Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 1896

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 24 NOVEMBER, 1896.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

PEARL-SHELL AND BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY BILL—FISHERIES BILL.

FIRST READINGS.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR MINES, these Bills were read a first time, and the second readings made Orders of the Day for to-morrow.

NEW RAILWAYS.

CLEVELAND RAILWAY EXTENSION—BRANCH FROM LAGOONS STATION TO SANDY CREEK.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS laid on the table of the House the plans, sections, books of reference, and the Commissioner's reports on the proposed extension of the Cleveland Railway and the extension of the Mackay Railway from Lagoons Station to Sandy Creek.

The papers were ordered to be printed.

LOAN PROPOSALS, 1896-7.

The TREASURER: I beg to lay on the table of the House the loan proposals for 1896-7, and move that the paper be printed and referred to Committee of Ways and Means. It may not be necessary to do it, but I wish to intimate to the House that on Thursday next the first Government business will be Ways and Means.

Question put and passed.

NEW BILLS.

In connection with the motion for the introduction of certain new Bills in committee,

The TREASURER said: As this motion has been called "Not formal," I should like to meet the views of the other side of the House and amend my motion so as to move the Bills seriatim.

MEMBERS on the Opposition side: Hear, hear!

The House then agreed that it would, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the advisableness of introducing the following Bills:—

A Bill to further amend the Navigation Act of 1876; and

A Bill to enable the Municipal Council of Brisbane to raise money by debentures for corporation purposes.

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK AGREEMENT BILL.

The TREASURER then moved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing the following Bill:—

A Bill to authorise the Treasurer to enter into an agreement or agreements with reference to any moneys due and owing, or to become due and owing, by the Queensland National Bank, Limited, to the Government.

Mr. GLASSEY: I think it is desirable at this stage to say that I think the Government should give the House some information as to whether they intend to further investigate the affairs of the Queensland National Bank or not. The House has a right to such information. I believe that the country generally demands that such an inquiry should take place, and that it is essentially necessary in the interests of the country, and for the well-being of the people, that the request I am now making should be acceded to. I deeply regret that when I put my questions bearing on this question to the Premier a few days ago, the hon. gentleman was not more explicit in regard to his intentions to hold such an inquiry. I do not say that legislation on the question should be suspended until the result of an inquiry is made known. I do not want to commit myself in any way upon that point, and I shall be prepared, when the proper time comes, to give my reasons—reasons which I hope will not only be satisfactory to the Government but to the country generally. But I ask the Premier, in all seriousness, to give this matter his most earnest attention, and tell the House that the Government have agreed to a further investigation concerning the affairs of this institution. I would look upon legislation passed without such a pledge being given as something that Queensland would not be proud of; and I am sure that unless something of the kind is done much injury will accrue to the people generally, and instead of our credit being raised in other parts of the world, where we are anxious it should stand well, I believe it will do us injury, and create a feeling that the Parliament of Queensland are anxious to hide something. I am sure I am expressing the sentiments not only of hon. members on this side but those of many on the other side as well when I ask the hon. gentleman to accede without further ado, without further pressure, to the request to appoint a committee to go fully and freely, and without stint or limit, if need be, into the affairs of the Queensland National Bank from the time the Government and that institution entered into unfortunate bonds of matrimony up to

the time at which the last committee commenced its labours. That, I believe, would give satisfaction to every member of the House and to the colony as a whole, and to many persons beyond the confines of Queensland; but unless such an investigation takes place I feel convinced that much dissatisfaction will be caused, and—I emphasise this with all the powers at my command—much injury will be done to Queensland. It may be said that there are some persons who are anxious to prevent an investigation, with a view, perhaps, to covering over the actions of some of their political friends. I hope that no such feeling will animate any hon. member. It is not a question of covering up the actions of any political friend, but a question of who are the parties responsible for bringing about the state of affairs which now exists. I say without fear or favour that that is the spirit which should animate every hon. member. The time has now arrived when the people of Queensland, through their representatives in this Chamber, should demand the fullest and freest investigation into the affairs of the Queensland National Bank during the period I have mentioned.

Question put.

Mr. McDONALD: I certainly think that on an important occasion like this the Premier should at least have the courtesy to get up and tell us what his intentions are.

Mr. DUNSFORD: He will not have anything to do with the "faction."

Mr. McDONALD: I maintain that it is not a question of the "faction" at all. It is a question that seriously affects the honour of this colony and of this Parliament. It is a well-known fact that ever since 1879 certain prominent politicians have been intimately connected with the Government and with this bank, and the country now demands an inquiry into the mismanagement of the institution. The report presented to us also deliberately states that dividends have been paid out of fictitious profits. That being so, it was an illegal act, and whoever was responsible for the illegality should be prosecuted. Yet the Government sit idly by and say they will not have an investigation into the matter. Why, I think it is a standing disgrace that anyone should attempt to hide or cover up anything connected with this institution. I think the Government, and particularly the Premier, stand in a most peculiar position. We must not forget that the hon. gentleman made a statement to the House in 1893, in which he assured us that the institution was thoroughly sound. I give the hon. gentleman and his colleague, the then Secretary for Lands, Mr. Barlow, credit for all sincerity and honesty of purpose; I believe that they believed the institution was sound, but their inquiries were founded upon the books and balance-sheets of the bank. It was purely a book inquiry; and if the hon. gentlemen could assure us at that time that the affairs of the bank were sound then, they must have been deceived by the books and balance-sheets. Are they going to take the onus of deceiving the whole colony, or are they going to bring to book those whom the committee say practically issued a false balance-sheet? Putting all sentiment on one side, and not speaking any more warmly than the occasion demands, I hope and trust that the Government will give some assurance that there will be a further investigation into the affairs of this bank. If it is necessary we can go on with the reconstruction legislation which it is proposed to introduce. I do not cavil at that, but the Government can get over the difficulty immediately and pass their legislation more rapidly if they will appoint a committee to further investigate the affairs of this institution. I do not see, then, that any member of the House could cavil at the Government bringing in legislation to allow them, if they think they can, to reconstruct this institution. Until that is done I maintain that every member of the House is called upon to oppose legislation. We should know the extent of the mismanagement of this institution, and who is to blame for it. Our constituents will demand a knowledge of who is responsible for the unfortunate position in which the affairs of the institution are placed. If the Premier will take up that ground I do not see that there should be much objection to getting reasonable legislation through this Chamber.

Mr. GROOM: I would not like this motion to go without an expression of opinion as far as I am individually concerned, and I think I should also be expressing the opinions of a good many hon. members on this side of the House. We gave every possible assistance to the Government in passing a Bill to relieve the current accounts of the bank. That was absolutely necessary in the interests of the country, but notwithstanding that, we feel that the inquiry of the committee should not stop where it has stopped. We cannot shut our eyes to the committee's report, nor can we close our ears to the rumours which are current in all directions, not only in Queensland but also in the southern colonies. We can hardly pick up a southern paper that we do not see references to this institution and the colony, in which the legislature is urged not to be satisfied with the report of the committee but to go even still further. Perhaps at this stage it would not be advisable to go into the whole matter, but we cannot shut our eyes to this fact: Those of us who have been in the colony and the legislature since 1878 must be aware that there is a great deal to be inquired into in connection with the bank. It is known to have been a political institution from the year 1878 up to the present time. It is known that business men have been positively afraid to express their opinions in public through fear that the financial influence of the institution would be brought to bear upon them to accomplish their ruin. The very fact that that state of affairs has existed is to my mind a sufficiently strong reason why the Premier should not allow the investigation to rest where it is. There are other things to be inquired into which the colony should know all about. The hon. gentleman, in reply to a question the other night, said he did not think any further action was wanted on the part of the Government until the shareholders and depositors took action. We all sympathise with the unfortunate shareholders whose capital has been wiped away and lost, and we are all of opinion that the unfortunate widows and orphans, of whom we hear so much in this House, should have every consideration extended to them. But consider the depositors who have placed £4,000,000 in the bank on the recommendation of the colony, on the strength of the prospectus which was issued by the bank, and relying upon the high names of the gentlemen who for so many years have been directors of the institution. It was partly the high financial character of those directors which induced the depositors to place four millions of money in the bank, and in their absence on the other side of the world it is our duty to inquire and supply them with every possible information now that they are invited to come into the reconstructed bank. I speak plainly now, so it may be understood that in assenting to this motion we are not committing ourselves to any subsequent action the hon. gentleman may take. We are quite prepared to allow him to go into committee to-morrow to introduce his Bill, but we reserve to ourselves the right to give full expression to our opinions when we are asked to affirm the expediency of bringing in the Bill. It is then that we shall

be able to give very strong reasons why we should hesitate to take that course unless there is a distinct promise that further inquiry will be made.

The SPEAKER: I would remind the House that, although this discussion is not absolutely out of order, it is most unusual. It is not customary for the mover of a motion of this description to give any explanation at this stage. The explanation may be given if desired, on the motion for leave to introduce the Bill. This is simply a motion that the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into committee for a certain purpose.

Question put and passed.

COMPANIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Companies Acts, 1863 to 1893.

SUPPLY.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEE—SUPPLEMENTARY LOAN ESTIMATES.

Mr. ANNEAR, as Chairman of Committees, presented a report from the Committee of Supply covering the resolutions passed in connection with the Supplementary Loan Estimates, 1896-7.

Resolutions received.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL AS AMENDED.

The HOME SECRETARY: At this report stage I have only one amendment to move, and that is in connection with the new clause 32 which at present provides—

"Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the Post and Telegraph Act of 1891, messengers, mailmen, stampers, sorters, letter-carriers, switchboard attendants, and line repairers, who were in the postal service before the 6th day of December, 1889, shall be admitted into the classified divisions of the public service according to their respective salaries without examination."

I propose that the clause shall read as it stands down to the word "postal," that the word "service" shall come out with a view of inserting the words "and Telegraph Departments," because line repairers are officers of the Telegraph Department; and I propose to add the words "who still remain in the service," so that men who have gone out will not be eligible. I propose then to provide, and this is the gist of the amendment, that these men shall be admitted to the clerical division "on obtaining a certificate of the board as to their fitness." There are some persons in the miscellaneous division who are old and who want to remain where they are. They have no desire for a classification in the clerical division, which may involve them in a loss of £40 or £50. There has, however, been a grievance, and this is it: Under the original Civil Service Act every person in the service on the 6th December, 1889, was eligible for admission into the classified division, and could go on to a higher position. In all the other departments the test of eligibility has been fitness for doing the work of the higher position. When the board went down to a department and found men doing clerical work of a classified division, that was admitted as evidence of their fitness to do the work, and in every instance they were at once taken into the classified division, speaking of that as a clerical division, because it is a misnomer to speak of it as a "classified" division as against the other. However, in the Postal Department, about two years after the Act was passed, it was provided in the Postal Act that there should be a test of fitness in the Postal Department in the shape of a pass with 38 per cent. in a small examination. Some men object that in other departments men have got into the classified division without passing an examination, and that the test of fitness in their case has been that they have actually been performing the higher work. In the Postal Department there are men in the miscellaneous division who have proved their competency for appointment to the higher work by actually doing the higher work, and in doing that they had a right to go higher still. I think the test of fitness in that instance is the work, and I would prefer that to a test of 38 per cent. in an examination, which may not be an evidence of fitness. Consequently I am prepared to accept the principle of the hon. member's amendment. But there are some persons who originally entered as manual labourers, and who, through age or want of education—for which no blame is attached to them in any way, as they had not the advantages we enjoy—do not aspire or claim to be anything more than they were when they entered the service. They do not want to go into the clerical division, as if they got into that division it would probably mean a reduction in their salaries. Some of those men, who are stampers and sorters, are getting £150, £160, and £170 a year, and £32 a year as overtime, which is paid for services rendered when an English mail comes in. If we remove those men *nolens volens* from the miscellaneous division into the clerical division we should practically force them into a position where the salary is lower, and where they would probably have very little chance of promotion. I propose, therefore, to accept the principle of the hon. member's amendment, but instead of putting all persons who were in the service on the 6th December, 1889, into the clerical division *holus-bolus*, whether they wish it or not, I propose to leave it to the board to determine their fitness for classification, and I say unhesitatingly that the Government, the board, and the department will conclude that their fitness is evidenced by their doing the work.

Mr. DAWSON: Will that apply to clerks of petty sessions?

The HOME SECRETARY: I can assure the hon. member that the very valuable officer he refers to, who resigned rather than do something not honourable, has gone back to his post, and I hope that he will long remain there. If the hon. member for Bundaberg is satisfied with the amendment I suggest, the principle of the clause will be accepted by me as fair and just—as a delayed act of justice to the men concerned. I now move that the word "service," on the 4th line, be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "and Telegraph Department."

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that the words "and still remain in the service" be inserted after "eighty-nine," on the 5th line.

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that the words "on obtaining a certificate from the board as to their fitness" be inserted after "shall," on the 5th line.

Mr. GLASSEY: The amendment submitted by the Home Secretary is a reasonable one. The board should, of course, ascertain the fitness or otherwise of the persons whose interests and claims we have been discussing from time to time in connection with this Bill. I am sure the hon. gentleman will acquit me of having any desire to induce the board, or the head of the department, to thrust persons into positions for which their education does not fit them. As the hon. gentleman has said, the best proof of fitness of some of these men is that they have been

doing clerical work for a number of years; but there are other persons engaged as stampers and sorters who are not in that position, and they should have an opportunity of communicating with the board, or putting the necessary machinery in motion to prove their qualifications for promotion to a higher branch of the service. I do not wish to mention any names, but I can furnish them if necessary. The hon. gentleman labours under a delusion when he says that if the persons we are now discussing are classified they may lose emoluments that they are now receiving. I hold in my hand a list of persons drawing from £150 to £225 a year as clerks, and who are still drawing emoluments the same as other persons.

The HOME SECRETARY: If we were to turn a stamper and sorter into a clerk he might lose his £32 then.

Mr. GLASSEY: That is not so. This list is proof positive that those persons who are classified and doing clerical work are in receipt of the emoluments referred to, and there is no rule, regulation, or statute which says that if stampers and sorters are promoted to the classified division they shall lose their emoluments. I am sure that the amendment will meet with the approval of a considerable number of persons who have not hitherto received that consideration to which they are entitled by reason of the duties they have been performing. Another point I may mention is that sometimes persons engaged as stampers and sorters are taken from that work to do clerical work occasionally, and are afterwards put back to their old positions, while newer hands are appointed to the more important positions. If the board act as I hope they will on receiving communications from persons aggrieved —endeavour to put machinery into motion with regard to the claims of those persons—many deserving persons will be placed in positions to which they are entitled.

The HON. G. THORN: The proposal of the Home Secretary is not an unreasonable one. I know something of the Post and Telegraph Department, though I have not been there for a good many years, and I am at a loss to conceive who is to judge of the fitness or unfitness of men in the lower grades in any department.

The HOME SECRETARY: They are doing the work; that is good evidence.

The HON. G. THORN: I know men in the Post and Telegraph Department who have no chance of rising. They are not able to pass the examination, though they are just as well able to do clerical work as those who are near the top of the ladder. I know that the permanent heads as a rule are opposed to men in the lower grades going higher up. I have not been spoken to on this matter; but I could name men who could show their fitness for clerical work if they only had a trial. I think this amendment will be a dead letter. No doubt it was framed with good intentions; but I doubt whether it will have the effect intended—whether deserving officers in the lower grades will be able to rise as they ought in the service.

Amendment agreed to.

A consequential amendment was made in clause 39.

The third reading of the Bill was made an order for to-morrow.

DREDGING THE NARROWS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, intimating their approval of the plans of the proposed cutting at the Narrows, between Gladstone and Keppel Bay.

INEBRIATES INSTITUTIONS BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On the following new clause, to follow clause 25:—

Any member of the Queensland Parliament or the editor of any newspaper printed and published in the colony of Queensland shall be empowered to enter and inspect, between the hours of ten o'clock in the forenoon and four o'clock in the afternoon, any retreat or institution established under this Act.

The HOME SECRETARY urged hon. members to assist in passing this Bill. They had already passed twenty-five clauses; there were only ten more to pass, and only one was likely to be contentious. This new clause was wholly inapplicable to the Bill, and the hon. member for Burke himself admitted that the object was to get a decision upon some abstract question as to the rights of members of Parliament and others. This was exceptional legislation, requiring particular management, and hon. members had had opportunities of maturing their judgment, so that a good measure might be passed. He hoped to make a beginning under this Bill. Machinery was provided whereby anybody might establish a retreat—which would be quite outside "institutions" provided by the Bill—and if they could only cure half a dozen persons before next year the Bill would have done good. He therefore asked hon. members not to delay its passage. The Council had sent it to them upon three different occasions, and members there who were engaged in medical work had always taken a great interest in it. It had been tried in other places and had worked well, and it would be wise for them to try to make a start. The new clause was entirely beyond the scope of the Bill, and he would ask the hon. member in charge of it not to press it.

Mr. GLASSEY was sorry that the hon. member for Burke was not present. Although the clause might not be applicable to the present Bill, the point which the hon. member wished to direct attention to was that the actions of hon. members and editors of newspapers were very much restricted in regard to public institutions. He saw no reason why the utmost freedom should not be given to public men to enter them, and ascertain for themselves how they were worked. He was referring more particularly to hospitals and asylums for the insane and prisons, and did not see why hon. members should have to produce passports before the officials would admit them. The Home Secretary could not imagine that editors of papers or hon. members would abuse a privilege which they were entitled to enjoy; and, for his part, he felt humiliated when he had to go to some official and ask for a ticket of admission to a public institution. It was a deplorable state of affairs that this privilege should be denied, because those he had referred to were entitled to make what inspection might be necessary in the discharge of their public duties. He had always been in favour of the Bill, and hoped it would be passed; but he particularly hoped that persons who were suffering from this unfortunate complaint, and who were in poor circumstances, would not be debarred from participating in the benefits. In that respect he was glad to see there was £500 on the Estimates for six months for this purpose. He did not intend to oppose the Bill, but urged that this abominable system of depriving hon. members of the right of inspection should be done away with, as he held that he was invested with certain rights by the people, and he should look after their interests.

Mr. BROWNE had no intention of delaying the passage of the Bill, but it was hardly fair to the hon. member for Burke to proceed with this matter now. At the head of the printed amendment it was intimated that the new clause

was to follow clause 34, and no doubt the hon. member for Burke thought he would be present before they reached that stage. They had not yet passed clause 26, and it was possible that the hon. member for Burke might be present by the time they reached clause 34.

The HOME SECRETARY: This clause had already been fully discussed by the hon. member for Burke himself. He had told the hon. member that the clause was not applicable to that portion of the Bill, but he had taken the bit into his teeth, and, though he had previously stated that he intended to move his clause after clause 34, he had proposed it to follow clause 25. He had pointed out to the hon. member that they had already passed clauses providing for the Government inspection of retreats, and, as the discussion at that time appeared likely to be interminable, he thought that if the hon. member had time for reflection he might decide not to go on with his clause. The very word "retreat" meant the very opposite of a place where members of Parliament and editors of newspapers could go at all. In any public institution there had to be certain rules, and no insult was intended to members of Parliament when officials did their duty by asking them to produce their authority for admission. Though he was a Minister of the Crown, as soon as he entered a railway carriage an official demanded the production of his ticket, but instead of considering his dignity offended he at once showed his pass. It afforded him great pleasure when any member of Parliament signified his desire to visit any institution in his department, but it was at times inconvenient even for a Minister to visit those institutions without notice, because the officers who could show them round might be absent, and on that account it was necessary to state at what time any hon. member would visit the institution. It was a matter of courtesy, and no hon. member would ever be refused by any Minister who had a sense of the responsibilities of his office.

Mr. DAWSON: It was difficult for any official to tell by a man's appearance that he was a member of Parliament; but a member should have the same right to go on board a Government boat that he had to enter a railway carriage. The hon. gentleman was quite mistaken with regard to the meaning of the word "retreat." It did not mean a place where people could get away from members of Parliament and editors of newspapers. It meant a place where people could get away from the close scrutiny of the general public, but the only two sources through which the taxpayers who paid for the institutions could know that they were being properly managed were members of Parliament and the Press. If there was any public institution in connection with which the administrator had power to exclude anyone but himself, the greatest abuses they had ever read of in the history of the world would be perpetrated in that institution.

The HOME SECRETARY: They could get letters into the newspapers from any institution in the colony.

Mr. DAWSON: The merit of the proposed clause was that a member of Parliament or an editor could go into any retreat by virtue of his office, because if he had to go cap in hand to the Minister and then obtained an order allowing him to visit the retreat at a certain fixed time, if there was anything wrong, it would be put in order before he came, and neither member of Parliament nor editor would find out that things were wrong.

Mr. CORFIELD did not like the clause, and he did not intend to vote for it. The characters of members of Parliament—leaving editors of newspapers altogether out of the question—were not so superior to those of the average citizen that they should have the right to inspect places set apart for females; and as regarded institutions of the kind dealt with in the Bill, the supervision of a Government inspector was quite sufficient. He would hold his office by reason of his fitness, which was a guarantee of good character. As constituencies, like their component parts, sometimes suffered from delusions, it was hard to say that the characters of future members of Parliament would be any improvement upon those of present members, and it would therefore be a mistake to allow members of Parliament such a right solely because of their position.

Mr. HAMILTON did not see that it would be any indignity to a member of Parliament to be unable to go to St. Helena without a pass. It would rather be an indignity if he were considered qualified to go without a pass. He had frequently gone there, but it had never occurred to him that it was an indignity to have to get a pass from the Under Secretary. Supposing that he (Mr. Hamilton) decided voluntarily to go into a retreat in order to recover from the effects of intemperance, he should not like anybody to be authorised to walk into the place and inspect him and write about him in the social columns of the public Press. In fact, he should decidedly object to it. It should be remembered that persons were not immured in those establishments for a long time; that as a rule they would be persons of character with only one failing; that if anything wrong was done their reports would be believed and the offenders brought to book.

Mr. FINNEY: Persons going into one of those retreats would not wish the public to know that they were there at all. It was a point they would be very sensitive about, and the quieter the fact was kept the better they would like it. He was sure those institutions, when established, would be the saving of many men and many families from utter destruction. He would point out that for the retreats the public would not pay one sixpence. The people who went there would have to pay for their keep and attendance.

Mr. GLASSEY: What about those poor fellows who cannot afford to pay?

The HOME SECRETARY: They go into the institutions.

Mr. FINNEY: And the nature of the superintendence at the retreats was such that no one could object to.

Mr. DANIELS: Why do we have to vote the money?

Mr. FINNEY: The vote was for the inebriate institutions, whither would be sent those who were not able to pay the expenses involved in admission to a retreat. No measure had been brought forward this session in which he took so deep an interest. Some might say it was a disgrace to introduce such a Bill. His own opinion was that it was a disgrace that such a Bill had not been passed into law long ago, as had been done in most other parts of the civilised world. He sincerely hoped the Bill would be passed, and the system given a fair trial.

Mr. DANIELS gave members of Parliament and editors of newspapers credit for having more good sense than to spread reports or write articles about the inmates of those institutions. All they would do would be to see how the institutions were being conducted, and to bring to light anything they considered wrong. They had been told that drunkenness was a disease. With regard to other diseases, such as scarlet fever and smallpox, the Government did everything in its power to prevent them from spreading; but they did nothing to stop the spread of this particular disease. They even allowed the germs of the disease to remain within the precincts of the

parliamentary buildings instead of sweeping them away altogether. It was another case where prevention was better than cure. He intended to support the amendment.

Mr. DAWSON: The amendment applied to institutions as well as to retreats, and when the general taxpayer was paying his money in order that certain unfortunate persons might have a chance to reform, it was his right to know that his money was being expended to good purpose, and that those for whom he was paying were being properly treated. That information could best be obtained by allowing members of Parliament and editors of newspapers to visit the institutions at any time within certain prescribed hours. It was not at all likely that newspaper editors would write columns of personal gossip about the inmates. They would go there to see how the institutions were conducted. If they were well conducted they would say so, and if there was anything to find fault with it was their duty to say so. One of the grandest things they had in connection with the hospitals was the right of editors of newspapers to visit them and see how they were managed, and if any committee of a hospital framed a rule prohibiting that, the general public would soon cease to subscribe.

Mr. STORY: The clause would apply very well if they were dealing with menageries; but what right had an editor of a newspaper or a member of Parliament, in preference to all other members of the community, to wander into those institutions as they liked? He saw no reason why editors or members of Parliament should be deified. They had the same rights as other members of the public. They could apply for orders to inspect such places; and if they were refused it would be time enough to complain.

Mr. DAWSON: Without an order a person visiting such an institution would see it as it was usually conducted, but if there was anything that could be taken exception to it would be removed or put out of sight when visitors were expected. As an illustration of that, he might say that he and his colleague wished to visit certain plantations at Mackay on one occasion. They did not send a courier in advance to say they were coming. One place which they visited had been informed of the proposed visit, and he must say it was the finest place he had seen at Mackay. At other places they saw a great deal more than they were likely to see if they had advertised the fact that they were coming.

New clause put and negatived.

Clauses 26 to 29, inclusive, put and passed.

Clause 30 passed with a verbal amendment.

On clause 31—"Penalty for offence against Act"—

Mr. GLASSEY was of opinion that the penalty of £20 or three months' imprisonment was excessive. He had always been against severe penalties, except in extreme cases. It might happen that a person adjudicating upon such cases as would be brought under the Act might feel aggrieved at what he thought the harsh treatment of an inmate and impose the full penalty. He hoped the Home Secretary would reduce the money penalty and the alternative term of imprisonment.

The HOME SECRETARY pointed out that £20 was the maximum, and if a person cruelly treated an inmate of an inebriate asylum he did not think that amount was too high. The hon. member should remember also that under the Justices Act the justices might reduce the fine to a farthing and impose no alternative of imprisonment at all. £20 or three months' imprisonment was the usual maximum penalty now fixed in Acts of Parliament, and it was advisable to keep to the rule.

Mr. GLASSEY did not believe that heavy penalties did any good. Their object should be to reform, and not merely to inflict punishment. However, if the Home Secretary did not think the provision would be abused, he had no desire by objecting to it to stand in the way of the passing of the Bill. He had always favoured such a Bill, and he hoped it would be the means of rescuing people from themselves and restoring them to society and their families, cured of that disease, and in a condition to become useful citizens.

Question put and passed.

Clauses 32 to 34, inclusive, put and passed.

Clause 35 passed with a verbal amendment.

On the first schedule,

The HOME SECRETARY explained that in consequence of the amendment made in the early part of the Bill providing for two justices, "one of whom shall be a police magistrate," it had been found necessary to redraft the first, second, third, and fifth schedules. The amendments were merely formal and necessary to carry out the wishes of the Committee, and he proposed to submit the new schedules for the schedules as they stood in the Bill.

First, second, and third schedules put and negatived; and new schedules, as printed, agreed to.

Fourth schedule put and passed.

Fifth schedule put and negatived; and new fifth schedule, as printed, agreed to.

Sixth schedule put and passed.

The 7th schedule was passed with a verbal amendment.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the third reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

BRISBANE TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—"Short title"—put and passed.

On clause 2—"Amendment of 59 Vic. No. 34, s. 2"—

The HOME SECRETARY said he would like hon. members to assist him in passing this Bill, which was necessary in the interest of the Traffic Board and of the public. Clause 2 provided that—

"In the definition of 'road' in section two of the principal Act the words 'pavement, footway' are inserted before the word 'bridge.'"

In his opinion that was merely declaratory of the existing law. The General Traffic Board had the powers of the local authorities; but when the Brisbane Traffic Act was passed it was understood by many persons that their authority would refer only to vehicular traffic. Of course vehicles, as a rule, did not go on the footpath, but the word "street" was a clear definition; it included the alignment of the street from house to house. At any rate, there was no doubt that that was so under the old Act. The Brisbane Municipal Council had, however, taken umbrage to the clause now before the Committee, and said it was the first claim of the Transit Commission to regulate pedestrian traffic. That had always been regulated by the Traffic Board; before its constitution it was regulated by nobody. The Act stated that the board was appointed for the regulation of traffic; it did not use the term "vehicular traffic." Under the Local Authorities Joint Action Act certain provision was made for the regulation of vehicular traffic, and it was left open as to who were to look after the pedestrian traffic. Then down came Mrs. McNaught, and the question arose as to who were to deal with her—the Traffic Board or the municipal council. The police looked to their masters for direction, and

they went first to the council, who said "We have nothing to do with the matter; the police have to administer our by-laws." And there was no doubt that the by-laws of the municipal council provided for pedestrian traffic before the constitution of the Joint Traffic Board. In the original Act there was no definition of the words "street or road," but he was of opinion that the words included the space between the houses on each side of the street. If it did not; if the Traffic Board were to regulate only vehicular traffic, and the municipal council the pedestrian traffic, they would have the anomaly that two different authorities would be regulating, the one pedestrian and the other vehicular traffic, in the same space. Therefore it appeared a necessity that if the legislature intended to give authority to any body to deal with traffic on one space, it must be to one body and not two. If the regulation of pedestrian traffic could be dissevered from that of vehicular traffic he felt sure the Transit Commission would not object, because the former was not associated with revenue; but the object being to regulate traffic generally, if there was a necessity for some commission or joint board, they must regulate all traffic. Under the circumstances he confidently asked the Committee to affirm, with the full knowledge of its meaning, this clause.

Mr. DRAKE: This clause said that in the definition of "road" in the principal Act, the words "pavement, footway" were inserted before the word "bridge"; but on looking at the principal Act he found that they were not inserted before the word "bridge." He did not suppose the hon. gentleman intended to do so, but it looked like asking the Committee to affirm a falsehood.

The HOME SECRETARY explained that the draftsman ought to have said that the words shall be inserted before the word "bridge." He moved the insertion of the words "shall be" in lieu of the word "are."

Mr. BATTERSBY said there was an agitation to make the Brisbane bridge free. If a joint authority were to be formed to pay for the bridge, would it not be wise to make provision that those who would have to pay should have some control?

Mr. McMASTER thought it was desirable that the Act should be made sufficiently plain to the parties responsible for regulating traffic. When the Traffic or Transit Board was first constituted the object was to regulate the licensed vehicle traffic, owing to the local authorities demanding a double license from the licensed vehicles. The Home Secretary was making it plain in this Bill that the Transit Commission should regulate not only licensed vehicle traffic but all traffic, including foot passengers. That being so, who did the hon. gentleman think ought to pay for that regulation? The licensees said—and he said so too—it was not fair that the cabmen, the few draymen, the few vanmen, and the 'busmen should pay for the regulation of the traffic of the whole of Brisbane. He admitted that the traffic had never been properly regulated. The Brisbane municipality had the regulating of all the licensed vehicles previous to the Transit Board being constituted; but when the Local Government Act came in and a double license was charged 'buses going through different localities — particularly Woolloongabba — the licensees objected. An appeal was made to the Supreme Court, and hence came the Transit Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member's remarks apply to the next clause. There is an amendment before the Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. McMASTER: If the licensees had to pay for inspectors to regulate foot-passenger traffic and all other traffic in the city of Brisbane, it was manifestly unfair. He noticed that the police were to assist, but that did not alter the fact. It was a very heavy tax upon licensed vehicles, and the owners had waited upon the Transit Commissioners with a view of ascertaining whether they could not make those who were reaping the benefit contribute something towards the expenses of the board. He had not a word to say against the present commission. On the contrary, he believed that for the last nine months the licensees had enjoyed more peace and comfort than they had for many years past. They had looked forward to the Bill passed last year with a great deal of satisfaction, and their anticipations had been to a great extent fulfilled. The chairman was devoting a great deal of his time to the regulation of the traffic, and the licensees were satisfied. The Home Secretary said the board had always had power to regulate the whole of the traffic, but that power was not well defined. It was to be defined now, and he was satisfied that as long as the chairman occupied his present position he would endeavour to regulate the whole traffic; but he must have more inspectors, and, to pay them, the license fees would have to be increased, because, if they had to control the foot traffic as well as the vehicular traffic, the work could not be done with the present revenue of only £1,200 a year. The tax was very heavy upon some people. He himself paid about £80 in license fees every year; others paid as much, and what they objected to was that the whole cost of regulating the traffic should fall upon the cab and van men and the 'bus proprietors.

Mr. BATTERSBY wished for an answer to the question he had asked in regard to the agitation for a free bridge.

The CHAIRMAN: I would call the hon. member's attention to the fact that this is a Bill to amend the Brisbane Traffic Act of 1896, which, as the hon. member will see, has nothing to do with a free bridge.

Mr. BATTERSBY: The Traffic Board would regulate the traffic across the bridge. Surely those who had to take the responsibility should have a say in the matter.

The HOME SECRETARY: The bridge was not under the Traffic Board, but under the Bridge Board, by whom the traffic was regulated.

Mr. DIBLEY did not agree with the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, that regulating the footpaths would add greatly to the expense. In fact, the hon. member had made a good speech in favour of a wheel tax, which was the tax they should propose if they wished to widen the scope of the commissioners.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 3—

The HOME SECRETARY: The object of the clause was to legalise the custom of the chairman holding inquiries into complaints against licensees for breaches of the by-laws; but it went too far, and he proposed to amend it. The chairman was given power to cancel or suspend licenses, and he proposed to omit the words "cancelled or to be," leaving him only the power of suspending licenses.

Mr. McDONALD asked what was the intention of the Government in regard to subsection 11 of clause 6, which allowed the board to compel owners of bicycles to obtain licenses.

The HOME SECRETARY: I propose asking the Committee to negative that.

Mr. McDONALD pointed out that all the cyclists living on the south side were taxed to the extent of £3 17s. a year in bridge tolls.

Mr. McMASTER: So are those who travel in trams or 'buses.

Mr. McDONALD: A bicycle did not do as much harm to the bridge as a man walking across it. He objected more to the inconvenience than to the amount. Several times he had got half-way over the bridge and found he had no tickets, and it was difficult to turn back, and sometimes dangerous to have to get off. In fact, three men had been sent to the hospital through accidents caused in this way.

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY proposed that the following be added to the clause:—

> Any licensee who considers himself aggrieved by the determination of the chairman may appeal therefrom to the board, whose decision shall be final.

That would give ample protection to everybody.

Mr. DIBLEY: Ever since he had been on the board the practice had been that when a license was recommended to be cancelled the final decision rested with the board, but he believed that was not according to law.

The HOME SECRETARY: There was an impression that it was intended to constitute the chairman into a court, and there was some objection to that. The object of the clause was that the chairman should have the powers of a justice. If a witness committed perjury the offence should be punishable. He was also to have power to summon witnesses and compel them to attend an inquiry.

Mr. STEPHENS asked why the words "whose decision shall be final" were inserted in the amendment? During his experience on the board cases had occurred in which information had subsequently come before the board which had induced them to review their former decisions, but with those words in the clause the board would in future be unable to alter their first decision.

The HOME SECRETARY: The object was that any person should have the right to appeal from the chairman's decision to the board, and that there should be no power to prosecute before any other tribunal once the board had given its decision; but the board would have the right to revise its decision if it chose.

Mr. McMASTER did not agree with the hon. member for Brisbane South. He took it that if the board suspended or cancelled a license for a time, at the expiration of that time the licensee could make a fresh application, and the board could treat it as a first application, and give the man a further trial.

The HOME SECRETARY: He had not the slightest objection to omitting the words referred to, and merely provide that any licensee who considered himself aggrieved by the decision of the chairman should have the right to appeal to the board. If there was any likelihood of the words causing confusion, he would move the amendment without them, stopping at the word "board."

Amendment agreed to in the amended form; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 4—"Committees"—put and passed.

On clause 5—"Powers of police officers"—

Mr. McMASTER thought the clause required some explanation. The last paragraph gave any police officer power to apprehend and convey to a police station any person who committed a breach of the by-laws. There was not a licensed driver who went up Queen street who did not commit some breach of the by-laws—for instance, by driving too fast or too slow—and this clause would put it in the power of an officious police constable to arrest a driver and remove him to the lock-up, and no one might know of what had happened or what had become of the 'bus or cab until next morning. He hoped the hon. gentleman would alter the clause so as to make the last paragraph plainer and less stringent. He presumed the clause applied to foot passengers as well as to licensees, and that a special by-law would be framed to include them. There were certainly cases where it was desirable that the police or the officers of the transit commissioners should have power to arrest without a warrant; such, for instance, as where a driver was intoxicated in charge of his vehicle, or where a person committing a breach of the law refused to give his name, or where a person engaged a cab to take him and his luggage to a train or steamer, and tried to escape without paying his fare. But it was making the clause too stringent to make it apply to any offence committed against the Act or any by-law made under it.

The HOME SECRETARY: The object of having policemen at all was that there should be a summary remedy in certain cases. A policeman had power under the present law to arrest persons whom he saw committing an assault. To lift one's hand against anybody was an assault in the eyes of the law, but no one ever heard of a policeman taking a man in charge for an assault of that kind. It was only in serious cases where the policeman interfered and locked a man up. In cases of wilful obstruction to traffic summary removal of the offender was necessary. Who was to do it but the police? Take the procession held on the 1st May. Supposing certain persons said, "We will have a procession the other way." They would be breaking the law. because one set of persons would have permission and the other not. Nevertheless, they continued to process and the result would be a conflict in the street. What was to take place? The men in the wrong must be prevented from doing that wrong; and who was to remove them but the police? At present they could do nothing of the kind. Or suppose there was a funeral and a solemn service going on, and somebody from wickedness went alongside and played lively and wicked airs. What would they do? Would they ask him for his name and summon him a fortnight hence? The policeman should be able to remove him at once. If in the exercise of his power the constable transgressed, there was a department above him to see that he was not there the next day to do it again. In ordinary cases where the police knew the man they would proceed in the ordinary way by summons. But if a man was offending in such a way that passengers could not pursue their avocations, what was to be done with him?

Mr. McMASTER: Lock him up.

The HOME SECRETARY: That was precisely what the clause provided.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 6—"Amendment of 59 Vic. No. 34, s. 28"—

The HOME SECRETARY: This clause gave the commissioners power to make regulations. The first six subsections were purely formal. Subsection 7 dealt with licenses for vehicles used for passengers. The reason for that was that at present it was only possible to license in respect of individuals. One individual would only have to pay the same license in respect to fifty vehicles as for one. Subsection 8 was formal, but in subsection 9 he proposed to make some alterations. It dealt with licenses for vehicles used for goods. On the 9th line, after the word "used," he proposed to insert "kept or let," and then on the 10th line, after "materials," he would move the insertion of the words "excepting vehicles ordinarily used for conveying fish, fruit, water, fuel, milk, vegetables, bread, meat, ice, agricultural produce, or groceries or other merchandise from retail shops." The object of the subsection was to meet those cases in which men practically plied for hire, but because they were employed in carting the goods for the wholesale houses,

and had the names of those firms on their carts, they paid no license. The old Traffic Board had brought the matter under his notice, and it was a matter that really required to be dealt with. It would be no use attempting to put a license upon all vehicles. If they did that the result would be that butchers' and bakers' carts and such like would be required to pay a license, and it would become obnoxious, besides which there would be very little chance of getting such a provision through in another place. It was that proposal which had blocked an amendment of the law on a previous occasion. What he proposed, therefore, was to insert the exceptions he had named. He had made the net so wide as to catch all those vehicles which were plying for hire except those which were used for the conveyance of goods entirely for the convenience of the public. The class of persons he had mentioned at present paid nothing towards the regulation of traffic, although they carried on business in competition with those who did, and that was felt to be a grievance. He had found it a very difficult thing to draft a subsec tion which he thought would meet the approval of Parliament; but he had done his best by naming certain exceptions, and he put the matter before hon. members in the hope that they would offer suggestions. The subsection was also wanted for the purpose of providing revenue. Many persons thought that the traffic authorities had a large revenue, but they only had £1,200 a year; and, although they paid very moderate salaries, they had not enough at their disposal to properly regulate the large and growing traffic of the city. He wished to hear the opinion of hon. members as to whether it was desirable that the particular class he desired to get at should be got at, and whether the exceptions he named were sufficient. He moved the insertion of the words "kept or let" after the word "used."

Mr. KEOGH: The Home Secretary did not mention amongst the exceptions he referred to the carts owned by a wholesale wine and spirit merchant and used by himself for the delivery of his own goods.

The HOME SECRETARY: Why should they not pay for regulating the traffic?

Mr. KEOGH: If they should, then grocers' and other retail traders' carts should not be exempt. If it was right that the carts the hon. gentleman referred to should be exempt, then the wholesale wine and spirit merchants' carts should also be exempt.

Mr. GRIMES: Practically the clause provided that a wholesale house keeping a horse and dray for carting its goods from the wharf to the warehouse should pay a license, while the retail houses need not pay for using a horse and dray for the same purpose. He certainly did not agree with that.

Mr. McMASTER: The traffic authorities had for years been endeavouring to get at the persons who kept in some instances as many as five drays and escaped license fees by being allowed by wholesale houses to have the name of their firm put upon the drays. Those drays carried goods to and from all parts of the city, and not alone for the firm whose name appeared on them. He had drays delivering goods at his store with the names of firms on them that had not a bag of produce in the store. Those drays did not pay a license and they did not go upon the stand, while the unfortunate drayman who did go on the stand had to pay a 10s. license fee for the dray and a 5s. driver's fee, and they might be on the stand for hours without getting a job worth a few shillings. It should also be remembered that the Traffic Commission regulated the charges made by the men on the stand. The difficulty was that three very small sections of the community had to find the cost of regulating the whole of the traffic of the city. The 'bus proprietors only numbered about twenty-three, and they had to pay as much as all the rest put together. Would hon. members say that was fair? He had been twitted by the hon. member for Woolloongabba with having supported a wheel tax, but he held that it was a most equitable tax, and if that means of raising revenue for the regulation of the traffic were adopted the cost would be somewhat equitably distributed, as it ought to be. Even when the control of the traffic was in the hands of the municipal council there had been difficulties in connection with the custom of wholesale firms allowing their names to be put upon drays not their own and really being worked for hire. He did not believe the Home Secretary desired to tax the firms working their own drays, and the Bill would not get at those people; but wherever a charge was made for the delivery of goods there should be a contribution to the revenue of the Transit Commission. It might be argued that the license was not so high here as in Sydney, but there was a smaller population here, and the burden was felt all the same.

Mr. GRIMES would have no objection to the provision if it applied only to vehicles plying for hire, but as he read it it applied also to persons who kept their own drays for the carriage of goods, except retail houses. He thought the difficulty might be met by imposing a penalty upon those plying for hire without a license.

Mr. FINNEY: While he agreed with the Home Secretary that it was quite right to prevent wholesale houses, or any class of business people, from allowing their names to be used by the owners of drays, he was of opinion that a heavy penalty would stop firms permitting draymen to use their names with the view of evading the payment of the license fee. The practice was a very mean one, and he was surprised to hear that it existed. A drayman once asked him to do such a thing, and he refused point blank.

The HOME SECRETARY: There were lots of other persons besides wholesale firms who would be affected by the clause. If no such provision was passed, then a contractor undertaking, say, the work of cutting down Adelaide street, might authorise his name to be placed on fifty drays, and they could then work without paying any license fee. The object of the clause was to include everybody who conveyed goods, chattels, merchandise, or materials, except those specified in the exemptions he proposed to insert in the clause. Persons engaged in retail business must use their own drays for the conveyance of goods, but there was no such necessity in the case of wholesale firms, and if they left out the wholesale men the difficulty would be to prove that the carts used by them were not their property. In every instance they would say that the drays were their own, and who was to prove the contrary? That was where the difficulty arose which had induced the Transit Commissioners to ask for this authority. Unless the Committee adopted the clause with the exemptions suggested in the amendment, the only alternative was to put in the words "ordinarily used, kept, or let for the conveyance of goods, etc., for hire." If they did that they would get back to the old provision under which the difficulty had arisen. He left the matter to the Committee.

Mr. STEPHENS was aware that it was a very difficult question to settle, but did not think the proposal now made was a complete solution of the difficulty. As had been said, certain persons allowed their names to be put on drays which were unlicensed, and which really plied for hire without going on a stand, and as the charges made for cartage were included in

the accounts between firms it was a difficult matter for the board to get evidence proving that the drays plied for hire. Under the proposal now made the vehicles would require to be licensed, but they would not come under subsections 10, 15, and 16, which required the driver to obtain a license, and empowered the commissioners to regulate the fares to be charged. The clause would also allow the Transit Commissioners to stop a man coming into town from the country with a load of bricks, and require him to take out a license. Under subsection 9 a good deal of hardship could arise, and it would be better to strike that out and only charge vehicles working for hire or payment. It opened the door too wide, and did not catch people half as well as it ought.

Mr. GRIMES contended that merchants and wholesale dealers, in consideration of the amount of rates and taxes paid by them, ought to be allowed to carry their goods along the streets without having to pay license fees for their drays.

The HOME SECRETARY asked permission to temporarily withdraw the amendment, with the view of considering paragraph 8.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The HOME SECRETARY said that paragraph 8 related to the licensing of drivers and conductors of vehicles, including cars used on tramways. He found in the Local Government Amendment Act of 1886 a provision to the effect that "no by-law shall impose any license fee in respect of licenses to drivers or conductors of cars used on tramways." As the law stood now, no fee could be imposed, though the drivers and conductors of those cars took out licenses; yet they outvoted men who had to pay license fees. He wished to remove that anomaly by excluding them from this paragraph, so that they could not obtain licenses. The paragraph was intended to try and get at them by making them pay the fees as well as take out the licenses; but as that could not be done, he moved the omission of the word "including" with the view of inserting the word "excluding." He moved the amendment with regret.

Mr. McMASTER regretted very much that the Home Secretary found it necessary to exclude those people, and he thought the Committee ought to come to the assistance of the present licensees. It was an iniquitous thing to compel a few people to pay for regulating the whole of the traffic, while this wealthy tramway company got off scot-free. At the last election fifty-one tramway conductors and drivers voted to put in a representative on the Transit Board, and the votes of those who paid license fees went for nothing. It would be some relief to prevent those men from voting; but that was very small consolation to the licensees who had to find the money. This rich tramway company had a monopoly of the street, and could stow in as many passengers as a car would hold without any fear of being pulled up by an inspector; but if a 'busman carried more than his proper number he ran the risk of being brought before the bench and fined. He thought the Home Secretary should insert a clause providing for the payment of a small license fee by conductors and drivers of tramcars, and he believed the Committee would pass such a clause.

Mr. FINNEY thought that if the Home Secretary could see his way to act on the suggestion made by the hon. member who had just spoken it would be an act of justice. The idea of a lot of men paying no fee being allowed to outvote men who paid fees was adding insult to injury. It would be only an act of justice if a small license fee were imposed. The Home Secretary was generally able to meet difficulties, and he hoped he would be able to meet this one.

Mr. FITZGERALD: There was nothing to prevent the Home Secretary introducing a clause which would compel tramway drivers to be registered and pay a small license fee. It might be urged that the tramway company had entered into a contract, and this would be an act of repudiation, but they all knew that a clause in an Act of Parliament inconsistent with a clause in a former Act repealed it; and he agreed with the hon. member for the Valley that these men should pay license fees, and be under the control of the board. It was absurd that the drivers should have votes and not pay anything at all. He could see nothing from a legal or any other point of view to prevent an amendment being made; Parliament was quite able to deal with the matter.

Mr. McDONNELL thought that the tramway company had received too much indulgence, and should now be compelled to pay license fees. He did not mean that the tram-drivers should pay them, because they were about the worst paid men in the city. They were only paid 24s. for over eighty hours' work in a week; but the tram proprietors should pay the fees the same as 'bus owners did. They had a monopoly at present, and would soon have a greater monopoly by the electric system, and he would assist to pass an amendment in the direction indicated by the hon. member for the Valley.

Mr. STEPHENS: It would be hardly fair to introduce such an amendment now, unless they amended the Tramways Act generally. The company had to maintain the road between the rails, and for eight inches on the outsides, which was right enough as long as they used horses; but they would soon be using electricity, and would then get no value for this expenditure, which they would have to keep up or else be liable to damages for any accidents.

Mr. McMASTER did not wish it to be understood that he wished the tram-drivers to pay the fees; the company should pay them, the same as the 'bus owners did. Notwithstanding what the hon. member for South Brisbane had said, the company had a monopoly, and while they had that they should keep the road in order; but there were places in Queen street where one would be almost thrown out of a vehicle if he tried to cross the tram rails. He thought the trams should be regulated by some other body, and not at the expense of the licensees, who should only be asked to pay fees to regulate their own traffic.

The HOME SECRETARY: He did not see how the difficulty was to be got over until the new Local Government Act came into force. The general principle was wrong. This company was about to be formed under the general Act. The inducement held out to them by property owners was that neither the vehicles nor the drivers nor the conductors should be called upon to pay anything to the council in connection with licenses. The company then sought its Order in Council and came to Parliament, and Parliament inserted a clause in the Act stating that by-laws might be made requiring any vehicles used in the municipality, not being tramcars, to obtain licenses from the council; also for regulating the traffic upon tramways in the municipality; and also for requiring the drivers and conductors of cars used thereon to obtain licenses from the council. It had struck him that if they obtained licenses from the council they should pay for them, but further on there was a subsection which provided that no license fee should be exacted from the drivers or conductors of tramcars. The present Tramway Company had obtained their Order in Council under those conditions.

Mr. McDONALD: Why was not the mistake remedied when it was found out?

The HOME SECRETARY: It was no mistake—it was a bargain. The council had not tried to impose a fee; they, as representatives of the landed proprietors at the time, agreed, in view of the enhanced value their land would get from the starting of the trams, to bear the burden. The Transit Commission had taken over the by-laws of the Traffic Board, and they could not repudiate the arrangements which had been made. If the Bill were of a general application to all tramways some licensee fee might be charged, but as it applied only to Brisbane they were met by the legislation of 1886. The whole difficulty would have to be met in the Local Government Bill to be introduced next session, so that the tramways in Brisbane would be governed by the same conditions as those which might be started in other places in the colony. Considering that the Tramway Company would not have to spend as much in the repair of the roads, and that they had a monopoly of the traffic for a certain number of years, the company should certainly contribute something towards the regulation of the traffic, which was such an important matter to them. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley wanted to know why they should regulate the tram traffic. Well, supposing a tram was only meant to carry eighteen passengers, and twenty-five wanted to get in, at present they found room for the other seven to the detriment of the 'bus proprietors. There never had been any by-law regulating the tram traffic. In asking that power he was only asking for something quite in accordance with the original contract, and the licensees would benefit by the prevention of overcrowding in the trams. In view of the fact that the matter would be dealt with in a general way in the Local Government Bill, he thought they should exclude tramways.

Mr. McMASTER knew that the hon. gentleman had been desirous of making the scope of the licenses as wide as possible, and notwithstanding that clause he thought they should charge a small fee. The Traffic Board and the Transit Commission had always had power to regulate the trams, but they had asked why they should regulate them when they got nothing from them. The same thing would continue. Regulations had been passed before.

The HOME SECRETARY: They made no by-laws.

Mr. McMASTER: He knew that the Transit Commission had never taken any trouble to regulate the trams. He had had a seat on the Traffic Board for several years, and that was the feeling the board had at that time. As to what the hon. gentleman had said about trams which should only carry eighteen passengers not being allowed for the future to carry twenty-five, there was not the slightest danger of the 'buses getting that extra traffic. He was not sure that people would travel in the electric trams for some time, because they would be afraid of being blown up, but, if the number of passengers to be carried by the trams was to be regulated, the Transit Commission would have to employ another set of inspectors, as the present staff could not possibly do the work; and the question then arose, Who was to find the wherewithal?

Mr. FINNEY: The 'bus and cabmen.

Mr. McMASTER: Of course, the 'bus and cabmen; so that the trams would be no better regulated than they were now. The only glimmering of light which the hon. gentleman had given them was that the matter would be dealt with next year in the Local Government Bill; but he was afraid that the same pressure which had been brought to bear in the past would be brought to bear again. When Sir S. W. Griffith introduced the Bill in 1886, although he (Mr. McMaster) was not interested in 'buses then, he had opposed the clause because he considered it unfair. At that time it was not so bad, because the municipal council had then control of the traffic, but now that the power had been handed over to the Transit Commission they got nothing to enable them to pay for regulating the traffic, and neither did the council.

Mr. TURLEY: It was no use the hon. member imagining that he could get a clause introduced into the Local Governmant Bill next session dealing with the question. That Bill would only apply to local authorities in general, not to a special body like the Brisbane Traffic Commission, which had an Act of its own; and the tramways would remain in the same position they were in now.

The HOME SECRETARY had never been able to see any reason why tram-drivers and conductors should not be compelled to pay for licenses in the same way as the drivers of 'buses and cabs. They were at present required to take out licenses, but the Transit Commissioners had no power to compel payment for them.

Mr. GLASSEY: Is not the law strong enough?

The HOME SECRETARY: They were prevented doing so by a provision to the effect that no by-law they might make should contain any matter contrary to the Act or to any other law in force in Queensland. He did not see, considering all things, why the tramway people should not bear their share of the burden, and before they finished with the Bill he would have an amendment prepared to that effect. In the meantime he would leave in the word "including."

Mr. GLASSEY had never been able to understand why the Tramway Company should enjoy special privileges which were not accorded to other persons plying their vehicles for hire, and upon which their livelihood depended; and therefore he was glad to hear the Home Secretary's concluding words. But he was prepared to go even further, and impose a license on all private carriages. He saw no reason why they should not pay a certain yearly sum towards the maintenance of the roads they helped to cut up. Why should those persons who could afford to keep a carriage, and perhaps a couple of well-groomed horses, be allowed to go scot-free, while the man who plied for hire was taxed? It was in reality a tax on a tool of trade, and he had always held the opinion that if it was necessary to impose such a tax it should be of the smallest possible amount. If the Home Secretary would frame his amendment so as to include private vehicles it should have his support, and he was sure it would give satisfaction to the general community.

Amendment withdrawn.

The HOME SECRETARY: He proposed to add later on a provision that, notwithstanding anything in any statute to the contrary, such by-laws might impose reasonable fees in respect of licenses issued to drivers and conductors of tramcars. They had now to deal further with subsection 9, and he moved after the word "used" on line 9 the insertion of the words "kept or let."

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that the clause be further amended by the insertion after the word "materials" of the words "excepting vehicles ordinarily used for conveying fish, fruit, water, fuel, milk, vegetables, bread, meat, ice, agricultural produce, or groceries or other merchandise from retail shops."

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY moved the omission of subsection 11, relating to licenses for bicycles.

Mr. GRIMES: Some hon. members had a strong objection to this provision being omitted. He believed one hon. member thought of keeping it in in the interests of the farmers. It would be in their interests to have a small tax on bicycles, considering how they were replacing horses and competing with trams and 'buses.

Mr. McDONALD: There was something in the hon. member's contention. Lately cyclists had come to recognise that they could endure more if they lived on arrowroot. If cycling was encouraged, the industry in which the hon. member was engaged would be greatly benefited.

Mr. McMASTER did not oppose the omission of this sub-clause, though the bicycles might take a few passengers from the 'buses. He wanted to correct the statement made in the Press by some evil-disposed person that the 'bus proprietors suggested to the Home Secretary or to the Transit Commission that a license fee should be imposed on bicycles. They had never hinted at such a thing, but it might be better for the bicyclists themselves if a very small license fee were imposed upon them for their regulation.

Mr. W. THORN did not see why bicycles should be omitted from the Bill, as the "bike" was becoming a regular nuisance. One could not walk up the street without finding some bicyclist coming up behind him or round a corner at a furious pace. He could not see why they should not pay a tax as well as any other vehicle. The time was coming when the people of Queensland would open their mouths about bicycles, tricycles, and other icycles, and if the Brisbane municipality did not tax them other municipalities soon would.

Mr. CORFIELD saw no more justice in giving the Transit Commission power to impose a license upon bicycles than to give them power to impose a license upon a saddle horse kept for private use or pleasure. He did not think the disfavour of interested parties was a sufficient reason for licensing those machines. If they had reached the stage reached in other places of supplying a special track for the use of bicycles, he could understand a license fee being charged; but there was plenty of room in Brisbane and Queensland for many years to come for pedestrians, wheelmen, and vehicles without getting in each other's way.

Mr. HAMILTON believed that this sub-clause was suggested by a Minister who lately lost confidence in his bicycle. It bolted with him down a steep hill, his hat gone, and coat-tails streaming *a la* John Gilpin. A cow, seeing him coming, charged the "bike," and nearly caused a vacancy in the Cabinet; a girls' school crossing the street only escaped destruction by dispersing. But the Minister at last found the bottom of the hill, and now gave vent to his overwrought feelings by placing a tax on bicycles.

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY: Some of the licenses provided for in the clause ought to go to the municipal council, and though they had not given him much help, and he did not appreciate their criticism of the Bill, he was going to do his duty. Subsection 27 provided for the regulating and licensing of hand-carts, and he proposed to omit the words "and licensing," thus giving the Transit Commission power only to regulate.

Amendment agreed to.

The HOME SECRETARY: Subsection 33 was one that was objectionable to the municipal council, and he proposed in that case also to omit the words "and licensing," but of course the Transit Commission must have power to regulate the setting up and use of stalls and vehicles for the sale of goods or the pursuit of any business.

Amendment agreed to.

On the motion of the HOME SECRETARY, subsection 34 was omitted; and the clause, as amended, was put and passed.

The HOME SECRETARY proposed, as a new clause, the words previously suggested as an amendment of clause 6—

> Notwithstanding any statute to the contrary, such by-laws may impose reasonable fees in respect of licenses issued to all drivers, conductors, and other persons employed upon cars used on tramways.

Mr. SMITH asked if a license would be required for both the driver and the conductor of a tram?

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes.

Mr. SMITH: In many cases there was both a driver and a conductor to the one tram, and one license should be sufficient.

The HOME SECRETARY: No, they must all be licensed. The object is to get reasonable honest men.

New clause put and passed.

On clause 7—"Amendment of 59 Vic. No. 34, s. 38"—

Mr. DRAKE did not know whether it was a new form of drafting or not, but it appeared to him it was a technical error to say "are" inserted; it should be "shall be" inserted, the same as in clause 2, as amended.

The HOME SECRETARY: The Bill had been drafted by one of their best draftsmen, the gentleman specially employed to draft the Local Government Bill, but as they had made an alteration in clause 2 he would move that the word "are" be omitted with a view of inserting the words "shall be."

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the third reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

FACTORIES AND SHOPS BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY: It will not be necessary for me to weary the House to-night with any elaborate explanation of the details of this Bill. Probably on this occasion the House will only expect from me a summary and a historical record of what has taken place in regard to factory legislation in Queensland and in the other colonies, with an explanation of how this Bill is based upon that legislation, and what are the leading features of the measure. Some of us have the decided advantage of an acquaintance with the measure that was introduced in this House some years ago, and moved from this very place by the late Mr. Macrossan, whose valuable assistance in that measure I fully appreciate. I endeavoured at the time to do all I possibly could to assist him in making that Bill a good Bill. Much of that work has been left for my benefit, and I have accepted it and built upon it as far as I possibly could. The House then affirmed without question and without vote that factory legislation was a necessity, and when I tell hon. members that at the present moment there are 15,000 persons working in factories in this colony, the necessity for some legislation of this kind must be apparent to everyone. In every civilised country it has been found necessary to protect the persons employed in factories by legislation, and this Bill is based principally on the legislation that has taken place in England. Hon. members opposite will probably not find so much fault with what is in the Bill as with what is not in it. Different Factories Acts have been passed in different colonies; and in nearly all the colonies where such Acts have been passed there have been several amending Acts. In Victoria they even introduced a Bill to amend an amending Act

passed in an earlier part of the same session. I mention that to show that no Bill can be complete; and I do not present this as a complete Bill. I want to get something passed as a basis of factory legislation on which we can build year by year as we gain experience. I am not attempting to bring into play too many of what may be called fads, theories, and dreams; this only pretends to deal with those measures which are essential to the good conduct of any factory. In many of the places where it is deemed advisable to deal with factories heavy fees for registration are charged, but I can see no reason why that should be done. The great object of such legislation is to encourage persons engaged in business to work harmoniously for the common weal. This Bill starts with the principle that it is not advisable to put any special burden on those persons engaged in connection with factories, whether employers or employees. Of course, the great difficulty in all the colonies has been to define what is a factory. Seven or eight years ago we agreed that a factory should include any place in which six or more persons were engaged; but some of the things we agreed upon then will not suit at present, and it seems to me that we had better start as they have it in Victoria and New South Wales, and fix the limit at four persons. Recently a Bill on which this is built up came before the New South Wales legislature, and I had the decided advantage of being present on several occasions and hearing the subject discussed with conspicuous ability. Though many things have been eliminated which many persons, including myself, would like to see in this Bill, we must take what we can get passed. We have to deal with another Chamber in addition to our own, and to consider what will be acceptable to all sections. I may say that I appreciate the criticisms of the Press in regard to this Bill. Some of the criticisms I saw in one of the leading papers yesterday, however, are based on a misconception of the provisions of the Bill and legislation elsewhere; and when we go into committee, if any persons desire it, I shall be glad to give such information as will remove those misconceptions and show where this is an exact copy of the Bill from which it is supposed to differ. I am charged with having provided in the Bill that laundries shall not be deemed to include any institution or place in which the only persons employed are the inmates of any prison, reformatory, orphanage, or industrial school, or the inmates of any institution conducted in good faith for religious or charitable purposes. I did not have it in the Bill in the first instance; but when I found it in the New Zealand measure I determined to adopt the clause and submit it for consideration. In the design of this Bill hon. members will find first the definitions, and they will see that I have endeavoured to include every place that ought to be considered a factory, making such exceptions as experience has demonstrated to be advisable in a new country. Then come two clauses which I regard as the safety-valves of the Bill, and which will remove many of the objections urged against the measure brought in by the late Mr. Macrossan. We do not take this Bill to apply necessarily to the whole colony. In New South Wales they are going to start in Sydney, and extend the Act in the same way as the Towns Police Act is extended. The 3rd clause, which is the first safety-valve, provides that the Bill shall apply only to such localities as are proclaimed districts for the purposes of the Act. I may say that I shall be pleased to accept any improvement on this so long as it does not differ materially from the principles contained in the Bill. It may be necessary to exempt, by proclamation, certain classes of factories even within a district which is under the operations of the Act. Day by day I find new industries started, and of course any drastic law would have the effect of strangling them. Part I. of the Bill has been objected to by people who have said that the powers of the inspectors are too severe. All I have to say to that is that I hope the part of the Bill that will receive the best attention is that relating to inspection. A Factories Act without proper inspection is an absolute farce. Nobody need fear inspection if his factory is run upon proper lines. The clauses dealing with inspection are even more liberal than those in the English Act; and wherever there might be allegations of intruding upon the privacy of places I have provided sufficient safeguards, such as were put in Mr. Macrossan's Bill. The unnecessary interference of inspectors need not be feared where females are engaged. I do not think these clauses will be objected to when they are understood. A deputation waited upon me the other day in regard to the Bill, and they criticised it minutely; but I found they had never read it, and there may be many others in the same position. All these objections I hope to meet by fair explanations in committee. After inspection, the next subject dealt with is "records." Records should be kept in every proper factory, and these are provided for in Part II. Part III. deals with sanitary arrangements. Of course, in a country like this nothing is more important than to make proper provision in respect of sanitary arrangements. This duty is cast upon local authorities now, and large power is given them to deal even with the matters that are dealt with by this Bill; but for some reason they seem to think their duties are confined to making roads, and they neglect those in connection with the preservation of the public health. These powers are allowed to become a dead letter when placed in the hands of local authorities.

Mr. MCMASTER: Not all of them.

The HOME SECRETARY: It would be very refreshing to me to know of one which came up to the standard of what it ought to do in regard to such matters as are dealt with in this Bill concerning sanitary arrangements. I hope, whether this Bill runs side by side with them or not, that they will assist by bringing into play all the powers in their hands, and making this part of the Bill of full effect. These provisions secure proper ventilation, and all other arrangements which will tend to preserve the health of those working there. Part IV. runs upon similar lines to the Mines Regulation Act which we have already passed. We then assumed that it was necessary to protect even an adult miner against himself. We have taken the safety of his life into our hands, showing that the State even takes upon itself to deal with full-grown persons when they choose to expose themselves to risks which the community thinks they should not. I need go no further into that matter, except to enunciate it as a general principle that the State has a right to deal with matters of public health, and which affect the general body of the community, even though it may be considered by some to infringe upon the rights of private individuals. The safety of the general public is paramount to the rights of private individuals. This part of the Bill deals with unfenced machinery and protection from fire. Houses are not so high-storied here as they are in some other parts of the world, but still there are some places in which sufficient precautions are not taken in regard to fire. The Bill also deals particularly with persons who may be inexperienced, and provides that they shall not be allowed to take charge of difficult or dangerous machinery. Then comes Part V., which deals with the ages of persons employed in

factories. All those who are physically incapable of taking care of themselves are protected, particularly the young and women, for the reason that they have nobody to speak for them in this House except those hon. members who are here now; and I hope the various clauses in that part of the Bill will commend themselves to the approval of the House. As to Part VI., the Committee may think it desirable to omit that part altogether. It relates to shops, and is only brought in as a temporary relief until such time as the legislature may take upon itself to deal with them in a more comprehensive manner. The Bill does not attempt to deal with early closing or with any other of the numerous questions which affect shops. In fact, many persons think it is a gross interference with the privileges of shopkeepers to deal with the subject at all, except in regard to the ages of the persons working there. Clause 41 limits the hours of work for the young, and also says that even in regard to shops exempt from the operations of this Bill regulations may be made by the Governor in Council defining the conditions of life under which persons working in them shall be employed. The miscellaneous provisions are the usual provisions necessary to give effect to a Bill of this kind, such as those referring to offences, and penalties and punishments for those who will not do what is right. I have endeavoured as far as possible to leave nothing to be done by regulation. I have always been opposed to a Factories Act in which everything is to be delegated to regulations, because there is so much uncertainty in the matter. There are certain details which must be dealt with by regulations, but so far as possible I have put everything in the clauses of the Bill themselves. We will start our factory legislation upon the modest lines indicated in this Bill, which, as I have said, is upon the lines of the New South Wales Bill, and includes clauses from the New Zealand and South Australian laws which experience has shown to be necessary wherever they were applicable to the conditions of Queensland. I therefore commend the Bill to the House without further ado, and move that it be read a second time.

Mr. GLASSEY: The Home Secretary in introducing this Bill has been very brief, and fairly lucid to most hon. members. I shall follow his excellent example and be very brief in my remarks. The hon. gentleman anticipated strictures from this side with respect to omissions from the Bill, and no doubt there are many serious and grave omissions, which perhaps are errors. However, I welcome the Bill, small as it is, as a step in advance. As the Home Secretary said, it is the beginning of factory legislation in this country, and on this will probably rise in the future a respectable superstructure. My chief objection to the Bill is that it is permissive. It leaves the Government great powers in regard to proclaiming districts under the Act, and to leaving districts or factories out. I have a strong objection to permissive legislation at any time; but, as this is a matter of detail, when we get into committee we may be able to effect such changes as to remove this permissive element. I entirely agree with the hon. gentleman when he says that in order to make factory legislation effective, inspectors must be employed whose duty it is to see that the provisions of the Bill are put in force. I hope that when we come to deal with the Bill in detail, the Home Secretary will accept an amendment, which will probably be moved by me, giving the hon. gentleman the right to appoint female inspectors. I believe it is absolutely essential that female inspectors should be employed to visit factories in which vast numbers of women and girls are employed in order to see the work performed by those females, and hear from their own mouths the conditions under which they labour, and to make suggestions which may be beneficial to the health and comfort of those people. Coming then to the question of sanitation, that is a subject in which I have taken the deepest interest for many years, and so far as the hon. gentleman can by legislation secure the carrying out of sanitary regulations he will have my most hearty support. I am glad the Home Secretary has fixed the age at which young persons shall be allowed to work in factories at fourteen years instead of thirteen as he originally intended. With respect also to the hours of labour, I agree with the views expressed in the Bill on that subject. I am very glad also to see that the hon. gentleman has made provision for preventing young persons, both male and female, being engaged at night. I am speaking more especially of young boys engaged in newspaper offices setting type. The junior member for Fortitude Valley—who I hope will shortly address the House—will probably lay certain matters before the House which will impress, if any extra pressure is necessary, upon the mind of the Home Secretary the desirability of making the Bill as stringent as possible in order to preserve the health and lives of young people who are engaged in places which may fairly be classed as factories. If we had reached the Bill earlier in the evening I should have mentioned a few things which it is not my intention to touch upon under present circumstances. I shall content myself with accepting the Bill as a step in advance, hoping that the day is not far distant when we shall see placed upon our statute-book a Factories Act which will be worthy of the inhabitants of this colony. I shall vote for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. McDONNELL: I am heartily glad to see this Bill introduced, and I congratulate the Home Secretary upon its introduction. The hon. gentleman said that it is the basis of factory legislation—in fact, he said it is not a complete Bill. I am quite at one with him there—the Bill is not complete. It does not go nearly so far as I should like. At the same time, it is a step in the right direction. It is a fair instalment, and on that account we should be prepared to accept it. When we cannot get all we want it is a good principle to accept all we can get, and if possible try and improve it. I regret that the Home Secretary did not include a few more clauses of the New Zealand and Victorian Acts. Had he gone a little further, and dealt with certain questions which he has omitted, the Bill would be far more satisfactory. Of course I can quite understand that the hon. gentleman has looked forward to the difficulties that may have to be met in another place in connection with passing the measure. I have a fair idea of the fire such a Bill will have to go through there, and it may have been wise not to make the Bill too drastic. It is the thin end of the wedge, and we should accept it on that account. If we had only factories to deal with, the Bill would do an amount of good, but, unfortunately, it will not deal at all with a large number of workers who are engaged in working outside factories and workrooms. I am very pleased to see the clauses dealing with ventilation and sanitary arrangements. The object of all factory legislation is the protection of the health of women and children, and this portion of the Bill is very good. If the Home Secretary would make a little more definite the clauses relating to ventilation and sanitation the Bill would be more satisfactory, and would have a more beneficial effect. Unfortunately these matters are left principally to regulations. I well remember that when a Bill dealing with this subject was before the House

some years ago the hon. gentleman himself took particular objection to dealing with this legislation by regulations. It would be advisable, for instance, to prescribe the minimum of space in a factory or workroom, and the number of closets in proportion to the number of persons employed. There is one portion of the Bill I am very pleased with; that is the portion dealing with child labour. For years the children of Queensland—to the disgrace of Queensland and to the disgrace of every Parliament that has existed in Queensland—have been simply exploited for profit. The portion of the Bill dealing with this great abuse will, I am sure, receive the support and the sympathy of every member of the House. Only this evening I heard that in certain factories engaged in the biscuit-making trade in Brisbane children of very tender years are employed, and those children are obliged to work, during the two months previous to Christmas, very long hours—sometimes ten, twelve, and thirteen hours a day. They are paid very low wages and a very small rate for overtime. This Bill will meet such cases, and I believe there are many more; it will be just in time to reach them. But while dealing with child labour I am sorry the hon. gentleman did not introduce a clause similar to that which appears in the Acts in the other colonies prescribing that children, until they come to the age of sixteen years, shall not be allowed to work in factories or workrooms unless they pass the 4th standard of the Education Act. It should be our ambition to see an intelligent race of people, whether workers or employers, grow up in the colony. We must remember that the children of to-day will be the parents of the future, and insist that, before children are obliged to go to work, they shall receive a fair amount of education. I hope that when the Bill gets into committee the hon. gentleman will see his way to accept such an amendment. The clauses dealing with machinery and protection from fire I am very pleased to see. When I was a member of the Royal Commission some years ago dealing with this question we visited several factories in Brisbane, and it was deplorable to see the very small consideration paid to these subjects. Males and females were working day after day and month after month in close proximity to great dangers, and very little attention seemed to be paid to their proper protection from those dangers. The Bill in this direction alone will be a great advantage to workers employed in factories where machinery is used. The part of the Bill which is most unsatisfactory to me is that dealing with what is known as the sweating system. I am aware that a list is to be kept of work that is given out to be made; but when the work leaves the wholesale house, or the retail shop of the draper or tailor, it cannot be traced beyond the middleman. That is the great evil in connection with it. The abuses in connection with our factory system exist mainly with regard to the people who are working outside for the middleman who has received the work from the wholesale houses. As I have stated before, great abuses do not exist in connection with the wholesale or retail places. I am aware that several of them pay a fair price for the work they give the middleman. It is the middleman who, as a rule, screws down the unfortunate persons who work for him. Under the Bill an inspector is empowered to visit a place where four persons are employed, whereas if a middleman sublets his work, and three adults and twenty children are employed, the inspector has no right to enter. This is a matter that should receive more consideration, and I trust that when the Bill gets into committee the Home Secretary will agree to accept some amendments whereby the goods that are sent out from wholesale houses and retail shops can be tracked to where they are made, so that fair conditions of work may be enforced. There are many other matters I should like to deal with, but, as I hope to have an opportunity of doing so later on, I will reserve what I have to say until then. One is the apprentice question. Another is that in drafting the Bill the hon. gentleman has given no attention to the question of overtime. People are allowed to work when they come to fourteen years of age, and provision is made that on several days, I think forty, overtime may be worked. I consider that some clause should be inserted similar to the clause in the Victorian and New Zealand Acts, providing that at least a minimum rate should be paid for overtime work. If that were done we should have very little overtime work, because at present overtime is a big source of profit to employers. Work is rushed at certain seasons of the year, and then the employers bring back their hands at night. This applies not only to factories but to retail traders' shops, where dressmaking and millinery are carried on. Girls are brought back night after night, working from 6 till 9 or 10 o'clock, and they get no recompense for it. Yet when the slack season arrives those people are simply sent away, and then brought back when the next rush occurs. The other matter I wish to refer to is that relating to shops. The Home Secretary has simply touched the fringe of this question; yet the provisions dealing with shops, small as they are, will be a benefit. At present there are a very large number of girls employed very long hours in shops. I regret to say that in Brisbane there are a large number of shops in which there is little or no provision for proper ventilation and no decent sanitary conveniences, and the portion of the Bill dealing with those matters will be a great boon to employees. I was glad to hear the Home Secretary say that if amendments were suggested he would give them favourable consideration, because I have a few amendments to suggest which I hope to see embodied in the Bill. I think every section of the House is satisfied that something should be done on the question of early closing. That question has been before the people of Queensland for the last twenty-five years, and remains to-day unsatisfactorily settled. I am firmly and confidently of opinion that it will never be settled without State intervention; therefore I hope that when the Bill gets into committee the Home Secretary will agree to accept some amendments which will have the effect of restricting the hours worked in shops, and providing for a weekly half-holiday. At the present time in all the colonies of Australasia this question has been dealt with. In New South Wales the Upper House has thrown out some clauses dealing with shops; but in Victoria, New Zealand, and South Australia there are laws in existence which provide for early closing. In the city of Melbourne alone 5,000 shopkeepers petitioned the Chief Secretary to make Saturday a half-holiday. If the Home Secretary cannot see his way to accept the amendments which I will propose, I trust he will redeem the promise he made some time ago, and early next session bring in a Bill dealing with early closing, making it apply not only to drapers and grocers but to waitresses, barmaids, and barmen, who work hours which are simply disgraceful. There are no other matters with which I wish to deal to-night, and I will reserve any further remarks until the Bill reaches the committee stage. Anxious as I am to improve this Bill, I am still more anxious to see a measure of some sort passed, and I therefore do not intend to do anything which will in any way obstruct the passage of the measure. I hope the

Home Secretary will be as determined and persistent in carrying the Bill through committee as he was last year with the Early Closing Bill, and I can promise him that he will receive every assistance from this side of the House. I shall, of course, support the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed; and the committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

SUPPLY.

On this Order of the Day being read,

The HOME SECRETARY said: I move that this Order of the Day be postponed until to-morrow. I do so with a view of getting the Rabbit Boards Bill prominently before the House so that we may advance it a stage.

Question put and passed.

RABBIT BOARDS BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This is a Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the incursion and migration of rabbits. I have already alluded, in previous debates in Committee of Supply and otherwise, to the necessity for passing it this session. The present Act provides that advances may be made by rabbit boards to lessees of Crown lands who desire to fence their holdings with rabbit-netting, on the condition that the boards shall be secured for such advances, and the lessees shall pay interest at 5 per cent. during the currency of the advance, which is terminable at the option of the lessees themselves. I allude to section 14 of the Act of 1895. Unfortunately no provision was made as to where the money was to come from to enable the boards to make these advances, and the Auditor-General very properly stepped in and put his foot down to prevent the appropriation of any public moneys for the purpose, for the simple reason that it was not authorised by the Act. That is the reason why it is necessary to introduce this Bill this session, primarily in order to remedy that defect in the past legislation. The defect was easily fallen into, but it must be obvious that the rabbit boards themselves have no means out of which they could supply this netting; it was always contemplated that the Crown should supply funds for the purpose. As hon. members know, it is provided for out of loan, and we have this year voted £50,000 for the purpose. Contracts have already been let for the supply of some £20,000 or £25,000 worth of netting. The absolute necessity for dealing with the matter this session lies in the fact that the time is fast expiring, under the existing legislation, within which lessees who have already applied for netting are compelled to erect their fences, and while dealing with this matter it was deemed advisable, instead of having a continuance of patchwork legislation, to deal with the whole question. I very much regret that it was impossible to have introduced the Bill earlier in the session, and that we should not have got to the second reading earlier than to-night. Very largely the Bill is a mere consolidation, but wherever it has been deemed necessary, under the best advice to be got from the local boards and from the Central Board, amendments have been introduced. I may here mention that some further amendments are in contemplation, which have been suggested by the Maranoa Board—the first constituted in the colony—which is doing excellent work, and the officers and members of which have had very large experience. These suggested amendments only reached my hand after the Bill was in print, but if I had known that the second reading would not have come on until to-night, I should have delayed the introduction of the measure until I had been able to embody those amendments in the Bill itself. Although the amendments are not very numerous, they will necessitate a considerable amount of consequential amendments, especially in the schedule. I have yet to take into consideration whether it would be advisable to introduce those amendments or not, but my own opinion is that they are a considerable improvement upon the Bill as it stands. They deal principally with the voting power, the qualification of voters, and the method and means of contributions for fences under groups. The three Acts dealt with are but temporary, expiring after the session of next year, and it has been found advisable to extend their operation for various reasons, the principal one being that the present rabbit boards are indebted to the Government for advances made, and it would not be possible for them to repay those advances unless the operation of the Acts under which they have been constituted is extended. Anyone who has studied the matter must be well aware that we cannot afford, as a community, to let our rabbit legislation drop at the end of next year. The pest, although thoroughly well kept in check by the measures taken in Queensland, is nevertheless advancing, and advancing in such a way as to threaten, if such measures are not continued, to overrun the colony right up to the Gulf. All the evidence I have been able to collect from the experts employed by the Government and by the rabbit boards goes to show that if it had not been for the fencing, which was the result of the Rabbit Act of 1891, the rabbits would by this time have overrun the Darling Downs and the whole colony to the Gulf. Some critics of the Bill have wondered why the Rabbit Act of 1885 has not been dealt with in this consolidation. The reason for that is very simple. The Rabbit Act of 1885 is a very short measure, passed for the purpose of preventing the introduction of rabbits into Queensland and prohibiting persons from keeping them. It is a permanent Act, and will continue upon the statute-book until it is repealed. It was not thought desirable to consolidate that permanent Act with the temporary Acts which are dealt with in this Bill, and which, if it were not for this Bill or some other legislation, would expire at the end of next year. It has also, I understand, been mentioned that the Act of 1894 has not been dealt with, but that is a misunderstanding, because the Acts of 1891, 1894, and 1895 are all repealed by this Bill and re-enacted with amendments. That portion of the Act of 1895 which deals with elections has been put into a schedule at the end of the Bill, a method which, I think, will be found to work very well and be very easy of reference. With regard to the amendments which have been suggested on the Bill as it now stands, I may mention that the first deals with the qualification of voters. At present, as will be seen from clause 11, the voting power is—for 100 head of cattle and under 2,000, one vote; for 2,000 head and under 5,000, two votes; and for 5,000 head of cattle and upwards, three votes; and the same relatively for sheep, reckoning five sheep for one head of cattle. It has been found that an evasion, or, at all events, what I call an evasion, of the Act in that respect has been attempted and carried out. There is a provision in the present law, and also in this Bill, to the effect that no person shall be entitled to more than nine votes. It has come to my knowledge that in one district at all events, and possibly the same thing may have been done in others, on one station where the lessee had a leasehold, of course, a grazing right over the resumption, and an occupation license, these were actually treated as three separate holdings, and a claim made in respect of each of them. If

the lessee had been able to declare as to the necessary number of sheep or cattle, as the case may be—I believe it was cattle in this instance—in order to entitle him to three votes in respect of each of those holdings—leasehold, grazing right, and occupation license—he would have had nine votes, although they were one station, and worked as one station. As it was he recorded three votes for the leasehold, two for the resumption, and one for the occupation license, when according to the spirit of the law he should only have recorded three. It is therefore proposed to substitute another clause for clause 11, by which the voting power will be, under 25,000 sheep, the same as it is here; then from 25,000 sheep up to 50,000, three votes, and one extra vote for every 25,000 sheep above 50,000; and the same of course relatively for cattle, reckoning one head of cattle for every five sheep. With reference to the alteration that is the immediate cause of the introduction of this Bill, I may say that the Governor in Council is distinctly authorised to supply the lessees, through the boards, with the necessary wire-netting, and instead of the mortgage over the lands being made in favour of the board, it will be given to Her Majesty for the purpose of securing the payment of the sum advanced for the wire-netting, and of securing the payment of 5 per cent. interest. There is one other matter, and I think that when I have mentioned that I need say no more on the second reading of the Bill. At present where a group is created, practically by the order of the board, a lessee upon the boundaries of whose run a fence has to be erected is compelled to erect that fence, and as the law now stands he has to look for contributions to the whole of the owners in the group, or protected area. I did not anticipate that the second reading of this measure would come on to-night, and I am sorry that I have not a schedule which was kindly supplied to me by the hon. member for Bulloo, as it shows the extreme hardship that this system works upon those persons upon whom the duty is thrown of erecting those fences. There are a great number of contributors throughout the district; some of them have to contribute ridiculously small amounts, and as the law stands the person who erects the fence has to apply directly to them individually for their contributions. Hon. members will be astonished to learn that in some cases the contributions are as small as 1d.—not the cost of the postage stamps which would be necessary in making the demand. In order to remedy that state of affairs, which I think is not at all satisfactory to the person who is compelled by the local authority to do a certain work, it is proposed that the local authority, and not the lessee, shall collect the contributions, and shall be responsible to the constructing lessees for the cost of the fencing. I think I have now touched pretty well upon all the matters which it is proposed to deal with by way of amendment in this Bill. All the rest is practically a consolidation of the existing law, making it very much clearer than it is at the present time. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. STORY: As I am the only Western member present just now interested in rabbit boards, I have a few words to say on the second reading of this Bill, although there is very little left to be said. I may say that we are particularly fortunate in having the Bill in charge of the present Secretary for Lands. He has mentioned that a good many amendments have been suggested by the Maranoa Rabbit Board, which is in my district, and I may say, in continuation of his remarks, that every amendment, no matter what it was, was considered carefully by the hon. gentleman, who has taken the greatest possible trouble to see if they were practicable. The rabbit boards are under a very great obligation to the hon. gentleman for the care and attention he has given to this measure. It is not necessary, nor would it be in order, to refer to the Bill clause by clause; but I will just refer to one contention held by the Maranoa Rabbit Board—namely, that as the rabbit netting and the assessment go towards protecting the whole of Queensland, the rabbit tax should become more of a national tax than at present. We know that the contribution of £10,000 per annum makes it to a certain extent a national tax, and supplying the netting for only 5 per cent. of the cost also makes it a national tax, because the balance comes out of the consolidated revenue; but I was speaking to a squatter outside the rabbit districts, and speaking for himself and many others he said there would not be the slightest objection all through Queensland to an assessment on all stock up to the Gulf so that every man who has stock should pay something directly towards stopping the incursion of rabbits, because every fence put up, never mind how far south, is put up for the protection of the North as well as the South. And I think every business man in Queensland should pay something towards protecting the public estate, though I do not know whether provision could be made for that or not. The most important matter dealt with in the Bill—and one that was touched on by the Minister—is the power of voting. I think we have arrived at the only solution of that question by allowing owners to vote according to the stock they possess without any limit. If we make nine votes the limit, a man with 200,000 sheep has as many votes as a man with 1,000,000 sheep, though the latter has to pay assessment on every sheep. As the Minister has said, they voted according to runs. In a case in which I was interested, a run worked as one was divided into three, and the owners got more votes than they had any right to. Many amendments have been suggested to the Minister, and I am glad to say that he has included some provisions which the Maranoa Board have found to work remarkably well. Under the last Act, if a man broke a fence or left open a gate not under the control of the board he escaped, but now if he breaks any fence he becomes liable to punishment. According to the last Act nobody could proceed against an offender except the clerk of the board, a member of the board, or an inspector of brands; now anybody can proceed against him. Every amendment that has been introduced is an improvement. The objection raised at one time about certain owners having instructions to fence and having to collect the money is done away with by the board being made responsible. If the board gives instructions to owners to fence, and they are either not able or not in a financial position to do so, the board may do the work and charge the owners. In some of the rabbit districts they do it generally, and that relieves the men from an immediate outlay which in some cases they are not very well able to undertake. I have no intention of making a speech, because there is nothing to be said except in favour of the Bill. There are some points that may be open to discussion in committee, but not very many, and I do not anticipate very much trouble in getting the Bill through.

Mr. CORFIELD: I do not profess to know very much about rabbits; but unfortunately they are in my district, and the rabbit board there have suggested a few amendments, of which the Minister, I am pleased to see, has taken notice. I shall support the second reading so that the Bill may get into committee, where I trust to see it greatly modified in many points, especially in the matter of interest, which

is rather excessive, seeing that Crown lessees are compelled to erect what are to them unnecessary fences, not in the protection of their own property, but that of the whole country, against what will become, if not checked, a very great danger indeed. For this reason I am sorry that the Bill stops short of declaring the whole colony a rabbit district, and assessing it for its protection accordingly. It is at least harsh, if not altogether unfair, to compel outside settlers to pay for the protection of Crown tenants and freeholders throughout Queensland. I believe that the danger is as great as is asserted by those who reside in the infested districts; but I believe also that the tax is too great a burden for the local people. I know that contradictory statements have been made as to the extent and the spread of rabbits; and it is very difficult for persons non-resident in the West to get at the real truth. I think, however, this could be arrived at if the Government introduced a short Bill to extend the duration of the present Act and appointed a commission to inquire into the whole question in the meantime.

Mr. CROMBIE: I was surprised to hear the hon. member for Balonne say he was the only member of the House who knew anything about rabbits, because I happen to be a member of a rabbit board, and have taken a great deal of interest in the question for years past. All I can say is that the Bill has my approval, although there are certain things that will require alteration in committee. When those matters have been attended to, the Bill will have my entire approval. I shall support the second reading.

Mr. JACKSON: I do not think that hon. members on this side expected that we should reach this Bill this evening, and they are not prepared for it. Hon. members opposite say they are pretty well satisfied with the Bill; that it is only a consolidation; but it seems to me that it is something more than a consolidation, because it proposes to extend the operation of the Rabbit Boards Acts of 1891 and 1894 for another four years. Those Acts expire in 1898, and under the latter £10,000 may be voted annually to be paid to the Central Rabbit Board. If the Act is extended for four years more, it means that another £40,000 will be voted in this direction, so that there is something more than consolidation. We do not intend to offer any opposition to the second reading of the Bill, but I am not prepared to say what may be done when it gets into committee, because it is a very important departure, and some evidence ought to be given, which has not been given yet, as to why we should vote such a very large sum of money for the purpose specified.

Question put and passed; and the committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for tomorrow.

The House adjourned at a quarter-past 10 o'clock.