

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Council**

**TUESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 1915**

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

TUESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER, 1915.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN (Hon. W. F. Taylor) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

## DEATH OF THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENTS.

## MOTION OF SYMPATHY.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN said: It is with very great regret that I have to inform hon. members of the death of the Clerk of Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council, Mr. Charles William Costin, who passed away yesterday morning after a brief illness.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. W. Hamilton): It is an unfortunate thing that again so early in the session I have to submit a motion of this nature to the Council. Since we last met, Death, the grim reaper, has been amongst us again and taken away our chief officer, the Clerk of Parliaments, a gentleman whom, I think, every member of this House has held in the highest respect and esteem. (Hear, hear!) He has been a most estimable and efficient officer; he has always carried out his duties fairly and impartially, and I think it is our duty at this time to show the feelings that we entertain towards the late Mr. Costin. (Hear, hear!) I am sure that the resolution I am going to move will be endorsed by every hon. member. After we transact some formal business, I intend to ask the Council to adjourn out of respect to Mr. Costin's memory. (Hear, hear!) I beg now to move—

"1. That the Council desire to place on record their appreciation of the long and faithful services of the late Clerk; Mr. C. W. Costin, and their sympathy with his widow and children in their bereavement.

"2. That the foregoing resolution be signed by the Presiding Chairman and forwarded to Mrs. Costin."

I am sure I am only uttering the sentiments of every member of the Council. We know the misfortune that Mr. and Mrs. Costin sustained in the loss of their son at the Dardanelles. They received a great blow then, only a few months ago, and now Mrs. Costin has the double shock of losing her husband. By agreeing to this motion the Council will be showing the appreciation and respect in which they held the late Clerk.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. F. T. BRENTNALL: Perhaps I may be permitted to say a few words on this motion. I had the privilege and pleasure of knowing the late Clerk of the Parliaments for a good many years before he came into this Chamber as Clerk-Assistant. He always has been devoted to his work, strictly honourable in his conduct, and conscientious in the performance of the duties he undertook to perform. (Hear, hear!) He has been esteemed wherever he has been employed and by whomsoever he has been connected with. He has not only faithfully and diligently performed the duties that were allotted to him in connection with Parliament, but outside the Parliament he has in

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many ways tried to aid and influence public opinion in directions that have been serviceable to the community, and very frequently useful to smaller sections of the community. I cannot look back upon anything in Mr. Costin's life that would cause me to hesitate for a moment in saying the strongest things that I can say of the value of his services, of his fidelity to duty, and of his upright character. It fell to my lot a short time ago, when the event occurred to which the Minister has made reference, to come up to this building and interview Mr. Costin privately. I got information which I thought he could not then possibly have had, and which, indeed, very few people had. I knew that the information would be coming out in two or three hours before the public eye, and it would be a dreadful shock to him if it came out first of all in the columns of the newspapers and he knew nothing whatever about it. So I came here, and I asked Mr. Costin if he had any news of his son. He said, "No." I said, "Neither from him personally nor through the authorities?" He said, "No, not a word, and we are very anxious about him." Well, what could a man do? What could I say under such circumstances as those? I could not tell him his son was killed. That would have been indelicate and imprudent; but I said this to him: "Well, I know that some information has come through from the Dardanelles about your son, and I would just advise you to be prepared for serious news when it comes out, as it must come out, in the newspapers this afternoon." Hon. gentlemen, I can never forget the look of horror that came on that man's face. He apprehended the worst at once—I could see that—and he said, "Can you tell me anything more?" I said, "No.; you will get the rest of the news by and by, when it is in public print, but I cannot say any more." I need not follow up that sad vein except to say that he set off at once to find his wife, who was out visiting that morning, and he had great difficulty in finding her; he could not find her, indeed. She was going from place to place, and it was not until later in the day that she realised the shock of the bereavement. I only refer to this because it seemed to bring me much closer to Mr. Costin's heart than ever I had been before, and I saw the pathetic beating of that heart as soon as I told him the serious news. I am persuaded that that event caused such a shock to the heart of Mr. Costin that he never got over it, and it made him susceptible to the influence of this prevalent disease when it seized him. Whether he should have taken more care or not is a matter we have nothing to do with. He was in the hands of his medical attendant; but one can hardly help wishing that he had taken a little more care of himself, because he was a very valuable officer, very efficient, too good to be lost. But we have lost him, and after bearing this testimony I can only express my own feelings, which can never pass away. The memory of that look on his face when he realised that something serious had occurred is photographed on my mind so indelibly that it will remain with me as long as anything can remain upon my memory. I can only express a hope that we may have his place filled as efficiently, as honourably, and as pleasantly and agreeably to everybody as it has been filled during his occupancy of the position of Clerk of this Council and Clerk of the Parliaments.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: I wish also to say a few words in connection with Mr. Costin's death. I had the privilege for many years of being associated with him on the board of the Australian Natives' Association. That was long before I came into this House; and both there and in connection with the work of the Queensland Rifle Association, in which he was also very deeply interested, I found him a most conscientious and enthusiastic worker. He always had in his mind's eye the good that he could do to the young members of those associations, and I am sure that his influence had a very great effect in forming the future characters and developing the ability of many members of both associations. He was a man to whom nothing was a trouble; and if he could in any way assist the younger members of the community in which he lived he was always most ready to do so. I need hardly say in the presence of hon. members anything about the conscientious and intelligent way in which he carried out his duties here. As the Hon. Mr. Brentnall has said, we can hope that in the future we will have someone who will fill his place as efficiently as the deceased gentleman. I am sure that I am voicing the sentiments of a very large circle of the community in and around Brisbane when I say that his loss will indeed be very severely felt.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN: I feel very much the loss of Mr. Costin, because during my term of office here I have received from him every help and every courtesy. At all times, without the slightest indication on my part, he would offer his advice and assistance, and I can assure you they have been most valuable to me in performing my duties here. (Hear, hear!) Reference has been made by hon. members to Mr. Costin's devotion to duty. I am afraid that his devotion to duty contributed somewhat to his death. As hon. members may be aware, he was unable through illness to attend when the Address was presented to His Excellency in reply to his Opening Speech on last Friday week. On the following Monday, to my surprise, and the surprise of others who knew that Mr. Costin was ill—in fact, at that time I had not seen him professionally—he appeared on the Monday evening at a meeting, and remained there for two and a-half hours, and took an active part in the meeting, and at its conclusion made a very nice and somewhat long speech, so that I and others thought he was in perfect health, and that he would be all right. Early on the Tuesday morning I had a telephone message from Mrs. Costin, asking me to go out and see him—that he had been in town all night, and was then suffering from a severe pain in his side. I went out as soon as I could, and found that he was suffering a good deal of pain, but that he was easier, and to all appearances was getting better, so that I did not feel much anxiety about his case. I visited him each day, and on the Thursday he was sufficiently well to go downstairs while I was seeing him. On the Friday I noticed that he was not so well as when I saw him on the Thursday, so that on Saturday I was not surprised to find him in bed with a high temperature, and with all the symptoms of pneumonia. The disease developed very rapidly, and, although he retained his consciousness, he passed away suddenly about 5 o'clock yesterday morning. It came as a bit of a shock to me, because I was quite prepared to see him yesterday,

and hoped, in fact, that I would find him in better health than he was the day before. But it was ordered otherwise. He was in full possession of his faculties when he died, I was informed by the nurses, and his heart suddenly ceased to beat. Probably had he not gone out on the Monday night to that meeting he would have been with us to-day, but evidently it was ordained otherwise, and we now have to deplore his loss, which I think is a very serious one to this Council, and one which it will be difficult to repair.

The question was put and passed, hon. members rising in their places when it was put from the chair by the Presiding Chairman.

## APPROPRIATION BILL No. 2.

### FIRST READING.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES, this Bill, received by message from the Assembly, was read a first time. The second reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

### PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table, was ordered to be printed:—

Despatch respecting permission to Mr. James Tolmie to retain the title of "Honourable."

### ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. Question put and passed.

The Council adjourned at ten minutes to 4 o'clock.