Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

FRIDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 1917

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

FRIDAY, 30 NOVEMBER, 1917.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. W. Hamilton) took the chair at half-past 2 o'clock.

REGULATION OF SUGAR CANE PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

MESSAGE FROM ASSEMBLY, No. 1.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of the following message from the Assembly—

"Mr. President,—

"The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the Legislative Council's amendments in the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amendment Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

"Disagree to the amendments in clause 4, lines 15 to 27—because it may be necessary in emergent cases to have such power.

"Disagree to the amendment, lines 28 to 39—because circumstances have shown the necessity of this provision—as, for instance, the case of the Inkerman canegrowers during the present season; also, persons growing cane for the first time, or who have not been previously allotted to any mill. Further, where a mill ceases operations before all allotted cane has been delivered.

"Disagree to that portion of the addition to clause 6, contained in lines 43 to 56, page 6—because the amendment does not provide both parties with the right of appeal.

"Disagree to the addition to clause 7, lines 8 to 16—because the proposal is contrary to the policy of the Act (vide section 15 of the principal Act).

"Disagree to the amendment in clause 12, page 10, lines 52 and 53, but offer to substitute the word 'eighty' for the words 'seventy-five' on line 52.

"In which substitution they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

"Disagree to the amendment on page 11, lines 19 to 24, but offer to substitute the word 'eighty' for the words 'seventy-five' on line 22.

"In which substitution they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

"Disagree to the amendments in clause 16—because the amendment proposed was designed to overcome a cumbersome provision in the principal Act; and

"Agree to all other amendments in the Bill.

"W. McCORMACK,
"Speaker.

"Legislative Assembly Chamber,
"Brisbane, 29th November, 1917."

The message was ordered to be taken into consideration at a later hour of the day.

MOUNT MOLLOY RAILWAY EXTENSION.

ADOPTION OF REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones): I beg to move—

"That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed railway extention of the Mount Molloy branch be now adopted."

I intend to move later a motion for the

approval of the plan, and, as in the case of the Many Peaks-New Cannindah Railway, I think we might take the discussion on the first motion. This railway, of course, has been before a Select Committee, of which I was chairman, and the Hon. Mr. Leahy, the Hon. Mr. Nevitt, the Hon. Mr. Parnell, and the Hon. Mr. Hodel were the other members. The committee unanimously recommended the line to the House. It is a very short extension of 8 miles and a few chains from Mount Molloy, and it has been proved to us that the line, according to the evidence that we have taken from the Commissioner for Railways and the Chief Engineer, Mr. Sexton, and from a perusal of the evidence given before a Select Committee which was appointed last session to inquire into the purchase of the Mount Molloy line, will increase the earning capacity of the present line, and will open up a very valuable area of good scrub land, and also timber lands. I think the line will commend itself to the Council for that reason alone. Besides that, it will encourage the mining industry in the district. The very fact that the Select Committee were unanimous in their recommendation justifies me in urging that the motion should be passed with very little discussion.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: It is not often that I find myself in hearty agreement with the Minister. (Laughter.) Hon. members will remember that last year a Select Committee was appointed to consider a Bill which was brought in to acquire some 20 miles of railway, of which the proposed line is an extension. I was on that committee, and I have a very clear recollection of all the evidence that was given. The members of the new committee that sat yesterday perused the evidence given last year, because, so far as the area of land to be opened up and matters of that sort are concerned, they could not have got any more reliable information than was given last year, when one of the main reasons that induced the Select Committee to recommend the purchase of the railway to Mount Molloy was the evidence of the Under Secretary for Public Lands and others that a valuable area of some 70,000 acres of scrub land would be opened up if the Mount Molloy Railway were extended another 8 or 9 miles. From my knowledge of the work of that committee, if it had not been for that valuable scrub land, I do not think the committee would have recommended the purchase of the Mount Molloy Railway last year. I look upon this proposed extension as really consequential upon what the House did last year. There is evidence that the land along the route is of good quality, and that there are something like 200,000,000 feet of timber in the district. There was also evidence last year that a fair number of settlers had taken up land a few miles beyond the present terminus at Mount Molloy, and that they were suffering great hardship on account of the bad roads, and, if this extension were made, it would relieve those men and also lead to a considerable amount of settlement on the rich lands referred to. For these reasons I find myself in hearty accord with the Minister, and I trust that the Council will pass the motion.

HON. A. H. PARNELL: I am not altogether in favour of railways being extended at the present time, considering we are so short of money and that there are other lines that ought to be finished before any new railway work is undertaken. At the same time, I recognise that, to make the railway that we acquired last year profitable, it should be extended into the scrub country beyond Mount Molloy. In fact, I think it should go beyond the proposed terminus, because the further you extend the line the better the country you open up. There is also another important reason for its further extension, and that is that you are going all the time towards Port Douglas and the Mossman Tramway. If Mount Molloy is linked up with Port Douglas, then there will be railway communication right into Port Douglas; and, if there should be a washaway on the Cairns Railway such as occurred last year, there would be this alternative means of communicating with the hinterland through Port Douglas. Another thing that makes me support this line is that within the last few weeks a very fine wolfram mine has been opened up in this district, and considering how good the country is and the large amount of timber that will be drawn from the dense scrubs of the locality, I think the Council will be fully justified in approving of this line. I have great pleasure in supporting it.

Question put and passed.

APPROVAL OF PLAN.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved—

"1. That the Council approve of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway extension of the Mount Molloy branch, in length 8 miles, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 27th November.

"2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form."

Question put and passed.

JOINT COMMITTEES.

CONTINUATION DURING RECESS.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES, it was resolved—

"1. That, in the opinion of this Council, it is desirable that the members constituting, respectively, the Joint Library Committee, the Joint Refreshment Rooms Committee, and the Joint Buildings Committee, should continue to control during the recess the several matters committed to their charge as such committees during the session.

"2. That the above resolution be forwarded to the Legislative Assembly by message inviting their concurrence therein."

STATE CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

(*Hon. W. F. Taylor in the chair.*)

Clauses 1 to 10, both inclusive, put and passed.

The Council resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment, and the report was adopted.

[3 p.m.]

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES, the Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly by message in the usual form.

Hon. A. J. Jones.]

REGULATION OF SUGAR CANE PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF ASSEMBLY'S MESSAGE.

(*Hon. W. F. Taylor in the chair.*)

Clause 4—"*Amendment of section 5*"—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved—

"That the Committee do not insist upon their amendment in clause 4."

The Committee had deleted subclause (2). The first part of that subclause dealt with frosted cane, and the latter part provided—

"In cases where it appears just and proper so to do, and upon application made in that behalf to the Central Board, the Central Board shall have power, notwithstanding the provisions of any Order in Council, from time to time to assign any particular land or lands or any defined area or locality to any mill or to alter the assignment thereof from one mill to another mill (whether or not each such mill is under the jurisdiction of the same local board), so that the sugar-cane grown on such land or lands or within such area or locality shall be supplied to the newly assigned mill."

The Government did not consider it wise to have those words deleted from the clause, for the reasons that had been advanced when the Bill was before the Committee on a previous occasion. He had had several communications, by telegram and letter, from canegrowers in Queensland, some of them in the far North, in favour of this provision being retained, and he hoped the Committee would yield to the wishes of the Assembly and the wishes of the growers. He did not stress the wishes of the Assembly, but, judging by the speeches made on the second reading and in Committee, he felt that hon. members were concerned only about the sugar industry, and that it was their wish to do the fair thing by the grower, while not doing any injury to the miller. He thought the Committee might alter their decision and allow the clause to remain in the Bill.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: The Minister gave no reasons why the amendment should not be retained. The first part of the clause gave the canegrower power, without reference to the board or anybody else, simply to deliver his frosted or damaged cane to any mill, whether that mill was crushing any frosted cane or not. If there was any regulation at all, the board should regulate the distribution of frosted cane. Lines 18 to 27, inclusive, gave a canegrower power to send his frosted cane to any mill. The canegrower could put on a big gang of men and harvest his frosted cane, and whatever mill he chose to send it to was bound to take it. They heard a lot about taking the power out of the hands of the board, but the clause which the Council previously omitted enabled canegrowers to take the power out of the hands of the board. A mill might have a lot of frosted cane to deal with from its own suppliers, still it would have to take the cane from another grower if it were sent to the mill.

Hon. G. S. CURTIS: And postpone the treatment of its own cane.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: Certainly. The first subclause which the Council omitted, and which the Minister now wished to retain, read—

"Provided that any canegrower shall be at liberty to deliver any of his frosted or damaged sugar-cane to any mill which is crushing sugar-cane, whether such canegrower's lands are assigned to that mill or not; and the owner of such mill shall be bound to accept delivery thereof and pay for the same if such sugar-cane contains over seven per centum of commercial cane sugar."

Hon. R. BEDFORD: How long will they have to postpone the crushing of their own cane?

HON. C. F. NIELSON: He had seen the time, in the Bundaberg district, when they were dealing with frosted cane for nearly the whole season.

Hon. I. PEREL: Not once in a lifetime. I was in Bundaberg for many years.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: The present season was the best season he had seen in Bundaberg so far as frost was concerned. There was very little frost in Bundaberg in the last two seasons, but generally the frost was an annually recurring matter in their district.

Hon. I. PEREL: You must have frost to make good cane.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: Nonsense. The best cane was grown up North, where there was no frost at all.

Hon. R. BEDFORD: What is the proportion of frosted cane?

HON. C. F. NIELSON: About 40 per cent. of the total.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will address his remarks to the Committee.

HON. C. F. NIELSON hoped that members would insist on the omission of the subclauses, otherwise a mill would have to take the frosted cane of any grower and postpone the crushing of its own cane.

Hon. R. BEDFORD: It will still be standing, and will not go to waste, whereas the frosted cane will.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: He knew where mills helped growers who had frosted or burnt cane. Quite recently there was a fire in the Bundaberg district, and a mill took 2,000 tons of burnt cane from a neighbouring grower. Then, as to the assignment of land, he did not think that was a good thing. The Hon. Mr. Courtice drew attention to the fact that the mill which he supplied had an award of 3s. a ton lower than any other mill in the district. If the board got power to reassign land, those people would want to supply a bigger mill in order to get a better price. The bigger turnover that large mill had the more they would be able to pay for the cane, and the mill from whose area the land was taken would get a less supply of cane, and those supplying that mill would get a lesser price for their cane. Mills had been built on the understanding that a certain area would be put under cane to supply those mills. Last year it was stated by the Royal Commission that the total cane supply capacity was only equal to 52 per cent. of the milling capacity in Queensland, so that it could be seen that one of their troubles was that there was already a short supply of cane. On the average no mill received a supply of cane anywhere near its full capacity. Take the Pialba Mill, or the Bauple Mill, or the Maryborough Mill. Would it be a fair thing to assign the whole

of the Pialba lands to one of those other mills? The Bauple Mill had done nothing for the Pialba growers. The Millaquin Sugar Company had laid a long tramline there to connect with the Government railway at Pialba, and had taken a certain amount of cane away, and the local mill was short of cane except in a good year like this.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There must be growers before there can be millers.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: That sounded all right, but it was not a fact, because no man would grow cane until he had a market. Mills were established by mutual agreement between persons who owned land on which cane could be grown and persons who were prepared to put up a mill. He noticed, according to the Press report of the proceedings in another place, that there was to be a conference on that matter, and, if the Minister could supply no reasons, they would probably be supplied at that conference.

Question—That the Committee do not insist on their amendment in clause 4—put; and the Committee divided:—

CONTENTS, 14.

Hon. R. Bedford	Hon. P. J. Leahy
,, T. C. Beirne	,, H. Llewelyn
,, W. R. Crampton	,, F. McDonnell
,, W. H. Demaine	,, T. Nevitt
,, T. M. Hall	,, G. Page-Hanify
,, A. J. Jones	,, I. Perel
,, H. C. Jones	,, W. J. Riordan

Teller: Hon. I. Perel.

NOT-CONTENTS, 13.

Hon. F. T. Brentnall	Hon. C. F. Marks
,, J. Cowlishaw	,, C. F. Nielson
,, G. S. Curtis	,, A. H. Parnell
,, E. W. H. Fowles	,, W. Stephens
,, G. W. Gray	,, H. Turner
,, H. L. Groom	,, A. H. Whittingham
,, A. G. C. Hawthorn	

Teller: Hon. H. L. Groom.

Resolved in the affirmative.

[3.30 p.m.]

Clause 6—"*Appeal from valuation*"—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved—That the Committee insist on that portion of the addition to clause 6 contained in lines 43 to 56, page 6, but propose to insert the words, "or canegrower" after the word "owner," on line 39.

The Assembly disagreed to that portion of the amendment, but his motion was a compromise, and he had the assurance of the Secretary for Agriculture that the Assembly would acept it.

Question put and passed.

Clause 7—"*Amendment of section 7*"—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved—That the Committee do not insist on their amendment in clause 7. The amendment read—

> "Notwithstanding anything contained or implied in this or the principal Act, it shall be competent for any millowner and any number of canegrowers supplying sugar-cane to the mill of such millowner to enter into agreements (such agreements being made in the same terms as to period of time, price, and general conditions) for the supply of sugar-cane to such mill; and no local board shall be or be deemed to be constituted or have jurisdiction with respect to such canegrowers."

If the Committee insisted on the amendment, it would practically destroy the principle of the Bill. His own personal opinion was that the amendment was out of order, but, as the Chairman had ruled otherwise, he hoped that the Committee would not insist upon it. He had a telegram addressed to the Government, dated the previous day, and reading—

> "Drysdale threatening close mill Friday unless growers consent variation award. Many Inkerman growers not yet harvested any cane whatever position atrocious we do not want variation award what on earth are we to do reply early."

Hon. C. F. NIELSON: Who is that from?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Mr. Christian, the president of the Inkerman Farmers' Association.

Hon. C. F. NIELSON: I know him.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. member knew everyone who was mentioned in that Chamber. He knew all the Hon. Mr. Beirne's friends; he knew all his (Mr. Jones's) friends; he knew all the friends of the Government.

Hon. C. F. NIELSON: In certain districts.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He hoped the Committee would not insist on their amendment, thereby making the Bill uniform. With the amendments that had been accepted by the Assembly, the Bill would be almost perfect if that amendment were omitted; and they would earn the everlasting blessing of the canegrowers of the State for having passed such a measure. If the amendment were insisted on, it would kill the Bill.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: If the carrying of that amendment would kill the Bill, it meant that the Government did not care twopence about anything else in the Bill but that clause.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They are concerned about those engaged in the industry.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: Apparently, they were not concerned about anything in the Bill but that clause. With reference to the telegram just read by the Minister, he knew nothing about the closing of either of Mr. Drysdale's mills, but he knew that the trouble in the Burdekin district was that they could not get their sugar away. He had a newspaper in his possession from which it appeared that Mr. Drysdale made a proposal to his growers for a reduction in the price of cane that had been already agreed upon, his reason for asking for the reduction being that he could not get his sugar away. The Pioneer Mill would crush about 100,000 tons of cane, and in that district that meant at least £12,000 of 9½ per cent n.t. sugar, and that represented, at the price Mr. Drysdale was paying for labour and cane, an expenditure of at least £200,000. That amount of money took a lot of financing.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: He has the Colonial Sugar Refining Company behind him.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: He had not the Colonial Sugar Refining Company behind him. The Commonwealth Government were not paying for the sugar when it was put on board the steamer at Townsville, as they did last year. On one of the financial Bills the Minister had stated that the Government had financed their central mills

to the extent of £100,000. Mr. Drysdale, besides having to finance £200,000, had not storage capacity to hold a season's output; therefore he was compelled to build special stores to hold that sugar, probably for one season in his whole life. Then he was compelled to insure the sugar when it was stored, and, on the basis of £21 a ton, the insurance would be considerably more than it was last year when the price of sugar was only £18 a ton. Last year he had not to store any sugar. The bulk of his growers agreed that, in order to meet this extraordinary set of circumstances, they would take a reduced price for their cane, but, apparently, some of them were standing out; and what option had Mr. Drysdale but to say, "I will stop crushing?"

Hon. R. BEDFORD: You know very well that this will kill the Bill.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: If the hon. gentleman would look up the reports, he would see that the Government had to come to an arrangement with the suppliers to one of their mills. All the amendment provided was that, if growers did not want an award and were willing to make an agreement with the millowner, they should be allowed to make such an agreement, while other growers could come under an award if they preferred to do so. It was well known that in the North it was very difficult for cane farmers to finance at the present time, as it would cost about £12 an acre to put land under cane, and no bank would make an advance for work of that kind unless the farmer had an agreement with the Government central mill manager or Mr. Drysdale to take his cane for the next seven years. He saw nothing in the amendment to kill the Bill. Some growers had petitioned that a majority of the growers should be allowed to bind the minority if they wanted an agreement, but the Committee did not approve of that suggestion, and made a compromise which was embodied in the amendment.

HON. T. M. HALL: With the conflict of evidence on this subject that they had from various quarters and the inflexible determination of the Government to bring all growers under the same conditions, it seemed to him that, if they fought this clause, they would deprive the growers of the Bill, which was a very undesirable thing to do. He thought they should differentiate between the growers in the South and the growers in the North, but the Government desired that the same rule should apply wherever the growers might be situated. Under the circumstances he was prepared to let the clause go without the amendment, feeling certain that the measure would confer some benefit on the growers, and that next year the growers would, if necessary, appeal to Parliament to remove any anomalies that were found to be contained in the Bill.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: The whole business was exceedingly difficult. The Committee could not get exactly what they desired, and the other Chamber could not get all that they desired. Therefore, all they could do was to come to the best working arrangement they could. The amendment under consideration practically gave power to persons to contract themselves outside the provisions of the Bill. Whether the principle of the Bill was good or not, if this amendment were insisted upon, the whole object of the Bill would be annulled. He was not prepared to take the responsibility of doing that, and he would therefore vote for the proposal that they should not insist upon their amendment.

HON. W. R. CRAMPTON: He felt satisfied that the adoption of the amendment as it stood would open the door to victimisation. The Hon. Mr. Nielson had painted a very fine picture of what would happen if the amendment were retained, but he did not tell the Committee anything about the tenant farmers who would be placed in a very awkward position when an ultimatum was presented to them by the millers; and that had been done, could be done, and would be done if this provision were adopted. There were a good many tenant farmers in Queensland. Some of them might want to contract themselves out of the Bill, but there were many who would prefer to be brought under an award. But, in the event of a miller or shareholder in a mill desiring to contract themselves out of an award, an ultimatum would be placed before those people, and they dared not refuse to accept it. They had an instance of that during the sugar strike of 1911, when they were compelled to go into the mills and do the work that was refused by the strikers at a time when the men were fighting against unbearable conditions in the sugar industry. The conditions at that time were such as kanakas almost would sneer at—twelve hours a day and £1 2s. 6d. per week. Still the tenant farmers were compelled to dance to the music played by the miller; and he was satisfied that, if this provision were insisted upon, the very same conditions would be brought about again.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He would respectfully ask hon. members to consider what they were doing in this matter. Because the Government hung a threat over the Council, that did not appear to him to be a good reason why the Committee should do what might be a manifest injustice to a majority of the canegrowers in Queensland.

[4 p.m.]

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There is no threat. I came here in a spirit of compromise, and every hon. gentleman knows that.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He was not referring to the Minister. He understood that the Government's threat was that, unless the Council shut their eyes to obvious facts and put this amendment out of the Bill, the Bill would be lost.

Hon. R. BEDFORD: There is no threat, but, if you kill the Bill, we must naturally bury it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I consider that the Government appreciate the consideration that this Council has given to the Bill.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: So they ought to. Let them consider what the amendment was, so that hon. members might not be voting in the dark on the matter. There was already a provision in the Bill that any twenty growers in any district—and less than twenty if there were less than sixty growers, in which case it would be one-third of the number of growers—could ask for a local board. Could anything be fairer than that?

Hon. W. R. CRAMPTON: That is not the position.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: That was already in the Bill, and let them not forget it. The only reason the Government could think of against the amendment was that the proposal was contrary to the policy of the Act. Could they show him half a dozen substantial Acts of Parliament where there were not reasonable and just exemptions? Every Act of Parliament that was substantial at all bristled with exemptions.

Hon. R. BEDFORD interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to call the hon. gentleman's attention to Standing Order 152, "Disturbances by Members." That Standing Order reads—

> "A member shall not make any noise or disturbance during the progress of business, and, if such noise or disturbance is made and persisted in after warning from the Chair, the Chairman shall call by name upon the member making the same, and shall report his conduct to the Council."

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He would point out that they could have exemptions to an Act without the exemptions being contrary to the policy of the Act. Even the Factories and Shops Act had exemptions.

Hon. W. R. CRAMPTON: The position is quite different. Those people under the Shops and Factories Act have absolutely no say whether they shall be exempt or not. It is done by the Governor in Council.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: If the amendment were not insisted on, they would have this position—that, if seventy-eight out of eighty growers wanted to have an agreement, the two growers could hang up those seventy-eight growers. Was that democracy? They were under the tyranny of a cantankerous minority. That was what the Committee were asked to vote for. He would like Queensland to know that the Labour Government stood for a cantankerous minority. The Government were so used to the tail wagging the dog, that they were trying to put that principle in the sugar industry He did not think there should be either a tyrannous majority or a tyrannous minority. The clause said that the majority could go their own way if they thought it right, and the minority could go their way.

Hon. W. R. CRAMPTON: And the miller can coerce the tenant farmer into signing an agreement.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Not at all.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have given the grower and miller an equal right of appeal.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: That was only against the valuations of the Central Board. The policy of the Government if they rejected that just amendment was that they would allow a tyrannous minority to ride roughshod over the wishes of the whole of the canegrowers in any district. If that was their policy, then good-bye to native freedom in Queensland. His policy was to allow the canegrowers who wished to make an agreement or a contract to make it.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: There are sugar-growers in the other Chamber who are not supporters of the Government, like Colonel Rankin and others, who are not in favour of this clause.

Hon. C. F. NIELSON: This clause was suggested to me by Colonel Rankin in lieu of my original amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I do not think so.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He had received bundles of telegrams from all parts of Queensland showing that there was a very large number of growers, almost a majority, who wanted to be free. They said they did not want to be bossed from Brisbane, or by any cane prices boards at all.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: A number of representatives in the other House are dependent on the canegrowers for their existence as legislators, and one of those members has said that they want this.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He would certainly resist to the last the proposition that two out of eighty could dominate the rest. With regard to the amendment being against the policy of the Bill, he would point out first that it really harmonised and extended the policy of the Bill. The second reason in favour of the amendment was that it was earnestly desired by a large number of growers, and it would conduce to a contented sugar industry. If they allowed twenty growers in any district to tyrannise over the rest, where would contentment in the industry go to? They would say, "We are dominated by the local price board. We are not allowed to manage our own business." Hon. members in another place, perhaps, were so dominated by outside influences that they did not know what managing their own business was. The farmers were intelligent enough to say, "We know what is best for us, and we want freedom." Unless that provision were kept in the Bill they would have the growers in any district absolutely dominated by a disastrous minority. Furthermore, the clause allowed each individual grower to settle for himself whether he wanted a contract or whether he would prefer the award.

Hon. R. BEDFORD: As to whether he wants a minimum wage or a starvation wage.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Not at all. If the hon. gentleman knew anything at all about the sugar industry he would know very well that, unless the clause were passed, new farms in new districts would not be opened up.

Hon. R. BEDFORD: It means starvation for the farms already in existence.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: As pointed out again and again, millers and growers found it advantageous to make special conditions. The miller said, "I will run you a tramline for 5 miles along this district. That tramline will be free, but I want you to pay me 5 per cent. interest on the tramline, and I will knock off a shilling from the price of your cane." And the farmers would jump at it, because they were getting good business. There was any amount of land right away from the mill, and not connected with the mill by any tramline. That land was dead land. This Government, which said they were in favour of land settlement, absolutely put up a sign post, "No road this way." They were not going to stagnate with the present farms; they wanted an extension of the industry. They must take it that the millers and canegrowers were not only honest, decent, and respectable men,

but that they were possessed of some business acumen, and knew what was best for themselves.

Hon. R. BEDFORD: You think this Government are a lot of rogues.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He did not think.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Do you say this Government are a lot of rogues?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He did not say so.

Hon. J. PEREL: That was the inference.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: That clause would allow the farmers in any district who had land a little away from the mill to make an agreement and say, "Right; we will plant that with cane if you will give us a tramline."

Hon. R. BEDFORD: Does the amendment prevent that?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: It prevented the farmers from making any contract with regard to the supply of cane to any mill. It absolutely prevented them. If they did not pass that clause the Government policy would mean suffocation; smother all expansion. Then, again, everybody knew that the sugar industry was a three-year industry; and why not allow a farmer to say, rather than have a rate which might give him £1 5s. this year and 18s. 6d. next year, and probably find himself squeezed out and be compelled to turn his sugar lands into dairying at the end of three years—why not allow that farmer to say, "I will make a contract for three years at £1 4s. 6d."?

Hon. W. R. CRAMPTON: Where have they ever converted sugar lands into dairying.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Did the hon. gentleman know that the sugar industry was just hanging on the edge of a razor at the present time? Did he know that it was a purely artificial industry? Did he know that in the present turmoil in Australia the sugar industry might be tossed overboard unless it was carefully fostered? The industry was essentially a three-year industry, and why should not a farmer be at liberty to make an agreement for three years if he chose? Farmers were wiser than the Government of Queensland, which lived simply from hand to mouth, or rather from hand to pocket.

Hon. W. R. CRAMPTON: There are plenty of other industries in the same category. We do not produce enough sugar for our own requirements.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: The sugar industry stood by itself in being a three-year industry. If they let the farmers make a three-year agreement, it would give stability to the industry.

Hon. W. R. CRAMPTON: Where is that done?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Surely the hon. member did not wish him to read all the telegrams again? He would read just one—

> "Suppliers Hambledon Mill emphatically urge Council insert in amended Cane Prices Bill clause allowing three years' agreement or power make award lasting three years. Also dates making award be fixed no later end February."

The amendment was reasonable. He was not attempting to bludgeon through things that were made in Germany—some Prussianised, cast-iron rule, which the Government wished to fasten on every district in Queensland, whether it fitted them or not.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES rose to a point of order. Was the hon. member in order in stating that the Government were trying to bring the sugar industry under a Prussianised, cast-iron rule—a rule that was "made in Germany," and other expressions of the kind, which were tantamount to accusing the Government of disloyalty?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Oh, no!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It was tantamount to saying that the Government were in the pay of Germany, just as other public men were saying.

Hon. C. F. NIELSON: You are getting very thin-skinned.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. gentleman is at times somewhat reckless in his remarks, and I would advise him to be a little more careful in future.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: He bowed with deference to the ruling of the Chair, but he would be very glad to see a transcript of the shorthand note of what he had said. He chose his words very carefully, and he did not alter in the slightest what he had said. He repeated his words—"A Prussianised, cast-iron rule, imposed upon all districts in Queensland, whether it fitted them or not."

Hon. A. A. DAVEY: You are quite right.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It's a lie.

Hon. W. R. CRAMPTON: You are evidently an anti-conscriptionist.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You are not the only man who is game to repeat his speech. Repeat it outside. (Laughter.)

HON. P. J. LEAHY rose to a point of order. Was the Minister in order in inviting the Hon. Mr. Fowles outside?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I did not invite him outside. I asked him to repeat his speech outside, and we would know how to deal with him within forty-eight hours. (Laughter.)

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: There was nothing disloyal in his speech. He was referring to the Procrustean bed.

Hon. W. J. RIORDAN: Who is he?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: His hon. friend had no doubt heard of the bed to which all occupants had to conform. If their legs were too long, they were cut off; if they were too short, they were telescoped out.

Hon. C. F. NIELSON: They were pulled, as the legs of the Government very often are. (Laughter.)

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: They would be doing an injustice if they made it a one-year industry.

Hon. T. NEVITT: We hope that it is a life-long industry.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: How will that fit in with the agreement between the Federal Government and the State Government?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: If the State Government did a fair thing by the industry, the Federal Government would not leave it in the lurch. They should give every grower the alternatives of making an agreement for three years, or two years, or five years, or whatever the term might be, or, on the other hand, of coming under the award. If they did not insist upon the amendment, they

would be imposing the will of a minority on the majority of growers in the district and in defiance of the wishes of the majority. That was not democratic. He was sure that the Labour Government would live to repent what they were doing, if the amendment were not embodied in the Bill, just as they would live to repent their action in connection with the grogshop. He did not believe the amendment would work the slightest injustice.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: He listened with the greatest pleasure to the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Fowles. In listening to him he felt something like a man who was moving down a placid stream with everything pleasant and agreeable, and he felt inclined to agree with the hon. member. But, when he sat down, the spell of the magician passed away, and he tried to come down to facts. The hon. member really attacked the system of awards. They must not forget that the sugar industry was being carried on under artificial conditions. He had objected before, and he hoped he would always object, to applying awards to agricultural farmers and dairymen; but they had to recognise that the sugar industry was an artificial industry, and that it could not live without the support it now received. The price of sugar was fixed on the one hand, and the price of labour fixed on the other; and what was to happen to the canegrower in between? Wool and butter could be sold in the markets of the world without any protection; but, without protection, the sugar industry would vanish into thin air, and "leave not a wrack behind." Being artificial, they had to deal with the industry in an artificial manner; and, whilst the system of awards might be unsound as applied to other industries that were not supported at the public expense, the system of awards, if it was to apply in the case of labour, must also apply to the man who grew the cane. It looked very nice to say that the canegrower should be allowed to make an agreement if he wished to put more land under cane, and so on; and he recognised there was something to be said in favour of the contention, but there was more to be said on the other side. If they insisted on the amendment, it would destroy the whole system of awards.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: No; it would allow an alternative to the grower.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: It would have exactly the same effect as if an employer were allowed to contract himself out of the provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Act. He was not in favour of the Industrial Arbitration Act; but they must take things as they were and try to make them workable. The Hon. Mr. Fowles and he had worked a great deal together on free conferences, and the hon. member knew that all legislation was a matter of give and take. If an irresistible body came in contact with an immovable body, he did not know what would happen; but, if they wished to arrive at a workable compromise, each side must give up some of its ideals. That was the way legislation was carried.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The Government have compromised a lot.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: He did not hold any brief for the Government—he opposed them quite as strongly as the Hon. Mr. Fowles—but he recognised that in this case they had accepted a great many of the amendments of the Council, and, if the Committee gave way on this amendment, they would leave the position exactly as it was last year, so far as the power to make awards was concerned; and he had not heard any outcry from canegrowers against the system of awards last year. The Council had amended the Bill very considerably, as they had a perfect right to do, but it was not advisable to strike out the vital principle of the principal Act. The Bill had several good points, and he did not think it wise to insist on this amendment if it meant, as the Minister told them, that their insistence would mean that the Bill would be lost.

HON. W. J. RIORDAN: If the amendment were carried and put into operation, the millers next year would be able to make an agreement with the farmers [4.30 p.m.] for three, four, or five years, or for any term they wished; and they would be able to coerce the farmers into entering into agreements. The main objection urged by the Hon. Mr. Fowles against the Committee not insisting upon this amendment was that if the provision were retained farmers would be able to make agreements with millers to lay down tramlines at a cost of 5 per cent. on the capital invested to the farmers; but he (Mr. Riordan) would point out that even if farmers worked under an award they would still be able to enter into an agreement with the millowner for the purpose of having a tramline laid down for their convenience. He had had a fair experience in the sugar industry, and he knew of cases where farmers had entered into an agreement for a number of years with the millowners, and afterwards found that the millowners refused to pay them the price for their cane that was fixed by the award, telling them that they must abide by their agreement.

Hon. C. F. NIELSON: Give us some instances of that.

HON. W. J. RIORDAN: Hambledon was one place where that occurred. The days when a private miller could force farmers to accept a lower price for their cane in order to get a tramline to their door had gone by, as it was not likely that there would be an extension of private mills in the future under this measure, and there would be no reason for a central mill company to enter into an agreement with canegrowers with regard to the building of a tramway. If the Hon. Mr. Fowles had been through the sugar districts he would know——

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: I went right through the sugar districts last year, and I know them infinitely better than the hon. gentleman.

HON. W. J. RIORDAN: The only time the hon. gentleman had any idea of the sugar business was when he saw sugar on the table. If the hon. gentleman knew anything about the sugar industry he would know that tramlines were built through the centre of an area, and that the fact that a man entered into an agreement did not ensure to him the getting of a tramway to his property. He thought the Committee would be well advised to leave the amendment out of the Bill.

HON. T. M. HALL: He wished to make it quite clear that although he was of

opinion that the Government would discover in the very near future that it was just as well to allow people to do as they pleased in an important matter like this, as long as the majority were agreed, still he held that having got 90 per cent. of their amendments it was fair to accept the proposal of the Minister in this instance. He did that reluctantly, as he was sure it would not be very long before it was found that it was not well for the growers to be bound in the way proposed by the Government. He wanted to see this Bill passed. If it did any injustice, it would only do it for a very short time, because he felt satisfied that Parliament would remedy any injustice that might occur under the Bill. Indeed, he gave the present Government credit for a desire to do justice in this matter, and believed that they would see that matters were properly adjusted. Some members took a short-range view of the matter and disapproved of the amendment, but if they would take a long-range view he was inclined to believe that they would have agreed to provisions which would remedy some difficulties that had arisen. However, rather than lose the Bill, he would vote with the Minister, and so give the Government a chance of putting the measure into operation.

HON. A. G. C. HAWTHORN: He was very much impressed by the representations made to him and some other hon. members by a deputation from the North. One of the members of that deputation represented the Australian Sugar Producers' Association, and claimed that that association included 1,500 growers. Another member of the deputation was a leading official of the United Cane Growers' Association, which had a large membership. Another member represented another association, and there was a fourth member who did not belong to any association. Those men told them that they represented at least 2,000 growers in the North, and that they came down here in support of a petition which was presented to the Council the other day by the Hon. Mr. Nielson. Amongst other things, the petition said—

> "Your petitioners respectfully ask that the Legislative Council will amend the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amendment Bill with the view of permitting sugar-cane growers to enter into agreements with millowners for the sale of sugar-cane to such millowners."

The last clause of the petition was as follows:—

> "Your petitioners are firmly convinced that as sugar-cane is not an annual crop, but a crop always expected to occupy the same ground for at least three or four years after being first planted, and as the initial cost of preparation of land and planting is much more costly than any other agricultural crop, it is advisable and necessary for the future maintenance and stability of the sugar industry that those engaged in it should be permitted to make and enter into agreements with millowners for such period of time as by mutual arrangement may be deemed advantageous."

The statements in those two clauses seemed very reasonable. The amendment had been framed so that it would coerce nobody. It gave to the grower who wanted to make an agreement with the millowner an opportunity of making such an agreement for three or four years, and it gave to every man who preferred an award the opportunity of asking for the establishment of a local board to fix prices and other conditions. Nothing could be more democratic than that, and he thought they should again try to impress upon the Government the advisability of accepting the amendment. For that reason he would still support the amendment.

HON. C. F. NIELSON: Mr. Dean, the secretary of the United Cane Growers' Association at Ayr, considered that one or two matters that he quoted in a previous debate were not accurate, and had asked him to make a correction. He would read a letter dated the 26th November, 1917, which he had received from Mr. Dean—

> "Dear Sir,—
>
> "I am directed to write you in connection with your speech on the second reading of the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amending Bill, particularly those parts of it appearing on page 2721 of 'Hansard,' where statements are reported to have been made by you affecting this association, which are not in accordance with fact.
>
> "First, regarding the telegram quoted by you in the first column on that page and attributed to me. I sent no such telegram. The facts surrounding the episode of the telegram are as follow:—
>
> 1. The petition which was being circulated by the Australian Sugar Producers' Association in favour of the Council's amendments of last year came under the notice of my committee, and, well knowing the views of our members, I was directed to wire to the Minister stating disagreement with the petition, which I did as per appendix 1. This the Minister published. Mr. Julin, secretary of the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association, wrote a letter to the 'Townsville Bulletin.' (Appendix 2.) Instructed by my committee I replied. (Appendix 3.) The challenge contained in that letter has never been accepted, nor replied to. The telegram of 10th October, over the signature 'Farmers' Association,' I know nothing whatever about. I certainly did not send it.
>
> "Second, regarding the Press report of our meeting in 'Delta Advocate' of 12th September. Mr. Crofton is not a member of our association, nor did he speak at our meeting, nor does the Press report make it appear that he did.
>
> "Third, the object of my visit to Brisbane. It is distinctly inaccurate to say—as you according to 'Hansard' did—that I was sent to Brisbane to plead with the Minister 'to alter the Bill in the direction in which the Council altered it last session.' The amendment I sought was as quoted in my letter to the 'Bulletin,' which, if adopted, would permit agreements being made between a grower and a millowner, subject to the Central Board's sanction as being (section 15 (2) of Act) 'in conformity with the Act and fair and reasonable in all its terms,' but which agreement would only affect the parties to it.
>
> "The amendment made by the Council last session, as you are aware, would, if

adopted, have the result that if a majority of growers came to terms with the mill, the jurisdiction of cane price boards was at once superseded, and the minority who made no agreement were bound equally with the majority who did. My association, although a strong advocate of stability of conditions, is very heartily opposed to this proposal of the Council.

"You will realise that the inaccuracies of your statements, however innocently made, are calculated to have a very detrimental effect upon our relationships with other branches of the United Cane Growers' Association as well as the central executive, as well as giving an entirely erroneous impression to outsiders; and we feel that it is only common fairness and justice that you should correct your statements in the same public manner in which they were made when the Bill is before the House in Committee. I am, therefore, directed to ask you to make that correction.

"Yours faithfully,
"ALBERT E. DEAN,
"Secretary,
"United Cane Growers' Association,
"Ayr Branch."

Then Mr. Dean included in his letter the correspondence between himself and Mr. Julin, published in the "Townsville Bulletin," and gave the full text of the amendment which his association, which was a branch of the United Cane Growers' Association, wanted, namely—

"Notwithstanding anything in this Act contained or implied, it shall be lawful for any canegrower to enter into contracts or agreements (subject to the approval of the Central Board as hereinafter mentioned) for the supply of sugar-cane to the mill or mills of such millowner and payment therefor, provided that no such contract or agreement shall be for a longer period than five years."

That was the main part of the correspondence. The only difference between Mr. Dean's association and the other petitioners was that the former wanted the agreement ratified by the board, but they were in perfect harmony with the amendment passed by the Council that the agreement should only bind those who entered into it, and not the others. The main objection of the Hon. Mr. Crampton was that the tenants of the mill would be unduly coerced. Why not leave them out of the agreement and let them have no voice in it—either the tenants, growers, millowners, or shareholders in the mill? He agreed with all the information given to the Committee by the Hon. Mr. Hawthorn, and he repeated again the request of over 1,000 canegrowers for the right to make agreements.

Hon. W. J. RIORDAN: Where are they?

HON. C. F. NIELSON: North of Mackay, Herbert River, Johnstone River, and the Mossman, Mulgrave, and Cairns districts. These men should not be ignored. Why should they not cater for them if they could do so? The Hon. Mr. Hawthorn had told the Committee that certain gentlemen had waited upon him, and that some of them had come down all the way from Cairns and other places. Mr. Howes came from the Johnstone River district, and his name was on one of the petitions. Not only had that gentleman been at the Johnstone River district, but in the Bundaberg district, and he knew what he was speaking about. There was nothing in all the talk about coercion and inveigling men into an agreement for a term of years, and about the millowner having the thick end of the stick. He knew of one man who was losing money but he could not get out of his agreement. Any one would think there were no mills and canegrowers working under agreement today, but the Central Board had never had anything to do with the mills in the Herbert River district where there was the greatest prosperity in the industry, and the board had nothing to do with the Mulgrave and Mossman mills. There were twenty or thirty mills in Queensland with which the Central Board had never interfered, but this Bill practically brought all of them under it. Under the Industrial Peace Act there were any number of industries working under agreements which had never come before the Industrial Court. The Hon. Mr. Hawthorn had also pointed out numerous cases where agreements arrived at between the parties were in operation and which had not been ratified by the court. Mr. Dean's association asked that the Central Board should ratify their agreements. He thought that the Hon. Mr. Hawthorn's suggestion was the correct one. The other place was prepared for a free conference and they knew the personnel of their managers already. This clause might be settled in such a way as to commend itself to everyone.

HON. T. C. BEIRNE: He wanted to make his position quite clear. Not only had he told the people to whom the Hon. Mr. Hawthorn referred, but he had written to others in the country stating that he was in favour of this particular amendment. He believed in the fullest freedom of contract in the sugar industry the same as in any other industry. This was a different amendment altogether to that suggested at an earlier stage where a majority bound a minority. If people engaged in the industry wished to make an agreement they should be at perfect liberty to do so, so long as they did not bind others, and this amendment bound nobody. While that was his opinion, he wanted to explain that he was going to vote against the amendment because of the 90 per cent. of good there was in the Bill. He did not want the Bill to be lost because they could not get all they wanted, as he was afraid it would be if the amendment was insisted upon.

Question—That the Committee do not insist upon their amendment in clause 7—put; and the Committee divided:—

CONTENTS, 17.

Hon.	R. Bedford	Hon.	H. Llewelyn
,,	T. C. Beirne	,,	L. McDonald
,,	W. R. Crampton	,,	F. McDonnell
,,	W. H. Demaine	,,	T. Nevitt
,,	H. L. Groom	,,	G. Page-Hanify
,,	T. M. Hall	,,	I. Perel
,,	A. J. Jones	,,	W. J. Riordan
,,	H. C. Jones	,,	H. Turner
,,	P. J. Leahy		

Teller: Hon. L. McDonald.

NOT-CONTENTS, 11.

Hon.	F. T. Brentnall	Hon.	C. F. Marks
,,	J. Cowlishaw	,,	C. F. Nielson
,,	G. S. Curtis	,,	A. H. Parnell
,,	A. A. Davey	,,	E. H. T. Plant
,,	E. W. H. Fowles	,,	A. H. Whittingham
,,	A. G. C. Hawthorn		

Teller: Hon. A. A. Davey.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Hon. T. C. Beirne.]

Clause 12—"*Amendment of section 12*"—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved—

"That the Committee agree to the substitution of the word 'eighty' for the word 'seventy-five' in their amendment in clause 12, page 10, lines 52 and 53; and insist on the insertion of the other words of the amendment."

That was not a material alteration. It gave the growers a little more than the Council agreed to in connection with the interim award.

Question put and passed.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved—

"That the Committee agree to the substitution of the word 'eighty' for the word 'seventy-five' in their amendment in clause 12, page 11, lines 19 to 24, and insist on the insertion of the other words of the amendment."

Question put and passed.

Clause 16—"*Amendment of section 20*"—

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved—

"That the Committee do not insist on their amendments in clause 16."

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: The amendment proposed to keep under the control of the Central Board all moneys that were gathered in under the sugar levy. The arguments with regard to that amendment had been not merely strengthened, but [5 p.m.] a little changed. At present the Central Board had control of all those sugar levies and the Minister dipped his hand into the fund and paid the expenses of a deputation. That was a scandalous misuse of public funds, and attention was drawn to it by the Auditor-General, who questioned the right of the Minister to do a thing like that. He wished to get a legal opinion from the Crown Solicitor on it, but the Crown Solicitor, being too busy with cattle and other things, had not had time to furnish a legal opinion on the question. Perhaps, he would rather not furnish any legal opinion. In order to show how just and reasonable all his amendments were, he would point out that on making further inquiries he found that if they allowed the Central Board to manage all the expenses it meant keeping up a double staff of accountants, and merely because the Minister had misspent public funds that was no reason why they should saddle upon the Government a second staff of accountants. They must not take it for granted that the present Minister would be always there, and if he did misspend public funds he would be brought to book by the Auditor-General. However, they must give the Crown credit for being honest in the control of public funds, and if any Minister kicked over the traces in that manner and scandalously misused his power, then they would have their remedy. He understood that a certain number of cheques were signed by the Minister and a certain number of other cheques were signed by the board. As a matter of fact, the department gathered in all the money, and the amendment would only mean that the Minister's department would have to make out cheques for disbursement, and then send them on for the formal signature of the representative of the board, so that there was really nothing in the amendment, especially if they had a Minister who had a very fine conscience with regard to public money.

Question—That the Committee do not insist on their amendments in clause 16—put; and the Committee divided:—

CONTENTS, 15.

Hon.	R. Bedford	Hon.	H. Llewelyn
,,	T. C. Beirne	,,	L. McDonald
,,	W. R. Crampton	,,	T. Nevitt
,,	W. H. Demaine	,,	G. Page-Hanify
,,	H. L. Groom	,,	I. Perel
,,	T. M. Hall	,,	W. J. Riordan
,,	A. J. Jones	,,	H. Turner
,,	H. C. Jones		

Teller: Hon. W. R. Crampton.

NOT-CONTENTS, 12.

Hon.	F. T. Brentnall	Hon.	P. J. Leahy
,,	J. Cowlishaw	,,	C. F. Marks
,,	G. S. Curtis	,,	C. F. Nielson
,,	A. A. Davey	,,	A. H. Parnell
,,	E. W. H. Fowles	,,	E. H. T. Plant
,,	A. G. C. Hawthorn	,,	A. H. Whittingham

Teller: Hon. A. G. C. Hawthorn.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had insisted on one of their amendments with an amendment, had not insisted on other of their amendments, and had agreed to the further amendments offered by the Legislative Assembly; and the report was adopted.

MESSAGE TO ASSEMBLY, NO. 2.

The Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly with the following message:—

"Mr. Speaker,—

"The Legislative Council having had under consideration the message of the Legislative Assembly of date 29th November, relative to the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amendment Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

"Insist on that portion of the addition to clause 6 contained in lines 43 to 56, page 6, but propose the following amendment:—

On line 39, after 'owner,' insert 'or canegrower.'

In which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

"Agree to the substitution of the word 'eighty' for the word 'seventy-five' in their amendment in clause 12, page 10, lines 52 and 53; and insist on the insertion of the other words of the amendment.

"Agree to the substitution of the word 'eighty' for the word 'seventy-five' in their amendment in clause 12, page 11, lines 19 to 24; and insist on the insertion of the other words of the amendment; and

"Do not insist on their other amendments in the Bill to which the Legislative Assembly have disagreed.

CHILLAGOE AND ETHERIDGE RAILWAYS BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Before I commence dealing with the Bill, I would ask the Minister to consider that this is the beginning of a debate that will probably go on till 11 o'clock at night.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Surely not.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I hope not. The Council has been called together this week for four days at 2.30 p.m., and we sat one night till half-past 11 o'clock. At

personal inconvenience we came here at 2.30 every day, because we were led to believe we were going to finish the business of the session this week. To-day we on this side actually had to form a quorum for the Government, as ten of their supporters were absent. Any one member on this side could have walked out and left the Minister without a quorum and with no business done. Yet, after that, he proposes to introduce this contentious measure, and, I suppose, keep us here until the second reading is passed.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Bad as you are, I know you wouldn't do that.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I would ask the hon. gentleman whether he intends to sit after 6 o'clock?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Why not go on till 9 o'clock or half-past 9?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: The Minister gave his word as a gentleman some time ago that half-past 10 would be considered a reasonable hour for adjourning, and yet he kept us here the other night till half-past 11, and several hon. members had to walk to their homes, although when they are kept late in another place motor-cars are provided for them.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I was very anxious to get away that night.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I would like to enter my protest against sitting after 6 o'clock on a Friday night. Here we are with not half the members present, with almost all the country members absent, and we are asked to rush through ill-digested legislation in the absence of those country members.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: You cannot say you were asked to rush through the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amendment Bill. No Bill ever got fuller discussion than that Bill in this House.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I would like to direct the attention of hon. members to the well-considered report of the Select Committee that was appointed by the Council last year to consider all the negotiations that took place with respect to the purchase of these railways. They examined a number of witnesses and all the documents that could possibly be got. In connection with that Select Committee the Council adopted the unusual procedure of allowing counsel to appear for both sides. The report says—

> "By resolutions of the Council the committee were empowered to hear counsel on behalf of the Chillagoe Company and the Government, and Mr. Stumm, K.C. (instructed by the Crown Solicitor's Office) appeared for the Government, and Mr. Macrossan (instructed by Messrs. Thynne and Macartney) appeared for the company.
>
> "Some of the evidence had no direct bearing on the chief question referred to the committee, but part of it was of value, including the statements with regard to the report of Mr. Horsley, the Government inspector of mines in the Chillagoe district."

As everyone knows, two sets of negotiations were going on at that time. The Treasurer was negotiating with certain people in Melbourne, and the Premier, in person, was negotiating with certain people in London. Cablegrams of a very strange nature were passing to and fro, some of which were put before the committee, and the public of Queensland, when they took the cover off them, came upon a number of facts that hardly reflect credit on those who were carrying on the negotiations on one side, at all events—

> "Considerable evidence was submitted, partly under protest, to the committee tending to show that two lines of negotiations were in progress, but the committee do not desire to make any comment on that portion of the evidence. They conceive it to be their main, if not sole, duty to consider whether the proposal is, or is not, one that can be recommended in the interests of the State.
>
> "The committee have not considered it their special duty to investigate the vendors' legal right to sell."

And, if we pass this Bill, it will be a very fine thing for the lawyers—

> "The committee have not considered it their special duty to investigate the vendors' legal rights to sell, nor have they considered the effect of the present moratorium (whether in London or in Australia), but the evidence shows that legal and other difficulties may arise in connection with these matters."

None of these things were before the committee. I am glad to know that some of these defects have been remedied in this Bill, and that we have a little more information now than was vouchsafed to us this time last year—

> "During the progress of the negotiations for purchase there was ample time for official and other expert reports to have been obtained on the following vital matters, namely:—
>
> (*a*) The mineral prospects of the field;
>
> (*b*) The present condition of the mines and smelters;
>
> (*c*) The approximate value of the machinery;
>
> (*d*) The detailed value of the railways;
>
> (*e*) The estimated returns which are reasonably expected to accrue from the purchase, whether the mines are to be worked by the State or by private enterprise;
>
> (*f*) The legal rights and schedule of assets included in the proposed purchase."

The Government at that time were in such an unseemly hurry to force this Bill upon the country that they did not even take the trouble to find out whether [5.30 p.m.] they could legally buy what they were supposed to be buying. Neither did they take the trouble to find out what assets were included in the purchase. They simply said "Here is a mine, let us pay £475,000 for it, and get it." Would any man run his own business on such lines? The report continues—

> "But, as far as the committee know, no such expert reports were obtained, or, if obtained, they were not made available to the committee. In view of the magnitude and importance of the proposed purchase, the committee consider that such reports should have been obtained.
>
> "The evidence actually given did not satisfy the committee that payable reserve ores exist in sufficient quantity

to justify the State in embarking on what may be considered a speculative enterprise.

"If the Bill should not become law, it does not follow that the railway will be closed, because under the Act the company are bound, under a penalty, to work the railway, and, further, the Commissioner for Railways has, under the Act, the right to run trains. The running of the railway and the working of the mines and smelters are matters of great importance to the district, but the committee are satisfied that both these objects can be attained without undue delay at less than one-fourth the present proposed expenditure, and without rendering it necessary to pass this Bill for the purpose. There was evidence to show that an expenditure of from £50,000 to £100,000 would be sufficient to resume work on the smelters, and it certainly is not necessary to purchase the whole assets of the company in order that this should be done.

"The evidence shows that cheap coal and coke are of vital importance, and that there is coal of fair quality, and suitable for coking purposes, in the Mount Mulligan mine; but it is not clear that this mine is part of the assets which the debenture-holders are offering to the Government. Unless such coalfield is included, the State may find itself unable to secure fuel cheap enough to justify an expectation of profit on the working of the mines and railways.

"The opportunity to acquire the rights of the company in the Etheridge Railway received full consideration. This railway must be purchased by the Government at the end of four years in terms of the Etheridge Railway Act, but, under the conditions that exist now, and that are likely to exist for some time, it does not seem probable that the twenty-eight years' purchase provided in that Act is likely to be a larger sum than it would cost the Government to acquire the line at the present time in connection with the purchase of the Chillagoe line.

"For the reasons mentioned, the chairman dissenting, a majority of the committee are unable to recommend the Council to pass the Bill."

That was the deliberate, well-considered judgment of the Select Committee at that time. I happened to be a member of that committee, and perhaps had an opportunity of learning a little more about the matter than some other hon. members. But the House is fully seized of the position. The proposition of this measure is to purchase the Chillagoe mines and smelters for £475,000, carrying 4½ per cent. interest, free from all taxation. A further proposition is to purchase at once the Etheridge Railway for £225,000. That. hon. members will recollect, must be purchased in 1921, and so the State is committed to that to some extent. The third proposition which is included in the present Bill, but was not included in the previous Bill, is that the State should lend £90,000 to the Mount Mulligan people to develop the coalfield and find out whether it will really fulfil the glowing promises of those who hope that it will be the best coalfield in the North. The Government, of course, will get the Chillagoe Mine for £475,000. But if private enterprise, with the most capable management that could be secured at the time, has continually landed this mine in a loss, so that the debenture-holders and shareholders are heartily sick of the enterprise and would be glad to let it go at any amount they can possibly get, are we to believe that if the State stepped in now they would be able to make a success of what has been a continuing failure, almost ever since Chillagoe became a familiar word in Queensland? No effort has been spared to make that venture a success. With regard to the deposits of ore we have the evidence of Mr. Ball, the Government Geologist, who might have been born a Scotchman as far as his caution is concerned, when he replied to a question as to whether there were deposits which would warrant the purchase of the mine. At question 226 he was asked—

"I have one question to ask you as a geologist, because you have a good reputation as a geologist: I am an old colonist, and I know the reputation of the different geologists, and I would like to ask you if, from your knowledge of the mining capacity of the Chillagoe district, you think the lodes are permanent enough in character and the minerals permanent enough to warrant the State in purchasing the Chillagoe Railway and works and all the assets, and working them, taking into consideration the price of labour, hours, and all other labour conditions which have been operating since the war started?"

What reply did he give to that question? He said—

"That is a very big question for one to answer."

The next question was—

"If you do not wish to answer I will not press it?"

His reply to that was—

"I don't want to escape my responsibilities."

Then he was asked this question—

"I asked you merely as a geologist?"

To that he replied—

"I should not like to say that the mines are developed sufficiently at the present time to warrant the purchase of the railway"——

That was the opinion he expressed, but I will give his answer in full as it is recorded in the evidence. Mr. Ball added—

"but I believe that the field as it stands does warrant it."

We have heard the persuasive speech of the Hon. Mr. Leahy, in which he supplemented a number of the arguments given in the Select Committee's report last year, and produced certain evidence which shows his mind on this measure. The proposition, then, before the Council is that in the face of a thoroughly well-considered and well-digested report, prepared after getting evidence from all quarters, the Government propose to purchase the railway and the mines. The committee deliberately came to the decision that nothing would justify this Council at that time in accepting the proposal. Has anything transpired in the meantime that would justify this House somersaulting upon its well-considered decision of last year? I, for one, am quite willing to hear any further evidence that may have been obtained in regard to the matter. In order to give the fullest evidence to the House I may be

permitted to quote one or two sentences from a relevant article which appeared in the Townsville "Daily Bulletin" of the 17th November of this year. These sentences read thus—

> "The millennium has surely arrived. Shades of Billy Browne, Johnny Dunsford, and Andy Dawson, witness the glad hand extended by Mr. Theodore to the heirs, executors, assigns, or representatives of those terrible 'boodlers' who promoted the Chillagoe Railway and Mines Company some twenty years ago. Who would have thought then, as the people's leaders thundered in ringing denunciations of the 'boodlers,' who were 'stealing the fairest and most productive mineral areas in Queensland,' than in the end the 'same old' Labour party would extend the hand of financial support to the heirs, executors, etc., who had either got in and could not get out, or who had failed to 'get out' at the psychological time and so compelled to nurse the expensive Chillagoe baby? No doubt, the aforesaid infant has been an expensive one to handle, and the older it gets the more it swallows up the cash.
>
> "Three or four new companies have been formed and failed to nurse the baby burden to lusty life; they have all proved miserable and costly failures. Something like two millions of widely collected share capital have disappeared, and the still expensive and capital-swallowing baby is now to be handed to the State to nurse, and the worst of it is the State is doing the baby-snatching."

How much of the £90,000 to be advanced will go to those who were the first shareholders of the Company?

Hon. R. BEDFORD: I do not believe a penny of it does; I do not know. The money is to provide coke works for giving this company a new lease of life, and the hinterland of Cairns a new lease of life.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: What is the width of the seams in Mount Mulligan?

Hon. R. BEDFORD: I do not know.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: Will the hon. gentleman tell me of a single coal-seam in Queensland that is worked at 2 feet? There is one in Northumberland in England that is 1 foot 9 inches. The article continues—

> "There is no doubt the new wet-nurse will be a highly-paid one, and her methods will be costly."

I am just giving this as the considered opinion of a large section in North Queensland, who may be considered to know the requirements of the district up there.

Hon. R. BEDFORD: You are giving us the opinion of one reporter, who may have been there two days.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: It is a leading article in a paper which is read by thousands in Queensland. It proceeds—

> "But what of that? The Labour party, whose original hostility to Chillagoe 'boodlers' has been mellowed by age and political circumstances—not, of course, because the electorates of the Treasurer and Speaker are concerned, that is merely a coincidence—are now determined to asist the struggling capitalists, who, having no other market for their property, and suffering excruciating pain from the continuous annual loss, turn with streaming eyes and uplifted hands to their only possible financial saviour, the Queensland Government. The debenture holders (really mortgagees) are to be relieved of their annual loss, and receive interest-bearing debentures."

Hon. R. BEDFORD: This is not a railway, but an electioneering matter to you.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: Incidentally, it may be an electioneering matter—I do not know whether it is or not—but I look at it from a far different plane than that. Is the State at this time justified in spending practically £800,000 upon an uncertain mining enterprise?

Hon. R. BEDFORD: There is no £800,000 about it, that is misleading purposely. We have to take up the Etheridge railway in 1921 at £225,000.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: I understand that I shall be allowed to make some further observations at the next sitting of the House.

The PRESIDENT: Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. member be allowed to continue his speech at the next sitting of the Council?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Hon. R. BEDFORD: I move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for the next sitting day of the House.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT.

MONDAY SITTING.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I move—That the Council, at its rising, do adjourn until 3 o'clock p.m. on Monday next.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I move—That the Council do now adjourn. The first business on Monday will be the consideration in Committee of the Public Works Land Resumption Act Amendment Bill, the Local Authorities Acts Amendment Bill, and the Pharmacy Bill, and the second readings of the Clermont Flood Relief Act Amendment Bill, the Succession and Probate Duties Acts Amendment Bill, and the Land Act Amendment Bill.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: Can the hon. gentleman give us any forecast as to when the business will be finished? Will it be next Friday, or next Tuesday?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I am hoping it will be next Tuesday. By arrangement, we are adjourning to-night at 6 o'clock, and the Council will meet on Monday to dispose of as much business as possible, without taking the contentious measures or having any divisions, so that we can have the Bills ready for divisions on Tuesday next. (Hear, hear!) We would like to close the session on Tuesday night, if possible, and I hope hon. members will assist me to do that.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at five minutes to 6 o'clock p.m.

Hon. A. J. Jones.]