**QUARANTINE BILL1877**

**House of Assembly, 4 October 1877, pages 1185-6**

Second reading

**The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. C. Bray),** in moving the second reading of this Bill, said he thought hon. members would agree with him that it was one which should be passed as soon as possible, inasmuch as from what had appeared during the last few months it was evident that the present law was not sufficient to enable the Government to deal properly with ships arriving with infectious diseases on board from other parts. Hon. members would recollect that a year or two ago one of the English mail steamers arrived with smallpox on hoard, and owing to no arrangements being made for quarantine in this colony it was necessary that all the passengers bound for Adelaide should be taken on to Melbourne—their passage to and fro having to be paid by this Government. He thought they were all agreed that such a state of things was very undesirable. At present when any ship arrived it was the duty of the Health Officer and the pilot, before any steps could be taken for quarantine, to go on board and examine into the cases of sickness, and it was exceedingly undesirable that those persons who were required to go ashore should have to do so. The Government had in preparing the measure availed themselves to a great extent of the laws in the neighbouring colonies, and they believed that the measure would be a workable one. Many matters were left to be dealt with by regulations, it having been felt that it would be difficult to provide definitely what should be applicable in all cases. The third clause provided for treatment of vessels coming from places where infectious diseases were known to exist, the Governor being given power to declare that, such vessels should be able to quarantine and that certain precautions should be taken before goods or passengers from such vessels were allowed on shore. The present Act provided that whenever any merchant vessel should arrive the master should report to the officer of Customs or the Emigration or boarding officer whether there were serious cases of illness on board ; but some officer had to go on board the vessel in order to get the information. There was nothing to prevent such person from returning to shore to pursue his ordinary avocation, though there might be infectious diseases on the ship he had visited. This was exceedingly undesirable. The present Bill provided that it should be sufficient for the officer to go alongside the vessel and make enquiries and judge whether further steps were necessary. Clause 5 provided that vessels coming from infected places should be subject to the orders of the Governor, and great powers were taken so that regulations to meet all cases which might arise could be made. The Bill provided for the punishments for breach of the regulations, such breach rendering a person liable to a fine of £50 or any term of imprisonment not exceeding three months. It had been thought desirable that power should be given to the Governor to deal with vessels suspected of having infectious diseases on board, though they might not come from ports where such disease was known to exist. Then, for the first time in this colony, power was given in the 8th clause to appoint lazarettes and places for performing quarantine. The Government had already indicated the site where they proposed to establish a quarantine station, and they intended to have it provided that persons should be strictly confined within the limits of those places, and that no communication should take place with those places until the Health Officer declared that it was safe to do so. There was also a provision that a medical officer should be appointed to attend to cases of sickness at the cost of the owners of the vessels. This would not apply to immigrant vessels chartered by the Government, inasmuch as by the charter parties special arrangements were made as to the performance of quarantine. One of the objects of the Bill was to give large powers to the Governor. Hon. members would agree that large powers must be given in such cases. It was far better that they should be given and the cases dealt with by regulation rather than they should define in the Bill how these matters should be dealt with. The Bill had already received attention by hon. members in another place, and he hoped the second reading would be passed, and that hon. members would facilitate its passing through Committee.

Mr. BOUCAUT moved the adjournment of the debate.

The motion was carried on the motion that the adjourned debate be an Order of the Day for the following Tuesday,

Mr. BOUCAUT expressed surprise at the course taken by the Government. The Commissioner of Public Works said he did not wish hon. members to sit late that evening. He moved that the other Orders of the Day should be considered in order that the discussion on the matter that had attracted attention that afternoon should be decided while it was fresh in the minds of hon. members; and yet the Attorney-General had been palpably talking against time. (Cheers; and Mr. Bray— "No.”

The motion was carried, and the adjourned debate was made an Order of the Day for next Tuesday.