

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1920

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER, 1920.

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

QUESTIONS.

INSURANCE OF COMMONWEALTH PUBLIC SERVANTS.

HON. H. G. MCPHAIL asked the representative of the Government—

“Will he inform the Council if it is a fact that the Commonwealth Government refuse to recognise the insurance of its servants when the same is taken out with the State Insurance Company, and whether the Commonwealth servants are instructed to insure with the Australian Mutual Provident and other private companies?”

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. A. J. Jones) replied—

“1. In response to repeated requests, since January, 1918, for approval of the Governor-General, under section 52 of The Commonwealth Public Service Act, the Commonwealth Public Service Commissioner's Office advised the Insurance Commissioner on the 11th June last that it had been decided, in view of the proposal to introduce a scheme of superannuation into the Commonwealth Public Service, that no further companies or societies should be added to the list of approved insurance companies or societies.

“In Commonwealth Gazette No. 93, folio 2108, dated 28th October, 1920, however, a notice appears to the effect that Policy No. 606528 of the State Government Insurance Office, for £192, has been accepted as a compliance with the provisions of the Public Service Act and Regulations. In view thereof, the Commonwealth Public Service Commissioner has been written that possibly since the advice of the 11th June last arrangements have been made for a general acceptance of policies issued by the State Government Insurance Office as a compliance with the provisions of the Public Service Act and Regulations, and asked for advice regarding the matter.

“2. Under Commonwealth Regulations governing the matter, certain private life insurance offices have been approved for the insurance of the lives of Commonwealth public servants.”

EXPENDITURE ON ROMA BORE.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES asked the representative of the Government—

“What is the total amount of money (inclusive of wages, etc.) expended in connection with the Roma Bore—(a) to 30th June, 1920; (b) to 30th October, 1920?”

Hon. E. W. H. Fowles.]

The SECRETARY FOR MINES replied—

“(a) Cost to 30th June, 1920, £26,251 14s. 4d. (details can be found in Auditor-General’s Report, page 54); (b) cost to 30th October, 1920, £28,002 8s.”

AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS ON STATE ENTERPRISES AND CENTRAL SUGAR MILLS.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I desire to ask the Minister, without notice, when the report of the Auditor-General on State Enterprises, also his report on Central Sugar Mills, will be available? I notice that the Auditor-General says these reports will be available “at an early date.”

The SECRETARY FOR MINES replied: I cannot say off hand when those reports will be available, but if the hon. gentleman will give notice of the question I shall be prepared to answer it to-morrow.

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table and ordered to be printed:—

1. Statements of various companies under the Life Assurance Companies Act of 1901.
2. Eighth Report of the Public Service Superannuation Board.
3. Return under the Mining Machinery Advances Act of 1906.
4. Report of the State Government Insurance Office for 1919-1920.
5. Report of the Agent-General of Queensland for 1919.

Papers Nos. 2 to 5 ordered to be printed.

SITTING DAYS.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I move—

“That, unless otherwise ordered, the Council will meet for the despatch of business at 3.30 o’clock p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday in each week, and that Government business do take precedence of all other business on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.”

This is usually a formal motion, but I should like to inform the House that it is not our desire to sit on Mondays or Fridays, unless it is necessary to do so. Still, with all the business that is likely to come before us, we shall probably find it necessary later on to sit on both Mondays and Fridays. The business that we are likely to get from the Assembly in the early days of the session we shall probably be able to get through by sitting on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: The Government have no business here at all.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. gentleman will probably have an opportunity of discussing that matter later on. In the meantime, we shall endeavour to do our business by sitting three days a week. I shall endeavour to concentrate the business in such a way as will render it unnecessary to sit on Monday or Friday, and I hope to have the support of hon. members on both sides of the House in the efforts I shall make in that direction.

[Hon. A. J. Jones.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: This is a new departure. In all previous sessions that I can remember the usual thing was to pass a motion providing that the House should sit on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; and later on, if it became necessary to provide an additional sitting day, a fresh motion was moved to add either Monday or Friday, or both if necessary, to the sitting days.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: This is doing the thing in the proper way.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: I do not think so. I understood the Minister to say that it will not be necessary to sit on Mondays or Fridays. I agree with him in that statement because we do not debate matters at such length here as they do in the other Chamber, although we probably do it more intelligently.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Most of the Bills last session were discussed here at greater length than they were in the Assembly.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: Some Bills were discussed here which never went back to the Assembly. I think we should adhere to the old custom of providing for three sitting days a week, but if the Minister insists upon his motion he will carry it, as he has the majority at his back. However, it is some satisfaction to know that it is not the intention of the hon. gentleman to sit on Mondays or Fridays.

Question put and passed.

JOINT COMMITTEES.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I move—

“1. That the President, Mr. Leahy, and Mr. T. L. Jones be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management of the Parliamentary Library;

“2. That the President, Mr. Skirving, and Mr. Davey be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management of the Parliamentary Refreshment-rooms;

“3. That the President, Mr. Perel, and Mr. Fowles be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings;

“4. That the foregoing Resolutions be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly, by message, requesting that they will be pleased to nominate a like number of members from their body with a view to give effect to the 8th Joint Standing Order.”

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Before this motion is put, I should like to offer a remark or two on the work of the Joint Library Committee. While complimenting them on the choice of books, newspapers, and magazines obtained last year, I would suggest to them that an effort should be made to weed out some of the smaller books, the eighteen-penny book, which have no more than an ephemeral interest.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: What class of books do you refer to?

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: Mostly little brochures about the war, which were cer-

tainly interesting at the time they were published, but were soon out of date.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: All books are not ordered by the Library Committee. I agree that there is a lot in what you say about some of the books mentioned.

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: The books on that table are a very mixed collection. Some of them are the best of their kind that you can get in the world, but a lot of them have lost interest and are really of no value. I would suggest to the Library Committee that, now that the Pacific is looming as being a theatre of great importance in the world's history, it might be of great advantage for us to get one or two magazines from the Californian Slope in America, well-informed magazines, and a leading daily from Honolulu, which is the place where the Japanese shake hands with the Americans. It might possibly be as well, also, to instruct our London board to give us books on the inside situation in Russia, Japan, and China. There are some excellent books of travel in the Library, and I am sure a number of us here greedily seize on them. If there is one subject on which most of us, I feel sure, are not fully informed, it is the Bolshevik movement in Russia. I find that the best information comes at second-hand through American magazines. Of course, we always have the Queensland newspapers here, but I think most of the world's best thought is gathered up in magazines at the present time, even fugitive articles in magazines; they represent the most advanced thought of the world. We might very well spend a few pounds on anything that would give us a bird's-eye view of the political and social conditions in the different parts of the world.

HON. P. J. LEAHY: As a member of the Library Committee, I desire to briefly refer to the matter mentioned by the Hon. Mr. Fowles. He spoke in a similar strain last year, and I very largely agreed with what he said. I think that last year the Library Committee agreed to get some American books, but I am not quite sure about magazines. During the last twelve months we have got a lot of the most recent books about Japan. I suppose there will be no harm, if the funds permit, in going a little further in the same direction.

Question put and passed.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

APPOINTMENT OF HON. T. NEVITT.

THE SECRETARY FOR MINES: I beg to move—

“That the Hon. T. Nevitt be appointed Chairman of Committees of the whole Council.”

HON. P. J. LEAHY: I have not risen for the purpose of opposing the motion, and I shall be very brief in my remarks. If the present occupant of the chair had thought fit to again offer himself to the Council I certainly would have supported him, as I did on a former occasion. In saying that, I do not wish to reflect in the least on the Hon. Mr. Nevitt, who has my highest regard. I doubt, indeed, whether there are any members of this House who are as qualified for the position as he is. I am not, of course, rising to support or oppose the motion. I just wish to express my personal views. Though a strong party man, the

Hon. Mr. Nevitt has a strong sense of justice, and whilst, if the late occupant of the chair had been nominated, I would have supported him, I feel sure that if the Hon. Mr. Nevitt is elected, as, of course, he will be, he will discharge his duties with strict impartiality. (Hear, hear!)

HON. A. H. PARNELL: I think the appointment of the Hon. Mr. Nevitt as Chairman of Committees is a very happy selection and one on which I congratulate hon. members opposite. I feel certain that that gentleman will be a fair and impartial chairman and will act so as to give satisfaction to both sides, and I have very great pleasure in supporting the nomination. (Hear, hear!)

HON. E. W. H. FOWLES: I desire to add a word of congratulation from a personal point of view to the Hon. Mr. Nevitt on reaching the distinguished position of Chairman of Committees in this Council, the duties of which he will, I am sure, carry out with the impartiality which we have always recognised is a strong trait in his character. If a ballot had been taken to-day, I believe the unanimous choice would have fallen on the Hon. Mr. Nevitt. I feel sure that hon. gentlemen on this side, who unfortunately cannot be here this afternoon, would, from their knowledge of his work in this Chamber for many years, and also his work in another place, have supported the nomination of the Hon. Mr. Nevitt. I should like to express my personal sense of the fairness with which the retiring Chairman of Committees has carried out his duties in the Council. (Hear, hear!) He has very often dropped on my ears, figuratively speaking, but I have always recognised, as every hon. gentleman recognises, that the Hon. Dr. Taylor, in giving his decisions, has been actuated simply by a sense of justice and impartiality, and has given a fair interpretation of the Standing Orders. The Council owes him a debt of gratitude for the work he has put in here, and we feel sure that the best traditions of this Chamber will be carried out with dignity and success by the Hon. Mr. Nevitt. (Hear, hear!)

Question put and passed.

HON. W. F. TAYLOR: According to Standing Order, No. 13, when the Council is informed by the Clerk at the table of the absence of the President, the Chairman of Committees, so long as the President is absent, shall perform the duties and exercise the authority of the President during such absence. The Hon. Mr. Nevitt, having been appointed Chairman of Committees, is now the Presiding Chairman, and my function ceases: but, before I leave the chair, I should like to express my deep gratitude to the members of the Council for the uniform courtesy and consideration which I have received from them during my term of office. I realise that in any decision I have given I could not suit everybody, as the Hon. Mr. Fowles says. I thank you very sincerely, hon. gentlemen, for your uniform kindness to me during my term of office. (Hear, hear!) The Hon. Mr. Nevitt will now take the chair.

HON. T. NEVITT (who thereupon took the chair) said: Hon. Gentlemen,—I desire to thank you very sincerely for the position you have placed me in as Chairman of Committees. I also wish to thank the Hon. Mr. Leahy, the Hon. Mr. Fowles, and the Hon.

Hon. T. Nevitt.]

Mr. Parnell for the very kindly remarks they have made about me, and I sincerely hope that I shall be able to live up to them. As long as I occupy the position of Chairman of Committees in this Council, I shall try to the best of my ability to carry out the duties of the office fairly and impartially to every hon. gentleman. I again thank you.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I rise to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the Government, and to offer my personal congratulations, on your appointment as Chairman of Committees and Presiding Chairman until the President shall resume his seat. I feel sure that you will discharge your duties impartially, and will prove worthy in every way of the position with which the House has honoured you. I should like to say that your work in this Chamber has, at least, met with my approval. I have had your valued assistance in debate and by regular attendance; as a matter of fact, I think you have not missed one sitting of the Council since you have been appointed. (Hear, hear!) We are pleased that you have been appointed as Chairman of Committees, and I am sure that you will carry out your duties with satisfaction, not only to yourself, but to a majority, if not the whole, of the members of the Council. There may be times when some of us will have to differ from you, and you may differ from us, but I believe that we shall get an impartial ruling on all questions that you will have to decide.

I think also, with the Hon. Mr. Fowles and other hon. gentlemen who have spoken, that we owe a debt of gratitude to the retiring Chairman. (Hear, hear!) I am sure that we all appreciate the consideration which he has given to the matters under discussion and the courtesy with which he has treated every hon. gentleman of this Council. We do not expect to agree in politics, and we do not always expect to agree with the Chairman's ruling. We have differences of opinion on very many occasions; but I am sure the late occupant of the chair has proved to be a gentleman in every respect; and now that his time has come for retirement, I think the least we can do is to place on record our deep gratitude for his services in the chair. (Hear, hear!)

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: I do not desire to make a second speech, because I conveyed my congratulations before the election, which, of course, was a foregone conclusion. I have risen for the purpose of agreeing with what other hon. gentlemen have said with regard to the qualifications of the Hon. Mr. Nevitt for the position to which he has been appointed, and also to endorse what was said with regard to the impartiality of the Hon. Dr. Taylor, the late occupant of the chair. I now formally congratulate the Hon. Mr. Nevitt on his appointment to the position, and trust that he may long enjoy good health in order to carry out his duties. (Hear, hear!)

Hon. A. H. PARNELL: I should just like to say a few words in appreciation of our late Chairman, the Hon. Dr. Taylor. I feel certain that every member on the other side is thoroughly in accord with what I have said, because the hon. gentleman has been strictly impartial to both sides. We on this side sometimes have differed from the hon. gentleman's decisions, but he has at

all times given great satisfaction to the Chamber, and I am very sorry that we are about to lose his services. At the same time, I have great pleasure in congratulating the present occupant of the chair, and I feel certain that he will carry out his duties faithfully and impartially. (Hear, hear!)

ADJOURNMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I move — That the Council do now adjourn. Of course, I cannot say what business we will have to-morrow. Possibly, we may have the Appropriation Bill, but we do not know. We cannot anticipate the work of the Assembly. If the Bill passes there to-night, we will have it to-morrow, but I do not want to disappoint hon. gentlemen to-morrow. If the Bill is not here we shall have no other business. I was at first inclined to move the adjournment of the Council until Friday, but it is quite possible that the Bill will be here to-morrow.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: You could safely do that, because there is no urgency. You do not want the money to pay salaries.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: The hon. gentleman knows that the Bill must pass.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: We grant that, but it won't matter until Friday.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It will be convenient to move the adjournment in the ordinary way and meet again to-morrow, because there is a probability that the Bill will pass the Assembly to-day.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: What stage has it reached in the Assembly now? Have the Government got leave to introduce it yet?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: No; they are getting leave to introduce the Bill.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: We have no hope of getting it to-morrow.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: I think I had better content myself with moving that the House do now adjourn and meet again to-morrow.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: Make it Friday; there will be a better chance then.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: It might not be for the convenience of country members to meet on Friday.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: The Address in Reply has been cut out in another place, so we may be sure the Opposition will take the opportunity of giving their Address in Reply speeches on the Appropriation Bill. There are some thirty-four of them.

Hon. P. J. LEAHY: Yes, and there are many members on the Government side who may also desire to speak.

Hon. E. W. H. FOWLES: Yes, there will be a speech from the Treasurer and replies by the Ministers; and we may expect half a dozen on the Government benches to make speeches, so that I do not see that we can possibly get the Appropriation Bill until next Tuesday.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: We have just got a whisper through from the Assembly that it will probably pass to-night.

Question put and passed.

The Council adjourned at five minutes past 4 o'clock p.m.

[Hon. T. Nevitt.]