

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 8th September, 1920.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. H. Stewart leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. J. A. Greig (South-East) on the ground of ill health.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—ROTTNEST ISLAND.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.35]: It is true, as the Minister said, that this is only a very short measure. At the same time, it is none the less important on that score. Class A reserves, in the opinion of those who reserved them, should not be interfered with except on very good grounds. The Bill deals with a Class A reserve. We were given to understand that Rottnest Island is under a board of control. I assume the board is appointed by the Governor-in-Council. That board has done excellent work. We were also informed that when the board assumed control of the island it was found that the public buildings there had been grievously damaged by the German prisoners interred on the island. When we remember that those prisoners were maintained in idleness—which is very different from the treatment meted out to British prisoners in Germany—we realise that the damage done to those buildings can only be attributed to the fact that those prisoners had nothing else to do. The Bill asks for certain concessions which amount to trespassing upon that Class A reserve. It is proposed that leases shall be granted for building purposes for 21 years. The reason advanced is that the island is exceedingly popular with holiday makers, in consequence of which the board cannot provide sufficient buildings for all those who wish for accommodation there. In my opinion, this is not a valid reason for trespassing on a Class A reserve. I cannot imagine anything

but a colony of rookeries being established on that beautiful spot by persons whose leases extend over only 21 years. No such lessee would erect a very substantial building. When in Committee I intend to move an amendment which will provide that the leases shall be not less than 21 years and not more than 99 years.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Why "not less than 21 years."

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Because that is the term stated in the Bill. A person building on a lease extending over only 21 years would erect but a flimsy structure, whereas if the leases were 99 years, fairly large and substantial buildings would spring up. Whilst I do not intend to detract from the work done by the board, I believe that if my amendment were carried, it would enable the board to charge higher ground rents, the board would have the advantage of the trade which would result from the increased number of people residing at Rottnest during the summer months, and with increased funds would be able to provide good roads and other facilities for the convenience of the residents. I trust that the Minister will agree to my amendment. It can easily be drafted by striking out at the end of the fourth line of Clause 2 the words "not exceeding—"

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member had better leave the discussion of the details of the amendment for the Committee stage.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Very well. With the reservation I have indicated, I will support the second reading.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [4.45]: I can see very little need for the Bill at all. If there is one thing we need to be more zealous of than anything else it is in respect to the control and disposition of our parks. It seems to me that the Government are taking a step in the wrong direction in this proposal. I agree with what Mr. Duffell has said in regard to the island. It certainly is one of the best places of its kind in Australia for amusement and as a health resort. I know of no other part of Australia equal to Rottnest, in respect to the healthful recreation, which one very often needs, that it affords to visitors. Now we have a proposal to throw open the island for leasehold living sites. Mr. Duffell goes one further in his suggestion to increase the term from 21 years to 99 years during which leases may be taken. If we are to go up in this way it would be almost as well to give the freehold. There are some of the most beautiful sea views on Rottnest I have ever seen. It would be quite possible for persons who may be taking up leases of sites to occupy those very positions. I do not see why anyone wishing to go to Rottnest should not take advantage of the large tents erected there, or indeed take over tents instead of erecting permanent buildings. The Government should be in a position to erect enough tents without recourse to this proposal. On

one occasion when I was at Rottneast a part of the foreshore was fenced off against the people who visited the island. That was the part leading from His Excellency the Governor's residence. I thought that was an unwarrantable interference with the rights of the people, and it was a step to which I strongly objected. People had to go up from the jetty and pass round the back of the residence, instead of taking a short cut, because the foreshore was fenced off in this way. I have every regard for the board, which I think is doing good work. At the same time, we need to be very careful before we give away any rights in our parks and reserves. I hope, if the House does pass the Bill, it will not extend the term during which the leases may be granted.

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom debate adjourned.

BILL—BROOME RATES VALIDATION.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [448] in moving the second reading said: On the 1st January last year the municipality of Broome was dissolved, and the municipal district became merged in the Broome road board district. In December of the previous year, 1918, the Broome municipality purported to levy rates for the municipal area in the year commencing the 1st October, 1918. On the dissolution of the municipality these rates, with all other assets of the municipality, passed over to the road board, which also took over all liabilities of the municipality. It has since transpired that the mayor of the municipality for the time being omitted to initial the pages of the rate book and publish a copy of the rate in the newspaper. These two things were omitted. Therefore, the road board when they took over found that they could not enforce the rates for that period, that was the period between the 1st October, 1918, and the 1st January, 1919. The purpose of this Bill is to rectify that omission and validate the rates for that period. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT—STATE OF BUSINESS.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [451]: In view of the state of the Notice Paper, I propose to ask hon. members to adjourn for a few days. With regard to the two motions,

the debates on which we have adjourned, it is desired that certain hon. members should be present to take part in the debates. I know that other hon. members wish to have an opportunity of reading the report of the Prices Regulation Commission before proceeding with the debate on that subject. The other Bills are not quite ready. It is the intention of the Colonial Treasurer to present his Budget during next week, probably on Tuesday, and in view of the position generally, I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 21st September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.53 p.m.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD.

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Premier: 1, When will farmers working under the Industries Assistance Board receive statements of their accounts for the year ended 31st March last? 2, When will the distribution of moneys held by the Board on account of creditors and others for the same year take place?

The PREMIER replied: 1, On completion of the distribution of proceeds. 2, Distribution is now proceeding, and it is anticipated that it will be completed by the end of the present month.