

SPEECH BY MR. S.T. STEWART, ACTING CHIEF SECRETARY,
MADE AT THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETING ON JULY
25, 1957, IN SUPPORT OF AMENDMENT TO THE
ORIGINAL AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE EIGHT OF THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS BILL MADE BY ABDUL HAMID BIN
HAJI JUMAT, MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LANDS
AND HOUSING

In support of my friend and colleague, the Minister for Local Government, Lands and Housing, I have to say that the Statistics and Printing Departments are well on with preparing the electoral rolls for the City Council elections, based on the City Council boundaries specified in the Local Government Bill and on the electoral divisions drawn up by the official Committee. Any changes in the boundaries must cause delay in the final certification of the electoral registers.

And if the change is a major change, the effect will be most serious. For example, if say Katong is restored to the City, it will materially affect the total number of voters in the City Council area, as it contains a large number of voters (well over 25,000).

The electoral divisions have been based on the assumption that there will be a total of about 505,000 on the rolls altogether, and the 32 divisions have been designed to divide this number as equally as possible. If the total number therefore is increased, it may probably be that all 32 divisions will have to be revised.

If divisions adjoining the boundary of the City Council are altered, there will almost certainly be repercussions throughout. Even a minor revision of two electoral divisions, e.g., Cairnhill and its western neighbour, must cause some delay, the length of the depending upon the number of alterations to be made.

If the first proviso given in the amendment by the Member for Tanglin is made applicable to the City and District Council electoral divisions, as suggested in the second and third provisos of his amendment, it would initially mean a delay of at least 5 to 6 weeks.

Next, if any major change takes place, it would involve a further delay of 2 to 4 months for the following reasons:-

- (1) re-arranging of the cards into new divisions requires about 10 weeks.
- (2) reproducing, collating and binding the registers about 10 weeks.
- (3) Assuming that a large part of these two operations could overlap, at least 15 to 17 weeks would be required.

If Katong is put back into the City and the rural areas included in the western parts of the City taken out, the recasting of the boundaries of all District Council areas would have to be undertaken.

My honourable colleague said in this Assembly some time in April or May 1957 that it was intended to hold District Council

elections in March 1958 if City Council elections are held in December 1957.

One of the main reasons therefor is that there cannot be simultaneous preparation of every phase in the preparation of new City and District Council registers, because the sorting machines, etc., can only be concentrated on one set of registers at a time.

Therefore, if City Council elections have to be postponed to April/May 1958, then District Council elections would have to be postponed to June/July 1958. The people of Singapore want these elections as early as possible.

We cannot afford any delay if elections are to be held in December 1957, since the electoral roll should be published by the latter half of August in order to hold elections in December. The tentative time-table to which the government is working, based on the periods allowed for in the Bill, is as follows:-

- (1) Listing, printing, collating, binding and publication of draft registers to be completed by 20.8.58.
- (2) Claims and objections from 21.8.57 to 18.9.57.
- (3) Adjudication of claims and objections to be completed by 19.10.57.
- (4) Listing, printing, collating and insertion of amendments for claims and objections in draft registers and certification of final registers by 31.10.57.

Thus, a writ for elections could be issued any time from 1.11.57 onwards. If it is found possible to publish the registers before 20.8.57, so much the better.

Therefore, Sir, for the reasons which I have given, I oppose the second and third provisos of the Member for Tanglin's amendment and support the amendment moved by my honourable colleague.

JULY 25, 1957.

(Time issued - 1530 hours.)