally liable, as in the case of the Glasgow Bank, where trustees were liable for the calls that were afterwards made, and they could only look to the trust itself to recoup them.

Clause put and passed.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL proposed a new clause to follow clause 10, to the effect that Government Savings Bank stock should be a security in which cash under the control of the Supreme Court might be invested.

New clause put and passed.

THE HON. C. H. BUZACOTT proposed a new clause providing that at any time after the expiration of the issue of any stock the Treasurer might redeem such stock upon giving twelve months' notice of his intention so to do, and paying a sum in gold coin equal to the face value of the stock, together with the amount of all accrued interest due on the date prescribed for the redemption of such stock. The Bill proposed that the term of the stock should be for fifty years, which was a very long term. He did not see why they should issue any stock for so long a term. Certainly, it had been done in the other colonies, but under the protest of some of the highest financial authorities in those colonies. It might be said that $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. was a very low rate of interest, and that it could not decline much below that; but in a short time English consols would be down to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and he had no doubt that they would reach par even at that rate. The object of his amendment was not to give every stockholder or the Government the power to extinguish the stock, but simply to give the Government optional power. The term he prescribed was twenty years; and then the Treasurer, before calling in and redeeming any stock, must give twelve months' notice, so that stock issued under the amendment would have a duration of not less than twenty-one years. But any time after the expiration of twenty years the Treasurer might give twelve months' notice of

redemption, and interest would be paid to the holder up to the date of redemption. He knew that it would be contended that the very fact that the Treasurer had that power would lower the selling value of the stock, and he admitted that there was something in the argument; but the experience in Continental countries, where that expedient had been adopted for many years, and found to be successful, was that in the long run it made no practical difference in the issue of the stock. It sometimes made a difference to the holder of stock, as when the value of money declined the price of stock went up, but though that was a benefit to the stockholder it was no gain to the Government. He hoped that the Postmaster-General would accept the amendment.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he had consulted with the Treasurer on the matter, and after very careful consideration they had come to the conclusion that the Government could not accept the proposal. One reason was that it was a very unusual thing in the markets of the British Empire to put stock upon the market with such an embarrassing provision, which would very materially interfere with the successful operation of the Bill. People were very easily intimidated by slight difficulties in the investment of money, and it was not desirable in introducing new stock, especially the first stock that would be issued in the colony, to hamper dealings in it by novel conditions to which people were not accustomed. The Government would have an interest in the continued maintenance of the stock at par or at a high price until the whole of it was absorbed by savings bank depositors, and it was desirable for the sake of trustees who invested trust funds in the stock that nothing should be done that would cause any depreciation in the selling price of the stock. They did not want "bulls" and "bears" to work it, but they wanted to afford a firm investment for the spare cash savings in the savings bank, so that there should be no uncertainty as to the period of investment or the rate of interest to be paid. After weighing the arguments on both sides, he thought the balance of argument was against the amendment and in favour of the proposal contained in the Bill.

The HON. R. BULCOCK said if there was to be any such limitation as was proposed in the amendment, to be honest with the purchasers of the stock they would have to put that limitation on the face of the certificate, and then it would only be regarded as twenty years' stock. If it was not put on the face of the certificate there would be a kind of deception of the public, as the people generally did not understand law, and would not think of looking at the statute, and they would feel exceedingly sore when they discovered that they might be compelled to surrender their stock within twenty-one or twenty-two years. It would be far better to make the term twenty or twenty-five years certain than to attempt by a side-wind to get what people had purchased with the idea that it was to run for fifty years. Many people might think that interest would go down still further, but he was not of that opinion. He could not support the new clause as it stood, but would regard it more favourably if it were so amended as to read that the Treasurer might at any time after the issue of stock give notice of his willingness to redeem it.

The HON. G. W. GRAY did not think the Treasurer could have hit upon a better time than the present for launching that new stock. There should be no departure from the regular system of issuing stock. If it was for fifty years, let it be for fifty years certain. He believed the issue of that stock would be viewed with great favour at home, and its success would strengthen the hands of future Treasurers. Instead of having

to sell their $3\frac{1}{2}$ or $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. stock at about 90, as at present, they would be able to sell it at par, and there was the possibility that ultimately they might be able to float their loans locally without going to the London market. At present there was an accumulation of £2,000,000 in the savings bank, and no doubt wealthy absentees, when they found that they could invest in $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. stock of that sort, would do so instead of withdrawing their money from the colony, so that there was every prospect of the success of the Bill.

The HON. J. COWLISHAW asked what was meant by subsection 4 in the next clause, which provided that the Governor in Council might make regulations prescribing "the mode, time, and place of payment of the capital moneys of any stock issued" under the Bill?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL replied that the regulations could not affect the currency of the stock, but would deal with such details as the time and place at which payments would be made; the forms of application and receipt; the manner in which applications should be made by the representatives of persons of unsound mind and the guardians of infants; and other matters of routine.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY thought it was very undesirable that they should hamper the mode of proceeding in dealing with that special savings bank stock, because there were certain rules which were well understood in England, and were used in working out the whole system of finance on the Stock Exchange; and if they attempted to impose special conditions, either to facilitate or restrict the issue of stock, they would probably bring themselves a considerable amount of trouble. At home, when the Government wished to call in any long-dated stock, they waited until the market fell, and the stock was purchased by agents on their behalf, though the sellers were probably not aware that they were selling to the Government. Every year large amounts of stock were both purchased and sold by the Government; but they sold less than they purchased, because they had to provide for the sinking fund for the national debt. There were many little details in connection with the matter, and if they attempted in a Bill like that to define how they should be done they would only hamper the Treasurer.

The HON. F. T. BRETNALL said that, coming back to the amendment, some credit should be given to the Hon. Mr. Buzacott for the manifest care with which he had pursued the subject, and the intelligence the hon. gentleman had brought to bear upon it. He had at first been disposed to think favourably of the amendment, and to agree that fifty years was a long term for which the Government should be bound to a definite agreement, because though interest would fluctuate, the tendency was downwards, and they would not go back to 6 and 7 per cent., and they would not go back to 5 per cent. for some time to come. Money was plentiful, and hundreds of persons in the old country were content to let money lie in the banks for twelve months at $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. His opinion of the amendment had been changed by consideration of the fact that a part of the religion of socialism was that interest was robbery. They were told from time to time that changes were taking place rapidly, and they had that week seen how an Act of Parliament, passed deliberately a few years ago, could be repealed, and the obligations entered into under it wiped out by fresh legislation. If that could be done in one case, they might by-and-by have a measure brought up from another place to repeal the Bill they were now considering, and reduce interest bit by bit, or wipe it out altogether. The present-day literature was absolutely pouring from the Press in advocacy

of the views to which he had referred, and it was not impossible that before some of them passed away an attempt would be made to legislate drastically upon the lines he had indicated. Under the circumstances, he felt that they should do what they could to protect investors in that stock, and that it was desirable that they should be protected in the way proposed by the Bill.

The Hon. C. H. BUZACOTT appreciated the hon. gentleman's kindly remarks, but he could not follow his argument. The hon. gentleman argued that the socialists might gradually reduce the rate of interest, or wipe it out altogether; but that did not affect the amendment, because if repudiation of that kind was gone in for, it would not matter whether the term was one, fifty, or 1,000 years. In proposing the clause he was not pitting his opinion or financial skill and experience against that of the Treasurer and the experts at his command. He was pitting experts against experts, and doing so he was driven to the proposal he had made. With respect to the remarkable observation of the Hon. Mr. Bulcock, the conditions of the stock would appear on the face of it, and if it was not liable to be redeemed for twenty years that would appear engraved on the face of the documents, and how could that be getting at it by a side wind? The Postmaster-General said that if the stock was issued for a fixed term at a fixed rate the price would be steadier; but the highest experts in the old country thought the contrary, and contended that in the case of stock issued for a long term, where there was a tendency to depreciate, there was speculation with a view to discounting the future. They could not discount the future very much in connection with stock maturing in twenty years. The most brilliant financial operation of modern times was that known as "Goschen's," and it provided not only for redemption, but for an actual reduction of the rate of interest, and in the case of stock issued at 2½ per cent. it was provided that after a certain number of years it should fall to 2½ per cent. The Postmaster-General had said that amendments being brought before the Committee in ignorance of the way in which they would be received by the Government led to a fuller explanation of the measure before the Committee than perhaps would otherwise be given. With that he was willing to agree, but his impression had been that his own amendments had been received as implying some censure upon the Government. He was pleased to hear that was not so. He had no wish to attach undue importance to anything he said, but if he had committed any breach of decorum or said anything unjust to any hon. member he was always anxious to withdraw the remark and apologise at the earliest opportunity. He had been twitted with differing from the opinions of the responsible Treasurer of the colony, for whom he had the highest respect, and for whose discretion and skill financially he had still more respect, and with the consent of the Committee he would decline to submit the amendment to a vote, and he therefore asked leave to withdraw it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. gentleman in devoting so much attention to the business of the House had done his duty as a member of the House, and it would be very culpable in any hon. member to find fault with the hon. gentleman for doing so. It was the duty of every member to study the Bills which come before the House; and if an amendment could be suggested to improve a Bill or the policy of a Bill, it was the duty of any member who could suggest such an amendment to bring it before the House in whatever form he thought best. Were that not so, they would cease to be a legislative body. But the ways of doing that differed at times, and the diffi-

culty was not that the hon. gentleman had taken the trouble to introduce amendments, but that he had adopted a course which had prevented him discussing them with the hon. gentleman in the way he so anxiously desired. The hon. gentleman was under some mistaken apprehension that he had some particular objection or hostility to amendments coming from the hon. gentleman. There was nothing of the kind, and hon. members who introduced amendments rendered assistance to the Government in the study of the measures before the House.

The Hon. C. H. BUZACOTT: That is intended. The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said there was no doubt of that, but the hon. gentleman was under the impression that he had been guilty of some discourtesy to him which for his own part he knew nothing about. He had not the slightest inclination to treat the hon. gentleman with any want of courtesy whatever. While under that impression the hon. gentleman had not adopted the course usually adopted where the advice of the representatives of the Government was sought. Nothing would please himself or his colleague better than to confer with any hon. member who desired to propose an amendment, but when amendments were put on the table, they became the property of the House, and he had to deal with them in that way. He would be pleased to give or receive assistance from the hon. member in dealing with measures before the House, and any supposed desire on his part to rebuff the hon. gentleman was absolutely non-existent.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The remaining clauses of the Bill and the preamble were agreed to without amendment.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with an amendment, and the third reading was fixed for a later hour.

THIRD READING.

At a later hour, on the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a third time, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly.

MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCE ENCOURAGEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

On clause 3—"Maker of dairy manufacture who exports it to foreign market entitled to a bonus in certain cases"—

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved the substitution of the word "Australasia" for the word "Queensland," in the 2nd line, as the Bill was intended to apply to exports which opened up new markets outside of Australasia, and it was not desirable to pay a bonus upon the export of produce to Sydney or to the other colonies.

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 4 and 5 put and passed.

Clause 6 passed with a consequential amendment.

On clause 7—"Governor in Council may appoint official inspectors, stampers, and certifiers, and provide for their remuneration"—

The Hon. G. W. GRAY called attention to the importance of the proper administration of that clause. During the last four years, the firm with which he was connected had remitted to the south of France no less than £1,250 a year for tinned butter. For the four years ending in July last, they had remitted £5,829 17s. 4d., but since that date the sale of the article had almost ceased, showing that the assistance given by the Government to the dairying industry had been of the greatest importance. Whilst on a visit to

Warwick recently, he had inspected one of the creameries there, which was superintended by a Dane and his wife, and in answer to the question whether the natural grasses of the district produced as good butter as was produced from cows artificially fed in Denmark, he was informed by the woman that she was convinced the butter was as good as Danish butter, and that the natural grasses were all that could be desired. As the butter for export would partly be tinned in the factories, the future of the trade would depend a great deal upon the inspectors, and he called attention to the matter now so that the importance of that branch of the subject might not be overlooked.

The HON. J. D. MACANSH said no doubt the value of butter depended greatly upon the pasture of the cattle. Cows fed on a particular kind of grass produced milk the butter from which was not palatable to many people, but no doubt the inspectors would see that such butter was not given a bonus. He did not think there was anything in the indigenous grasses which would destroy the keeping qualities of the butter, and he believed if it was properly made it could compete successfully with butter made in any part of the world. In the neighbourhood of Warwick factories had been established by private enterprise, and they were paying well. He thought it quite unnecessary to assist private individuals in the erection of factories, but he thoroughly approved of giving a bonus for the export of butter.

The HON. F. T. BRETNALL said there had been some outcry against the expenditure of money in the assistance of local industries, and some people had gone so far as to say that the money spent in instruction given to the farmers had been wasted. It was said that those who were instructed could teach their instructors, but whether that was so or not, it was extremely gratifying to hear the testimony of the Hon. Mr. Gray. If it had not been for the instruction given, in all probability this colony would still be sending money to the south of France for butter. That outflow of money had ceased, and they were now producing for themselves what previously they had to buy. He did not think there could be much doubt that the natural grasses of the country were equal to those of any country in the world. They were now in the proud position of exporting largely in excess of their imports, and the more the dairying and agricultural industries were fostered the better would their position become. He hoped that the local industries in the form of factories and creameries for the production of butter, cheese, and bacon would be largely extended, and that the exports of those articles would be greatly increased. If they wanted to increase the importance of the country they would have to open up for agricultural and dairying purposes the vast extent of agricultural land in their possession.

The HON. F. CLEWETT was pleased to hear the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Gray. He had always considered the instruction imparted by the travelling dairy as being of the greatest possible importance. He contended that it would be desirable that the instruction should be continued, and that each district should have instructors to still further educate the farmers. He was surprised to hear the information given by the Hon. Mr. Gray with regard to French butter, and had no idea that it had been imported to the extent mentioned, but he was pleased to know that the consignments had now ceased. He hoped the hon. gentleman's firm and others would in course of time become large exporters of the product they had ceased to import. The hon. gentleman said that the success of the business would largely depend upon the manner in which the inspection was

carried out, but he took a somewhat different view. The success of the business, in his opinion, would depend upon the way the produce was put into shape and submitted to the inspectors. The fact of inspecting it would not give it quality, and the inspectors could only see that the quality was such that the article was worthy of a bonus. It was an open question whether competent persons were available to act as inspectors. If the first operations under the bonus system should happen to miscarry it would take a considerable time to recover lost ground, and he thought there should be some test of the fitness of inspectors for their duties. If the bonus were paid to the manufacturer of the butter, no doubt butter of such a quality could be produced as would take its place in any market in the world.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said as the natural grasses of the colony had been referred to, and as he had recently returned from a visit to other parts of the world, he might be allowed to express the feeling with which he had returned to the colony. He could say unhesitatingly that he had seen no country with greater natural advantages than the one they were privileged to live in, and it rested with the people themselves to bring it to that state in which it could successfully compete with other countries of the world. The condition in which they shipped their produce was a very material factor in the success of the meat and dairying industries; and it was essential that that question should be studied if they desired to exploit the markets outside the British dominions, such as France and Germany. They must place their products on those markets in such a condition as would satisfy the people of those countries that the meat and other products they sent away could be absolutely relied upon. The Government were by no means wanting in appreciation of the importance of studying in the most minute detail everything relating to the export of meat and dairy produce.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 8, on the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, was verbally amended and agreed to.

On clause 9—"Bonuses, etc., under this Act to be paid out of funds"—

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR said he noticed that provision was made in the clause for the payment of "any fees and salaries payable in respect of the inspection, stamping, and certifying of live stock and meat." He would like to know whether it was really the intention of the Government to appoint proper persons to inspect meat, and certify as to its good quality? They knew for a fact that a very large proportion of the cattle in the colony were affected with a disease called tuberculosis.

The Hon. J. D. MACANSH: No.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR said it was very easy to say no, but it was very difficult to prove the assertion. The existence or non-existence of the disease could only be proved by gentlemen trained to observation and experienced in bacteriological investigations, and the superintendent of the recently established bacteriological institute had informed him that he was really astonished at the number of dead carcasses he had examined which showed that the cattle had suffered from tuberculosis, and had deplored that want of proper inspection. The success of the meat export trade depended upon the quality of the meat exported, and it was very necessary that competent persons, independent of the meat preserving companies, should be appointed to inspect carcasses and see that they were quite free from disease.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. gentleman was a little behind the fair, as that matter had been thoroughly discussed on clause 7. However, he might tell the hon. gentleman that the Government were thoroughly impressed with the necessity of taking every precaution to see that the meat exported was of good quality and free from disease.

The HON. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON thought it was unfair that a gentleman of the large experience of the Hon. Dr. Taylor should be told that he was a little behind the fair when he called attention to so important a matter, even though he was a little late coming into the House. That there was disease in the cattle of this country could not be denied, and it was very desirable that there should be proper inspection.

The HON. J. D. MACANSH hoped that if an inspector were appointed he would be a man who thoroughly understood everything about diseases in cattle, and that the strictest examination would be made of all meat consumed in the different cities and sent out of the colony, because unless that was done their meat, which had not a very good character now, would get a worse character and become unsaleable. There might be a good deal of tuberculosis in cattle in some districts, but living in the country and having opportunities of conversing with men who owned large quantities of cattle, he knew for a fact that the disease was not nearly so prevalent as one would infer from the remarks of the Hon. Dr. Taylor.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR confessed that he did not speak from his own knowledge of the prevalence of the disease of tuberculosis in cattle. Some three years ago Dr. Hirschfeld read a paper before the Royal Society in which he showed that there was a large amount of tuberculosis among cattle in the colonies, and he, with the Hon. W. Forrest, the Hon. Mr. Macansh, and others objected to his statements; but unfortunately at a subsequent meeting of the society Dr. Hirschfeld brought forward further evidence in the shape of a veterinary surgeon in support of his views, and they were forced to admit that they were correct. It was on that statement and on the information given him by the superintendent of the bacteriological institute that he based his opinion. When Dr. Hirschfeld read his paper, he (Hon. Dr. Taylor) expressed the opinion that it was a mistake to give so much prominence to the matter, as it might alarm the purchasers of their meat in the European markets; but Dr. Hirschfeld told him that the Postmaster-General had said he was perfectly justified in bringing the matter before the society and having it thrashed out, so that if it were proved that the disease was prevalent the necessary steps might be taken to deal with it.

The HON. F. T. BRETNALL pointed out that though hon. members were glad to have the valuable professional opinion of the Hon. Dr. Taylor, the whole matter had been discussed on clause 7, which provided for the appointment by the Governor in Council of fit and proper persons to inspect meat and dairy produce.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY thought that a great deal of the fear in regard to the existence of tuberculosis among cattle had arisen from the fact that in the districts immediately around the principal towns on the coast the best herbage had been eaten up, and that that which remained did not afford cattle the wholesome nourishment they ought to receive. But the greater part of the colony consisted of country which had not been overstocked, and which produced far more wholesome grasses, and there the disease was not so prevalent.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that he had not changed the opinion he had expressed

to Dr. Hirschfeld in the slightest degree, as might be inferred from the remarks of the Hon. Dr. Taylor. He had all along been impressed with the necessity for the inspection of meat, and thought that it was a great pity that the recommendations made by Dr. Hirschfeld in his early study of the disease, for the establishment of a proper system of inspection, had not been carried out.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 10 to 19, inclusive, put and passed.

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

THIRD READING.

The Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE BILL. COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 12, inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 13—"Price at which land is to be sold"—

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said that under the clause the land was to be sold at a price equal to the price paid for it in cash or debentures plus one-tenth part of that price, but the debentures would bear interest at 4 per cent. for twenty-five years, and they would be selling the land for half what they had paid for it. Was that intended?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. gentleman was under some misapprehension. The clause provided that one-tenth of the purchasing price should be added to that price, and the total so arrived at should be the price which would have to be paid for it by the selectors. Where the land was taken up under lease the annual rent could not be less than £7 12s. 10d. for every £100 of the purchasing price. That provided for principal and interest, so there could not be the loss the hon. gentleman anticipated. The amount of £7 12s. 10d. would cover the purchase money without the additional tenth provided for in the clause.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said that only applied to lands that were leased. There were provisions also for the repurchase of those lands, and it seemed to him that 4 per cent. for twenty-five years would be equal to the principal over and above what they sold the land for.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the Bill provided for the selection of land taken up under it conditionally and unconditionally on the system in force under the Crown Lands Acts. Land taken up under lease would carry a rent that would provide for the repayment of principal with interest and something extra besides. If land under the Bill was paid for in cash, the Government could retire the debentures if they wished.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said the arguments used in connection with the Savings Bank Stock Bill would lead to the belief that the holders of the debentures would stick to them. He hoped he was wrong, but his view of the Bill was that it could scarcely have been fully considered. It appeared to him that if the land was purchased at the nominal price of £2 10s. per acre it would, under the Bill, to avoid loss, have to be sold at £5 per acre; and land in small lots in the best positions on the Darling Downs could be got now for £2 and £3 per acre. He was afraid it would not be a profitable transaction.

The HON. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON said the hon. gentleman lost sight of clause 16, under which a man might accelerate his purchase on terms calculated by an actuarial process. A man taking up a selection under the Bill on a lease could accelerate his acquisition of it by

simply paying at any time the cash value of the balance of his obligation in respect to it. There was no loss in it.

The HON. F. CLEWETT said that the clause provided that one-tenth part of the sum actually paid for the land should be added to that sum, and that would give the price at which the land should be selected. Clause 15 provided that the annual rent was to be £7 12s. 10d. for every £100 of the purchasing price, and the 2nd paragraph of that clause said that such rent included the interest upon the portion of the purchase money remaining unpaid, together with the instalment of the purchase money as set forth in the schedule. It was not stated what the interest would be, and he thought that should be stated. What would be the rate of interest charged?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it should be understood that they were not going into the matter as a transaction for the purpose of making money. He presumed the rate of interest was 4 per cent., as that was the rate paid upon the debentures.

The HON. G. W. GRAY had calculated the matter, and found it was based on the assumption that £2 15s. would be paid for the land. To that 10 per cent. was added, and on a calculation of interest at 5 per cent. that worked out properly.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT presumed the 10 per cent. was added to compensate the Government for the reserves provided for. The rent was really interest and redemption money. Under subsection 2 of clause 13 the price of each farm was fixed by the Governor in Council, but so that the aggregate price of all the farms into which the land was divided should not be less than that before prescribed. The land would not be uniform in value, and no doubt it would be valued by a competent valuer after survey, and each portion would be marked at what its value was deemed to be, but so that each would have a price bearing a certain ratable proportion of the price paid for the whole. The Allora lands had been dealt with in that way, and the money paid by the Government had in that way been refunded by the purchasers of the lands. Under the Bill the interest for the first year was calculated upon £92 7s. 2d., as it was assumed that the purchaser paid his first instalment when he made the purchase. The payment for each year was worked out to the even sum in the schedule, and that would be a great convenience to the purchasers, and it would enable them if they wished to pay up the balance at any time to easily discover what the amount required would be. The principle followed had been taken from the Local Works Loans Act, which had been found to work so satisfactorily. He thought the Government were perfectly safe. They got the 1 per cent. which the purchaser paid more than they paid themselves, and that would compensate them for the administration of the Act. He thought the House might safely accept the calculations in the Bill, because they had been very carefully worked out; the revenue would sustain no loss, while it would be a great convenience to the purchasers of the land.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said the clause they had under consideration was clause 13. Supposing the land was purchased at £2 10s.; to that must be added one-tenth, or 5s. There must be a further addition for roads and reserves, which would amount to 10 per cent. of the area. That was another 5s., or £3 altogether. That would be the purchasing price under clause 13. The Government might intend that they would sell no land out and out; if so, let them understand it.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT said the whole difficulty had arisen through the desire to cut Acts of Parliament short. Instead of referring

to the Land Act of 1884, if a few provisions applicable to the scheme had been inserted the House would understand what was meant. He could see the force of what the Hon. Mr. Gregory said, but they had the Bill before them, and he believed it would work out all right, and they must trust in the Government and Providence.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the question was clearly settled by the 13th section. A certain part of the land was reserved for townships and reserves, and the remainder was to be proclaimed open as agricultural farms under the Crown Lands Act of 1884. The land would not be submitted at public auction so that it could get into the hands of speculators, but it must be taken up as selections and the usual conditions performed.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 14 to 21 and the schedule passed as printed.

The House resumed; and the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was recommitted for the purpose of considering clause 20.

A verbal amendment having been made in the clause, the House resumed; and the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with an amendment.

The Bill was read a third time, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly, by message in the usual form.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT: I wish to move the adjournment of the House to discuss the remaining business on the paper. We have done a very arduous day's work, having cleared the paper with the exception of the Railways Construction (Guarantee) Bill. I am most anxious to assist the Government in facilitating the business of the House, but I cannot forget that there is likely to be a long struggle upon a new clause we have inserted in that Bill. If that clause stood alone we might have been content to go on with the Bill, but there are other objectionable clauses in the Bill. I appeal to the Postmaster-General to give a little consideration to the members of this House, and I may mention that so far as I am concerned I do not wish to press my amendments. There are two points in which the Committee are with me. One is that while all lands in the benefited area will be benefited Crown lands should not be exempt, and the other is that in the benefited area lands may be taxed up to the point of confiscation. I have given notice of amendments with respect to those two matters. One is that all lands within the benefited area, whether Crown lands or otherwise, shall be deemed ratable land, and the other is that the amount which would be leviable on Crown lands should be deducted from the contribution of the ratable land. It is quite easy to ascertain what the Crown lands would produce if they were assessed and rated in the same way as private lands. I cannot say if the hon. gentlemen who supported the new clause would support me in the amendments I have to propose.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman under cover of a motion for adjournment is discussing an Order of the Day on the paper. It will be time enough to discuss the Bill when we get into committee.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT: I will not discuss the Bill, but I will discuss other matters.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Well, stonewall the thing if you like.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT: We have been sitting here since half-past 3 o'clock. It is now

nearly 9 o'clock, and I am prepared for a two or three hours' speech on this question if necessary. I am quite willing to meet the Postmaster-General in a fair way; but while I am a member of this House I will not allow advantage to be taken of a thin House to push through an obnoxious Bill. I hope the hon. gentleman will see this is a proper time to adjourn. We have nothing on the paper for to-morrow except one Bill, and I shall have an opportunity of continuing my remarks while we are waiting for business from the other Chamber on the important question of federation. I have a great deal to say upon that, and it will prevent hon. members from falling into a state of mental quiescence. I promised the House in a moment of excitement to give a full hour to the Railway Bill, but I see the great objection I had to it has been removed, so that I may cut my remarks down to five minutes. That is the only business to come before us.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The Loan Bill.

The HON. C. H. BUZACOTT: That measure will not take five minutes, and I should be delighted to assist the Treasurer in reducing our interest bill in the way he proposes to do. I think it is time this House adjourned, and in saying that I am only anxious to get the Postmaster-General to listen to reason. I observe there is no quorum present, and I therefore beg to call attention to the state of the House.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN: Attention having been called to the state of the House, and there not being a quorum present, the House is adjourned till next sitting day.

The House adjourned at two minutes past 9 o'clock.