

companies without we had offices outside the colony. What, he would ask, would be the result? In all such matters as these people must look after their own interests, and, therefore, he thought the matter brought forward by the hon. member had better be left alone.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said he was not cognisant of the facts which had induced the hon. member to table the motion before the House; but generally he thought it would be wise if these foreign companies had offices in this colony, so that shares could be registered and other matters attended to. Persons in this colony holding shares in Adelaide companies which carried on business at Yilgarn, for instance, had the greatest trouble to find out what was going on. Any information was first sent to South Australia, and it was only after it was generally known there that it was sent on here. Of course it might be said that people should not invest their money in companies which had no office here; but that was not the question at the present time. He did not think the matter would be a very difficult one to deal with, and the Government, if they took the matter in hand, could soon bring about what was a very general desire on the part of those who invested in mining scrip.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:40 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 17th December, 1891.

Petition—Drought at the North—Yilgarn Railway: Survey between Beverley and Southern Cross—Agent General: Appointment of—Tariff Amendment Bill—Removal of Fences at Greenough—Increased Police Protection to Inland Stations—Soundings at Rous Head—Property Qualification for Members of the Legislative Assembly—Tidal Locks—Mineral Lands Bill: third reading—Northam-Southern Cross Railway Bill: second reading: referred to Select Committee—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PETITION: DISCOVERY OF KIMBERLEY GOLDFIELDS.

MR. A. FORREST brought up a petition signed by Messrs. Slattery, Hall and others, which, on the motion of the hon. member, was read to the House. The petitioners alleged that, being the discoverers of the Kimberley Goldfields, they were entitled to the reward payable by the Government in terms of a proclamation. The petition stated that part of the reward had been paid, but that the balance had been refused. It further alleged that the petitioners had endeavored to prosecute their claim to the whole of the reward through the courts of the colony, but that the Government had refused to submit their petition of right to the Supreme Court for trial, and they now prayed the House on the subject, with a view to obtaining the balance of the reward.

THE SPEAKER, after the petition had been read, said: There are two irregularities in connection with this petition, and therefore I do not think any notice can be taken of it by the House. In the first place the petition is one asking for a grant of money, and one of our Rules says that no such petition shall be received until it is first approved by the Crown. I should also like to call attention to Standing Order 96, which says that "every member presenting a petition to the House shall affix his name at the beginning thereof, with the number of signatures, and shall certify thereon that the same is in conformity with the Rules of the House." In future I would ask hon. members to observe this rule before presenting petitions. I do not

think that the House can take any further action on this petition because it is irregular in form, and it has been irregularly presented.

MR. PARKER: The petition having been presented, I think there should now be a motion expunging all reference to it.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, it would be as well if that were done.

MR. PARKER: Then I move that all reference to this petition on the Minutes be expunged.

Question—put and passed.

DROUGHT AT THE NORTH: INCREASE OF RENTALS.

MR. RICHARDSON: I have to ask, Whether, in view of the experience afforded by the present disastrous drought in the Northern and Gascoyne Districts—causing such heavy losses to the settlers, thereby bringing ruin to many and greatly reducing the profits of sheep husbandry to all—the Government would consent to introduce a Bill repealing Clauses 67, 68, 69, 70, and 71 of the Land Regulations of 1887 (and any other clauses rendered necessary by such repeal), and which clauses provide for an increase of the present rentals after the first seven years of the leases; such Bill to provide that the present rentals shall not be increased during the tenure of the lease.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government do not propose introducing a measure on the subject at present. The second term of leases, which carries additional rent, does not begin till 1894, and it is considered premature to deal with the question so long beforehand.

YILGARN RAILWAY—BEVERLEY-SOUTHERN CROSS SURVEY.

MR. DE HAMEL: I have to ask the Premier, Whether the Government have, in accordance with the terms of the motion passed by this House on the 23rd of February last, caused a careful examination to be made of the country lying between Beverley and Southern Cross; and, if so, when and by whom? And what was the nature and duration of such survey? And have the Government received any written report on the points mentioned in the said motion?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn): An examination of the country between Beverley to about the 45-mile peg on the line surveyed from York to Yilgarn was made by Mr. C. E. May, last month. A section of the route followed was obtained by barometric observations, and it was found to be distinctly inferior, from an engineering construction point of view, to the York and Northam lines. The Engineer-in-Chief's report on Mr. May's is already upon the table of the House. Mr. May's report I now lay upon the table.

THE SPEAKER: I think it would be a great convenience if members would address their questions to the Minister controlling the department they wish the information from. It will now appear on our Minutes that a question has been asked of the Premier which has been answered by the Commissioner of Railways.

AGENT GENERAL—APPOINTMENT OF.

MR. PARKER: I have to ask the Premier, What, if any, arrangement has been made by the Government with respect to appointing an Agent General for the Colony; and, if an appointment has been made, the name of the gentleman selected to fill the office.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government has not yet appointed an Agent General, but will do so as soon as practicable.

TARIFF AMENDMENT BILL.

MR. PARKER: Does the Government propose, this session, to introduce a bill dealing with the Tariff?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government has no intention of dealing with the Tariff this session.

REMOVAL OF FENCES AT GREENOUGH.

MR. TRAYLEN: I beg to ask, Whether the Government would insist on the removal of certain fences placed by the contractor for the Midland Railway across the public roads at South Greenough, known as "Wakeford" and "Walter" roads, respectively; and would also have proper crossings made.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn): The Engineer to the Company met Mr. Clinch,

the Chairman of the Greenough Roads Board, on November 28th, at my express invitation, when the question of these two roads was dealt with. It was then arranged that a level crossing be put in at cross road leading into Walter road. In regard to Wakeford road, a diversion of the original road—which intersected the railway at a heavy bank—was agreed to, the selection and proposal coming from the Chairman of the Board. At this spot (which is on Government land) a level crossing is ordered to be put in. The Midland Company have at all times met the wishes of the settlers in regard to roads and crossings.

INCREASED POLICE PROTECTION TO INLAND STATIONS.

MR. TRAYLEN: In accordance with notice, I ask, Whether, in view of the occasional loss of life and frequent loss of property, the Government could make it practicable to increase the amount of police protection to inland stations.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government propose on the Estimates of 1892 to make further provision for police protection for inland stations.

SOUNDINGS AT ROUS' HEAD.

MR. RANDELL: I have to ask the Hon. the Director of Public Works, Whether certain soundings and plans had not recently been taken off "Rous Head," Fremantle; and if so, would such be laid on the table of this House at an early date.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn): The Government propose, as soon as possible, to place on the table maps and drawings showing the works proposed to be undertaken at Owen's Anchorage, and they will at the same time submit to the House all the information in their possession with reference to the mouth of the River Swan, with plans showing borings, &c.

PROPERTY QUALIFICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

MR. CANNING: I now move, sir, "That in the opinion of this House the property qualification for members of the Legislative Assembly ought to be at once abolished." This resolution will, I

venture to hope, commend itself to the consideration of hon. members generally, and especially to those who, at the general election, expressed themselves in favor of the principle involved in the resolution. Moreover, since the general election and the assembling of Parliament many things have occurred to make it manifest that, in order that the people of the colony may be fully and fairly represented in the Legislature, the property qualification for members of this House should be abolished. So far as I am concerned, I declare at the outset that I do not wish to make this a party question. I do not bring it forward with the slightest wish or intention to embarrass the Government, or to impede the transaction of any other public business, and I maintain that the question is in itself so simple, and embodies a principle the truth of which is now so generally recognised, that it need not give rise to any lengthy discussion, or delay the consideration of other measures of importance. It has been said that the passing of a measure to remove the property qualification would necessitate a dissolution. The effect of such a statement may possibly be to prevent some honorable members from voting in favor of the measure, as for various reasons many would desire to avoid the necessity of seeking the suffrages of their constituents at an early date. Well, in the first place I feel satisfied that no honorable member who votes in favor of the measure in question need fear to face his constituents. So strong is the feeling outside with regard to it, that those members who support the measure may, I feel sure, rely upon the support of their constituents. In the next place I absolutely deny that a dissolution would be a necessary consequence of the passing of a measure for the removal of the property qualification. Victoria affords a complete precedent by which we may be guided. In the year 1857, in the first session of the first parliament under Responsible Government in that colony, an Act abolishing the property qualification for members of the Assembly was passed in the ordinary way, and no question of a dissolution arose in connection with it. There was no dissolution, no general election, in consequence of the passing of the measure. The Act was passed in August 1857, in the first session of the

first Parliament, and it was only the third session, in August 1859—two years afterwards—that Parliament was dissolved. The title and preamble of the Act run as follows:—"21 Victoria, No. 12. An Act to abolish the property qualification required by members of the Legislative Assembly. 27 August, 1857.—Whereas the number of persons capable of being elected as members of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria is at present unduly restricted, and it is expedient to enlarge the same: Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly of Victoria in this present Parliament assembled," &c. It is worthy of mention that at that period there were in the Victorian Assembly men who have since risen to great distinction in the colony referred to and elsewhere; some became subsequently members of the House of Commons, and one became a Secretary of State. There can be no good and valid reason why a similar measure should not be passed here in a similar manner. As for the urgent necessity for such a measure, I do not think that anyone who understands the present political situation can contest it. The property qualification for members of the legislature has been abolished in England and in all the other Australasian colonies, and was only permitted by the House of Commons to remain in our Constitution Act because it was pointed out that, for certain reasons, its omission would involve an amendment of the bill then before the Select Committee, and the necessity of sending it back to the colony, and the consequent postponement, for perhaps an indefinite period, of the passing of the measure and the granting of Responsible Government to this colony. At the same time a solemn assurance was given to the Select Committee of the House that the obnoxious provision imposing a property qualification for members of the Legislative Assembly would be removed by the Western Australian Legislature without delay; in other words our delegates pledged themselves to use their most strenuous efforts to bring about its abolition. Well, sir, we may well wonder that a provision so fraught with evil, and which has been discarded by the British

Parliament, and by every other Australian Legislature, should have found its way into our Constitution Act. The property qualification for members of the House of Commons was introduced in the reign of Queen Anne by the efforts of certain landowners, who sought by means of it to strengthen their own power and influence in Parliament. It fully answered their purpose, but the evils to which it gave rise became so intolerable that it was swept away altogether in 1858. But it may be remarked that during the greater portion of the period of its existence—at all events until about 1825—the House of Commons was more obstinately opposed to every liberal measure, more resolute in curtailing the liberties of the people, and more subservient to the Court and Tory party, than it had ever been at any former period of its existence, or has been since. I may here appropriately quote what Sir Erskine May, in his "Constitutional History of England," says with regard to it. He says:—"The policy of excluding all but the proprietors of land from the right of sitting in the House of Commons was at length adopted in the reign of Queen Anne, and was maintained until 1838. In that year this exclusive principle was surrendered, and a new qualification substituted of the same amount, either in real or personal property, or in both combined."

MR. A. FORREST: Is the hon. member in order in reading his speech? The hon. member reads nearly the whole of his speeches, and I ask are we to sit here and listen to them?

MR. CANNING: I am reading a quotation.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member may not read his speech, but I understand now he is reading a quotation, which he is allowed to do. An hon. member may refer to his notes, but may not read his speech, and I must say I think the hon. member at times reads rather too much. But now I cannot say he is out of order in reading the quotation.

MR. CANNING: I will now go on. "In 1858 the law of property qualification was abandoned altogether. In its original form it had been invidious and unjust; and from its beginning to its end it had been systematically evaded." These are the words of one of

the greatest authorities we have upon parliamentary history and practice. Now, sir, what do the concluding words of the passage I have quoted imply? May says:—"In its original form it had been invidious and unjust, and from its beginning to its end it had been systematically evaded." The words "invidious and unjust" imply that worthy and honorable men had been excluded from Parliament, whilst the unworthy and unscrupulous had found their way in; that the choice of the people had been unfairly restricted to a small section of the nation; and certainly parliamentary records of the times referred to go far to justify the belief that the results were as bad as might have been expected. What do the words "systematically evaded" imply? They imply that the measure had given rise to misrepresentation, to collusive conveyances or transfers, to perjury, and fraud. And on the part of whom? Of legislators!—of those who were to frame laws for the whole nation, but whose right and power to do so were tainted with illegality! The stream is no purer than its source. The words imply that whilst honorable, conscientious men were excluded from the legislature by the law of property qualification, the unscrupulous laughed it to scorn, and "systematically evaded" it! It may be said the words quoted apply to a state of things which is past and gone. Let us hope so: but it must be borne in mind that like causes, like conditions, produce like effects, like results; and we know that average human nature is very much the same in all ages and in all countries. The only effectual means of guarding against evil results is to utterly sweep away what may cause them. To turn to a matter of detail: there is one provision of the law as it stands at present which might be productive of very serious inconvenience to members of this House. Let us suppose the case of a member whose qualification may consist of a single property of perhaps considerable value. It may be the only freehold property possessed by the member. An advantageous opportunity—such an opportunity as he would not be warranted in allowing to pass—might offer of selling his property. The member sells, and so leaves himself without a qualification. It may be said: "Let him buy another property and sub-

stitute it for his former qualification. Provision is made in the Act for such a course." Perfectly true as regards substitution, but the Act provides that when a member substitutes one property for another as a qualification, he shall make and subscribe a similar declaration to that which he subscribed on first taking his seat; that would be to the effect that the property was of the value required, and that he had been possessed of it for at least twelve months. Well, it must be evident that he could not make such a declaration with regard to a property he had only just purchased. The consequence would be that he would have to give up his seat. I affirm, then, that there should be no further delay in sweeping away a provision of our Constitution Act, the existence of which cannot be justified on grounds of morality (I use the word in its widest sense), of justice, of the maintenance of equality of political rights, of expediency, or even of usage. It is here an anachronism and an anomaly. It has ceased to exist in the other Australian colonies or in England, and its existence in this colony places the people of Western Australia, as regards political rights, in an exceptionally unfavorable position compared with the people of the other great Australian colonies. It is well known that there is a general desire to see this qualification removed. Many honorable members now present have expressed themselves as being favorable to its removal. I cannot imagine that any good reason can be shown for retaining it any longer. A dissolution would not be necessary through the abolition of the qualification, and scarcely any interruption to other business would be occasioned by the steps necessary to the desired end. A precedent for the course I urge has been brought forward so exactly in point, so completely on all fours with what we require, that it should be a sufficient answer to all objections to the action contemplated by the resolution. Then with regard to any special and specious objection that might be urged to our amending our Constitution without a dissolution following, we have a complete answer in the fact that only last session Parliament passed an amendment of the Constitution Act, the House only taking care to observe that the majority required by the Act in pas-

sing a measure of that kind was present. Once more let me remind the House that there is a general desire among the people for the removal of the qualification, and it should be borne in mind that a right yielded promptly and gracefully is often received as a boon. The franchise is, I must admit, a matter which might provoke discussion, and perhaps require a dissolution, but with the question of the qualification no such thing need happen. I therefore urge hon. members, in the name of consistency, of expediency, and of legislative morality to affirm the resolution which I now move.

MR. PARKER: To me, sir, has been entrusted the honor of seconding this motion, and I do so with a very great deal of pleasure. I may, perhaps, in the first place, remind hon. members how it is that this provision appears in the Constitution Act. It may not be generally known that this Act was essentially a Government measure. It was prepared in this colony by our late Governor, Sir Frederick Broome, who sent it on to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who revised and amended it. As altered it was returned to the colony and submitted to the Legislative Council, the members of which were virtually told that if they passed the Bill as it was sent out by the Secretary of State, he would ask the approval of the Imperial Parliament to it. Some hon. members are aware that we fought over many of the clauses of it, and made many amendments, which were telegraphed Home; but in nearly every case the Secretary of State insisted on our adhering to the Bill. Under these circumstances, members, who, like myself, thought that not only should the property qualification be abolished, but that the franchise should also be widened, came to the conclusion that it would be advisable to take Responsible Government on the terms on which it was offered, and then, having obtained it, we could amend it in such a manner as would make it acceptable to the people. We had virtually no choice in the matter, and we were told that we must accept it as it stood. Having done so, the Legislative Council appointed delegates to go Home and appear before the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider the Bill. I had the honor to be one of those dele-

gates, and I can assure hon. members that the question not only of the property qualification for members, but also that of the franchise was brought particularly to our notice by many members of that committee. No member of the committee expressed approval of the property qualification, and many members strongly disapproved of the franchise as provided by the Bill. In one of my answers, I drew attention to the fact that the property qualification had only been carried by the votes of the then Government and the nominee members, and that the majority of elected members had voted against it. I said I felt I could assure the committee that at an early date the new Parliament would take steps to abolish that qualification, and I also said that I felt sure the franchise would be considerably reduced and enlarged. I did not give a pledge, for of course I could not bind either the Parliament or the people of this colony; I simply gave my views, although at the same time when I did so I felt that I was in accord with the opinions of the great majority of the people. At the last session of this Parliament, when the matter was brought forward by the hon. member for East Perth, I think the time was hardly opportune to then bring about a change. I thought the Government should have a fair chance of carrying out their policy without having a dissolution ahead: but I thought that at the next session, which is this one, some steps should be taken to meet the wishes of the people. If I did not support the hon. member at the present time, I feel I should be committing a breach of faith with the Select Committee of the House of Commons, the members of which I assured that steps would be taken in this direction at an early opportunity. I do not suppose any member of this House will contend that a property qualification for members is right. The idea of Englishmen at the present day is that they should be allowed to select and elect those whom they think fit to represent them. Now, let me ask, does property qualify a man? Is it to be supposed that because a man possesses so much land he possesses so much intelligence, or that as his wealth increases so much the more is he fitted to be a statesman. Such a proposition is ridiculous

A man's qualification is his natural or acquired ability, and whether he possesses one or five thousand pounds worth of land does not affect the question. Why should not the electors select whom they please? It is often said why do not constituencies elect local men; but the answer to it is that they have not always a free choice. There may be among them someone whom they might wish to represent them, but it is discovered that he does not possess the necessary land qualification, and it then becomes necessary to seek someone living at a distance from them who does. It has been said that if we agree to the striking out of the qualification now, it would be necessary to have a general election at once. From the precedent quoted by the hon. member for East Perth, it seems that in Victoria it was not considered necessary; but I may say that if a Bill is brought in to abolish the qualification for members I shall feel it my duty to move also for considerable alterations in the franchise, and I look on this motion as a step in that direction. My idea is that we should induce the Government to bring in a Bill to amend the Constitution, and when we have it before us, I shall feel that I shall not be doing my duty to my constituents or be behaving properly as far as the select committee of the House of Commons is concerned, unless I took steps to reduce and enlarge the franchise. Presuming that an alteration of the franchise were to take place now, under the electoral law of the colony the time for registering a person as a voter is the 10th of April. After that time the list is made out, and a Revision Court is held, and the electoral list so revised is the electoral list as from the 1st of October following. Consequently the present would be the most convenient time for making any alteration, because it would allow the electors under the enlarged franchise to come in by the 10th April next and register themselves; while at the same time no election could take place until after the 1st of October next. This would give the Government the whole of this session, and in June or July next they could hold another session, and then in the following October they could dissolve, hold the elections, and have everything ready for another meeting of Parliament in the early part of next

year. This course would in no way interfere with the business of the country. We must remember that because Parliament is dissolved, it does not do away with the Government; in fact it might be an advantage to the Government to be able to carry on without a Parliament. If we do not take the opportunity now afforded to pass the bill, it means that no election can take place under the new electoral law until after the 1st of October, 1893. I ask hon. members, Will it be fair to their constituents to put them off till the end of 1893? I see no reason why the Government should prevent the passing of this bill. I am sure if they facilitated it, they would make themselves even more popular than they are at the present time. They would then be not only popular with those possessing the £10 franchise, but popular with the enlarged class of electors who would come in under the new order of things. I give my views on this question this evening with the hope that the Government will seize this opportunity of doing justice to the large number of people of this colony who are now disfranchised. I have great pleasure, sir, in seconding the motion of the hon. member for East Perth.

MR. DE HAMEL: I rise, sir, to move an amendment. I propose to strike out all the words after "House," and to substitute in lieu thereof the following: "It is desirable that the Government shall, at the next session of Parliament, introduce a bill to amend the Constitution Act for the purpose of extending the franchise and abolishing the qualification of members." I move this, sir, because it appears to me that by adopting the motion which is before the House we shall be attempting to carry an extension of the franchise, and abolish the qualification for members by a side wind. For my part I do not believe in doing anything of the kind. If we are going to do it, let us do it boldly. I am not in favor of saying, "Let us bring in a bill to abolish the qualification, and then make use of it to obtain an extension of the franchise;" and I prefer to boldly and honestly call upon the Government to introduce, at the next session of Parliament, a bill which will deal with both questions. I consider that to simply abolish the qualification is only a means

of drawing a red herring across the trail. Even if it were abolished, how much would the *personnel* of the House be changed so long as we are an unpaid body? And whilst we can get the services of able and honest men, I trust that we shall, for many years to come, not adopt what is known as payment of members. The abolition of the qualification is the small thing; but the great one is the extension of the franchise. I have heard a great many people use the miserable argument that if a man cannot pay £10 a year, he is not worth giving a vote to. In other words they regard the payment of £10 as evidence of some wonderful right to the franchise; but let me point out some facts I am aware of, of my own knowledge—things I have seen with my own eyes; things I have heard with my own ears. In many places in the Southern districts, men have started farms, and have brought up a large family upon them. In time the children have grown up. In one case I know of, there are eight sons, and not one of them is entitled to a vote; because they live with and work for their father, not receiving any pay, and paying nothing for their board and lodging, but receiving what money they required—looking forward to the time when, at their father's death, the farm would be divided up among them, which would be their return for their past labor. These very men, sir, are the backbone of the country, and yet they have no vote; while their own hired servants have. This, I think, sir, does away with the argument about the £10 franchise. In the past we have looked to South Australia as a model in framing our laws; but in the present instance I think we have been rather inclined to follow Queensland, and on this colony's qualification, I desire to make a few remarks. I find by a proclamation dated 20th December, 1859, the qualification of electors for the Assembly was made the same as that for New South Wales in 1855. I referred to it, to find out what that was, and I discovered that it was exactly what we now have. I ask whether it is reasonable that we in the year 1891, almost 1892, should possess the same qualification as New South Wales possessed nearly half a century ago? I find, however, that the people of New

South Wales only assented to such a restricted franchise for three years, for in 1858 they amended the Act and provided, firstly, that every male of the age of 21 years who shall have resided in the colony for three years shall be entitled to vote as a resident elector, provided that he shall, at the time of the making up of the electoral list, have resided six months in the district; and, secondly, providing that any resident elector, who shall have been six months in the district, and who possesses one or other of the prescribed qualifications (these being similar to the ones we now have), shall also be entitled to vote. Queensland made no change until 1872, when she gave to every male of the age of 21 the right to have his name placed on the roll, subject to six months' residence prior to the holding of the revision court, or who has been for six months possessed of freehold land of the value of £100, or a lease of the value of £10, which he has held for six months prior to the holding of the revision court. It must, therefore, strike hon. members that if we desire to make our colony more attractive we must so amend our Act as to satisfy those who have been used to freer institutions. It is perfectly true that the Government have pledged themselves to bring in a bill dealing with the qualification and the franchise; but I think that promise is too vague, for it only goes the length of saying that they will do it at a convenient time. By my amendment I say that the convenient time will be next session. I do not say in what direction the extension should be made; I leave that an open question for the Government. There is another reason why I think next session will be time enough. I believe no hon. member wishes to see the Government leave their seats, or go through a general election until they have had sufficient time to carry out the policy they have instituted. The success or failure of their policy will depend on whether they will be able to raise the £1,100,000 they require to complete their loan. If they succeed they will receive, and will rightly receive, credit for their policy; but if they fail, of course, like all people who fail, evil will come upon them. The present Government, having gone into this borrowing policy, should be allowed by the country the fullest

opportunity of carrying it out, and we on this side of the House have no right to hinder them. We are told that if the House passed this bill now for the abolition of the qualification, there would be no need for us to go to the country; but I say if that bill were passed, I, for one, would feel I had a moral obligation cast upon me of placing my seat in the hands of my constituents, so that they might return, if they saw fit, a representative who did not possess the land qualification. I know there are other hon. members who also take that view. It is quite true, as the hon. member for York points out, that it will be quite 18 months after the passing of the bill before an election can take place under the law as it now stands; but I would point out that at the present moment the population of the colony is 54,000. If we have gained 4,000 since the Census, it is only reasonable to say that within twelve months the population will have reached 60,000, and I need not remind hon. members of what then happens with regard to the Upper House. There are some hon. members of this House who, though they would prefer to sit in a nominated Chamber, might still like to sit in the Upper House if they could go there with the same freedom they possess here. Therefore, the two elections should undoubtedly come together; and, although it may seem that I am for the moment opposing the granting of an extended franchise, I feel I am by my action tending to give finality to the subject when I ask that steps should be taken at a certain fixed time,—a time when members of this House and members of the Upper House also can go to the country with the qualification abolished and the franchise extended. There is one other point I may mention. Supposing we went to the country without altering the franchise, members would only be returned pledged to obtaining an extension of it; and hence the next House could not possibly hold their seats even for twelve months, for their one duty would be to pass the amended Franchise Bill and then go back to the country. It is my intention to divide the House, if necessary, on the amendment, because I am convinced that the country desires to have some finality about this matter, and to know when we

may expect to have the franchise extended and the qualification abolished. I hope sincerely that the House will pass this amendment, which I now move.

MR. HASSELL: I second the amendment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The views of the Government with reference to the matter before the House are set out in paragraph 5 of the Speech, and hon. members will understand from that paragraph that the Government are of opinion that before the next general election takes place the qualification for members should be abolished and the franchise extended, and we are prepared to introduce legislation on this subject as soon as the state of public business permits. The Government have, however, no objection to the amendment of the hon. member for Albany. We have already pledged ourselves to deal with this matter, and we hope to be able to take it in hand next session. At any rate that is our intention at present. I do not see that the amendment of the hon. member goes much further than the paragraph in the Speech. On all hands it is admitted that the qualification is not necessary; but it is a very different thing to ask the Government to bring in a bill at once to deal with it, notwithstanding the instance quoted by the hon. member for East Perth. I must say that I should like to have a close scrutiny into that case, because I believe in those days in Victoria it was necessary to get the Royal Assent to such a bill, which would then, of course, have taken some time. But even if Victoria did, in 1857, amend her Constitution in this way without an election immediately following it, there is no reason why we should follow the course now. Things have moved rapidly since that time, and things that were done then would not be tolerated now. At any rate, this Government considers it would be such a material change in the Constitution as to necessitate a dissolution. The hon. member referred to an alteration of the Constitution Act which was made last session; but that does not apply at all, because it did not, as this would, affect either the electors or the elected. The hon. member for York said that if we adopted the suggestion of the hon. member for East Perth, the Government would become more

popular than it is. I do not suppose anyone desires to be unpopular, but in our positions we have to consider our duties and responsibilities, and we have our policy, which has only now just begun, to carry out. Our duty does not lead us to throw the colony into a state of confusion at the present time. The Government does not object to the amendment; but if the hon. member for East Perth presses his motion it will be our duty to resist it.

MR. RICHARDSON: I am glad to hear that the Government has no desire to oppose this amendment, but with regard to the motion, I cannot help thinking that the mover of it has to a great extent been beating the air. In a very lengthy speech he labored the principle of the abolition of the qualification as if we disagreed with him on that point. On the contrary we all agree that it should be abolished, the only question being which is the most fitting time to bring it about. I do not think the hon. member has chosen an opportune time, and I cannot understand the object he has in only bringing forward the matter of the qualification, unless it be to burk the question of the franchise, which is the more important of the two. To pass a bill such as he wishes, and not have a general election, would only make the electors more discontented than ever, for they would not be able to get the benefits of the Act, and hon. members of this House would also be placed in a most false position. The hon. member for East Perth has cited a precedent which, in my opinion, is altogether beside the mark. In Victoria the qualification was £2,000, and here it is only £500—an amount almost any man without much difficulty can qualify himself with. And as to the reference he made to the fact that no qualification was required for the House of Commons, let me tell the hon. member that an election in England costs thousands of pounds, which is a very much heavier qualification, though an indirect one, than ours. But I do not think there is a single member of this House who does not agree with the principle of abolishing the qualification, but the question is one of "the time when." As soon as that time does arrive—and the amendment says it will be next session—it will

be our duty to deal with the franchise as well, and so give finality to this matter.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Before this debate proceeds further I should like to say a few words in reference to the case which has been cited by the hon. member for East Perth. In the first place I think he should have told us what Ministers said on that occasion.

MR. CANNING: I shall be glad to give the hon. member the quotation.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): As far as I am informed now, there is nothing in that case to show that a dissolution did not take place after the Act was assented to. At any rate, it is a fact that the Bill was not passed for two years after they obtained the Constitution, and we have had ours only for 12 months—or rather the Ministry has only been in office for 12 months; so that from that point of view we have yet a year to spare. But I will assume that in Victoria there was no dissolution. There was an amendment to the Constitution Act in one particular only, namely, the abolition of the qualification for members. If we could attempt merely to abolish the qualification, we might, perhaps, be justified in passing a bill here for a like purpose without having an election; but is there one hon. member who does not know that if we brought in a bill we should have to at once meet the case of the franchise? Of course we should. The hon. member for York, who seconded this motion, told us distinctly that if the bill were introduced he would at once table a motion to amend the franchise. I was among the hon. members of the old Legislative Council who strove to strike this out when the bill was being passed; but we could not succeed in giving effect to our views. Now, however, that the Government has entered upon a policy which demands some prudence and attention to carry out, we do not deem it expedient to commence a fight on the question of "one man one vote," and all sorts of other things, which would take us weeks to discuss. For my own part I should make short work of both the qualification for members and the franchise as well by fixing the limit at nothing; but, perhaps, we are not able to do this at the present time. I consider that whatever we fix,

either the qualification or the franchise at, they will gradually be reduced until they come to nothing; and, therefore, if we were to start at once at the bottom, it would be better in the end. After the promise of the Government, I ask the House not to press us to deal with this question this session, because it really means two questions, and to deal with them now would not, I am sure, be for the benefit of the country.

MR. SIMPSON: I am sure the House will be glad to receive the assurance given by the Government on this most important question. To my mind the most important matter before us at the present time is to see a full and ample development of our public works policy; and then comes the question of the franchise, a question which, in my opinion, takes precedence of the matter of the abolition of the qualification for members. However, the two questions have so much bearing on one another that they should certainly be dealt with together. To-night the Premier has asserted that the Government have no objection to the alterations which are required, and they have promised to bring them before us next session, and therefore I cannot see what is to be gained by pressing this motion now. There is no firmer believer in the colony than I am in favor of the principle that every respectable man—every contributor to the revenue—should have an opportunity of electing a representative who should speak for him in the Parliament of the colony, and these persons should also have a free choice as to whom they elect. I happen to know that a man who is admired throughout all Australia—Sir Henry Parkes—could never have sat if there had been any property qualification. If you have one it only tends to attempts being made to drive the proverbial coach-and-four through the law, and when a law is so disrespected as to bring attempts of this kind about, the sooner it is abolished the better. I shall support the amendment.

MR. QUINLAN: I came into this House this evening, sir, with the intention of supporting the resolution moved by the hon. member for East Perth; but now that the Ministry has pledged itself to bring in a measure, dealing with the subject not only of the qualification, but

of the franchise also, we must be satisfied. In my remarks on the Address-in-Reply, I told the Ministry, in very plain language, that, in my opinion, the time was opportune for bringing about the change. I think so still; but as we are certain to have the whole matter brought before us by the Government next session, we must be content. Under the circumstances, I shall support the amendment in preference to the motion, and my action, I contend, will be not only perfectly consistent, but in the best interests of the country. If I were to support the motion now, what would be the result? It would simply mean delaying the matter indefinitely. It would not be carried, and, consequently, there would be nothing to bind the Ministry to bring in the bill either next session or the session following that; whereas, by adopting the amendment, we are certain of something definite next session. At the present time I firmly believe that half the population have not a voice in the representation of the country. In some cases, men who were born in the country, and others who have lived in it for years, have not a vote. In other cases, too numerous to mention, people have been deprived of their votes simply because they have moved across a road from one district to another, and are unable honestly to say that they have lived in a particular district for 12 months. The hon. member for East Perth has omitted to touch the question of the franchise; but I think it is the more important of the two. In fact I do not think anyone cares very much about the qualification, and some hold that to do away with it is only a step towards payment of members. For my part I shall always be willing to occupy my present position without any payment, and if men have the interest of the country at heart I feel sure such a measure as I have indicated is far distant. There may be exceptional cases where payment is necessary—to country members to recoup them they incur for instance—but as a general principle I do not think it is needed. I shall support the amendment in preference to the motion, because I feel certain it will lead to more practical results.

Question—That the words proposed to be struck out, be struck out—put and passed.

Question—That the words proposed to be added, be so added—put.

MR. PARKER: I repeat that to which no answer whatever has been given. I say if we postpone this matter until next session, it means that no general election can take place for two years, because it cannot take place until after the 1st of October, 1893.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): It would be possible.

MR. PARKER: You would have to alter the electoral law, and I do not suppose that would do, for it would mean altering the Revision Courts and throwing everything out of order: Besides it would be most undesirable to alter the time for registering voters, which is in April; and therefore if we do not alter this Act now, it is obvious that voters cannot be registered until next April twelve months, and it takes six months after that before the roll is made up finally and comes into force.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): No!

MR. PARKER: I do not speak without authority. I will just quote the law on the subject. Section 28 of the Electoral Act says that "such electoral lists, signed and forwarded as aforesaid, shall respectively become and be the electoral register of votes for the electoral district or division for the twelve months succeeding the first day of October following." And then section 6 says that on or before the 10th of April in every year any person claiming to vote must make his claim, &c., in the form prescribed. Consequently if we do not enlarge the franchise before next session the lists cannot be made up and become law until 1893, and no election can take place until after 1st October, 1893. Now if we pass it this session we can register voters in April, 1892. Not to pass it simply means postponing the enlarged franchise for 12 months. As to the property qualification, I think all hon. members are agreed upon the point—except, perhaps, the hon. member for the DeGrey, who evidently still thinks it a good thing, judging from the way in which he wound up his speech. A large majority of hon. members also think that the franchise should be considerably reduced, and why not do it? The whole thing could be settled in a week or ten days. As the law now stands a man

must have resided in a district for twelve months to begin with, and then it takes him six months to become registered, which virtually means eighteen months before a person is entitled to vote. If a man has resided for twenty years in East Perth, and he removes to West Perth, it is eighteen months before he can exercise the franchise. Our duty demands of us that we shall alter this state of things at once, and for my part I shall be glad to give up a considerable portion of my time to amending this Act. I do not look on this as a party question, and I shall, if necessary, be glad to assist the Government in preparing the bill.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We must prepare our own bill.

MR. PARKER: I will do it according to the direction of the Colonial Treasurer, and I believe we should be almost unanimous as to the franchise that would be acceptable. I do hope that the Government will re-consider the matter. It will certainly not interfere with their policy, for there can be no election until after next October. The ordinary session could be held in June or July next, after which we could part and go to our constituents. If any hon. member fears a dissolution, perhaps that may be a good reason for not voting for this motion now, but I do not think such is the case. As far as I am concerned, if I felt sure that at the new election I should be rejected I would still go forward and vote for it. I would like to ask, sir, whether it is now competent for me to move to strike out the word "next" and insert "present."

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. PARKER: Then I will do that.

MR. RANDELL: I beg to call your attention, sir, to the fact that a motion to the same effect has already been negatived.

THE SPEAKER: Partly to the same effect. This goes to the extension of the franchise. The question of the property qualification has been decided. Perhaps I was wrong in saying that the hon. member could move this amendment, because it certainly alludes to the property qualification, as well as the franchise. The House has already decided that it will not abolish the property qualification this session, and hence I do not think the amendment would be in order,

MR. CANNING: I may say I am surprised at the line taken by the hon. the Attorney General. Surely the hon. gentleman must have heard me make a similar statement some days ago, and if he doubted its accuracy he might have taken steps to look into it. I quoted from the Statutes of Victoria, which are in the Victoria Public Library, and I should have considered that I would have been treating the House with the grossest disrespect if I brought before it a precedent which I had no authority for. Then the hon. member for the DeGrey said that every member of the House was agreed to the abolition of the qualification, and he stated that I had been "beating the air" on the point without any necessity for it, and yet he concluded his speech by saying that he did not see anything to object to, because it was an easy matter for anyone to qualify himself to the extent of £500. It is very difficult to either deal with or answer remarks of that kind as if they were logical argument. Then the hon. member for West Perth says that I burked the question of the franchise.

MR. QUINLAN: I never used those words.

MR. CANNING: It seemed to me that the hon. member did use them, or words to that effect.

MR. QUINLAN: I say I did not use them.

MR. CANNING: However, I did not evade the question, and I gave my reasons for only dealing with the question of the qualification. I said that if we abolished the qualification it would not necessitate a general election. If we altered the franchise it might be another matter.

MR. DE HAMEL: The hon. member for York seems to think that if we do not pass this bill next session there can be no election for two years, but I make bold to say that if a general election were necessary at an early date after next session, the Government could facilitate it easily enough. It is all nonsense to talk about the 10th of April or any other date, for when the bill is before us we can without very much difficulty arrange to have the election whenever we please.

Question—That the words proposed to be added, be so added—put and passed.

TIDAL LOCKS ON THE SWAN AND MURRAY.

MR. RICHARDSON, in accordance with notice, moved, "That this Assembly is of opinion that the Government should, as soon as possible, have estimates prepared by competent authorities of the probable cost of constructing tidal locks on the Rivers Swan and Murray, in order to check the flow of salt water up those Rivers, and thus to enable the fresh water to be utilised for irrigation purposes on their banks; and further, in the event of the time of the present Engineer-in-Chief being too much occupied with his present professional work to permit him to superintend this and other works of a similar kind, that the Government should arrange for the services of a competent Hydraulic Engineer from one of the Eastern Colonies, whose duty shall be to conduct gauging of the flow of water, at different seasons of the year, of various rivers in the colony, and to select eligible sites for weirs and head-works for irrigation purposes; to take levels of the contour of the country, and otherwise to initiate and conduct such irrigation schemes as the Government of the day may deem advisable." He said that his intention was not to detain the House at this late hour of the evening, but he might say that he had tabled the motion for the purpose of provoking some little discussion so as to enable him to find out what the views of the House were on this important matter. He was quite willing to alter or amend the resolution, or to bring it down in some other form such as would be acceptable to the House, providing that something were done. He thought that they should at once take steps to establish some irrigation scheme in the colony. This could not be done all at once, for it took a long time to obtain the necessary gaugings and levels. He thought, therefore, that it would be a good thing to at once obtain the services of some hydraulic engineer, who could do a great deal of the preliminary work necessary, so that when the colony was in a position to enter upon works of this kind there would be some known and defined basis to work upon. The question of saltwater locks had been before the House on many occasions previously, at the instance of the late hon. member for Beverley, Mr. Harper,

who was thoroughly acquainted with the value of works of this description, and of the great benefit that would accrue by checking the inflow of salt water, thus leaving the fresh water for irrigation purposes. It was well known that the salt water came up just at the time of the year the fresh water was required for irrigation purposes, and hence it was impossible to use any water at all. The locks would not require to be of any great height, as he believed the rise was only about two feet; nor did he think the expense would be very great. He commended the motion to the House, and hoped the Government would take the necessary steps to obtain the services of some gentleman who could advise as to what was practicable and what was not.

MR. THROSSELL said he had much pleasure in supporting the motion, for he felt sure that if the proposal of the hon. member were given effect to it would lead to the irrigation of a very large area of land.

MR. LOTON said he did not like to stand up and throw cold water upon a progressive scheme of this kind; but hon. members must remember that to carry out such schemes means were required, and in the present instance he would like to know where they were to come from. There was no doubt but that the scheme would be of immense benefit to the colony; but he considered that before any considerable sum of money was expended on artificial production there need be a considerable increase in the consuming population. At the present time there was a very considerable area of waste lands, which belonged to the Crown, and which were as yet unimproved. An ample amount of produce could be raised from these, even in the ordinary primitive way, to supply the wants of the people, and therefore there was no very great urgency in the matter: and again, with a large number of public works going on, was it worth while to force the hands of the Government to go in for a further large expenditure? Unless hon. members were prepared to support a vote of this description, he could not see much value, beyond the mere expression of opinion on the part of hon. members, in agreeing to the proposition now before the House.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): said there was no doubt that the hon. member for the Swan had struck at the root of this matter. No one would deny that the conservation of fresh water, by keeping the salt water back, must tend to the improvement of the land on the banks of the rivers which had been mentioned, but such a scheme would require a vast amount of money to make the necessary locks, and they must also bear in mind that most of the land along the banks of these two rivers was in the hands of private individuals, who would probably object to pay for the water whether they used it or not. He was afraid that with our limited population it would not be advisable to undertake a work of this description. Besides this they had their hands pretty full at the present time with other matters. They would shortly have 300 miles of railway under construction, in addition to other large public works. Even if they did agree to carry out the work, he presumed a loan would be required, and the Government could not listen to such a proposal as that. If £2,000 or £3,000 would do the work he would be glad to look into the matter and see whether the funds could not be provided out of current revenue, but he did not think it could be undertaken for anything like either of those sums. They could get a report from the Engineer-in-Chief if it were desired, and they could also obtain a report from some hydraulic engineer, but it seemed to him that unless they were prepared to give effect to his suggestions, it would not be worth while spending money on a report.

MR. PATERSON said that the gangings could not be taken in one year; consequently, if ever they proposed to enter into such works as these, it would be advisable that the services of some hydraulic engineer should be obtained at once. He did not see what the use of the report of himself and Mr. Richardson would be, unless something practical were done. In many parts of the colony there were thousands of acres which could be brought under cultivation by using the water which now flowed into the sea. When in the other colonies he saw some locks, constructed of timber, which only cost £5,000 or £6,000. He did not think

anything very expensive was necessary, but certainly something should be done.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marnion) said that he did not think it wise to pass this motion unless they were prepared to vote the salary of an hydraulic engineer, who was rather an expensive personage as a rule. If they engaged such a gentleman, it would be no use getting him unless he were a first-class man, and it would be still less good to get him unless the colony was prepared to take action on his advice. He had had experience in this colony of the advice of eminent engineers: but it seemed to him that people were not always guided by it, and were rather inclined always to follow their own wicked ways. There might be the same result with the engineer it was now suggested they should get, as was the case with the last. They might get the advice, and the colony would then find itself not in a position to provide the means of carrying it out. Besides this, at the present time, many progressive movements were going on, and they must not expect to do too much in a short time. He hoped, therefore, that hon. members would not force the motion on the Government.

MR. RICHARDSON said he thought a young man just starting in his profession might be obtained for about £600 a year, and he would be able to do a great deal of permanent work which would be useful in the future. Besides this, his advice would be of great benefit to the settlers who were undertaking private works of this description. There would be nothing very extravagant in such an appointment. It would not mean thousands, as had been suggested, but a few hundreds only.

Question—put and negatived.

MINERAL LANDS BILL.

This Bill was read a third time and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence therein.

NORTHAM-SOUTHERN CROSS RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): It is about ten months since this item in the Loan Bill for this railway was passed

by this House. It was passed, as hon. members are aware, without division, and it was fully discussed by a great many hon. members. I had then the opportunity of thoroughly dealing with the subject, as far as I was possessed of information, and of giving my opinion as to the capabilities of the mines, and of the country between the Eastern districts and the Yilgarn railway. I also then predicted a great future for the Yilgarn goldfields, and I am very pleased to see that the opinion I then had formed, after a personal visit to the fields, has been realised by the results from the mines since that time. I cannot help thinking that this railway line, which was opposed in the first instance by several persons, is now generally acknowledged by everyone to be a line the Government should undertake. At the time it was placed before the House in the Loan Bill, a great many members had some misgivings as to the desirability of money being raised for the purpose, but I believe all those doubts and fears have now been entirely removed, and that we all believe the permanency of the Yilgarn goldfields has been thoroughly established, and that a great future will result to the colony through their rapid development. There is a difference of opinion as to the route the railway ought to take. The only convenient routes for the railway to Yilgarn and Southern Cross are two, one starting from the terminus of the present Eastern railway at Northam, going up the Salt River a short distance, then by the Grass Valley Brook, and onwards to Southern Cross; the other route leaving the existing railway four miles beyond York, following the valley of the Mackie, and joining the route from Northam about 90 miles from York. Both these routes have been surveyed much more carefully than is usual with trial surveys; in fact the surveys are almost of a permanent character, rather than trial ones. The Engineer-in-Chief has reported on the matter; his report is on the table, and there are large maps accompanying it, giving complete information as to the character of the country in sections of five miles along the whole length of both routes. Anyone looking at these papers will observe that every five miles is dealt with separately, the cost of every description of work is cal-

culated, and then in the general report of Mr. O'Connor the total results are also calculated. The Engineer-in-Chief reports that these two routes for 90 miles are equally suitable in all respects except one. Practically they are the same cost, and I believe the calculations are almost identical, the only difference being about £500, which is not worth mentioning in such a large work, and that difference is in favor of the Northam route. The worst grade in both routes is of one in 60, which is not very much; in fact there are worse grades than that in the line between Perth and Fremantle. In all particulars, except one, there is very little to choose between the routes, from an engineering point of view; and that one exception is the distance from the port. From Fremantle *via* Northam the distance to Yilgarn is 241 miles, and from Fremantle to Yilgarn *via* York, the distance is 256 miles. Then, assuming Albany to be the port for these goldfields, the distance from Albany *via* Northam is 447 miles, and from Albany *via* York it is 422 miles. If anyone looks at this matter, he cannot help coming to the conclusion that the port of Fremantle is the natural outlet for these Yilgarn goldfields, because you have to compare 241 miles as the shortest distance from Fremantle, with 422 miles as the shortest distance from Albany. It seems that this is the conclusion one must come to, that the port of Fremantle is practically 200 miles nearer to these Yilgarn and Southern Cross goldfields than the port of Albany. Besides that, the districts of Fremantle, Perth, the Swan, the Murray, Wellington, and Sussex will all be connected by railway with the Yilgarn goldfields, and it should be remembered that within these districts is one half of the whole population of the whole colony. I do not think that anyone can fairly argue that Fremantle is not the natural port of the Yilgarn goldfields, both as regards distance and the population to be served. It is not a question of Northam, or Beverley, or York that we have to consider. These towns have nothing to complain of in the treatment which they have received from the Legislature in the past. The colony has done its duty to both them and the districts, rich agricultural lands as they are. They have railway

communication to all of them—to Newcastle, Northam, York, and Beverley; and these towns have been provided with railway communication, which is now worked and maintained at a considerable cost to the country. In considering the route to Yilgarn, we must try to get rid of these local interests, and deal with the question on a national basis. I do not intend to-night to say very much about this route which the Government recommend, except again to say that the Government can find no sufficient reason for starting the line from York or Beverley, for in the case of York we should have to go 15 miles farther, and in the case of Beverley we should have to go 26 miles farther than there is any occasion to go. I have made inquiries to-day as to what the cost of these 15 miles of extra haulage would be, and I was told that in order to make this railway pay at all there would have to be something like 10,000 tons a year of traffic, and that the loss to those persons who paid for the freight would be something over £1,000 a year, by carrying it 15 miles farther than is necessary. It means, besides, nearly an hour's loss of time for anyone travelling the extra 15 miles. I cannot see how it can be argued that it is desirable to go 15 miles farther for the sake of getting to another particular town. The necessity for this railway is acknowledged by everyone. The only argument that I can see at all in favour of going 15 miles round would be that the land were very much better on that route, and that it was a much more fertile district; but as far as I am able to judge—and I have been over the country on both routes—I have never heard before that there was such good land, or that people were so pleased with it, as I have heard of late. If you would look at the reports of the Agricultural Commission which visited these districts, and if you compare the replies that were then given by some of the witnesses, who are the same gentlemen as have been giving other testimony in the newspapers, you will find that their descriptions at these different times do not quite agree. My experience is that settlers do not praise up the country. Those who have lived in isolated places many years, and have not done very well in consequence, are not inclined to speak of the land as so very

fertile. My own opinion is that there is very little to choose between the land along these routes. They are not far distant from each other—twelve or fifteen miles would be the greatest distance between the two routes; and they converge until at 90 miles they join. I think it will be found there is very little to choose between the class of country along either route. There is a considerable quantity of land at a place called Meekering. The limits of the Sand Plain are clearly defined on the map, but there is a considerable amount of good land, which, I believe, will all be taken up as soon as facilities are given by this railway. The greatest difficulty as to the land is the uncertainty of the rainfall, for in some seasons no doubt there may be good crops, but I think it will be found in the future, not that there is no good land, but that there is not a sufficient and certain rainfall to grow good crops. The object which the Government and the country have in view, in building this railway, is not to supply the means of transit to the few people along the line, but is to give cheaper, more rapid, and easier means of transit to the Yilgarn goldfields; and whatever other interests there are, they must all be subservient to the one great object of getting a cheap and rapid means of reaching the goldfields and getting back to port. Of course it will be our endeavor at the same time to encourage the settlement of the soil. I remember that when this matter was before the House last year, it was said by several hon. members that in our public works scheme we were building railways near the coast, through the settled portions of the colony, which were well watered, and where there is a certain rainfall, in order to encourage the agricultural development of the country, and that we were at the same time building a railway to the Yilgarn goldfields to encourage the development of the mineral resources, and thereby give a market to those who were cultivating the soil. But as to the route this railway should take, the motives of the Government have been questioned by some people. The reason why the Government fixed on Northam as the starting point was that it is 15 miles shorter than any other route we know of. If anyone can show that these 15 miles are of no consequence, the

reasons of the Government will be somewhat disposed of. It is also said we have desired to rush this matter through the House; but I say we have no such desire. The more this matter is investigated the better the Government will be pleased. There is no objection to the fullest inquiry. We have no objection to the bill being referred to a select committee, and we will be glad to co-operate in every way we can to assist investigation. The only thing we do not desire is that there should be any considerable delay. If the select committee could report to the House early in the new year, probably on the 5th January, or a day or two later, I don't think any time will be lost. I hope that if this bill is referred to a select committee, those members engaged on it will recognise that it is important that the permanent surveys should be proceeded with. We wish to act entirely in accordance with the decisions and wishes of this House, and although we have the surveyors and their parties all established, we must await the decision of this House as to the route before directing them to go on with the permanent survey, and if there is any considerable delay the surveyors and their parties will be doing nothing. I believe all are agreed there is no time to be lost; and if this select committee can get to work, I see no reason why they should not be able to report, if not on the 5th January, then on the 7th or 8th, and then we can pass the bill through all its stages in a very few days.

MR. PARKER: I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading of this bill. Although the Government advocated the building of this line, and placed the money for it on their Loan Bill, I believe I have been even a stronger supporter of it than the Ministry; and if I had had anything to do with it I should have placed it in the forefront. I believe the great thing to advance the interests of this colony, and make her prosperous, is to develop her goldfields at the earliest opportunity, and connect them as quickly as possible by railway with the metropolis and other parts of the colony. This will induce population on the fields, who will become consumers, and consequently benefit both importers and producers, as well as in a short time enable us to have an elected instead of a nominated Upper

House. I trust that as well as the line to Yilgarn the Government will, at the earliest opportunity, see the necessity of carrying on the Mullewa line to the Murchison; for, while we should do all we can to develop the Yilgarn field, we should not neglect the others. I am not going to follow the hon. the Premier in the reasons he has given for selecting the Northam route. If I take exception to the starting point I shall do it at the proper time, namely, after it has been considered by the select committee, and good grounds can be given for altering the starting point. This bill is not brought forward either in the interests of Northam or York; it is in the interests of Yilgarn and in the interests of the whole colony, and it is having this in view I shall make up my mind as to which is the proper starting point. I do not speak on this occasion as an advocate for York. If the hon. the Treasurer has read what I said to my constituents he will have seen that I did not pledge myself to any particular starting point. I said all things being equal, York should be selected in preference, and I trust that when all the evidence has been adduced the large majority of hon. members will see that York should be the starting point, and that even my mind will be made up on the subject. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of this bill.

MR. RICHARDSON: I just wish to say a few words in justification of the remarks I made on the subject of this railway when the Loan Bill was before the House. I then said that I trusted the Government would not bring forward this bill unless the fields justified it. I said I hoped and believed they would prove permanent and payable, and I am now happy to say that these anticipations have been realised. I then quoted facts and figures as to the probability of the returns, and the yield of gold which I estimated, I am happy to say, has been more than exceeded. I said I thought we should get about £70,000 worth of gold per annum, but this amount has been exceeded, and I believe that in the next 12 months the yield will be valued at £150,000. I showed also that the returns from this field would mean an equal amount of cultivation, and I am now happy to say that the qualified

support I gave to the Government has been justified in such a way as to enable me now to give an unqualified support to this bill. With regard to the minor question of the starting point, I believe it will come to the impartial members of this House to decide the matter. We cannot get away from the fact that self-interest cannot but have the effect of biasing our judgments, and therefore it will be for the disinterested members to hold the scales between the contending parties. We have nothing to do with York or Northam in this matter; we have only to consider the fields and the colony as a whole.

MR. SIMPSON: I hope local jealousies will not interfere with the settlement of this question in the best interests of the colony. There are two routes, and on these we have a report from the Engineer-in-Chief. And here let me take the opportunity of publicly stating that it is a wretched thing to see in the Press of this colony an imputation against a gentleman holding such a high reputation, that he has had a motive in selecting a particular route. In this report I find detailed particulars are given up to within five miles of the junction, and I must say I think it would have been better if they had been carried right up to the junction. From having looked through the plans I am not inclined to say which route I should favor, and therefore I am here solely for the purpose of voting for that route which will prove of most service to the country. I may, however, call attention to a point which has, I think, been missed up to now. As is well known, there are a number of clay pans in this Yilgarn district, and it may be found that the cost of building the railway across them may be considerably more than is expected. In order that so important a matter may be thoroughly gone into, I think it wise to appoint a select committee, so that we may have all the facts before us. We must, of course, in the first place, consider the goldfields, but we should also endeavor to have the line taken along a route which will be of service to the colony in other ways—along the route which contains the most arable land. It is determined in this report that this route is from Northam, as such would

necessitate a lesser amount of haulage than on the York route. The revenue earned on this railway, from my experience, will be chiefly derived from the coaching traffic, and not from freight; that is as far as the fields are concerned, and we must therefore look to the quality of the land through which the line will pass to supply that which will be deficient as regards the fields. I may also say that we must not load up the Yilgarn fields with too great a cost of construction, but if we can pick out a track, near which people will settle and turn out produce, it will be all the better. To my mind neither Northam nor York must be considered at all in this matter. It is a line to the fields, and should be constructed at a minimum of cost, consistent with obtaining the largest returns. I know both routes, but I cannot say which is the better of the two at the present time.

MR. CLARKSON: At this late hour it is not my intention to say much on this subject. Like my hon. friend the member for York, I am not prepared to express an opinion on the route. I admit I have formed an opinion, but if it can be proved to me that I am in error I am willing to alter my present view. I regret the turn the controversy on the subject has taken, for it is not a matter between York and Northam, but one affecting the whole colony.

MR. PARKER: I just desire to say what I omitted before as to some assertions which have been made in a newspaper. I may assure the hon. the Premier that I have never written a line or instigated a line being written or published in the papers on this subject.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I hope the hon. member does not think I was referring to him.

Question—That the bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

MR. PARKER: I now move that the Bill be referred to a select committee.

Question—put and passed.

A ballot having been taken, the following members, in addition to the Mover, were elected to serve upon the Committee:—The Hon. H. W. Venn, Mr. Piesse, Mr. Throssell, Mr. Symon, Mr. Randell, and Mr. Traylen.

Ordered—That the Select Committee may adjourn from time to time and from

place to place; may sit on those days over which the House is adjourned; may call for persons, papers and records, and report upon Tuesday, 5th January.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:30 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Friday, 18th December, 1891.

Mineral Lands Bill: first reading—Police Bill: report of select committee—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Sir T. Cockburn-Campbell, Bart.) took the chair at 3 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

MINERAL LANDS BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly and read a first time.

POLICE BILL.

THE HON. J. W. HACKETT brought up the report of the select committee on this Bill, and moved that it be printed.

Question—put and passed.

THE HON. J. W. HACKETT then moved that the report be considered in committee of the whole House on Monday, 21st December.

Question—put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council at 3:10 p.m. adjourned until Monday, 21st December, at 8 o'clock p.m.