

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

TUESDAY, 6 AUGUST 1889

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, 6 August, 1889.

Message from the Governor—Trustee Bill—Messages from the Legislative Assembly—Quinquennial Census Act of 1875 Amendment Bill—Mines Regulation Bill.—Health Act Amendment Bill—third reading.—Brisbane Water Supply Bill—second reading.—Brisbane Temperance Hall Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR.

TRUSTEE BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor, intimating that the Royal assent had been given to a Bill entitled, "A Bill to amend the law relating to the duties, powers, liabilities, and remuneration of trustees."

MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

QUINQUENNIAL CENSUS ACT OF 1875 AMENDMENT BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly, returning the Quinquennial Census Act of 1875 Amendment Bill, without amendment.

MINES REGULATION BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Assembly, intimating that that House did not insist upon their disagreement to the amendment on which the Legislative Council insisted.

HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the MINISTER OF JUSTICE (Hon. A. J. Thynne), this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly, by message in the usual form.

BRISBANE WATER SUPPLY BILL.

SECOND READING.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE said: Hon. gentlemen,—This Bill has been necessitated by the great want which has existed in the metropolis for a more liberal supply of water than we have hitherto been able to enjoy. It has been found, by bitter experience, that the reservoirs at present existing are far from being sufficient to supply the wants of this city and its suburbs. It is now proposed to extend the supply by obtaining water from the Brisbane River, and it is hoped that a larger supply of water can be obtained there, which will be equal to the requirements of the city and suburbs for many years hence. At the present time there are many important and populous suburbs of the city which are without any water supply from the present reservoirs. They have to obtain water from tanks, and other uncertain sources of supply, for their commonest requirements. There is no doubt that the absence of a suitable water supply is a source of great danger to the city, so far as the health of the population is concerned. The scheme adopted in this Bill is to obtain a supply from a point on the Brisbane River, somewhat below the place where the Ipswich water supply is drawn from, and to carry it, by necessary works, into the city. The Bill contains, in the 3rd clause, the necessary provision for continuing the operations and works under the present Board of Waterworks, so far as they may be necessary, and by rendering the by-laws which they have hitherto made, which would be valid if made under this Bill, as valid as if they had been made under the Bill. The past history of the construction of waterworks to supply this city has shown that the Board of Waterworks went rather beyond their legal powers in constructing the reservoir at Gold Creek, under the Act which was then in force. The works have been carried out, and, fortunately, no legal difficulty has occurred to mar their usefulness. It has been considered wise to include in this Bill clause 4, validating the operations of the Board of Waterworks in connection with Gold Creek works. The 7th clause provides the means by which the works are to be carried out, and gives the Treasurer power to advance to the board the necessary funds out of any moneys which may be appropriated by Parliament for that purpose. These sums are to bear interest, and be repaid in the same manner as loans are now repaid under the Local Works Loans Act. Power is given to the Treasurer, in case of default, to step in and levy water rates, and generally exercise the powers of the board. The 9th clause provides that the board may obtain from the Brisbane River, at a point fixed by the plans, which are to be submitted to the Governor in Council and approved by Parliament, a supply of water. The subsequent clauses provide that, before the construction of works is undertaken, the plans, sections, etc., are to be submitted to the Governor in Council, and approved by Parliament, and the point from which the supply is to be taken must appear, and be in accordance with the plans as submitted and approved. The 13th clause gives all the necessary powers for taking levels, and the usual formal powers. The 14th clause is of the same character. Clauses 14 to 19 regulate the power of the board to break open the roads and streets, and the rules which they have to observe in dealing with the local authorities having control over the said roads and streets. The supply and distribution of water is provided for by the sections commencing with section 20. Speaking of this portion of the Bill, I may state, generally, that power is reserved to the board, in case of urgent necessity, to reduce or restrict

the quantity of water supplied to the inhabitants. In times of drought, and in other cases of emergency, the use of water may be restricted to those purposes which are most necessary for human requirements. Otherwise water may be supplied for any domestic purpose, but for other purposes it may be supplied, under regulation, by meter, or by some other equitable mode of assessment, which the board are to regulate by means of by-laws. It is not necessary for me, hon. gentlemen, to refer in detail to the several clauses under the heading of protection of fittings, prevention of waste, etc. There are clauses which, I think, would be found necessary in the working of the measure for the prevention of damage to property and prevention of waste of water. Power is given to the board, by section 50, to make and levy water rates. The principle of rating is defined by section 52, and there is also a provision that notice of rates is to be given; and the means is provided for appealing against the assessment which may be made. Those provisions are all contained in sections 51 to 58. The four following sections, 59 to 62, regulate the sale of water by meter. That is a system which is in force in many places, and which may be found very convenient and advantageous in some cases, at least, in the city; for instance, for manufacturing purposes, or if a customer requires more than the ordinary supply of water. Sections 63 and 64 provide for the time and mode of recovering rates. In cases where the rent does not exceed £20 the landlord is the person who is obliged to pay the rates; in other cases the tenants, in the absence of any special arrangements, are the persons who would be liable to pay. Section 72 provides for a return being made of the requirements of each tenant or occupier of land in respect to the purposes for which water is likely to be used on the premises, exclusive of that required for ordinary domestic purposes, giving the number of cattle, vehicles, etc., which are likely to be kept, and for which water would be necessary. The usual power of distress for rates is given, as is always the case in enabling Bills of this kind. Section 82 deals with the revenue of the board and the application of the revenue, which may be used for defraying the expenditure incurred in the works, and in payment of the instalments due in respect of the loans advanced. The unexpended balance may be applied either towards the general expenditure or the extension of the works, or in reduction of the sum due to the Treasury. Section 84 contains a provision enabling the board to make the necessary by-laws for carrying out the administration of the Act, which require to be approved by the Governor in Council, and published in the usual way. Provision is also made, in section 92, for testing the validity of any by-law, which any ratepayer may desire to dispute. Provisions appear in the Bill for the keeping of accounts and for a special audit at the instance of the Governor in Council. The powers and duties of the special auditor are also contained in the measure, and provision is made that the Auditor-General shall cause the books of the board to be examined, once at least in each year, and make the usual report. Up to this point in the Bill, the work is to be carried on as at present, by the Board of Waterworks. But in Part II. of the Bill, provision is made for the establishment of a joint local authority, for the purpose of exercising and performing the powers, duties, and authorities conferred by the Bill on the present Board of Waterworks. This authority may be constituted at any time by the Governor in Council by Order in Council. It is to be called the Metropolitan and Suburban Water Board, and will consist of representatives of every local authority having

jurisdiction in any part of the district through which the mains pass. The number of representatives to be elected, and the period for which they will hold office, are to be decided by the Governor in Council. In determining the number of representatives for each local authority, regard is to be had to the relative population within the districts of the several component local authorities, which are comprised in the district of the joint local authority, and clause 106 further provides:—

“Provided the Governor in Council may dispense with the provisions of this section requiring the election of a representative or representatives by every local authority, and may direct that two or more of the component local authorities shall proceed in such manner as may be directed by the Order in Council to elect one or more members of the board, and that another or other of the component local authorities shall separately elect a member or members.”

Then, section 107 contains the necessary regulations with respect to the election and qualification of members of the board, and the whole of the provisions for deciding whether a man is entitled to be elected, or entitled to continue as a member of the board. When this new joint local authority is constituted, the whole of the waterworks become vested in it, and it has all the powers of the present board, and can enforce the recovery of rates, carry out contracts, and enter into all the arrangements that the board now enters into. Following these clauses are a number of clauses regulating the proceedings of the board, and the mode of carrying on business. These are, to a great extent, similar to the clauses which are now constantly in use in relation to local authorities. The remainder of the Bill contains regulations with regard to the appointment of officers of the board, and a few general provisions which I think it is not necessary for me to refer to in detail. I think, hon. gentlemen, that the Bill before you is a very necessary one. It is necessary, at any rate, in regard to the project for providing a more liberal water supply for the city, and I have no doubt I shall receive the assistance of hon. gentlemen in passing it into law. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The Hon. W. F. TAYLOR said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think this Bill should hardly be allowed to pass without some discussion. The Bill will no doubt be useful, as an increased and more regular supply of water to the city of Brisbane and its suburbs is very much needed. Of that there can be no possible doubt in the minds of anyone, either inside or outside this Chamber. The Bill before us is one which I hope will have the effect of increasing that supply. We have not any very definite information as to how the supply is to be increased, or the quantity of water that can be obtained from the Brisbane River. There is no mention made of that at all, and there is certainly no mention made as to the quality of the water. I think those two points ought to have been gone into somewhat fully, because, after all, the Brisbane River may not be the best source of supply. I have heard it said that a better and more constant supply, entailing a less expenditure on pumping works could be obtained by going a little further off, to the Stanley River. Of that I am not in a position to judge, but I have heard the statement made more than once. However, there is no doubt, that some effort should be made to secure a greater supply of water, but every consideration appears to have been given to this scheme. What the details of the scheme are I do not know, but we will learn all about them when the plans are submitted to Parliament for approval. This Bill is like all Bills of the sort. It entails a great number of

restrictions and penalties on consumers and upon those who may have the misfortune to have the water-mains laid past their property. They have to pay for the water whether they use it or not. They have to pay for the privilege of having the mains laid past their property, and they are liable to the same penalties in regard to the recovery of rates as those people who use the water. Well, there may be a certain amount of fairness in that; it is a little bit hard, but it is a general rule adopted in nearly every country, and I will not question the fairness of it. But there is one point in which I think this Bill is a little unfair, and that is in excluding from the term “domestic use” wheeled vehicles and horses used for private purposes. There is an express provision contained in clause 85, which says:—

“Water supplied by the board for domestic purposes shall not be used for watering cattle or cleansing wheeled vehicles, except upon payment of such additional sum, if any, as is charged by the board in respect of cattle and wheeled vehicles.”

At the present time there is no extra charge, I think, made for wheeled vehicles and horses in use for private purposes. I know, in Great Britain, horses and wheeled vehicles used for private purposes are included in the term “domestic use,” and I think it is a little hard to make this exception here. And, again, when this Bill was being introduced, I was in hopes that the meter system would have been more strongly recommended, and I think it is a mistake to leave it an open question as to whether that system shall be adopted or not. We know the present way of rating property is a very curious one, and a very arbitrary one, and a very unfair one. For example, a person who happens to have a stable on his premises, whether he has a horse or not, has to pay so much per stall. The area of the buildings is taken and a rate is struck upon that. It would have been very much fairer to have meters used—to make it compulsory to have water meters used—the same as meters are used for gas. I do not see why any difficulty should arise. I remember some years ago the hydraulic engineer in his report strongly recommended that meters should be used, and meters are very generally used at home, and are found to answer two purposes. They are found very fair to those who use the water properly and they prevent undue waste. Now, we all know that a great amount of undue waste does occur. We know that under the system which obtains in this city of allowing the water to escape from open baths by downfall pipes, the water may be running for twenty-four hours before anyone is one bit the wiser. In fact, I have never seen in any house in this city anything like what is made at home an absolute necessity, and that is what is called a “warning overflow.” So that, if a bath gets full, and the water flows away through the overflow pipe, warning is given, and the tap can be turned off. That is not the case here, and people may waste the water as they like, and, as a matter of fact, they do waste the water in enormous quantities in this manner, and nobody is a bit the wiser. It is only fair to those who use the water economically, that they should have an opportunity of using it by meter, and of paying for what they use, the same as they pay for the gas they may use. I should very much like to see the system of meters used universally. I am perfectly satisfied that that system would lessen the consumption of water, and it would very much lessen the waste of water. While ample provision is made for all the contingencies that may arise in regard to the extension of the supply, and the rates and so forth, there is one very strong point which at once struck me in looking over the Bill, and

that is that there is no notice taken whatever of the quality of the water that is to be distributed. The preamble of the Bill says:—

“Whereas it is desirable to amend the law relating to the supply of water to the city of Brisbane and the suburbs thereof, and to make further provision for securing to the said city and suburbs a constant supply of pure and wholesome water.”

How is that supply to be obtained? This Bill does not say how it is to be obtained. It says nothing at all about the quality of the water or the standard of quality, and it evades the fact that for the last twenty-five years the people of Brisbane have been obliged to use the filthiest water in the world. I think it is rather too much to introduce a Bill of this sort and make no provision for altering the present existing state of affairs in this respect. Some three years ago, I had the honour of calling the attention of hon. gentlemen to this fact, that the supply of water to the people of Brisbane was in quality positively detestable. At the time I referred to the matter the water was stinking—it was actually putrid. I brought the matter before the Central Board of Health, and, in fact, I placed under the tap in my bathroom a piece of flannel which collected some of the deposit from the water; I took this to the Central Board of Health, and showed to the members the filthy state of the water we were supposed to use for domestic purposes. The consequence was that some action was taken. The Central Board of Health represented the matter to the Board of Waterworks, who did nothing; but the case became so very urgent that a public meeting was held, the mayor presiding, and the subject was fully discussed at the Town Hall. Resolutions were passed, and a deputation waited upon the Colonial Secretary to represent the condition of affairs. Some action was taken after this, and I believe surveys were made with a view to the construction of filter beds; but beyond that nothing was done; so that we are in the same position as regards the purity of the water as we were in three years ago, and as we have been in since the formation of those works. No attempt whatever has been made to filter the water, or make it in any way fit for domestic purposes. In fact, such water would not be tolerated in any community in Great Britain for one moment. The water, as every hon. member must know who has lived in town, is at times positively offensive, and, in fact, it will stink the house out. This is the condition of affairs which we are supposed to submit to for goodness knows how long. There is no provision made in this Bill for supplying pure water, or filtering the water; for, although the Bill relates particularly to taking the water from the Brisbane River, the Enoggera and Gold Creek reservoirs will still be in use, and water will be used from them. Furthermore, we have no evidence to show that the water from the Brisbane River will be better—it cannot be worse—than that we are supplied with at present. All this expense is to be gone to, and no provision is to be made to protect the health of the inhabitants, as well as their lives, by compelling the board to supply anything like pure water. Every hon. member must know that the supply of pure water is one of the first essentials to health. Quantity is one thing, but quality is essential. We may do with a limited supply, but it must be of a quality which will not be injurious to health. Now, I must contrast the apathy of the people of Brisbane, and the Board of Waterworks, and, I may say, of the legislature also, with the earnestness and activity which is displayed in England. The Metropolitan Act of 1852 enacts that every company shall effectually filter all water supplied within the metropolis for domestic use, before the same shall pass into the

pipes of the consumers. I was informed of something to-day which really surprised me. I was told as a positive fact—and if I mentioned the name of my informant hon. gentlemen would not doubt the truthfulness of what he said—that forty-seven cows had been seen by him standing inside the fence, in the water. At the top of the reservoir there is a slaughter-yard, and pigs are kept there, and he has seen as many as twenty pigs wallowing in the reservoir. The catchment area of the Enoggera reservoir is about 7,000 acres, and it is clear that part of that is contaminated by these cattle and pigs, and all the offensive matter must be washed into the reservoir when heavy rains fall, such as we have had during the last few weeks. Furthermore, when the reservoir gets very low, as it has been recently, water plants growing on the sides, and in the water, gradually fall as the water falls, and then when the reservoir is suddenly filled these plants are drowned and become so many sources of decayed vegetable matter, and further contaminate the water, so that we have now a combination of all the ingredients which can possibly be imagined to contaminate water freely entering into this reservoir. I presume Gold Creek is not much better, and that is the kind of water we are obliged to use. I know that some hon. gentlemen have said, why not filter the water before we use it for domestic purposes? Unfortunately for myself, the water I catch from the roof of my house ran out, and I was obliged to use Enoggera water for drinking purposes. I filtered some of it, and in two weeks my filter was clogged up and useless. It was, in fact, worse than useless, because it became a source of contamination from the organic and inorganic matter which collected in it. I do not see where the great difficulty comes in in constructing proper filter beds. All the London companies use filter beds; the material is easily obtained, and the objection that, owing to the great quantity of vegetable and other matter in the water the filter beds soon choke up, can easily be disposed of. There is no difficulty in remedying that. Simply increase the supply of beds, and as they choke up they can be cleaned. The matter that forms upon the surface of them is only two or three inches in thickness, and when it is taken off the filter bed is fit for use again. I will give you as nearly as I can, and as shortly as possible, an idea of the process which ensues when water is filtered. It is from a very interesting and instructive work by the metropolitan water examiner, Colonel Sir Francis Bolton, on the London water supply. He says:—

“It is well known that all solid bodies attract about them an atmospheric film, and, therefore, as a bed of sand and gravel is an agglomeration of minute stones, each with its coating of compressed air (or, in other words, compressed oxygen and nitrogen), the water filtering through its interstices has to pass a concentrated body of oxygen, capable of rapidly decomposing it and forming other compounds; consequently if we take the case of a decayed leaf, for example, we can see that it will be resolved to some extent into carbon, nitrogen, and hydrogen, which recombining with the oxygen forms carbonic acid gas, ammonia, and water. As the result of this chemical process the polluting vegetable matter will have actually vanished, and though the filter bed has really abstracted it from the percolating water the bed itself will show no trace of it. Following out this theory, it has been asserted by chemists that when some of the London companies drew their supplies from the tidal portion of the Thames where it received all the sewage of London, their filter beds did not clog up nearly so fast as might have been expected. Scientific experiments showed that the filter beds must have intercepted considerably more impurity than was actually found in them. Another phenomenon was explained by the theory that filtering was not merely a mechanical straining process, but one also of rapid chemical action, by which the polluting matter intercepted was destroyed and converted by oxidation.

"The filter beds of the London companies consist of sand, gravel, etc., arranged in layers of varying thickness, and it is manifest that a considerable quantity of solid impurity must be removed from water by the merely mechanical process of straining through this porous mass. The polluting matter is arrested to a great extent by the sand and gravel, which, of course, after a long while get choked up, becoming not merely less impervious to water, but also sources of contamination. It is consequently the practice of the water companies to remove the surface of the sand at frequent intervals, and periodically to renew the filter beds entirely."

There is a solution of the whole difficulty.

"But, curiously enough, it has been found, by careful scientific observation, that the filtering medium does not, as a matter of fact, become so rapidly clogged up as might be expected, judging by the amount of extraneous matter actually extracted from the water.

"For the sake of illustration, let it be granted that a hundredweight of impure matter will—in theory—entirely destroy the filtering efficiency of a given quantity of sand, yet the latter will in reality abstract from the water passing through it more than a hundredweight of impure matter without wholly losing its filtering efficiency. In other words, a considerable proportion of the intercepted matter is oxidised, and the filter will be found upon examination, to contain less contaminating substance than it can be proved to have intercepted from the water passing through it. This is only explained by the theory of chemical change described above. A similar process goes on in the small domestic filter, in which, instead of several feet of boulders, gravel, shells, and sand, there are only a few inches of some porous substance, presenting a certain amount of surface for the air to cling to, and for the water to pass over.

"From what has been said it will be seen that there are two reasons why a filter must not be relied upon indefinitely for the purification of water. In the first place it is gradually choked by the pollution it is continually attracting from the water passing through it, and in the next, the air coating upon which the chemical action depends becomes exhausted, and the oxidising process gradually ceases."

I quote from my own report :—

"The reservoirs in London are eight in number, and have an area of 220 acres, the total capacity being 900,000,000 gallons. Considerable oxidation and subsidence takes place in the reservoirs before the water is conveyed to the filter beds at Lea Bridge. There are twenty-five filter beds, with a joint area of 24 acres, the filtering medium consisting of 2 feet of sand, 6 inches of hoargin, and 1 foot of coarse gravel—3 feet 6 inches of material in all. The maximum rate of filtration per square foot of area in gallons per hour is usually about one and one-third. The maximum rate of filtration, consistent with efficiency, is usually considered to be about 540 gallons per square yard in twenty-four hours—2.5 gallons per square foot per hour.

"The filter beds require cleaning about once in six weeks, or oftener, according to the condition of the water, and may need renewing every six months."

I may state that the river Lea, from which most of the water is taken, was flooded at the time, and it was about as thick and dirty looking as the water is in the Brisbane River at the present time. Still by subsidence, by allowing the water to remain in large tanks until part of the matter contained in it has subsided, and then carrying it to the filter beds, and storing it in a surface reservoir, where it is aerated, it is made fit for immediate distribution. That is what has been done in London for many years past, and I think it can easily be done here; at least I see no reason why the inhabitants of Brisbane should be gradually poisoned by the filthy condition of the water they are supplied with, when means can be employed to render the water almost, if not entirely, pure. I have no analysis of the Enoggera water to give you. I did not think it was necessary to do so, because at the present time it is very dirty indeed; but upon the previous occasion I gave the analysis of Mr. Mar, the Government analyst, and the water was then comparatively clear. It was then found that the amount of suspended matter was three times that which is usually recognised as the limit of good water in England, and the amount of dissolved matter was more serious

still. The next question is, what standard can we fix for good water? Professor Parkes gives the physical characteristics of pure water as—

"Colourless or bluish tint, transparent, sparkling, and well aerated, no sediment visible to the naked eye, no smell, taste palatable."

Professor Corfield says:—

"Good drinking water should be clear, colourless (slight blue, green, or brownish tint exists in most waters), aerated, fresh to taste should contain no visible suspended matter, and no sediment on standing; kept twenty-four hours in a warm place, should not become offensive to smell."

Enoggera water will not stand one of these tests. It appears to me to be very strange that, after so much has been said upon the subject; after the condemnation it has received by the public Press and by individuals; and after the condemnation it has received by the Legislature, and after the fact that the late Government were fully aware of the necessity for some means being adopted in order to render that water purer—it appears very strange indeed that no attempt should be made in this Bill to introduce some system whereby consumers can be at all satisfied that they are not drinking that which will, if not reduce their physical vital powers, at least render them liable to many complaints which ought to be easily avoided, and which are quite preventable. As I said before, there is nothing of more importance than a supply of good water to any community, and it appears to me, that it should be the first duty of every Government to provide, so far as possible, for the health and well-being of the people; because of what use is it to pass Acts of advantage to social and material prosperity, if the health of the people is affected in the manner in which the health of the people of this community is persistently affected? We find, unfortunately, that the death-rate of Queensland exceeds by a great deal that of the other colonies. I was very much surprised, on my recent visit to Melbourne, at the time of the Intercolonial Medical Congress, to hear a paper read by Dr. McLaurin, then President of the Board of Health of New South Wales, in which he said that in the year 1885 the total number of deaths in Queensland of typhoid fever exceeded the total number of deaths from that source either in New South Wales or in Victoria, and those colonies. I may mention, have populations of, at least, three times that of Queensland. Whereas the deaths from typhoid were, in Victoria, 53 in 100,000; and, in New South Wales, about 56 in 100,000; in Queensland the total number was 169 in 100,000; and the doctor thought that the unenviable position held by Queensland ought to be a matter of grave consideration to sanitarians and to the Government. I merely mention this to show that we are not in the healthy condition that many people would have us believe we are in. On the contrary, Queensland is gaining an unenviable notoriety as an unhealthy place, and the fact remains that, although we pay large sums of money annually to bring people out to this country, as soon as they come into the colony they go South. That fact is well known, and the reputation of Queensland for being an unhealthy place extends not only to the Southern colonies, but unfortunately it extends to the old country also. So that from an economical point of view, as a mere commercial transaction, if it is a desirable thing to import people as we are doing, at something like £22 per head, it is a desirable thing that we should keep them in the country by making them healthy. And what do we find is the fact? That an enormous proportion of the typhoid cases we have occur amongst new arrivals, before they have been in the country more than six months. We old, acclimatised

individuals can stand it. You can get human beings to adapt themselves to almost any circumstances, and we have adapted ourselves to the insanitary conditions under which we live. But, unfortunately, new arrivals have not adapted themselves, and they do not until they go through the ordeal of typhoid, which ordeal carries off a great number of them. I can produce statistics of the Brisbane Hospital to prove the assertion; but I did not contemplate going so far into the matter to-day; in fact, I was doubtful whether I ought to say anything on the subject at all, as this is a money Bill, and we cannot alter or amend it, and all the talking we can do is a simple waste of time. I trust, however, that, in the interests of humanity, and in those of the health of the people of Brisbane, the present Government will endeavour to do something to remedy the state of affairs that prevails at present.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think this Bill is one that is very much required. It will afford a greater supply of water to the city of Brisbane, but the board has had to go even outside the limits which were prescribed by the earlier Act for regulating the water supply, and upon that point also the Bill will do good service. They have performed an Act which was not strictly legal, and they have done it as a matter of sufferance. There are some parts of this measure which will require a little modification. We find that as soon as the existing board is replaced by the new board, the latter will be formed very much on the system upon which the Traffic Board was formed. Hitherto, that class of board has not proved altogether a success, and I think it important that the Government should to some extent, since they find so large a proportion of the funds, have the power of appointing at least two members of the board. The details, however, must of necessity be matters for further consideration in committee, which is the proper place to discuss them; but it is as well to refer to the chief points that strike one on the second reading of the Bill. Another part of the Bill relates to the rating of property. Now one part implies that only those properties which have frontages to the roads on which mains run are to be rated, but another part implies that property on roads running into the main roads, and which may be quite inaccessible to the mains may also be rated. That, I think, will call for our attention in committee. The Hon. Dr. Taylor has remarked that the Bill proposes to levy a rate for water used in washing horses and buggies—a thing which does not exist now. Those rates are certainly not imposed now, but they are imposed upon the stalls in which the horses are housed, and on the coach-houses, so that I think it comes to very nearly the same thing. The most important question with regard to the working of the Waterworks Board will be that touching the purity of the water. There can be no question about it that it is very desirable to get water delivered in as pure a condition as possible; but when we come to compare the water supplied anywhere near Brisbane with the water supplied to London and other parts of England, we find that the conditions are so totally distinct that we cannot bring the same arguments to bear on the subject. Indeed if we wish to find a system of water supply constructed and carried on on nearly the same conditions that we have here, we must not go to England but across the Channel to Antwerp. There they have the same conditions as to the character of the water. It is quite free from calcareous matter, which is at present in all the water in London and its district. In Antwerp the water is obtained from a catchment area, which has no lime or minerals in it, and the result is that the water is very soft, and

when first collected has every appearance of being good. When it is filtered and passed through the mains it comes out quite as bad as though it had not been filtered at all, and it is found that the only way to purify it is to pass it through six or seven miles of iron piping, which destroys the organic matter, and it is then possible to filter it. Therefore it is found that except in the case of spongy iron filters, although for the first few days the filter may do some good, yet afterwards there is a greater amount of contamination in the filtered water than when it is not filtered, and that under all conditions it is better to deliver the water as quickly as possible from the filters. Now, it may be said, "Why not filter the water here?" and it is pointed out how much filtering is required; but here we erected experimental filters and found that in about ten minutes they became absolutely water-tight, and that there was no possibility of filtering the water through any kind of filter whatever. Either it ran through in its normal condition, or the surface of the filter was immediately covered with a film of organic matter which rendered it absolutely water-tight. One reason why the water supplied to Brisbane has got such a very bad smell is in consequence of it coming out of the pipes in a much purer and more wholesome state than when it goes in. The iron of the pipes has killed the organic matter in the water and changed it into gas, which evaporates and leaves the water more wholesome. Therefore, so far from objecting to the peculiar odour of the water when we step into our baths, we ought to congratulate ourselves that the experiment has been so eminently successful. In reference to where we are to get our supply from, it is taken for granted that we are to get it from the Brisbane River. It has been suggested that we do not know whether that is the best source to get it from, and that we have not yet fully examined the various sources of supply. But that I think it would be too long a document to read to the House, I could read a paper which was written just ten years ago, after the whole of the water supplies within fifty miles of Brisbane had been carefully examined, and in which a description is given of the various characteristics of the different supplies. I may state, that after a careful examination of the country which I made eleven years ago, I found that, taking all the sources within ten miles of Brisbane, the only available one for any large quantity of water was the Brisbane River, and that that supply, although it certainly is not unobjectionable, being far from free from organic matters, is in fact the only one upon which we can rely. Therefore we can feel quite satisfied that by adopting the Brisbane River Pumping Works we are adopting the best scheme within our grasp. Of course we all know that if water has to be pumped, in the long run it costs more than working it by gravitation; but there is no ground sufficiently elevated within any reasonable distance of Brisbane to give any supply by gravitation beyond those places which have been already examined and dealt with. A great variety of the provisions of this Bill are of a minor character, but they are all, I think, necessary. It is, of course, necessary to provide in such a way that any board working out the system shall be in a position to frame by-laws which will meet special cases. It has been said that the present system of rating proposed is the best, but notwithstanding I think that a better system may yet be found. On the whole, I think that the Bill will be a really useful one, and after it has passed through committee, and has been amended considerably in its details, it may possibly be a useful measure to add to our statute book.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the MINISTER OF JUSTICE, the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

BRISBANE TEMPERANCE HALL BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE HON. P. MACPHERSON said: Hon. gentlemen,—We have heard a great deal this afternoon about an increase in the water supply, and I hope that the Bill which I now have to move the second reading of, will tend directly to increase the consumption of good wholesome water. It is a Bill to enable the Brisbane Total Abstinence Society to sell, mortgage, or lease certain trust lands remaining in their hands. The facts upon which the Bill is founded are briefly these: In July, 1863, allotment No. 5, section 23, in the parish of North Brisbane, containing 2 roods 23 perches, was granted to three gentlemen upon trust, for the erection thereon of a temperance hall. In 1869 the hall was built, and has ever since been used for temperance purposes. In 1876 the property became vested in the Corporation of the Brisbane Total Abstinence Society, and in or about the month of May last, the Commissioner for Railways resumed 1 rood 5½ perches, with certain buildings upon it, for railway purposes, for the Brisbane and Valley extension. The sum received for the land resumed was £6,148. In consequence of the resumption and the contemplated early completion of the railway works, the hall, which stands on the remainder of the land, is rendered totally unsuitable for the purposes for which it was built, and, in consequence, the society took the earliest possible steps to acquire another site, this site being allotments 14, 15, 16, and 17 of section 24, in the parish of North Brisbane, which they acquired for the sum of £12,500. £6,000 they paid in cash from the compensation money received from the Government, and the balance of £6,500 is payable at the end of three years. It appears upon the evidence that the means which will be available from the sale of the balance of the land will be amply sufficient not only to build the new hall, but also to pay the balance of the purchase money for the new land. I need not refer, hon. gentlemen, at any length to the evidence. I merely draw particular attention to page 8, question 38, where Mr. Bulcock in his evidence says:—

“Will you kindly explain to the committee what effect the resumption by the commissioner had upon this site? It made the hall and the ground remaining altogether unsuitable for the purposes of the society. On one side there will be the vehicular traffic of the street, which will be considerable after the central railway station is opened. On the other side there will be the shunting of the trains. There are five lines of rails laid down now. Mr. Stanley told me it was the intention to make those lines, and now I see they are laid. When the railway is in operation the consequent noises and interruption will make it impossible, at a meeting in the hall, for a speaker to be heard. Besides there is only sixty-six feet of frontage to Edward street left, the portion of land taken from that end of the allotment being wider than near the School of Arts. There, where is the greatest depth of the land left, there is about 117 feet;—and when we go about 60 feet, towards Edward street, it is only about 90 feet. In order to provide for our requirements, besides a hall that we can hear in we want offices, a reading room; and these will leave us hardly sixty feet for the hall. There is no room for conveniences. We saw at once that the site had become totally unsuitable for our purpose; we could not erect a hall upon it of any size. That is the reason we applied for ‘his Bill to enable us to sell the land. During the time this matter was under consideration by the Temperance Council, we heard of the land in Turbot street for sale and we purchased it.”

He is then asked a question by Mr. Luya:—

“By Mr. Luya: What do you anticipate getting for the land that is left? From £16,000 to £20,000. If we cut it up, and can wait, we then shall be able to get sufficient to pay the balance due on the other, and sufficient for the building.”

Well, hon. gentlemen, those are the facts of the case, and the Bill very shortly gives effect to the objects which are sought to be attained. Clause 2 enables the society to sell or mortgage the residue of the land, and section 3 directs how the sale is to be made. I wish to point out that by section 3 the society is tied down to a sale by public auction, and I think it advisable to insert an amendment giving them power to sell by private contract; but in order to satisfy any scruples as to the fairness or unfairness of the transaction, I propose to add the words “after the property has been offered by public auction.” I will propose that amendment, because I am afraid that if it is known that there is no power to sell by private contract, an adequate price will not be obtained at public auction. Clause 4 gives power to mortgage, and clause 5 gives power to lease, a power which may be required pending a sale. Clause 6 provides that the lease may be surrendered. Clause 7 says how the proceeds of the sale or mortgage are to be applied—in discharging the balance of the purchase-money of the new land, and in the erection of a new hall. Clause 8 provides for the application of the income and profits, and clause 9 directs how the purchased land is to be held. I do not know that I need say anything further on the Bill. It seems a very straightforward one, and I have very much pleasure in moving that it be read a second time.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the Hon. P. MACPHERSON, the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

On the motion of the MINISTER OF JUSTICE, the House adjourned at twenty-five minutes past 5 o'clock.