

colony, and that every penny spent by these gold-diggers in the colony would have been a real benefit to the colony—I think the Government would have acted more wisely if they had limited the period of exemption to a few weeks, instead of affording these men an opportunity of going to the other colonies to spend their money. I do not think there was any necessity for this prolonged exemption, more especially as we have been fortunate enough to have had some rains on these goldfields, which has enabled a great many of the men to remain on the field. I think the Government themselves must now see that in this matter they committed somewhat of a mistake. Beyond this, I see nothing in the Speech or the actions of the Government to say much about; and with these few remarks I beg to support the Address-in-Reply.

On the motion of Mr. R. F. SHOLL, the debate was then adjourned until the following day.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eight minutes to 5 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 21st December, 1893.

Address-in-Reply: Presentation of—Suspension of Standing Orders—Suspension of Sitting—Electoral Rolls Bill: first reading: second reading—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 2 o'clock.

PRAYERS.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION OF.

At ten minutes past two o'clock, p.m., the Council adjourned to present the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech.

The Council re-assembled at twenty minutes past two o'clock.

The President resumed the chair, and announced that the Address adopted by the Council on the 20th instant had been presented to His Excellency the Governor, in accordance with the resolution of the Council; and that His Excellency had been pleased to express his thanks for the said Address, and for the assurance of the Council of its desire to consider and deal with all matters brought before them.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

THE HON. J. G. H. AMHERST, in accordance with notice, moved that during the current session, so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as may be necessary to pass any Bills through their different stages.

Question—put and passed.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING.

At half-past two o'clock, the sitting of the Council was suspended until five o'clock p.m., when the President resumed the chair.

ELECTORAL ROLLS BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly, and was read a first time.

SECOND READING.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton): Before the hon. member moves the second reading of this Bill, I may say that there is nothing, now that the Standing Orders have been suspended, to prevent the Bill being passed through its remaining stages at once; but I think time should be given between each reading, so that hon. members may have an opportunity of looking through the Bill.

THE HON. J. G. H. AMHERST: I beg now to move that this Bill be read a second time. I may explain that the reason the Bill is brought forward is fully set forth in His Excellency's Speech. If hon. members will look at Part II., Section 14 of the Act of 1893, they will see that it cannot come into force until after a dissolution of the Assembly, and this means that the Electoral Rolls, which I believe have already, to some extent, been prepared, are *ultra vires*, unless some

steps are taken to make them valid. It would be unfortunate if the Assembly, at this period, were to be dissolved, because there would then be no Parliament for a space of at least six months, and this Bill will prevent that. As far as I can see, if we pass this Bill it will, instead of retarding the general elections, hasten them, inasmuch as Registrars will be saved the work of commencing the compilation of the rolls afresh. I do not intend to go through every clause of the Bill now; but I shall be happy to answer any questions I can. It appears to me that every care has been taken to draw up the Bill. There are one or two clauses which are new. One is to facilitate Registrars sending telegrams with reference to returns. In the old Act these telegrams are to be sent under the inspection of a justice of the peace or a notary public. It has been thought inadvisable to keep this the law, as it, owing to the difficulty of procuring a justice in some parts, may tend to delay the receipt of returns. In Clause 7 there is a provision as to mortgagees and trustees, which seems to me to lay down the law very clearly. I move the second reading of the Bill.

THE HON. H. ANSTEY: Clause 10 of the Electoral Act of last session says: "The clerk of every local authority in Western Australia shall, during the month of January in every year, make out a list to be called 'The List of Ratepayers,' containing in alphabetical order of surnames the name of every male person whose name appears in the Electoral or Voters' Lists of such local authority. Such lists shall be in the following form, and shall contain all the other information required by such form." And Clause 11 states: "It shall be the duty of such clerk as aforesaid, on or before the thirty-first day of January in every year, to transmit the said list, certified by such clerk under his hand, to the Electoral Registrar or Registrars of the district or districts within the boundaries of which the local authority or any part thereof, or the municipality or district (as the case may be) of such local authority is situate." Now, I presume a local authority would include a Roads Board; but under the law it is permissive whether these bodies shall have clerks or not. These sec-

tions do not deal with any other persons than clerks, and in many cases Roads Boards have no clerks, although they have other persons who perform the duties. I should like to know what effect this would have as regards the electoral lists which are required to be sent in. Again, on looking at the form prescribed, I see it is headed "list of ratepayers." This also may lead to confusion, for in many districts there are no ratepayers, because no rates have ever been levied. Does the word "ratepayers" mean and include persons liable to be rated? I know my name appears on the list of voters for a Roads Board, but that does not make me a ratepayer, for I have never paid a rate. Further, it says that it shall be the duty of the clerks to transmit the lists to the Registrars, but there is no penalty for not doing so. As Clause 11 now stands, many persons may lose their votes through the neglect of the clerks, who cannot be punished for their negligence. Then Section 14 of the Act of last session seems to me to be ambiguous, for it reads as if a province were part of a district. What is meant by the section, I take it, is that if a person wishes to vote for a province on account of a qualification he may possess in a district he may do so, but the section does not put it in that way. I think it is only right that I should call attention to these matters, so that we may remedy the errors as well as the one we are particularly called together to consider.

THE HON. J. MORRISON: At five minutes past three o'clock this Bill was placed in our hands. I notice His Excellency, in his speech, states that he has summoned us for the special purpose of providing for the preparation of the electoral rolls under the Act of last session amending the Constitution, no provision having been made in the Electoral Act for their compilation prior to the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly, and then he says that a Bill will be submitted for the purpose. Looking at this Bill, I see it not only covers the purpose stated, but four others also, of which no notice has been given. I understand that it is the desire of the Government to pass this Bill through this House this afternoon, and I only wish we could do so conscientiously. However, I cannot. As I

have said, Clauses 4, 5, 6, and 7 deal with four matters quite distinct from the one stated, and we have not had time to consider them; besides which, I think the longer this Bill is delayed, the more faults we shall find in the original Act. Only yesterday I heard a very important question raised in regard to it. A gentleman who is an unnaturalised subject, but who has resided here for many years, and who owns property, informs me that his application to become registered as a voter has been refused; while at the same time he found that if he had been a ratepayer, he would have been placed on the list without any question being raised. This is an inconsistency which needs remedying. I think that we should not go into committee on this Bill before the next sitting of the House, so that we may have an opportunity of looking thoroughly into the Bill.

THE HON. J. W. HACKETT: I do not intend to debate this Bill, for the reason that I have been reading as hard as I could for the last few minutes, and I have, up to the present, been unable to master it. It will certainly take more than the intervals between the first and second readings to enable us to understand it. Take Clause 2, for instance: I have no doubt but that it is worded correctly, and carries out the intention of the Government; but it is certainly not clear at a glance what the meaning is. How is it possible to grasp a clause like this in a few minutes, when we are told that it is to be read with the Electoral Act of 1893, and with Section 24 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act of 1893, and when on referring to the said Section 24, we find that it again refers to other sections of the principal Act? I would point out that it is absolutely essential we should be given a few more hours to grasp it. Another place has had a great advantage over us. It had the Bill yesterday. It has been said that this is the revising Chamber, and that if an error did creep in the last Bill it was for us to repair it. That having been said, I am still less disposed to rush the Bill through. The other House will be in session to-morrow, and if we do make any change there will be ample time for its consideration. I think the points raised by the Hon. Mr. Anstey are deserving of every consideration, and I may add

to what he has stated that a ratepayer who has not paid his rates loses his vote for the Municipality, but not for the Parliamentary elections. I hope the hon. gentleman who is in charge of the Bill will endeavour to meet the convenience of hon. members and allow the committee stage to be taken to-morrow.

THE HON. J. G. H. AMHERST: After what has been said by hon. members, I shall acquiesce in their views by putting off the consideration of the Bill in committee until to-morrow.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Sheulton): I may say that a copy of the Bill was, as usual, placed on the file in the Library as soon as it was introduced in the other House.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

The consideration of the Bill in committee was made an Order of the Day for Friday, 22nd December.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council, at 5.35 o'clock p.m., adjourned until Friday, 22nd December, at 11 o'clock a.m.