

INCURSION OF RABBITS AT EUCLA BORDER.

MR. HASSELL, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands whether the Government had any recent information with regard to rabbits at Eucla.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) replied—On 4th April, station master, Eucla, reported to Postmaster General that he had been shown what was considered to be dung of rabbits, found about seven (7) miles from Eucla; and on 11th May he reported further, as follows:—"Have had natives hunting along coast 15 miles, and over all country within ten (10) miles radius of station. Mr. Been has also had natives out, and has been out frequently himself, but can find no trace beyond the deposits already reported. Tramps, horsemen, and camel parties arrive daily, many of whom had years of experience in rabbit-infested parts in other colonies; all report no trace whatever of rabbits, between Bight and Eucla, along route."

POLICE PROTECTION AT EUCLA.

MR. HASSELL, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier whether the Government had made any provision for police protection at Eucla.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the Government hoped to be able to do so upon the estimates.

SCHOOL AND MONEY ORDER OFFICE AT ESPERANCE BAY.

MR. HASSELL, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier whether it was the intention of the Government to build a school and establish a money order office at Esperance Bay.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: The Education Department has under consideration the establishment of a school at Esperance Bay. If the necessary number of children are promised to justify the erection of a school, the Government will build one. In regard to the question of a money order office at Esperance Bay, the Postmaster General has been considering it for some time past, but, owing to the infrequency of communication and other reasons, has not been able to make a recommendation.

IMPROVEMENT OF RECREATION GROUND AT ALBANY.

MR. LEAKE, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier whether it was his intention to place upon the Estimates the sum of £500 for the purpose of improving the recreation ground at Albany.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: The Government are unable to do so. Recreation grounds are so numerous all over the colony, that to provide funds for the improvement of the ground at Albany would result in similar demands from every other town, and the Government are unable to recommend such demands being granted.

BANKERS' BOOKS EVIDENCE BILL. IN COMMITTEE.

Bill passed through committee without amendment, and reported.
Report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 7:54 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 7th August, 1894.

Railway rates for Live Stock—Removal of Powder Magazine, Fremantle—Railway Station at East Perth—Amendment of the Goldfields Act—Return showing revenues received from the Railways of the colony—Municipal Institutions Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 2:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

RAILWAY RATES FOR LIVE STOCK.

MR. HARPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Rail-

ways whether he adhered to his statement made on the 11th October last in the House, to the effect that the rates charged on live stock carried on our railways are lower than the rates in the other Australian colonies.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied by reading to the House the following statistical tables:—

CATTLE.

	4-WHEEL TRUCKS.				
	Miles 25.	Miles 50.	Miles 100.	Miles 150.	Miles 200.
Western Australia ...	s. d. 18 9	s. d. 37 6	s. d. 66 8	s. d. 87 6	s. d. 108 4
South Australia ...	18 9	37 6	66 8	87 6	100 0
Victoria ...	18 9	37 6	75 0	87 6	116 8
New South Wales ...	16 8	33 4	66 8	98 4	123 4
Queensland ...	12 0	23 6	47 6	70 6	98 0

CATTLE.

	8-WHEEL TRUCKS.				
	Miles 25.	Miles 50.	Miles 100.	Miles 150.	Miles 200.
Western Australia ...	s. d. 33 4	s. d. 66 8	s. d. 116 8	s. d. 150 0	s. d. 183 4
South Australia ...	37 6	75 0	133 4	175 0	200 0
Queensland ...	24 0	48 0	94 8	140 0	175 4

NOTE.—Victoria charges 2s. per truck (terminal charge) in addition.

Comparative Statement of Live Stock Rates.

SHEEP.

	4-WHEEL TRUCKS (SHEEP).				
	Miles 25.	Miles 50.	Miles 100.	Miles 150.	Miles 200.
Western Australia ...	s. d. 18 9	s. d. 37 6	s. d. 66 8	s. d. 87 6	s. d. 108 4
South Australia ...	18 9	37 6	66 8	87 6	100 0
Victoria ...	18 9	37 6	75 0	87 6	116 8
New South Wales ...	16 8	33 4	63 4	82 1	98 9
Queensland ...	10 0	20 0	38 0	49 6	59 6

By Clause 10, W.A. Rates, a reduction of 25 per cent. on rates is made on train loads not less than 15 trucks; 10 per cent. concession is also made on 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9 full wagon loads, and 15 per cent. on 10, 11, 12, 13, or 14 full wagon loads.

It would be seen from these figures that what he had stated last year was practically correct, as to our rates being lower than those of the other colonies. It might be said, perhaps, that the size of our trucks was smaller, and would make a difference in the number of sheep or cattle carried. He had not been able to obtain the dimensions of the trucks in the other colonies, but he had reason to believe that our four-wheeled cattle trucks

were the same as those used in some of the sister colonies, though he believed there was a difference in the capacity of our sheep trucks, compared with the Victorian trucks, which, he believed, would carry 100 sheep as against our 70. He might say that he was looking very carefully into this question of live stock rates, and, if he found he could possibly make a reduction, he would do so. Since he made the statement he did last year, he should say that the New South Wales Government had issued a different classification sheet, and possibly Victoria had done the same. Members would see from the figures he had quoted that we were on a par with two of the other colonies as regards our rates, lower than one, and only higher in all grades than Queensland, where the rates were exceptionally low.

REMOVAL OF THE POWDER MAGAZINE AT FREMANTLE.

MR. SOLOMON, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier whether any suggestion had been made by the authorities at Fremantle respecting the removal of the magazine for explosives; and, if so, were the Government taking the matter into consideration?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that he had not received any suggestion from the authorities at Fremantle upon the subject, but the Government proposed erecting a magazine near the jetty at Owen's Anchorage.

RAILWAY STATION AT EAST PERTH.

MR. JAMES, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways whether it was proposed to construct a railway station at East Perth; and, if so, when? If not, would the platform recently removed be re-erected?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied that it was not proposed to erect a railway station at East Perth, but that if there should be a demand for the re-erection of the platform, he would be glad to consider it, as his desire was to give every reasonable facility to the public.

AMENDMENT OF THE GOLDFIELDS ACT.

MR. LEAKE, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier whether it

was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to amend the Goldfields Act?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the Government would be willing to introduce a Bill to amend the Act in question, if the hon. member would raise a debate and show any defects in the Act, or that additional legislation was required.

REVENUES DERIVED FROM THE RAILWAYS OF THE COLONY.

MR. LOTON, in accordance with notice, moved for a return showing—

1. The revenue earned on the South-Western Railway (Bunbury to Donnybrook section) during the year ending June 30th, 1894; revenue from passenger and goods traffic to be shown separately.

2. What amount of said revenue, if any, was earned by the conveyance of railway plant and other material belonging to the Government during the same period.

3. What amount of said revenue, if any, was earned by the conveyance of goods on account of the contractor for the Boyanup-Busselton Railway.

4. A like return as required under Nos. 1 and 2 with regard to the Eastern Railway.

5. What amount of said revenue, if any, was earned by the conveyance of goods on account of the contractor for the Yilgarn Railway.

6. What amount of said revenue, if any, was earned by the conveyance of railway plant and other goods on account of the contractor for the Midland Railway.

7. A like return as required under Nos. 1 and 2 with regard to the Northern Railways.

8. What amount of said revenue, if any, was earned by the conveyance of railway plant and other goods on account of the contractor for the Midland Railway.

9. The expenditure during the year ending June 30th, 1894, on the South-Western Railway (Perth to Bunbury, Bunbury to Donnybrook), Eastern Railway, Northern Railway.

10. The revenue earned on the South-Western Railway, Perth to Bunbury, during the year ending June 30th, 1894.

11. What amount of revenue, if any, was earned on the Eastern Railway by the conveyance of railway material and other goods, on account of the various

contractors for the deviations on said railway, during the year ending June 30th, 1894.

12. What amount of revenue, if any, was earned on the Northern Railway by the conveyance of railway material and other goods, on account of the contractor for the Mullewa Railway, during the year ending June 30th, 1894.

The hon. member said he moved for these returns in view of the fact that the Government were about to bring a further Loan Bill for the modest sum of £1,500,000, most of which was to be expended in the construction of further railways; therefore, it appeared to him, that members, when considering that Bill, should be possessed of the fullest information that could be possibly given as to the working expenses and the revenue in connection with our present railways.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said that personally he had no objection to the production of these returns, and he would be pleased to furnish the information asked for. It had been his intention to have given this information to the House before the hon. member moved in the matter. It might be that he might not be able to furnish some of the details asked for, but he would be happy to supply all the information in his power.

Motion put and passed.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Sir—I rise to move the second reading of the Municipalities Bill. But a few months ago it was my duty in this place to rise with the same object in view, and I then explained the Bill at some length; and, if I might venture to say it, I think, after reading what I said on that occasion, I explained the Bill far better than I am likely to do to-day; and I cannot help thinking, on a perusal of *Hunsard*, that a good deal of the credit of that speech is due to the reporter. Members who care to refer to it will find it on page 461 of last year's volume, and it will give them every information as to the general scope of the Bill. At the same time, perhaps, I may be excused if I again refer to one or two of its main features. The Bill was intro-

duced last session in compliance with a resolution previously passed by the House, asking the Government to bring in a Bill for the consolidation of the present municipal laws, and adding such further provisions as the altered circumstances and progress of the colony rendered necessary, particularly with regard to the vexed question of rating. The Bill of last year, of which the present Bill is to a large extent a counterpart, was an endeavour on the part of the Government to carry out that resolution of the House. It affects all the municipalities of the colony, though some of its provisions will be found more applicable to the larger municipalities. The Perth City Council, as members will recollect, had drafted a measure dealing with the municipal law as it affected metropolitan municipal life; but as it was mainly applicable to Perth and Fremantle, and the larger towns, I thought it would be much more preferable to have a Bill dealing with, and regulating municipalities throughout the colony, instead of having one system for Perth, another for Fremantle, and a different system for other municipalities. Therefore, this Bill is made to apply more or less to all municipalities. The small municipalities will find they have nothing more to do than to leave untouched such portions of the Bill as do not as yet affect them. The working of the Act will be carried out largely by means of the by-laws framed by the municipalities themselves; and, if a small municipality has no occasion for exercising any particular powers, there will be no necessity for it to make by-laws dealing with such questions, and the Act, so far as these municipalities are concerned, will, in that respect, be inoperative, while, on the other hand, the larger municipalities will, according to my judgment, find in the Bill everything they require. The Bill is divided into ten parts. The first part is preliminary, and the second part deals with the constitution of municipalities. That is exactly the same as the provisions introduced into the Bill of last year, with this exception: that in the case of municipalities of less than a thousand inhabitants we propose that their chief officer, instead of being called a Mayor shall be called a Chairman. There are small municipalities throughout the colony, such as at Carnarvon, Southern

Cross, and other localities, where the population is small—I mean small at present; in the future some of them will no doubt develop into large municipalities—and I think that in the case of places containing only 200 or 300 people it does look rather tall to style the chairman of these petty municipalities a mayor. The Government have also fallen short of doing what the late Municipal Conference suggested as to calling members of Municipal Councils “aldermen” instead of “councillors.” We did not think that in the case of small municipalities, where the chief civic officer was styled a chairman, it would sound very well to style the members of his council aldermen; nor did we see that any good would follow from changing the present designation in any municipality. Therefore we propose that where the population is under 1,000, the council shall consist of a chairman and six councillors; where the population is over 1,000, and not exceeding 5,000, we propose that the municipal council shall consist of a mayor and nine councillors; and, in the case of large municipalities we propose that there shall be a mayor and three councillors for each ward. Of course it will be within the province of the House, when we go into committee on the Bill, either to affirm or alter this principle, and, if members wish, to substitute “mayor” for “chairman,” and “aldermen” for “councillors.” For my own part the more high-sounding titles would sound incongruous, especially in the case of the smaller municipalities, where the whole population perhaps does not exceed three or four hundred people. I do not think that a man is any the better for being called an alderman, than if he is called a councillor, and I do not suppose he would work better. With this exception I think Part II. of the Bill will be found to be the same as the Bill of last year, with this further exception: it has been brought to the notice of the Government that at present it is only such places as have been declared townships that can claim to be proclaimed municipalities; and it has been found that it may be necessary or desirable in some cases to declare certain localities which are not townships to be municipalities. Therefore Clause 9 has been altered somewhat from the corre-

sponding clause in the Bill of last year. Now it is proposed that the Governor may proclaim any locality containing a certain amount of rateable property, capable of yielding a certain amount of revenue, a municipality, whether it has previously been declared a township or not. There is the case of Leederville, a Perth suburb, which I may say first brought up this question. The residents of that locality desire to have a municipality of their own, but, under the existing law, that cannot be done unless the locality has been previously declared a separate township. It would not do, I think, to make every locality in the place a municipality. As a rule when localities spring up, and there is a chance of their becoming populated, they are created towns. It is by a mere accident that they are not created towns when they become centres of a considerable population; or it may be that a municipality overgrows itself. It may be said that the municipality of Perth has overgrown itself in some directions. I think there is room for a difference of opinion upon that point; still some people think it has, and it is considered that Leederville, for instance, should be declared a separate municipality. This clause will enable that to be done, provided it is found that the rateable property in the locality will yield a certain annual revenue. I think there should be some restriction placed in this way. We must do things reasonably. If a locality aspires to be created a separate municipality it would be idle to so declare it, unless it had some rateable property capable of yielding some amount of revenue to enable it to carry on its municipal duties. Therefore, in Clause 9, we provide that the Governor may declare any locality to be a municipality if it contains rateable property capable of yielding, upon a rate not exceeding 1s. in the pound on the annual value, a sum of £300. If Leederville, or any other place, is shown to have rateable property capable of yielding an annual revenue of £300, it may be created a municipality; otherwise not. Opinions may differ as to the amount, whether it is too large, or possibly in the minds of some too small, but that can be fixed in committee. Certainly if a place does not yield any revenue at all, it would be idle to proclaim it a municipality, as it would be

incapable of exercising its powers as a municipality. Of course it may hunger for the Government subsidy, whether it be 10s. or £1 in the £, but unless it had a revenue of its own the Government subsidy would not be worth much. At any rate, we propose that no locality shall be declared to be a municipality unless it has a rateable capacity to some extent. The next clauses of the Bill deal with the qualification of electors; and the only thing that is new, or very new, in that part of the Bill is the provision as to the powers of committees, to which the Municipal Council may delegate certain of its functions. This practice, I believe, obtains now with the Perth City Council of delegating certain functions to a Works Committee, a Finance Committee, and committees of other denominations. Then we have provisions in the third part of the Bill dealing with the qualification of electors; and Part IV. deals with the qualification of councillors. I do not know that there have been many alterations made in the present law in regard to these qualifications. Part V. of the Bill relates to the election of councillors, and in this part we propose a change. We provide, in the first place, that the voting shall be by ballot, whereas at the present time it is not so. We also propose certain provisions relating to acts of bribery and corruption, provisions which are altogether wanting now, and the absence of which has, in the past, created some scandal on occasions. There is also here provision made for the continuance of the same system as at present obtains — only it puts it on a better footing—as to enabling electors who are absent a certain distance from a polling place to record their votes in writing. The distance provided is 20 miles, which is different to the distance in the case of parliamentary elections. We also provide that the election of mayor, councillors, and auditors shall take place, in all municipalities, on the same day. That may appear to create some difficulty at first, but I think the provisions of the Bill and the schedules will be found to meet the difficulty, and I do not think that the proceedings are likely to clash. I think it is far more preferable to have the election for all members of a municipal council on the same day, instead of having a separate date for the election of mayor,

councillors, and auditors. Electors have one or more votes under the Bill. In the case of the election of mayor it is proposed to retain the present law, by which an elector may have from one to four votes, according to the value of his property; and in the case of the election of councillors we propose that the same principle of cumulative voting shall apply, only the number of votes is limited to two. That is a new provision, or rather it is an extension of the principle which already obtains in connection with the election of mayor or chairman. The next portion of the Bill deals with the powers and duties of municipal councils; and here will be found the provisions relating to the making of by-laws. They have been made very ample, and I think they embrace every necessary power which a council may desire to exercise, or have occasion to exercise; not even excepting the power of regulating the use of bicycles in the public thoroughfares, and requiring them to use a lighted lamp after sunset, and to sound a bell, whether by day or by night, and to proceed at a certain pace along the streets, in regard to which there have been some complaints lately. The next portion of the Bill is the financial part, which is included in Clauses 146-179. We retain in the Bill very nearly the same provisions as at present exist in connection with the finances of municipal councils, but there is a provision in a later part of the Bill enabling a certain number of ratepayers, if they think fit, to demand a Government or special audit. The Governor is empowered, in such case, to appoint two auditors, either on his own motion or on the petition of any fifty ratepayers, or at the request of any creditor of the municipality. Such special audit has to be notified beforehand in the *Government Gazette*, and the auditors, when they have completed their audit, are to report the result of their investigations to the Colonial Secretary. The expenses of this special audit are to be paid as follows:—if it has been required by the ratepayers, the council shall bear the expense; if required by a creditor, the creditor shall defray the expense; and, if the audit has been made at the instance of the Colonial Secretary, on behalf of the Government, the Government shall defray the expense of such

audit. I think that is a good provision, because, when things are said to be going wrong in connection with a council's financial affairs, it affords the ratepayers this opportunity of having an independent audit; and, if the Government think, in case of outlying municipalities, where there is not much life perhaps, that things are going wrong with the council, it is within their province to require a special audit. This demand for an independent audit may possibly never be exercised, but still it is a good thing to have the power to do so, should the ratepayers desire it. I may say that several suggestions were recently made to the Government in regard to this Bill by a Conference of municipal delegates that was held in Perth. I cannot say that the Government have accepted the recommendations of the Conference in every particular, but we have in several. That body did not touch the rating clauses of the Bill in any way; their attention was directed—or at any rate the conclusions they came to were directed—more to quite secondary alterations in the various clauses. Those which we considered of importance we have adopted; others, as to calling councillors "aldermen," and one or two more which I cannot call to mind at present, we have not adopted. If the House should desire to have the recommendations of the Conference before it, I shall be happy to lay them on the table, for no doubt it was a Conference that had much weight, being composed of accredited representatives from nearly all the municipalities of the colony. I do not mean to say that I have explained the Bill on this occasion exhaustively by any means; and, if the House would prefer to have some time for perusing the Bill before going into committee, the committee stage may be postponed for a few days. When in committee, members will be able to ask for any explanation they may require, when we deal with the Bill clause by clause. As I have already said, a more exhaustive explanation of the Bill will be found in *Hansard* of last year. The Bill has been before the country for twelve months, and by this time most members will know what they object to in it, and to what extent they are prepared to aid the Government in placing it on the statute book. I now move the second reading of the Bill.

After a pause,

Mr. JAMES rose and said: I should have thought that a Bill of this importance would have called forth some remarks from members right and left of me. It seems to me there are many things in the Bill for which we ought to be thankful. I, myself, am more thankful for the recognition which the Bill affords of the necessity of consolidating the existing statutes dealing with municipal law. There are many matters which, no doubt, will require alteration as the Bill goes through committee. I noticed that when the Attorney General referred, somewhat sneeringly I thought, to the aspirations of municipal councillors to be called aldermen, the hon. member for the Gascoyne applauded the sneers of the hon. and learned gentleman. Of course the old higher-sounding title of an alderman would be manifestly inapplicable to a lanky, skinny-faced councillor like myself, and I suppose I would be turned out of the council right away, and there would be a general cry for men of weight and standing, like the hon. member for Gascoyne, to fill the office of alderman. At the same time I see no objection to the substitution of the word "alderman" for "councillor." If in other parts of Australia they adopt the title of alderman to municipal representatives, I see no objection to those occupying the same position here doing the same. I may state that I have been entrusted with the recommendations of the late Municipal Conference, and that this is one of their recommendations; and when the Bill goes into committee, I intend to ask for an expression of opinion upon it. The request of the conference was not that the term should apply to every municipal council in the colony, but only to places where the population exceeded 5,000. That would not, at present at any rate, apply to Carnarvon or Southern Cross, or other small villages. Another defect in the present Bill is that it makes no provision for the appointment of a Deputy Mayor, in the absence of the Mayor of the municipality. Some difficulty and a little friction occurred in the City Council recently by reason of the absence of such a provision; and, in committee, I shall ask that a provision be inserted in the present Bill, providing for the appointment of a Deputy Mayor,

in the absence of the Mayor for the time being. There was another recommendation made by the Conference, which has been ignored by the Government, and that was that provision should be made, when a municipality so desired, to make the Mayor an allowance, to meet the expenses of his office. The colony, I believe, is "booming," and the Government is "booming," and, if we are going to attract people here, surely Perth itself must also "boom," and the Mayor of the city must be prepared to receive and entertain distinguished visitors coming here. I do not see why he should be expected to do this entirely out of his own pocket, and the Conference recommended that power be given to municipalities to make their Mayor or Chairman some allowance to meet such expenditure. I am speaking now as the representative of the Municipal Association; my own individual opinion I shall be prepared to express when the question comes before us in committee. The Conference, representing, as it did, the councils of the various municipalities of the colony, many of them being men who have been engaged for years in municipal work, not men who profess to sneer at those who do their best for their native towns, but men who have served their fellow citizens for years in municipal offices—this Conference recommended that the present system of municipal election should be re-framed in this direction: that in the election of Mayor the ratepayers should have cumulative votes, as at present, up to four votes, according to the value of their property, but that in the election of councillors the system should be the single vote system. The Conference was unanimous on that point, and I shall ask the House to adopt the recommendation. There is another important matter which came up before the Conference—and in this matter I am sure the Premier will join me—and that is: if we are going to give lady ratepayers a vote, we also ought to give them the right to sit as town councillors. The members of the Conference were not all young and likely to be carried away by sentiment. Although there were some young and enthusiastic delegates amongst them, there were also many grave and reverend gentlemen; and the conclusion arrived at was that, if you give women

the right to vote at municipal elections, you should also give them the right to sit at the municipal board. I should like to hear any logical argument to the contrary. Perhaps when I bring this proposal before the House in committee, as I intend to do, we may have some of these arguments trotted out. In dealing with the system of rating, Clause 149 of the Bill proposes to exempt (amongst other properties) land or buildings "belonging to any religious body, and used or occupied as a place of residence of a minister of religion." The Conference was unanimous against this exemption. It is simply another form of State aid to religion. We have an Ecclesiastical Grant now, and if we are going to give any additional aid of this kind it should be done openly, and not by a side wind. Another class of property exempted is that "belonging to any religious body, and used or occupied as a convent, nunnery, or monastery, or by a religious brotherhood or sisterhood;" also any building (belonging to a religious body) that is used exclusively as a private school. I do not see why a private school, being the property of a religious body, and in respect of which fees are charged, should be exempt from being rated, any more than schools belonging to private individuals. The Conference also recommended—and in this I am sure the hon. member for the Gascoyne will agree—that mayors, who have to discharge very important duties and onerous duties, should have an *ex officio* right to be appointed justices of the peace. That, I believe, is the law elsewhere, and I hope it will be adopted here. There are other alterations, of minor importance, which I think are required in the Bill, and which it will be my duty to bring before the committee on the Bill. I have referred to the more important recommendations of the Conference, and I ask that these recommendations or suggestions be taken very seriously into consideration, emanating, as they do, from a body of men experienced in municipal matters—more experienced than any of us are—and who know the deficiencies of the existing system. When in committee, I also intend to introduce a clause to enable Municipal Councils to make a by-law for the early closing of shops. Recognising, as I do, the principle of

local option, I know of no better way of settling this debatable question of early closing than by the application of that principle to it. I think all of us will recognise that there is need for some legislation on the subject. Owners of shops have, in the past, acted with commendable consideration for their employes in this respect, and the system of early closing was at one time generally adopted in our principal towns; but latterly many new-comers, and especially Asiatics and Chinese, are departing from that practice, by keeping their shops open very late at night, which is unfair to other storekeepers of our own race and blood. I am sure if we took a poll of the storekeepers it would be found that a large majority were in favour of local option; and I have no doubt that when we go into committee I shall receive a large measure of support in my effort to adopt this principle as regards early closing. Whether I succeed or fail, I shall have the gratification of knowing that the names of those who support me, and of those who oppose the principle, will be duly recorded in the votes and proceedings of the House.

MR. SOLOMON: I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of this Bill. It supplies a long-felt want, undoubtedly. For two or three sessions past, the matter of amending and consolidating our municipal law has been before the House. Last session we got so far with a Bill for this purpose that the House was on the point of going into committee on the Bill, and, but for the illness and absence of the Attorney General, I believe it would have passed through all its stages. The measure by this time has received the full consideration of those who are connected with municipal affairs, and I believe the provisions of the Bill have been generally approved. When it goes into committee there may be one or two matters which perhaps will require explanation. For instance, the clauses dealing with the qualification of electors. Clause 37 gives the right to vote to every British subject possessing the necessary qualification, but no provision is made for a naturalised subject to vote. In the Electoral Act such a provision exists, and I think it should be found in this Bill. We all know there are many naturalised subjects

in the colony who own property, and who are equally entitled to vote as others are; and I think it would be well that the position of these people should be clearly defined, so that there may be no confusion when the municipal elections take place. Section 68 provides that the ballot papers to which each elector is entitled are to be delivered to him in respect of every vote the elector may possess; so that, I take it, a person having four votes would receive four ballot papers. That is how I read the Clause. But Clause 75 provides that in ascertaining the state of the poll the returning officer shall compare the number of votes given by each voting paper, and see that each voting paper corresponds with the number of votes the elector is entitled to. It appears to me that the two clauses are inconsistent, and likely to clash with one another. No doubt the matter will be explained to us in committee. There are one or two other matters which I shall bring forward when we go into committee; meantime I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

MR. MORAN: I should like to know if I am in order in asking the Attorney General for an explanation.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member will not be in order in doing so now.

MR. MORAN: In looking over the provisions of the Bill dealing with the borrowing powers of municipalities, I find that no provision is made to meet the case of a new municipality which may require to raise a loan in the early days of its existence. The Bill appears to me to contemplate that no loan is to be raised by any municipality until it has been at least four years in existence, for the clause dealing with the amount of money which any municipality may borrow provides that the sum shall not exceed the annual income of the corporation for the three years terminating with the last yearly balance of accounts. Therefore no municipality will be in a position to borrow until it has been at least four years in existence. I think this is unfair to such municipalities as Coolgardie, where the progress of events and the development of the town are likely to be much more rapid than that of ordinary towns. We may have a larger population on some of these gold-fields townships in a year or two than in

any other place in the colony, and it may be necessary to raise loans for municipal works. But, according to the Bill as it stands, no step could be taken in that direction for at least four years to come. I think special provision should be made to deal with municipalities on the gold-fields, which may spring into great importance in a very short space of time, and require to borrow a considerable sum, and whose revenue may justify their doing so. I hope this matter will receive the Attorney General's attention when the Bill is in committee. I think these young municipalities should be allowed to borrow a sum based upon their first year's revenue. I know the desire of the Government, and the desire of all of us, is to make the Bill as perfect as possible, and make it so that it will suit the requirements of all parts of the colony. I also think some additional provision will be required by which the first electoral rolls may be made up in newly-created municipalities on our gold-fields. With these exceptions, I shall have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

MR. RANDELL: It is not my intention to say much with regard to the Bill before the House, for one reason because I have not studied it very closely at present, to see how it differs from the existing Act, under which our municipalities are now working. Whatever may be said as to the necessity for fresh legislation in this direction, I maintain that the cause for complaint is not so much because of inherent defects in the present Act as because the Act is not administered as it might be, in many cases. If the Act were strictly carried out, a great many complaints that have arisen would not have arisen. At the same time I think it is desirable—in fact there has been a strongly expressed opinion, more especially by the Perth City Council—that an alteration of the law should take place to meet the growing requirements of the city. I am of opinion, however, that this is one of those Bills that should go to a select committee, because I think that on the rateable clauses of the Bill there should be an opportunity afforded of obtaining evidence and information that cannot be obtained in a committee of the whole House. If that course were adopted, there would be less necessity, at the

present moment, to continue the debate upon the Bill. I might briefly say I am not in accord with the proposed new departure of giving two votes to any ratepayer for the election of councillors; I believe the number of votes should be limited to one. I think the election of a mayor and the election of councillors should be conducted on two different lines, one being on the cumulative vote principle, and the other on the single vote principle. I am glad to find that it is not proposed to limit the selection of mayor from amongst the councillors; I think the area of selection should be larger. We have not yet arrived at that stage that we should restrict the selection of our mayors to the councillors in office. The position of mayor is a very important one; he is the managing and directing spirit of the whole business, and it is necessary that the ratepayers should have an opportunity of selecting the very best man they can get for the position. I hardly agree with the proposal that the smaller municipalities should be content with their chief civic officer being called a chairman, instead of mayor. The mayor sounds much shorter than chairman of the municipal council. I do not know that there is anything very grand about it, but it is a title which strangers will recognise at once, that of mayor, whereas they would not be likely to understand what a chairman of the municipality meant. This, perhaps, is only a minor matter; but I think that the other question I have referred to, the question of rating, should in the first place be referred to a select committee. I am inclined to think that some alteration will be required as regards the system of assessment. I know it is impossible we should have any perfectly equitable system, but we may be able to strike the happy medium. I am inclined to think, from a cursory perusal of the Bill, and from what I can gather, that the Bill as at present drafted will bear more hardly upon the small owner than upon the larger owner of property. It is a question, too, whether 10 per cent. is enough to allow for outgoing and other expenses which attach to property, and especially house property. I believe that in some places an allowance of 20 per cent. is made. There is one feature of the Bill I am very glad to see, and that is the

appointment of independent and professional valuers to assist in valuing municipal property for rating purposes, instead of the present perfunctory and unscientific system of two or three of the councillors driving about the town in a buggy, and making a haphazard valuation. These independent valuers, we may reasonably expect, will do what is right as between the council and the ratepayers. The only question is, as to the remuneration of these valuers; if they are paid on the *ad valorem* principle it may be a temptation to them to over-estimate the value of property. This, however, is a matter which is to be left to the municipalities themselves to decide. Inasmuch as the Bill is a codification of the existing law, and provides for the altered circumstances of the colony, I shall have pleasure in supporting its second reading; but I hope that some member will be good enough to move that it be referred to the consideration of a select committee.

Motion put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eighteen minutes to 4 o'clock, p.m.
