

## Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 11th March, 1892.

Reclamation Works, River Swan—Governors of High School Appointment Bill: third reading—Hawkers and Pedlars Bill: second reading—Gascoyne and North-West Divisions, Crown Rent Remission Bill: withdrawn—Conference between the two Houses re Error in Police Bill—Reporting and Printing "Hansard" Debates: report of Joint Committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7:30 p.m.

## PRAYERS.

## RIVER RECLAMATION WORKS, PERTH.

MR. CANNING, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works whether in view of labor being now immediately available, and that owing to the long-continued dry weather the water in the estuary was very low—two conditions favorable for prosecuting the work—the Government would forthwith begin the work of constructing the Perth embankment?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn): I presume the hon. member means the reclamation?

MR. CANNING: The work of reclamation will form the embankment.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn): The Government have not yet decided upon any definite course of action with regard to the reclamation of the foreshore of the river, but contemplate carrying out the work at an early date, if possible.

MR. CANNING: I understood the plans were prepared.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn): Plans were prepared by the late Director of Public Works, and probably some plan similar to that will be carried out; but providing plans and providing means are different things, and the Government have not made up their minds yet as to the best means.

## GOVERNORS OF HIGH SCHOOL BILL.

Read a third time, and passed.

## HAWKERS AND PEDLARS BILL.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I have to move the second reading of a bill to repeal the present law relating to hawkers and pedlars. It

will be in the recollection of the House that a short time ago a resolution was passed by the House asking the Government to deal with this subject, with a view of putting an end to the inconveniences that seem to exist generally throughout the country in connection with the granting of these licenses, more especially to people of color, Afghans and others, who seem to be making themselves very obnoxious indeed, not only in the country but in the town; and it was stated that this class of persons are the ones who chiefly obtain licenses under this Act. The Government had some difficulty in restricting the issue of licenses to others than these aliens, because many of these men, being Indians, are subjects of the British Crown, and it was not thought at all advisable to discriminate between one class of subjects and another, and say that the white man should have a license but that the man of a different color should not have one, both, as I said, being subjects of the British Crown. Consequently, after consideration of the subject, the Government have come to the conclusion that the better way would be to repeal the Hawkers Act altogether, leaving it to members who represent the country to say whether they think that would be acceptable. For my own part I do not think that hawkers are desirable or necessary in these days in the country districts; now that our means of internal communication are so enlarged, I do not think that any out-stations will find much difficulty in supplying their wants from the adjacent towns; and if these hawkers did not call at all I do not think they would be missed. People generally buy from them simply because they go to the trouble of calling, and not because they really want any of their small wares; and their absence would not occasion the slightest inconvenience to anybody. Therefore we propose to repeal the Act altogether, which seems the only method of giving practical expression to the view held by members, and the resolution they passed the other day. In the measure now before the House we except the hawking of such things as vegetables, fish, fruit, butter, and eggs, and articles of that kind, whether in town or country, and people will still be allowed to go about hawking these things; but we put

a stop to indiscriminate hawking and peddling from house to house, and homestead to homestead in the bush, of any other things that are not mentioned in the 6th section. There was no Hawkers Act in the colony for many years prior to 1882, but in that year a measure was re-enacted authorising hawking; why it was done I do not know. I do not think there was any particular call for it, and previous to that the colony was for 25 years without a Hawkers Act, and we propose now to revert to the old state of things. If there was no necessity for it in those days, I am sure there is no necessity for it now. I now move the second reading.

**MR. CANNING:** There may be some very good reasons for the introduction of this measure, but from my recollection of the other colonies and of other countries, I do not know of any place where it is illegal for hawkers to go about to sell their wares. I think there should be some restriction upon them, and that they should be licensed, on payment of a small fee; but it seems to me an unwarrantable interference with the freedom of the world we are living in, that people should be debarred from earning their living in the best way they can, so long as they do not transgress the law. Of course if this bill comes into force, they will be transgressing the statute law by hawking, though it cannot be said that they would be transgressing any moral law. I think this system of itinerary hawking from station to station is a very great convenience to residents in the bush, in districts a considerable distance from town, who are often in want of many little things for ordinary use, which these hawkers are able to supply them with. I cannot discover any good reason why, in these days, any person who chooses to follow this kind of occupation should not be allowed to pursue it, so long as they do not otherwise break the law. I must certainly vote against the bill.

**MR. A. FORREST:** There is one thing I would like to call attention to in clause 6. I find that persons who go about selling books are to be excepted under this bill. So far as my experience goes, this is the most objectionable class of hawker you come across; he won't take "no" for an answer. He will walk into your office or into your house, and he won't

go away until you give him an order. He is a perfect nuisance, and you can't get rid of him. I believe the Attorney General knows something about him, and I think that hawking books ought not to be exempted. People now can generally get all the books they want from town, either by post or by conveyance, and there is no necessity for allowing these men to pester people's life out. If they only went about in the country, I would have no objection to them, but they are the greatest nuisance in town. They come to your place with a very nice-looking book as a specimen, and they get an order, and when your book comes you find it is nothing like what you saw as a specimen. I know it, for I have been bitten myself. I do not think there is any class of hawker that is so objectionable as the book man.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion):** "Book fiend."

**MR. A. FORREST:** I do not think this bill as it now stands will do what is intended. If people are to be allowed to go about hawking certain things in the country, you will find they will not confine themselves to these particular articles, but, under the cloak of selling what this bill allows them to sell, they will also sell other things, and I do not see how you are going to prevent them. I think the bill might very well be read this day six months.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** You asked us to bring it in.

**MR. A. FORREST:** I didn't. I did not say anything against it when the resolution was moved, but I object to class legislation of this kind. I do not think it is wanted in the interests of the colony at all. If these hawkers make themselves disagreeable, surely there must be a way of getting rid of them. I object to the bill. It debars Europeans and our own people from making an honest living, and I do not see why we should interfere with them so long as they keep to the law.

**MR. R. F. SHOLL:** I notice in subsection 2 of clause 6 that the bill does not apply to hawkers of certain articles, and among them "brooms." I do not see what particular virtue there can be in brooms. If a man is allowed to hawk brooms I do not see why he should not also be allowed to hawk tin pots.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt):** The hon. member can deal with this matter in committee.

**MR. HARPER:** I do not think that the hon. members for East Perth and for West Kimberley, who have objected to the bill, quite appreciate the object which the bill is meant to meet. It is intended to put down what is a nuisance, particularly in country districts, where these Indian hawkers make themselves very objectionable, especially to the women folk in isolated places, whom they intimidate into purchasing wares which they really do not want. As to hawkers of European extraction, I do not think they are very numerous, nor are they of a very high class, generally speaking, so far as this colony is concerned. It is well known that under the pretence of hawking they do a great deal in the way of sly-grog selling; and, to the best of my recollection, that was the reason the Hawkers Act was repealed some years ago. These hawkers were in the habit of going about the country, and visiting timber stations and settlers' places, and selling spirits of a very inferior quality to the men, and caused a great deal of mischief and loss to the employers, and only did harm to the men themselves. That was why the Act was repealed. As soon as it was re-enacted the same practice was revived, and I am sure it cannot be said that it is in the interests of the community that it should continue. The class is a very small one; I do not suppose there are a couple of dozen of European hawkers in the whole colony, and it appears to me that for the sake of these few, some hon. members would compel country residents to submit to a great deal of annoyance from the Afghans, and other colored races, who are now the class chiefly engaged in hawking about the country. The bill has my cordial support.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** The Government has brought in this bill at the request of the House. There was a resolution passed a few days ago, unanimously I believe, in favor of legislating in this direction, and, in obedience to that request, the Government have introduced this measure. For my own part I do not think that hawking and hawkers are a necessity in this colony at the present time; at the same time I must say

my sympathies are largely with what has fallen from the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. Canning) and the hon. member for West Kimberley. I do not like the idea of interfering with any man making an honest living, and, so far as that goes, I am averse to preventing men from earning a livelihood by hawking. Still there seems a general idea that there is no necessity for it, and that these men are not required, and therefore probably no great hardship will be done by abolishing the Hawkers Act. But with reference to the Indian hawkers, of which a great deal has been said, I must say this of them, that, so far as my experience of them goes, in town, I have heard that they are a very civil people, and I think we must also commend them for their great industry. They carry their wares on their backs all over the country, and it must be pretty hard work for them, and so far as I know they sell their wares fairly cheap, and I must say I think they deserve all they get. This bill of course will do away with this class of hawkers, and the question we have to consider is whether this is likely to do the colony any injury. I do not believe it will, although it will do away with the occupation of these people, and, as they will not be able to live in the colony, I suppose the result will be they will go somewhere else where hawking is allowed.

**MR. HARPER:** Why can't they work?

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** They are not used to it. They have not been brought up to manual labor. They are a very intelligent people, and they are very polite and civil (so far as I have had an opportunity of judging, and I have made inquiries in my own household). If they annoy people in the country, as we have been told they do, they do not seem to do so in town. They do not look a very truculent class, or men who would use threats and violence; as a rule, they seem to be an effeminate class of people, very civil and very polite, but not used to what is called manual labor. Still I cannot see that there is any necessity for them in this country now, when we have such frequent means of communication, and stores all over the colony. No doubt it is an annoyance to have these men coming to pester you to buy their wares, even when they are civil—in fact, I think the more civil and polite they are

the more difficult it is to get rid of them, and the more annoying they are; and people feel compelled to buy what they don't want, more out of good nature, because they have come a long distance, than because they really want their wares. Altogether I think no great harm will be done—no harm at all to the community—in doing away with this class of hawking altogether. It will be seen that it is not proposed to interfere with any licenses now in existence; these will be allowed to run out their term to the end of the year, when no more licenses will be issued.

MR. BAKER: I am thoroughly opposed to these Indian hawkers. As a rule, as the Premier says, they are civil enough when in town; they know whom to be civil to, and when they know the police are within call. But once they get out into the country, they begin to show their insolence, with their daggers and revolvers in their belts, and frighten poor women into buying what they don't want. They are a nuisance, in fact. I have seen it, in my travels about the country. There is no necessity we should have them here at all to intimidate our women folk.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Fence them in with a wire fence.

MR. BAKER: No; I don't think they are worth fencing in. Let them go.

MR. SIMPSON: I am certainly in favor of the bill before the House. One of the principal objections I have to these alien hawkers is that they compete unduly, and under more favorable conditions, with our own storekeepers, whose whole interests are wrapped up in the colony, who have made the colony their home, and who spend their earnings in the colony. There is no necessity whatever for these colored men to travel about the country with their wares, striking terror into lonely women and children. It was only the other day that I read in a paper of a case which is now occupying a Victorian court, where two of these fellows went to a house with their packs, in a country place, and they threw a woman down in her own house, snatched her purse away from her, and away they went. They generally take care to be about when the men of the household are away, and then intimidate the women to buy what they have no necessity for. Beyond that, as I have

said, they do not compete on equal terms with our own storekeepers, who have rents to pay and other charges which these men are exempt from.

MR. QUINLAN: I intend to support the bill for the reasons pointed out by one or two previous speakers, one being that this hawking business unduly interferes with legitimate trade, and the other is that there is no necessity for it. The goods they sell are not necessities, and country people, in these days of frequent communication, can always get what they want from stores in the nearest town. Some years ago, when we had no railways, these men may have served some useful purpose, but in these days there is no necessity for them at all.

Motion—put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### GASCOYNE AND NORTH-WEST DIVISIONS CROWN RENT REMISSION BILL.

##### ADJOURNED DEBATE.

On the Order of the Day for the resumption of the debate upon the Premier's motion for discharging the Order of the Day for the second reading of the Gascoyne and North-West Divisions Crown Rent Remission Bill,—

MR. SIMPSON said: I am sorry to learn from the head of the Ministry that the Government consider it expedient to withdraw this bill from the consideration of the House,—not that I entirely agree with every feature of the bill as presented to the House, but because I think that in another form the assistance proposed to be given to our Northern settlers would be likely to prove more acceptable. I am one of those who desire to do something more practical than to merely express our sympathy with these settlers in their distress, but, from what I have been able to gather from the people who are more particularly concerned, they do not ask for a remission of their rents; their idea, rather, is that the payment of their rents should be deferred until they are in a better position to pay them. They are in the position of a man in business who has given a bill or a promissory note payable at a certain date, but who, finding he is unable, through some unforeseen calamity, to meet it at maturity, asks to have it renewed, in order to enable him to recover from his misfortune and to be

able to pay it at some future date. This, I think, is just the position of these unfortunate settlers with their rents. They do not ask for a remission, but for a longer period of grace in which to pay them, so that they may have a chance of recovering their losses. I think if the Government could see their way to allow this bill to go into committee, the object in view could be managed in some such way as this: say that the payment of the next two years' rent by the settlers who have been affected by the drought were to be deferred, and extended over a period, say, of ten years. That is to say, in the event of the man who has £100 a year rent to pay, which would come to £200 in two years, let the payment of that two years' rent be spread over the next ten years, by adding £20 a year to his usual rent. I think that would be a practical way of giving assistance to those who are afflicted with the drought, and certainly a more acceptable form of relief than that proposed by the bill. I do not see that the remission of rent for this particular year granted in the way proposed by this bill would save any particular settler from absolute ruin. Bad as they are, I do not think things have come to such a pass as that,—that the remission of a year's rent would be the salvation of any of these men financially. I do not think it is the desire of such a manly body of men as our Northern settlers and those who take up pastoral country in this colony to come to this House *in formâ pauperis*, or to any financial institution they may be associated with. These men are simply in the position of men who have bravely done their level best to overcome their difficulties, but find that circumstances over which they have absolutely no control have been too much for them, and under the circumstances they ask for some little consideration until they are able to recover themselves; and I think that assistance in the way I have suggested would give them a little more heart to face the future, in the hope of there being brighter times in store for them. It would give them an opportunity of pulling through their present difficulties, and, in my opinion, give them a great deal more practical assistance than the remission of a year's rent. I think it would be establishing an extremely

unwise precedent and a very dangerous principle if it went forth that, once a contract were entered into with the Crown like these pastoral lessees have entered into, political influence could be brought to bear to induce the Crown to forego the conditions of that contract. So far as I have seen, there is no desire on the part of the Northern lessees to ask the Crown to do any such thing for them, and, as I said, it would be establishing a vicious principle. I remember, years ago, in New South Wales, that when a number of selectors had taken up land on certain terms in that colony, under the existing land regulations, and an effort was made in Parliament to enable these selectors to get rid of the necessity of paying the interest accruing on their selections, the principle was strongly opposed at the time on the ground that it would be unwise to establish such a principle, even to the extent of a remission of the interest only. In South Australia, too, when agricultural land was sold by public auction, and people bought land (without really knowing the conditions they had to face) at a price considerably in advance of what they otherwise would have done, and when it was afterwards discovered that they had paid too much, and that it was impossible to farm profitably under the conditions they had made, the result was that the Government had to abrogate all those sales, and start the whole thing over again, and it gave rise to a great deal of confusion and trouble. I think this principle of abrogating the conditions of a contract made with the Crown and their lessees is treading on very dangerous ground, and I think if the Ministry could see their way to adopt some such course as I have suggested, it would meet the views of this House, and while extending practical sympathy to our settlers would at the same time avoid the dangerous element I have referred to. It would then not be an absolute remission of the payment of the rent due, but simply affording them a reasonable time to recover themselves. I believe if the Government could take that into consideration it would probably meet with the approval of a good many members of this House, and at the same time be more acceptable to the general body of settlers.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I should like to say a word or two upon this question before it passes from us, more particularly as I represent one of these Northern constituencies. The Premier has already stated the reasons for the Government introducing this measure in the first instance, and I need not remind the House again of what took place. But I would like to say—as will be seen from the bill itself—that the idea was not simply to remit *en bloc* the whole of the rents, but only the rents of those lessees who had complied with the conditions of the land regulations as to stocking the country. There is, no doubt, a quantity of land held, and has been held for years, by mere speculators, without any attempt in any way to place a single head of stock on the land, and who simply hold it in the hope of obtaining a better price. That class of speculators would have been excluded from the benefit of this measure, because (under a clause of the bill) before they could have claimed any remission of rent they would have had to have made a statutory declaration and prove to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Crown Lands that they had complied with the stocking conditions by having on their land ten head of sheep or one head of large stock for every 1,000 acres leased by them. The hon. member for the DeGrey—who I am sorry not to see here to-day, and who, I think, may be called the prime mover in this matter,—representing as he does a Northern constituency, has all along contended, and contended so last night again, that the better way to afford assistance to the Northern settlers would be to do away with that regulation under which their rents are to be increased during the second and third terms of their leases. The hon. member laid stress on the fact that the proposition to remit the rents was objectionable; he went on the conception that the granting of pecuniary assistance was not a nice way of helping the settlers, and that it would be distasteful to the settlers themselves to receive a money grant, that it would look too much as if they were putting themselves in the position of paupers, coming to the Government with an open hand begging for a grant of money. The hon. member said

it would be better than that method of assisting them to repeal the regulation under which the rent of their leases is to be increased after the year 1894 for a term of seven years, and afterwards further increased for another term of seven years. The hon. member also said he knew perfectly well what he was about when he stated this. I have no doubt he did know perfectly well what he was about; and I suppose every member of this House could see at once that it would be far preferable to these lessees to have their rents reduced for 14 years than it would be to share in this remission of rents for one year only. In other words, it would be far more advantageous to take their proportion of the reduction of their rents for 14 years at the rate of £10,000 or £12,000 a year, than it would be to take their proportion of the £25,000 which would about represent the total remission of rents for this one year. Therefore, when the hon. member was opposing the proposal to remit the rents for this year, it was because he thought he saw his way to something infinitely better, and not simply that it was not a nice thing to accept a money grant in the shape of a remission of your rent, and to come to the Government in the shape of a pauper, but because the hon. member was seeking something that was infinitely more valuable. We could all see that, though the hon. member was careful not to let it out. I am not dealing now with the wisdom of the regulations which impose an increase of rent upon these lands every seven years. When these land regulations were before the House, years ago—I may have been wrong, but my personal contention all along was that these lands would never bear this increased rent; and I fail to see now why the land in these particular districts should have been mulct in such high rents during the second and third terms of the lease, as compared with other districts. I pointed out at the time, and I allude to the fact again, that in the early days of settlement at the North we allowed people to have the land without paying any rent at all for the first three years, upon certain conditions; and it is notorious to everyone who knows the history of settlement at the North that it has been only those stations that were taken up under those conditions that

have ever made any solid progress at all, or even made both ends meet. Other stations have never paid, and I question whether they ever will pay. And why, in the face of these facts, this extra rent was put on, I never could conceive. It is very certain they will never bear this additional burden. Coming back to the question before us, I quite agree with the hon. member for the Swan (Mr. Loton) and the hon. member for the Moore (Mr. Randell) that the question we have to consider now is what relief is best to be offered to these distressed settlers at the present time; and, in my judgment, present relief could only be effected by remitting their rents for the present year, as those hon. members suggested; because next year may be a good year, and also the year after, whereas we know that after the past two years the distress is very severe now, and the only thing that could tend to relieve that distress at the present moment, in my opinion, would be the remission of the rent now due. But, as I said before, I think, and am more than ever confirmed in this opinion, that this subject of the remission of rents is certainly a difficult one. It is a difficult one because we cannot meet every particular case—we cannot discriminate between one case and another. There are sure to be some cases of hardship outside the limits of these two districts, and although they may not suffer from this drought in the same degree, still they are suffering, as there are others suffering in other parts of the colony. People just on the edge of the districts which this bill proposed to assist are just as badly affected as those within their boundary, but these would be entirely left out, under the proposition now before the House. Then again, to complicate the position, some of the lessees within these districts have already paid up their rents, since this measure was first mooted,—it may be said perhaps by way of protest against the proposed relief; and, unless we find a large measure of unanimity in a matter of this kind, it increases the difficulty of the Government very much. As I say, some of these lessees, either to show that they do not want assistance or that their losses have not been more than they can bear, paid their rents when it became due on the 1st March, since this subject

was first brought before this House. The hon. member for West Kimberley likened the Government to a landlord, in this matter; but I do not think that analogy applies in this case, because a landlord would be in a position to interview individual tenants and deal with individual cases, remitting a certain percentage of the rent in some cases, and less or more in other cases. But the Government cannot do that here, unless we established a Commission Court to inquire into every case in the two districts concerned. Therefore, it must be a general remission of rents all round or none at all; and it cannot be said that the Government are exactly in the position a private landlord would be in, with distress among his tenants, where he could discriminate between individual cases. The Government here are bound by the colony's Land Regulations, whereas ordinary landlords are not so bound; and we have to get the authority of this House before we can deal with the subject, and the difficulty is to get any other authority than that given by some general measure for the remission of rents all round. The hon. member for Northam pointed out—and he is a man who thinks well on these subjects—that in his judgment there were three classes of people to be dealt with, some who have only suffered in a minor or first degree; others who have suffered in a second degree, and others who have suffered in a third degree. This shows the great difficulty of dealing with the matter. Then again, as has been said, it is rather a delicate question, looking at the position of many members in this House in their relation to the districts affected. I may say that I, for one, do not think that because members of this House or members of the Government are themselves personally interested that they should push away this question from them. If that was to be allowed to influence the minds of members who are interested, in what position would our constituents be? If their representative, because he happened to be personally interested were to completely efface himself, what would become of his constituents? My constituents at the North have directed me to advance and protect their interests, so far as I can, as their representative in this House; and

when I find that their interests are more acutely assailed and affected perhaps than those of any other constituency in the colony, is it for me, their representative, to say, "I must do nothing for you, because I am myself personally interested." I take it that the Northern constituencies have selected as their representatives those who have some knowledge of their circumstances and their daily life, and who have interests in common with them, or identical, and if because of that identity of interests, their constituents are to be unrepresented in this House, then I say those constituencies are placed under a very grave injustice indeed. If this question had come to a vote, I should myself not have refrained from voting, or I should have endeavored to vote, and have left the responsibility of preventing me on those who sought under the rules of the House to compel me from voting. I consider it would be a dereliction of duty on the part of any member, simply because his interests were identified with the interests of his constituents to refrain from voting when those interests were menaced or affected. As I said, I should not hesitate to vote myself, or to offer to vote, and if I were prevented I should throw the responsibility on those who prevented me. I have very grave doubt myself whether the right of members who are personally interested in the North and who represent Northern interests, could have been objected to, or challenged; if it could, it must have been considered that they were voting simply for their own interests and not in the interests of their constituents. Still, as I said, this makes the consideration of this subject a delicate one, apart from the difficulty that surrounds it. Now the position of the Government is that this bill should be withdrawn. The Government have found, as the Premier has told the House, that there has been apparently a revulsion of feeling on the part of members, or, to put it in plainer language, that the bill would not be carried. I have felt all along that it was a difficult and a delicate subject, which the Government did not care to approach, and unless we could have found a large measure of unanimity, I do not think there was any occasion for the Government to press it, and then lose it, or, what would have been equally

disastrous, have only carried a measure like this by a majority of only one or two, especially under the circumstances in which we were placed. That something should be done for the relief of the distress in the North I have no doubt whatever, and, during the recess, between this and next session of Parliament, there will be ample time to obtain all information as to the extent of this distress. At present we would be taking rather a leap in the dark, though of course some of us pretty well know exactly the extent of it. But many members of the House and people outside are not at present informed as they might be of the extent of the distress at the North; and before next session—for, as the Government have told you, they do not propose to hold another session until about the end of December—before next year, before these rents will be payable, fuller information may be obtained from every station in these districts as to the extent of their losses, which, I am afraid, will be found far more appalling than people think at the present time; and this information will be laid before the House at the disposal of any member who desires to move in the direction of assisting these Northern settlers. Therefore, it is not to be supposed, that, because this bill is withdrawn no relief whatever will be afforded. A great deal has been said about the present action of the Government having been brought about by reason of certain leading articles and letters that have appeared in the newspapers. One member was good enough to say he did not think that it affected the Attorney General. I would not like to say that newspapers do not affect me; they certainly amuse me very often. It was only the other day I found from one of them that I had made a long speech in the House when I was not in the House at all. Of course I only laughed at it. As I said the other day, newspapers have a great deal to do, and as a rule I am not prepared to say they do not do it as well as might be expected under all the circumstances. They follow their vocation, and I follow mine. I leave them alone, and, if they don't leave me alone,—well, I don't think I would disturb them. But to say that the action of the Government in this matter was induced by what has been said in the

newspapers is not correct, although it may have some influence on the minds of some. But we felt the difficulty of the position from the very first, and, as I pointed out, that difficulty was increased the more we went into the matter, and found that there were cases outside these particular districts which we could not reach by this bill, also that there were cases within these districts which called for a larger measure of assistance than others. There was also the delicacy of the position, with members in the House personally interested, and the fact of its being noised abroad that objection would be taken to their voting; and considering all things, I think myself that the Government had no occasion to regret the withdrawal of the bill now before the House. I do not know that I need say anything more at the present moment on the subject. That something will be done in the way of affording relief to the settlers of the North I am in hopes; but the Government have not yet considered what further steps may be taken hereafter. I am sure they will very anxiously consider the subject, after having gained information which we do not at present possess, and which I think it would be safer to proceed upon.

MR. HARPER: I rise to express my approval of the action of the Government in withdrawing this bill, for I do not consider that the result of it would have been that which a State ought to do. It would no doubt prove of great benefit to a good many, but it would be a benefit which they had no right to claim from the State. It is generally accepted, I think, that it is desirable, if possible, that something should be done towards meeting the great calamity which has overtaken our Northern settlers particularly; and, as one of those who sat on the committee that framed the regulations which are now the land laws of the colony, I would just like to mention one or two circumstances which I know operated in the minds, not only of members of the committee, but also of members of the Legislature, in passing those regulations, dealing with the land in these Northern districts. Prior to the framing and passing of them there had been a succession of very fair seasons in the North, and the prospects of stock-raisers appeared to be very good

indeed. The price of wool at that time was very considerably higher than it is at present, and, if my memory serves me, about the very time that these regulations were passed fat sheep from these districts realised in the market here something like 30s. a head, whereas just prior to the present drought the price of sheep from the North would not stand the cost of transit. Therefore it is obvious that the conditions of the pastoral industry are very much altered now from what they were when these regulations were framed. The Attorney General states he has always been of opinion that the rents were originally fixed too high for the second and third terms of the leases, and I may say that there were many members of the select committee, and of the House, who probably shared his opinion. But the opinion of the majority, looking at the success which, up to that time, so far as the seasons were concerned, had attended the pastoral industry up in the North, and also at the prospective value of the leases, was that the rents were not fixed too high. But, as I say, circumstances have very materially altered since, and I think it would be a very wise and statesmanlike proceeding if the Government, during the recess, were to take the best opportunities they can of thoroughly examining into the whole of the circumstances and surroundings of this industry at the North, and see whether some recommendations could not be made at the next session of the House dealing with the whole subject. I think that would be more likely to provide a permanent and satisfactory settlement of the difficulties than any attempt to deal with them in a temporary manner. It is certainly quite open to argument whether this should not be done in the interests of the State as well as in the interests of the settlers. I think it is in that light that we should look at the question, and not alone in the interests of those who are immediately concerned. It is our duty to look at it in the interests of the State, because if the Government compel these lessees to pay an increased rent at the end of the present term it certainly must have the effect of reducing, enormously, the capital value of these leases, and it will not be to the interests of the State that this should be the case. Even now

not only are the unstocked leases unsaleable at the present time, but the stocked land is also unsaleable, and has been for some considerable time past. This is a state of things which the State may well take into consideration; and if the Government, instead of simply trusting to the chapter of accidents, will, during the recess, make some effort to ascertain the actual condition of this important industry, and the position of those who are engaged in it, I think they will be acting in the interests of the colony; and, with the information thus gained, we shall be in a position to discuss this question of relief in a clearer light when this House meets again next session.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** Before the debate closes I should like to say one or two words with reference to what some hon. members said last evening, more especially in reference to a statement which I made, and which, probably, may not have been altogether correct in the eyes of some members. Still it was my opinion, and it is still my opinion, that there *has* been a revulsion of feeling, both in this House and outside this House, with regard to this matter. I am certain that statement is perfectly correct. This change of feeling may be accounted for, perhaps, by the fact that we have recently had fine rains in these Northern parts of the colony. We know that in the DeGrey River country they have had a great flood, and that other parts have been favored with passing showers, which has all tended to make members of this House, and the public generally I think, less inclined to deal with this matter in the way the Government proposed to deal with it in this bill. That is my opinion, and that is what I intended to say last evening. I was surprised—very much surprised—and I am sure every other member of the House must have been surprised—at the action taken by the hon. member for York, who, not only on this occasion, but on many other occasions since I have had the honor of being in this House, has always run a tilt against the Northern parts of the colony; and especially when the hon. member for West Kimberley the other day brought forward a motion that something should be done in the way of a remission of rents this session, nothing could have been stronger, nothing could

have been more definite than his language on that occasion. Although I have not his words before me, still I may say that he led us to believe that he was altogether opposed to the motion; and I think that a great deal of the opposition to assisting the Northern settlers at the present time is due to the attitude which the hon. member for York took up on this question, and which he has not hesitated to proclaim far and wide on all and every possible occasion. How then must all members have been surprised last evening, when, having heard that the Government did not intend to proceed further with the bill, he at once goes and twits us with a change of front, and that he himself having said what he had to say did not intend to oppose it. I reminded him that he had told me outside that he intended to challenge every member's vote, because he said we were interested. I suppose I had no right to make that remark, being contrary to Parliamentary practice; but it was the absolute truth, for all that. It was not only said to me privately, but before all members of this House. The hon. member, I say, has changed round completely. If I were inclined to insinuate motives (which I do not wish to), I should say that if we had not expressed our intention to withdraw the bill he would not have made the speech he did last night; but, because we asked to withdraw it for the present, he charged us with a change of front, and said that he himself did not intend to oppose it any further. I think the hon. member's own action in regard to this matter has been most inconsistent. He reminds me of dancing Jim Crow, with his

"Wheel about and turn about and do just so."

That's how it is with the hon. member for York; first one way, and then another way, and then another way again. He also charged the Government with having been influenced altogether by the comments of the Press. Well, I myself have nothing at all to say against the Press. I believe it has a great influence, in this community and in every community; and to say that it has not would be saying what many people do say but what very few believe. But I can certainly say this, that the Press has not unduly influenced the Government in this matter. We have been influenced by other con-

siderations besides those put forward by the Press. As I have said, I value the Press, and acknowledge the influence of the Press, not only in this colony but throughout the world. It is no use anyone saying he does not value it, because he is simply saying what is not the usual opinion. The Press is part of our social system. The influence of the Press in these days is acknowledged everywhere all over the world. Even in Western Australia, I believe the Press here has considerable influence, which I am very willing to acknowledge. But to say that we were influenced by it in this matter, and that the action of the Press made us withdraw this bill, is far away from the fact; I entirely deny it. I think I informed the House last night of the reasons that actuated us, but I will again repeat them. First of all, we thought we would not carry this bill if we pressed it; a great many of the supporters of the Government, those who are in entire sympathy with us on most subjects, did not wish this bill pressed at the present time, and, as you know, the Government were never much in favor of it. We were not inclined to it at the beginning, and we brought it forward at the request of both Houses of Parliament. They did not dictate the terms of the bill, but they asked us to bring forward some measure to alleviate the distress at the North; and this, we considered, was the best way to do it. Another reason that very largely influenced the action of the Government in withdrawing the bill was this: that we were determined not to insist upon payment of these rents until the end of the year, and that before that time there would be another meeting of Parliament, and there would be plenty of time then to deal with the question. We thought we would then be in possession of much more information as to the actual state of affairs, whether the drought had broken up for good, the extent of the losses sustained, and be in a far better position than we are in now for dealing with the question; and in the meantime no one would be injured in the slightest way, because no rents would have to be paid by these settlers who are in such distress, and there would be plenty of time to deal with the matter quite as well and better than we can deal with it at the present time. I can only

say that I agree with every word that my hon. colleague the Attorney General says as to the difficulty the Government felt themselves in with reference to this matter. Of course I am not aware what would have been the action of the House or of individual members of the House, except what I had heard, that they intended to challenge the vote of every member interested in these Northern lands; and, if they had done that, most of the members of the Government—three at any rate—would have been subject to challenge. That was a position I, for my part, did not care for. I had no desire personally to vote on this matter, except as a representative of the people. I have no desire at all to take part in this distribution of relief, or in any way to benefit by it, personally. But in dealing with it on general terms, and as one of general principle, as the Attorney General said, we could not discriminate between those who required assistance and those who did not; and if any assistance was given at all it would have to be by some general measure. Having said this, I hope the House will now agree to withdraw the bill. They may feel sure of this, that, when next session comes, the Government and this House will be in a far better position to deal with the matter than they are now, and, during that time, no rent need be paid, unless people feel inclined to do so. Question put—That the bill be discharged.

Agreed to on the voices.

#### ERROR IN THE POLICE BILL.

At 25 minutes past three o'clock, MR. SPEAKER announced to the House that he would leave the chair for a short time, in consequence of the Conference to be held between the Committees of the two Houses respecting an error which had occurred in the Police Bill.

At a quarter to four o'clock, p.m., Mr. Speaker having resumed the chair,—

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) read to the House the following Report:—

"The Conference reports that having inspected the Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly with relation to any proceedings upon a Bill intituled 'An Act to consolidate and amend the

Law relating to the Police in Western Australia,' they find that on Thursday, January 21st, when in Committee on the said Bill, an amendment was proposed, and carried, in clause 96, to strike out sub-clause 18, which amendment was not included in the schedule of amendments forwarded to the Legislative Council in Message No. 17.

"The Conference recommends that the Legislative Council give their concurrence to the amendment which was omitted from the schedule in Message No. 17, viz., 'To strike out sub-clause 18, in clause 96, and that the Clerk of the Parliaments be authorised by writing under the hands of the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to make the necessary correction in the Bill before presenting it to His Excellency the Administrator for Her Majesty's assent.'"

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved that the Report be adopted.

Question—put and passed.

Subsequently, the following Message was received from the Legislative Council:

"The Legislative Council informs the Legislative Assembly that it has this day passed the following Resolution:—

'That the Council concurs in the amendment omitted from the schedule of amendments to the Police Bill, forwarded by the Assembly in its Message number 17—namely, to strike out sub-clause 18 in clause 96—and desires the President, in writing under his hand, to authorise the Clerk of Parliaments to make the necessary correction in the Bill before presenting it to His Excellency the Administrator for Her Majesty's assent.'

"Legislative Council Chamber, 11th March, 1892."

"HANSARD" DEBATES: REPORTING AND PRINTING OF.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I beg to move "That the report of the Joint Standing Orders Committee of the Legislature, on the question of the reporting and printing of the *Hansard* debates, be agreed to." This report has been laid on the table for a week or ten

days, and no doubt members have made themselves cognisant with it. I do not think at this moment I need read it; it relates to the staff of the reporters for each House and the organisation of that staff.

Motion put and passed.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 4 o'clock, p.m.

### Legislative Council,

Monday, 14th March, 1892.

Game Bill: committee's report—Appropriation Bill: second reading: in committee—Fremantle Harbor Works: Legislative Assembly's message on—Geraldton-Mullewa Railway: Legislative Assembly's message on—King George's Sound Garrison Discipline Bill: second reading: adjourned debate—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Sir T. Cockburn-Campbell, Bart.) took the chair at 8 o'clock.

#### PRAYERS.

#### GAME BILL.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Shenton): I have to move that the report of the committee on message No. 38 from the Legislative Assembly be adopted.

THE HON. J. W. HACKETT: I rise to move that the following words be added: "Provided that the Legislative Assembly agree to the insertion of the words 'last mentioned' before 'person' in the sixth line, and 'first mentioned' before 'person' in the seventh line of the said clause."

Question—put and passed.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL.

#### SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Shenton): I have now to move the second reading of this bill, which is the usual measure Parliament is asked to