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1901-05-31

Senate.

The President took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

QUESTION

HOOR OF ADJOURNMENT - ORDER OF BUSINESS

Senator Sir JOSIAH SYMON

- May I ask Senator O'Connor -when he proposes that the Senate shall adjourn to-day, and whether if the debate on the Address in Reply is closed this afternoon, he intends to proceed with any of the other business on the notice-paper? It might be a convenience to honorable members to know what he intends to do.

Vice-President of the Executive Council

Senator O'CONNOR

- It is not the intention of the Government to proceed with any of the other business on the notice- paper this afternoon. We hope to be able to get the debate on the Address in Reply closed early, and I do not think it will be worth while to go on with any other business. We must meet next Wednesday, and on that day I expect that we shall be able to get through all the formal business on the notice-paper. I hope that wo shall finish the debate to-day in time to enable honorable members who wish to get away to catch their trains.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address in Reply

Debate resumed from 30th May,vide page 482, on motion by Senator Fraser -

That the address in Reply to His Excellency the Governor-General's speech, as read by the Clerk, be now adopted.

Upon which Senator Millen had moved, by way of amendment -

That the proposed address be amended by the addition of the following words . - " but while fully concurring in the proposal for the gradual reduction and ultimate relinquishment of the kanaka labour at present within the Commonwealth are of opinion that the further importation of such labour should be at once prohibited."

Postmaster-General

Senator DRAKE

. - As I listened to the debate during the last two evenings I had a great feeling of regret that I was not able to bo present during the first three days of it. My fellow senators are aware that I was performing an important duty during those three days, and I think they will not blame m for my absence. But I should have liked it very much if events had happened so that I could have performed that duty, and also had the pleasure and profit of hearing the opinions expressed by honorable members. It was in Queensland that I first learned, to my surprise, that an amendment had been moved to the Address in Reply. It was moved also upon a subject with which I am fairly acquainted, and in which I am deeply interested. I naturally desired that before the debate terminated I should have on opportunity of being present to say a few words, and also to speak perhaps in defence of the policy of the Government. But on arriving here I found, to my astonishment, that the enemy had fled and abandoned his guns, and there is really nothing now to fight about. Still, as I am here, I would like to say a few words with regard to this very important matter, and as I am accustomed to endeavour to find good in everything, I think that perhaps after all it is not a misfortune that the amendment has been moved. We might have been perfectly sure that the policy of the Government would be attacked, but he would have been a very bold man, I think, who the week before last would have ventured to prophesy whether the policy of the Government in this matter would be attacked on the ground that we were going too fast and too far, or on the ground that we were not going fast enough or far enough. We know now that the latter attitude is the one that has been taken up by honorable members sitting on the other side of this Chamber.

SenatorPulsford. - By Senator Millen.

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Senator DRAKE

- I am not aware, of course, of the private arrangements which may exist amongst honorable members on

the other side. I simply see the foot recorded that this amendment has been moved by Senator Millen, a gentleman whom I have not even had the pleasure of meeting, and who since then seems to have disappeared from the chamber altogether; and that it was seconded by Senator Ewing, from Western Australia. So far as I have been able to observe from the debate and from interjections, there appears to be only one senator who is supporting the amendment. So we may consider that the only expression of opinion with regard to that particular subject antagonistic to the Government has been based on a belief that the Government are in this matter not going fast enough or far enough. Speaking from the point of view of a senator coming from Queensland, who has been for the last 12 or 15 years engaged in an effort to cure this evil - of one who perhaps, I might almost say, without excepting even my friend Senator Glassey, has taken a leading part in regard to this matter in the State of Queensland, I think I may claim that we, at all events, may speak from the point of view of those who are sincerely and earnestly desirous that the employment of coloured labour shall cease and determine. What we have wanted for a great number of years has been an assurance that a time would come when the employment of coloured labour in Australia would cease. We know the difficulties there are in the way. I venture to say that Senator Millen is not so well acquainted with all the difficulties in the way of attaining this desired end as are the senators who with me represent the State of Queensland. The facts with regard to the subject have not been completely stated I think either in this or in the other Chamber, and I would like to say a few words now in justification of the attitude which has been assumed by the Government, premising it only by this remark, that what I think is the desire of senators who come from Queensland is to have a definite absolute assurance that this particular class of labour shall come to an end. And, if we have that assurance, then I think we are justified in giving a certain amount of consideration to those who are engaged in the industry in which that kind of labour is principally employed. We have heard here, and it has been stated in the other Chamber, and stated correctly, that in 1885 a Bill was passed which provided that no licences to recruit islanders should be issued after the 31st December, 1890. That, in the opinion of the people of Queensland, settled the question, as we hoped, once and for ever. We considered, and a majority of the people of Queensland believed, that black labour by the Act had been practically abolished, because, as soon as the five years should expire, we were to hear no more of it. It has been stated correctly that after the end of the period a sort of reaction - set in, and an effort was made to reintroduce kanaka labour. I come now to the important part in connexion with this matter, and I think, holding the views I hold, and have always held, I may be trusted to state, I hope, with fairness, the case of the planters. In 1893 a Bill was brought in, which, though in form it repealed the Act of 1885, was practically a measure to reintroduce kanakas, and it was done with the avowed intention of inducing those who had embarked capital in the industry to remain in Queensland, and also of inducing others' to put their capital into the industry. The Bill was very strongly opposed by myself, by my friend Senator Glassey, the only one of the labour members now representing Queensland who was in the House at the time, and by others; but, notwithstanding our most strenuous efforts to defeat the Bill, we were not successful, and it passed its second reading. In committee - I think the spirit of prophecy must have been upon me - I moved to insert a clause providing that no vested rights should be created under the Bill, and in this, also, I was defeated. We cannot shut our eyes, therefore, to the fact that the Parliament - and I think it must be assumed to have been authorized to speak in the name of the people - did deliberately introduce a Bill to provide for the importation of kanakas, and refused to insert a clause stating that no vested interests should be created. Of course; in reply to my efforts to put the clause in, I was told what I knew perfectly well - that no vested interests, in the strict legal sense, could possibly be created under the Bill. But I considered it safer to put that clause in, and I regret to this day that it was not accepted. The Bill having been passed by Parliament under those circumstances, and persons having invested their capital practically on the faith of the Act of Parliament, I think, although they have no legal they have some moral claim to consideration when they are called upon to make a change in the character of the labour by which they are carrying on their industry. Moreover, in 1895 - three years later - the Parliament passed a Sugar Works Guarantee Act, which enabled the Government to guarantee the debentures of companies formed for the purpose of working sugar mills, and in the following year the form of that measure was changed in such a way as to enable the Government to advance the money. Under those two Acts £500,000 has been advanced for the erection of sugar mills in order to encourage the large owners to cut up their estates and small farmers to come in and occupy them. Though I regret, and have always

regretted, that ever a single kanaka landed in Queensland - and I hope as soon as possible to see the day when the Just kanaka will leave it-I think that under the circumstances I have related the persons who have invested their capital on the strength of those Acts of Parliament are entitled to some consideration, and that is the justification for the attitude which the Government have assumed on this matter. I do not intend to be drawn into any debate here on the subject of protection or freetrade. But it will have been observed from several of the speeches here that this fiscal question is to a certain 'extent connected with the question of the abolition of black labour. 'That has been recognised already by a number of the speakers. The first speaker whom I had the pleasure of hearing in this debate was Senator Pulsford. Senator Pulsford. - I denied the connexion.

Senator DRAKE

- In spite of the honorable member's denial I think I shall be able to show that the two matters are intimately connected. I do not say that the honorable member stated there was a connexion, but I state it. I am very pleased to have this opportunity of meeting the honorable member, because, though I have not met him before in the flesh, I have read of him very often. I may say that in Queensland his name is a household word, and I have always recognised him there, though I have not been able to agree with his conclusions, as correct in his facts, and as what I should call a true exponent of the gospel of free-trade according to Cobden. The honorable member disagreed with the Vice-President of the Executive Council with regard to some of the figures that he quoted in connexion with the supply and consumption of sugar in Australia. I think it was made pretty clear as the debate went on that the inaccuracy, which the honorable member thought he had discovered, was simply the result of my honorable colleague having quoted the figures for one year, whilst he had quoted the figures for another year.

Senator Glassey

- Hear,hear; that is true.

Senator DRAKE

- Since then I have been endeavouring to ascertain exactly what are the latest -statistics on the subject. I may say at once that the more you strive to get at any truth whatever from the study of statistics the further you get away from the 'truth. Walt "Whitman tells us that logic and sermons never convince. 'I think he might also have said that statistics never convince. If the study of statistics could have settled this question of free-trade or protection it would have been settled long ago, because there have been reams and reams of statistics used on both sides. I do not know that I have ever met any one who by a study of statistics has been converted from freetrade to protection, or from protection to free-trade, simply because I think that while they may prove, or be evidence of, certain facts, they do not help us to decide the all-important question of whether the policy of free-trade or the policy of protection is the more beneficial in the long run for a country. What we want to know is whether the people of a country under either of these systems are more happy or more prosperous. When an effort is made to prove these facts by means of such statistics as the individual wealth of the people or the deposits in the savings banks, or any facts of that nature, then we find at once that we get a lot of statistics that are capable of two different interpretations, and that each side puts its own interpretation on them, when it would appear that the statistics prove the case of each side, which is an absurdity. I am reminded now that in the debate only last night, Senator Clemons, of Tasmania, as though he had a fact that must crush the other side entirely, said that the exports of Great Britain were equal to the exports of the United States and Germany combined.

Senator Clemons

- Per capita.

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Senator DRAKE

- I am inclined to think, without having the statistics at hand, that the exports per capita from Queensland are greater than the exports from either the United States or Germany.

The honorable member will find, if he looks at Coghlan, that the exports per capita from Queensland amount to the enormous sum of ?23. But what can this prove ? It simply . proves - what we know already - that Great Britain has deliberately adopted a policy of trading with foreign countries in preference to encouraging commerce among its own people. The consequence is that it exports a very much larger amount per capita than those nations which encourage internal commerce. All that is proved by that fact

which the honorable member seemed to think so convincing-

Senator Clemons

- It was an interjection, not an argument.

Senator DRAKE

- I know that it was an interjection, and, with regard to certain arguments, it may have considerable weight.

Senator Clemons

- It has practically none.

Senator DRAKE

- All it proves is that Great Britain has adopted a certain policy, and that the United States and Germany have adopted a different policy.

Senator Pulsford

- That is Great Britain's method of increasing her internal trade.

Senator DRAKE

- "What it does not show is whether one system or the other is the better.

Senator Clemons

- I admit that, so far as I am concerned, it is proof of nothing whatever. I used it simply and solely as an illustration. I never accept statistics as proving anything.

Senator DRAKE

- I am very pleased to hear the interjection, because it entirely concurs with my own opinion. I have noticed, once or twice during the debate, that free-traders are apt to use the terms trade and commerce as though they could be interchangeable. The American political economists are very much more precise in the use of those two terms. They keep "trade" to denote a system of exchange between the countries spoken of and foreign countries. They use the word "commerce" to indicate the interchange of goods that goes on within the country - internal exchange - and the difference between the policy of Great Britain being the only free-trade country and those countries that are called protected countries, is that whereas in Great Britain the policy has been to encourage to the utmost the foreign trade, the policy of the United States and Germany, and nearly every civilized country has been to encourage internal commerce. No amount of statistics that can be quoted to show the amount of the exports and imports of Great Britain and those of other countries can do anything more than prove the fact that we all know that Great Britain has adopted one policy, and the other nations a different policy. It leaves the question of whether one policy or the other is better for the country entirely unsettled; it does not touch it at all. Now, how does the matter stand with regard to exports and imports, because I want to show how absolutely useless all these quotations are for the purpose of settling this vexed question. At the present time, if Victoria exports £500,000 worth of goods to New South Wales, it is bound to get, according to Senator Pulsford, the same amount in exchange.

Senator Pulsford

- Not necessarily from New South Wales.

Senator Harney

- Indirectly from the world.

Senator DRAKE

- Well, we will suppose there is that interchange between the two colonies; £500,000 worth of goods exported from Victoria to New South Wales and £500,000 worth imported from New South Wales by Victoria. By those who rest their arguments on a calculation of exports and imports, that is set down as £1,000,000 worth of trade to Victoria and £1,000,000 worth of trade to New South Wales. If you are going to make a calculation as to the total trade of Australia, you will find that the £1,000,000 worth of trade from Victoria is added to the £1,000,000 worth of trade from New South Wales, and actually stands as £2,000,000 worth of trade. What I want to make clear is this: that any table showing the exports and imports of a country may show the amount of foreign trade carried on by that country, but certainly does not go to show that that policy is a profitable or advantageous one for that particular country to adopt. As the debate proceeded, there were one or two matters that occurred to me to which I would like to refer. But first of all, with regard to the subject of sugar, I understood Senator Pulsford to say - it does not matter much what the figures are for the sake of argument - that supposing there are 200,000 tons of

sugar produced in Australia, and the consumption in Australia is 200,000 tons also, we cannot then protect the producer, because production having overcome consumption protection would be inoperative. Is that correct ?

Senator Pulsford

- Practically.

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Senator DRAKE

- Well, I think I shall be able to show that it is not correct. But if that is the position taken up by such a very high authority as Senator Pulsford, that protection is inoperative under those circumstances, may I ask him whether he will have any objection to putting on the statute-book a. pretty stiff duty? If it will be inoperative, I take it that he will have no objection.

Senator Pulsford

- If the honorable senator will allow me, I will explain. I referred to the figures of 1898 or 1899. I showed that the total production of sugar in Australia was 1,930,000 tons, and that the consumption, accepting the figures given by Senator O'Connor, being 170,000 tons, there was a surplus of 23,000 tons.

Consequently, Australia was in that year producing in excess of her consumption, and a protective duty could not possibly be operative ; I also said that although in the following year there was a falling off in production, we might expect that same high production to be reached again in years to come.

Senator DRAKE

- That is quite correct, and I do not mind what the figures are. I take up this position, that the production of sugar has overcome the consumption - whether it has or not I do not know. I do not think it has yet. I want Senator Pulsford to inform us whether I am correct in understanding him to say that protection under those circumstances becomes inoperative. If so, there will be no harm in putting a heavy duty on sugar, because if it is inoperative no one can possibly be harmed. Why I desired that the honorable member should make this perfectly clear was that I understood him in the same speech to say that if we put a protective duty on sugar we should enable the producer to put money in his pocket at the expense of the consumer.

Senator Pulsford

- I said that if it was operative there would be an added cost to the people, but no gain to the Treasury.

Senator Clemons

- And the price would go up to the consumer.

Senator DRAKE

- This remark was in contradiction of my honorable friend the Vice-President of the Executive Council, who had said that if a duty was put upon sugar it would assist the producer. That was the position he took up, and that was the position that Senator Pulsford was contradicting. I am claiming that my friend the Vice-President of the Executive Council was absolutely right, not only in his figures but in his conclusions, and that a protective duty will certainly help the producer. Now, coming back to the facts, it may be easily seen that the weak point in Senator Pulsford's argument is this : that though we are producing, say, £200,000 worth of sugar and consuming £200,000 worth, the £200,000 worth that is produced here is not represented by the £200,000 worth consumed. A considerable portion of the sugar produced here is not consumed in Australia, but goes home to England, and is sold on the English market ; and the price is regulated by the price in Mark-lane, in competition with sugar from other countries. On the other hand, we here in Australia are consuming sugar from Mauritius and Java, and to a slight extent from Europe, to the amount, I think, of about 40,000 tons a year ; and that sugar comes from, countries where they employ nearly of coloured labour, and to a certain extent from countries where they adopt the very pernicious system of giving bounties.

Senator Charleston

- But does Marklane fix the price of sugar in Queensland ?

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Senator DRAKE

- No, it fixes the price of sugar that is exported from Queensland to England. What I want to make clear is this, because it is here the subject is so intimately connected with that of black labour, that at the present time the sugar produced in Queensland, where, of course, there is an import duty, as there is in the other

colonies, has to be sold in competition with sugar grown in other countries by means of black labour, and also in countries where they have the system of bounties. That being so, if we are going to say to the sugar producers in Australia that they must produce their sugar by means of white labour, then I think we may be fairly asked to put such an import duty on sugar as will prevent the Queensland product from having to be sold in competition with sugar that has been grown almost wholly by black labour. It is very cheap indeed for honorable senators who have been sent here from other places to tell us that block labour must be abolished in Australia, and at the same time to say that they are willing that sugar which has been grown almost exclusively by block labour shall be brought in here to compete with the Sugar which is being grown in Queensland said New South Wales. If we are going to take up the position, which I hope this Parliament will always take up, that block labour must be abolished in Australia, then I say we ought to see that the people engaged in the production of sugar here are placed in the same position as those who are growing it in other places.

Senator Matheson

- If Queensland sugar can compete in Mark-lane, why not in Brisbane?

Senator DRAKE

- The sugar grown in Queensland is grown with the help of black labour. It has been decreed by the people of Australia - and this Parliament is engaged in carrying out their will - that black labour in Queensland shall be abolished. That being so, I say you should give to the producers of sugar in Australia a certain amount of protection, to compensate them for being compelled to give effect to the will of the Australian people.

Senator Harney

- Then they would have to give up the Mark-lane market.

Senator DRAKE

- Parliament is going to say that they must give up their cheap black labour.

Senator Clemons

- The honorable senator wants the consumers to pay the price of getting rid of black labour.

Senator DRAKE

- That is the price of getting rid of black labour ; and if the people of Australia demand - and I think they are quite right in doing it - that black labour shall be abolished, I think they should be prepared to make that concession to the producers of sugar unless it is their desire to stamp out the industry altogether.

Senator Sir FREDERICK SARGOOD

- Would it not be better at once to pay compensation to those now engaged in it?

Senator DRAKE

- I think decidedly not. It is an industry that is firmly established ; an industry which I believe, even when black labour is taken away, will continue to flourish ; and I, not holding the views of the free-traders, say that it is an enormous advantage to a country to be able to supply itself with all the necessities that it requires. It would be a great misfortune for Australia if we were ever to take such a step as would stamp out the production of sugar, and make us dependent on foreign countries. I cannot see myself how any senator who believes in a white Australia can deliberately contemplate crushing out any natural industry in Australia and substituting in place of it a product coming from foreign countries where they employ black labour.

Senator Clemons

- No one wants to do that

Senator Matheson

- Senator Glassey told us distinctly that the kanaka is quite unnecessary,

Senator DRAKE

- I think not. I heard the whole of his speech, and I do not think he showed that.

Senator Harney

- He tried to.

Senator DRAKE

- What he showed was that it is the opinion held by every senator who comes from Queensland that there is no work performed now by block labour in Queensland that cannot be performed by white labour. But we say that though we believe the sugar industry can be carried on, and all the sugar required in

Australia, and, perhaps, some for export can be produced by white labour, yet, if the producer in Queensland or New South Wales is compelled to employ white labour, at white men's wages, he should not be thrown into open competition with the countries employing all blacks.

Senator Smith

- But will they be able to export?

Senator DRAKE

- I think they will. The experience of other countries has been that where industries have been protected, though they may for a time, and perhaps permanently, have an advantage in their own country, in a great many cases they not only supply the local wants, but export and compete with countries that have no protection.

Senator Matheson

- Then we should be paying for other countries getting cheap sugar from Queensland.

Senator DRAKE

- Not at all. I do not say it would be cheaper, but I say that a country with a certain amount of protection - that is, protection in its own market, and we have the experience of the United States to guide us in this matter - is able to supply, not only its own wants, but to compete with other countries.

Senator Matheson

- Selling at a cheaper price.

Senator DRAKE

- No, it does not necessarily mean that.

Senator Matheson

- We cannot avoid it if we have 6 per ton protection.

Senator DRAKE

- It does not necessarily follow. The fact of our market being preserved for the producer is a great advantage for him, and gives him an opportunity of producing for export.

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Senator Pulsford

- Will the honorable senator explain how it can be profitable for Australia to contribute £1,000,000 a year to sustain this industry, the production of which is only valued at £1,500,000?

Senator DRAKE

- What does the honorable senator mean by the £1,000,000 - what does it represent?

Senator Pulsford

- Money collected from the consumers of sugar.

Senator DRAKE

- I am not aware that I have asked for £1,000,000, or any sum. I have asked that a duty shall be put on which will shut out sugars coming from countries that are employing black labour almost exclusively, and I say, that unless we are willing to incur a charge of being hypocrites, I do not see how we can set ourselves to shut out black labour from Australia, and at the same time be prepared to take the product of black labour from other countries. Senator Harney made a remark in the course of his speech which struck me as being of a decidedly unfederal character. I was rather surprised at it coming from a gentleman who had been telling us just before that it was the duty of the people of Australia to shoulder the burden of making a railway to his particular State. He said, and the honorable member will correct me if I am wrong in my statement, because I cannot reproduce it in the same language, that if we had £1 in our pocket with the knowledge that there is no black labour at all in Australia and we got a chance of having 25s. in our pocket, with the knowledge that there would be some kanakas hundreds of miles away, then he would consider it a wise thing to take the 25s.

Senator Harney

- The 25s. - with the dissatisfying sentiment is better than the 20s. with the satisfying sentiment.

Senator DRAKE

- Yes, the dissatisfying sentiment with this emphasized that this coloured labour is to be hundreds of miles away. Now bear this in mind; it is the people who are nearest to this black labour who object to it most. We have got this form of labour in Queensland, and the dissatisfaction of the people is shown I think by

the senators they have seat here. The places where the sugar planters are, and where the kanakas are the most numerous, ure the places where the greatest dissatisfaction exists. Senator Harney says, "No matter so long- as you have the inconvenience of the kanaka I will take the 5s." Now I hope the man who has the extra 5s. in his pocket will have the kanaka sitting on his own doorstep.

Senator Harney

- It is only an appraisalment of the kanaka sentiment.

Senator DRAKE

- Still I think in this matter we ought to consider that we are now one people; the troubles of one State ought to be considered the troubles of another State. If kanaka labour is bod anywhere it is bad everywhere, and we should moke up our minds to get rid of it altogether. There was another remark mode by Senator Harney, which, perhaps, does not directly bear upon the subject He has found a short and easy way of solving the difficulty of raising the ?8,500,000- revenue without giving any of that protection to which he strongly objects. His. easy solution is to put a tax on the articles we cannot produce. I would like the honorable member to tell us what are the articles which we cannot produce in. Australia.

Senator Harney

- Tea.

Senator DRAKE

- But we can producer tea.

Senator Harney

- I mentioned that merely to illustrate what we mean by a revenue Tariff. My contention was that that should be our tendency ; not that that is what we should do.

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Senator DRAKE

- I am not indulging now in any verbal quibble; I understand the position which the honorable member takes up, and I wish to show him where the fallacy rests. We contend that there is hardly an article -which we cannot produce. It is. only a matter of degree. As soon as you put a duty upon an article we can produce it has a protective value. The only reason why tea is not produced in Australia, at the present time is that it is an article which requires an astonishingly large amount of finnickin ' labour. The Chinese and Indian coolies have practically a monopoly of it, and a small duty of 3d. or 6d. per lb. does not make up for the large amount of that semi-mechanical labour necessary in: the production of tea. But Senator Harney's, argument, if good, would be good if we were to increase the amount. Supposing that, instead of a duty of 3d. or 6d. per lb., we put on a duty of 1s. per lb., the result would be that we should at once have tea produced in Australia, and, probably,, produced in sufficient quantities to supply our wants. Then, of course, the objection from the point of view of the free-trader arises at once. That tax does not suit his maxims at all. He says that the person who is growing the tea will be getting a high price, which will represent money that is being taken from the community, but is not going into the Treasury. You may search through the whole list of articles which enter into consumption in Australia, and you will hardly find one - there are one or two exceptions - upon which you can put a duty, which cannot be produced in Australia.

Senator Harney

- The honorable member is putting us what I said actually, what I said by way of illustration. The point of my argument was that you should attack first and most severely those things in which your producing capacity is least, and then rectify it by a corresponding excise. It is only a matter of tendency.

Senator DRAKE

- The honorable senator chose his own illustration. If he had chosen any other I should still have been able to follow him. I only want to show that it is a fallacy to presume we can put duties on articles we cannot produce.

Senator Harney

- My argument is right, but the illustration chosen does not bear it out.

Senator DRAKE

- I thought we were going to get a little help from Senator Pulsford. He is not satisfied with the Tariff which is going to be submitted. Neither Senator Pulsford nor any one else knows what it is, but he is not satisfied with it. He does not approve of the Tariff. At the same time, he does not help us a bit. He tells us



we can raise, by way of duties on alcohol and narcotics, £5,000,000. There would, however, still be £3,500,000 to raise. He does not tell us in the slightest degree how that £3,500,000 is to be obtained. Neither have we had any help from Senator Harney. I think in this respect the speeches from the Opposition side of the House stand in very marked contrast with the short and highly practical speech made by Senator Ferguson, from Queensland. That honorable member was one of the few who threw some light upon this particular branch of the subject. I know that Senator Pulsford can suggest a method by which the revenue may be raised, but we will leave the honorable member to propose it himself at some future time. I will not take up the time of the Senate much longer, for I believe there is a general desire that we should adjourn pretty early. I have dwelt upon the sugar question perhaps a little longer than necessary, because it has been brought up by several honorable members in their speeches, and because I think we learn more in regard to free-trade and protection by taking the case of some particular article than we should gain by floundering for a whole evening among statistics. In this particular case we have an industry which we know, if judiciously looked after, may expand considerably. It happens to be an industry which at this time is employing a class of labour to which the people of Australia very rightly object, and if we are going to insist that that particular class of labour shall be abolished, then I say we may reasonably ask that the producer shall not be exposed to the unfair competition of people in other countries, who are producing sugar with the kind of labour to which we most decidedly object. I would say this before resuming my seat. It has been assumed by a great number of honorable members who have spoken on this subject that the question of the employment of coloured labour is exactly the same all over Queensland. I think, in consequence of a misconception on that point, that there have been some apparent contradictions during the course of the debate. As we all know, Queensland is a State of vast extent, and the difficulty that will arise in substituting white labour for coloured labour will be much greater in some parts of the country than in others.

Senator Matheson

- Senator Glassey said not

Senator DRAKE

- I am sorry that Senator Matheson has an entirely different idea of what Senator Glassey said last evening than I have. I was very near to the honorable member and listened attentively to his speech.

Senator Matheson

- Senator Glassey is here.

Senator DRAKE

- That is so. During the greater part of the time Senator Glassey was speaking, he was drawing his illustrations from his experiences in the district which he so ably represents.

Senator Matheson

- He was asked particularly about the north.

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Senator DRAKE

- Bundaberg, with which Senator Glassey is more particularly intimate, is a fairly large town, upon a railway line, with many industries, and closely connected with the metropolis. There is, therefore, always a certain amount of white labour there which can be made available for the work of sugar production. Mr. Angus Gibson, one of the large sugar-mill proprietors at Bundaberg, stated at a conference recently that with an import duty of £5 per ton, he would be prepared at once to substitute white labour for coloured labour. That statement was made in regard to Bundaberg, but when you go further north you come to districts where the difficulty of substituting white labour for coloured labour would be considerably greater. I will deal with these other districts. Let us take the case of the Johnson River. Senator Glassey knows the river very well. There you have a district possessing a large amount of low-lying land of extraordinary fertility; but it is remote from other settlements. There are no industries in the district that could give employment to white labour. In fact, the only other industry in that great tract of country is that of fruit production - principally the production of bananas - which is carried on by Chinamen. There you have the case of the sugar industry being carried on under circumstances which necessitate that the whole of the white labour should be specially taken there, and the difficulty of substituting white for coloured labour would, therefore, be much greater there than in Bundaberg.

Senator Charleston

- Could white labour be induced to work there?

Senator DRAKE

- I am of opinion that white labour will work anywhere for sufficient wages. I am simply pointing out the difficulties that exist in that particular part of the State ; whereas in Bundaberg there is a floating population which might take to the work readily. In the Mackay district they have an incipient dairying industry which gives employment to a considerable number of white men, but it is in the particular district which I have singled out that the greatest difficulty occurs. There is no white labour there, and it would be necessary to take it there specially in order to substitute it for coloured labour. If we were to adopt the course which some honorable members on the opposition side of the Senate have been trying to dictate to the Government, and do away with the black labour at once, I make no doubt the result would be to close up some of these mills, and probably to throw the land out of cultivation. I believe that if the matter is dealt with in a fair and reasonable manner white labour may be substituted for black, and the sugar industry may not only be carried on there as in the past but it will be the scene of considerable extra activity, when, as I hope, the markets of Australia will be preserved for the Australian producer. We have been discussing for the greater part of the time the kanaka phase of the question, which is admittedly not the most difficult feature of the Government programme with regard to coloured labour. We have to face the very important subject of how to deal with other forms of coloured labour in Australia, and I hope the Government will have in this matter the solid support of the Senate, as I believe they have of the people of Australia. Something has been said during the debate with regard to the position of the Senate, and the other Chamber.

Senator Glassey

- I do not think we ought to anticipate difficulty.

Senator DRAKE

- That is what I was just going to say. The rights of the Senate are embodied in the Constitution, and we need not alarm ourselves at the present time in regard to our position. I think that the position of the Senate will be assured not by protestations, and certainly not by putting ourselves in a hostile attitude before any attack is threatened, but by conducting ourselves in such a way as to secure for us the confidence of the people of Australia.

Question - That the words proposed to be added be added - resolved in the negative.

Original question resolved in the affirmative.

#### QUESTIONS

#### LETTER CARRIERS AT COOLGARDIE

Senator PEARCE

- I beg to ask the Postmaster-General if the petition of the letter carriers of Coolgardie, forwarded to the Deputy Postmaster-General of Western Australia, has received consideration ; and if not, will the Government inquire into the request of the petitioners with a view to the favorable consideration thereof?

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Senator DRAKE

- I may tell Senator Pearce that I have received the petition from the letter carriers of Coolgardie, and have given it consideration. I have come to the conclusion that the request is a reasonable one, and I have, therefore, given instruction for it to be granted.

#### FREE TRAVELLING FOR MEMBERS

Senator KEATING

- I beg. to ask the Vice-President of the Executive Council what arrangements, if any, the Government intend to make to provide for the Tasmanian and Western Australian Members of Parliament free travelling between their own States and the Parliament, and when such arrangements, if any, will be completed?

Senator O'CONNOR

- The whole matter of free travelling of members, both by rail and water, is being considered, and will be dealt with on a uniform basis at an early date.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DUTIES

Senator PULSFORD

- I beg to ask the Vice-President of the Executive Council - (1) Have the Government received any

suggestions for Duties of Customs and Excise from Australian Protectionist Associations ; and, if so, will they forthwith lay a copy of such suggestions on the table of this House 1 (2) Have the Government received any suggestions for Duties of Customs and Excise from the Australian Chambers of Manufactures ; and, if so, will they forthwith lay a copy of such suggestions on the table of this House?  
Senator O'CONNOR

- The Government have received suggestions from the sources mentioned as well as from many other sources. There will be no objection to laying the suggestions named on the table as soon as the Tariff resolutions have been introduced in the House of Representatives.

#### DEPORTATION OF BOER PRISONERS

Motion (by Senator Clemons) proposed -

That there be laid upon the table of this Senate copies of all the correspondence between -

. The Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth ;

Between the Prime Minister and Mr. Lewis, the Premier of Tasmania ; with reference to the proposal to deport Boer prisoners to Tasmania.

Senator O'CONNOR

- The Government have no objection to laying the papers on the table, but there is a difficulty at present. Several communications - those from Mr. Chamberlain for instance - are confidential. Honorable members will see at once that it would be impossible to lay these on the table until the Government have leave from Mr. Chamberlain to do so. If the honorable member will postpone his motion, I will undertake to obtain an answer for him or ask for the necessary permission. Perhaps the honorable member will postpone his motion, or withdraw it, and give notice again.

Senator CLEMONS

-May I ask the Vice-President of the Executive Council if it is not possible to lay on the table of the Senate those communications which are not confidential? His reply to me seems to imply that there are other communications which are not confidential.

Senator O'Connor

- Yes, there are.

Senator CLEMONS

- May I ask the honorable and learned gentleman if he will cause those communications to be laid upon the table?

Senator O'CONNOR

- I should be quite willing to do that, but I may tell the honorable member at once that the subject matter will be quite incomplete without the telegrams to which I have referred. Those telegrams are the subject and the basis of the other communications which are not confidential, and it will be impossible to understand one without the other. Honorable members will see at once that we are quite willing to give the information but inasmuch as it includes confidential communications which cannot be made public without the consent of the party who has made them confidential we cannot do so. I only ask the honorable member to wait until we can obtain that consent, which I have no doubt will be given.

Senator CLEMONS

- I shall be only too glad to wait ; but may I ask the honorable and learned gentleman if he will give me some intimation as to the time when he expects that the consent will be given? Does he expect me to wait until letters have passed - three months for instance ?

Senator O'CONNOR

- No ; I only ask the honorable member to give fresh notice for a fortnight hence.

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Senator Clemons

- I shall wait.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

#### DESTITUTE PERSONS IN THE STATES

Ordered(on motion by Senator Glassey),

That there be laid on the table of the House a return, showing -

The number of persons in each State of the Commonwealth (distinguishing the males from the females)

of 60 and under 65 years of age.

The number of persons of each sex, in each State, of 65 years of age and upwards.

The number of destitute married couples of 60 years of age and upwards in each State who are in receipt of out-door relief.

The number of destitute married couples in each State of 60 years of age and upwards who are inmates of benevolent institutions.

The number of those aged married couples in each State who are inmates of such institutions who are permitted to live together.

The number of those aged married couples in each State who are inmates of such institutions who are not permitted to live together.

#### CABLE TO TASMANIA

Ordered (on motion by Senator Keating),

That there be laid upon the table of this House copies of all agreements at present in force between the Government or Governments of any of the States of the Commonwealth and the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company relative to the control and management of the electric telegraph cable between Tasmania and the mainland of Australia.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Resolved (on motion by Senator O'Connor),

That the Senate at its rising adjourn until Wednesday next, at half-past 2 p.m.

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15:37:00

Senate adjourned at 3.37 p.m.