

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 10th October, 1893.

Water Supply (Crown Lands) Bill: first reading—Greenbushes Townsite Abolition Bill: first reading—Petition of Right of Mr. William Wilkinson—Immigration Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Railways Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Elementary Education Act Amendment Bill: second reading—Homesteads Bill: Legislative Council's amendments—Extension of Leave of Absence to Member for Ashburton—Extension of Time for Bonus for Deep-sinking on Goldfields—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 2:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

WATER SUPPLY (CROWN LANDS) BILL.

Introduced by MR. MARMION, and read a first time.

GREENBUSHES TOWNSITE ABOLITION BILL.

Introduced by MR. MARMION, and read a first time.

PETITION OF RIGHT OF MR. W. WILKINSON.

MR. MONGER, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands whether it was his intention, on behalf of the Government, to accede to the request contained in the petition of right of Mr. William Wilkinson, of York, and to permit the charges, as alleged therein, to be settled in the Supreme Court of this colony.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) replied that the petition was under the consideration of the Crown Law Officers, who had not yet advised the Government on the subject. He might add, in addition to his official answer, that the petition was so lengthy and so verbose that it had been a difficult matter to the Crown Law Officers to arrive at the exact charges alleged against them; hence it had taken considerable time to consider the subject.

IMMIGRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time.

Ordered—That a Message be transmitted to the Legislative Council, informing them that the Legislative Assembly had agreed to the Bill, without amendment.

RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):

Sir, in rising to move the second reading of this Bill, I may explain, what no doubt is already known to members, the general scope of the Bill. In the first place, it is proposed to do away with the Central Board of Education. It has been generally felt, I think, by members of this House and by others in the community, that the time has arrived when this Board should be superseded by a Minister of the Crown, as controlling the educational system of the colony. But I may say, for myself, that I have never felt very strongly upon this matter; and I think that the thanks of the colony are due to the members of the Central Board of Education for the long, and I may say valuable, services they have rendered to the country during so many years. They have carried on their very important duties without any great flourish of trumpets. They have performed their work quietly and unobtrusively, and without any remuneration whatever; and, so far as I have been able to learn from those who have sat upon the Board, they have been very regular in their attendance. [MR. A. FORREST: Irregular.] The hon. member must be thinking of some other Board. I think, therefore, it would not be right of me, in moving the second reading of a Bill intended to abolish this Board, that I should not refer to the long and valuable services rendered by the Board, and thank them on behalf of the Government for those services. The second point in this Bill is to provide a mode of election in the case of the District Boards of Education. That is absolutely necessary, if these District Boards are to continue to be elected. In some of the colonies, I believe, these local Boards are nominated, or partly nominated and partly elected; but in this colony they have always been elected. But the machinery for electing them is altogether obsolete; in fact, it is inoperative, especially now that we have had a change of Constitution, because it is stated in the existing Elementary Education Act that the electoral roll to be

used in the election of the members of these Boards shall be the roll in use for the Legislative Council under the then form of government. Of course that Legislative Council having ceased to exist, there has really been no electoral roll under which these District Boards could be elected. I have heard it said that some members think that this Bill should be laid aside, owing to the lateness of the session; but, I would ask them to remember this: that at present there is no means of electing these District Boards of Education, and they would have to be appointed. I believe there is some provision made for that, in the old Act; but at the present time there is really no machinery in existence for the election of these Boards. The next important point in this Bill is really one of the principal reasons why the Bill was introduced. I refer to the provision contained in the 18th clause of the Bill, for giving religious instruction in schools, during school hours, for a portion of the day not exceeding half-an-hour. That is a matter that interests a great many people who are concerned in the education and training of the youth of the colony; and it has been pressed upon the Government very strongly—

MR. MONGER: By the *West Australian* newspaper.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member is speaking without book, as usual. It was pressed upon the Government by all sections of the community—all the religious sections of the community. I am aware that some misunderstanding has arisen on the subject, on the part of one denomination, latterly. I am not going into the reasons which gave rise to this misunderstanding; I have no doubt that those who take up the position they are now taking up on this question will be able to defend themselves. But, speaking for myself, I may say that when the Government undertook to bring in this alteration in the law, we thought we were supported by every religious section in the community. We understood that the Church of England, the Roman Catholics, and the Wesleyans were all in favour of provision being made for religious instruction in our schools; and, we thought, such being the case, why should the Government object to making that provision? So we agreed to

do so. But I understand that a very important section of the community, the Wesleyans, through some misunderstanding, have receded from that position. In their letter to me they said they were in favour of the abolition of Assisted schools, and, secondly, in favour of religious instruction during school hours. I replied at once that the Government were not prepared to abolish the Assisted schools, but that we were willing to, and would, introduce a Bill containing the other provision which they desired, namely, as regards religious instruction during school hours. No reply was received by the Government to that communication for months afterwards; and it was a great surprise to us to find that this influential section of the community were opposed to this clause. When we pledged ourselves to introduce it, we were under the impression—not having heard anything to the contrary—that all sections of the religious community were in favour of it; and, as I say, it came as a surprise to me to find that one section, and an important section, do not now regard it with favour. However, having promised to introduce this provision into the Bill, we, at any rate, could not go back; and we have done so, and we think it is a reasonable clause, and a clause that is likely to work much good. We cannot see that any harm can result from half-an-hour each day being set apart for religious instruction; in fact, that is putting it on a very low ground, to say that no harm can result. As I said before, I consider that much good must result from it, and I cannot understand how anyone who is a teacher of religion, or who believes in religion, can possibly object to a certain time being set apart in our schools for religious instruction by persons qualified for the work—qualified for imparting instruction to children in the tenets of their own faith. I say of their own faith, because it is only children belonging to one denomination that will be allowed to be taught by the pastor or clergyman of that denomination. The next important point in the Bill is the last one, and I may say it was not inserted in the Bill by the Government. It was introduced in another place by a private member, and I may say at once that I propose, when we go into committee on the Bill, to move that the

clause be struck out. I refer to the 25th clause, dealing with the Assisted schools.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: It is the best clause in the Bill.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): If so, the hon. member can use his voice and vote in support of it. But the Government are not responsible for its introduction, and we shall, therefore, be acting quite consistently in voting against it. The reasons why I shall propose that this clause be struck out are many. The first one is that the country has never, in any way, signified its wish that the law of the land, which has existed over twenty years as regards these schools, should be interfered with. I think that is a strong enough objection on an important question like this, upon which people feel very strongly indeed. It was a question that caused a great deal of trouble some twenty years ago, and a great deal of ill-feeling in the community, before the present Act was passed; and I know of no reason why, at this late period of the session, and on the eve of a dissolution of Parliament, we should be called upon to re-open it, when, as I have said, the country has not in any way signified its wish that the present system should be done away with. Apart from that, I shall not feel disposed to agree to it even in any other session—at any rate, unless I change my views. I will not say I am not capable of changing my views in the future.

AN HON. MEMBER: That depends how the cat jumps.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): My own view as regards this question—I do not mind stating it publicly—and my desire also is to see one system of national education in the colony. I should like to see public schools established all over the colony, to which all children might go, and to which all children would go. That is my desire. But I do not mean to say that I am infallible, or that my opinion always should have weight. We have to do that which is reasonable, and which is politic, and which is expedient; and we know from experience, both in this colony and elsewhere, that a large section of the community will not accept that view of the case. We know that rather than accept that system which I should like to see, this section of the community are prepared to build their own schools,

and do so. They put their hands in their pockets to build schools, without any assistance from the State, in order to be able to educate their children in their own way. Seeing that they are willing to do this, and have done it for many years, I think we must be convinced, at any rate, that they are in earnest. If they were not in earnest, they would not be likely to do that. When people put their hands in their pockets to pay for a thing which they could get for nothing, or next to nothing, from the State, you may depend upon it they are in real earnest, and are actuated by some strong principle and strong conviction. That is the case with the Roman Catholic section of the community in regard to this education question. This section of the community, at any rate, numbering one-third or one-fourth—say one-fourth, for the sake of argument—are in real earnest in this matter; and their wishes deserve to be carefully considered, and, as far as possible, to be respected. For that reason, I think that the system of education which was established over twenty years ago and which they have availed themselves of to a large extent—and which any other religious section of the community can avail themselves of, if they like—should not be interfered with, except for some very good reason, or some very great pressure indeed. These are my views and my feelings with regard to this education question; and, for the reasons I have given, I hope this House will not in any way interfere with the existing system in this respect. It is not a system that originated in this colony; it was founded, and it has been in force, in England. I do not mean to say that the circumstances are the same in England as here; but we have had twenty years' practical experience of the working of the system here. This Assisted School system has worked side by side with our State schools, and it cannot be said that the results have not been satisfactory. Their efficiency is equal to that obtaining in the Government schools, while the cost to the State is certainly not greater. I know that some persons say that the cost is not more than one-half; but I am not going to argue that point. It certainly is not greater. The present system is one that has given peace and contentment to the community for over twenty years. If

there is anything more than another I should like to see continue in this colony, it is the absence of religious feeling in elections. Where there are religious interests at stake, you may depend upon it people will exert themselves to the utmost to protect those interests; and I do earnestly hope we shall not have any religious contests in this colony, but that we shall continue to work together as one people for the common good. I feel quite certain that whatever may be the feelings of members—and some may have strong feelings opposite to what I have indicated—they would not feel that they would be doing right, or acting justly, in interfering with this system at the present time. If there is to be any interference, it is a matter that should be referred to the constituencies of the colony, and of which due notice should be given to the people of the colony, who should have every opportunity, on the hustings, of saying whether they are in favour of an alteration of the present system or not. I do not, myself, believe that the people are in favour of this radical change in a system that, on the whole, has worked satisfactorily for the past twenty years, and which has caused peace and contentment in the community. We are a law-abiding and quiet-going people, and we do not want any religious dissensions in our midst. Happily, for a long time past, these religious dissensions have been absent, and I hope it may long continue to be the case. For these reasons, when the Bill goes into committee, I propose to move that the 25th clause—which, as I have said, was not put in the Bill by the Government, but introduced by a private member in another place—be struck out. I now beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. CANNING : I take this opportunity of making a few observations upon the general tendency of the Bill. I think that the intention of the hon. the Premier to move that Clause 25 be expunged will meet with sufficient support to carry it out. We know that a feeling has been growing up for a considerable time past that religious training should be wholly and entirely dissociated from education; but I think that those who reflect upon the question calmly, and without any bias, will come to the conclusion that there is

absolutely nothing to justify the conclusion that that course should be taken. For over a thousand years England was a united Christian country; it was not split up into sects; it was under one faith; and during those thousand years the English people were making progress. They were becoming the great English nation. They were proving themselves, by sea and land, stronger than any other people on the face of the earth; and they built up during those thousand years the great English nation. They were the stock from which we are sprung. During the past 300 years, the descendants of those who for a thousand years were a religious people—and there never has been a more religious people known than the English people—during the past 300 years, since the termination of the period of a thousand years I have referred to, the descendants of those people have carried all before them, in war, in science, in colonisation, in civilisation. They have been enlarging their dominion, until they have built up the greatest empire that the world has ever known. Well, sir, during those thousand years, when the English people made such great progress, and laid the foundations of the British nation, education and religion went hand-in-hand. The education of the people was wholly in the hands of the Church during those thousand years; and what did it produce? It produced such a nation as I have just attempted to give an idea of. And since the end of the 16th century, down certainly until the early part of this century, education in the mother country was in the hands of the clergy of the different denominations of Christians in the United Kingdom; and it cannot be said that the result was unfavourable to that system. On the contrary the result has been the grandest, the most overwhelmingly conclusive that has ever followed from any course of human action. The result of religious training going hand-in-hand with the education of the young has been the most completely beneficial to the human race that could be hoped for. For some years past, we know, a different system has been adopted in the Australian colonies. That system is at present on its trial. It has produced absolutely no ascertained good results. I defy anyone to name any good or beneficial result that has followed from the

adoption of the system of education that became general in the other Australian colonies some 14 or 15 years ago—any good result whatever. If anyone can show me any ascertained good result that has followed from that system, I shall be inclined to say that there is some force in the argument in favour of the change sought to be brought about by dissociating religious training from education. So much for the general principle of the Bill. With regard to the detail of the Assisted schools, the result there has been so eminently satisfactory that I am at a loss to understand why the suggestion should have been seriously made to do away with the system. We know that the Roman Catholic Church has, by its organisations, special advantages for carrying out the work of education. It has numbers of men and women who have devoted themselves to a religious life, associated with the training of youth; and the results, in all cases that have come under my observation, have left nothing to be desired. I have seen something of the system in different parts of the world, and I have witnessed what has been accomplished by those excellent societies, the Christian Brothers and the Sisters of St. Joseph. By their admirable organisation they have rendered incalculable service to civilisation, by devoting themselves to the training of youth. As to the Christian Brothers, their special province is not the higher education, but the education of the children of the working classes; and for their great and earnest efforts in that direction many thousands of the human race have cause to be thankful. We all know what has been done by that admirable sisterhood, the Sisters of Mercy, and the excellent work they have done and are doing in the cause of education. With such special organisations as the Roman Catholic Church possesses, I think every encouragement you can possibly give should be given, to enable it to develop its system, and to enable it to carry out the excellent work it is engaged in, in connection with the training of youth, to the utmost possible extent. I am sure, when we go into committee on the Bill, that the matters at which I have briefly glanced will be urged more strongly and more ably than I can urge them; but I thought I ought not to pass over the opportunity of expressing the

very decided views I hold on this question—views which I have held for years past. It is not a question of to-day; the views I have expressed are the views I have ever held since I first thought upon the subject at all. I have always felt that education should not be dissociated from religion. The proposition has been put forward that if we encourage one religious denomination we should extend the same encouragement to all, including those of the Mahomedan and Jewish religions. That is reducing the argument to an absurdity, and I am not going at this time to combat it further. It is almost too absurd to be treated seriously. I shall, however, in all probability, when the consideration of the question is forced upon public attention, have an opportunity of dealing with it.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: In supporting the second reading of this Bill, I may say that I consider the measure a very valuable one, as it now stands, but, if it is to be shorn of the 25th clause, I think the Bill might just as well be thrown out altogether. It is proposed by that clause that, for the future, there shall be no further grant in aid from the revenue of the colony for any new Assisted school. I should have liked it to have gone a little further, and to provide that, after a certain number of years, these Assisted schools should cease altogether; because, if we are going to have State schools, I do not think it is good policy, nor a fair policy towards the State schools, to have Assisted schools alongside of them, also supported by the State, to compete with them. If it is decided to continue these Assisted schools, there should be a provision that no such school, situated within say five miles from a State school, should be assisted from the public revenue. We are actually subsidising these schools now to compete against our national schools; and I have heard of some of these Assisted schools actually admitting children free, for the purpose of securing the capitation grant, while a fee is charged in the Government schools. This is unfair to the teachers of those schools, who are paid by results; and the consequence is there is a want of efficiency in the Government schools. I think it is most unfair that one class of the community should be assisted at the expense

of the whole community, which is the case under this system.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): It is open to all.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: It is not open to all. The clause says: "From and after the passing of this Act no new Assisted school shall be established."

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): But you want that to stand; the Government don't.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I do want it to stand. I should like to see these Assisted schools swept away altogether.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Of course you would.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Or do away with our Government schools. It is absurd to have the Assisted schools entering into competition with our own State schools, and especially in country districts. I think it is perfectly monstrous. This question has been fought out in the other colonies, and it will have to be fought out here, and the sooner the better. They will have to be swept away here, as they have been swept away elsewhere. I say it is simply monstrous that three-fourths of the country should be taxed to support schools belonging to one denomination.

MR. MOLLOY: How do you make that out?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): That won't do.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: So far as I am concerned, I should like to see a further amendment introduced, that after ten years these Assisted schools should cease to exist altogether; and I think that those who are in favour of these schools had better accept some proposal of that kind, because I am certain that before many years are over our heads we shall find members returned to this House pledged to do away with these schools, upon much less favourable terms than I am now suggesting. I hope some member will move a further amendment to that effect—that, after ten years, the Assisted schools shall cease to exist.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Why not move it yourself?

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I probably will, in committee; or else that the sum now voted be reduced by ten per cent. annually. These are my views, and when we go into committee I intend to support them.

MR. SOLOMON: I will only just make a few remarks upon this Bill. After looking over it, I must say that it is a better Bill than I expected, more especially as I understand the Government are going to move to strike out the 25th clause. With regard to Clause 3, abolishing the Central Board of Education, I doubt whether it will be better to invest all the powers of that Board in the hands of a Minister, rather than in an independent board. My own impression is that a board would be less liable to have pressure brought to bear upon it than a Minister would, and for that reason I am rather inclined to think it would be better to retain this Board, which has done such good service in the past. With reference to Clause 18, permitting religious instruction during a portion of the school hours, I am perfectly in accord with it. I think the Government were perfectly right in introducing it, more especially as they had been asked to do so by the ministers of the various religious denominations. I think, myself, it will do an immense deal of good, especially for the poorer classes, to have half-an-hour of religious instruction before their usual school studies; and I feel that I am expressing the views of the majority of the people of the colony in making these remarks. As to the 25th clause, which proposes that no Government aid be given to any new Assisted schools, I am very pleased indeed to congratulate the Government on their intention to expunge the clause. That being so, I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): It is not my intention to speak at any length on the second reading of this Bill. But in the first place I wish to thank my hon. friend and colleague, the Premier, for the kind remarks he made with reference to the Central Board of Education. I think, I may say, I am the only member of this House at present who is a member of that Board. I was nominated to that position by Governor Weld in 1871, twenty-two years ago, and I have continuously held that position from that time to the present. Although a clause in the Education Act provides that no two members of the Board shall belong to one and the same religious denomination, I

am happy to say that the members of the Board have acted together in a most harmonious manner; there has been no discordant feeling among them, no acrimony, and no religious discord. Each and everyone has, I believe, done his very best to advance the educational interests of the colony; and I believe they have done it successfully. It has been hinted in the course of this debate that the members of the Board have not been regular in attendance; but that I deny. I say they have been scrupulously regular in their attendance, and assiduous in the discharge of their duties. Of course there are times when every member cannot attend, but, as a rule, the members have been regular in their attendance, and most attentive in administering the details of the Education Act. I think, myself, it has been a most admirable arrangement, under which representatives of the various religious denominations could be brought together, and their little differences, or great differences (as the case may be) thrown aside, and all agree to work with one accord in the cause of education. I think if it had done no more than that, the Act of 1871 has done a great deal of good. I know that at the time that Act passed, there were religious dissensions and sectarian discord in our small community; but they were wiped out, so far as the cause of education was concerned, by that Act. They ceased to exist, and they never appeared on the scene subsequently. Everything has worked smoothly and harmoniously. Our elections in those days were tinged with religious rancour. The flag of bigotry was waved on high, and the most acrimonious feeling was engendered. Thank God, they have been free from such rancour and acrimony from that day to this. I only hope—and I say it as one who has had some experience in electioneering in those troublous times, when the religious flag was hoisted—I only hope that the time is far distant when that rancour may be again introduced into our public life. My hon. friend the Premier, in alluding to the particular clause which had a great deal to do with the introduction of the present Bill—Clause 18, which provides for religious instruction being imparted during school hours—said he did not think that any great harm would be done by the intro-

duction of such a clause. I think that was putting it on rather low ground. My hon. friend certainly afterwards toned it down by saying he believed it would do a great deal of good. I honestly believe myself that it will do a great deal of good. It is said by many people that the proper religious teachers of the people are the pastors of the particular Church they belong to, and that the Sunday school is the proper place for imparting religious instruction to children. But is it not well known that there is a large section of the community whom these Sunday schools do not reach, because you cannot compel parents to send their children there? Is it not also known that there is a clause in our Elementary Education Act which makes it compulsory upon children of all classes to attend some day school, and that a parent's poverty is no excuse, because in that case the Act distinctly provides that the education of the children shall be free. The hon. member for the Gascoyne made a most unwarrantable statement, that the managers of the Assisted schools enticed children from the Government schools by offering to admit them to their schools without payment. The hon. member, perhaps, was not aware that the probability is that the children so admitted were children whose parents could not afford to pay, and that the District Board, through the Central Board, had in all probability given permission for those children to attend free, as the Act provides they may, whether attending Assisted schools or Government schools. That class of children will be reached by this Bill, children who probably never enter a church or a Sunday school, and who may not—I do not say that they do not—but who may not ever have an opportunity of listening to the exhortations of their pastor. Surely this Bill must do some good if it only brings children of that class within the reach of religious instruction and the exhortations of their pastor, whoever he may be. He must be a heathen indeed, and lacking in every perception of what is morally right, who would say that the religious teaching of the pastor of any denomination can fail to do a certain amount of good to the youthful mind. I say he must be a heathen indeed who does not believe that, and I hope there is no

heathen in this Assembly. It has been said—I do not like to refer to it—but it has been said that the present Elementary Education Act was introduced for the benefit of one particular denomination. It was argued that because one denomination had more than any other taken advantage of it, the Act was solely intended for the benefit of that religious denomination, and that no other denomination could benefit by it. I have already, on a former occasion, exposed the fallacy of that argument. I did so by quoting the 26th clause of the Act itself. I will read it again, and I hope it may convince even the hon. member for the Gascoyne, if he is open to conviction. That 26th clause says: "Any elementary school may receive Government aid, provided always (1) that such grant-in-aid shall not . . . be made in respect of any instruction on religious subjects. (2) It shall not be required that the school shall be in connection with a religious denomination, or that religious instruction shall be given in the school; and no preference or advantage shall be given to any such school on the ground that it is or is not provided by a School Board, or by a religious denomination, or by an individual patron or promoter." That shows clearly and distinctly that this Act was intended for every section of the community, irrespective of their religious faith or opinion. Therefore, I say it is most unfair that members should persist in alluding to one religious denomination as being the only one that can benefit by the existing Act. It is, moreover, a fact, as members know, that the Roman Catholic body is not the only religious denomination in this colony that takes advantage of that Act and who have Assisted schools. The only reason, in my opinion—I say it in all humility—the only reason, in my opinion, why advantage is not taken of it by other denominations is practically because of their comparative weakness; I won't say lack of energy, but because possibly of their numerical weakness. They are probably not strong enough in numbers to enable them to take advantage of the Act. But surely that is no reason why others should not take advantage of it. My hon. friend also reminds me—and it has been alluded to by the hon. member for East Perth—

that they have not got the organisation which the hon. member referred to as belonging to the Catholic Church. They may have organisations which are as self-denying and which carry out what is expected of them in connection with the work of their Church, but at the same time they do not possess those organisations and those societies the members of which devote their lives to the training of the youthful mind. It cannot be argued for a moment that the standard of instruction given in these Assisted schools is inferior in any way to the standard of instruction given in the State schools at a greater expense to the community. I need only allude to the reports of successive inspectors of schools to prove that the standard of education in the Assisted schools is at least equally as high—I will not say more—as that given in the Government schools. I do not wish to drag this subject out to any great length, but I must allude to one remark made by my hon. friend the member for the Gascoyne. It seems to me that if anyone is inclined to throw down the gauntlet and to hoist up the red flag of religious strife it is my hon. friend, who is the only one who has said anything in the course of this debate which is calculated to introduce into the discussion in this House, or at a future date, that element of religious dissension and (if I may use a harsher term) religious bigotry which I think is to be deplored. The hon. member made this remark: that it is unfair and injurious to our State schools that competition should enter into our system of public education. That seems to me an extraordinary statement to make, because we have competition in every other line of life, in every trade, in every profession, and I may say even in religion. It is quite possible that as competition is the soul of trade, so also this competition in the religious world may cause those who enter into it to be more zealous. At any rate we know that in every other sphere of life competition does no harm. Emulation in what is good cannot possibly do any harm in this life; and I am very certain that the competition or spirit of emulation that has existed between the Assisted schools and the State schools in this colony—and I know it from a long practical experience of the working of the system—has done

no harm, but possibly been of benefit, to both classes of schools. It seems to me savouring of absurdity to say that two classes of schools cannot exist in a community without injuring each other. If that were the case, the High School and our middle-class schools, and other private schools, outside the Government schools, are a standing injury and injustice to the State schools of the colony.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Do you subsidise competition, as a rule?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Subsidise! I will come to that presently. I would not have alluded to this matter if the hon. member had not made the statement which he did. It has been stated that these Assisted schools are as costly to the State as the Government schools. It is hardly worth while demonstrating the absurdity of that statement. It goes without saying that the Assisted schools, while supplying a system of education or means of education equal in every respect to the State schools, do not cost the State more than one-half what its own schools do. That can be proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. So that the system of subsidising these Assisted schools, from whatever point of view you look at it—whether a utilitarian point of view, an economical point of view, a political point of view, a social point of view, a religious point of view, or a moral point of view—from whatever point of view you look at it—is a good and wholesome system, and one that should continue to exist. For that reason I should be sorry indeed, myself, to see any change made, simply because of a different state of things existing elsewhere, in other colonies. I would like to know whether the moral tone of society in the other colonies is such as to encourage us to alter our system of education and follow theirs. Is there anything in the social life of those colonies, as disclosed in the columns of the Press, that points as a beacon for us to follow, or that should induce us to substitute their educational system for our own? I say no. On the contrary, I think that the moral and social records of those colonies should act as a warning to us in this respect. We have only to look day after day for an illustration of what I am saying, that there is no good reason at all why Western Australia

should abandon its present system of education and adopt that of the other colonies. I honestly do think that so long as we can do that which will preserve peace and harmony in the community, which will ensure concord and unanimity among the various religious denominations of the colony—so long as we can do that without injury to the State schools of the colony, while at the same time economising the funds of the colony, and improving the moral and religious tone of the rising generation of the colony—so long, I say, as we can do that, so long should we continue the present system of education unimpaired. Sir, I am pleased and proud that I form one of the Ministry of this colony that has decided that the 25th clause of this Bill, inserted in the Bill in another place, shall be struck out, and that we should give to those who have fought hard, and earnestly, and zealously, in the cause of education, an opportunity of continuing their well-directed efforts for the religious and moral welfare of the rising community of this young colony of ours.

MR. DEHAMEL: There is no doubt that the education question will be in the near future one of the most vexed political questions in this colony.

MR. CANNING: Not necessarily.

MR. DEHAMEL: We can only judge from what has happened in other countries, and in the other colonies; and what has happened in other places is certain to happen here. However, there is no doubt that everyone must believe in two of the principles introduced into the present Bill; the first principle being the appointment of a responsible Minister, instead of the Central Board, to manage the educational business of the colony; and the second principle being that embodied in Clause 18, which provides for allowing religious teaching, by every sect, by every denomination, by every Church, in every State school in the colony. With regard to another part of the Bill, there is no doubt that, up to the present, the Assisted school system has worked well in this colony; and I myself should be sorry to see that system done away with. I think, however, that Clause 25 would be more likely to have the effect of prolonging the existence of the present system than if it were struck out; for it seems to me that if the opponents of that system saw that

State assistance is not to be granted to any new Assisted schools in the future, they would be less inclined to attack the system. I think, myself, that this clause, if adopted, would be likely to prevent the present system from being attacked as soon as it otherwise would be—for attacked it inevitably must be, sooner or later. However, that is a question that has not yet been before any of the constituencies, at any of the elections at which the present members of this House were returned. Therefore, though I think that the intention of the clause is for the benefit of the Assisted schools, yet it is one I shall support the striking out of, until the country has had an opportunity of expressing an opinion on the subject.

MR. SIMPSON: We have had two very important speeches from the Ministerial bench, and I now beg to move that the debate be adjourned.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I really do not see what is the good of adjourning the debate, when we are all anxious to get rid of the business of the session. Surely the hon. member can say all he has to say on this subject without adjourning. It is a subject we have all thought over for years; it is a subject that enters into our daily life, and I would ask him not to press for an adjournment until the second reading of the Bill is passed.

Motion to adjourn the debate put and negatived.

MR. SIMPSON: I am sorry that the Ministry—for it is their Bill—could not have seen their way to adjourn this debate till to-morrow, especially as to-morrow the Premier is going to ask the House to grant him what is practically a favour, and that is that the House should suspend all its rules for his convenience.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Not for my convenience at all.

MR. R. F. SKOLL: I hope the House will object to it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I don't care.

MR. SIMPSON: I say I am sorry that the Government should think fit to oppose the adjournment of this debate, more especially so, seeing that this important measure has not been twenty-four hours before this Assembly. Practically, it is before us for the first time this

afternoon; yet the Ministry think they will rush it through at this sitting.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Only the second reading.

MR. SIMPSON: I hope the House will resist it, especially when we have just had two very important and very grave speeches from two Ministers of the Crown upon this question, differing in opinion to a certain extent.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Not at all.

MR. SIMPSON: One pointed out that the cost of education in the Assisted and State schools was about equal.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I did not say that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): I am sure I didn't.

MR. SIMPSON: I think the Premier said that the cost in the Assisted schools was not greater than the cost in the State schools. If not greater, the impression left was that they were about equal.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I did not say so.

MR. SIMPSON: There really seem to be such refined distinctions between the Premier and the Ministry upon this question that the ordinary mind cannot grasp them. The fact of the matter is, I believe they are really frightened of it. That is my absolute belief.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Why?

MR. SIMPSON: One of the Ministers of the Crown who favoured us with his views on the subject paid a high compliment to our neighbours on the other side of the continent by stating or insinuating that they are less moral than West Australians are. I think that is an insult to all the residents of those colonies. It was an ungraceful statement to make, on the part of any Minister. But let us come back to main principles. I think that the Bill we have before us is simply tinkering with this great question of education. The whole Press of the colony, with the one single exception of the inspired organ of the particular religious communion which benefits by the present system,—the whole Press of the colony has advanced the opinion that the existing system should be amended in its main principle; and that is, that of State aid to religion. For that is what it

comes to. Public meetings have been held in nearly all the most important towns in the colony,—

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Where?

MR. SIMPSON: Fremantle, for one.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): When?

MR. SIMPSON: At Albany a meeting was held; at York a meeting was held; at Geraldton a meeting was held; in Perth a meeting was held.

MR. A. FORREST: I never heard of it.

MR. SIMPSON: The Mayor of Perth says he never heard of it. I do not think that education is a question in which the hon. member takes much interest. If it had been a meeting concerning the imposition of a stock tax, I dare say the hon. member would have heard of it. The Premier only referred to one denomination, the Wesleyans, as being opposed to this Bill, unless it also dealt with the Assisted school question. But the Presbyterian body and the Congregationalists also decided unanimously that no amendment in the present system would be satisfactory that did not suggest or contemplate that the grant to the Assisted schools should disappear. That grant is simply State aid to religion in another form. That is what it amounts to. I am not one of those who decry the efforts of that religious communion, who have done so much for the cause of education, who have expended a great amount of wealth and a great amount of energy in that direction, and who, no doubt, have a splendid record in this colony so far as educational training is concerned. I am not decrying their efforts. I take up my position upon this one incontrovertible principle: that it is not the duty of the State to teach religion. And I say that the particular Church which I am alluding to is doubly endowed by the State in this colony. It obtains its full share, in common with other denominations, of the Ecclesiastical Grant, and it also receives State aid in support of its own schools, established for the express purpose of teaching the tenets of its own religion. I maintain that, if it is reasonable that one section of the community should draw from the public Treasury a certain amount of revenue to accomplish a certain object of its own, that principle should run through

all our daily life. Surely, we may expect that a section of the community that is so favoured should, in return, relieve the State of some of its burdens, or at any rate should not impose upon the State more than its fair share of expenditure in other directions. I went to the trouble, the other day, of getting a return of the religious beliefs professed by the inmates of the Fremantle gaol. It has been said in the course of this debate, by the hon. member for East Perth, that no ascertained good result has followed from the abandonment of the system of denominational education in the other colonies. Well, sir, I am not going into that question now; but I was astounded at the figures I obtained from the Sheriff of this colony the other day. I found that that section of the population to which I am referring—that respected section of the population, I may say—which contributes only about 30 per cent. to the revenue, or, at any rate, comprises only 30 per cent. of the population of the colony—furnishes 40 per cent. of the inmates of our principal gaol. That is the result of this twenty-one-year-old Act.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Were they all educated in this colony?

MR. SIMPSON: I don't know.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Then what is the value of your argument?

MR. SIMPSON: I am speaking of their religion.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Nonsense!

MR. SIMPSON: There is no question of nonsense about it. It is the Sheriff's return.

AN HON. MEMBER: Were they brought here?

MR. SIMPSON: I don't know whether they were brought here or not. But that is the ultimate result of this system.

MR. MOLLOY: Which system?

MR. SIMPSON: The Assisted school system.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): How many of them were educated in this colony under the Assisted school system? Was there one of them?

MR. SIMPSON: I did not go to find out all these particulars. I did not want to ascertain whether they had a birth mark, or whether they had been vaccinated;

I only wanted to find out their religious denomination. Another point is this: why should the State subsidise rival institutions which must necessarily diminish the efficiency of its own institutions? The Government, I suppose, start with the idea that the State has a right to teach religion in its schools. I think the Premier said that.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I don't think I did. I said religion was a good thing to be taught in our schools.

MR. SIMPSON: What religion?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Christian religion.

MR. SIMPSON: What about the Jewish religion? We have many adherents of that religion contributing to the revenue. What about the Mahomedan religion? I suppose that some of the adherents of the Mahomedan religion are amongst the most pure men in the world. Once you get into this religious difficulty, where are you to end? If the Forrest Ministry, amongst its other virtues, were to establish some religious system of its own, and make that the State system of religion, I have no doubt it would result in the production of moral young men. But until that is done, or until we are all agreed as to the one and only system of religion worthy of recognition, I do not see how the State can decide upon what system to teach. Must it not really degenerate into a farce? I have heard it stated, on several occasions, that we should take lesson from the experience of the other colonies. I challenge members to look over the statute-books of those colonies, and say where there is a more positive verdict, in the whole course of their legislation, than in their abandonment of the denominational system of education. It is said that it would be unfair to those who have participated so long in the emoluments of the denominational system in this colony to deprive them of those emoluments, which they are dependent upon. My opinion is that the same principle should be adopted here as was adopted in other places, and that is that the grant should disappear by degrees, or in a certain number of years, and that any buildings which were available, if they were suitable, should be leased by the Government for State school purposes. I remember,

when the denominational system was first abandoned in New South Wales, hearing one of the most accomplished prelates of that great Church, the Roman Catholic Church, who ever visited Australia, Archbishop Vaughan, saying that the State schools were godless institutions and seed plots of immorality. I know that in the Assisted schools belonging to this same denomination, within the last few years they used school books in which the members of all other Christian denominations were described as "heretics." That is what the State had to pay for. Those books have since been withdrawn. They are not used in these schools now, and I do not suppose that anything of the kind will ever have a chance of occurring in this colony again as a text-book, used in one class of denominational schools subsidised by the State, containing passages stigmatising the members of all other denominations as "heretics."

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): What is the meaning of the word?

MR. CANNING: There is nothing in the world wicked or improper about it.

MR. SIMPSON: If we take it with its association, I think there is. It does not sound very well. I say that this Bill is simply tinkering with the great question of education; and, to make it worse, the Government have decided to use their endeavours to strike out the 25th clause, which was unanimously adopted in another place.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): They don't care much about it, I understand.

MR. SIMPSON: The hon. gentleman seems to have a more exact knowledge of their feelings than was indicated by their votes, for it was passed without a dissentient voice, or at any rate without a division.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Several members were opposed to it, but, as they had not a majority, they did not divide the House.

MR. SIMPSON: Then we come back to this: is this House going to take up this question? Sooner or later it will have to be faced. It is printed in front of every hustings in the colony.

MR. CANNING: Since you raised the cry.

MR. SIMPSON: The hon. member does not like it, I know. He reminds me of

that character in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, "Looking-both-ways," but who invariably got into trouble. I say this Bill deals in an unstatesmanlike way with a great national question. Even yet we have heard nothing positive from the Government with regard to this Assisted school question. They will not face it boldly and openly. They have been running around it, and around it, but they are afraid to tackle it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We said all along we did not intend to disturb it.

MR. SIMPSON: Now we have it. I asked the Premier last session if he approved of the principle, but I didn't get an answer. But we have it to-day. I say this is a question for the next election.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): You want it to be, evidently.

MR. SIMPSON: I do not mind it, because my views with regard to this question of the State teaching religion are pretty well known, and they are pronounced. I say that the State has no more right to teach religion than it has a right to teach watchmaking.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): What is religion?

MR. SIMPSON: I always decide for myself. I do not want to make any other man's religion mine. I should like to point out that if this 25th clause is abandoned, there are other features in the Bill that will require attention. Clause 18 says: "In every Government school a portion of each day, not exceeding half-an-hour, may be set apart when the children of any one religious persuasion may be instructed by a clergyman or other religious teacher of such persuasion." Why should this be confined to Government schools? Why not make it apply to Assisted schools as well, so that the clergy of other denominations may be allowed to enter those schools, to give religious instruction to any children who may belong to their own denomination? I say that, because I know beyond question—I have seen it—that these Assisted schools are depleting the State schools of the colony over the fee question. They admit them without any fee, or the children go there, in many cases, to save the fees. I know a public school in this colony which used to have an attendance

of five times as much as now, while the Assisted school used to have about one-third the attendance it has now. That is what the Assisted school system is doing. There is no doubt about the system; it is a splendid system, and those who are working it have done much in the cause of education. But let us be logical. Either let the State subsidise every denomination, or let the State abandon subsidising religious teaching altogether. Either let the churches be responsible for the religious education of our young, and let the State wash its hands of it, or let the State take charge of the whole question. I think all that can be logically expected from the State is that it should provide its children with such an education as will enable them to understand the laws of their country, and to take an intelligent interest in the politics of their country. Let them do this in their own schools, where every child in the colony could go.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): A considerable section won't go.

MR. SIMPSON: Let the State give them the opportunity, and it will have done its duty. It gives a man an opportunity to go gold-mining, and if he does not go, he has no grievance against the State. I have heard it said of the present Ministry that it is a Ministry with a hold policy. I am sorry that on this occasion they have not displayed any bold policy, but a very weak-kneed policy, a sort of "wait-awhile" policy. But I tell the Premier that this is a question for the hustings; and I tell him more than that—the danger signal has been hoisted.

MR. MOLLOY: I do not intend to weary the House by addressing myself to this important subject at any length; and, had it not been for the wild assertions of the hon. member who has just sat down, I do not know that I would have troubled the House with any remarks at this stage of the Bill. But when we are treated to such a discourse as we have just listened to, and when it is publicly stated that the existing Education Act was mainly introduced for the purpose of encouraging the teaching of the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion, I think I should not be fulfilling my duty to those who elected me to a position in this House if I did not take an opportunity of resenting and challeng-

ing such an assertion. I hold in my hand a copy of the Elementary Education Act of 1871, and out of that Act I propose to refute the hon. member's unfounded statement, that this Act is intended solely for the benefit of one religious community, the Roman Catholic community, or any other religious community. Clause 22, sub-section 1, says: "It shall not be required, as a condition "of any child being admitted into or "continuing in the school, that he shall "attend or abstain from attending any "Sunday school, or any place of religious "worship, or that he shall attend any "religious observance or any instruction "in religious subjects in the school or "elsewhere, from which observance or "instruction he may be withdrawn by "his parent, or that he shall, if withdrawn "by his parent, attend the school on any "day exclusively set apart for religious "observance by the religious body to "which his parent belongs." I also find that sub-section 2 of Clause 26 lays it down distinctly that "it shall not be required that the school shall be in connection with a religious denomination, "or that religious instruction shall be "given in the school, and no preference "or advantage shall be given to any such "school on the ground that it is, or is "not, provided by a School Board, or by "a religious denomination." I think that nothing further is wanting to refute the assertions made by the hon. member for Geraldton, when he said that the Assisted schools can only be availed of by one particular denomination, or that the Act was designed for the special benefit of that denomination. It is distinctly laid down in the Act that every section of the community, irrespective of creed or class, can avail themselves of the privileges which this Act affords. Although it is a fact that the Roman Catholic community have availed themselves largely of the provisions of the Act, surely that is no reason why they should be taunted with having availed themselves of privileges which are open to all. Before this Act was introduced, that particular community was under a serious disability as regards the educational system in force. For conscience sake, they could not avail themselves of the system of education which the State offered, though they were called upon to contribute their share of

taxation to support the system. But they were willing even to make that sacrifice rather than surrender their convictions, and to provide for the education of their own children out of their own pockets. It has been said that they possess organisations which give them advantages over other religious denominations, in availing themselves of the provisions of the Act. Surely, they are not to blame for that. Allusion has been made to the Christian Brothers. We had the privilege of having the Christian Brothers in this colony in its early days; and I and many others remember with the deepest gratitude the inestimable blessings conferred upon the community by that brotherhood in the training of the youth of the colony. I challenge any member of this House to point to any evil result that has followed upon the adoption of the present system of education. It is well known to those who were in the colony before the passing of this Act what religious dissensions, and bickerings, and heart-burnings prevailed amongst the various religious denominations with regard to the education question, poisoning the whole life of the community. But since the passing of this Act, twenty years ago, peace and concord have reigned throughout the whole colony; and the educational results achieved from the present system have been such as to extract, even from those who are violently opposed to the system, an admission that it has done good service in the community. We are now endeavouring to amend this Act, and to amend it in such a way as to meet the wishes of the most influential sections of the community, who think it necessary that in the Government schools, where they send their children, a certain portion of the day should be set apart for religious instruction. I think all will agree that that is a very desirable thing, and that the Act may be beneficially amended in that direction. Surely that is no excuse for the bigotry which has been introduced into the discussion on this subject by certain sections of the community, and, I am sorry to say, by one or two members in this House, who have availed themselves of the opportunity for casting unmerited aspersions upon that denomination which has most largely availed itself of the provisions of the present Act. The Roman Catholic com-

munity, not only in this colony, but elsewhere—at least I can speak for this colony—have made great personal sacrifices in the cause of their religion, and great sacrifices in the cause of the education of their children. Is it, I ask, any crime that they should hold these views sacred? Is it to be charged against them that, for the sake of bringing up their children in the tenets of their own religion, they are willing to make these sacrifices? Allusion has been made in the course of this debate to the relative cost to the State of Government and of Assisted schools. The figures are not far to seek. They are laid down in the report of the Inspector of Schools, and what do they prove? They prove that the Assisted schools, for producing exactly the same educational results, gauged by the same standard as the Government schools, do not receive £1 15s. per child from the public funds, while the cost in the State schools amounts to £3 10s. per child, or quite double. I am not sure about those being the exact figures, but I know that is about the proportion. How then can it be said that the State is a loser by supporting the Assisted schools? Surely if these schools turn out an article equal in every respect to the State schools, and at one half the price, the State must benefit accordingly. It has been said that we are entering into competition with the Government schools, and that by reason of the excellence of the Assisted schools the competition is an unfair one. That, surely, is a very narrow-minded view to take of the matter, even if it were true that these Assisted schools are “depleting” the State schools (as one hon. member put it). But is it a fact? I know it is not a fact in Perth, at all events, for I know that the Government schools in this city at the present time are overcrowded. The great cry, at any rate, with regard to the Government Girls’ School is that the building does not afford sufficient accommodation for the children attending it. What, then, would be the result if the Assisted schools were abolished? All the school accommodation which the Roman Catholics at present possess, and which they have provided out of their own pockets, would have to be provided out of public funds. Will any member stand up here in his place and say that would be a saving to the country? I

think I have said quite enough in answer to the wild charges levelled by the hon. member for Geraldton against the present system on the score of economy. I should like also to refer to another matter dwelt upon by the hon. member, who sought to show—but with lamentable failure—that a result of the teaching in the Roman Catholic schools is to encourage or to increase crime. I throw the vile accusation back in his face. I say it is a vile accusation to make, and it needs no answer of mine to refute such a calumny. The hon. member said he took the trouble to find out the records of the Fremantle prison, and because he found that a certain number of the unfortunate inmates professed to belong to the Roman Catholic communion, he jumped at the conclusion that it was the result of the teaching of Roman Catholic doctrines in the Assisted schools. As a matter of fact, if the hon. member was only honest enough to have gone to the trouble of ascertaining the true figures, he would probably have found that not one of these inmates had received their education in this colony at all. If he had gone a little further, he would probably have found that the reason of their being inmates of such a place at all was because they had not received that religious teaching which the Roman Catholic community regard as a vital portion of the education of their young. Of course it would not have suited the hon. member’s purpose to have prosecuted his inquiries in the direction I have indicated. He seems to have gone seeking for these figures in a sneaking sort of way, so that he might bring them up as a surprise here to-day, and so that no one might have an opportunity, before the discussion closed, of ascertaining the actual facts of the case, so as to refute his base insinuations. I have no hesitation in saying that if these figures were investigated, the result would satisfy even the most bigoted mind, that there was not a shadow of foundation in the cowardly statement that these figures were the result of the system of education prevailing in the Assisted schools of this colony. So much for the hon. member for Geraldton. I think, sir, the Government are wise in endeavouring to strike out the 25th clause of this Bill, which proposes that no Government aid be granted to any new Assisted schools. This clause deliberately aims at prevent-

ing the Roman Catholic section of the community from providing the necessary school accommodation wanted in view of our increasing population; and I think the Government are to be commended in their action in refusing to be a party to any such act of injustice and of religious intolerance and bigotry. The hon. member for Geraldton has referred to the approaching elections. He said this question will have to be fought out on the hustings. Well, sir, I shall be on the hustings, I hope, and, as my opinions on this particular question are well known, there can be no mistake or misapprehension as to the attitude which I shall be prepared to take whenever the question comes up, whether in this House or on the hustings. I have no fear, myself, as to the result. I have no fear but that those who have done me the honour of placing me in the proud position I hold to-day will again be ready to respond to my views on this subject, and to my request to elect me again to the position I now occupy. I am certain of this: whatever other differences of opinion may come between us, this will not be one of them. I am satisfied that if the electors of the colony are addressed on this subject, the answer will be that they are quite satisfied with the results achieved by the Education Act of 1871, that it is an equitable system, and a system that brought peace and concord into a community where religious intolerance and religious dissensions prevailed before its introduction.

MR. QUINLAN: I do not intend to address myself at this stage of the discussion to the provisions of the Bill; I merely wish to reply to the somewhat impertinent remarks of the hon. member for Geraldton. I regret he should have thought fit to introduce into the debate that feeling of religious animosity which did not exist until he got on his legs. I was delighted with the spirit shown by previous speakers in dealing with a subject that is calculated to arouse so much ill-feeling. I think some of his remarks were beneath contempt, and a deliberate insult to a certain section of the community. I refer particularly to his reference to the inmates of the Fremantle prison and their religious belief. He forgot to tell us whether these men were educated in this colony; I am per-

fectly satisfied that they were not. What, then, has it got to do with the system of education in force in this colony? Supposing his statement were correct, I am pretty certain if he had inquired into the nature of the charges against these men, he would have found they were minor charges. With regard to the statement that school-books were in use in the Assisted schools containing passages offensive to other denominations, I have no hesitation in saying it is perfectly untrue. The books have been approved by the Central Board, and have always been open to inspection. I remember the books which were in existence immediately after this Act was passed, and I know that those portions relating to religious matters were expunged. The hon. member has come out in his true colours on this occasion. We all knew perfectly well what his feelings were all along, but he had not the pluck to give expression to them before. I am glad that the Government intend to move the omission of the 25th clause of the Bill, and I venture to say that if this question goes to the hustings the verdict of the country, as represented in this House and another place, will be in favour of the retention of the present system. With regard to the relative cost of the two classes of schools, it is a fact which cannot be controverted that the Assisted schools cause a saving to the country of many thousand pounds annually, while the results, from an educational standpoint, are beyond question equally satisfactory, as the reports of the inspectors and of the Central Board testify. It is absurd, in the face of these facts and figures, to say that the Assisted schools cost the country as much as the State schools. In school buildings alone we have saved the Government thousands and thousands of pounds. Has not this House this very session voted many thousands of pounds for new school-houses, not a penny of which will go to an Assisted school. As to these schools entering into competition with the State schools, let any member put his hand on his heart and say that this competition interferes in any way with the efficiency of either class of schools. Competition is the life and soul of every trade, and especially of this particular trade, because in the two classes of schools the teachers are paid by results; and, if the children are not up to

the required standard, the teachers have to forfeit a considerable amount of money, which otherwise they would be entitled to. With regard to the 18th clause of the Bill, I have always been of opinion that religious instruction should be given to children attending schools. I do not care what particular religion or denomination it may be, it cannot fail to do some good. I do not hold narrow views at all on this subject; I believe that a man's conscience is about the best religion he can follow. There is a similar provision in the New South Wales Act, and I believe it has given very general satisfaction in that colony. If the clergy or ministers of religion do not choose to avail themselves of this opportunity of giving religious instruction to the children of their flocks, the onus will rest upon themselves and not upon this House. I say the clause cannot fail to do a great deal of good, if acted upon. We know that the very presence of a clergyman, no matter of what denomination, always carries a certain amount of respect. I think it was the hon. member for Geraldton who once said, when dealing with the police vote, that he believed one clergyman, morally speaking, was worth half-a-dozen policemen. That is my view likewise. I think the Government are to be congratulated upon bringing in this Bill, as it will tend to make the present system of education more acceptable to all classes. The existing Act has done good service, and the results have been highly satisfactory, when the means at our disposal are taken into consideration. I have conversed with several persons who are conversant with the systems in operation in the other colonies, and their general opinion has been that we have a better Act than any of them. I trust that this education question will be set at rest this session, and dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties. I feel sure, when people think calmly and dispassionately over the matter, they cannot help agreeing that in the present system we have a system from which excellent results have accrued. Of course there are some narrow-minded and prejudiced people who have not a good word to say for the system; but with these it is a matter of jealousy and not of principle. It has been said that the Assisted schools are only availed of by one denomination. Whose fault is that?

It is not the fault of the Act. As has been pointed out in the course of this debate, the system is open to anybody and everybody, irrespective of class or creed. Mr. Briggs at Fremantle, or Mr. Kinnear at Perth, could bring their schools under it, if they liked to submit to the conditions attached. It is therefore sheer nonsense to say that the Act was introduced for the benefit of one section of the community. This Bill, with the 25th clause out, will have my cordial support.

Motion put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HOMESTEADS BILL.

The following Message was received from the Legislative Council:—

"*Mr. Speaker,*

"The Legislative Council acquaints the Legislative Assembly that it has agreed to a Bill intituled 'An Act to provide facilities for Permanent Settlement by Free Grants of Land for Homestead Farms, and by Homestead Leases, and for other purposes,' subject to the amendments contained in the schedule annexed (*vide* "Minutes," pp. 318-321); in which amendments the Legislative Council desires the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

"*GEO. SHENTON,*

"President.

"Legislative Council Chamber,

"Perth, 10th October, 1893."

Ordered—That the consideration in committee of the Legislative Council's Message be made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House.

EXTENSION OF LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion of Sir JOHN FORREST, an extension of leave of absence for one week was granted to the hon. member for Ashburton (Mr. Burt).

RETURN RE SLEEPERS USED ON EASTERN RAILWAY.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, moved that a return be laid on the table showing—"1. Number of sleepers used by the Government on the Eastern Railway, including sidings and station yards, in 1893. 2. Price paid per sleeper.

3. Why tenders were not called for such a large work outside ordinary yearly tenders for timber." The hon. member said he might state, for the information of the House, that in the early part of the year tenders were called by the Government for the supply of timber for use on the Eastern Railway, and a certain tender was accepted. But it was never understood at the time, among those engaged in the timber industry, that such a large number of sleepers would be required to replace those taken up when the line was re-railed. Had it been known that such a large quantity would be required, the price would have been much lower than the contract price accepted, because there would have been keener competition. He believed if separate tenders had been called for this large supply of sleepers, it would have saved the colony thousands of pounds.

MR. R. F. SHOLL, in supporting the motion, considered that when there was an unforeseen demand for a large quantity of sleepers, as had been the case in this instance, it would only have been fair to other companies for the Government to have invited special tenders, which, no doubt, would have saved the colony a considerable sum of money.

Question put and passed.

EXTENSION OF TIME FOR BONUS FOR DEEP SINKING ON GOLDFIELDS.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, moved, "That in the opinion of this House it is desirable to extend the time, for a further period of 12 months, of the bonus for deep-sinking on the goldfields of the colony, on terms similar to those now in force." The hon. member said although different mining companies had taken advantage of the bonus offered by the Government last session, to a certain extent, still a great deal more remained to be done in the way of deep sinking, and he hoped that during the next twelve months, if this bonus were continued, a great deal would be done in this direction. They might, however, be sure of this: no mine would go in for deep sinking merely for the sake of a bonus of £5 a foot below a depth of 200 feet; still the bonus would be an encouragement to the mining companies to continue sinking. He was sure it would be in the interests not only of the Eastern goldfields, but

also the Northern goldfields, if this bonus were continued for another twelve months. It was a move in the right direction; and if by deep-sinking we could prove that our gold-bearing reefs extended to a great depth, and also that water was obtainable, it would be the best advertisement which the colony could possibly have. It would attract such attention to the colony that we should have a large influx of population and capital, which would more than compensate the country for this expenditure. He therefore hoped the Government would see their way clear to agree to this motion.

On the motion of MR. DEHAMEL, the debate was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at twenty minutes to 5 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 11th October, 1893.

Public Health Act Further Amendment Bill: third reading—Electoral Bill: third reading—Railways Act Amendment Bill: second reading; committee: Suspension of Standing Orders: third reading—Suspension of Standing Orders—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time and passed.

ELECTORAL BILL, 1893.

This Bill was read a third time and passed.