

Agricultural Bank. There was a good deal of trouble and correspondence about that before it was allowed. As to the clerk referred to by the hon. member, the salary was £80, and it was increased to £92 9s. 5d.; £80 being considered too low, he supposed, or something of the kind.

MR. GEORGE: Then the item was not properly considered when that estimate was made.

THE PREMIER: A new officer came in, or something else occurred. There must have been some special ground for the increase. Through the whole of the departments, and especially the Treasury, alterations and increases of salary were more closely scrutinised than anything else, because, as he had said, increases were contrary to the express terms of the Audit Act.

Vote passed.

Post and Telegraphs—£183 15s. 2d.:

MR. A. FORREST asked when the Minister in charge of the department intended to give effect to the resolution of the House with regard to urgent telegrams.

THE PREMIER: Unfortunately, the matter seemed to have been overlooked, but it would be at once attended to.

Vote passed.

Remaining votes and items in the schedule agreed to.

Schedule B—agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the PREMIER, the House adjourned at 10.41 until 7.30 p.m. the next evening.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 18th October, 1899.

Papers presented—Electoral Bill, second reading—
Wines, Beer, and Spirits Sale Amendment Bill,
Legislative Assembly's Amendment—Permanent
Reserves' Bill, Legislative Assembly's Amendment
—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: 1. Copy of resolution passed by South African League *re* expressions of sympathy and offers of support to Uitlander population in Transvaal; 2. Paris International Exhibition, progress report of Royal Commission.

Ordered to lie on the table.

ELECTORAL BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell), in moving the second reading, said: This measure, which is important in two or three particulars, to a large extent embodies legislation we have at present, although the Bill itself is a copy of the South Australian Electoral Act, which has been in existence for a number of years, and is reported to have worked admirably. The object of the Bill is to put the election of members to the two Houses of Parliament on a better footing than at present, and to simplify in many particulars the working of the electoral law. This simplification is directed to the registration and the placing of duly qualified persons on the electoral roll in the easiest manner possible, and is further directed to the retaining of names on the roll after they have once been placed there. The Bill provides that very careful inquiry shall be made by the Inspector of Rolls and the registrars, in the intervals between one revision of the rolls and another; and one very important feature of the Bill—a feature which, if the Bill were introduced for nothing else, would deserve the careful and favourable consideration of the House—is a provision for transferring voters from one district to another. It is

a serious blot on our electoral legislation that a man, say in Perth, who moves from one side of the street to another, loses his qualification; and, it being admitted that such a state of things ought to exist no longer, the Bill proposes a very easy mode of transfer, as hon. members will find by reference to Clauses 37 and 40, which remove what has really become a grievance to a large number of people. At present there is first of all the difficulty of getting on the roll, and then, when on the roll, there is the danger that by shifting his habitation the elector may lose his qualification, and have to make a fresh claim. This is all obviated under the Bill. A man can apply for a transfer, and under Clause 40 it is the duty of the person to whom he applies—the registrar of his district, who makes the transfer—to notify the officer from whose district the voter has removed. This will remove all objections on that score, at any rate, against the Electoral Act; and, taking the Bill as a whole, I think we may say it is a very liberal measure. Clause 33 provides that claims may be delivered to the registrars by post, or otherwise at any time. There is also a clause of great importance with regard to names taken from the municipal lists and roads boards lists. Some people have suffered under the present system, and I found myself struck off the parliamentary roll on one occasion because I had been omitted from the municipal roll. The officials had failed to place my name upon the electoral roll of one of the wards of the city, and when the electoral roll for Parliament was made up from that, my name was omitted. I am not singular in that.

HON. F. T. CROWDER: Was it not your duty to see the roll?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It may have been my duty to see that my name was on the municipal roll, but having been on the roll for years, one could not anticipate that his name would disappear without a cause. If all the ratepayers in the country have to go and examine the rolls to see whether their names are on, I think it is rather a big order. I believe Sir John Forrest shared the same fate as myself, and that Mr. Padbury and other well-known citizens also did so. That shows there is some

necessity for an amendment of the Act in this respect. In some cases persons had their names struck off the municipal voters' lists because they had not paid their rates; but, under this Bill, even if names are removed from the municipal voters' list, and are on the ratepayers' lists, they are to be copied into the parliamentary list for the district or province, as the case may be. There is a provision very like that in our present Act for absent voting, so that persons living in one part of the colony may have the right to vote in another, being able to exercise that power very much in the same form as at the present time. That is, they can go to a magistrate or person authorised in that behalf and exercise their vote, and that is transmitted through the post to the returning officer of the district for which they wish to vote. Another important alteration in the Act is that a person who is seeking election must be nominated by at least two persons qualified to vote at an election. I believe the effect of this will be that a man cannot withdraw after he has been nominated. It is a kind of *quasi* contract between himself and his nominators, because he has to give his consent in writing, and will be obliged to go to a poll. He will not be able, as in a case very recently in the North, to retire after nomination day, and cause a considerable amount of trouble and expense. - If he attempts to withdraw afterwards, he will lose the £25 whether he goes to the poll or not. I think that is only right, because the country is put to considerable expense over these elections; and although there may be some argument on the other side, because if a man were ill or an accident happened it would seem rather hard that he should not be allowed to withdraw after the day of nomination, the difficulty of the present system is much greater than that, and all things considered it is desirable that a person should not withdraw after he is nominated. He ought to carefully consider his position and chances, and should not proceed so far as to put the returning officer to the expense of printing the ballot papers, and having them circulated and placards posted up, and all the preparations made for an election, and then suddenly withdraw.

A MEMBER: Supposing he dies?

HON. D. K. CONGDON: That provision can only apply where there are two candidates.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It can only apply where there are two or more candidates. I believe that in some countries they allow 48 hours, or in some cases 72, during which candidates may withdraw; but I am informed that the effect of this proposal will be that a candidate cannot withdraw. A question arose whether a candidate, who had withdrawn under the circumstances I have named, had a legal claim to his deposit. There were doubts on the question, but I believe the deposit has been returned, and it is better to be on the side of generosity than otherwise. Then the Bill provides, most effectually I think, for the secrecy of the ballot, which has been declared by some who are well informed upon electoral subjects, to be one of the most important features in an election. I understand that the papers will not be numbered, and it will be difficult for anyone to trace a vote. All voting papers not used are to be destroyed at once, and I believe I am correct in stating that when an election cannot be disputed the other ballot papers will be destroyed. I believe there is another means of ascertaining if anything wrong has taken place in an election, but I am not prepared to say at the moment what that is. I have already dealt with absent voters, and to my mind, and I believe the minds of the members of the Council, the provision is a most important one, especially as concerns the Council. Perhaps there may be a difference of opinion about proxy voting as regards the Legislative Assembly, but I think there cannot be any in relation to the Legislative Council, constituted upon the basis we are. The provision is a most valuable one to make in any Bill for the purpose of protecting the interests of the country, so that there shall be a conservative influence, which is always associated with the constitution of a legislative council. There are further clauses which deal with the question of bribery and offences of various kinds committed under the Bill, and the penalties which are to be enforced. Another alteration is that, instead of having quarterly revisions of the rolls, there will be only annual revisions; but there will be supplementary rolls from time to time,

and before an election takes place. If an election intervenes between two annual revisions, supplementary rolls will have to be issued for the purpose of that election. My attention was drawn by one hon. member to Clause 102, which seemed to him to be a little vague. The clause says "No Council elector shall vote at any election except in the division for which he is registered to vote." Other clauses affect this, especially that one which provides for absent voters, and which clearly shows that a person can vote by letter for any part of the colony as long as he is out of the division for which he so votes. The hon. member thought Clause 102 meant that an elector must personally vote within the boundaries of the division. The object of the clause is to prevent an elector from voting twice in one district. If an elector is registered to vote in half a dozen divisions, I presume he can vote in all of them. I thought there was a little vagueness about it, and I consulted upon the matter, and found that persons will be able to exercise their votes, although absent, at elections. I find that Council elections are provided for very distinctly under Clause 112, which indicates that, as the divisions are unduly scattered, there may be different polling places and deputy returning officers in those places, and if practicable each deputy returning officer shall telegraph to the returning officer of the province "the certificate of the result; provided that the transmission of any result by telegraph shall be in accordance with the provisions hereinafter contained relating to the transmission by telegraph of the return to an election writ." The object of this is to save time. Our knowledge of the result of an election has in some cases been delayed very considerably, and this provision will enable the returning officer for the province to ascertain the result at a much earlier date than he would do if he had to wait for the boxes to be returned to him from the different polling places in the districts composing the division. Then there is another provision in the Bill for a "Court of Disputed Returns," the measure providing, I believe, that the Court shall consist of two Judges of the Supreme Court, and shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine all questions of disputed re-

turns. Clause 146 provides that no return shall be disputed except by petition, and no petition shall be noticed, nor shall any proceedings be had thereon unless the petition is addressed to the House affected, and presented by a member or left with the clerk within 40 days after the day of return. It will be noticed that the House does not decide upon the question. It is left to the Court, but it has to pass through the channel of the House to reach the Court. I do not know that I need refer to any more of the clauses. Doubtless each clause will be carefully scrutinised. I have omitted to say one thing. Of course the Bill provides for adult suffrage, that principle having been assented to by resolution both in this House and in another place. The Bill provides that any person 21 years of age, whether of the male or female sex, and duly qualified to vote, shall vote at elections, and I think it is only my duty to call attention to that fact. I had taken a list of clauses which struck me as being very important, but I think members will themselves look through the Bill carefully, and I need not at this stage of the proceedings indicate those clauses to hon. members for their more particular observation. There are a good many which require looking at for us to be fully acquainted with the scope and objects of the Bill. I am pleased to give my most unqualified support to the measure. It is just possible that members, looking at it from different points of view, may here and there find some things they would wish to have altered, and these should be considered in Committee, but upon the whole the Bill is in my opinion an admirable one, and one which will give general satisfaction to the community at large, inasmuch as it places our electoral law upon a very much better basis than that at present existing, by providing for persons getting very easily upon the roll and being retained there.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

WINES, BEER, AND SPIRIT SALE AMENDMENT BILL.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY'S AMENDMENT.

The Legislative Assembly having amended the Bill by inserting a new clause (No. 3), the Council having also

dissented to the amendment, and the Assembly having sent a further Message insisting on the amendment, the Assembly's further message was now considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

HON. F. M. STONE (in charge of the Bill) moved that the Assembly's amendment be agreed to. There was a somewhat similar clause in the Wines, Beer, and Spirit Sale Act, and at the time he moved the rejection of the clause he thought the section of the original Act was sufficient; but it had been pointed out that sly grog-sellers were aimed at by the new clause, to which there could be no objection.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, and report adopted.

PERMANENT RESERVES BILL.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY'S AMENDMENT.

The Council having made five amendments in the Bill, and the Assembly having assented thereto while also further amending No. 4 amendment, the further amendment was now considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the Assembly's amendment on No. 4 amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, and report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until the next Tuesday.

Put and passed.

The House adjourned at 5.8 o'clock until the next Tuesday.