

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 24. September, 1891.

First Readings—Crown Lands Act Amendment Bill—Iron Girders for Railway Bridges—Major-General Harding Steward—Railway from Cootamundra to Temora—Municipalities Act Amendment Bill (No. 2)—Differential Duties—Municipalities Act of 1867 Amendment Bill (second reading)—Rescission of Order for Printing—Australian Gaslight Company Electric Lighting Bill (second reading).

The PRESIDENT took the chair.

FIRST READINGS.

The following bills were received from the Legislative Assembly, and read the first time :—

Sunk Nets Bill.
Nuisances Prevention Act Amendment Bill.
Albury Mechanics Institute Enabling Bill.
Mort's Dock and Engineering Company Enabling Bill.

CROWN LANDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Assembly :—

Mr. President,—

The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the Legislative Council's message, dated 10th September, 1891, in reference to the Crown Lands Act Amendment Bill,—

Insists upon its amendment upon the Council's amendment in clause 3, new sub-section (v).

Insists upon its disagreement from the Council's amendment in clause 4.

And requests a free conference with the Legislative Council on the subject of the said disagreements; and has appointed the following of its members to be managers of such conference in its behalf:—Sir Henry Parkes, Mr. Brunker, Mr. Carruthers, Mr. Copeland, Mr. Crick, Mr. Gormly, Mr. Lyne, Mr. O'Sullivan, Mr. Ewing, and Mr. C. A. Lee.

J. P. ABBOTT,
23rd September, 1891. Speaker.

Motion (Mr. W. H. SUTTOR) agreed to :

That the consideration of the message stand an order of the day for Wednesday next.

IRON GIRDERS FOR RAILWAY BRIDGES.

Mr. DAVIES asked the VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,—(1.) What railway bridges have been constructed with cast-iron girders, and upon what section of the railways are they situated? (2.) What is the difference in the cost of construction in the Newtown railway bridge with cast-iron girders as against wrought-iron girders?

Mr. W. H. SUTTOR answered,—(1.) This information will be prepared, and laid upon the table of this House in the form of a return. (2.) The difference in favour of cast-iron girders would be between £350 and £400.

MAJOR-GENERAL HARDING STEWARD.

Mr. CREED asked the VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,—(1.) In reference to his answer to Mr. Creed's question of 23rd September—by whom or by what Government have the negotiations respecting Major-General Harding Steward been commenced with this Government? (2.) What is the date of the first communication made to this Government by which these negotiations were commenced; and what dates do subsequent communications on this matter bear? (3.) Have any replies been made by this Government to the other parties in these negotiations?

Mr. W. H. SUTTOR answered,—I have already given an answer to the hon. gentleman's inquiry respecting General Steward, and I cannot admit the hon. gentleman's right to challenge the Government on the subject.

RAILWAY FROM COOTAMUNDRA TO TEMORA.

Mr. R. BURDETT SMITH asked the VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,—When will tenders be invited for the construction of the line of railway from Cootamundra to Temora, as sanctioned by Parliament?

Mr. W. H. SUTTOR answered,—No time can at present be fixed.

MUNICIPALITIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No 2).

Bill presented by Mr. Pigott, and read the first time.

DIFFERENTIAL DUTIES.

Mr. CREED: I beg to withdraw my motion in reference to the imposition of differential customs duties, because the papers which it is necessary hon. members should have in their possession in considering the question have not yet been laid upon the table. I will give fresh notice of the motion for this day fortnight.

MUNICIPALITIES ACT OF 1867
AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. TRICKETT rose to move :

That this bill be now read the second time.

He said : This is a measure which has come to us from the Legislative Assembly. Its object is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, to extend to all municipalities of the colony the mode of voting and the same right to votes that are enjoyed by the citizens of Sydney under a measure that was passed some four or five years ago, and popularly known as "O'Connor's Act." At the present time the mode of voting under the Municipalities Act is acknowledged to be of a very doubtful and complicated character. At the time of election instead of only the person who pays the rates being able to vote, very often both the landlord and the tenant exercise that right, because they both have their names on the roll, whereas, as far as I am able to understand it, the object of the Municipalities Act is that only the person who pays the rates should have the right to vote. A roll is made out, but people come up and demand to be allowed to vote ; they make a declaration, which is provided at the end of the Municipalities Act, and the returning officer has no option, but must allow them to vote. It is contended by the advocates of the bill that the person who pays the rates, whether he be the landlord or the tenant, should have the larger share of the voting power. We all know that in letting a house we very often agree that the tenant shall pay the rates. If that could be clearly defined under the present law, he would be the only person entitled to vote, but there is no way of arriving at that exactly. On the other hand, a landlord often lets a house for a certain rental and takes into consideration the amount of rates when he is letting the house. He lets it, say, for £5 a year extra on the express understanding that that is to cover the rates which he himself has to pay. This measure is intended to get over difficulties of that kind, and to enable the person who pays the rates, whether directly or indirectly, to have a cumulative vote. Hon. members are, no doubt, aware that under the Municipalities Act the vote is purely a property vote. If the property is of a certain annual or capital value, the

person has either one, two, three, or four votes, in proportion to the value. The object of the bill is to provide that, if the landlord out of his own pocket pays the rates on a property worth, say, £200 a year, he shall have four votes, and the tenant, who is merely the occupier, and does not pay the rates, shall have only one vote. On the other hand, if under the terms of his agreement with his landlord the tenant pays the rates he shall have the cumulative vote, according to the value of the property, and the landlord, as the property owner, shall have only one vote. That principle was embodied in the Sydney Corporation Act a few years ago, and, so far as I have been able to gather, it has not worked any hardship or any wrong against either landlord or tenant, because at the end of the act there is a declaration which the voter has to make, stating that he is the person named on the roll, that he has not already voted at the election, and that he still has the qualification mentioned on the roll. Those last few words are not inserted in the declaration attached to the bill ; but if it meets with the favour of hon. members, I shall seek to introduce amendments, one of which will be to make it clear that the person who is seeking to vote has not lost his qualification, and also that he himself pays the rates. I shall seek to introduce some words making it clear whether the tenant or the landlord pays the rates, and providing that at the time he votes he shall declare that he pays the rates with his own money, and thus possesses the qualification mentioned when his name was put on the roll. So far as I can see the bill is not an unreasonable one, because it gives to the person who actually pays the rates the larger share of the voting power. On properties within any municipality the rates are of a local character. They are used for the improvement, not altogether of a permanent character, of the roads in the locality. A tenant may be in occupation of premises for a considerable time, and when he has to pay the rates, which are really for the benefit of the property which he occupies, it seems to me only reasonable that he should be entitled to vote as is provided for by this measure. I do not say that the bill is perfectly drawn. It may require some amendment even if its

principle is favoured by hon. members. I do not see the Postmaster-General in his place; though I hoped to do so, because he was the author of the measure under which this principle of voting was introduced in connection with the city of Sydney council. He introduced the bill in the Legislative Assembly. The hon. member who took the measure up in this House, Mr. Thornton, I am sorry is not here, because I know that both he and the Postmaster-General are warm advocates of the principle of the bill, and would no doubt have supported the second reading. So far as I can see, the object of the measure is to definitely state who shall be the persons entitled to vote, to separate the cumulative vote from the individual vote, and to give the tenants the cumulative vote if they pay the rates.

Question proposed.

Mr. PIGOTT: If the question goes to a division I shall vote against the bill simply because I think that it could scarcely be made to work. If it goes into Committee we shall have a very considerable amount of trouble in endeavouring to so shape the bill that it will carry out the wishes of the hon. member who introduced it in the Assembly. Hon. members may, perhaps, bear in mind that the Municipalities Act, which has been in operation since 1867, and which, speaking generally, it may be said has worked very satisfactorily, and under which a great deal of good has been effected, provides, and has for its principal object, that the person who pays the rates shall exercise the voting power. The object of the bill is, in fact, to take away that right and to vest in a person who has really no interest whatever in the property the right to vote. Hon. members, perhaps, may remember that section 52 of the Municipalities Act provides that

every person of the full age of twenty-one years who on the seventh day of January in any year shall be the occupier lessee or owner of any ratable property within any municipality and liable to be rated for the same as such occupier lessee or owner shall be entitled to be enrolled according to the provisions hereinafter contained upon the municipal roll of the municipality for the ensuing municipal year and being so enrolled shall be an elector thereof and shall be entitled subject as hereinafter mentioned to vote.

Provided that only the person who pays the rates for such ratable property shall be entitled

[*Mr. Trickett.*]

to vote in respect thereof and no person who shall at the time of claiming to vote be in arrear on account of any such rates shall be entitled to vote in respect of the property rated at any election in such municipality.

On the 7th January in any year, that day being the commencement of the municipal year, the council clerk, from the books and documents in his possession, makes out a list of owners, tenants, and occupiers liable to be rated. The list is settled by a revision court composed of the mayor and aldermen; then the names are copied into a roll, which becomes the roll of electors for the borough. But he makes out the list from the persons, who by his books appear to be the persons who have paid, or are liable to pay, the rates. The bill strikes at the very root of that principle, because it provides that

every person of the full age of twenty-one years who on the seventh day of January in any year shall be the occupier, lessee, or owner of any ratable property within any municipality,—

This is the innovation :

and having paid rates for the same for the current half-year (hereinafter styled ratepayer) shall be entitled to be enrolled —

The owner, occupier, or lessee of the premises on the 7th January, who has not paid the rates for what is here termed “the current half-year” cannot be entered on the roll at all. If the owner has paid the rates for the previous half-year, which is no doubt what was intended to be provided, then no occupier or tenant can be upon the roll. On the other hand, if the tenant has paid the rates for the half-year previous to the 7th January in any year, no owner can be on the roll at all.

Mr. TRICKETT: That is a copy of the provision in the present act, except the words “hereinafter styled ratepayer”!

Mr. PIGOTT: No. The words “and having paid rates for the current half-year hereinafter styled ratepayer,” are not in section 52 of the Municipalities Act. Those words make all the difference, and make the thing absurd, with all due respect to the gentleman who drafted the clause. How can it be said that the occupier, lessee, or owner has paid the rates for the current half-year? The half-year commences on the 7th January, no rates can be paid on that date except for the previous half-year, as the rates have not been struck. Nomination day is the 7th

February, election day may be a week afterwards; the mayor must be elected within seven days of the elections; within three months of that date an assessment and rate has to be struck by the borough, and upon that being done these persons become ratepayers. No rates are, therefore, due on 7th January, there can be no current half-year at that time; but according to the clause it is only under these absurd circumstances that a person can be enrolled as a ratepayer. But the mischief of the bill does not stop there. Take the case of an owner on the 7th January, who has purchased three, four, or five months prior to that date. According to the bill, he cannot be on the roll at all, certainly for that next year, because he is not the person who has paid the rates for the previous half-year which must be what it was intended to provide here. Take the case of a person who has become a tenant, or a lessee, during the five months preceding the 7th January. He cannot be on the roll simply because he has not paid any rates for the previous half-year. This shows the absurdity of tampering with a measure which has worked well, and with reference to which, as far as this clause is concerned, not a single complaint has ever been made. I think I am in as good a position as any one to speak on this question, and though the hon. member who introduced the bill in the Assembly may show that individual complaints have been made to him, I am in a position to say that no general complaint has ever been made by the boroughs as to this clause. Clause 3 will have to be cut about most fearfully if any good is to be done with it. But what do we find in clause 4? We understand pretty well that a dead set has been made in certain quarters against any man who has the misfortune to own property. Here is an attempt to gain spurious popularity. Here is an attempt to have a slap at men because they happen to own a little property, and the provision is directed as far as one can see against one particular set of individuals and, perhaps, against one particular family.

Every person of the full age of twenty-one years, who on the seventh day of January in any year shall be the occupier, lessee, or owner (other than the actual "ratepayer") of any rateable property within any municipality (for the purposes of this act styled the "non-ratepayer") shall be entitled to one vote, in addition

to the vote or votes to which the "ratepayer" is entitled: Provided that no lessee shall be entitled to a vote as a "non-ratepayer" in respect of any property, the lease of which has a currency of less than five years, nor shall any owner be entitled to a vote in respect of any property for which he has granted or contracted to grant a lease having a currency of fifty years and upwards, nor shall any "non-ratepayer" be entitled to votes in respect of more than four properties.

This is clearly and unmistakably, and it is no use mincing matters, a slap at the Cooper family. I do not think the House will lend its countenance to this kind of thing. I do not know the Cooper family. I have had nothing to do with them except to sue some of them, and make some costs out of them, for which I do not suppose they thank me. I have no interest in protecting that family; but as a matter of fairness and of right I think we should not pass a law which must, in its incidence, be a direct slap at a particular family. Because they have let property for terms exceeding fifty years they are not to have the right to vote at all. Will the House tolerate such a provision as that? Is not the proper way to deal with a bill which is brought in in such a spirit to reject it at once?

Mr. CHARLES: I agree with every word that has been said by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. I go still further; I have had many transactions with the Cooper family, and I say that in business matters one could not have more honorable men to deal with. Not only that, but they have been acting most liberally to the municipal body of the district in which their estate is situated. I look upon this bill simply as a slap at the Cooper family. I, for one, shall be no party to such conduct as going behind a man's back when he has not an opportunity to defend himself and trying to injure his interests. This bill affects not only the Cooper family, but every other person who has any interest in the different municipalities. Will anyone contend that the lessee or occupier of a house has the same interest in the improvement of a municipality that the owner of the property has? It is not reasonable to expect it. The majority of householders are here to-day and gone to-morrow.

Mr. MACINTOSH: What good do some of the landlords do?

Mr. CHARLES : They try to improve their property and they pay rates. I am speaking now in regard to small houses in connection with which I have had some experience. If I left it to my tenants to pay the rates, they generally slipped off when the rates were becoming due, and I had to pay them. I now pay the rates, and I expect to see the streets improved. I have a greater interest in the small properties I own than any of my tenants. I shall oppose the second reading of the bill.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN : It seems to me that the principle embodied in the bill is practically the same as that adopted in the Sydney Corporation Act of 1887. I have always thought that, as a matter of fairness, if one man owns a property, and another man occupies it, each of those persons should have a vote in the election of aldermen for the municipality in which the property is situated. Suppose that I own a house, and the tenant does not pay the rates. As the law now stands, because I pay the rates I am entitled to the votes in respect of that property, and the man who lives in it will not have a vote. The present bill makes this difference. It says that the owner of the property is to be entitled to vote, and that the occupier is to be entitled to vote. If the rates are paid by the owner, then the owner has the cumulative votes. If the rates are paid by the tenant, then the tenant has the cumulative votes. It is a perfectly fair principle, and it is meant to be exactly the same as the system of voting in the city of Sydney. As regards the suggestion that the bill is aimed at some particular family, I really think, with all due respect to the hon. member, Mr. Pigott, that that is a mistake. Take the family to which he refers, the Cooper family. To begin with, they cannot vote if they are not in the colony, and if they are in the colony, they cannot have more than four votes each in any ward in which they have property. They only require to have one piece of property worth so much π year to entitle them to four votes. They would have that by residence, if by nothing else; therefore when it is said that the bill is intended to deprive them of their votes, that is a mistake. It would not affect them in the slightest degree.

Mr. TRICKETT, in reply : I do not wish to add anything further except this :

[Mr. Charles.

that I am in a position to say with regard to the municipalities around Paddington, of which there are four, that they are all in favour of the bill. Public meetings have been held to advocate this principle, and the residents are in favour of the person who pays the rates having the suffrage extended to him. I quite agree with what has fallen from the hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, with regard to the Cooper family. Of course the Municipalities Act cannot take away from them their four votes. The case was a little overstated by the hon. member, Mr. Pigott. If the tenant happens to pay the rates for fifty years, the owners can vote in respect of other property. The hon. member spoke of the Cooper family as being the largest landowners in Woollahra; but they can only have four votes for each ward. This bill is not intended to deprive them of those votes. It is only intended to give the person who pays the rates the right to exercise a vote in controlling the disposal of those rates to which he contributes.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read the second time.

Motion (by Mr. TRICKETT) proposed :

That the President do now leave the Chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the bill in detail.

Mr. W. H. SUTOR : I would ask the hon. member only to go into Committee *pro forma* to-night, as the Attorney-General is absent in consequence of illness. I should like the hon. and learned member to be here when the bill is considered.

Mr. TRICKETT : I have no wish to force the bill through Committee to-night, and will only take it into Committee *pro forma*.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill committed *pro forma*.

RESCISSION OF ORDER FOR PRINTING.

Mr. W. H. SUTOR rose to move (*with concurrence*) :

That the order for printing certain papers relating to the resumption of land for public school purposes, made by this House on the 29th July last, be now rescinded.

He said : This information has been published in the *Government Gazette*, and a large amount of unnecessary expenditure will be saved if the order for the printing of these documents be now rescinded.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

AUSTRALIAN GASLIGHT COMPANY
ELECTRIC LIGHTING BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. HUMPHERY rose to move :

That this bill be now read the second time.

He said : This is a bill to enable the Australian Gaslight Company to extend their operations, in order that they may supply their customers with electric light. They also desire to use their uncalled capital for that purpose, and to increase the capital stock of the company to £2,000,000. The necessity for increasing the capital stock of the company is shown by the operations of the various electric lighting companies in London. At the present time their aggregate capital amounts to between £4,000,000 and £5,000,000. I may explain that clause 6 provides that the consent of the local governing body must be obtained before the electric light can be introduced by the company into any borough, and that all work must be done under the superintendence of the local authority, which consent, of course, can be either withheld or granted on such terms as the local body may determine. There appears to be an impression that the gas company are by the bill trying to obtain a monopoly. They disclaim any such desire. They only ask to be placed on the same footing as any other company that may desire to undertake the supply of electricity. They have no desire to compete with any municipal body. They simply wish to be in a position to supply electric light to any municipal body or private individuals who desire to have it. The municipal council of Sydney have been represented before the select committee by the mayor, and I would call hon. members' attention to the evidence of Mr. Manning. Mr. Manning was asked :

Do you think every encouragement should be given to those who are desirous of introducing this service ?

His reply was :

Subject, of course, to the right of the municipality.

Then he was asked whether he thought that sufficient power was given to the local governing bodies to deal with the gas company—either to permit them to introduce electricity within the boundaries of the boroughs, or to refuse to do so, and he said he thought that it ought to be made very clear. The committee endea-

voured to make it very clear that no work can be done by the gas company without the consent of the local governing body. In order that the various boroughs that might possibly be affected by the passing of the bill, should be fully informed of the intention of the company, a circular was addressed to the various mayors. I will read the concluding paragraph. On behalf of the company, Mr. Johnson, the secretary, wrote :

We think it is our province to supply light, and if any of our consumers of gas consider the electric light the best illuminant, and desire to have it, we wish to be in a position to give it to them. There is nothing in this to prevent other companies, or the municipal councils if they think fit, from supplying electricity. The public would no doubt patronise those who sold cheapest and best ; and we would have to take our chance with others in the field.

That is precisely the footing upon which the gas company desire to be placed. The gas company consists of about 700 or 800 shareholders, and they have about 900 miles of mains and services. They have spent about £1,250,000 on plant, and the superiority of electric light over gas, and, in fact, over every other illuminant yet discovered appears to have been so clearly demonstrated that the gas company think it time to prepare themselves to supply the electric light to those who desire to have it. Hitherto the supposed existence of an element of danger in the installation of the electric light has, to some extent, prevented it from coming into general use. Another reason has probably been the high cost of the electric light compared with gas. According to the evidence given before the select committee, which I dare say has been read by many hon. members, it appears that in London the cost is regulated by the Board of Trade. The maximum charge is fixed at 8d. per Board of Trade unit, which is equivalent to about 100 feet of gas, and therefore the charge would amount to 6s. 6d. for electric light equivalent to about 1,000 feet of gas. The cost of gas in England is on the average 3s. per 1,000 feet, therefore the cost of the electric light there for private use is about double that of gas. In this colony it is considered desirable that the maximum charge shall be fixed at about 1s. per Board of Trade unit, which would be about double the present price of gas here. Of course, it does not follow that the maximum price

would be charged. In some places in England the cost of electric light is 7½d., and in other places 4½d. per Board of Trade unit. Many years ago the cost of gas here was 25s. per thousand feet, but now the price is 5s. 3d. It may be assumed that in course of time the cost of electric light may be proportionately reduced, and, instead of being 1s., or even 8d. per Board of Trade unit, it might not be half that. It is a light that private individuals may desire to have if they can afford to pay for it. It would save them a very considerable sum annually in preventing damage to the decorations of their houses, and its use reduces the temperature very much, while the simplicity of the electric light is so great that much economy can be exercised in its use. Whenever gas is required to be lit you have to apply a match to the jet, but all that is necessary with the electric light is to turn a tap to illuminate a room in an instant. That will tend to prevent waste, and probably economy exercised in that way may so reduce the actual cost of the light as to bring it almost on a par with the cost of gas. The bill also provides that the company shall make full compensation for any damage caused by their operations. It provides for the protection of telegraph and telephone wires; for testing the normal strength and the electro motive force; for the appointment of an electrical examiner with the approval of the Government or local government body. Then all the apparatus which is used must be approved by the Superintendent of Telegraphs. A limit is placed upon the electro motive force of 2,000 volts for arc lights, and of 400 volts for incandescent lights. Provision is also made in case of overhead wires being used. The bill provides principally for underground wires; but it was pointed out that underground wires might only be necessary in the main streets and thoroughfares, and that in by-streets, under proper precaution, overhead wires might be safely used. In the event of such wires being used, the bill provides that the work shall be done under the superintendence of the local governing body, or the Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs. The usual clause is inserted for the protection of the works and punishment of persons stealing electricity. It is provided that nothing in the bill shall affect the privileges conferred by law upon the Postmaster-General or the Superin-

[*Mr. Humphery.*

tendent of Telegraphs. A final clause provides that any public act which may be passed shall apply to the company, which shall not be entitled to any compensation by reason of the provisions of such act being made applicable and binding upon it. In the absence of a general act, it was necessary for the company to apply to Parliament for authority to supply the electric light; but, in the event of a public act being passed, the company will come under its operation without being entitled to compensation in any way. I may mention that an electric lighting act is in force in England, under which a company may obtain permission to light a borough, or any portion of a district with electricity. As there is no such act in this colony, it is desirable to insert this clause in the bill. The select committee on the bill gave very careful consideration to its provisions, and, with the assistance of my hon. friends, Mr. Hoskins, Mr. Jacob, and other hon. members, many clauses were amended, and several new clauses were introduced. As the gas company, who are the promoters of the bill, do not desire to obtain any privilege which they are not quite willing should be granted to other companies, I may fairly ask the House to consent to the second reading of the bill.

Question proposed.

Mr. LUCAS: It appears to me, in view of the answer given by the Vice-President of the Executive Council to the question of the hon. member, Mr. Trickett, the other night, that it is hardly desirable to proceed with the bill now, as a Government measure is being prepared to regulate and control the supply of electric light. No less than three bills are now before the Parliament, namely, the Sydney Electric Lighting Bill, the Borough of Newcastle Bill, and the Australian Gaslight Company's Bill. If each municipality—and we have 116 municipalities in the colony—has to apply to Parliament for a bill of this kind the statute-book will be largely increased. A bill has been introduced into the other Chamber in the interest of a company which wishes to light the city and the suburbs with electricity. There is a great difference between the two bills. That company proposes not to have any works overground, but to place the whole of their wires in concrete tubes underground.

MR. HOSKINS: That is provided for in this bill!

MR. LUCAS: But this bill asks for power to erect poles and wires overhead; that would be objectionable. The other measure was postponed, I think, for a fortnight. I read the report of the debate on the bill, and all the speakers appear to favour the passing of a general measure, of which any municipality may take advantage. It is hardly advisable that a measure dealing with the same question should be considered in each House at the same time, as the provisions in one measure may be different from the provisions in the other. It is desirable, I submit, that one measure should be passed before the other is dealt with. The bill before the House will require to be altered in Committee. It provides, for instance, for the appointment of a superintendent of works at £2 2s. per day, one-half to be paid by the local body and the other half by the company. I do not know why the local bodies should be compelled to pay £1 1s. a day for the services of a man employed by a company which is working for its own benefit. Another provision which I should like to see omitted is the power of cutting off the supply of electricity. The gas company possess a similar power under their act; but I think it is hardly desirable that they should possess the power under this bill as it is now exercised very unjustly by the company on many occasions. It would be much better, I think, for the company to compel their customers to pay for the gas in advance. A tenant is very often supplied with gas by the company; but just before the bill becomes due, he takes himself off, and the supply of gas is then cut off, unless the incoming tenant or the landlord pays the account of the outgoing tenant. I do not see why any company should be placed in a different position from an ordinary tradesman. Why should a company have any greater power than a private individual? A grocer or a butcher loses money occasionally through bad customers; but their remedy has to be sought in the courts of justice. In many cases the exercise of this provision has inflicted a very great hardship, simply owing to the neglect of the gas company to collect their accounts from the tenants at the proper time. I know a person who suffered to the extent of £70.

He let his house for a term of years, and it was expressly stated in the lease that the tenant should pay all taxes; but the officers of the Board of Water Supply and the gas company neglected to collect the rates for two or three years, and the consequence was that the landlord was compelled to pay something like £70, simply owing to their neglect. I think that, if they have power the same as any other company to recover their debts, that should be sufficient. They ought not to be allowed to compel an incoming tenant or a landlord to pay the debt of a previous tenant. We are told that the butcher and the baker would cut off supplies if their customers did not pay, and the gas company might adopt the same course. I admit that they should have the power to stop the supply of gas to persons who do not pay, and any person who takes gas without the permission of the company should be fined heavily. That would be quite sufficient without the pipes and fittings being injured, and the landlord having to incur considerable expense to put the things in order again. I am sure from what I hear that the bill will hardly pass in the other House. I believe that several municipalities intend to petition the Assembly not to pass the measure, and to ask the Government to pass a general bill of which the municipalities would be able to take advantage. I know that no less than seven municipalities intend to take that course. I asked them why they did not petition this House; and they said, "In all probability the measure will go through that House; but we depend upon our representatives in the other House to prevent it from passing." They hope to induce the Government or a private member to bring in a general bill. We all know the difficulties that mining and other companies used to have in introducing a separate bill for each company; but a general measure was passed and all they have to do now is to register under that act. That saves a great deal of trouble and expense. The gas company are very unpopular in the municipalities, because, although they have had a monopoly for fifty years, they have always charged a very high price for the supply of gas. Whilst in Melbourne the people have been paying 4s. 6d. and 4s. 9d. per 1,000 feet for the gas, the Sydney company

were charging 6s. 6d. and 7s., until the Mayor of Ashfield threatened to establish a gas-works in that suburb. They then reduced the price to 5s. 3d.; but it is still much higher than the rate at Melbourne, although the Melbourne company have to get their coal from New South Wales. One would imagine that, at any rate, the gas could be supplied as cheaply in New South Wales as it is in Victoria, if not more cheaply. The people felt very much aggrieved that the company should increase the price of gas when the strike took place, seeing that the company had had a monopoly for fifty years, and that they had a very large reserve fund. They increased the price very materially; but the people thought that as they had had a monopoly for so many years they might have waited a short time before doing so, although the price of coal was increased by a few shillings a ton. I believe that that action on the part of the company has done more to injure them than they imagine, and I know it has made them very unpopular throughout the city and suburbs.

Mr. HILL: The shares are very much in demand, notwithstanding!

Mr. LUCAS: No doubt, their shares have always been in demand. It has been the best paying company ever established in New South Wales.

Mr. MACINTOSH: They buy off all opposition!

Mr. LUCAS: I remember when steps were taken in Sydney to establish other gas works, by Mr. Ronald. He went up to a certain point, he got a large number of subscribers, and then the undertaking collapsed in a most extraordinary way. No one knew why it came to an end. I happened to be on a committee to which the bill was referred, when it was before the other House. The bill almost passed through the select committee, then one day the proceedings were stopped.

Mr. HILL: Where did the under-current come from?

Mr. LUCAS: We do not know. I have no doubt that this bill will be passed here; but I hope that hon. members will pay attention to the points to which I have referred, namely, with reference to exacting from the local authorities £1 1s. a day; and giving the company power to turn off the light. No doubt a more liberal bill than this is before the Legislative Assem-

bly, and if the two bills be passed there will be some competition; but I am convinced that the municipalities around Sydney will not rest satisfied until a general bill has been passed, under which they will be enabled to undertake the supply of the electric light.

Mr. W. H. SUTTON: Hon. members have referred to an answer which I gave the other night in regard to the intentions of the Government. The Government have a bill prepared which they will, if possible, ask Parliament to pass this session, but I cannot guarantee that they will be able to do so.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN: In view of the large powers which the bill contemplates giving to a private company, and the fact that the Government have under consideration a comprehensive measure to deal with the whole question of electric lighting, it would be unwise for this House to pass the bill at the present time. It might lead to complications, at any rate. We are asked to give the company certain powers; but if a comprehensive measure is introduced it will give other companies also power to use electric light as occasion may require. The bill not only gives power to this company to establish electric lighting in the city of Sydney, but also in any boroughs, municipalities, districts, or places which the company are now lighting with gas, or which they are empowered to light with gas.

Mr. JACOB: With their consent!

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN: Of course, with their consent. I understand that there must be the consent of the municipality; but the bill, as it stands, practically gives the company the right to establish electric lighting in any place where they have gas-works or supply gas. It seems to me that is a great deal too large a power to give to the company, and it ought to be very much more defined; but the great objection that I have to the bill is that it practically creates a monopoly, and gives this company a greater power than any other company could possibly have, and I think it is absolutely a matter of duty for us to hesitate before we grant a large wealthy company like this advantages over every other company which might in the future come into the field. This company has, of course, a very large quantity of mains laid down all over the city, and some years ago, when

[Mr. Lucas.

the question of electric lighting was first started, I know that people in England holding shares in the company, sent out directions to have their shares sold, because they said that "Electric lighting, if ever introduced, will have the effect of depreciating the value of the gas company's shares." Whether that is a correct idea or not I do not know, but I know that shares were sold in consequence of the apprehension of the damage which the company would sustain if electric lighting became general. What are we asked to do? Why should this company be given enormous advantages over every other company that might possibly wish to supply the electric light in the city? We are asked to give power to a company to whose interest it may be never to start electric lighting at all. That may be one of the principal reasons why the company are seeking to get the bill passed; and granting them power to supply electric lighting to different places may have the effect of preventing the introduction of the system. Supposing any other company come forward and apply for an act of Parliament, this company will have obtained a start, if this bill be passed, and once the bill is passed this company will be in a position to lie still and do nothing as regards electric lighting until they have some evidence that another company are thinking of carrying on electric lighting; then this company would have at least six months' start of that company. Is it right for us, in dealing with the interests of the public, to give a company like this the enormous powers which we are asked to give them by the bill, which will practically give them a monopoly of the whole business? There are many points connected with it that require to be considered. I hope the use of the overhead wires will never be sanctioned. That is fraught with very much danger. I have read accounts of accidents in many places, especially in New York, and we often hear that the use of these overhead wires are fraught with dangers to an extent which we do not know. I have no personal feeling against the bill. I am not a shareholder in the gas company, nor am I concerned in any company thinking of establishing electric lighting, but I think that this is a bill which in the public interests we ought not to pass. If

the majority of hon. members are in favour of the bill, I think that we ought to hesitate about passing it before the Government bill is introduced, so that we shall not put an impediment in the way of the Government introducing their comprehensive bill. I think that is a very strong reason why the bill should not now pass its second reading, and that in the interests of the public the power sought should not be given to the company.

Mr. HOSKINS: I was a member of the select committee appointed to inquire into the bill. We devoted a great deal of time and attention to it. Judging from the speech of the hon. gentleman who has just resumed his seat, I suppose the members of the committee are now on their trial, and are required to justify their conduct in assenting to the bill; therefore, I feel it incumbent on me to say something on the question. I went into that committee with a strong prepossession against granting what I considered would be regarded as a monopoly to the Australian Gaslight Company; but, after having put a number of questions—I think very searching questions—to the chairman of the gas company, to the secretary, and to other persons, and looking at the bill itself, I found there was no intention to ask for a monopoly; and no monopoly would be given if the bill were passed. I am surprised at the hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, telling the House that the bill will give the company a monopoly. Where is the evidence of monopoly? I will read some of the evidence given before the select committee; and I think hon. members will see that there is no evidence that it is intended that the company shall have a monopoly. The chairman of the company, Mr. George J. Cohen, is well known, I think, to hon. members, and he is an old colonist. This question was put to him:

Would your company, in the event of getting this bill passed through Parliament, oppose any other company seeking to obtain a charter for electric lighting?

His reply was:

Not at all. Our company would not interfere in any way, nor would we use any influence whatever to prevent any other company obtaining power similar to that which is given to us.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN: That is not my point at all!

Mr. HOSKINS: The hon. member's point was that the bill would give a

monopoly to the company. There is the answer to that—that they would not oppose any bill introduced by any other company for the purpose of obtaining parliamentary consent to their lighting the city with the electric light. This company asks for no monopoly whatever. Mr. Cohen, the chairman, gives very full evidence on that point. He was asked :

Are you seeking any powers under this bill which are in excess of those granted to other lighting companies?—No ; we only desire to have the power of supplying the light. We do not wish for any monopoly, but we wish to be in the same position as other companies will be if they start. Ours being a large company, and understanding the working of light, we think we would be able to supply electricity to the public, or to the municipalities, quite as well, if not better than any other company starting specially with that object. We have, as it were, no preliminary expenses to pay.

Do you think, in the interests of the citizens, it would be desirable to grant the Australian Gaslight Company power to supply electric lighting for public and private purposes?—Yes ; I think it would be a great advantage to the public for Parliament to give us the power—I do not say to give us the power alone ;—but if we had the power to supply it, we could supply it readily, and we should know far better what our customers would require, than many other companies newly starting. I think we should be in a position to give the public every advantage.

The hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, said the company is asking for enormous powers. I say the company is not, as the powers are strictly limited, as hon. members will see, by the new clauses which were introduced by the select committee. In respect to interfering with roads or streets under the Government or municipalities, the witness is asked :

Do you propose to obtain permission from the local authorities?—We must do that. Even in the case of gas we are bound to give a certain notice before we can go through the streets of the different boroughs. They never refuse permission, but we have, nevertheless, to ask permission. It is thought, generally, that the gas company has power to go through the streets without permission, but we cannot do that.

What monopoly does the bill give the company ? What extraordinary powers does it give ? If the city council refuses to allow the company to take up the streets and lay down their insulators underground, the work cannot be done. The bill gives the company no power in that respect. It provides that the sanction and authority of the municipal council must be first obtained, and that everything must be

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done by the company subject to the approval of the Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs, or any responsible officer employed under that gentleman. The chairman of the company is asked :

Do you think you would be able to supply the light at less cost to the public than an ordinary private company not possessing all the appliances which you at present possess?—I should think we would be in a better position to do it than any other company, although we do not seek to have a monopoly. We have a staff of officers who would be able to do this work at the same time as they do the gas work, whilst any other company would have to have a special staff.

I inquired into this matter very fully, and I confess that my mind was disabused of the impression that the company asks for a monopoly. The hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, says that if the bill is passed, and the company is authorised to light the city, or any portion of the city, with electricity, practically that will prevent another company from coming into the field. That is simply nonsense. The chairman of the company does not ask for any such powers. More than all, the company only proposes to supply the electric light to any person or corporation that applies for the illuminant ; it is not proposed to supply the light indiscriminately. If any other company obtains a similar bill, and is able to supply the light at a cheaper rate, the gas company cannot interfere with its business. All a company has to do is to obtain the sanction of the corporation to pull up the streets, and it must work entirely under the supervision of the Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs. It has been shown that electricity as an illuminant is much dearer than gas.

Mr. HILL : And more uncertain !

Mr. HOSKINS : And more uncertain, as we know from the electric lights going out in this Chamber. The hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, urged as another reason against passing the bill that we ought to wait to see the comprehensive bill proposed to be introduced by the Government. Supposing that we pass this bill, there is nothing to prevent Parliament from waiting to see the provisions of that comprehensive Government bill. I suppose the hon. member will not urge the view that the Government should undertake to supply electricity to the city and suburbs. The object of the comprehensive Government

bill is, I suppose, to regulate the supply of the electric light. The bill before the House does not provide for regulating the supply of the electric light, but its provisions are made subject to any general act which may be passed hereafter for the management and control of electricity. I would ask hon. members to turn to clause 34 :

Nothing in this act contained shall exempt the company from the provisions of any public act which may be passed by the Parliament of New South Wales, applying generally to the manufacture or generating of electricity, or to the sale or supply of the same, or to the method of installation or distribution thereof, nor entitle the company to compensation from the public revenue, by reason of the provisions of such general act being made applicable to and binding on the company.

If the comprehensive bill of the Government, which I think has a very comprehensive policy before Parliament, is passed, it will in no way affect the provisions of this bill. Therefore, the intention of the Government to introduce a comprehensive bill regulating the supply of electricity in no way militates against or justifies opposition to this bill. The hon. member, Mr. Lucas, has asked why the company delayed so long in introducing the bill. The gaslight company has not delayed in the matter. The hon. member, Mr. Humphery, introduced the bill in the early part of the session ; but, in deference to the opinions of some hon. members who take an interest in the question, its consideration was delayed for some time. The bill was then referred to a select committee, and while it was sitting a gentleman, who is, I believe, the managing director of the company supplying Redfern with electricity, came, without being summoned, and without the sanction of the House, and asked permission to give evidence in opposition to the bill, as he objected to the principle of a gas company having power to supply electricity. He was informed, in accordance with your ruling, sir, on a previous occasion, that before he could be heard before the committee, he must petition the House to that effect. To show with what consideration he was treated by the committee, I may state that we suspended our proceedings for eleven days, in order to enable any person to present a petition to the House asking leave to give evidence against the bill. That is one cause of the delay in dealing with the bill. Again, last week, when the second read-

ing was called on, an hon. member asked that its consideration should be postponed for another week or two, and, out of courtesy, the hon. member, Mr. Humphery, complied with his request. Therefore, the delay has arisen because we desired that all persons, corporations, and companies who might be opposed to the gas company having power to light the city with electricity should be afforded every opportunity to be heard on the subject before the select committee. But not a single petition was presented to the House by any one asking to be heard against the bill, and not a single witness appeared in a formal way. Under the circumstances, what were the select committee to do? Were they to cast the bill aside because there was some unreasoning clamour against it on account of the company having a large monopoly? I have shown that they have no monopoly. They say they are prepared to compete with any company, because they believe that they can supply the light cheaper than any other company can supply it. They say they will not oppose a bill brought in by any other company. The hon. member, Mr. Lucas, has endeavoured to create a prejudice against the bill and against the company by saying that they unjustly treated the public in regard to the supply of gas. This is not a gas bill—it is a bill to authorise an existing company, the interests of whose shareholders are identified with the welfare of the city, to supply the public with electric light, and I say that the company were the first in the field. They were the first who applied for an act. The hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, urged an objection to the erection of overhead wires to convey the electricity for illumination or other purposes. If the hon. member looks at the evidence he will find that I put some searching questions to the witnesses on this subject. I am aware that a good many accidents have occurred in New York in consequence of the wires being suspended over the roadways, but what is the evidence given before the committee? The Superintendent of Telegraphs, who has closely studied the subject, is in favour of having all electric wires properly insulated and placed in conduits underground, though he can see no objection to electric wires being suspended on poles in by-streets. But if it is decided

by the Electric Telegraph Department that it is not desirable to have the telegraph wires carried on poles through the by-streets the Superintendent of Telegraphs representing the Government will have power to prevent that. The bill gives the Superintendent of Telegraphs ample power to prevent electric wires from being suspended from poles in any of the streets. He can compel the company to take the wires underground and have them properly insulated. The corporation are amply protected because the company cannot take up any portion of the streets without having first received the sanction of the municipal council. The Chairman of Committees and myself took great interest in the matter, and we put very searching questions to the witnesses. I think that the people of this city, if the bill passes, will be indebted to the hon. member, Mr. Humphery, for the insertion of four clauses which will prevent the occurrence of accidents. I refer to clauses 17, 18, 19, and 20. The hon. member wrote to Melbourne and obtained the provisions of an electric lighting bill now before the Victorian legislature which contains stringent provisions as to the insulation and the covering and suspension of the wires. Hon. members will see that by those provisions the public are amply protected. The hon. member, Mr. Lucas, found fault with the charge imposed by the gas company for gas, and pointed out that in Melbourne the charge was much less. I can give a reason for that. A gas company can supply a large and compact population with gas at a much cheaper rate than it can supply a straggling population such as we have around the city and suburbs. Besides, that, the gas company in Melbourne can sell the products of gas manufacture—tar and other refuse—with greater facility than those articles can be sold in Sydney. I assume that every member has no prejudice against the gas company, and that they are prepared to treat this old established company, composed of colonists of New South Wales, with the same consideration that they would show to any other persons. If the bill of the other company, which is before the Legislative Assembly, comes here, although I have had a great deal to do with this bill, having sat on the committee for many days, I shall be prepared to consider that bill with the same fairness with which I have

[*Mr. Hoskins.*

considered the bill before us. I shall not be prepared to give the promoters of this bill any monopoly. I ask hon. members not to be led away by prejudice, not to give any credence to the statement that the promoters of the bill ask for a monopoly because we have the evidence of the chairman that they seek no monopoly, and further, as the hon. member, Mr. Jacob, points out, the bill does not give them a monopoly. I ask hon. members to treat the bill fairly, to read every clause carefully, to read every statement that was laid before the select committee, and if they do that they will not withhold their sanction from the second reading of a bill promoted by a company which has been in existence for fifty years, and is composed of reputable citizens. It is not a company trying to get a parliamentary concession, with a view of taking it to England to float a company, and bag 5,000 or 6,000 shares each. It is a company composed of citizens whose interests are identified with the progress and welfare of the city and suburbs of Sydney, and if the matter receives fair consideration, I think the House will not withhold its consent from the second reading of the bill.

Mr. MACINTOSH : To a large extent I am of the same opinion as the hon. gentleman who has just sat down. I do not think that the gas company would consider it wrong for another company to make application for the introduction of a bill; but, practically speaking, it would be no use for another company to do so, for if this bill pass it would be of little use for any other company to start in a similar business. This company would make things too warm for them. If wealth constitutes respectability I have no doubt that this company is the most respectable company in New South Wales. However, from what they have done on several occasions, I know they do not behave altogether equitably, as the hon. member, Mr. Lucas, has pointed out. I know this from personal experience. There is another matter which we must closely consider. All over the colony the gas companies are giving very great dissatisfaction at the present time. At North Sydney the municipal council are trying to buy out the local gas company, and to obtain powers to light the borough themselves. In nearly every other town in the colony the cor-

poration is endeavouring to get power to light the municipality, and I think the same thing should be done in Sydney. The corporation of Sydney is quite prepared to light the whole of the city, and they could do it better than any company.

Mr. HOSKINS: There is nothing in the bill to prevent them!

Mr. MACINTOSH: They want no bill to enable them to open the streets; they cannot light the city without the authority of an act of Parliament, but they have everything prepared, and could be ready to light the city before this bill could be passed through Parliament. They have the means and the desire to do it. We know that they have a bill prepared, and I think that the municipal council of Sydney should have the sole power of carrying out a necessary public work like this for the citizens. I know that the gas company have given great dissatisfaction for the last fifty years in opening the streets, which are never left in a proper state of repair. Very great complaint has been made against them. The bill is fair enough as far as it goes; but there is nothing in it to compel the company to go on with the work. If the bill were passed, I think it would be very difficult for another company to start, and it would not be likely that any other company would start, seeing that this company would have more conveniences and privileges than any other company could possibly have. The probability is, that they would not start at all; but, if they did, the price of the light would be so high that there would be hardly any benefit to the citizens. I have no doubt that what the hon. member, Mr. Lucas, has said is true, namely, that we are charged 5s. 3d. per 1,000 feet in Sydney, whereas the price for gas in Melbourne is 4s. 6d. per 1,000 feet. We know from personal knowledge that coal is far cheaper here than it is in Melbourne, and that the conveniences in Sydney are very much greater than they could possibly be in Melbourne. The population is as dense in Sydney and its suburbs as it can possibly be in Melbourne. Melbourne is almost surrounded by public parks, where there are no houses; but the whole of the land in Sydney is built upon, and will be very thickly built upon before very many years have elapsed. If cheapness depends upon density of population, we ought to

have the benefit. I do not think that the present company would have any objection to any other company obtaining an act authorising them to supply either gas or electricity.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN: This company would have so much of a start that it would be of no use!

Mr. MACINTOSH: I admit that it is of no use squaring up to a man who is much heavier than yourself. The desire of the city corporation—their unanimous desire, I understand—is to pass a bill which they have had prepared, and they could commence opening the streets tomorrow without any bill whatever, and have everything ready, so that, by the time their bill was passed through Parliament, they could light the streets the day the Governor gave his assent to it. Other municipalities are desirous of managing their own lighting, and we ought to pause before we pass this bill, because the city corporation may do likewise in Sydney. We have too many companies who are not doing a great deal of good, and we have passed too many bills authorising undertakings which companies have never carried out. This is a very rich company, but the probability is that they would not do much under the bill unless compelled to do so by some other company. There is not one word in the bill to make them go on with the work but in almost every other bill which we have passed there has been a provision limiting the time in which the work should be done. I think we should wait to see what the corporation of Sydney is going to do. The municipal council will have finished considering their bill next week, and then it will be before the public, and I am sure Parliament would rather give the power to them than to any private company seeing the manner in which the citizens have been treated by private companies for many years past. I wish the bill to stand over until we see what the corporation of Sydney is going to do.

Mr. DE SALIS: I do not undertake to go into details, but I wish to draw attention to the general principles which necessarily are connected with monopolies and competition. There is such a thing as an innocent or necessary monopoly. In supplying a large city with trams, water, and gas, with electricity, to allow unlimited

competition would be to encourage needlessly the breaking up of the streets. As a hindrance to the bad effect of necessary monopoly, it is the custom in England as regards railways to limit the charges and to insist upon occasional changes of condition by the Board of Trade. In the present case we scarcely have need to ask the interference of the Government, since the municipality of Sydney will have sufficient power to influence the future action of companies proposing to light the city with electricity, especially as we have heard that the city council intend next week to determine whether they will themselves undertake the lighting of Sydney with electricity. Again, another company has recently applied to the Assembly for a similar bill, and the discussion has been postponed for another month. In a spirit of fair play to a rival company, and indeed to learn what the all powerful city council intend to do, I propose that we also postpone this discussion for another month. Again, we cannot help remembering that electric-lighting is connected with the gas industry. I maintain that future light will be supplied by electricity—warmth, especially domestic warmth, will be supplied by gas in proportion as gas is cheapened, and stoves are improved. Then smoke will no longer pollute the city, from the overwhelming smoke of private houses. As for manufacturing, and even steamers in our harbour, we ought in imitation of London, Birmingham, and Manchester, to compel them to consume their smoke, and then we may have great hopes of having unpolluted skies in our otherwise delightful climate.

Mr. LAMB: It would seem as if some hon. members were animated by a feeling of revenge against the gas company on account of some misdeeds which the company appear to have committed. I am animated by no such feeling. I think the gas company are to be highly commended for the enterprise and courage they have shown in introducing this bill. The undertaking will necessitate the expenditure of a very large sum of money, and we know that the gas company are in a position to find the money, whereas in the case of any other company seeking for the same rights, we do not know that there is any money available at present. If there is to be any privilege, and none is asked for here, surely it ought to be bestowed upon a local company

[*Mr. De Salis.*

which has a large number of shareholders, our own citizens, who are willing to undertake the heavy expenditure necessary in supplying the city with the electric light. I do not think the hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, has dealt very fairly with the company in saying that they are seeking to obtain a monopoly. I have read the bill carefully; but I cannot find any clause—and I challenge the hon. member to point to one—which confers any monopoly. There is another bill of the same character before the Legislative Assembly, and I fail to see why a local company should be excluded from the business and a company consisting of a number of strangers allowed to take it in hand. Looking at the matter in that light, I think the bill ought to pass. I do not see where the question of monopoly comes in at all. If this bill passes, there is nothing to prevent the bill before the Assembly from passing also. If that bill comes here, I am sure, from the remarks of hon. members, that it will be dealt with on its merits. There is no intention on the part of the House to pass this bill and then refuse to pass the other bill. I will give the bill all the support I can.

Mr. PIGOTT: I am inclined to think that this is a good bill, and the fact of its having been so carefully considered by the select committee gives me greater faith in it. So far as I have been able to examine the bill I do not find that it is open to any serious objection except in one respect, namely, that if the company do not establish the electric light within a certain time it is not provided that the powers conferred by the bill shall cease. It has been contended that the bill practically gives a monopoly to the gas company. In so many words it does not; but if it should pass in its present shape, without any limit as to the time within which the electric light shall be established, it may operate so as to create a monopoly in favour of the gas company, because it would be difficult for any other company to start in opposition to the gas company. If some other company should take the preliminary steps to enter into competition, the gas company, with its immense capital and influence, could crush it, so that it would be practically impossible to start a rival company. I, therefore, rise principally for the purpose of asking the hon. member in charge of the bill whether

He will consent in Committee to the insertion of clauses which will provide against a monopoly of that nature, and in effect compel the gas company to establish the electric light within a certain reasonable time. I may be told perhaps that this is a difficult thing to do; but I cannot see any difficulty in framing clauses to meet the case. I think it might be provided that the gas company should establish the light within a certain time after being required to do so by the city council or the municipal council of any suburban borough, and after it had been arranged between such municipal council and the company as to the terms upon which the electric light shall be established, the length of time it should be maintained, and so on. It may be said that it would be difficult for the municipal council of Sydney and the gas company to agree as to terms; but I do not see any difficulty in framing a clause providing that if, after negotiations had been commenced between the municipal council and the company with reference to establishing the light, the municipal council and the company could not agree as to the terms or as to the length of time during which the light was to be maintained, the question should be left to arbitration, one arbitrator being appointed by the Government, another by the city council or the suburban municipal councils, and the third by the gas company, and that the gas company should be bound by the decision of the arbitrators or a majority of them. The arbitrators might also be empowered to go to the Supreme Court to get advice or controlling power. I see no difficulty whatever in the way of making such a provision, and therefore I ask the hon. member in charge of the bill if he will consent to clauses with that object being inserted in Committee? If he will consent to the introduction of such clauses as I have sketched out, it will facilitate the passing of the bill; but otherwise there may be considerable difficulty in passing it.

Mr. CHARLES: The hon. member wishes to bind the company under this bill as to time. There would be some reason in that, if a monopoly were given to the company, and no other company could come in; but under the bill the corporation would have power to step in themselves and supply the light if the company did not meet their views, or any other

company might step in. The more companies compete the greater facilities will be given for supplying light at the least cost. Therefore, we cannot give too many companies power to supply the electric light as far as the interests of the citizens are concerned. I heard the evidence that was given before the select committee, and it was clearly shown that this company have advantages and facilities for carrying out the work, not only at as cheap, but at a cheaper rate than it can be done by any other company.

Mr. MACINTOSH: Except the corporation!

Mr. CHARLES: They can carry it out cheaper than the corporation could. They have throughout the city and suburbs several stations where they have ground on which they could establish a plant. In addition to that they have the gas mains to supply fuel to the engines for creating the electric light. No other company could compete with them as far as that goes. The cost to other companies erecting engines at different stations would be very much greater than the cost to this company. Finding that the company have these facilities, is there any just reason for saying that a preference should be given to some foreign company as against this company, of which our own citizens are members? They have an advantage as regards their capital. At present they have at command £600,000 with which they could start this enterprise, and they have unlimited credit. They can borrow money at as cheap a rate as any other company can possibly borrow it. They have, therefore, a better opportunity of starting the concern than any strange company could have. The company having all these facilities, if interest is to be paid on the money expended to supply the electric light, I think it would be to the advantage of the colony that the interest should go into the pockets of colonists instead of into the pockets of English capitalists. I think no one will be bold enough to say that it will be better for the country to borrow the money from foreign capitalists than to have it provided by the citizens themselves. If there is interest to be paid they have a better right to it than the foreigner. It has been said that the corporation would carry out the work. I am not one of those who have admired very much the past

actions of municipal corporations. They have not managed their affairs so well as to give them any recommendation over private companies. No doubt a number of small municipalities are very desirous of having the power to undertake the supply of electric light, but at the same time they are over head and ears in debt. Will it be any advantage to them to establish expensive works for supplying the electric light at double the present cost of gas? It will not be advisable for them to rush into such undertakings too rapidly. It appears they are afraid that if we pass the bill the company will not carry out the work, and that they will prevent others from doing so. They cannot do it. It is open to any company in the world to come and light the city if the citizens are fools enough to pay double for their light. I shall vote for the second reading of the bill.

Dr. GARRAN: On the face of it this appears to be a remarkably simple and innocent bill. A company which, for the last half century, has single-handed almost provided the citizens of Sydney with artificial light, appears to be asking simply for leave to keep pace with the times, and to be able to supply a new kind of light, as well as the old fashioned light—electric light as well as gaslight. But there is no doubt that this bill, which seems so simple, really does raise one of the great and difficult questions of this present age; it really raises, to some extent, the question of state socialism in its municipal form, because this bill comes before us just at a time when the municipalities of the colony are asking themselves whether the lighting of towns ought not to be a municipal matter. I have a very strong sympathy with the leaving of the municipal governments to deal with those matters that are purely municipal, such as sewerage and water supply and lighting; but, at the same time, I should like to point out to the House that there is a great difference between giving municipalities power to supply light in public streets and giving them power to go into business as competitors with persons who properly supply light to private dwellings. There is all the difference in the world between these two things. In the first case, a municipality is strictly within its own rights in supplying all requirements for public purposes. In the other, it enters at once into the

[*Mr. Charles.*

domain of commercial enterprise, and goes into competition with private capital for a private undertaking. The bill before us is mainly a bill for the supply of private light. It is quite true that the gas company at present does supply the corporation with its lamps, for the reason that the corporation never yet undertook to supply its own wants, and it has been thankful to have the assistance of the gas company in doing it; but there is nothing at present, nor has there been for the last fifty years, to prevent the corporation supplying itself if it had the enterprise to do so.

Mr. MACINTOSH: They could not start because of the company!

Dr. GARRAN: The company have never stood in the way. They could not have stood in the way, and for fifty years the corporation slept upon their rights and privileges, and they are now waking up and complaining of the company to which they have been indebted for so long. The bulk of the business which the company would do under this bill would be private business, and the question we have to ask ourselves is, "Is there any sufficient reason to prevent an enterprising company that has hitherto supplied the wants of Sydney pretty fairly, and of course made a profit—a handsome profit—from changing its mode of lighting, if it finds that the science of the day is making the electric light a more saleable commodity, and therefore a more suitable article for domestic supply?"

Mr. JACOB: And for motive power!

Dr. GARRAN: That is rather incidental to the general purpose of the bill, which is to supply light, but at the same time it provides for the supply of motive power. That motive power will, in the main, be supplied to private persons, therefore the bill is mainly a bill not for dealing with municipal works, but a bill strictly for supplying private persons with what private persons want. Now the great objection I see to leaving the supply of this kind of thing in the hands of private companies is that we should have so many companies wanting to break up the streets or to carry their wires over the streets. If it were not for these two difficulties, which are practically one, because we could compel them to carry their wires underground, I should say that the more competition we have the better it will be for the citizens,

* because they would be likely to get the light better and cheaper, and we should then avoid those complaints of the municipalities about which so much has been said this evening. If we had, as we ought to have, a sub-way under the pathways there would not be that difficulty about breaking up the streets; but, governed as we are, it seems that we shall not have such a sub-way in our time. If we had it we should not have to break up the streets to lay wires or drain pipes, but once the street was made it might remain as it is. At present we hardly ever put down a pavement which is not broken up before it has had time to consolidate. I hardly know a street that has remained undisturbed for a decent term of years after it had been made. The question of whether or not the municipality should be empowered to carry out municipal works hardly seems a question that comes within the present discussion. It may come under consideration when the general bill which the Government are going to introduce is before us; but this bill does not interfere with anything that may be done by municipal bodies. The hon. member, Mr. Lucas, has said that the municipalities are anxious to have a general bill introduced. Let them bring in their bill. This bill in no way anticipates that. If their bill is passed every municipality will be able to establish works for public lighting, and there will be nothing to prevent them. The bill which the corporation of Sydney are considering can come into operation, although this bill is passed, because even this bill gives to the corporation power to stop the company from breaking up the streets. They cannot break up a pathway or street without the permission of the corporation, and the corporation can say, "We will not let you do it; we are going to have a bill of our own." It leaves the power in the hands of the corporation, but it is a serious question for the House and the country to consider whether the corporation ought to go into private competitive business. I see no objection to allowing them, if they like, to go into the business of lighting the city, and this, I think, is in harmony with the trend of modern opinion. It would be wise for the ratepayers to be cautious as to what they are about, for electric lighting is still almost in its infancy. It has de-

veloped very rapidly during the last ten or fifteen years; but there is no reason why it should not be improved very much more. It would be awkward for the ratepayers, after having invested their money in an electric lighting system, to find that that system was to be superseded by some important invention during the next few years. Some municipalities have gone in for establishing gas-works, and they are doing this just at the time when it appears likely that gas is going out of fashion, and the electric light is coming in. Those corporations that have invested in gas-works will either have to lose half the capital they have invested, and turn their works into electric light works, or they must hang on to gas long after gas has ceased to be the best light. Well, if they go into electric lighting, they may find in a few years that some new invention has cheapened the cost of the necessary plant by one-half, and the ratepayers would find that a private company, if allowed to act, would be able to undersell the corporation and make a handsome profit. It is a matter for the ratepayers of the different municipalities to consider whether it is a wise thing under those circumstances to go into a speculative business; but, if they are prepared to do it, there is no reason why they should not experiment if they like. So far as the bill is concerned, it does not block the road against anybody; it does not block the road against the municipalities, nor against any other persons who want to go into electric lighting on their own account. It is said that this company will have an enormous advantage. It is true that they are the parties in possession. So they are in being the persons who now supply light, but in no other sense are they in possession. The whole plant for supplying electric light is totally different from that required in connection with gas-lighting. The facilities for supplying the electric light are absolutely independent of anything connected with the operations of a gas company, and if this company start on this business, they would have to do exactly what any other company would have to do, and be put to the same expense. The only advantage is that they are in business, and have customers' names in their ledgers. That is really the only advantage they possess. They cannot buy or lay wire more cheaply; they

cannot buy dynamos more cheaply; they cannot do a single thing that has to be done to provide electric light more cheaply than any other company promoting an electric lighting bill. All their advantage is having been in business fifty years. The old adage is that "possession is nine points of the law," but if what has been said to-night is true, namely, that this company is very unpopular with its customers, I cannot see that that advantage is very great, for if their customers are disgusted with them, and are anxious to change masters, it is rather against the company than for them; therefore I do not see that their being in possession of customers is of great advantage. I thought that some of the objections that have been urged had some force in them, but I think the hon. member, Mr. Hoskins, has disposed of the most of them, and has clearly shown that as the bill stands, the company will be completely under control. Whatever Government bill may be introduced—and we never know whether a Government bill will be introduced or not, the fact of its being mentioned in a viceregal speech being no guarantee that it will ever show itself in this House—it will override this bill directly. This bill is made subject to any rules or regulations which the Parliament may choose to impose. This is the safety: the wires and everything connected with them is to be placed under the control of the Superintendent of Telegraphs. The company cannot do anything but what the superintendent approves of. With any new orders or regulations that he may choose to impose, he is absolutely master over everything relating to the public safety, and the corporation is absolute master of the company so far as the breaking up of the roads is concerned. The company are in irons, so to speak, from the first clause to the last; they are absolutely under control. You cannot put the company more under control. The only omission is about fixing the price. There may be some difficulty about that. If there is any possible risk of a monopoly I should like to see the price fixed, and there should be some governmental control to prevent a company from doing those wrongs which a company with a monopoly very often does. Some control over the price ought to be provided. As to the proposal that we should put something in

[*Dr. Gairan.*]

the bill to compel the company to begin business, I do not attach much weight to that, for the company may comply with the letter of the law by simply beginning with a few lights in half a dozen streets; and might do nothing further; therefore, such a provision as that would not be of much potency. If the city council are going to introduce a bill to enable them to light all the city with electricity on their own account, it is useless to have a clause in the bill enabling the company to do what the municipal council are not going to let them do. The best check on monopoly is to leave the company absolutely open to competition. Let the municipal council go in if it likes for lighting the public streets, and if there is any probability of the gas company having any difficulty about breaking up the streets, they must settle that matter with the council.

Mr. LACKEY: I intend to vote for the second reading of the bill; but there appear to be many objections raised to it, and some of them seem to be of a reasonable character. With regard to the merits of the bill, I have every faith in the fairness and justice of it, and it having passed through the hands of the select committee I am sure that it will be found to contain nothing that is inimical to the interests of the public. But I wish to say that the bill contemplates very great changes in the lighting of Sydney at all events, and the company have, I submit, every reason on their side to ask for that power, but I do think that as the matter is new to the community—as it has not come before the public in any very prominent way before this evening, and as there are indications of an intention on the part of the Government to introduce general legislation, or, as they call it, comprehensive legislation on this question, and as we also have a petition from another company, asking to be heard before anything is decided in this matter—I think it will be gracious on the part of hon. members to defer the second reading of the bill for a week or so in order to give any one desirous of it an opportunity of urging what opposition they desire to urge. I think this is the proper spirit in which to deal with such an important matter as this, and if we take this course it will absolve us from a charge of having dealt with an important measure hurriedly, or in a way that shut out inter-

ests that made any opposition to it. With reference to the merits of the measure generally, I do think it is desirable now to go into them. The matter has been very well dealt with by hon. members. We are told that the Australian Gaslight Company have a better claim than, perhaps, any other body who will apply to Parliament for establishing the electric lighting system in Sydney. I would point out to hon. members that the electric lighting system has been spoken of for a long time, but I have not yet heard that it is a great success anywhere. Up to the present time it has not attained that position which would warrant us in regarding it as a success even in London, and if any city in the world will take up a new invention for the purpose of affording a good light on economical terms to the public, London, I think, would be that place. London has not done that up to the present time. The reason is well known to every one who has read anything about the introduction of the electric light. The reason is that the multiplication of engine power to produce electricity and distribute it through a large city is so great that it is found to be neither remunerative nor reliable. Both in England and America the electric system has been found very much more practicable and successful in small towns than in large cities. In this country there are some suburban and country municipalities which have adopted the electric system, in some cases with success, but in other cases with absolute failure. As far as the large cities of the world are concerned the electric lighting system has not been by any means an unqualified success. If it had been an unqualified success it would have been in general use in London twenty years ago, for, in common with many hon. members who have referred to the matter, I recollect the time when some of our colonists, who had gone to England, and who were large shareholders in the Australian Gaslight Company, took fright at the introduction of electricity in London, and as they thought it was a system of lighting that was going to be introduced in this city, they wrote to their agents and partners in New South Wales to sell out their shares in the Australian Gaslight Company. They did so. Notwithstanding that that happened a great many years ago, the electric

system has never obtained up to the present time. Now, an attempt is being made to revive it, and I think that the application before the House is a very fair and reasonable one, and having every faith in the action of the hon. gentlemen who formed the select committee, and who investigated matters connected with the bill, and after reading the evidence given by witnesses in its favour and against it, I think the privilege asked for ought to be given to this company. However, I am inclined to defer further consideration of the matter for a week or fortnight, so that the House cannot be accused of hurrying the bill, but I shall give support to the bill as far as I can possibly do so.

Mr. HUMPHERY, in reply: I do not propose to go into Committee except *pro forma*, if the House will agree to the second reading of the bill. I believe that that will meet with the approval of the hon. member, Mr. Lackey. All the objections to the bill have been so fully answered by the hon. and learned member, Dr. Garran, that it would only beging over ground which has already been occupied if I attempted to answer the objections which have been relied upon as reasons for a postponement of the consideration of the measure until the Government shall introduce a general measure to deal with electric lighting. As the hon. and learned member, Dr. Garran, remarked, the Government does not propose to introduce an electric lighting bill for the purpose of supplying electricity, and if the city council or any local governing body desire to make a bargain with this company, should power to introduce the electric light be granted, they will have power to make that bargain at such a price and on such conditions as to them may seem advantageous. It is true that there is no maximum charge for electricity fixed by the bill, but it has been pointed out that a maximum charge of 1s. per Board of Trade unit would be considered reasonable, and I understand that there would be no objection to a provision being introduced providing that a shilling shall be the maximum charge. But with regard to the objection mentioned by the hon. member, Mr. Pigott, that there is no time fixed in which the company must introduce the electric light in any suburb, I may state at once that I shall be quite prepared to assent to any reasonable amendment which

that hon. member may propose to give effect to his views, but public lighting is one matter and private lighting quite a separate matter.

Mr. FIGOTT: The bill does not apply only to private lighting. No municipal council could get a bill passed for private lighting!

Mr. HUMPHERY: If the hon. member proposes a clause, I can assure him that there will be no objection to it, provided that it be equitable; but, as the matter of price and the conditions upon which the light is to be supplied must be an element in any contract between a council and the company, it would be somewhat difficult to fix a period within which the parties must agree. Then, if it is to be determined by arbitration, the company on the one hand, or the council on the other, should have power to withdraw in the event of the award of the arbitrators not being satisfactory. If the arbitrators were to fix a price which would involve the company in a very heavy loss, the company should certainly be at liberty to say, "We are unable to supply at the price mentioned, and we will leave it to any other company who think fit to come in and supply it at the price." On the other hand, if the arbitrators should fix a price that the company deemed reasonable, the council should be at liberty to say, "We decline to pay that price." It would be a very unsafe thing if any arbitrators were in a position to fix a price which would be binding on both parties, without the option of withdrawal; and then, in the event of the council not being able to agree with this company, there would certainly not be any difficulty in inducing other companies possessing similar privileges to compete. It appears to me that all electric lighting will, in the future, be a matter of public competition, and that the various councils, in the interests of the public, will make the best bargains that they can. They will have absolute power, as pointed out by the hon. and learned member, Dr. Garrahan. No street could be broken up, no work could be done in any borough, without a previous agreement with the local governing body, and having a controlling power of that kind will enable the councils to make excellent terms in the interests of those whom they represent. Reference has been made to the public

[*Mr. Humphery.*

lighting of the city of Sydney. The evidence given before the select committee showed clearly that for years past the gas company have not made a shilling profit out of the public lighting. The charge to the council has barely covered the cost of supplying the light. The price has been reduced to £4 15s. per lamp, and that barely covers the cost of producing the light. Reference has also been made to the difference between the cost of gas here and the cost of gas in Melbourne. The difference is accounted for, to some extent, by the ready sale in the Melbourne market of what are called by-products, such as tar. Here, the sale of tar is extremely limited.

Mr. LUCAS: You cannot get a supply of tar here!

Mr. HUMPHERY: The evidence is very clear on that point.

Mr. LUCAS: I have sent for tar, and could not get it for two days!

Mr. HUMPHERY: The evidence is very clear that there is no sale in this city for tar, which has a ready market in Melbourne, and also in London. With regard to the cost of coal, the difference is very slight—1s. or 1s. 6d. per ton—between the cost in Sydney and the cost in Melbourne, the freight being so low. As a matter of fact, coal forms but a very small proportion of the cost of producing gas. The chief expense is labour.

Mr. MACINTOSH: Is labour cheaper in Melbourne?

Mr. HOSKINS: Yes, the chairman of the company said so!

Mr. HUMPHERY: I am not prepared to say that. I am speaking as to the proportion which the cost of coal bears to the cost of labour in producing the light. It is very small, and that is the reason why the difference in the cost of coal hardly affects the actual cost of gas. It may be said that this is the first instance of a gas company seeking to combine electric lighting with gas lighting. The hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, says "Hear, hear!" As a matter of fact, in America 100 gas companies, or more, are now combining electric lighting with gas lighting. On that point, if hon. members will permit me, I shall read an extract from the *Electrical Review* of 11th July, 1890:

Attention may be directed to America where there are quite 100 gas companies supplying

electricity in connection with the Thomson-Houston system alone. How many are supplying electricity by other systems is not known exactly, but they must come to a large number.

Mr. JACOB : The Grafton Company has power to supply gas and electricity !

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN : Are they supplying electricity ?

Mr. HUMPHERY : I do not know that they are.

Mr. JACOB : They have the power to do so !

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN : The same as this company wants !

Mr. HUMPHERY : With reference to the price of labour, I would quote the following evidence :—

Mr. Hoskins : If they charge 2s. 9d. per 1,000 feet in London, and pay 16s., 17s., and 18s. per ton for coal, do you think you ought to charge a little less than 5s. 3d. per 1,000 feet ?—The cost of labour here is more than double. We pay more for labour than they do in Victoria, and more than double what is paid in England, and all their products are sold at large prices. In England everything goes into use. Here we have the greatest difficulty in getting rid of our ashes and tar.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN : Who said that ?

Mr. HOSKINS : The chairman of the company !

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN : Ah !

Mr. HUMPHERY : It is the evidence of a gentleman who is well known in the community, and whose word, I am satisfied, will be accepted by any hon. member in any transaction. I believe I have answered all the objections which have been raised to the bill. I move the second reading with the intention of going into Committee *pro forma*.

Question put. The House divided :

Ayes, 16 ; noes, 6 ; majority, 10.

AYES.

Charles, S.	Lackey, J.
Day, G.	Pigott, W. H.
Garran, Dr. A.	Stewart, J.
Halliday, W.	Suttor, W. H.
Hill, R.	Vickery, E.
Hoskins, J.	
Jacob, A. H.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Joseph, S. A.	Humphery, F. T.
King, P. G.	Lamb, W.

NOES.

Creed, J. M.	
Lucas, J.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Macintosh, J.	De Salis, L. F.
White, R. H. d.	Stephen, S. A.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read the second time.

In Committee :

Motion (by Mr. HUMPHERY) proposed :

That the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again this day week.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN : It is absurd to rush the measure through the House in this way. It is one which requires a great deal of consideration. I move :

That the word "week" be omitted with a view to insert in its place the word "month."

Mr. HUMPHERY : I trust the Committee will not consent to put off the consideration of the bill for a month. I am prepared, by way of compromise, to agree to a postponement for a fortnight.

Mr. LACKEY : I hope my hon. friend, Mr. S. A. Stephen, will accept the compromise offered. It is a fair one, and it will absolve the House of any desire to hurry the bill through, and will give ample time to any one who may wish to oppose the bill.

Mr. MACINTOSH : As there is barely a quorum of members present, I think that a postponement for a month is short enough. Within that time we can see what the city council propose to do, and if they do not bring forward an acceptable measure we can proceed with this.

Mr. DAY : I hope the hon. member, Mr. S. A. Stephen, will agree to the compromise offered by the hon. member in charge of the bill, because if the question goes to a division the postponement will probably be for only a week. If at the end of a fortnight we do not wish to proceed with the bill it can be postponed again.

Question—That the word proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put. The Committee divided :

Ayes, 10 ; noes, 8 ; majority, 2.

AYES.

Charles, S.	Suttor, W. H.
Hill, R.	Vickery, E.
Hoskins, J.	
King, P. G.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Lamb, W.	Humphery, F. T.
Stewart, J.	Pigott, W. H.

NOES.

Day, G.	Macintosh, J.
De Salis, L. F.	
Joseph, S. A.	<i>Tellers,</i>
Lackey, J.	Creed, J. M.
Lucas, J.	Stephen, S. A.

Question so resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN: Is it possible to propose the substitution of any other word or words for "week"?

The CHAIRMAN: No; the Committee have decided that the word "week" shall stand.

Mr. S. A. STEPHEN: Or to insert any word before "week"?

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Motion agreed to; progress reported.

House adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 24 September, 1891.

Tram-line: St. Peters to Cook's River—Smuggled Bacon—Wentworth Falls Reserve—Special Area, Dowling—Charitable Institutions—Railway to Broken Hill *via* Wilcannia—Eight-hour Day: Special Trains—Newtown Railway Bridge—Railway Employees—Report of the State Children's Relief Department for 1891—Railway from Piper's Flat to Sunny Corner—Mining Lease on Portion 114—Grafton Wharf Gate—Leichhardt Public School Grounds—Fisheries Commission—Green's Creek Bridge—Mort's Dock and Engineering Company Enabling Bill—Callan Park Asylum—*Hansard*—Illawarra Election—Public Service Commission—Financial Statement—Purchase of Brown Brothers Lease—Personal Explanation—Parramatta Sewer—Representation of the People Bill (No. 2)—Employers Liability Act Amendment Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

TRAM-LINE: ST. PETERS TO COOK'S RIVER.

Mr. T. WALKER asked the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS,—Is it the intention of the Government to continue the construction of the tram-line from the St. Peters railway bridge to Cook's River; if so, when?

Mr. YOUNG answered,—I cannot give the hon. member any definite reply at present.

SMUGGLED BACON.

Mr. H. MCKINNON asked the COLONIAL TREASURER,—(1.) Is it a fact that large imports of New Zealand bacon have been smuggled into Sydney and Newcastle under the name of "pickled pork," thus evading the duty on bacon? (2.) Is it also a fact that a large quantity is now detained on the Union Company's wharf by the customs officer? (3.) If so, will he take steps to have the same confiscated?

Mr. BRUCE SMITH answered,—(1.) Such importations are carefully watched, and it is believed the bacon duty has not been evaded. (2.) No. (3.) Answered by No. 2.

WENTWORTH FALLS RESERVE.

Mr. H. MCKINNON asked the SECRETARY FOR LANDS,—(1.) When were the new trustees appointed for the Wentworth Falls Reserve, and why? (2.) Is it a fact that the old trustees and the new are at variance, and that in consequence thereof the money granted for improving the reserve is not being laid out?

Mr. BRUNKER answered,—(1.) Additional trustees were appointed on the 16th April, 1890, as it was represented that most of the original trustees were non-resident. (2.) The official papers do not disclose any dispute among the trustees, who will be asked whether the money granted for improving the reserve has been laid out.

SPECIAL AREA, DOWLING.

Mr. MORTON asked the SECRETARY FOR LANDS,—Has the district surveyor, Cooma, reported on the application of the Dowling Progress Association to reduce the price of special area No. 8,789, parish of Conjola, county St. Vincent, from 30s. to 20s. per acre?

Mr. BRUNKER answered,—No; he has been requested to expedite his report, on receipt of which the hon. member shall be communicated with.

CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN asked the COLONIAL SECRETARY,—(1.) (a) Is it a fact that in one of the charitable institutions there is an inmate with the initials F.B., 74 years of age, whose brother is a police magistrate, and with one son a magistrate, and another a bank manager, whose relatives decline to subscribe more than 1s. per week for his maintenance; (b) what is the name of this inmate? (2.) (a) Is it a fact that there is a widow, 63 years of age, with the initials M.B., in one of the charitable institutions, whose son is a well-known sporting character, but who declines to contribute to the support of his mother; (b) what is the name of this inmate? (3.) (a) Is it a fact that there is a female inmate of one of the charitable institutions,